

CONSTANTLY IN FLIGHT

ARTIST
MARIN DEARIE
TAKES OFF

BY ARIN BLACK

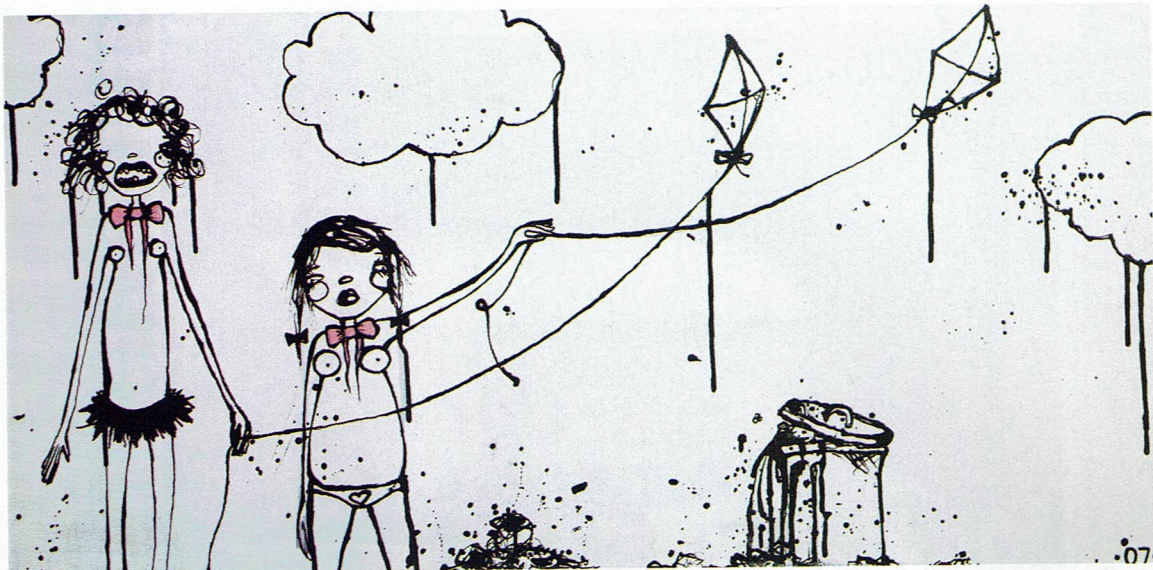
“I’m obsessed with birds,” says painter and designer Marin Dearie. “There’s a tree downtown—I swear it has a million birds that just fly in and out. Every time I go there I’m like, I have to paint more birds.” Dearie often incorporates winged entities into her work, along with charmingly distorted line figures, boats, and kites. Hers is a kind of feminine, modern symbolism. If Warhol had Marilyn and Campbell’s soup, then Dearie has balloons and birds.

“I like the freedom of birds,” she says. “That’s something that comes up a lot in my work; the freedom. But it’s always a kind of limited freedom.”

Dearie is like the avian creatures she draws inspiration from—she’s delicate and always in motion. “I shouldn’t be doing multiple things at one time. I guess this is how I work,” says the 24-year-old artist as she reads coffee and homemade biscuits in her Garden District apartment. “I always have multiple things going at once ... I think it keeps me entertained to be running around. That way I don’t get bored,” she explains. But she’s also grounded in the certain, sharp grids of a graphic designer. Her aesthetic

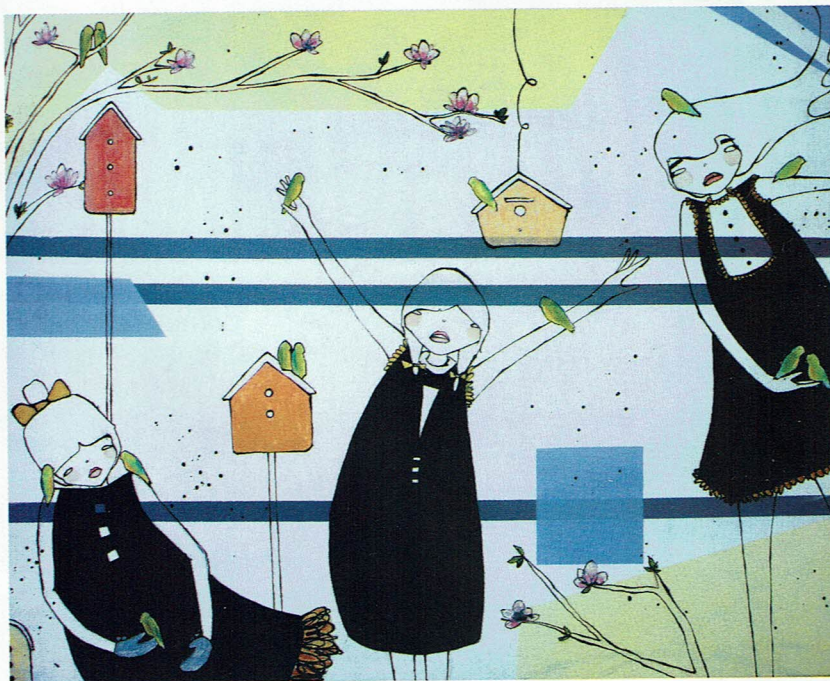


is evident in her space. Elements of precision litter the apartment; a vase of daisies sits on the coffee table. The rooms are white and peach and perfectly *au courant* — girly without being overly floral. There's evidence of multiple projects in progress. A painting sits on an easel; there's weaving materials for a chair Dearie plans to complete with her sister during her winter break; jewelry supplies nestle in clear plastic boxes on a shelf; an immaculately cute "to do" list is taped to the back of the front door. It's a controlled chaos that utilizes the breadth of an artist's tools to fuel the self-sustaining energy of a talent taking off.



Dearie has recently come back to Louisiana to continue her development. After a brief stint in Portland painting murals she returned to the city to attend Loyola University. The New Orleans native says coming back felt inevitable in a way, "I love it here. I really do. I feel like I've surrounded myself with a lot of artists and people I can feed off of. Olivia [Hill] and I are always talking about our work. We feed off each other."

Dearie, along with Hill and mixed media artist Rebecca Re-bouché, occupies a milieu of young women artists in the city that traffic in a kind of precious juxtaposition. In their work, they utilize traditionally feminine objects to explore larger ideas about freedom, relationships, and home. "Olivia and I met when grouped together for a show at Home Space," Dearie says. "Not that our styles are similar at all, but what we include is very much the same. Rebecca[']s and [my] styles are very different too, but ... I don't know if that's being in New Orleans, being in the same age group ... the things that we appreciate. The things that we find sweet."



Although the subjects in many of Dearie's images offer a kind of girlish prettiness, elements therein often belie the candy impression of it all. Specifically, the expressions on the characters offer a double edge.

In *Cupcake*, the adorable figurines bear countenances that belie their innocence. Looking closer at a Dearie work is necessary, both because of these juxtapositions, and to glean the layers that the often-slick surfaces seem to deny. In fact, Dearie often creates paintings as archeological digs. It's an effect of her desire to stay in motion, so paintings that don't work get co-opted and reconfigured into something new. "A lot of times I'll start drawing and then think, 'I don't like that,' and then will go over with another layer of acrylic," she says. "There [are] a lot of layers in my work."

But unlike artists who develop surfaces that own the muscular brunt of paint, Dearie uses thin sheets of acrylic or spray paint that leave the resultant canvas smooth and flat. It's a doodle on top of a doodle. "I'm not worried about ruining it," she says. "I have a lot of pieces that never work. But then I bring them back and then I feel they're still there, behind them."

"I just paint what makes me happy," she says. "I feel like pretty much every time I paint I'm in a really good mood, enjoying it. It's relaxation for me. My paintings make me laugh a lot of times, especially when I don't sketch things out. I'll just go in the ink. I kind of feel like I have no control over it." But along with the humor and fluidity, the work is controlled. The

sureness of the hand allows for that kind of anything-goes approach.

Dearie didn't attend art school, didn't follow the traditional path through course work and critique, so she has a *joie de vivre* in her art that is often suckled away through endless professorial censure. However, as she matures, her work does well to incorporate a headier, more reasoned approach. This is evidenced through a piece, not immediately recognizable as a Marin Dearie work, that hangs in her bright, happy apartment titled *Age Distribution Population Diagram*, a series of cut metal squares that hang from nails along an aged wooden board. In the sculpture each square has been calibrated to represent census numbers and each nail from which the squares hang represent a distinct period in time. "I'm really into info graphics and data visualization," Dearie explains.

The resultant project is beguiling, both for its simple beauty and for the methodology behind the presentation. The sophistication here is something Dearie would do well to pursue, to grab a hold of, like an errant kite string, and work at keeping aloft. "It's funny with my paintings, I feel like a lot of it just comes," she says. "Some of it is random stuff, but then I'm really into planning and displaying information. It's like two total opposites."

If she can find a way to marry the two, then this young artist, already successful, will truly soar.