

## ARTSEEN



Critic Doug MacCash rates New Orleans art exhibits.

This one is  Wonderful  Worthwhile  Whatever

### Conceptual art with a bitter ecological bent

*The UNO St. Claude Gallery, 2429 St. Claude Ave. Call 504.280.6493.*

It's not your usual warm-hearted ecological art exhibit. There's not much naturalistic beauty, no instruction and certainly no optimism. Visitors to "You Killed My Pretty Things," the group exhibit at the University of New Orleans St. Claude Gallery, will find nothing but a sort of chilly, clenched-jaw cynicism, mixed with a hiss of sardonic wit.

#### Just look at:

- ▶ Daphney Loney's faux fur polar bear rug titled "Final Resting Place."
- ▶ Christy Rupp's Passenger Pigeon skeleton, assembled from chicken bones.
- ▶ Rico Gaston's "Nazi Eagle," a sort of op art render-

ing of the feathered symbol of the Third Reich.

- ▶ Dan Tague's "Limbo," a gas station sign/pirate flag painted with motor oil and adorned with a dead Pegasus.
- ▶ Paul Villinski's array of hazard-orange butterflies made from discarded beer cans.
- ▶ Sarah Emerson's "Into the Dark," a colorfully polluted Disneyesque landscape, studded with fake diamonds.
- ▶ Mike Peter Smith's snarling miniature dog, straining at the leash to leave his barren, precarious patch of earth.

Have you ever seen such unvarnished anger presented with such an elegant conceptual sheen?

It's hard to pick a single most-angry object in "You Killed My Pretty Things," but Tague's elongated duck decoy etched with the words "Some People Should Die" might just take the cake.

On another note: Unless you're a student, visiting campus art exhibits at the university galleries around town is a challenge. Bravo to UNO for opening (in November 2008) an off-campus showplace designed to reach a broader art-world audience. The other schools should forget the on-campus exhibits and follow suit.

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The attractiveness of Paul Villinski's beer can butterflies disguises their ecological implications.

DOUG MACCASH / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE