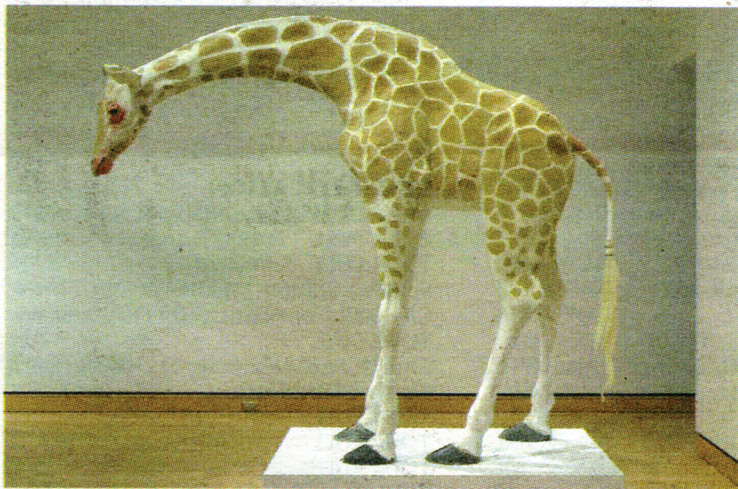


art



Trevor Gould's *Model Of Nubian Giraffe With Landscape* makes a major statement.

GROUP SHOW

Natural talents

Artists and animals meet at Barnicke **By LEAH SANDALS**

NATURAL HISTORY at Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (7 Hart House Circle), to May 29.
416-978-8398. Rating: **NNN**

ART SCHOOL IS OUT AND GRAD SHOWS are up across the city. Accordingly, the newly renovated Barnicke Gallery hosts *Natural History*, an end-of-term project by curatorial studies student (and long-time Toronto area

curator) **Jennifer Rudder**.

Inspired by natural history museum exhibits, Rudder has gathered works by local and international artists that seem both to criticize and reinforce nature-diorama dynamics.

Trevor Gould's large, meticulous sculpture of a giraffe is the most immediately affecting work. Based on an 1827 painting, it intends to critique colonialist fascination with "exotic"

African animals. But it also prompts wondrous awe: How did these amazing animals evolve? And how dare we risk their mass extinction?

A video by **Mircea Cantor** of a deer and a wolf in a pristine white room prompts similar responses. Though it takes aim at the artificial ways we see and constrain nature, the beauty and otherworldliness of these complex animals is what came through most to me.

Volker Seding's photo of a majestic zoo rhinoceros before a pathetic, savannah-painted backdrop and **Joshua Jensen-Nagle's** glossy image of a ghostly polar bear underline the vast (and potentially doom-filled) distance between humans and animals.

Other works address humans as the subjects of zoo-like displays. Gould's beautifully rendered watercolours of Ota Benga, a Congolese pygmy who was once kept in the Bronx Zoo, point to a truly ugly chapter in the history of racism. **Crystal Mowry** puts the viewer on display with an installation that urges us to question what and who is behind seemingly objective educational structures.

Natural History needs a bit of work to truly interweave its human and animal themes. But overall, it prompts a desire for education, environmental and otherwise — an admirable school's-end achievement. ☺

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