

ELIZABETH JEAN YOUNCE

Artist Statement
The Dissection of Fear

Elizabeth Jean Younce's work is born from the worlds of scientific, medical, and children's-book illustration, as well as symbology, natural history, wunderkammers, and feminism. While her works take the form of prints, much of Younce's practice involves the physical collection of natural specimens from forests, prairies, and bodies of water. The lithographic prints serve as psychological investigations of such specimens. Specifically in this Bestiary, the flora and fauna serve to illustrate the dichotomy between their lives and our own human ones.

On a most basic level this work is based on the dissection of ideas involving fear and feelings of being overwhelmed, while simultaneously deconstructing what it means to be a fertile being. The evolutionary process of plants and animals metaphorically mirrors our own developments. Instinctual habits of the animal kingdom relate to our "civilized" lives. A mother swan's capability to fight off a predator can function as a visual metaphor for ways we overcome seemingly impossible situations in our lives. The sheer fact that a fragile, fertile, feathered, female can overcome seemingly impossible situations can function as a visual metaphor for perseverance. The obstacles we struggle to overcome may be great or insignificant regardless this struggle is all-consuming. These conflicts involve questions of identity, equality, self-worth, depression, growth, change, life, and ultimately death. It is these fundamental and undeniable questions that define our humanity.

Simultaneously, there is duality between these symbols and their meanings. While a boar may appear a dangerous, beastly, creature, symbolic tradition would instead lead one to believe that the boar represents fertility as well as motherhood and all of the patience, nurture, and care that it requires. So much of perception is taught or learned yet, when we take a second look... things are not always what they seem. These creatures are beautiful, delicate, yet strong and capable of survival. We all are wild and fragile beings; we have similar wants, needs, and desires. Our bodies are incredibly resilient yet can fail us instantaneously. By warping or perverting the flora and fauna referential of fairytales or children's books, we peer into the psyche of Mother Nature.