

Notes on camp

With this new installation, Marilla Palmer takes Susan Sontag's seminal essay "Notes on Camp" and merges it with the current vacation vogue for "glamping," i.e., glamorous camping.

When Sontag published her essay in 1964, it was a codification of something theretofore never named, the aspect of gay taste known as "camp." She wrote, "The essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration....And Camp is esoteric—something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques."

Palmer's installation is not the only evidence of a resurgence of interest in camp. It was the theme of this year's Costume Institute Gala at the Met, an event always marked by outrageousness in dress.

Palmer brings these ideas to new environs, ICEHOUSE and the woodlands of Connecticut. Her work in the past has often blended the natural and the manmade using materials as far-flung as wasp nests, mushroom spore prints, mylar and sequins but with this new project, she ups the ante. In her words:

A beautiful dead bluebird was presented to me, it was innocence personified. I cry for the dead bird, I mourn. I have enshrined it in a velvet and sequined nest. I embellished it with glittered talons and sequined eyes. Did it die for the sake of "Art?" I cut down a doomed crabapple sapling for its new home and hand stitched silk, chiffon and sequined garments for it.

Glamp is a tree dressed in silk with three million stitches. I wanted to honor the tree, but every stitch I made was a contradiction. Ms Sontag wrote that nothing in nature can be campy. Camp is artificial, against the grain... Camp taste effaces nature. The sapling is now a suitable resting place for the bird.

Notes on Glamp: A Bluebird's Guide to Glamour will open June 8, 4-6 at ICEHOUSE Project Space. Please join us or call regarding an appointment for viewing.

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Humans have left our mark everywhere, there is no uncontaminated part of nature left on the planet. But Ms Sontag said *one can be frivolous about the serious*. Everything we create is artifice. *The essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice*. Nature thrives to decay. Camp is decadence. Our world is camp.

Marilla Palmer, May 2019