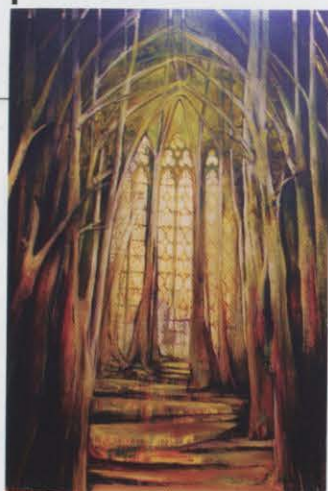


ARTNOTES



Sharon Kopriva's
Hallowed Hall,
2011, at Colton
& Farb Gallery

ENLIGHTENING STOPS: You can't go wrong at **The Menil Collection**, home to a pair of exhibitions that are moving and poignant in different ways — and very much in keeping with the sensitivity to art history and human rights championed by the de Menils. "Upside Down: Arctic Realities," is curated by visual anthropologist **Edmund Carpenter**, whose ongoing "Wunderkammer" exhibit at the museum also is heavy on the power; artist **Doug Wheeler** devised the inspiring installation with its labyrinthine pathway, display tables and wall niches for treasures of Arctic culture spanning millennia. This is one of the most exquisite exhibitions the Menil has ever mounted (through July 17) ... Also Menil way, take in the truths of "The Whole World Was Watching: Civil Rights-Era Photographs from **Edmund Carpenter** and **Adelaide de Menil**," co-curated by the Menil's **Michelle White** and **Danielle Burns** of the Gregory School, where it is also on view (through September 25 at the Menil; through August 20 at Gregory). **THE HOMETOWN TEAM:** We're making tracks to **Darke Gallery**, where **Linda Darke** continues her commitment to Houston talents via a solo for **Wendy Wagner**. This mid-career notable plays with a panoply of media — sculpture, installation, animation, craft and painting — in a whimsical exhibition that could be on the Cartoon Network (May 13 – June 10) ... **At Colton & Farb Gallery**, the first artist that this scribe ever interviewed, **Sharon Kopriva**, adds ghostly canines and a few phantoms

to her repertoire, paired with a homecoming for **Angelbert Metoyer**, who rolls out his latest explorations in memory, time and the universe, told through films and glass-based works (both May 14 – June 25) ...

THE NEXT CHAPTER: At **McClain Gallery**, **Aaron Parazette** leaves surfing behind with "Cloud Break," an investigation of the push-and-pull between control, surface and geometry in contemporary abstraction (May 5 – June 11). **HEIGHTS-ARAMA:** Don't forget that edgy 11th Street Heights enclave, where cross-continental Indian and American painter **Rahul Mitra** comments on dual cultures at **G Gallery** (May 7 – 29) and **Ann Harithas'** captivating collages triumph at **Naü-haus** (May 7 – 28).

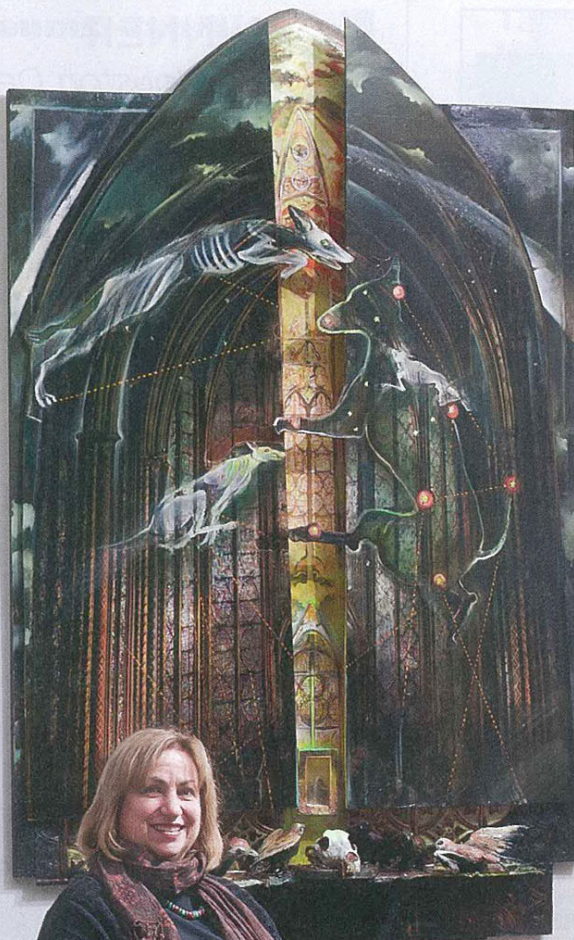
BACK TO LAWNDALE: The buzz is thundering about **Lawndale Art Center**, which has triumphantly returned to a prime spot as a trend-spotter. Three of its most exhilarating artists in residence are highlighted this month: conceptualist **Anthony Shumate**, painter **Daniel McFarlane** and provocateurs **Hillerbrand+ Magsamen** (through June 4). **DID YOU SAY TITIAN?:** Next month we'll bring you an update about the masterful **Titian/National Galleries of Scotland** blockbuster at the **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston**, so stay tuned for a report on two of the greatest paintings of the Italian Renaissance (May 22 – August 14).
Catherine D. Ansporn



Wendy Wagner's *Piccadilly Circus*, 2011, at Darke Gallery

**for art's
sake**

By Nadia Michel
Photography by Sofia van der Dys



**SHARON
KOPRIVA**

BRINGS
*CATHEDRALS,
PHANTOMS
AND
NAKED DOGS*

TO COLTON & FARB GALLERY



AT FIRST GLANCE, THE WORDS *NAKED DOGS* MIGHT SEEM LIKE ANOTHER KOOKY PIECE OF IMAGERY MEANT TO GARNER ATTENTION FOR AN OTHERWISE LUSTERLESS ART SHOW, BUT THIS IS, IN FACT, ABOUT NAKED DOGS. THE PERUVIAN HAIRLESS KIND. AND THE SHOW IS FAR FROM LACKING IN LUSTER.



While *perro sin pelo* are not the sole attraction in Sharon Kopriva's massive artworks, they are key to both the aesthetic and the themes. "I am in love with my dogs," she says of the canines, renowned for their healing powers by the Incan cultures of Peru. Kopriva currently has three of these beloved pets. She has been breeding them since returning from a life-altering trek through Machu Picchu some years ago, while completing her art thesis at the University of Houston. In addition to the symbolism of basic human frailties they provide and to the spiritual powers ascribed to them, hairless dogs make excellent models: With their obvious musculature, they are akin to the naked forms of classical nude paintings.

"Frida Kahlo loved them too!" Carolyn Farb chimes in. A legendary art collector and now Creative Director for the Colton & Farb Gallery, Farb is one to know. She owns a Frida Kahlo. She also owns a few Koprivas. "Sharon's vision is universal. She deals with challenging subjects of life, death and after life. She transcends any limitations or boundaries," extols Farb. The socialite and philanthropist commissioned Kopriva to create a pair of nuns sitting on a church pew about twenty years ago, and a bevy of serious collectors have since gravitated towards Kopriva upon seeing the sculptures in Farb's home. "Other artists touch on similar themes, but I have never seen her experience with her work duplicated," she explains.

Architectural photographs printed on canvas (by Dan Allison of Texas Collaborative Arts) served as backgrounds and starting points for the roughly 29 large-scale works that make up *Cathedrals*, *Phantoms* and *Naked Dogs*. Digitally enhanced images of cathedrals are superimposed with rocks, trees and dogs resulting in a kind of surrealism/romanticism. "It's definitely a combina-

tion of the spiritual knowledge I gathered in Peru and the spiritual knowledge that gathered me in my childhood, Catholicism," explains Kopriva who grew up in a Sicilian-American family. "I'm putting religion in the background and putting nature and dogs in the forefront," she muses.

Fueled by early morning cans of Diet Coke, Kopriva has taken an already successful idea and supersized it, replete with her signature 3D built-up relief at the bottom of the images, masterfully constructed from chunks of concrete and wood debris. "Sharon's work touches the deepest depths of our souls, referencing our own personal journeys while also conveying a sense of history, place and society. Even in this exhibition, with works that reference tragic events like Tiananmen Square and 9/11, there is no dwelling on sadness," says Deborah Colton, Director of the Colton & Farb Gallery in Texas and the Managing Director of Deborah Colton Gallery (which is still the "parent company" of Colton & Farb Gallery).



Colton's eye for art is well established. Since opening her gallery in 2004, she has continually presented national and international contemporary art exhibitions and become a *must* on any serious art collector's itinerary. "My inspiration has always been the vision that art can make a positive difference in the world," she says. Kopriva's latest oeuvre is another notch in Colton's belt.

Having her art in several museum collections, including the Menil, is serious street cred for this artist. Having Carolyn Farb as a friend doesn't hurt, either. "People are buying them right out of the studio before the paint is even dry," says Farb. "It's a magnificent show. Collectors wouldn't feel like 'Oh, I already have a Sharon Kopriva!' There is yet another vista."

- Carolyn Farb has a deep-seated fear of cats.
- Colton & Farb has art on display at *über-cool* Philippe Restaurant. Available for take-away!
- Deborah Colton also owns OUTPOST NYC DCG.
- The minimalist Gallery structure is easy to miss – keep your eyes peeled for the sign!

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Sharon Kopriva

 at Colton & Farb Gallery, Houston, Texas
 Recommendation by Troy Schulze


Sharon Kopriva, "Down of a Daydream," 2010-11, oil, mixed media on photo canvas, 70 x 48 x 13".

In her new series of mixed-media paintings, "Cathedrals, Phantoms and Naked Dogs," **Sharon Kopriva** continues her exploration of Catholic imagery and themes, but this time in a lighter and more hopeful tone — there isn't a "living corpse" sculpture of a bishop, pope or saint to be seen. Kopriva turns to architecture here, particularly Gothic cathedrals, and she augments their grand facades and vaulted interiors with swirling spirits, encroaching nature and animals. The artist's own Peruvian Hairless dogs are the show's major characters, depicted as ghostly guardians of the cathedral. Aside from the "MileStone" series, small iconic works chronicling dramatic world events like 9/11, Hiroshima and Tiananmen Square, each of Kopriva's large canvases have been prepped with an inkjet print of a Gothic structure or a stained-glass window, to which Kopriva applies her imagery. It's used to startling effect in works like "Sanctum" and "Hallowed Hall," in which trees become the structural elements of the churches, growing into the walls and framing the tall windows that seem to actually glow. They are the most impressive pieces by Kopriva to date.

Also on display is new mixed-media work by **Angelbert Metoyer**, titled "Levels, Forms and Dimensions" and subtitled "Research in Progress." Metoyer's compositions are always pleasing, even though his repetition of elements and motifs is more oblique and abstract than Kopriva's. The imagery tends toward the cosmic, sometimes containing a pop element, such as a repeated horse. It feels like a clinical exercise in symbolic meaning — engaged in actual research. If Kopriva's dogs are the souls of the show, Metoyer's horses in double-profile are the heads. It's a worthwhile study of symbol, ritual and two artist's personal religions.

[Colton & Farb Gallery](#)

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