

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

309A THIRD AVENUE SOUTH, SEATTLE, WA 98104
tel: 206.903.6220 fax: 206.903-6226 www.jamesharrisgallery.com

PRESS RELEASE

Claire Cowie

“About Strange Lands: Sculpture and Watercolors”
May 11 – June 17, 2006 Reception: Thursday, May 11 6-8 PM

James Harris Gallery is pleased to announce the third solo exhibition of watercolors and sculpture by Claire Cowie. The body of work in this latest show, *About Strange Lands: Sculpture and Watercolors*, is inspired by the famous story of Clara, a rhinoceros who was raised by a Dutch sea captain and then exhibited in the 1740s and '50s to eager crowds of Europeans who had never seen the exotic animal.



Compelled by the way Clara became a spectacle and object of curiosity, Cowie’s work plays with ideas of objectification and preconception. For Cowie, the history of this rhino indirectly exposes how, before Clara was brought to Europe, most artistic representations – paintings, drawings and poems alike – of rhinoceroses were based on second and third hand accounts. While few artists had ever seen a rhino, they still rendered them.



Cowie pulls on this legend to highlight how preconceptions are at the forefront of our experience of the world. Accordingly, the artist renders diverse animals – both common and uncommon – exploring their stereotyped and personified personalities. Cowie, for instance, juxtaposes the sculpture of a rhino, a solitary but nonetheless menacing animal, against the soft drawing of the meerkat, a very social and precocious animal.

Since our expectations of these animals are not usually based on any reality, Cowie’s work brings up a basic question: What defines our place in the world and how do we know and understand the images we see?

About Strange Lands explores the connections we have with images and objects and then tests those boundaries.

Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday 11 to 5 and by appointment.
Photography is available upon request.