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BITTER | SWEET: AN INTERVIEW WITH CRYSTAL MOREY

[Anmarie Soucie](#) [February 18, 2017](#)
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Visual artist [Crystal Morey](#) takes us on a journey with her milk-white, porcelain figures in *Entangled Wonders*, a series that will be included in the

beautiful.bizarre curated international group exhibition '**Bitter | Sweet**'. Join beautiful.bizarre for the opening reception from 6 – 8pm on 18 March 2017 at **19 Karen Contemporary Artspace** on the Gold Coast.

Morey's beauties, a timely addition, given our continued concern on global warming, evoke the innocence of fairytales and folklore, but also hold a much deeper narrative, exploring humanity's effect on both the environment and entire ecosystems. Growing up in Northern California, being close to the land was part of Morey's upbringing and the seed of which her intrigue with the environment grew. Through this closeness with the land, Morey was able to see firsthand how our species narrative is connected with the land and animals that surround us. By choosing to sculpt from the medium of porcelain, Morey's figures root us further still into the connection between womankind and earth, with porcelain itself being delicate and silky, alchemical in materiality, and though easily broken, if cared for, can last for ages.

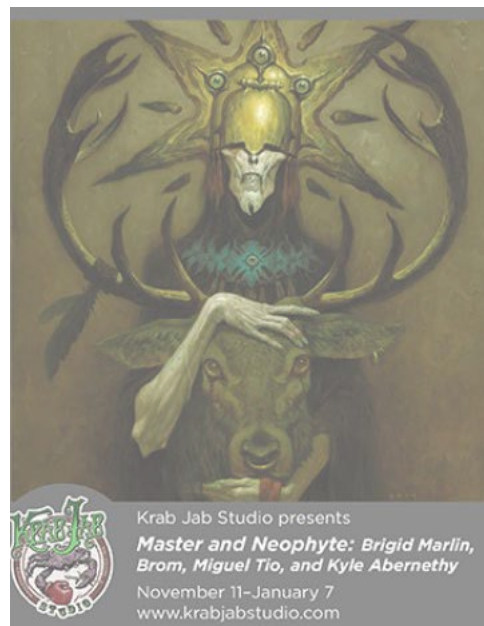
There is a quiet, feminine strength to her work, balancing the qualities of solidity with fragility, myth with reality, and melancholy with mirth. Delve deep into Crystal's sculptural imagination and learn about the conceptualization of her artistic process, as well as her participation and thoughts on the highly anticipated beautiful.bizarre curated exhibition '**Bitter | Sweet**'!

Please tell us Crystal are you excited about exhibiting in Australia for the first time?

I am so excited for the opportunity to show my sculptures in Australia and to be included in the Beautiful Bizarre show, '**Bitter | Sweet**'. These days I love sharing ideas and images across the world through social media, it is a great treat to send my actual sculptures so far away.

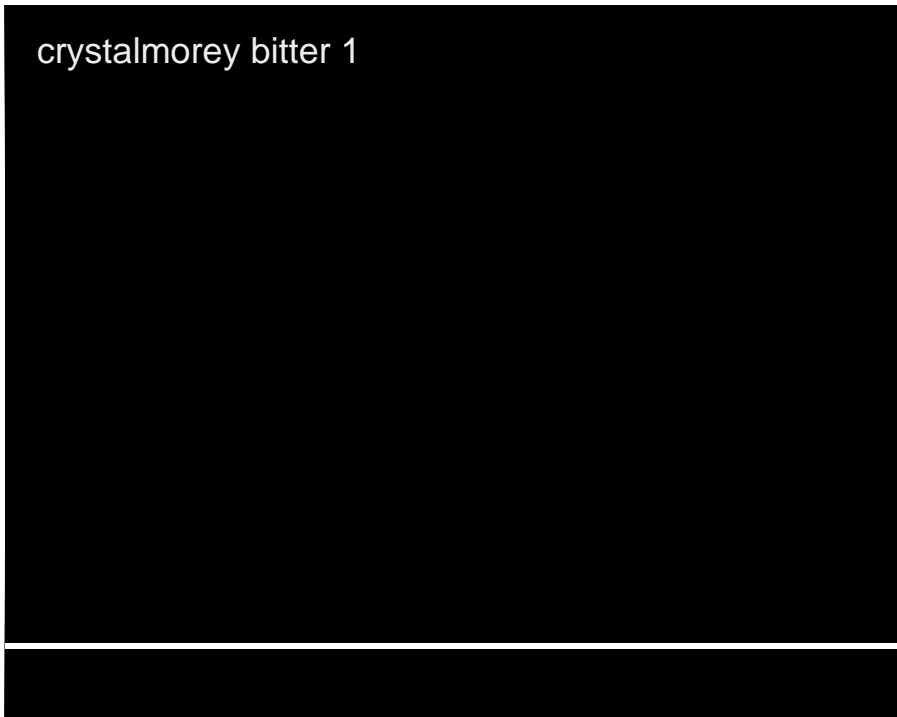
What has it been like working with beautiful.bizarre as curators?

beautiful.bizarre curator Danijela Krha Purssey has incredible enthusiasm and motivation, working with the team has been such a pleasure. The process has been extremely active with all of the included artists sharing works in progress as pieces develop. There is a real excitement and connection that has grown out of this process and show preparation.






Work in progress: "Entangled Wonders: Bitter"



"In this first piece "Entangled Wonders: Bitter", I explore how emotions and pure instinct can exist inside of us and not always reach the surface and break through our analytical selves. I am thinking of the dichotomy that exists in the self that is both wild and tame, awake and in

hibernation, resting and on fire. The contrast and struggle between what is “animal” and what is “civilized”. ~ Crystal

crystalmorey sweet 1



“My 2nd piece, “Entangled Wonders: Sweet” is a corresponding anthropomorphic figure. An animal of prey, with delicate, telling and graceful gesture showing emotion in the body and hands.” ~ Crystal Morey on conceptualizing her work for Bitter | Sweet



Detail: “Entangled Wonders: Bitter”, 2017 [Porcelain, 9" x 4" x 4"] and
“Entangled Wonders: Sweet”, 2017 [Porcelain, 13" x 5" x 5"]

If you wish to receive the collectors preview for ‘Bitter | Sweet’ please contact
Gallery Director, Terri Lew terri@19karen.com.au

Each artist was asked to create two original new works in response to the ‘Bitter | Sweet’ theme, could you tell us how you chose to interpret the theme and why?

In my ‘**Bitter | Sweet**’ sculptures I wanted to create a relationship of harmony between two sculptures of opposing emotions.

In this first piece, I was looking to build around the dichotomy that exists in the self that is wild and tame, awake and in hibernation, cool and smoldering. With these thoughts in mind, I created a figure that is lost deep in emotional contemplation while her internal self, a hybrid bear, is alive and fierce, betraying her composed surface. This contrast and struggle between what is “animal” and what is “civilized” became my piece representing “Bitter”.

For my second piece, I created a corresponding anthropomorphic figure, creating a predator and prey relationship between the two sculptures. The bear representing the aggressor and the deer, the prey. With the deer, I wanted to show a fragile delicacy and grace in her gesture and face, while also building a

precarious balance in her antlers with a bloom of growing mollusks from the sea. In her delicate power, she stands alone yet entices and calls to the animal instinct living within the bear. My Bitter and my Sweet figures are equally powerful and have an attraction towards each other leading to an endless cycle of upheaval, growth, entanglement, and destruction. They are a symbol for the relationships humans have in our natural world, and the delicate dependencies we all share.



On your website, you talk about humankind's ability to alter life and affect changes to the environment. Can you talk about the specific ways your work investigates those actions?

We live in a time of rapid change, development, and growth. Our relationship to the natural world is shifting, and in many ways, we understand more biologically while also growing further away from our instinctual human ways.

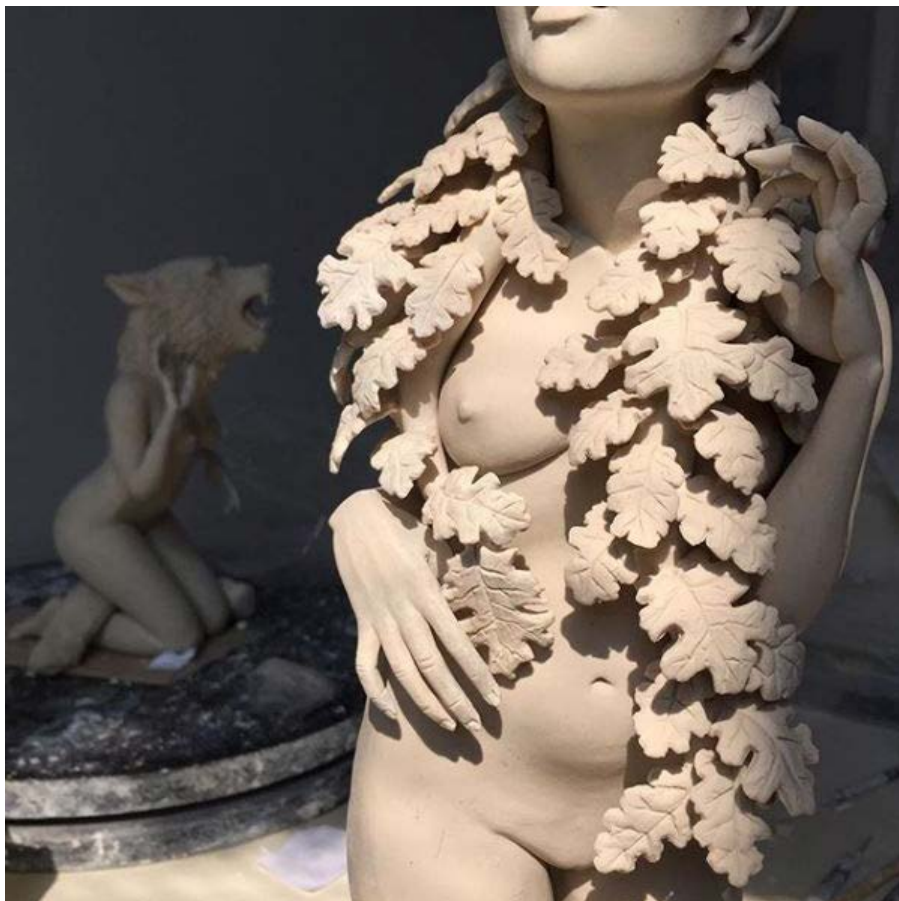
Humans have always searched for a greater understanding and control of the land around us, although in many modern cultures, we are pushing this power into all aspects of the natural world. Our impacts are now affecting plants and animals on a micro, cellular level as well as disrupting entire habitats and ecosystems. I believe we have entered a new age, one where humans are the driving force behind natural evolution, able to influence all things. My work is a reaction to these ideas, a way to investigate stressed and endangered creatures and plants while also continuing interest in the relationships found between humans and other living creatures. In my work, I explore these ideas while also creating an evocative and mysterious narrative that shows our interdependence with the land and animals around us.



Your choice of material is porcelain – a fragile and delicate substance from which to sculpt. Can you talk about this selection of substance and how it complements your subject matter?

I find porcelain to have a mysterious quality, one that is almost alchemical in its materiality. As a mixture of refined earth, it is notoriously difficult to sculpt, although when fired at high temperatures renders an amazing substance that is

crystalline to the touch and so glass-like, light can penetrate the surface. Porcelain is a strong element with a stone-like permanence and the ability to last thousands of years. At the same time, it can be broken, shattering into tiny un-repairable shards. I see these qualities of delicacy and impermanence in my subject matter – in the plants, animals and human environmental relationships I am looking to convey. Creating a parallel of stability and fragility, a balance that can easily be disrupted, leading to unknowable outcomes.





What started your interest in the topics of environmental issues, endangered animals, and perhaps sustainability?

I grew up with a keen interest and connection to wild landscapes, aware of the strength, kinship, and history we have to the lands and living creatures around us. These interests in the environment have increased and adapted over time. In this process, I have become more and more interested in the growing stresses we have imposed, that disrupt and change natural ecosystems. My hope is to share my ideas on compromised and endangered species and our environment, to create awareness that our actions affect other creatures and habitats. I want to invite the viewer to see that we are all interconnected, an entanglement of ecosystems reliant on each other for the long-term health and well-being of our earth.





When I see your work, I think about not only the land but also myth, and how the two come together. Can you elaborate at all on the topic of myth, and how it's connected to your work?

My sculptures exist in a narrative that is both rooted in current environmental issues and a myth I have created. I see my myth as a warning of what may come if our actions do not change as well as an anecdote that we are all connected, one big woven cycle, bound together by our need for a healthy planet.

My myth explores an imaginary landscape expanding on a conversation of climate change, the manipulation of evolutionary processes, and where our actions may lead. In this new land, a great shift has occurred, and we find the earth in a state of imbalance. Humans and animals have become one, intricately and physically bound together, dependent on each other with a new ability to restore natural life. This alternate world reminds us of our connection to the plants and animals around us, that we are all part of one interwoven ecosystem, supporting and growing together for the long-term health of our world.





You talk about your figures as being “absorbed in their feelings of stress, anxiety, and ambivalence.” Do you feel this is the general reflection of humankind in this day in time, in regards to our impact on the planet? At the same time (and in the next sentence), you view the delicate figures as powerful and telling in their portrayal – can you elaborate on this?

We live in a difficult time, our attention and energy constantly pulled in every direction. Sometimes it is hard to be aware of the important local and global issues that are all calling for our attention. We are inundated with information that it’s easy to become complacent, letting opportunities for activism or environmental support slip by. And in our current political state, I see the need to make one’s views heard even more important. I see my figures as containing a powerful voice, as modern talismans and precious telling objects. They share a heightened vision of human influence in the natural world and are here to remind us of our current trajectory and the delicate dependencies we all share.





In your bio, you discuss how living in rural Northern California shaped your perspective on nature and the ways that humans interact with the land, animals, and each other. Can you talk about in what ways specifically?

Many of my inspirations and interests in the natural world stem from an alternative upbringing, one closely connected to the landscape around me. For much of my early childhood, I lived in wild and untamed lands in simple dwellings. This lifestyle allowed for plenty of time to explore the forests, lakes and river canyons of the area, creating a healthy relationship in the way I saw myself as a small component in a vast sea of natural land. I now live in the urban city of Oakland, California and as time has passed, my perspective has changed, leaving the world smaller, less wild and free. Through living in an urban environment, manipulated and controlled by humans, the fragile quality of the natural world has become more apparent to me. I no longer see the natural landscape as an expansive, never-ending spaces, I see them as finite,

irreplaceable gems that we must nurture and protect.

There are times when I find myself longing for the safety and ease of the wooded landscape of my past, though I chose to live in a city, to remind myself of this modern, rapidly changing world and the significant environmental conversation we have today. As artists, I believe we have the duty and ability to show new truths about our culture and to create a visual record of human expression and experience that can change and enlighten our views on the world.





Lastly, do you have any new projects in the works? Anything upcoming we should know about?

Right now I am creating a new collection of fifteen sculptures, “Entangled Wonders” for my upcoming solo exhibition at [Abmeyer + Wood](#) in Seattle, opening this March 2nd. I am so excited for this show and believe this is my most comprehensive body of work yet. I am also honored to be included in the [beautiful.bizarre](#) exhibition, [BITTER | SWEET at 19 Karen Gallery in Australia](#), opening March 18th. To follow along you can see my process and more sculptures at my [website](#) and [Instagram](#) !





In **Delicate Dependency: Mule Deer with White Oak Adaptation II**, again, you see this mythic quality, with the woman's body conjoined with the face of a beautiful deer. This allusion between humanity and the land and animals that surround us becomes strikingly evident in this piece, to the point that there is no longer separation, but total completeness. This oneness is an important aspect in Morey's work and is a repeated process in many of her sculpted figures. "I want to invite the viewer to see that we are all interconnected," Morey says. "(We are) an entanglement of ecosystems reliant on each other for the long-term health and well-being of our earth."

Her poignant series *Entangled Wonders* can also be seen in her upcoming solo exhibition at **Abmyer + Wood** in Seattle, WA, on view March 2 – April 1, 2017.





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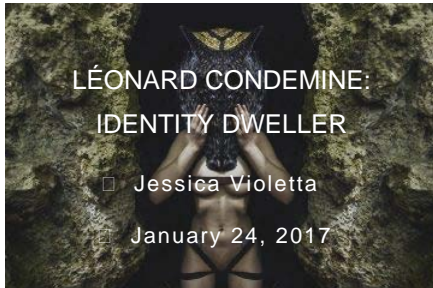


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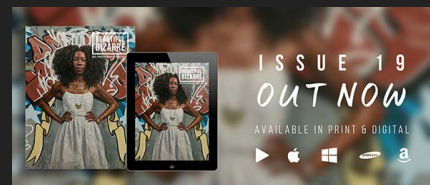
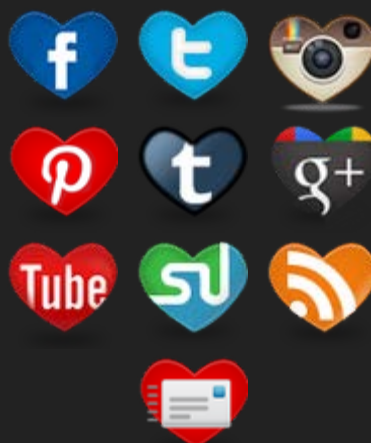
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