

SHANNON AND WILLIAM CANNINGS COLLABORATE ON 'DUPLICITY' AT ANYA TISH GALLERY

Both Shannon and William Cannings are represented by Anya Tish Gallery, so showing them together at some point seemed predestined. Interestingly, this is the first time they have collaborated, not only for an exhibition but in the actual production of works of art. Their individual pieces could not be more different in medium, technique, and subject matter, yet Shannon's paintings and William's sculptures bear a kinship in sensibility and execution. They share a passion for color and an obsession with the surface qualities of their pieces. Both are devoted to their creative process and finish their pieces to perfection.

According to Shannon, "The plan is to hand off the collaborative pieces to one another until we are both satisfied with them. Our processes are so different that we have to work individually. And until we start the process, I can't tell you much about the collaborations. There are too many factors that will have to be worked out. If we get them right, they should be a perfect marriage of our work, complementary but still autonomous. Even though our work is very different and usually made separately, we share a concern with surface sensibilities and a love of obfuscation."

The artists are from different parts of the world (William is from England, and Shannon is from Pennsylvania) but earned BFAs in 1995 and went on to Syracuse University for their graduate work, both receiving their MFAs in 1998. Though married with two children, they maintain separate art studios in Lubbock, where they both teach at Texas Tech.

William spent his youth working in automotive body shops, where he became proficient with the tools he uses to create his seemingly buoyant steel sculptures. Earlier sculptures were painted with automotive paint, but some recent work is coated with urethane. He has perfected an innovative process that involves heating and inflating steel so its weight belies its weightless appearance.

Shannon's hyper-realistic paintings of toy guns, targets, and Nerf bullets address the dichotomy of children playing innocently with them while real guns are causing violence and pain. With their shiny, translucent qualities and seductive colors, Shannon's paintings are appealing to viewers, regardless of their attitude concerning guns.

William's inflated steel sculptures have polished surfaces that reflect color and light. He has been experimenting with new paints and pigments that have produced bright, iridescent surfaces. "I hope these surfaces reflect the environment and absorb it, making the relationship of object, environment, and audience more poignant and visually fun," he said.

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“It is this poignancy of audience, object, and installation that continuously energizes and compels me to investigate.” In an arrangement of nine snow-white, silver-white, and platinum clouds hanging in front of a blue wall, the intention is that the clouds reflect the blue wall behind them. There are also several free-standing and leaning sculptures, including variations on pool floats that complement Shannon’s paintings. When their children were small, both artists drew from their toys as subject matter.

Shannon has included several hyperreal paintings of Nerf bullets, which are bright blue tubes with red tips used in Nerf guns. On a round canvas, they are piled on a black surface, and on a square one, they are spread out on a yellow background. In yet another painting, a blue toy gun is presented resting on dozens of small rocks.



The Cannings family; photo courtesy of the artists.



Shannon Cannings, *Near Miss*, 2021, oil on panel, 48 inch diameter. Courtesy of Anya Tish Gallery and the Artists.



William Cannings, *Beach Ball*, 2020, inflated steel, automotive paint, 52 x 52 x 50 inches. Courtesy of Anya Tish Gallery and the Artists.

“I use Gamblin Reclaimed Earth Paints in my rock and dirt paintings,” Shannon said. “I grew up near Pittsburgh, and the three rivers that run through the city were always filled with coal and detritus from the steel mills. As soon as I read about the partnership between

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the paint company and environmental clean-up, I bought a set.” Shannon borrowed World War I camouflage imagery for her paintings of guns lying on a reflective striped surface. This technology was called “Razzle Dazzle” and, when painted on ships, disguised their orientation and identification numbers. Reverberation in Yellow combines a bright yellow gun, targets, and these reflective stripes for a dazzling effect.



Shannon Cannings, studio image of works in progress for Duplicity at Anya Tish gallery, 2023. Courtesy of Anya Tish Gallery and the Artists

Shannon’s work is somewhat subversive in that she uses bright colors and seductive patterns to make toy guns appealing while bringing attention to the marketing of guns to children, as well as gun violence. Her paintings explore a multitude of questions regarding gun ownership, gun control, and gun legislation in this country that she hopes sparks dialogue among viewers. ns of small rocks.

Duplicity, which runs April 14-May 13, 2023, is a provocative collaboration. The title references the fact that neither artist’s work is what it appears to be initially. “William’s pieces deceive the viewer into believing they are plastic, lightweight, and contain air under pressure,” Shannon said. “My paintings use imagery complicated with distorted effects, graphic patterning, and visual noise that mirrors the public debate about gun culture.”



William Cannings, *Platinum Cloud*, 2023, inflated steel, platinum automotive paint. Courtesy of Anya Tish Gallery and the Artists.



William Cannings, *Silver Cloud*, 2023, inflated steel, pearlized automotive paint. Courtesy of Anya Tish Gallery and the Artists.



William Cannings, *Clouds*, 2022, Permanent installation at William P. Hobby Airport, 30 inflated steel clouds of various dimensions, pearlescent automotive paint. Courtesy of Anya Tish Gallery and the Artists.



William and Shannon Cannings; photo courtesy of the artists.

Both artists create alluring works of art with an undercurrent of wit. They dazzle us with bright colors and enticing surfaces that engage and seduce us. William uses hard steel to create apparently soft objects, while Shannon borrows imagery from popular culture and presents it ironically. Both artists produce artwork that operates on multiple levels, creating pieces that are ambiguous, complicated, and compelling.

—DONNA TENNANT