



Normal

.....February 1–7, 2007



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Linda Warren Gallery, through Feb 17.

Unless you have been living in a parallel universe for the past 50 years, where cheerleading and David Lynch movies do not exist, you know that nothing is more sinister than what’s “normal,” especially the “normal” found in the suburbs. This show is yet another reminder of the evil of banality, but it’s at least an entertaining one.

Carson Fox’s *Garden of Artificial Bliss and Joy* grabs the viewer’s attention immediately. (It’s shiny.) The installation features a few of her *Kissable Balls*—pastel spheres covered with glitter-encrusted silk flowers and fake birds—on a yellow field of artificial vegetation and insects. Though the piece seems pretty at first, Fox’s surfeit of ornamentation eventually hits you like an overdose of marshmallow Peeps.

Peter Drake’s glossy, soft-focus paintings are also good. In the enormous *Delightful Garden*, an homage to Hieronymus Bosch, lawn ornaments swarm a nuclear family frolicking in their yard. As bluebirds flit among the plaster nuns, naughty gnomes and cheerful mariachi players, the viewer is seized with an urge to flee.

David Humphrey’s cartoonish paintings create their own freakish world, where poodles kiss babies and a sobbing young man appears to rest his head on a slab of pound cake.

Although Elliott Green and Jon Waldo also present intriguing pieces, it is difficult to understand how they relate to the show’s theme. Strangely enough, Tom Van Eynde, whose mysterious architectural photographs are displayed in the gallery’s project space, is the one who best succeeds in contesting the “normal.”

—*Lauren Weinberg*