

ARTF CITY

STUFF: Dana Sherwood

by DANA SHERWOOD on AUGUST 2, 2013

[Editor's note: Are you having trouble understanding artists through their art? Understand them through their STUFF instead. In this edition of STUFF we bring you 10 things from artist Dana Sherwood. Sherwoods work often involves organic materials and elaborate confectionery as well as interventions by animals, so does her STUFF.]

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My Kitchen



This is the kitchen where I do a lot of my work. It is painted a kind of sick cupcake pink and the walls and surfaces are covered with cake molds, knives, pictures of cakes, all kinds of graters and slicers, teapots, snail shells, scissors, fancy gadgets, tarnished silver, pots and pans, spices and tinsel. I use this space as a laboratory to experiment and come up with new recipes for wild and domesticated animals.

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Fake Animals



In my fantasy life, my home would be filled with lots and lots of animals. Unfortunately, my real life and hectic travel schedule does not allow for this. Instead, I have tried to fill my Washington Heights apartment with signifiers of the outdoors and the kinds of animals I would have on my fantasy ranch (this is sounding like Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch, but that is NOT what I mean). I have a collection that includes deer, rabbits, horses, birds, foxes, a peacock, squirrels, an antelope, a sting ray, bats, ermine, a martin, and a hazelnut mouse.

3

Gormenghast



A decade and a half before “Game of Thrones,” there was Gormenghast, a BBC miniseries that inspires me to no end. I often play it in the studio as I work so that its strange blend of macabre decadence and humor will set a good tone for the workday. It is based on a series of books by Mervyn Peake and has a kind of Victorian/Orientalist sensibility and an evil, Machiavellian hero. The sets and the costumes are magnificent. There is lots of absurdist ritual, animal hoarding, gluttonous feasts and baroque murders.

4

Hera



This is my dog, Hera. She is a Whippet and typical of the breed, she is very lazy and spends most of the day alternating between the bed and the sofa. She loves to run when she isn't sleeping and is really, really fast. I take her running along the Hudson River in Washington Heights most mornings. She has all kinds of peculiar habits and always makes me laugh.

5

Prized Dress from New Orleans



This is one of my most dear possessions. It is a silk velvet dress from the forties that I found in the trash in New Orleans in 1995. I wore it most days during the six years I lived there. It's completely ripped and worn out, the sleeves are torn off, and it has been mended many times. It still has the faint smell of my sweat and filth from those heady years.

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Victoria Mourning Hairwork



I have a large collection of Victorian Mourning Hairwork. It's such a beautiful and sensitive way to remember your loved ones and keep them nearby. Besides, if you have a magical altar or shrine, there is no more direct line to communication with the spirits of the deceased than through their hair. This particular specimen is exceptionally fine.

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Guide for letter writing and penmanship



Being a person who loves to write letters and send elaborate packages, for years I was for a guide to letter writing and penmanship instruction. I found this disheveled manual in a junk store in Carbondale, Pennsylvania, and despite its terrible condition, it is the absolute gold standard in terms of variety of letter forms; from condolence to complaint, as well as a complete guide to teach yourself how to have the most beautiful and ornate cursive writing. I studied it quite a bit, but I never got the true knack for the curly-Q birds and other biological forms.

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My Husband's hotel stationary drawings



My husband is nearly always on the road for work, and we are apart more than we would like. While he is away, he makes drawings on the hotel stationary, and at the end of the year, compiles all the little drawings into an album for me at Christmas.

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French Reliquary with Friends Hair



I found this French marriage reliquary in a very dusty garage in the Loire Valley. It's not really a reliquary, it's an object traditionally used in the nineteenth century to hold mementos from a wedding. Usually, it contains the rings (before the ceremony), the headpiece and the earrings of the bride. This one also came with two locks of hair. Since acquiring it I started collecting hair from my close friends and family members, which I display here with the two original locks.

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Zazou, Dressage Horse



This is Zazou. He is a 17.1 hand Dutch Warmblood gelding. I often work with animals in my art practice, and I genuinely have a deep interest in inter-species communication. Zazou and I practice a very particular equestrian discipline called dressage. In dressage, you work with the horse, communicating through an intricate series of small bodily gestures to create an aesthetic performance, not unlike Dance. The ideal expression should demonstrate lightness and harmony between horse and rider.