

Jennifer Vanderpool  
Sugary Sweet  
Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Featured Artist  
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## **Surrogate Saturated Images from the Domestic Goddess**

**Robert C. Morgan**

My acquaintance with Jennifer Vanderpool's sculpture came by way of a mutual friend who also happens to be an artist. He was somehow convinced that I would relate to these funky phantasmagorical, quasi-amorphic shapes that occupy real time and real space. Indeed, Vanderpool's art has a certain hybrid quality that combines both pop art and surrealism at its core. The colors are startlingly bright – nearly fake, yet completely synthetic. They tease the optic nerve and, in the process, offer the eye another level of perception. They take us to other terrains of intrigue and aesthetic exploration. In fact, her desire to amalgamate these funkster images with actual landscapes is an essential aspect of the work. Her strange betrothals bring together diverse liquefied colors with an intense supermart consciousness. Vanderpool wants to dismantle the barriers between nature and culture. By this I refer to the fact that her candy-coated, phosphorescent vibrations of synthetic form are not so much about the dichotomy between nature and culture as they are a resistance to that dichotomy. They are images in search of a synthesis, a whimsical overlay, and a way of pulling opposites together, magically in tandem to one another. Her preposterous drippy droopy manifestations are full of colorful noise, contrasting values, and barking hues. Now there's a good one! Imagine someone saying: "Could you keep your Barking Hues under control?" Or how about this: "That Barking Hue needs a muzzle!" Maybe that's it. Maybe there are receptors out there that can't take Jennifer Vanderpool's magnificent radical-edged sculpture because it needs a muzzle. Well, OK, it needs a muzzle – but so what! Radical edge is radical edge – and Jennifer Vanderpool is precisely that.

She presents her work without a discount. It's all retail – or no go. She gets the profit, a cornucopia of celestial mayhem. Her vibratory colors are exactly the point. Take it or leave it. Can you talk about one of her sculptures without talking about another? I doubt it. They all seem to follow one another.

I insist on calling her work sculpture, because I believe it is. In fact, I am not thinking at all. And that provokes a real pleasure. Her work is what it becomes – light, ephemeral, mysterious – but clearly not

transcendent. There's not a formal ounce in her body (of work). These sculptures are about contradiction – if not diction, then contra something else. There's no assumption that the various parts of her ensemble will create a perfect fit. These works are fluid – as fluid as sculpture might be. Am I getting tears in my eyes (as the song goes)? Well, maybe. But somehow I feel obliged to account for these works in the way the great gallerist Holly Solomon would have accounted for them. I learned so much from Holly – and frankly, I think she would have loved Jennifer Vanderpool's art.

From an art historical, critical, aesthetic point of view – Jennifer Vanderpool follows a certain trajectory that begins with Louise Bourgeois, and then tackles the more formal intricacies of Judy Pfaff and Sarah Sze -- with maybe a dash of Sheila Pepe thrown in. There is certain lightness about Vanderpool's work, a certain wryness, and a coming to terms with the possibilities of form without allowing form to become the only issue. Somehow, I appreciate this -- this lack of pretentiousness in the work, this straightforward pour-and-see attitude. I like it. There is nothing overly trite or formal -- just a doubled resemblance, a precise artificiality that points in the direction of homogeneity, that is, wackiness in a single heap. In Vanderpool's sculpture the heap is spreading outward into the interstices of nature, finally finding coalescence with “the natural.”

As Vanderpool has mentioned in one of her interviews, there is nothing wrong with putting the artificial together with the real or, for that matter, putting the real out of sight in relation to artifice. The ball game is now an open field – so why not? The impulse precedes the expression – we all know this, at least, those of us who have read John Dewey. Even so, I have to hand it to Jennifer Vanderpool -- her colors, her shapes, her registry of forms and anti-forms are not imposed at all, as far as I can tell. They are just what they are. They are poured and placed and situated indoors and outdoors—but either way, they have their own life. Whether permanence is the issue or something else. I am not convinced that this is a relevant question. The real question is – as Bob Dylan once asked – “How do you feel?”

Robert C. Morgan

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