

ARTnews

Reviews: New York

Rob Wynne

Craig F. Starr Associates

Rob Wynne's striking installation was a cunning trap. Unsuspecting viewers entered a rectangular area from one of its extremes, probably not noticing the silvered tree branch bearing a plastic eyeball far above their heads. Before them, in Wynne's signature glass letters, the show's title, "The Heartbeat of a Bird" was emblazoned on the wall. Pivoting left, they were confronted by wallpaper with eyes—the artist's—staring at them. Superimposed on the eyes were glass teardrops of various sizes, and on the floor were silvered-glass patches sprouting glass mushrooms.

It looked like a Surrealist garden with a sentimental thought attached to it, but like all rococo frivolity, it also harbored cruelty, frustrated desire, and death. The glass tears, reminiscent of Man Ray's famous photographs, signal sorrow. But where Man Ray turned sorrow into spoof by making the tears into shimmering glass beads, Wynne makes transient emotion eternal. These could be the tears of Eros frozen in an esthetic cemetery. Desire has been banished; only its cold husk remains.

The eyes on the wallpaper do not flirt. They, too, are frozen symbols. They invoke the eyes Oedipus pierces when he understands his sin, the sacrificed eye that appears in the Buñuel-Dalí film *Un chien andalou*, and the horrifying one in Georges Bataille's perverse text *Story of the Eye*—all images of sexuality cruelly interdicted by a superego that would destroy desire, conquer pleasure.



Rob Wynne, *The Heartbeat of a Bird*, 2006, mixed media, installation view.
Craig F. Starr Associates.

The mushrooms allude to those in *Alice in Wonderland*, which both changed her size and symbolized her journey from childhood to maturity and death. These beautiful glass fungi remind us that one purpose of art is to make eternal those passions that frail humans only experience for a short time.

—Alfred Mac Adam