

## "GUN SHOW! art in the era of campus carry" at Texas Tech Landmark Gallery



Camp Bosworth "Plata a Plomo"

It's hard to find a coherent exegesis of the idea of a gun and all it represents; it's even more difficult when guns have been legalized for open carry in the hallowed halls of public education. Those civilians (students, professors, anyone) properly licensed are allowed to carry their firearm on publicly funded Texas campuses with very few exceptions (like storage rooms containing volatile chemicals). Untangling the legalization of objects for defense and violence in the most civil and reserved of all spaces begs to be addressed through artistic expression. To this end was curated GUN SHOW!: Art in the Era of Campus Carry, on view at the Landmark Arts Gallery at Texas Tech University (until December 18th, 2016)

Ten artists from Texas and around the United States contributed work for an exhibition exploring the many tones, images, and identities conjured by the form and shape of a gun. Mark McDevitt's "Nudie Gun" depicts an idyllic scene with nude women among foliage reflected in the side of a pistol. Clearly McDevitt finds some humor in the idyllic, peaceful scene reflected in the body of a gun. It perhaps lends no insight into the ongoing dialogue of gun policy and usage, but it is cute excursion into juxtaposition.



Shannon Cannings "Analogous"

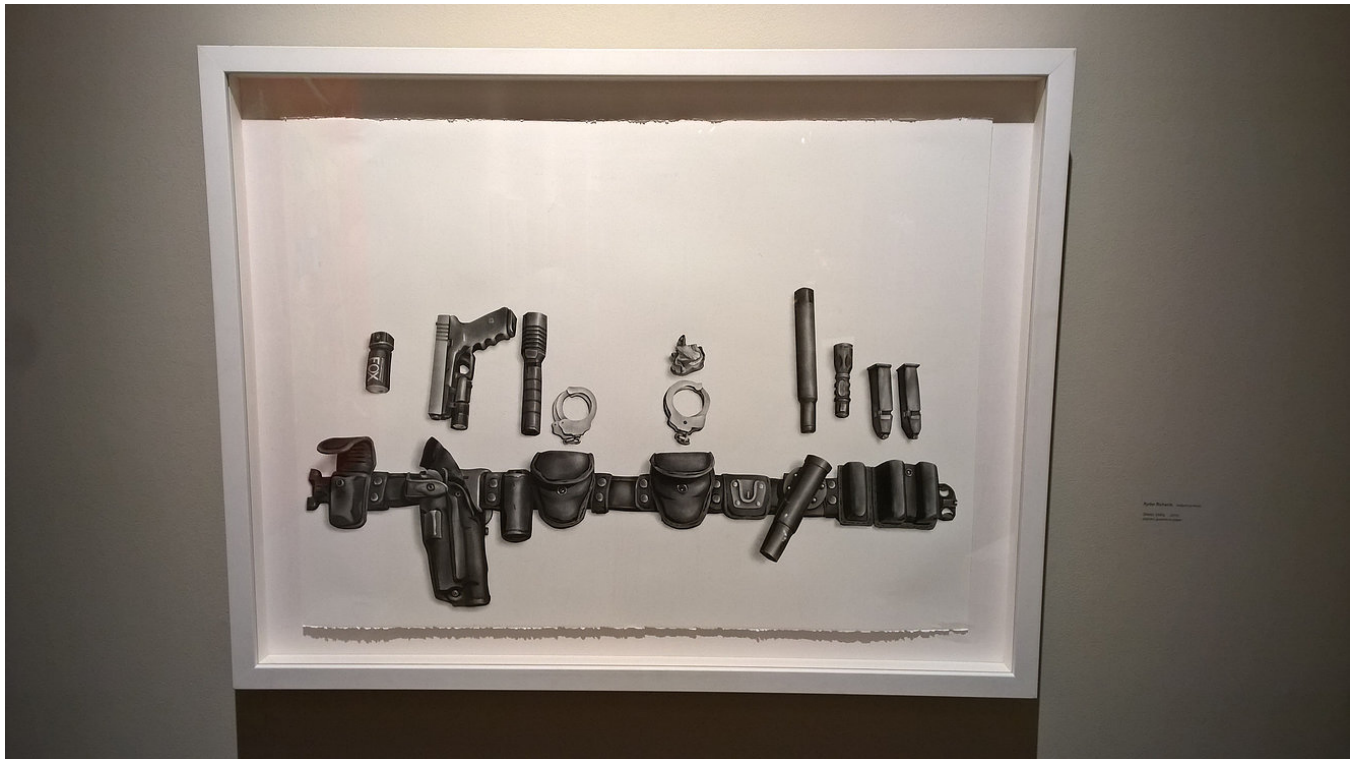
Marnika Shelton's four works given such titles as "The Nikita" and "Magnum" are foam molds of pistols wherein the barrel of each is a dildo (I say this instead of the usual 'phallus' because Shelton runs a crowdfunding campaign to manufacture the

suggestive sidearms as toys). Besides this certainly secondary function, the four pieces work in the most explicit possible way to mark the conflation of masculinity with the gun's place in its owner's identity.



Shannon Cannings *"Final Frontier"*

Shannon Cannings' "Western Frontier" and "Final Frontier" fall within the much larger body of her work on plastic toy guns. Laid against cellophane, the translucent squirt guns serve parallel purposes. They highlight the trivialized place given to implements whose sole purpose is violent deterrence or lethal force. They frame the image of life-altering or life-ending objects in a mass-produced ordinariness. Such ordinariness is not possible for anyone whose life has been affected by gun violence. The cellophane backing each of her paintings also mocks the sheen of cool surrounding guns, poking at their long, romantic history as the trusty helper of the hero and villain of so many stories.



Ryder Richards "*Shield: Utility*"

"Shield: Utility" by Ryder Richards is off-putting in its simplicity; it is a realist drawing of unholstered police service implements drawn against a white background. A sidearm, mace, billy stick, mag-light, cuffs, and additional ammunition lay idly above the utility belt worn by police everywhere. The cue of the title in conjunction with the image itself pulls into focus the offense-as-defense mode of police power of authority. Whether used properly or improperly, the form of a police officer holding these implements as a 'shield' can look like safety or like assault

In any exhibition curated around such a focused theme, the possibility that the need to fill space will triumph over desire to include any variety of work is a concern of mine. Here no such compromise was realized. Each work presents its own vision of guns with the artist's unique vision of their role; these individual pieces aspire to varying levels of seriousness, but all contribute to an impressively well-rounded whole.



Charles Krafft "AK47"

*The author's opinions are his own.*

More GUN SHOW! events:

Marnika Shelton and Camp Bosworth: GUN SHOW! Artists' Forum November 15th at 6:00 PM in Art Building Room B-01  
Texas Tech University

Trigger Warnings: Performances for the Campus Carry Era November 19th at 7:00 PM, LHUCA Firehouse Theatre (admission free) Organized by Jared Strange, Arts Coordinator ELPN, College of Visual & Performing Arts and Kimberly Jones, Fine Arts Doctoral Program candidate, School of Art.

Stop it!: Posters against guns, hate and violence in youth culture December 12, 2016 February 5, 2017, Studio Gallery Organized by Dirk Fowler, Associate Professor of Graphic Design, and Dennis Schmickle, Assistant Professor of Graphic Design. Posters created by Graphic Design students.