

ARTOFFICIAL: ICYMI EDITION

By Kendall Morgan



“I Want Candy” by Shannon Cannings at Cris Worley Gallery

Your last chance to catch two remarkable exhibitions

That moment that just flew by? Yeah, that was the month of March. The jam-packed month heralding the start of Spring passed by so quickly, taking with it two exceptional exhibitions at local galleries Cris Worley Fine Arts and Talley Dunn. BUT! You’ve still got time to make it a date. Hurry, these show close tomorrow.

“Triggered” by Shannon Cannings at Cris Worley Fine Arts.

Painter Shannon Cannings’ references our blasé view of ultra-violence through her hyper-realistic canvases splashed with water pistols, space-age ray guns, and (most bizarrely) glass revolvers filled with candy dispensed through the barrel.

The artist was first drawn to painting candy-colored children’s guns in 2007. At the time, the most notable school shooting at Columbine in ’99 seemed to be

an isolated incident. With a shocking 290 further massacres since 2013's Sandy Hook, the idea of guns as toys has a resonance the artist can't seem to quit.

"When I picked (the guns) up the first time, I thought it would be a smaller exploration, then I'd get back to painting other plastic, interesting things," says Cannings, who also teaches art at Lubbock's Texas Tech.

"But the thing that attracted them to me is stuck in a way that's complicated and painful. What started as a simple question ended up more of an obsession, and an attempt to find a deeper understanding between us and our complicated relationship between violence and toys."

Cannings feels that plastic weapons and video games "are not the problem, but a symptom of something bigger," and that the nation's current obsession with "fake news" puts a further filter on the reality of our country's epidemic of violence.

By sharing her bright and bold work, she hopes to spark a dialogue that might make someone think twice before buying a child a colorful super shooter or violent game. And, until the culture changes, Cannings will keep on painting toy weapons in all their bright and shiny glory.

"I'm not making these for academics, or Conservatives or Democrats," she says. "I'm trying to speak to a broad range of people, whether or not they see them as childlike toys. The important thing is you get sucked in by one part (of the work) and have to question what you're looking at when you get there. It has so many facets; I can keep going with it for a while."

[article shortened for brevity]