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Art in Review; Desired Constellations

By ROBERTA SMITH

Daniel Reich 537A West 23rd Street, Chelsea Through today

Given this show's title and its news release, which cites the annual transglobal migration of the monarch butterfly, the life instinctual seems to be the theme of this group show, which has been organized by Meredith Darrow, the gallery's director. But some instincts, at least as seen here, are more interesting than others.

Animals abound, in formats ranging from excessive factuality (Michelle Elzay's handsome photographs of falcons) to excessive cuteness (Misaki Kawai's bunny-rabbit airplane). Jon Pylypchuk's furry sculptures of a bewildered cat and bird and Laura Owens's painting of a squirrel in a folk-art tree find a better balance.

There are intimations of cosmic experiences in Elliot Hundley's "Medea's Craft," a delicate white-on-white assemblage that brings to mind Joseph Cornell and Greg Colson, and Greg Smith's fastidious painting of a skeleton urinating in a lake, which suffers from an overreliance on older art in both subject and technique.

Leaning a little too much on Edward Gorey is a fey ink drawing of a figure confronting a strangely rooted (and charted) Rorschach shape that suggests both a tree and a sky map by Alex Cardenas, who until recently provided the collective Lansing-Dreiden with its sly, distinctive graphic style. Tyson Reeder's colorfully blurred painting of scattered dirty clothes suggests nocturnal abandon; Peter Coffin's even blurrier atmospheric abstraction is explained, but not really justified, by its title: "Aura

Portrait." Paul Heyer's small, bright semi-abstract tondo painting is appealing but generic; it suggests instincts that have yet to clarify themselves. ROBERTA SMITH