



Artist portrait by Thomas Lee

Not Elementary

Local artist uses a medium well known to most kids — papier-mâché — to create unusual “trophy heads”

In the
studio

BY MICHELE CORRIEL

Adair Peck, immersed in floury paste and acrylic paint, builds up the antlers on one of her trophy heads. She is playing with the idea of Montana’s penchant for hanging animal heads on the wall. The heads — a grizzly bear, a buffalo (with a bird on its head), a deer and an antelope — sit in various degrees of doneness, and are mounted on a piece of oval wood. Her upstairs studio space, covered in a layer of protective newspaper, sports other projects as well.

“This started with an idea my brother had,” she says, swirling brown and black paint on an aluminum foil palette. “He needed some heads for his sunglasses stores.”

So she began to make busts — of people, not animals. Her artistic work had begun with drawing people — people at parties, people in bars, people her parents had over for drinks. But nowadays, with small children in her life, animals have taken over.

It wasn’t until she moved to Montana a few years ago that the idea for the trophy heads came to her. “I think my woodcuts are so in your face,” she says, slathering on a skin of beige to the antelope head. “I wanted to do something three-dimensional. I’m capturing the essence of the animal without the scare factor.”

Maura Condrick, a fellow artist from Peck’s days in New York City, has known Peck for years. They went to school together and shared a studio.

“Her papier-mâché — it’s hard not to be jokey with that kind of medium but she’s articulating something, she’s observing,” Condrick says. “With the animal heads, she captures their majesty...but they also have a look in their eye like she’s met them. To me, she’s looking at it as a local statement but I see it as a huge trend. It’s sculptural. Going from papier-mâché human heads to animal heads — what’s