



Art

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Review

Randy Wray

[Black & White Gallery](#), through Jun 2

Walk into Randy Wray's latest exhibition, "Chapter and Verse," and you may think you've encountered the work of a split personality. There's the trickster who fashions kitschy, architectonic objects from papier-mâché, plaster, crystals and other crafty materials. Then there's Mr. Order, a painter intent on imposing his highly refined visual logic on the sinuous forms seen in the sculptures. The paintings are dominated by Southern gothic iconography—animal skulls, crosslike forms, thorny branches and tangled vines. They retain the semi-abstract quality of the sculptures, but sadly, none of their mystery.

"Offal," a series of collages reminiscent of Victorian botanical studies (in a bastard-child kind of way), incorporates the detritus seen in Wray's sculpture and paintings (scraps of paint, twigs, paper, tape, thread) in a manner that almost reconciles the show's contrary impulses. Conveying the uneasy relationship between faith and science, their organic forms hum with a material sense of the divine.



Overall, though, "Chapter and Verse" fails to achieve the focus of Wray's previous shows, which explored issues of contemporary American patriotism through historical references to the economic factors that fuelled the Civil War, from the moonshine business to slavery. Metaphorically replacing the Confederate flag with the American flag in his current exhibition, the artist clearly intends to more broadly address the country's current political predicament. But instead of alluding to hidden agendas like oil or cheap labor, Wray offers us sticks, shells and macramé, leaving us to wonder what it all adds up to. — *Jane Harris*

Installation view

Photograph courtesy Black & White Gallery