



CATARINA LEITÃO, *Accessory*, 2002.
Fabric, carpet, acrylic, paint, styrofoam,
wood, 205 x 203 x 160 cm.

Even in the wilds of South America and Africa, most of the “wilderness” has been relegated to bounded, controlled areas called bioreserves or national parks, zones that are regulated and expected to perform their designated functions like urban areas. Tourists wanting their own authentic experience of nature consciously enter these regions while on vacation. Nature is no longer a condition; it is a location.

In her show entitled “Tamed Nature,” Catarina Leitão condenses these desirable, digestible experiences into environments sewn from felt. Each of the three pieces includes small handmade objects delineated by large squares of green carpet — their “turf.” Like an aquarium, they suggest a kind of nature you’d have in your living room.

Shopping and *Accessory* subversively mingle the shallow pleasures of purchasing with those of escaping the city, creating a metaphor for our current relationship to the natural world. Soft gray shopping bags of sticks and leaves, and a dressing room with discarded greenery, suggest that you can dive into nature like a style, feel woody, and then change back into your street clothes when you’ve had enough.

Leitão takes a cartoonish approach to scale: that which is far away, like the hanging blue hunk of sky in *Landscape*, is made small. Objects perceived to be close are oversized, like the bright seedling pushing up through a mound of soil in *Shopping*. This makes nature cute and fun, like visiting a Disney zoo.

Leitão’s work is almost too succinct, tending to complete its thinking quite neatly while allowing their aesthetic appeal to overwhelm the possibility of a more open interpretation. Luckily, the presence of Matthew Ronay’s lyrical polychrome wood sculptures in the same room add some mystery to the overall message.

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