



SARAH MCRAE MORTON

# Carousel of Life and Death

Growing up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Sarah McRae Morton was surrounded by a carousel of life and death. "I was attached to the pigs and cows on the farm, but I also understood what their ultimate destiny was," the artist says. The rural landscape can feel suspended out of time, a sensation that crosses over into Morton's paintings, which are the subject of a solo show at Somerville Manning Gallery.

Rebecca Moore, director of the gallery, says, "I find something new in Sarah's paintings every time I see them. These 'dreamlike' compositions transport you into past worlds that are both provincial and elegant, but mostly surreal."

Morton draws inspiration from her own family history, art and literature,

and combines those elements to create her ethereal works. *Mending the Decoy* references one of her ancestors from the late 1700s who made his living as a hunter and trapper. Morton adds, "It's also a reference to the Native American tradition of becoming the animal that you are hunting by dressing in its skin."

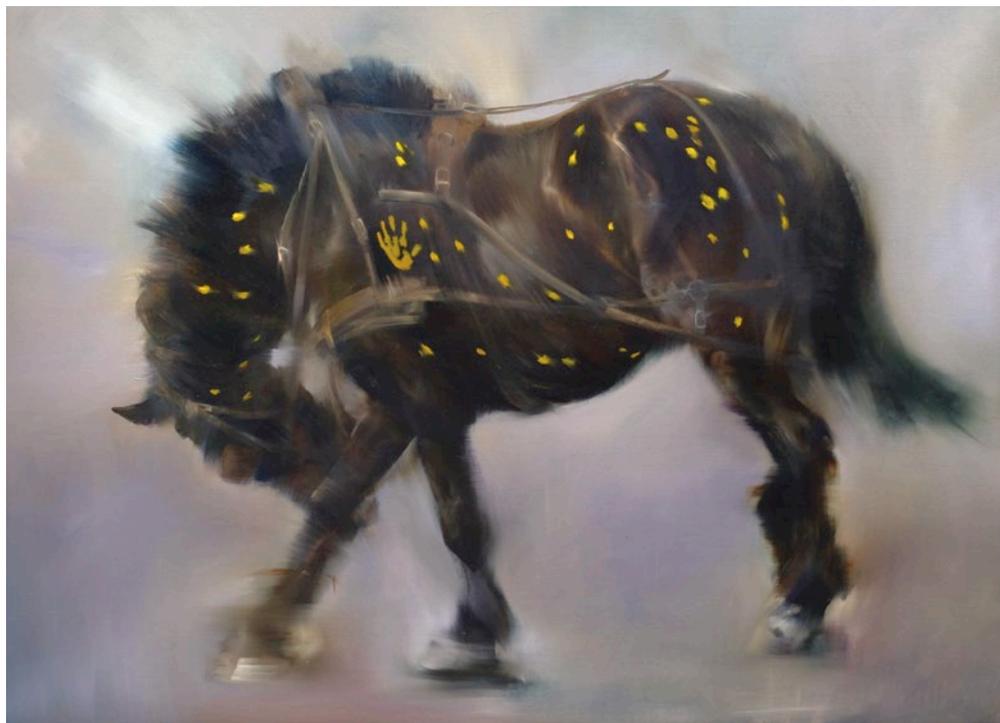
The scene in *Crown* is based on a family Morton knows in Pennsylvania who had a daughter that was hospitalized. "After her illness, a friend went out to the family's home and realized they had cut down all their trees to pay the hospital bills," she explains. "It's about crisis and resources." The background imagery, devoid of trees, is drawn from a Rufus Porter mural, while a bear lurks underneath a white quilt, repre-

senting both the imperiled along with the monsters under the bed."

The quilt from *Crown* will make an appearance in another painting. "It's about the meeting of craft and ideas, and the history of handiwork," Morton says. At the same time, as a white-on-white square, it also contains elements of modernism, while if the viewer looks closely, the pattern of the stitching is that of a historical American quilt.

Morton's work will remain on view at Somerville Manning Gallery through December 15. ●

**Somerville Manning Gallery** Breck's Mill,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor • 101 Stone Block Row • Greenville, DE 19807 •  
(302) 652-0271 • [www.somervillmanning.com](http://www.somervillmanning.com)





**1**  
*The Making of the Yellow  
Roan*, oil on linen,  
50 x 70"

**2**  
*Crown*, oil on linen,  
35 x 35"

**3**  
*Mending the Decoy*,  
oil on wood, 24 x 24"

**4**  
*County Seat*, oil on linen,  
33 x 33"

2



3



4