

# Shelley Uckotter's Trap Paintings

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Images courtesy of the artist and King's Leap Gallery

In the dark dark corners of a dark dark house, up in the rafters of cob-webbed abandoned buildings, on the creaky stairs of a haunted mansion, in the shadows cast by a heavy wood door rusting on its hinges, live Shelley Uckotter's paintings. Shelley paints sinister scenes from cinematic nightmares, the locations where our most outlandish fears play out, bolstered by our collective obsession with things that go bump in the night. But Shelley's world is occupied by stylish girls, headless and the blue-grey of a gourd, wielding knives and low-slung miniskirts, guns and high pig-tails. These doll-like women do not seem to be in danger of anything, her subjects walking a line between the passive and the aggressive, victim and villain. Taking inspiration from Japanese horror-action video games like *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*, Shelley's work aims to both seduce and repel the viewer, but instead of inducing fear, she hopes to make people laugh. After all, "who's going to get scared of a picture?" Shelley's show, *Trap Paintings*, is on view at King's Leap until October 31st. – Olivia Whittick



**What are "trap" paintings?**

I think of painting as a kind of magic trick. A trap is a more aggressive kind of trick. I want my paintings to attract a viewer for one reason and then repulse them upon closer inspection. There is humor somewhere in there.

**Who are the faceless women in your scenes? Are they dangerous, or are they in trouble?**

Neither, they're serving looks and functioning as props. It's a way to activate the architecture they inhabit. They're more like dolls to me, a coat rack to hang different outfits, gestures, personalities. I don't care about the narrative happening within the scenes. It's a simple set up or formula to allow painting to happen.

**What possesses you to create?**

I can't help but do it, it's a compulsion for me.

**Is your work intended to induce fear?**

Of course not, who's going to get scared by a picture. The work is camp, it's meant to subvert. I'm playing upon certain structures and cliches you find in horror movies and literature. I think compelling work should be funny.

**Can you talk a bit about Lillian Paige Walton's text for your exhibition, what do the dead dogs signify?**

You would have to ask Paige about that. I don't want to speak for her. Artist statements are so boring and unbearable. You walk into a show and it's something everybody expects like window curtains or wallpaper. The audience doesn't care, I don't care. My paintings can speak for themselves. Project what you will at them. Paige's fiction piece is an independent response to the paintings in the show. It's not explaining or illustrating or conceptualizing. That's more interesting, a palette enhancer.

**Are we living in a culture of fear?**

Absolutely, duh, everybody is insane and the world is dying.



**What do you think pushes someone to murder?**

No clue, the idea of real physical violence repulses me. It needs to stay in the world of fantasy.

**Have you ever had any sort of supernatural or paranormal encounter?**

Nope, I'm an ex catholic, I don't believe in anything.

**What scary movies inspire you?**

My biggest inspiration is the *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* video games. *Deep Red*, 1975. *The Shining*, 1980. I know that movie is over-referenced but Shelley Duvall's performance! She's the main inspiration for the women in my paintings. *The Devils* (1971), *Raw* (2016), *Honeymoon Killers* (1969), *Persona* (1966).