

## CHURNER *and* CHURNER



### **Review: Karen Heagle, "Let Nature Take Its Course and Hope It Passes"**

*The painter finds magic in unlikely subjects.*

**By Joseph R. Wolin**

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Courtesy of the artist and I-20; New York, Karen Heagle, *Inexperienced/Insatiable*

In nine mostly large paintings on paper, Karen Heagle endows unlikely subjects with a kind of magic. An Old Masters--ish still life bisected by a hanging dead rabbit also features a lava lamp, its reflected glow glinting as red highlights on a nearby copper pot, kitchen knife and artichoke. In another work, a nimbus of yellow flecked with turquoise and violet outlines a tiger wading in a moonlit lagoon, making his backlit fur appear nearly phosphorescent. Yet despite such deftly luscious effects, other images, such as the one of twigs burning in an oil drum that sits in a wheelbarrow crushing a snake, recall the portentously symbolic blather of 1980s Neo-Expressionism.

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The carcass of a young buck sprawls down the biggest and best piece in the show: *Studio Still Life with Partially Disemboweled Deer*. It shows the eponymous animal dangling by one hind leg from the top of the composition, while its head droops near a bloody pile of innards. A vulture perched atop a small stump on the left and a rottweiler panting on the right eye the body keenly. Between them sits a Savarin coffee can filled with brushes—an evident nod to Jasper Johns.

The deer's hide changes from brown tones at his head to lustrous metallic gold on the suspended leg, all against the backdrop of a luminously abstract stained-glass window set in a rough wooden wall. Some sort of apotheosis seems implied, but whether it's of the cervine corpse, or Heagle's life in the studio, or the art of painting itself remains the work's alluring mystery.

I-20, through Oct 29; [See complete event information](#)