



CALDER KAMIN

Calder Kamin makes sculptures of puppies. Soft, pink puppy tummies, in fact. This may sound like a Hallmark endeavor yet it is anything but, even though Kamin's ceramics betray astonishing levels of tenderness toward their truly adorable subject. How can this be? Imagine the softest, prettiest little pup, with silky gray fur, tiny black nails, and wee teats on her fleshy belly. This is how Kamin has sculpted the creatures, deftly applying each shock of fur, meticulously painting each nail. Now lay the pup on her back, legs all sweetly splayed, and sever her upper half. This is also how Kamin has sculpted the creatures, abruptly truncating their bodies and covering the stumps with glossy black enamel. The effect has nothing macabre about it, however. There is no blood, no guts, no gore. Just the kind of careful application of a dark finish that one finds on trees where the limbs have been cut off for one reason or another. The black tar helps keep the rest of the tree safe and sound. Here the effect is less one of fixing than of framing, however, and it allows viewers to focus intimately on the beloved body parts of beloved creatures. The effect is not so far from how it feels to really love a living being—this isn't about fetishization but intimate bodily love, how we love certain specific parts of those pets and children and spouses whom we love most of all. Kamin's weirdness and brilliance is to have figured out that one way to represent those most beautiful feelings is through cut-up puppy parts. Who knew?

—Lori Waxman