

## Phoebe Quin Kong

*Words from the Curator*

*“Fear, fantasy, and fable,”*<sup>1</sup> Phoebe Quin Kong describes of her craft.

Kong’s visual expressions merge childhood whimsies with a mature darkness. She unearths the creatures that live within us and beneath the surface of our everyday fantastical worlds. *“It’s like my imaginary friends grew up and out of me, taking on their own sinister lives.”*<sup>2</sup>

*“I’m just a girl,”*<sup>3</sup> Kong laughs, half nervous, all earnest. The sketchlike, impulsive quality of her mark-making is the very strength and essence of her craft. She dips into the uncanny, unveiling the familiar in the strange; somewhere between longing and dread, dreams and doom, what lives in the realms of childhood imaginaries comes into purview.

She details her process as *“quick, visceral, and flowing out of (her),”*<sup>4</sup> where, voluntarily or strenuously, her creations are resistant to editing. Once they’re there, they’re there. By fleshing out a world that exists inside, she introduces herself to and gives this creaturely universe a language: face, form, and movement.

With each stroke, Kong draws these beings closer to her, thus immersing herself in their worlds. She speaks of these characters as separate entities she is trying to both approach and uncover. Emerging from the tip of her fingers, the creatures are caught mid-panic, tumbling over and into each other. They represent *“human desires, interactions, and complications, but in very crude terms.”*<sup>5</sup> Kong characterises them as her own imagined homunculi—mystical, magical little humanoids that lie within all of us.

As Kong draws, she discovers. She alludes to starting each piece like watching a movie from the middle, and building out towards the beginning and the end.<sup>6</sup> Time underlies her works, paralleling Mark Fisher’s idea that things lurking in the backdrop of our younger years are most evocative in our remembering<sup>7</sup> and, for Kong, in her making.

Kong’s creatures is primal, abstract, and (dis)alarmingly real.

Far from calculated and pristine, Kong’s practice is characterised by a rash, freeing grittiness. Her erratic paints and smudged pastels give her pieces urgency and delicacy, themselves alive in the blurring and reworking. She is excited when her short stories and preparatory sketches *“go off course”*<sup>8</sup> in translation, transforming into larger compositions that take on lives of their own.

In a way, Kong’s art is laden with reconciliation. She finds humour in the frightening, delight in grotesque, and creativity in the unknown. *“I’m drawing something that I’ll never know is true. It’s just my own understanding of this underbelly.”*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Phoebe Quin Kong, in conversation with ModA Curations. Mar 7, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2022), 129.

<sup>8</sup> Phoebe Quin Kong, in conversation with ModA Curations. Mar 7, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Kong rejects finality, knowing when she puts her brush down it is just the beginning.

*Now, her feral, raw creatures live on.*

### **Works Cited**

Fisher, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2022.

Kong, Phoebe Quin. Conversation with Esther Fan, ModA Curations. Mar 7, 2024.