

LIMINAL ODYSSEYS

A homecoming of resistance beyond binaries, a voyage of fluid creaturely hybridization, surfing through the increasingly nebulous categories of identity and language.

Kalman Pool Solo Exhibition at Jupiter Museum.

In an act of fluid refusal and a stealthy occupying of the liminal space of contra-taxonomies, the artist Kalman Pool invites us to embark on a journey of discovery through a series of encounters with uncanny mutations, porous binaries and otherwise worldly ecologies in his solo show Liminal Odysseys. Walking towards the unknown and paralleling the titular journey of Odysseus, we are confronted with a slippery search for identity – both our own and of the critters we encounter– as we are presented with Kalman Pool's menagerie of beings, ethereal flouro chirography and dreamy inflatable monoliths in his first solo show at Jupiter Museum.

The triadic structure and logic of the exhibition invites a cross-pollination and a transmutation of associations between the full and extensive range of the artist's complex practice; spanning 2D paintings and calligraphy to 3D inflatables , a new solid state carbon fibre sculpture and fully immersive installations - taking us into extra-worldly imaginaries that defy gravity, disrupt hierarchies of categorization and taxonomy and continue to evade any hegemonic regimes of scale.

This evasion and direct soft protest against classification and taxonomy is a constant line through all of Kalman Pool's work, and as the artist summons his creatures into being through various material states and spaces they begin to occupy the non-space, the liminal, and inhabit a position of quiet, dreamy slippages of identity. From the central creaturely monument Z-Tex which occupies the main space of the gallery, (the artists first piece rendered in carbon fibre), we are presented with a mimetic speculative species, a poetic hybridization, a monsterly apparition that defies classification but which compels us to seek connections and familiar points of

reference. This knee-jerk compulsion towards chasing labels, tags, categories and seeking to neatly position the unknown beast in prefab taxonomies speaks directly to our pre-disposition that we as humans possess towards a hard wiring into rendering the “other” into convenient colonial silos. Each morphic creature that is presented in Liminal Odysseys triggers this thwarted attempt at antiquated regimes of labelling and packaging. Our myopic adherence to binaries is unseated, usurped and unsettled as we now exist in a society with more porous boundaries between identity markers, the fluidity and flow through previously hard-edged signifiers is beginning to be diffracted, and we enter uncharted territory on a daily basis as the non-normative begins to take up space amongst the regimented binaries of the real and the virtual, gender, race, social positioning and political alliances.

Kalman Pool’s inflatable sculptures have always contained within them this set of contingencies and tensions and in this exhibition as we are presented with his collection of over 20 inflatable pieces we are unequivocally thrown into the liminal space as we are confronted with these wilfully precarious and contingent beings that embody the very essence of his practice. Born and conceived in the virtual world and manifested and birthed into the physical white cube space these creatures of the twilight spaces in-between throw us into a state of deep dreamy reflection and move us towards a vision of taxonomy imagined otherwise. A re-imaging of colonial regimes of order and aesthetic borderlines begin to be redrawn.

In the exhibition, as Kalman Pool clearly references organic life and ecologies rendered through the optic of computational language and processes, graphic novels and popular culture there is a sense that when we view his collection of creatures together in this way there are familial connections to be made with each other. The associations and lineages invited through this reading of his hybrid species are multiple, fluid and unfixed – a collection of anti-breeds that co-exist together but that deny patriarchal, colonial, heteronormative classification. The “look-like” and uncanny qualities of the creatures presented to us in the exhibition are designed to complicate and extend our perspectives on systems of classification and identity and perhaps import into the white cube space the potential radical agency of the virtual context where embodied knowledge and experience could render the potential for new forms of taxonomies and hive mind multiple readings on identities in flux if used more cogently in the future.

Mutating through scales of macro to micro; the totality of critterly sculptures that occupy a totemic anti-gravity dream-space to two dimensional representations of jump cut narratives in Kalman Pool's wall canvasses and paintings, to the flouo-tinged lexicon of mutating forms of language and calligraphy in space, the artist breaks down normative boundaries whilst contemporaneously enhancing the commonalities between entities, scales, materialities, linguistic utterances and species.

In *Staying with the Trouble*, feminist techno scientist Donna Haraway proposes that, in order to survive the dramatic effects of climate crisis, we must rethink our relationships with other species and the earth and build towards a more liveable future. For Haraway this entails an embracing of understanding around how things exist in a contingent relationship within complex ecological systems and acknowledging the impact of divergences and inconsistencies within networks. She posits the **Chthulucene** as the framework for understanding and living as situated beings in our highly connected and connective world through creating the conditions for ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with. Her position rejects the individualism commonly associated with identity-seeking and introduces the idea instead of relational ethics. Turning her attention to the creaturely world she applies this to thinking in relation to creatures and beings who are entangled and interlaced within our world; from computational networks to jellyfish to forests and domestic animal companions, composts to fungus. Echoing through to the Odyssey and encounter with long histories of monsters and other worldly creatures such as Scylla and Charybdis, Haraway speculates that staying with the connected, half-imagined beings of the earth offers up a different read on the future:

*"The unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the exterminism of the Capitalocene, and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener, make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents, and futures."*¹

As we are invited to place ourselves directly into the imaginary, liminal space of the Chthulucene in the exhibition *Liminal Odysseys* we find ourselves in tentative

¹ Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble; Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.

dialogue with morphous generative monsters and critters and asked to understand ourselves in relation to this precarious state of being as we begin to shape-shift as much as the speculative beings inflated in front of us. We are encouraged to stay with the trouble of refusal of identity and classification in line with Haraway and celebrate the unresolved, unfinished, unstable taxonomies of Kalman Pool's liminal menagerie:

"[S]taying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings".²

² Ibid.