

blob

NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 21

CELESTE CHANDLER

KRISTIAN GLYNN

BRAN HOC

VALENTINA PALONEN

KATE ROHDE

BEN WHEELER (UK)



## *The Rococo Abject and Pastel Transmutations*

Jack Sargeant

When the philosopher Georges Bataille described his search for a paradoxical philosophy he found his definition in the 'formless,' a brief text in which he describes the universe as a glob of spit. The disintegration of all certainty, the end of closure and rigid coherence manifest as the shapeless, finds its distorted echoes in the work collected in *Blob*. Here the artists uncover a world in which rigid structures and boundaries give way, melting and slowly collapsing. Now the very recognizable world of form is melting, uncovering an endless fluidity. But there is more at play here than in simple liquefaction.

**Valentina Palonen's** *Becoming* sees this fluidity as a liquid moment, in which form is embracing the formless as a molten potential with no teleological climax. Instead what appears is a climax without end, a change that flows only to continue its viscous oozing, nothing else is possible. This is a becoming without apparent end, in which there is an endless flow. But beneath this melting, dripping texture is a crouching form, meditating or praying even while transforming. Placed upon, or emerging through, the drips is a crystal halo, perhaps the only aspect that could be viewed as permanent in the fluid textures, but like ice in the heat these crystals may also dissolve in time. This impermanence of those aspects once considered solid can be seen in **Kate Rohde's** *Classic Stalagmite* in which the speleothem emerges as a dripping, melting late Baroque form, a Rococo ice cream geology from which the looped coils of an annelid appear to be emerging or sinking. The stalagmite meshed into an endless cycle of phreatic speleogenesis.

In contrast to the endless formlessness of these sculptures, the blob that is manifested across on the face of the women in **Celeste Chandler's** self-portrait series *lovesick* is a custardy, yellowed smear that transforms these works into images that engage with notions of both concealment and transformation. The viewer is asked to consider not merely the smeared gloop but the visage that lay beneath it (while the inevitable questions of eroticism emerge, they are displaced by the artist's fixation of bodily gesture). Here the formlessness of the blob transforms yet simultaneously conceals the possibility of changes occurring beneath. The immutable nature of the postures suggests that there are bones and structures beneath the skin, but there is something else at play here too, something that sees an opening

out of this structure of the body as a zone of concealment into something where the interior body finds an echo in the smeared dizzying globs. The face, the essence of identity is erased and hidden, as if momentarily consumed by fulvous blob.

The face as a canvas on which change erupts can be seen in **Bran Hoc's** sculpture *you and me and me and you*. Here a merging and collapsing of identity emerges from the two-heads. The two faces finding themselves mirroring and transforming, threatening the cold stability of order as the subject becomes the beloved object of its own other. Here the certainty of flesh is revealed as a protean moment of instability that is mirrored within the collapsing identity of the title.

In contrast to the smears and drips of transforming identity, the figures in **Ben Wheele's** work look like nothing less than a mutating pop cultural kitsch. Yet even amongst the images in *Novelty Busties* there is a sense of the restless uncertainty inherent in the mutated forms commonly associated with dreams and hallucinations: the pink elephant of the dipsomaniac's nightmares, the crescent of a waxing Moon, and so on. In *Think Lonely The Only* **Kristian Glynn** offers a more directly pop oriented work, a mixed media collage of forms and shapes, yet there is still a sense of transformation and change at play here.

What links these works is a combination of the stylistic excess of the Rococo, and the graphic intensity, iconography, disposability and ready-made nature of Pop, all realized in a baroque palette of pastel and coral pinks, light baby blues and sickeningly custardy yellows. Moreover these colours and forms manifest a relationship in which they embrace a clear sense of the tactile – as manifested in the title of the show – there is something moist, even sticky, about these works. A sense of chewed gum, of sugary sweets and of dripped honey candy. Colours and textures simultaneously nauseate and appeal, echoing the visceral abjections and excesses of childhood. There is almost something of the *kawaii* dancing through these works, the cuteness of pink bubblegum bubbles combined with themes of endless change to create a mutated alchemical aesthetic.

*Blob*, then, extravasates.

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