

Anomalies

Zoe Porter



JULY 22 – AUG 13

Much of nature engages in the curious phenomena of camouflage, blending invisibly with the environment. In 1935 an intriguing theory of animal mimicry was published by social anthropologist Roger Callois. Callois found some insects that camouflage with their environments do so for means beyond survival, as their predators hunt via scent. He posited their behaviour as a psychological adaptation to their environment – acting out a subconscious desire to dissolve physically and psychologically into surrounding space. This sentiment echoes vividly in the interdisciplinary practice of Zoe Porter.

Porter and her subjects meld into the layered scenes she creates. As spectators, we are drawn into a dream-scape where nondescript creatures inhabit spaces beyond conscious sight. Flickering across differing landscapes, realities, and eras – the borderline of old and new worlds – there is an element of psychological archeology at work in Porter's practice.

Within the microcosm of *Anomalies* distinct elements emerge. New watercolour drawings are inhabited by anthropomorphic figures that seem displaced, drifting between human and animal, place and statelessness. Like hybrids in a state of transformation, these fluid subjects merge in and out of their natural environments. They bring to mind the enduring human desire to free oneself from the realities of humanness and become animal, and in this way invoke a primal relationship to nature - a now almost mythological space for humans to occupy.

The cluster of images *In The Studio* (series) blend layerings of reality and dream-like imagery through the manipulation of figurative photographs. Printed onto watercolour paper the images are then manipulated with watercolour inks, almost disguising their duality as the images merge into one. There is a sense of playful yet powerful exploration of female sexuality, and through it a metamorphosis of complex identities. Porter's use of found-objects including LEDs and anatomical forms in sculptural works *Anomaly 1* and *Anomaly 2* are driven by a Surrealist bricolage method – a kind of stream of consciousness approach to making that is manifest in the exhibition's entirety – a projection of Porter's aesthetic stream of consciousness.

At *Strange Neighbour*, a live collaborative cross-disciplinary performance with Olivia Porter evokes a dark, almost freakshow-like interaction, conjuring the audience from an otherworldly place, as if dis/connected to the performance space via a slippery parallel plane. The performative landscape alludes to a mischievous Gothic conception, further strengthened by video piece *Homunculi (Transmutations)* showcasing the performer in a solo setting.

Porter's live drawings have a detached sense of automatic writing about them, as if channelling elements of psychedelic nature and mysticism. I'm reminded of Marcus Clarke's writing of the monstrous Australian bush, that in it "alone is to be found... the strange scribblings of nature learning how to write". Here, drawing is a mercurial narrative that brings life to the creatures inhabiting Porter's work. Lines escape their expected confines, confusing the boundaries defining space as complete or resolved, and in this way illicit an atmosphere of non-stasis; an ever becoming, overlapping, continuum of activity. Objects and studio remnants present in the performance also amalgamate to form the post-performance space, creating a strange and transitional, interdisciplinary space. Imbued with a curious, charged energy, the post-performance space acts as a remnant of a ritualised atmosphere, suggesting rhizomatic possibilities of transformation.

–Alicia King, 2016

Cover: Zoe Porter, 'The Nomads' 2016, watercolour on paper, 29 x 39 cm

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