

Nikki Renee **Anderson** & Joanna **Mortreux**: **transformative VISIONS**



Nikki Renee Anderson, *Budding Delight*, Ceramic and acrylic



Joanna Mortreux, *The Impossibility of Disappearance*, Oil on composite panel

College of Lake County

Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art

August 17 – September 23, 2012

Nikki Renee Anderson and Joanna Mortreux: **Transformative Visions**

*“And these things
that keep alive on departure know that
you praise them; transient,
they look to us, the most transient,
to be their rescue.*

*They want us to change them completely,
in our invisible hearts,
into...O endlessly...us! Whoever,
finally, we may be.”*

- Rainer Maria Rilke

The canon of art history has secured painting and sculpture at the foundation of the fine arts. Our visual history supports our oral history via documented images of past cultures and contemporary trends. Sculpture, from ancient times through the Renaissance, holds our persistent spiritual beliefs, our reverence for higher powers and an understanding of our earthly lives. With Modernism came our shift toward a humanistic approach to image and object making. Artists focused on themselves as creators, found purpose in their art by raising the altar of the spiritual state and brought it to the proletariat in an act of understanding our collective body. Post-Modernism furthers this direction by focusing on the ironic, the combined influences and the self-reflective study. This exhibition of painting, sculpture and photography, *Nikki Renee Anderson and Joanna Mortreux: Transformative Visions*, examines two artists' visions that draw from traditions of painting and sculpture and transform how they grapple with contemporary issues.

Anderson and Mortreux met at SIM, the Association of Icelandic Visual Artists Residency, Reykjavík, Iceland in 2010 and later became members of Operation France, a Chicago-based art project space that focuses on international artist collaboration. Their shared interest in

travel, appetite for exploring and engaging with the environment influences the work they create both in material and concept. Each artist has attended and worked at various international artist residencies in France, Iceland, Germany, Italy and the U.S., exposing their working processes to different cultural experiences and situations. Anderson pulls from her travels by working within the environment and allowing the sights, smells and imagery to seep into her work.

While in Vallauris, France [a historical ceramic-making town] in 2008, Anderson walked the cobblestone streets investigating the various baked goods offered in bakery window displays. Combining this with her experience as a



Nikki Renee Anderson, *Flora Body #1*, 2011, Ceramic and acrylic

foreign traveler using an unfamiliar language, Anderson created a series of ceramic sculptures incorporating audio that use familiar pastry forms and a female voice that speaks no specific language, but rather communicates general sounds of laughter, sorrow, excitement and exhaustion. By reframing and re-contextualizing the sights and sounds of her experiences into her sculptures, Anderson transforms specific moments into abstract narratives open to our interpretation.

Mortreux applies travel to her work by investigating local history and culture. In Reykjavik, Iceland in 2010, she walked the port town of Hafnarfjörður, where Icelanders believe the elves or “hidden people” live inside lava rock formations. This belief is so integrated into Icelandic culture today that it is considered cursed luck to remove or damage these rocks. Roads, buildings and structures are oftentimes built around the rocks, leaving them undisturbed out of respect toward their mythical inhabitants. This admiration for history, nature and the supernatural constructs the imagery and concepts within in her paintings. Her figures and constructs exist between two spaces – the present and the fantastical.

Chicago-based sculptor Nikki Renee Anderson creates her fanciful biomorphic forms using a range of materials, including ceramic, bronze, acrylic, photography, sound and installation. Anderson presents us with colorful sculptures of delightfully ambiguous objects culled from various objectified resources. These forms with their smooth surfaces, dripping and pooled liquids, imply various earthly subjects ranging from the sensual female form to flamboyant desserts to bountiful flora and fauna representations. Gathering from personal experience, Anderson creates works that entice us into wanting. What we want is directed by her sculpted formations of luscious objects. These objects bulge and bloat. They appear to be made of colors from a familiar palate, an innocent palate with captivating memories. They desire to be engaged – to be touched, caressed and tasted.



Joanna Mortreux, *Sentinel*, 2012, Oil on composite panel

Oftentimes we do not know what the objects are made of, but there is a familiarity to them. Anderson may create an object from clay, but she does not follow ceramic tradition by glazing the surface. Instead, she paints them and allows the work to ooze sauces or syrups made of resins and acrylics.

In the same vein, she employs bronze, a very traditional material known for its strength and permanence, but it becomes playful in her hands. With *Blue Drop* (2012), one piece in this exhibition, Anderson creates from clay a billowing mass of soft blue with a drop of glossy syrupy acrylic falling below it. The fallen drip has pulled away from its host, creating a tension that excites the piece with motion. We also find these lively bulbous masses set in pastoral scenes that appear to be from another world. In her *Icelandic Garden* (2011) series of photographs, the artist creates a work within a work. Photographed in Iceland, the sculptures lurk in the volcanic lava fields nestled in carpets of velvety moss or perched on rock formations. Icelandic folklore speaks of faeries, elves and trolls that inhabit this otherworldly land. Anderson's works appear as sentinels in this mystic land, not of this world, but a link to fantasy. Influenced by the intimate and powerful sculptural and installation works of artists Louise Bourgeois and Annette Messager, Anderson draws an interesting line between unassuming innocence and sophistication within her work.

Joanna Mortreux is currently based in Melbourne, Australia, where she studied painting and psychology. Her work explores the artifact as preserved specimen. Human and animal figures are morphed into earthen and organic forms. Working with oil paint, ink and permanent marker on metal sheeting for commercial sign making, her images float on the smooth surfaces literally and visually. The expressive boldness of the figures, with their rich earthy colors against the ethereal lightness of the ground, makes the work appear to be suspended in a space of virtual containment. Mortreux speaks of artifacts as containers for previous lives with a function and history that is unknown, but is intentional and with purpose. These figures dip in and out of time frames, preserved for all eternity to see. Suspended in time and space, they are literally flattened like cross-sectioned fossils. Showing interest in painters Neo Rauch and Dexter Dalwood

for their painterly combinations of urban realities and natural dreams, Mortreux creates forms that reflect a realism that is unhinged from our understanding, but we trust its existence. In the works *Metamorphosis* (2012) and *Relic* (2012), Mortreux creates a figure of a person; or is it an animal? The species of the creature is unclear, but what is certain is that the subject is in a state of repose. The relaxed nature of the figure combined with the directed energy of the paint suggests a pulling or altering notion. Mortreux allows enough detail in the figure to identify facial features, torso, arms and legs, while at the same time creating a disembodied reaction with the paint. She allows the material to interact with the metal surface: smearing and pushing the paint and allowing it to drip until it pools up into a frozen state of animation. The works' weathered appearance only supports the idea that this humanoid artifact is suspended between rest and movement – decaying before our eyes or perhaps mummified forever. What is learned from Mortreux's work is that the artist needs to preserve an image, an idea and a purpose. We meet her at the intersection of artifact and history.

Nikki Renee Anderson and Joanna Mortreux: Transformative Visions presents us with the chance to view two artists' perspectives and experiences in this world. From Anderson's colorful sculptures to Mortreux's decaying figures, the vivid images and provocative forms in this exhibition come not only from working in their studios, but also are fueled by their explorations and visions of other spaces. Art functions on both the aesthetic and conceptual levels. The important function of art occurs when we relate, understand and learn from the artwork.

Essay by Michael Kozien

Michael Kozien is an artist and assistant professor in the Digital Media and Design department at the College of Lake County, where he teaches courses in animation, video, sound and digital media theory. He is the founder and director of Operation France, a non-commercial art project space based in Chicago.

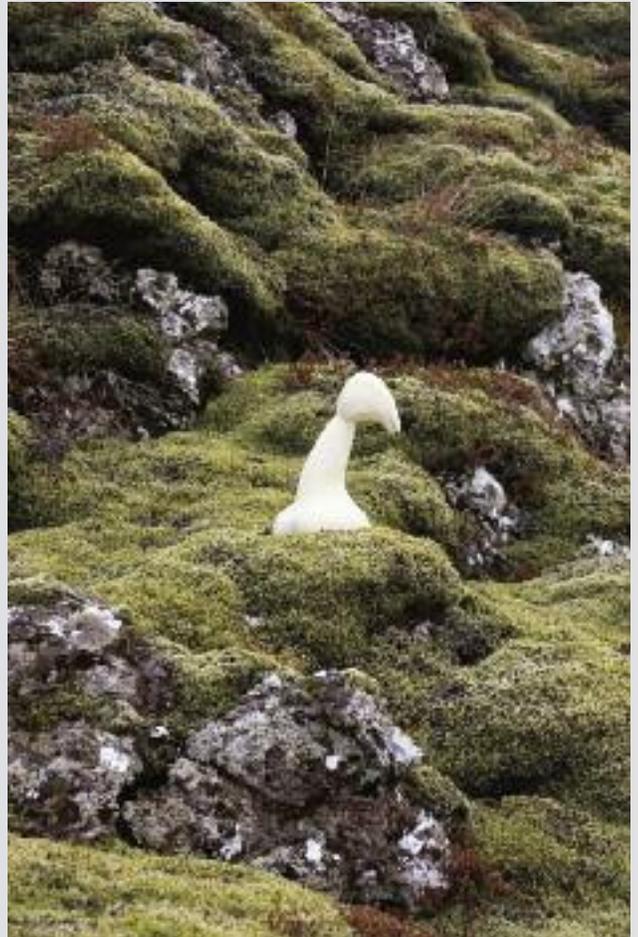
Nikki Renee Anderson, *Blue Drop*, 2012, Ceramic and acrylic



Nikki Renee Anderson, *Icelandic Garden #3*, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper



Nikki Renee Anderson, *Icelandic Garden #4*, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper



Nikki Renee Anderson, *Icelandic Garden #5*, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper



Joanna Mortreux, *Relic*, 2011, Oil on composite panel



Joanna Mortreux, *Metamorphosis*, 2011, Oil on composite panel



Joanna Mortreux, *The Distance of Time Inverted*, 2012, Oil on composite panel



Joanna Mortreux, *Fastened to Look Back*, 2012, Oil on composite panel



Joanna Mortreux, *The Impossibility of Disappearance*, 2012, Oil on composite panel



Joanna Mortreux, *Looping a Continuum*, 2012, Oil on composite panel

NIKKI RENEE ANDERSON

www.nikkireneeanderson.com

RESIDES Chicago

EDUCATION

2002 M.F.A., Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY

1999 B.F.A., Drake University, Des Moines, IA (magna cum laude)

SELECTED AWARDS

2012 Artist Project Grant in Visual Arts, Illinois Arts Council

2010 Kiln God Award for Full Funding, Artist Residency, Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts

2003 Best Faculty Presentation, Voices, Visions and Visionaries Gender Conference, College of Lake County

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2012 *Secret Bodies*, Dubhe Carreño Gallery, Chicago (solo)

2011 *A Delivery To Your Senses*, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX (two person)

Simsalabim, The Association of Icelandic Visual Artists, Reykjavík, Iceland

2010 *Whispering Bodies*, Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL (solo)

Countercurrents, Chicago Sculpture International, Art Chicago, Chicago

2009 *NCECA Clay National Biennial*, Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ

56th Premio Faenza, International Competition of Contemporary Ceramic Art, Museo Internazionale della Ceramiche, Faenza, Italy

2008 *New Work*, Galerie Aqui Siam Ben, Vallauris, France

Chicago Sculpture International Biennale, FLATFILE Galleries, Chicago

SELECTED RESIDENCIES

2011 Takt Artist Residency, Berlin, Germany

2010-11 The Association of Icelandic Visual Artists (SÍM), Reykjavík, Iceland

2009 La Macina di San Cresci, Greve, Italy

2008 AIR Vallauris, Vallauris, France

COLLECTIONS

Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL; A.I.R. Vallauris, Vallauris, France; Museo Internazionale della Ceramiche, Faenza, Italy

JOANNA MORTREUX

www.joannamortreux.com / <http://every1000years.blogspot.com>

RESIDES Northcote, VIC, Australia

EDUCATION

2007 B.F.A., Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

2005 Diploma of Fine Arts, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

2000 B.A., University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2012 *White Capsule Collection*, Installation Project, Loop Bar, Melbourne, Australia

2011 *Exhibiting Time*, Obscura Gallery, East St. Kilda, VIC, Australia

The Brunswick Show, Donkey Wheel House, Melbourne, Australia

Eins Show, Kunstraum Tapir, Weserstr 11 Berlin, Germany

2010 *Terra Interstellar*, Extended Play Gallery, Northcote, VIC, Australia

The Brunswick Show, Donkey Wheel House, Melbourne, Australia

2009 *Second Nature*, Bus Gallery, 117 Lt Lonsdale St, Melbourne, Australia

The furthest Stretch, The Galley, Brunswick, VIC, Australia

2008 *The Pea Green Boat*, Kick Gallery, Northcote, VIC, Australia

Self Made Naturalist, First Site Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

2007 *Surfacing*, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology graduate exhibit, Ekersley's Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

COLLECTIONS

Work in private collections in Australia, France and New Zealand

RESIDENCIES

2011 TAKT Kunstprojektraum, Berlin, Germany

2010 SIM Artist Residency, Reykjavik, Iceland

Exhibition Checklist

Nikki Renee Anderson

Icelandic Garden #1, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Icelandic Garden #2, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Icelandic Garden #3, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Icelandic Garden #4, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Icelandic Garden #5, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Icelandic Garden #6, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Icelandic Garden #7, 2011, Archival inkjet on paper, edition of 5
Budding Delight, 2011, Ceramic and acrylic wall piece
Blue Drop, 2012, Ceramic and acrylic wall piece
Red Drop, 2012, Ceramic and acrylic wall piece
Flora Body #1, 2012, Ceramic and acrylic wall piece
Drop Garden, 2012, Bronze pedestal piece
Bubble Drop, 2012, Bronze pedestal piece
Folded Bubbles, 2012, Bronze pedestal piece
Billowing Drops, 2012, Ceramic and acrylic wall piece

Joanna Mortreux

Parallax, 2011, Oil on composite panel
Metamorphosis, 2011, Oil on composite panel
Relic, 2011, Oil on composite panel
Slipstream, 2012, Oil on composite panel
The Distance of Time Inverted, 2012, Oil on composite panel
Left Buried, 2012, Oil on composite panel
Fastened to Look Back, 2012, Oil on composite panel
The Impossibility of Disappearance, 2012, Oil on composite panel
Sentinel, 2012, Oil on composite panel
Split Megalith, 2012, Oil on composite panel
Looping a Continuum, 2012, Oil on composite panel



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