

Scrambled Aches
a text by Jessica Gispert

Driven by hunger, the coyote is a living, breathing allegory of Want (1). He is a lone hunter in dire environments, like the desert or cold mountainsides, going days without nourishment. This does not make it easy to make friends. And perhaps with this in mind, animator Chuck Jones created a desperate Looney Tunes character; one who's sole aspiration is to capture an unfathomably quick bird for dinner. Wile E. Coyote (2) is a character seduced by appetite and determination. But the coyote exists in a delusional spiral of yearning, driven by his desire to submit to the mirage.

Living in an unknown desert, Wile E. Coyote has crafted various methods to occupy his idleness. His most concerted effort is The Road Runner (3): a masterpiece bred from loneliness. The Road Runner provides the coyote with an infinite game of chase-and-can't-catch. Sisyphean in nature, yet Wile E. Coyote remains motivated. The Coyote turns to capitalist means to support his practice, buying countless products from the Acme Corporation to aid his hunt. These products consistently misfire, never helping him achieve his goal. This leaves us to ponder: are these objects poorly manufactured or is he subconsciously sabotaging them in order to never end the chase? Is the Road Runner truly outsmarting the coyote, or is he just an imaginary companion?

Trapped by his own imagination, Wile E. Coyote repeatedly makes objects and paintings which fail his reality. Portals into other universes, tunnels that lead to places for road runners but not for himself. When Wile E. Coyote turns to painting, it's a source of deception. He paints murals on the edges of cliffs, roads leading to nowhere, and infinite horizons for the Road Runner to miraculously escape through. But when the coyote attempts to step through his painting, he cannot walk through it. Or in other circumstances he finally breaks through to the other end, rapidly falling over the edge to his demise.

Does the artist sabotage their own reality in order to reach their vision? Do they give up convention in order to let their art works give life to the subconscious, to completely submit to their fantasy?

The painter cannot step into his own painting without submitting to his fantasy. Kenneth Bergfeld's Androgynous Angel series depicts an array of characters portraying fragments of his subconscious. These characters embody the metaphysical relationship between the artist and people in his life. Creating, displaying, and co-existing with these paintings in his live/work space, Bergfeld has surrounded himself with a squad; posse; crew of homies that keep him company in the mirage. One could even say these figures represent Bergfeld himself, as his own gang of science-fiction icons-the artist existing inside of his paintings.

Alluding to Flemish portraiture with a hint of lavish Italian Renaissance, Bergfeld depicts a contemporary version of exuberance and swag (4): bling without bling (5).

Bright colors and patterns remind us of Coogi sweaters and stained glass windows, feathery head pieces blocking the gaze. One of the most prominent facial features in these works are the lips. Almost like in Russian Icon painting, where the eyes are the most emphasized attribute; Bergfeld pays close attention to the mouth, as if to let us know these characters speak. And so the artist too speaks, through lyrical works that he will perform during the exhibition, *The Spire Pt.I at Hospitality*, in the company of his paintings. As the persona Kenny Unrest, along with musicians Nassau, Bergfeld will take us on a journey down his isolated roads of visual encapsulation, personal relationships, and phantasmagoric soundscapes.

footnotes:

1 Twain, Mark (1872) *Roughing It*, San Francisco, CA: A Roman & Company

2 *Carnivorus Vulgaris*

3 *Accelerati Incredibilus*

4 A very confident attitude or manner; coolness

5 Denoting expensive, ostentatious clothing or jewelry, or the style or materialistic attitudes associated with them.