

Artist: Marlon Kroll (Montreal, Canada)

Exhibition Title: *Trees That Worry*

Exhibition Dates: June 4, 2022 to July 16, 2022

According to the Greeks, trees are alphabets. Of all the tree letters, the palm is loveliest. And of writing, profuse and distinct as the burst of its fronds, it possesses the major effect: falling back.

– *Roland Barthes* by Roland Barthes (1977)

In a passage titled *Toward Writing* in his eponymous autobiography, Roland Barthes considers the proposition that trees are alphabets. As the trunk of all prose, their organic textures would cultivate their own phonetics, achieving meaning through their proximity to other organisms. Woodlands become a long-form essay; a shady grove, a rhyming couplet.

Perhaps it's obvious that language, pillar of human communication and meaning-making that it is, should stem from the natural world. Barthes is far from the first (or the last) to write about the correlation between the two, but as of late, his equation of writing to biology has taken root in my imagination. Like a forest, a paragraph amounts to a system of association and selection, infinite in its potential and variability. Case in point, over 2600 species of palms populate the Earth—a measure of biodiversity that signals an overwhelming repertoire of vernacular possibility.

Nestled in the overlap between the biological and the linguistic realm is where I locate Marlon Kroll's practice. Using various media, including drawing, sculpture, ceramics, and animation (his *scattered matter*, so to speak), Kroll has sown the seeds for a vocabulary all his own. Across these fields, he has championed a visual language ripe with idioms, puns, and *mimicry*, a term borrowed from evolutionary biologists to define the phenomenon where one species imitates another out of a survival instinct.

Looks can be deceiving. Found in the chameleon's camouflage, or a stick bug's twiggy frame, mimicry is a tactic that allows one to masquerade as other without compromising their true essence. This is a strategy Kroll uses in his work to simultaneously confront and conceal personal memories and affinities through a visual syntax steeped in polysemy. Animal horns become wind instruments, staircases spiral out into seashells—these playful metaphors seize the retina and the psyche, populating works with figurative language and organic geometry in equal measure. With this, its "major effect" is not one of *falling back*, but of *falling into* Kroll's vibrant compositions, which are most legible through a hybrid practice of looking and verbalization.

Text by Danica Pinteric.

Biography

Marlon Kroll is a German/Canadian artist living and working in Montreal. He holds a BFA in Ceramics from Concordia University and is one of nine laureates of the Darling Foundry's 2019-2022 Montreal Studio Program. He was the 2020 recipient of the William and Meredith Saunderson Prize for Emerging Artists.

Selected recent exhibitions include "Trees That Worry," Projet Pangée, Montreal, 2022; "Nesting," Foundation Phi, Montreal, 2022; "Stress Tested," Public Gallery, London, 2021; "A Chronique Fear," Marvin Gardens, New York, 2021; "Rifts, hovels, a sighing tide," Afternoon Projects, Vancouver, 2021; "La machine qui enseignait des airs aux oiseaux," Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, 2020; "At the center of my ironic faith," Cassandra Cassandra, Toronto, 2020; "Red Sky at Morning," Interstate Projects, Brooklyn, New York, 2019; and "Thirsty Things," Clint Roenisch, Toronto, 2019. In 2023, he will present projects at Art-O-Rama, Marseille, and Galerie Acappella, Naples.

About the author

Danica Pinteric (b. 1994, Tkaronto/Toronto) is a curator, writer, and editor based in Tkaronto/Toronto. Her practice is guided by an ethos of sustainability, collaboration and trust. She is founding director of Joys, a gallery based in Tkaronto/Toronto. Previously, she was co-director of Calaboose, a gallery based in Montreal (2018-2020), and a Curatorial and Research Assistant at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2020-2021). She holds a BA in Communications, Cultural Studies & Art History (2018) from Concordia University and an MA in Curating Art & Cultures from the University of Amsterdam (2021). She has written texts for DRAC Drummondville, Dürst Britt & Mayhew, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Stedelijk Studies, BAD WATER, galerie l'inlassable, and CIRCA Art Actuel, among others.

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