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Checklist



Natura Morta

Aaron Angell, Javier Barrios, Matt Copson, Birgit Jürgenssen, Calvin Marcus,
Joanna Piotrowska and Formafantasma, Megan Rooney

19 January – 09 March 2024

Private view: 18 January 2024, 6-8pm

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A FOX AND A TREE

TREE: So, 'natura morta', as in 'still life' in Italian? And it's a group show?

FOX: Uh huh, exactly! Painting, photography, sculpture, all mixed up together; a killer line-up.

TREE: But what does the tradition of still life in art mean in 2024, with the year just waking up and rubbing its eyes?

FOX: That is the question! Still life painting has always been about trickery, capturing nature in hyperreal lushness and wonder, the cornucopia mid-decay—

TREE: —The stained glass on a butterfly's wing.

FOX: So what *Natura Morta* proposes is that tradition taken to a surreal, freaky, oddly haunting new zone. 'Nature' but distorted into something strange and dreamy.

TREE: Examples, please!

FOX: OK, Matt Copson's sculpture offers us the psychedelic and unsettling prospect of *undead sculpture*, a still life of some *Watership Down*-on-bad-shrooms scene depicting a furry organ skewered on a barbed wire fence, the whole thing in kaleidoscope colours which slowly transform, the whole thing trippily breathing and darkly glowing.

TREE: Whoa, mutating! And the colours in Megan Rooney's paintings are so loud, too.

FOX: Yeah, and the paint is so thick and rough. Like being thrown into a forest on fire. Can you see the hint of a flower there, melting, pink?

TREE: Big mood.

FOX: But Aaron Angell's ceramic works, roughly hewn and weathered, look organic even if they aren't, exactly, as if nature has feasted on them, worn them away.

TREE: They look like they've washed ashore on a haunted beach.

FOX: They look like a collab between the sculpture and time itself, germs, raw sea breeze, ripe with decay.

TREE: And the stone in Calvin Marcus' sculpture looks fleshy...

FOX: Yup, a strange head sticks out its tongue: fleshy and yet not, sinister, spooky.

TREE: But Joanna Piotrowska's thing isn't like that.

FOX: Nope, it's very funereal, a sculptural installation of photographs of flowers in goth monochrome.

TREE: Chilly.

FOX: Gorgeous as a marble grave.

TREE: And then the Birgit Jürgenssen drawings, I don't know where I am, I get goosebumps on my bark—

FOX: —They're green, too, a sickly medical green, probably toxic in large doses, the mossy fur breeding mossy fur and the mask hung on the table like an abandoned face.

TREE: Unnatural.

FOX: Only if you think dreams or nightmares are unnatural and not part of how we relate to our weird environment, the strangeness of the world.

TREE: The Javier Barrios drawings are also freaking me out: like, what *is* that?

FOX: They're so sexy! Some monkey creature grinning, going nuts while the foliage growing out of his head riots like flames— still life from a twisted brain.

TREE: Like, do you think any of this has to do with our vexed and apocalyptic relationship to nature right now?

FOX: Aw, possibly maybe. But a lot of other stuff, too. I wouldn't want to wreck the mystery, and they're very mysterious works.

- Charlie Fox