

*I want to speak about bodies changed into new forms.*

– Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Bk I: 1-2- The Primal Chaos)

In recent human history a series of unfortunate and careless circumstances has led the world to feel like a very different place in a very short time. Authoritarianism has spread like wild weed, there is war and inequality everywhere, the Earth keeps sending devastating shifts and there seems to be no way out.

The need to embrace difference and change is as strong now as it must have always been. In parallel, we are surfing life through cities, or dipping out, sharing via images, our diaries amongst friendships, in love and solitude, art, traveling and ideas. Although there is an illusion of contemporaneity to all of this, humanity and its history as we know it has been built on the same concentrated and collective energies.

For Churchman, to paint is to act within a collective mind, portraying the multitude that a singularity is composed of. Within this activity of human marks, emotions and identities, every painting becomes a very unique symbol of itself. Like a haiku, seemingly disparate elements are coming together, building a narrative that is not. An identity that is not. A movement in stasis.

There is a rumour that the snowlion flew and pounced from peak to peak over the Himalayan mountains, bringing Buddhism to Tibet from India. In Tibetan Buddhism the Four Dignities are: The tiger which is Meek, the snowlion is Perky, the garuda is Outrageous, and the sky dragon is Inscrutable. For one who practices, understanding how each dignity unfolds can inspire the journey and enable them to discern, with awareness and delight, their own progress. The snowlion embodies fierce joy, a fearless and doubtless aspect of mind that manifests clarity and precision. Illuminating the range of this work is the ever-present wakefulness of this Dignity, with a gaze both joyful and wrathful.

In Churchman's work, the subject matter is at once familiar and unfamiliar — coming from the unknown, popular imagery, and joining with other artists' work; logos of corporations, paintings of tombstones, natural elements, flora and fauna, unidentified creatures in transit, staring-out fierce deities...

The new paintings made for Rodeo in Piraeus represent, as a whole and as individual works, a specific state. In *Cairo 1550 B.C.* animals have claimed the roles of humans and switched the power structure completely, a row of cats serving the master mouse. The eyes of a vine leaf are staring at

us from *Medieval Sketchbook*, another plant character hovering above while an ancient naked muscular orator is making a point. There is the cover of the journal *Womanspace*, a non-profit community in California, that has been advocating since the '70s on gender equality and social justice in art. In the bed of Felix Gonzales Torres, which was shared before his lover died of AIDS, there are crocodile mummies swirling, with vacant crushed pillows above. A tiny gold painting is framed by a thin black outline, with one white dot on each corner. An erotic work by Dorothy Iannone has been joined with collected language, concrete poetry and snails winding labyrinths. A calligram in the form of a gentle flower, titled *Budapest 1551*, has become a deep black, and intensifying the centre void there is gold. A countryside photograph by Thomas Struth pictures a bright open sky and a curling road, quiet and tense, not knowing where it leads.

It is with great importance to inaugurate the space with a symphony of a solid variety of such joy, colour, openness and positive aggression. This will define and determine the identity of a space that aims towards constant flux, togetherness and diversity, a *locus amoenus*.

Leidy Churchman (b.1979, Pennsylvania) lives and works in New York and Maine. His work has been recently shown at *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*, New Museum, NY (2017-18), Kunstmuseum Bern, a solo show at Kölnischer Kunstverein (2017), *Protuberances* at LAXART (2016), *Lazy River* at Boston University gallery (2013) and extensively at gallery exhibitions. This summer he is participating in *Painting: Now and Forever III* that is taking place between Greene Naftali and Matthew Marks in New York, and in the fall *One day at a Time: Manny Farber and Termite Art* at MOCA, Los Angeles. In June 2019, he will have a solo exhibition at Hessel Museum, Bard College. Churchman received his MFA from Columbia University in 2010, and his BA from Hampshire College in 2002. From 2011-12, he was a resident artist at Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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