



April 1st, 2018

For immediate release:

PARADICE PALASE is thrilled to present *Dimensions of Alterity*, a group show discussing the grotesque, the chimeric, and the carnivalesque. From early manifestations on 1st century Roman grotto walls to the 15th-18th century European notions of the grotesque and carnivalesque body, this current exhibition compares historic traditions with our contemporary understandings as a fundamental human experience.

Current interpretations of the grotesque equate to “gross” - messy, bloody; organs out on the table for display; B-horror movie blood unnaturally spraying out of cut-off arms. But where are these images rooted in? The term “grotesque” originates from 15th century Italy when the original site of Nero’s Domus Aurea was excavated to renovate the palace. It was there, in the depths of the foundation built over by past emperors for centuries, that they discovered fresco drawings from the imaginative minds of Romans circa 64 AD. The artwork was deemed *grottesco*, or *of a cave*, and soon came to inform a new style of *grotesque* art that partially defined Renaissance Europe.

In *Rabelais and His World*, written in 1965, the prolific theorist and writer Mikhail Bakhtin talks about the “sportiveness of the grotesque” and the humor behind the carnivalesque nature of renaissance times. In this exhibition there is certainly a jest quality, but it is also about the fantastical and the impossible within our current reality. And in that is a sort of comedy too, as Bakhtin suggests. That we can imagine the ways bodies can exist in other forms and we can depict it so fully is certainly absurd. The chimeras and monsters that **Colin Radcliffe** creates are playful, and dual-y serious and contorted - they constrict, swallow each other, swallow themselves eternally. They relate most closely with the drawings found along the grotto walls, pure imagination of animal hybridity. Bodily cycles are a core focus for Bakhtin - he writes, “the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world” is therefore the means in which we cycle; through our extremity orifices. Like the dragon eating its own tail. Or our bodies being pulled into other dimensions, abstracted from ourselves.

The word other is often interchangeable with the word abstract, as in something removed from its source and viewed outside its home, its context. The abject abstractions in Luke’s, Olivia’s and Alex’s works ring true to the traditional grotesque, which is somewhat ironic considering the contemporary means in which they are produced and depicted. The blood-like fluid that pumps through **Luke Todd**’s sculptures is color-matched to his own blood, and despite the contorted abstraction of bodily fluids into these shapes, we hear the hum and grumble of the *Blood Ball* motor pumping at the pace of a heartbeat. It reminds us simultaneously of modern mechanics and the ever-present sound of our existence.

**Olivia Taylor**’s flesh pillow is aptly titled “Dangerously Cheesy” - an obvious reference to the Cheetos mascot tattooed on one side, and the almost fluorescent orange coloring “smeared” across the top half. As if the “skin” was sourced from a snack binger, it’s equally funny and disturbing to think that much material could be from one person; from one clean section. These subtle dualities are explored throughout much of the show- the familiar/real and the abstract/imaginative.

Although the abstracted self (and the abject self) is a more contemporary depiction, it relates to the notion of the grotesque and the body being a codependent relationship. For example, in carnival celebrations masks were sometimes seen as an extension of the body, of the face. **Katie Green** builds her masks as functional objects. She often documents them through a ritualistic performance, and the monsters she sculpts are simply mascots for a greater experiment in the ways mundane and inanimate objects can be brought to life as a means of community engagement. In many ways, that experience mirrors 17th and 18th century carnivalesque celebrations.

**Alex Patrick Dyck's** installation is site-specific and titled *Anima Sola Animal*. A body separated, chained, and captured is displayed like an altar against the wall. Her installations are in a constant state of decay, changing in texture and color as a morbid reminder of our own mortality. The smell of the flora emanates out from the piece as it slowly rots and returns to once it came like the never ending cycles of the body. Often referenced in her work is mythology, in particular the women who play starring and supportive roles in the various tales. This most recent installation relates to Andromeda, who was punished unfairly for her beauty and chained up to die by the wrath of sea monsters. Additionally it honors Ana Mendieta, the Cuban-American performance artist who met her untimely death in 1985 when she was pushed out a window at the suspected hands of her spouse and collaborator, artist Carl Andre. He took their ideas and is considered now a prolific artist despite never being punished for his crime. These two women were fated from the start it seems, seen more as objects to be swallowed and destroyed than as the higher beings Alex guides us to believe. The various parts of the installation - the metal cuffs, the locked box of Andromeda, the pile of flora at the floor - suggest an altar that has been built to pay homage to these warrior women.

**Alisa Sikelianos-Carter's** latest series depicts *Future Descendents*, black femme deities adorned fully in cornrows, dreadlocks, and twists as armour for attacking white supremacy, micro-aggressions, and misogyny. She aims to create an alternate reality, a much needed alterity where there exists a symphony, of black people as their truest spectral beings and majestic goddesses of ancestry. In *Venus is the Cauldron | Black is the Beginning* we are presented three future descendents aligned in a pinnacle - the strongest form - as they seem to embark through time and space into other realms, or maybe this realm. They have emerged out of metamorphosis into magical deities prepared for battle. Bakhtin considers this transformative step a "fundamental existential experience" and therefore a core making of the grotesque body.

*Dimensions of Alterity* is open April 13 - April 29, 2018 with gallery hours Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 pm and by appointment. For questions or to request any images, please email Lauren or Kat at [paradicepalase@gmail.com](mailto:paradicepalase@gmail.com).