

Clima

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TUE – SAT, 11.30 - 7.00
OR BY APPOINTMENT

Addio al Passato

Jason Gomez

February, 1 – March, 24, 2018

Opening Reception

Thursday, February 1st

From 7 to 9 pm

For more than a year Jason Gomez has been living in a multispecies companionship. Lucca, aka Addio del Passato (Farewell to the Past), is a Whippet sighthound with whom the artist shares his daily life, creating with him a symbiotic relationship. “When Lucca was placed in my life the desire to delve back into questions of identity came up again.”¹

Lucca is for Jason Gomez the companion through which he can observe, and call into question, all of those characteristics that allow humans to define themselves as such. The relationship between the two is built upon shared physical spaces and actions, combined in a behavioral pattern that, every day, becomes more unexpectedly intimate. Jason Gomez implements with Lucca what Donna Haraway calls a *multispecies companionship*, which is to be associated to another fundamental concept of the North American philosopher: that of *becoming-with*. *Becoming-with* can be seen as a constant transformative experience that allows the human being to see itself through other creatures, telling their stories, and learning new ways of being in the world; it is a continuous thinking exercise that deconstructs the key concepts of western history, like identity, species, and race.

The greatest challenge for contemporary human beings is to move towards a radical change of perspective, so that they can be seen as part of a great and complex system of relations in which any pre-established and apparent identity is in fact the consequence of continuous symbiotic intra-actions. That of intra-action² is here a key concept: it introduces the impossibility of circumscribing individuals into one category, to then highlight the associations that allow each earthling to identify itself as such, and it includes all those human and non-human phenomena that while operating together give a recognizable shape to constantly transforming entities.

Throughout history, however, human beings have generated precise classification methods, based on fixed qualities that only consider change within an evolutionary frame, which have provided a precise taxonomy to both organic and inorganic species. If modern science has introduced this kind of linguistic conventions, in the social field the same attitude can be found in the production of specific ontologies of race, that authors such as Franz Fanon and Sylvia Winter addressed, in the sixties, as some of the most relevant themes of post-colonialism. Essential for these theorists was the pursue of the de-alienation of humans, in order for them to rediscover bodies without race or, using another phrasing, bodies that are emptied of any cultural taxonomy.

One of the starting points of this movement of rediscovery, that goes through the re-evaluation of the significance of hybrids and otherness, lies in the intention of moving the focus from objects to connections, towards temporary or continuous juncture points, concentrating on associations between images and concepts, prior to the ones between living things.

The show by Jason Gomez is dotted with connections, provisional associations between objects, between the written word and built environments. The public enters a space that is sectioned by a number of differently sized tents, originally used to propagate biological material indoors.

¹ Correspondence with the artist, December 2017

² Karen Barad introduces the concept of *intra-actions* in “Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and Entanglement of Matter and Meaning”, Duke University Press, 2007.

The words “Clonal Hut” immediately take us back to the serial reproduction processes that affect vegetal organisms and, just as it happens in the great greenhouses for intensive cultivation, each work is hanged, “connected” to its containing structure, forming a more complex installation. By occupying and taking these environments out of their context, Jason Gomez accompanies the public into a space that is metaphorically cultivated through processes of contamination and hybridization, treating all the works as genetically specific elements, capable, together, of generating new micro-environments.

Hung in the first room of the gallery, a banner created through the re-elaboration of the famous Caspar David Friedrich painting “Wanderer above the sea of fog” exorcises the beginning of the intellectual superiority of man over nature. The sentiment of the sublime elevates humans to the position of conscious observer of the world. They are then capable of distancing themselves from the immense power and beauty of nature, transforming it into a marvelous object that creates wonder. The work, wrapped around itself and held by the knots used in bondage, becomes a grid, another metaphor that acts within the space.

Another two objects independently repeat within Gomez’s production: the orchid - a subject that he already used in his show *-opsis* in 2016 - and the sighthound become here emblems of originality and identity of the species. The artist contaminates their shapes, as in the series of seven orchids that, anchored to the inside of a tent, hide their imperfections behind the iridescent color of their iron petals.

The image of the sighthound, and in particular the image of Lucca, to whom Gomez reserves a space out of the tents, takes the attention back to the specific relation between the artist and his companion.

Addio del passato is a dog-faced mask onto which Gomez has glued his hair, signaling the beginning of an already started transformation, in which Lucca becomes the safe image through which he endures a path of re-discovery of the self in its relation to the outside world. *Untitled (walking stick)*, the wooden stick, polished and painted with the elongated shape of the sighthound, becomes the metaphor of a journey, the transition of the artist. The daily practice of *becoming-with* finds its representation in an instrument that often helps our wondering, the same one sustaining Friederich’s subject as he is immersed in the fog.

Jason Gomez narrates his works through the concept of object, or transitional phenomenon, referring to a process of discovery of the objective world thanks to which every child extends a subjective and egocentric vision of the world to an objective and organized one.

This primary experience contains the sprout of imagination, and invites human beings to push themselves towards the discovery of the surrounding world through certain and secure objects.

That is how Jason Gomez imagines his sculptures: connective elements in the uncertain relation between the self and the outside world. The transitional object is first of all a bridge element between humans and their certainties – their language for instance – and what has been unknown to them until now. Connections, the actual handholds that appear here and there throughout the exhibition, behave as secure points through which we can imagine, and therefore build, an hybrid space, to which we could potentially add more strata and levels of association.

It is exactly in this terrain that Gomez’s “Farewell to the Past” takes place, becoming a possible transitional space for the artist and the spectator that, by trusting objects – handholds – that are still recognizable, move the imagination beyond common thinking. The primacy of human beings, of the species and the race, finds an incubating space for what could become a world of future alliances.

Text by Caterina Molteni

Jason Gomez (Los Angeles, 1986) lives and works in Los Angeles.

He has an MFA in sculpture from UCLA, Los Angeles and a BFA from California State University, Long Beach.

Recent solo exhibitions include:

Addio al Passato, Clima, 2017; MFA thesis show at UCLA, Los Angeles, 2017; *-opsis*, Clima, 2017; *The Domestic Archivist*, Magazijn, 2014; RijksakademieOPEN 2014, Amsterdam, 2014; *Parallel Pictures*, Almanac Inn, 2014; RijksakademieOPEN 2013, Amsterdam, 2013.

Selected group show:

Condensed Matter Community, Synchrotron Radiation Center, 2015; *color my life with chaos of trouble*, Clima, 2015; *Evil Under the Sun*, Volcano Extravaganza Fiorucci Art Trust, 2013.