

BALICE HERTLING

GALERIE

Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo)
Anxiety, Depression & Triggers
June 6th through July 20th, 2019

Dear Jade

To speak directly to you feels like the thing to do here. You and I, we have never met. But on the off chance that I'm guessing right, I want to say that what I wrote a few years ago, isn't simply describing the art that you make, it feels true about you too: (...) Puppies Puppies is triggered by a push-and-pull dynamic between that which is intimately close and that which is far away, removed even. I went on to say that throughout the narrative that you have laid out, you are hyper-present, as much as you disappear behind a convoluted structure of signs and pathways—a maze, maybe.

For a while now, I've been suspiciously fascinated by that maze. From tragedy to desire, your biography continues to bleed into your work. In the middle of it, at times, pretty sentimental or even heavy-hearted outlook, I find myself asking who it is who is actually speaking and in what voice. It makes me wonder how much I'm watching the unfolding of an artistic identity or, indeed, the unraveling of a person's life. The two poles keep intertwining and feeding back.

The more, usually industrially mass produced, readymade materials serve for illustrations of a very private life that, up to this point, you've lived behind the public curtains of Puppies Puppies, the more I feel tempted to believe that what is actually important, isn't the source of those materials but what (or whom) they are addressing. So actually, it matters less whose voice it is that I am listening to and, instead, I'm curious where that voice is headed.

Any address, regardless what intention lies behind it, deals with anticipation and, as such, Puppies Puppies has been meditating a lot on trauma and the death. Relieve me of the bondage! I have to say, it feels good to be able to speak to you directly. When I think back though, I realize that your work never really dictated anything, it never came from a place of authority or attempted to claim one. In a way, even with a name like Puppies Puppies, you never insisted on your own authorship.

In Paris, you are exhibiting triggers that have been mechanically removed from guns in the US. Left without a device to be pulled, the triggers, as isolated objects, pose as a somewhat awkward and nasty metaphor for the castration of phallogocentric power. But it is never as easy as this. Come to think of it, the absent guns and the triggers are only quasi readymade, as they involve the action of something being removed.

More than that, the works embed a critique within themselves. A readymade can only ever trigger an association, it never really is that thing it refers to and, as such, the triggers represent the potential and limitation of the readymade itself. But perhaps such self-reflexivity of art, the moment when a work addresses or even reveals the structure of how it is set up or potentially functions, is its Achilles heel.

The materiality of the overlap between authorship and reference, between what is taken from the world and what is added to it, is, to chew again the gum of Duchamp's old idea, really thin. In the most convincing cases, the moment doesn't mark a dialectical result but instead an actual merging of the included margins.

Being like water, the margins, that are interspersed, are as much about the act of mirroring as it is about a machine of repression, the construction of mere fiction, the representation of the formation of the self and how brittle and precarious that process is—with the certainty that an entirely fresh identity can be born anew.

Puppies Puppies has always fiddled with the broken membrane between imagination and the experience of reality, something that isn't really perforated per se, but that is, perhaps, structured like a layer cake. Remember Donna Summer's McArthur Park: the talk of lost love, the creaminess of icing, melting in the rain.

The sweetness that goes down the drain.

Because things do change. Especially directions. Recently you shared a quote by Murakami that describes fate as a sandstorm. You can change directions, the quote says, but the sandstorm keeps chasing you. The sandstorm isn't blowing in from far away. It isn't something that isn't you. The storm is you.

Whenever I see your work, I like to think of that storm. The one that is you. With everything you're doing, how things have been leading up to this point, it feels like I've been looking at the eye of that storm.

And then, you wink.

- Tenzing Barshee

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Jade Kuriki Olivo (Puppies Puppies) was born in 1989, in the USA. She lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include Queer Thoughts, New York; Barbara Weiss, Berlin; What Pipeline, Detroit; and Overduin & Co., Los Angeles. In 2019 the artist will present solo exhibitions at Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg; Remail Modern, Saskatoon; and a two person exhibition with Eliza Douglas at Francesca Pia, Zurich. Puppies Puppies participated in the 2017 Whitney Biennial.