

Presented by Latcham Art Centre



UPON THE BALCONY, 2017, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches

Anthropocene

JAIME ANGELOPOULOS DERRICK PIENS

AUGUST 23 - OCTOBER 14, 2018

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JAIME ANGELOPOULOS | DERRICK PIENS

There is a presence and energy that can be felt immediately when one is first confronted with the paintings, sculptures and drawings by Jaime Angelopoulos and Derrick Piens. The gestural forms in both two and three-dimensions appear to be active, somehow moving in the space, yet all the while fixed in place. This exhibition brings together a selection of 15 works by these two artists, observing the way their respective practices respond to one another and their shared interest in nature. While both practices are formalist at their core - exploring the communicative potential of colour, texture, shape and form - the artists are equally interested in narrative. The titles of each work provide an access point for meaning, allowing the viewer to consider how the narratives at play may speak to their own experience.



Installation view

For their exhibition, *Anthropocene* at Latham Art Centre, Angelopoulos and Piens reflect on the variety of ways their work speaks to nature, particularly as it relates to the title *Anthropocene*, the proposed term for the period of time when significant human impact on the Earth has been greater than ever before. In their own unique ways, both artists examine the complexities of contemporary life, making work in reference to the human body and environment.

Angelopoulos' practice is often personal in nature, but aims to express the very relatable highs and lows of emotional experience. She gives physical form to feelings and sensations where the chosen colour and sense of movement through gesture, act a metaphor for an idea or expression. *Oxygenate* and *Heal Right*, provide two examples of the immediacy and joyful chaos visible in her drawings. Strong graphic lines of brightly coloured forms are temporarily interrupted, appearing to



OXYGENATE, 2017, 27X25 inches, conte and oil pastel on paper
HEAL RIGHT, 2017, 27X25 inches, conte and oil pastel on paper

be interwoven as they cycle through some sort of system. The titles invite us to think organically: *Oxygenate* hosts a series of neon pink and orange forms moving through a softer pattern of blue and white. The concept of oxygen in relation to the body or the environment can be considered, and perhaps the struggle and tension that can arise when the flow is interrupted. *Heal Right*, especially in relation to its counterpart, cues us to think about the energy and activity involved with healing. In the context of the exhibition, Angelopoulos' drawings shift seamlessly between bodily behaviours and the ecosystems of nature.

Both artists have an on-going interest in the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. The human figure is typically absent from Piens' densely occupied environments, but a human presence in the paintings is referenced through elements that look like built structures and with titles that allude to a place or feeling. *Upon the Balcony* (cover image) employs an inviting palette of soft pink, lavender and blue, which initially may remind one of sunsets enjoyed from a balcony view, but this notion of serene beauty is quickly challenged by the undulating gestural forms that seem to be slowly consuming the foreground of the picture plane. This beach-like environment in the distance is now less idilic and may soon disappear. The alien-like gestural limbs have a resonance with Angelopoulos' sculpture, where the same sorts of twists and turns activate her simple, but powerful forms. In fact, for this exhibition she re-worked two of her existing sculptures, taking inspiration from Peins' paintings with the lavender colour for *Orchid Child*, and the neon green and lavender colour combination for *Acid Tear* (installation view). This pastel palette is quite prevalent in Peins' recent paintings, providing a compelling contrast to the more electric and vibrant colours used in his sculptures. These decisions make sense as the sculptures take influence more directly from the formation of crystals, meteors and botanical life, whereas the soft hues in the paintings reinforce the tension at play in these environments that are simultaneously inviting and unsettling.

What at first seems accessible and non-threatening, reveals itself as precarious and unpredictable. Unfamiliar forms defy gravity and seem to float overhead, encroaching from all sides. In *Major Transition* (the centre of the three paintings

pictured below), there is a form that extends to either side - part bridge, part slide, part ramp. Is this safe passage or is this space collapsing? The angles are severe and there does not appear to be any stable surface to anchor oneself. *Too Bright* and *The Germ* conjure an even more ominous feeling with streams of smoke rising in the background and stacked forms accumulating in the foreground. The scale of these elements would dwarf the human figure, blocking access to what may lay beyond. It is as if things are moving at a rapid pace and escalating quickly. There is a physical weight to these forms that evokes an uneasiness as we try to make sense of this environment, but the few recognizable elements of the world we know leave us unsure, but curious.

The organic forms and gestures in Piens' paintings are in good company with the vulnerability and pathos that Angelopoulos achieves in her gestural sculptures. They are speaking the same language and having a conversation that demands our attention.



TOO BRIGHT, 2017, oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches
MAJOR TRANSITION, 2018, oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches
THE GERM, 2017, oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches



Installation view

Jaime Angelopoulos received her MFA from York University (2010), BFA from Nova Scotia College of Art & Design University (2005) and also studied at Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, TX (2006-07). She was awarded the Hazelton Sculpture Prize in 2013 and has participated in artist residencies at KulttuuriKauppila Art Centre (Finland) and the Banff Centre (Alberta). Her works are held in numerous corporate, institutional and private collections throughout Canada and the United States. Angelopoulos is represented by MKG 127 in Toronto and Parisian Laundry in Montreal.

Derrick Piens received his MFA from Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX (2007), BFA from Nova Scotia College of Art & Design University, (2005). He has participated in artist residencies at Thames Art Gallery (Chatham, ON) and KulttuuriKauppila Art Center, (Finland), and is the recipient of several grants and scholarships. He has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions across Canada and the United States including, *When Things Collide*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, (Waterloo, ON), *Summertime in Paris*, Parisian Laundry, (Montreal, QC), *Art of Our Century*, Pollock Gallery, curated by Christina Rees, (Dallas, TX) and *trans/FORM: Matter as Subject*, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, curated by David Liss, (Toronto, ON). Piens' work is held in both private and public collections internationally.

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