

Orphan Drift: *Unruly City*

Press release:

Orphan Drift is a collaborative media artist and avatar that emerged in London, 1994. The video, performances, installations and eponymous cyberpunk novel *0(rphan)d(rift>)* addressed the future through the science-fictional, nascent technologies and related shifts in perception and matter-energy. OD re-emerges in reconfigured form, again addressing the future as it speaks to us in this moment. Considering current narratives around climate change, bio-capital and related migratory patterns they re-imagine the urban as porous, interspecies and terraformed. We continue to work with moving images and ancient predictive technologies such as I-Ching to create non-linear narratives and installations. OD work has been performed and exhibited in galleries, museums, conferences and night clubs internationally. www.orphandrifarchive.com

Unruly City premieres segments from a new Orphan Drift media project, also titled *Unruly City*, alongside selections of related work by OD collaborators Ranu Mukherjee and Mer Maggie Roberts. *Unruly City* is built around Hexagram 49 of the I-Ching, presented to the artists during a reading intended to guide this project. It charts a course through a shifting urban imaginary emerging in the shadow of climate change and bio-capital, creating an amalgamation of potential spaces, materialities and creaturely life.

The first segments of this project bring together densely layered collaged video and animation in a collaborative work by the artists. Treating the hexagram reading as a partial score, these clips revolve around the description of a ritual for the new year: "At new year, dances when the exorcists, dressed in bearskins and wearing bear masks with 4 golden metal eyes would drive out the old year animals pushing them over the edge of the world into renewal and change. Humans also wore bear masks and dressed as other genders. Old things were destroyed. Everything moves into a liminal state, the fertile chaos called Change." *Unruly City* is in some way generating a space in which this fertile chaos manifests. Orphan Drift's *49*, installed in the window at Dold Projects, features elements of Hexagram 49 printed on silk. It marks and defines the space of the exhibition both for entering viewers and passersby.

The exhibition also includes static works by the artists Ranu Mukherjee and Mer Maggie Roberts, made in a similar vein or towards the making of *Unruly City*.

Mukherjee includes several paintings on paper and a hybrid film; *Chimeric (DogOwl living on the edge of free trade zone)*. Her images of bear hybrids and fires are preparatory works for *Unruly City*. During the drought in California, bears have been appearing in towns looking for water and are one of many indicators of shifting ecology. During her 2015 residency at Space118 in Mumbai, India, Mukherjee began to make hybrid animal paintings which combined land and flying species, as creatures from the future. Reflecting both melancholy and power, they are conceived of as creatures attempting to have better chances of survival. Mukherjee was inspired both by the magnitude of the city and by a three legged dog she met while staying in the Kherwadi neighborhood just outside of the Bandra Kurla Complex – an enormous 'planned commercial complex', or free trade zone created to bypass any national and local regulatory standards for resource extraction, labour practices and land use. From this, she brings a set of questions to *Unruly City*: Is it possible for the seeds of the old form of urban, where culture can be created regardless of economic power, to be carried into the future, despite this form of organic urbanity becoming less dominant? Can a creature, in the act of becoming, be an agent for storing that which is being disappeared? What is this intense visceral identification she feels with cities of this magnitude? Her film *Chimeric* features a drawn dog owl maneuvering its expansive body in the narrow space of the vertical frame, composed of photographic fragments shot in Mumbai. The ephemera of the city - lost earrings and chewing gum, bits of cloth and hair clips get stuck in its wings as it moves to the edge of the land and becomes amorphous and fluid. The work is an attempt to visualize a confrontation between two kinds of speculation.

MER brings a mutating world set in a forest infected by cliched fantasies of wilderness and the sublime to the project, which proliferates across her screen, collage and monotype images. There are references to ancient and futurist entities and a pervasive foreboding of cosmological uncertainty – portents prescience of profound ruptures in the fabric of realities. Mer draws on images of portals and holes as access spaces for a series of radical becomings, techno animistic and, later in the video, technogenetic (radical, non-conscious human and machine evolution in tandem that would produce new hybrid organic - inorganic life forms that are beyond human and confound all humanist and capitalist agendas). Her *Unruly City* is inhabited by fragments of urban myths around edgelands and wildernesses; vestiges of being, skins, furs, sleepwalkers, ghosts, spooky dells and indeterminate virtual objects. All exist in an awkward temporality, frozen, blinking in and out of existence and refer to events that are always hyperobject elsewhere. They are intruding from the parallel dimensions and quantum zones of possibility that shadow our daily life, algorithmic, vast and incoming. A repatterning by artificial entities, suggested here by proliferating digital skins and golden parametric geometries.

Hooded human and animal watchers, perceived from other kinds of time, bear witness to this gradual evertion. They are a continuous presence in Mer's current work - inspired by her increasingly finding herself in the role of disaster tourist – recording Capetown's ravaging forest fires, refugee camps and xenophobias, drought emergencies, human driven changing animal populations, toxic waterways and nomadic peoples failing magic. The collages, influenced in aesthetic by the spatial vertigo of Piero della Francesca, Mughal miniatures, Mayan avatar stone assemblages and Baroque excessive swarms bring things together that need now to coexist. The monotypes are fluorescent and shimmering, fantastical, dirty and vibrant. Mer is fascinated in her space of watching, finding associations, making visible hidden circuits of accountability and collusion and mapping change, fantastical, ungrounded, destabilised and alluring.

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Dold Projects, Sankt Georgen