

Psyche

The title of Lars Skjeltbreia's exhibition takes its name from one of the most mischievous concepts in Western thought, namely, *Psyche*. The word itself is equal mythology to the Ancient Greek legend that was woven around it. Psyche was ambiguous from the outset, whimsically evoking the human soul, life, spirit, breath, and strangely, psyche was a butterfly. Fluttering, fluctuating, transformative and ephemeral, perhaps the Greeks were aware of deeper connotative associations, which later came to be buried under the determined structures of hyper-reflective modernity. Psyche is also breath, the act of breathing life into an object, in other words, creating. There is a sense in which consciousness is the activity of creation-breathing, of objectively inhaling and exhaling the external world through reciprocal respiration, within an intangible medium. Or conversely, perhaps humans are organs of their environs, a growth or membrane resulting from the world's breathing them (maybe this is what Chuang Tzu's butterfly was attempting to communicate to him). In its indeterminacy, breath is somehow pure openness, drawing the inside out, and the outside in, a swelling portal, that follows vibrations and rhythms, patterns, and folds of becoming-other. The Greek butterfly, then, suggests that at their innermost, humans are always already something external, something other. In brief, it testifies to our essential plasticity and fundamental malleability.

Lars Skjeltbreia's Psyche radicalizes the above notions, transporting them ever further afield. In his exhibition, Skjeltbreia summons alien scenes and phenomena of the microcosms and it is no coincidence that the centerpiece draws its inspiration from a microscopic image of a butterfly wing. The phantasmagorical entities of the micro-world, ever-remote due to physical limitations of everyday perception and experience, despite their omnipresence, here meet with us in a relatable proximity of scale; their form, texture and features simultaneously familiar and something else entirely. The numerous scales of the wing, colored in varying forest hues and organic tones, swing and bulge gently in random ripples impelled by what seems like an internal breeze. They hover meditatively in front of us, moving interchangeably from singularity to gestalt - like living wind chimes whose scaled undulations beckon another world. Once again, an almost sedative familiarity, yet, coupled with an overarching transportative otherness. What emerges from this unity of cosmic vistas, the microcosmic and our own (relative macrocosmic) plateau, is an embodied recognition of self-similarity, ambiguous enough to unleash an intuition borne from a common architecture, a kind of frozen layered fractal. Here, the recognition is not a cognitive or interpretative act, but is instead freed precisely because it has been brought to its limits, and in the process, unhinging both

perception and reflection from habitual trajectories. The fractal aspects of the microcosm fold into our own, revealing our own hitherto unconscious forces, patterns, forms, qualities and textures, ultimately propelling intuition toward a fractal allegiance with the cosmos, and yonder. Though, only to return in same instance it embarks. As the engagement grows increasingly intimate, our spatio-temporal positionality disintegrates, and inside/outside, small/large and any strict dimensionality are slowly lost to forgetful irrelevance. All the while taking place in lapsing moments of canny proportions and familiar scale. Finally, we subtly merge with Skjelbreia's world, and any distinct border between subject and object, between the perceiver and the world, consequentially fractures.

There is a paradox here, of course, which is not the fault of the physical world itself, but representation; nature solves its paradoxes or propagates them, indifferent to hermeneutics. Nevertheless, sensation maintains its necessary orbit, shimmering just beyond the outer rims of the spectacle that perception itself helped breathe life into. And these oscillations remain perspectival, in actuality, these spheres of life are not detached from one another, operating in monadic isolation, on the contrary, their unfolding takes place within layers of instantaneous compresence, always breathing in unison. We are confronted with, and placed within, an interstitial space in which our sensorium (in the most expanded sense) becomes malleable and open, porous and plastic, from molecular to macrocosmic, traversing energy and matter, untangling us from pre-conceived perceptions of 'humanness'. We experience, breathe, perceive and ingest with our entire physical/psychical being, at every scale of our body and being, and through it, the field of the human is temporally re-located; ushering in the potentials of metamorphosis. Ultimately, Skjelbreia's interstitial space sets consciousness afloat, jettisoning it into an active process of transformation by means of its continuously interwoven relation with nature, summing that-which-is-not-human, otherness, at the heart of the open terrain we call human.

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