

Karla Marchesi: Exhibition Text - Slow is smooth, Smooth is fast  
Nicholas Thompson Gallery 2023

The garden is overgrown and lit only by the torches of a search party. Human life may be absent here but there is life to be found indeed. Remnants of metallic material are snagged in branches. Once belonging to a rescue blanket they now morph, over an indecipherable stretch of time into chrysalises. These cocoons extend an invitation of renewal and self-correction if given the time and conditions to do so.

Slow is smooth. Smooth is fast. Nature plays a long game.

The exhibition *Slow is Smooth, Smooth is fast* at Nicholas Thompson Gallery, October 4<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, takes its title from a phrase coined by the US Marine Corps, referring to methodical and steady mission tactics. Though for me it expresses a poetry of relational time and physics. This exhibition extends from my most recent show, *Cruise Control Death Drive* at Bark Gallery Berlin, September 8<sup>th</sup>-October 6<sup>th</sup> 2023.

Bookended by two-shows, these series question the limitations of looking to solutions for crises within systems which bore their creation.

Through an art historical lens, my work refracts the socio-cultural anxieties of our age, critiquing what it means to be human at this present moment, under conditions of late capitalism and Anthropocentrism. Here I interweave allegoric deconstruction of ideological systems with autobiography, pathos and humour. In recent years I've been drawn to the 'Impossible Bouquet' popularised in 17th century Dutch Still Life painting. Secular merchants championed this genre, where every bloom is unseasonably bountiful: A simulacrum of nature. I am attracted to its symbolic ability to stand in for market-capitalism and Western worldviews.

*Cruise Control Death Drive* explores the relationship between human-made climate change, western epistemology and the psychological death-drive of our species. *Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast* responds in its wake.

17<sup>th</sup> century Still Lifes espoused nature as possessable. 19<sup>th</sup> century Industrialists saw it as extractable. German Romantics saw nature as a mirror to the individualised self, gazing upon mountaintops and violent seas for moments of self-conscious humility: an 18<sup>th</sup> century selfie if you will.

#awestruck

Sped up and amplified these imperial systems blithely drive a highway to existential destruction – blinkered by hubris. Disabling cruise control and sharply turning left seems inconceivable within the constructs of modern life. To paraphrase Žižek it's easier imagine end of the world than the end of capitalism.

You are invited to venture off-road and consider the generative possibility of non-human ontologies.

Here I paint complex entanglements of multi-genus flora in hyper-natural, Post-Humanist scenes. In reimagined ecosystems non-human subjects are presented as heroic and embodied with agency. Conflating laws of time, biology and chemistry, these non-human protagonists display a potential for infinite adaptation, mutation and hybridity. They blend existing and fantastical botanical species within landscapes unsettled by the forces of eerie weather phenomena. Picture the convergence of desert

and oceanic landscapes, tidal expanses and alpine summits, all overgrowing the remnants of a bygone anthropocentric world. In their place, new organic monuments rise.

Within this paradoxical horror and delight there lies hope, to imagine a new future: one not in fear of change, but of possibility and generative co-creation – which is evitable with or without us.