

“Labyrinth”

Joël Andrianomearisoa, Bea Bonafini and Jeanne Gaigher

5 October – 5 November 2022

Kristin Hjellegjerde London (Wandsworth)

Private View: Wednesday, 4th of October, from 6:30 – 9 pm (wandsworth)

Labyrinth, the latest group exhibition at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, brings together a vivid collection of textile works, gestural drawings and elemental paintings by the artists Joël Andrianomearisoa, Bea Bonafini and Jeanne Gaigher. Though highly distinct in style and subject matter, the works share a certain fluidity, in which layers of symbols, forms and narratives appear to drift in and out of focus, drawing the viewer ever closer to the surface and offering fresh perspectives with each encounter.

Malagasy artist Joël Andrianomearisoa considers his work to be an ongoing series of ever-evolving exercises which explore complex emotional states that we all experience but can't quite articulate in words. For this exhibition, he presents textile works from his ongoing series *Labyrinth of Passions*. *Labyrinth Summer Act 1* and *Labyrinth Autumn Act 2* are formed through the delicate layering of materials and resemble abstract landscapes with the line of the horizon delineated in each by a subtle change of colour in the woven threads. For Andrianomearisoa, the emotionality of the work is very much related to the sensorial experience, the way we relate physically to the materials and anticipate touch. As with all of the artist's works, the various iterations reflect on a specific moment in time – the time in which they were made – while also evoking a sense of the eternal. The line of the horizon, for example, provides a focal point and a sense of structure, dividing the land and sea, but also serves as a visual metaphor for a threshold or a state of meditation. The slow, unfolding narratives of these works are contrasted by the quick, dynamic gestures in a series of drawings by the artist titled *History of Roses*. Presented as an installation, these works pay homage to the mythology and romance of Andrianomearisoa's favourite flower through fragments of handwritten text and swirling monochromatic imagery.

Italian artist Bea Bonafini's interdisciplinary practice similarly draws on the language of mythology, oneiric visions and bodily experiences. For this exhibition she has created a large-scale textile work in which two hybrid, aqueous creatures swirl around one another, their shimmering, scaled bodies creating an almost infinite loop. The work was made using hand-dyed wool and bamboo silk in collaboration with artisans in the hand tufting technique which combines the ancient craft of weaving with modern day technology to create a kind of pixelated effect so that as you approach the work, the image appears to slowly dissolve. Also on show are two of the artist's sculptural cork paintings, which were inspired by *Cosmicomics*, a collection of short stories by Italo Calvino which each build an imaginative world around a scientific 'fact.' In a similar way, Bonafini brings together organic forms with spiritual imagery to meditate on origin stories. *Burst from my lips* appears almost like a whirlpool of wave-like forms out of which the shape of hands and two faces appear, while *Crush, Crushed* comprises a central egg shape surrounded by what looks like two halves of a shell. While the former work creates a feeling of lightness and fluidity through a watery colour palette, the vivid hues in *Crush, Crushed* suggests a more intense emotional experience – the inner red lining evoking the appearance of blood, or perhaps heat.

South African artist Jeanne Gaigher's mixed-media, textile-based works also blur the boundaries between the corporeal and spiritual worlds. Her compositions are often built around two central figures that appear in a state of transformation or disintegration, their flesh rippling, limbs twisted and fragmented, within a landscape that almost appears like a body itself, comprised of layers of material painted in a mixed colour palette of earthy and acid tones that simultaneously imply growth and sickness. This synergy between the figures and their surroundings is both intimate and uncanny, tender and violent, familiar and strange. The large-scale work titled *If it's for you, it won't pass you*, for instance, depicts what looks like some kind of fertility ritual. An egg-shaped hole is cut through the centre of the canvas while two muscular female bodies standing on either side are connected to both the egg and one another by an undulating liquid-like substance. As throughout Gaigher's work, there is a curious interplay between strength and vulnerability, which is also reflected in the materiality of the work and the artist's process. Gaigher stitches layers of raw canvas, painting directly onto the fabric in translucent layers of watercolour and ink through which it is possible to see the marks beneath. Each piece is then covered with a shimmering gauze-like material that adds to the physicality of the work and evokes the idea of a threshold. It is as if we are glimpsing a hidden underworld, a liminal space caught between life and death.

Presented together, this diverse collection of artworks creates a complex and highly tactile environment – a labyrinth – where the boundaries between body and landscape, myth and reality, ancient and new dissolve to open up new ways of not only looking at art, but also thinking about the world around us.

About Kristin Hjellegjerde

Established in 2012, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery has fast gained a reputation for exhibiting a diverse roster of innovative, international artists, both emerging and established, with strong theoretical and aesthetic bases. Since its inception the gallery has embraced a collaborative, multicultural curatorial approach, maintaining a deep devotion to the artists it represents while fostering close relationships with museums and curators worldwide.

Drawing on her own international background, Kristin Hjellegjerde seeks to nurture new talent by offering artists a dynamic, inclusive platform through which they can be introduced to local and global clients. She works closely with other curators and collectors as well as developers and architects to develop unique and exciting exhibition concepts. In 2019, she curated 'Kubatana', a museum exhibition focused on African artists at Vestfossen Kunsthøgskolen, Norway and in November 2020, she joined forces with Jacqueline Goldenberg to launch JK Masters, an art consultancy that aims to present secondary market artworks to those who are looking for something unique and special of the highest quality and/or historic value. In October 2021, Kristin Hjellegjerde was featured in Monocle Magazine's Top 25 Global Entrepreneurs of 2021.

In April 2018, the gallery opened a space in Berlin, which was shortly followed by the launch of a second location in London, occupying a two-storey building in the vibrant neighbourhood of London Bridge. In June 2020, the gallery opened its first annual summer space in a converted shrimp factory in the beautiful coastal town of Nevlunghavn, Norway. Following its success, a second summer space launched in 2021 in an 18th century German castle forty minutes outside of Berlin at Schloss Görne. In Autumn 2022 the gallery will expand its presence in the US with the opening of a permanent space in Palm Beach.