

ARE THEY ALL YOURS

Polly Morgan x Robert Cooper

08/02/19 – 07/04/19



How to Loop in Python, 2019
taxidermy reticulated Python, fibreglass, plaster, fridges
165cm x 53cm x 76cm

On paper it may seem that the organic sculptural works of taxidermist Polly Morgan are the antithesis of multidisciplinary artist Robert Cooper, whose digital and performance work lives within the internet, mediated through technology. Although Cooper's interest in the synthetic and mass-produced does counterpoint Morgan's focus in '*cannibalistic, predatory and unnerving*' Animalia, both artists' aesthetic is grounded in the manipulation of bodies.

Whilst Morgan's craft sees her skinning and manipulating the cadavers of animals to create physical sculpture, Cooper (usually) uses his own body, as transferred through computer to screen and disseminated through Instagram, which is also how the two artists met and began collaborating.

The artists found they treated their images differently, Morgan being the more guarded of the two, understandably so as the very nature of Cooper's online work is to be viewed, edited and reposted endlessly, whereby sharing the images is to lose his grip on them, and consequently his ownership of them. This exhibition brings together both artists' preferred mediums and looks at how they have influenced and affected each other, Cooper describes learning taxidermy in Morgan's studio as exposing himself to '*all the sensory stimulation that is lacking when working on a computer*'.

A large taxidermy python, shown publicly for the first time here, celebrates their artistic collaboration. The monolithic reptile, an unsettling being to face, has been infested by three-dimensional 'doodles', clambering and burrowing into its folds. Persistent and unrelenting, they represent obsessive niggles; a feeling or memory that nudges its way into your conscience. They inhabit the space and share it with mundane objects; a cap, a rucksack, a freezer, and in doing so, they articulate hangovers from the virtual world, insidiously worming their way into reality.

Frozen sculptures are exhibited in a glass-lidded chest freezer, intended to further consider technology's intrusion on reality; these works only exist as long as the freezer remains plugged in and fully-functioning. The frozen atmosphere ensures the preservation of the decaying organic material, and, just as it is possible to cryogenically preserve a body after death, there are now companies who offer to keep a digital presence going after one's demise, between technology and the internet we can preserve both the physical and the psychological.

Paradoxically, the freezing environment can not only preserve death, but it also has the ability to withhold life, keeping embryos with the potential for life in indefinite stasis. Here, technology directly interrupts the natural course of death – conserving the body from innate decay yet also withholding the possibility of new life.

Both the exhibition title and names of the works included have been lifted from internet searches, collectively written. A word or two typed into a search engine brings up a list of popular searches, each subsequent search is influenced by the last, as the computer seeks to embody the mind of its user, left to chance yet inevitably predictable. Each element of this exhibition, from the artists meeting to the given artwork titles have developed through the mass of data we commit to the internet. Patterns may emerge and probability can be calculated, but there is still serendipity to be found within the public mass-sharing of information.

Polly Morgan (b. 1980)

Selected Exhibitions:

Naturalia, Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York (2017), *Organic Matters*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC (2015), *Psychopomps*, Haunch of Venison, London (2010), *You Dig the Tunnel, I'll Hide the Soil*, White Cube (2008).

Selected Collections:

The New Art Gallery Walsall, Warrington Museum and Art Gallery, Royal Albert Memorial Museum Exeter, The Olbricht Collection, Ömer Koç, The Zabłudowicz Collection, Ivor Braka, David Roberts Art Foundation, Didier Casimiro, Murderme

Robert Cooper (b. 1994)

Central St Martins, London 2013, Akademie de Bildenden Kunste, Munich 2016, MA Fine Art Hons University of Edinburgh 2013-18.

Recipient of the Scottish Sculpture Workshop Graduate Award 2018.

@futurelessfame

About HIX ART:

HIX ART was established by the restaurateur and author Mark Hix in 2012. It is located in the basement of Tramshed on Rivington Street in Shoreditch, London, and is run by Director Sophie Harriott. It stages up to eight exhibitions annually, and its curatorial programme embraces a wide range of artists, from the established to the undiscovered.

Opening Times:

For the duration of the exhibition, the gallery will be open Monday to Sunday, 11am – 6pm.

For all enquiries contact HIX ART

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