

Ali Lotz

Four/Four

Through the Forest of Denial

Opening 23.09.21 6-9pm

Continues 24.10.21 - 23.10.21

Fridays & Saturdays 12-6pm

& By Appointment

Along the turnpike, miles away from an exit in either direction, there is forest on both sides with no conceivable entrance point. These are the woods that 'Through the Forest of Denial' takes place within. Mysterious, inaccessible and right there beside us. Showing a mixture of work mined from pop and underground culture, the installation is an exercise in connective research and genre bending aesthetics.

Led by the film 'We Are Who We Are' the artist explores the impossibility of living the American dream, the disillusionment of being on the road while burdened by unemployment and debt, and the ecstasy of the unburdened life of a monster.

Building on this, the rest of the work emerges from the process of unburdening the mind. Fandom and obsession allowed to run rampant, the works give space to pop cultural figures, zoning in on small moments from films, music videos, and paparazzi photos, or memories from dreams. The resulting installation brings the images and aesthetics of contemporary pop culture into the canon of Americana regardless of the cultural origins of the source material.

b. 1994, Butler, PA, USA; Ali Lotz is an interdisciplinary artist who lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. This is her first solo show in the UK.

The Artist & Four/Four would like to thank Transmission, Anika Ahuja, Harry Freestone and Sarah Wilson for their assistance and contributions towards the exhibition.



Room 1

IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT

Oil on canvas
1.22m X 1.52m

IN THE STILL AND THE QUIET

Oil on canvas
1.22m X 1.52m

I'LL SLIP AWAY

Oil on canvas
1.22m X 1.52m

LIKE A BIRD IN FLIGHT

Oil on canvas
1.22m X 1.52m
All on custom stands

Round Eared Bear

Handstitched acrylic

Pointy Eared Bear

Handstitched acrylic

Rabbit Eared Bear

Handstitched acrylic

Drawings untitled 1-48

Earl Had to Die T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

You Make Me Sick T-shirt

Ink and acrylic on cotton jersey

No Fate But What You Make / Wolf T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

Bootleg Poison T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

Bootleg R.L. Burnside Bad Luck City T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

Out of My Mind T-shirt

Acrylic on cotton jersey

Signage

Release Me

Acrylic on aluminum

Nobody Gets Me Down

Acrylic on aluminum

Here I Am Where I Must Be

Acrylic on plywood

PALACE

Steel

Fence-cutting Mask

Cotton

Room 2

We Are Who We Are
Film, 10'51"

T-shirts

Pain T-shirt

Acrylic on cotton jersey

Release Me Skeleton T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

Pennsylvania Dead T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

Pig Feed T-shirt

Acrylic on cotton jersey

Future Coyote T-shirt

Ink on cotton jersey

Dear God I Hate Myself

Ink on cotton jersey

PISS & VINEGAR T-shirt

Acrylic on cotton jersey

Courtyard

Palace in the Pines

Acrylic and pine

Sarah Wilson's Jokes

Audio

freedom in the dark

*I used to have this
recurring black and white
dream when I was a kid. I
befriend a monster in a
graveyard, and we become
very close. But he turns
on me and I have to kill
him. And then I am crying
at his funeral in the very
same graveyard, because I
had to kill my best
friend.*

by: anika ahuja

if you weren't anyone before you can make yourself up of all the things you see and believe and then they'll tell you that you are that thing and you are free to say that you are that thing or free to deny it and ultimately I don't care what you think . I want to ride free and be a bird or on a horse through the hills and live off the land that would be nice . no one can stop you when you know it is free you are free it is everything you want you can have . it is a big bright sky and a wide open well you can swim in it the water is only black if you decide you can't see through it it is a river that runs and the fish are free and all the pigeons are swans if you paint them white . it is up to you you are in a prison of your own making break the chains or you can turn them into gold . who cares if you are sad don't be sad it isn't real nothing is a copy if a copy of a copy of a copy is your own make the job don't do the job be the person you were meant to be you aren't the person in the mirror the person in the mirror is you . manifest manifest manifest . your body is made of mercury move through the world like it belongs to you . sometimes you hurt the ones you love to love the ones you hate but pain isn't real there isn't any sunshine streaming through the window if you don't want to feel the warmth . systems aren't broken they are built up. the moon belongs to the earth but it is just a lightbulb to help you see better in the dark maybe you just need to sleep less . no one gets to where they are going if they are going to go in the wrong direction but you can draw the map if you try hard enough. it is up to you to be the one who can live the life you dream if you want to dream about death then maybe live until you are dead and if you don't want to die you don't have to do it no one can tell you what to do beautiful people live forever. there is an endless road before you lay the asphalt as you drive on forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever until everyone knows and no one forgets people who turn themselves into the people they want to be and wouldn't it be fun we could live forever and die together and something about that baked-in-the-sun-dust smell just old enough to sit in the front seat playing with the radio watching the orange dial move through AM and FM top 40s flipping to country to classical and back . it is nearing midnight and the dj broadcasting from the club is playing " do you believe in life after love " .

Excerpts from a Conversation

Ali Lotz. - ...The film has come out of a few years of research about rurality + ferality, folk music, pop culture, the undercommons- mixed with a bit of reflection on the myth of America. A lot of the footage at the beginning is taken from road trips around the country, some alone and some with a friend, that were originally intended to become a road film, which never really worked out. Mostly because we felt like nothing was actually as exciting as we imagined and we were too busy talking about being unemployed to say anything epic or cool. In retrospect it's something about the failure of the American dream in contrast with how physically cool and beautiful it is as a place. It's hard to enjoy this because we're all so burdened by making a living while pursuing our dreams and making our families proud. This then got mixed with reflecting on my home which is a rural area outside of Pittsburgh, very blue collar. A lot of horror films are filmed nearby and I wanted to bring that into the work. So the graveyard scenes are shot where the original Night of the Living Dead was filmed at Evans City Cemetery. I was interested in this idea of becoming a monster in order to be free because of the burden of achieving the American dream and making your family and your home proud while also fitting in with academics and the metropolitan upper class and just this constant feeling pressure and wanting to just exist outside of all of it. I think it touches on this tension that people from rural places often feel where your home is both the idyll and the horror. I linked this also to the t-shirts/signs/bumper sticker culture with aphorisms on them like "Don't mess with me, I'm a pipefitters wife" or "Gimme a collar, if I've gotta work like a dog I might as well look like one too". Trying to be proud of things you think other people might look down on you for. This is all then mixed with pop culture because when you grow up in a small town it's only right to be obsessed with Kesha or Slipknot or David Lee Roth. And that is about looking at fandom as an escape. The music aspect is important to me because I see it as a cultural access point. Genre bending in a way that shows the similarities between say Kesha and Black Metal but also between the different people that like them.

Adam Grainger - ...I quite like that you talk about a road film that never really worked out, about it never being as exciting as you imagine. There's something there that ties in so well with what you're looking at, it is just the epitome of the American dream isn't it? I feel like America has a different relationship to roads compared to the UK too, that they're somehow more linked to an idea of destiny, or self determination which plays quite well into the whole failed experience. The stuff about the graveyard is a great background to the work, that's so cool! I wonder what it is about the Pittsburgh area that attracts all the horror stuff?

I like that you mention Kesha too, and the link between her and black metal in the video. I feel like the venn diagram of Pop and Black Metal is almost a circle sometimes, which I love. They're both so heavily centred around the idea of spectacle, and romanticising aspects of life which in reality are much less dramatic. I think when you mash all of those different fandoms together it creates a sort of irony that exposes a common link- the desire for some form of escapism. And I suppose in the context of the work that deconstruction then gets shifted onto the idea of America, and shows how impossible that is as a concept too?

A.L. - There's this idea of trying to find some sort of redemption where it's not meant to be...amongst all of the impossibility and failure. This is where I think Moten and Harneys' idea of the undercommons does the best job at collectively defining a group of people who are disconnected but unified in their rejection from mainstream society. Which also ties into the idea of becoming the monster to be free as a sort of refusal of the choices. The idea that perhaps we don't need to strive to fit in or be 'better'. When I think about being scary, that is relative to who is perceiving the monster. Say you feel like a monster anywhere that you feel like you don't fit in. Then the reaction to this can be to make yourself more extreme. In the film becoming a monster is the escape from being perceived or furthermore from living by the rules of being a human.

A.G - So in this context a monster is a subjective thing. I wonder what the conditions are that prevent someone or something from being solely viewed as a monster? If I think about a vampire, or a zombie, the things that humanise them and remove them from being a pure 'evil' come from somewhere between empathy and pity; you can see a monster and still understand why it is that way. I'm wondering if this plays into your idea of monsters, I suppose in some way it has to? As in, the world might understand your conditions as monstrous, but you can identify the aspects that are not so tied to a binary of good or evil.. You're totally right about becoming more extreme, all monsters start off as something less terrible, and the descent is a defence isn't it.

REFERENCES

Alice Longyu Gao

The Beak Trio

Bebe Rexha

Bialowieza Forest

Bret Michaels

BTS

Diamanda Galas

The Dixie Chicks

DPR Ian

Earthater

Evans City Cemetery

Farah Fawcett

Fence Cutting Wars

The Grapes of Wrath

Hares on the Mountain

Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerard

Hulder

In The Pines

Isle of Lismore

Katie Cruel

Kesha

Lavender Country

Lizzie Abner

Love Chunibiyo and other Delusions

Lucinda Williams

Mayhem

Mokyo

Naruto

Night of the Living Dead

The Palace in the Pines, Lowellville, Ohio

Pamela Anderson

Pennsylvania Dutch

Poison

Roswell

Screamin' Jay Hawkins

Slipknot

Stray Kids

System of A Down

Taemin

Tomorrow x Together

Train to Busan

T-Model Ford

The Undercommons

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