

Siera Hyte
Honey Week
March 3rd – April 14th

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Ladies and Gentlemen: the play you are about to watch is of no great consequence and yet disquieting; the sad tale of someone who reached for the moon and discovered the meaning of a broken heart. Love, that same love that passes with its ironies and tragedies through human lives, on this occasion passes through a distant meadow inhabited by insects – a place where once upon a time life was peaceful and serene. The insects were extremely happy and spent their lives quietly drinking dewdrops and instilling in their children a saintly fear of their gods. They made love naturally, without undue concern. For love was something handed down from father to son like an old and exquisite jewel which the very first insect had received directly from the hand of God. With the same tranquility and sureness with which the flower gives its pollen to the wind, so they gave themselves to love's sweet pleasure in the lush, green grass. But then one day there was an insect who longed to go beyond such love; who was seized by a vision far removed from his normal way of life. Perhaps he had struggled to read a book of poems abandoned on the grass by one of the few poets who visit the countryside; perhaps he was enraptured by a line, you know the kind: 'Oh how I love you, impossible dream!' And so I beg each one of you: do not leave your books of poems in the fields, for they cause the insects immeasurable heartache. The kind of poetry that questions the movements of the stars can be harmful indeed to immature souls. It goes without saying that the lovelorn little creature perished. For the truth is that Love is Death in disguise. How often in our prayer books is that skeleton who wields the scythe depicted as a woman who deceives us and opens the doors to darkness. It is as if Cupid himself sleeps often in the hollow chambers of her skull. And in how many ancient tales does a flower, a kiss, a longing look perform the function of a dagger?

The Butterfly's Evil Spell, Federico Garcia Lorca

Siera Hyte's exhibition, *Honey Week*, features work that implies an audience both human and animal. Hyte's practice is based in sculpture and performance; though these media usually include reference to a human scale or form, the work in *Honey Week* alludes to human and non-human bodies alike. By deploying shifts in scale and material meaning, Hyte addresses the phenomenology of multiple conditions of corporeality.

To do so, Hyte has created an installation that confuses the gallery and the space outside of it. The floor covered with clay for her piece, *I change with your weather* (2018) both continues the dirt of the street outside and recalls the natural spaces from which such clay would come, while still firmly rooting the viewer within the gallery. *Taste of red* (2017), constructed from emptied Coke bottles, recycled and refilled with red sugar water, functions also as a hummingbird feeder. To ensure an animal audience can access this piece, the gallery's windows and doors will be kept open during open hours. The result is a viewer experience that opens up into multiple expanses and modes of being—*Honey Week* employs

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methods of understanding rooted in the textual and the sensual, affirming the body as a valid site of knowledge as a result.

In creating the works for this show, Hyte took inspiration from Spanish dramatist Federico Garcia Lorca's first play, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* (1920). In it, a young beetle falls in love with a butterfly; his love unrequited leads to his emotional and existential demise. But the crux of the play lies in the fact that the insects act as people do, and as one reads—or listens or watches—it is easy to forget the characters that live and love and mourn are not human, but bug.

In the play's prologue, Lorca writes that the beetle's love and thus undoing is caused, perhaps, by stumbling upon a book of poems left by someone visiting the countryside. Lorca writes, "And so I beg each one of you: do not leave your books of poems in the fields, for they cause the insects immeasurable heartache." If this is the effect we may have on the insects, what sort may they have on us?

Honey Week achieves what *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* does: a sort of effortless empathy of the viewer with the bug or the hummingbird whom Hyte envisions as another audience for her works. Through this explicit choice of audience of such different size and mode of being from a human viewer, she compels the visitor to experience the question: What happens to the body when it tries to engage something explicitly not made for it?

Though Hyte's use of honey and pollen, as well as her transfiguration of the gallery space as a space populated by the birds and the bees, may evoke in some visions of current posthuman impulses, of a future in which insects inherit the earth, or a present in which health trends co-opt the foods of insects in order to achieve effects meant only for, say, queen bees, Hyte's work lies cram in a different imagining. Her vision is not one of extinction but of cooperative generation; her goal, one of empathy and connection, not only through metaphor, but also through physical experience and bodily transference.

-Grace Sparapani

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