

Kelly Agius & Natalie Lerner: *It Creeps In* at Gallery Mouse

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It Creeps in at Gallery Mouse

Gallery Mouse has welcomed the transition from summer to autumn with an exhibition by Kelly Agius and Natalie Lerner. *It Creeps In* opens a conversation about pursuit, not as an essential aspect of the food chain but as an element of horror in storytelling. This feeling that threatens our physical and psychological reality is inseparable from being alive in this world regardless of any implications that we are immune to the chase. Outside of the predator/prey dynamic of the *natural* world, the topic of pursuit exists, for humans, as a nightmare that haunts our psyche in more ways than one. Here, sculptures by Agius and works on paper by Lerner come together to build a fantastic scene where interpretation is guided by literary and visual supports, like a storybook. The viewer has the opportunity to engage in the act of enchantment by entering a world complete with 3D renderings of sentient beings and 2D windows into their environment.



Look... by Natalie Lerner, Charcoal on Paper, 2024.



Creepers and Axe with Crows by Kelly Agius, Aluminum, 2024.

To me, this show touches on a mode of creative production that has been emerging over the past few decades, which takes into account folklore as an irreplaceable aspect of humanity. The artists' careful approach to mark-making indicates an intentionality that calls upon a timeline that links the antique aesthetics of Brothers Grimm to contemporary Hollywood movies. The basement as context for the work certainly adds to the dialogue, however the show could be just as successful in a clean white cube due to the increased presence that such themes have assumed at this point. It is interesting to consider art's relationship to the subconscious throughout time, especially because, within the context of Cartesian dualism, art was one of the only safe spaces for the exploration of the inner world. Regardless, many artists who dove into the depths of the mind were marginalized into the genre of Art Brut, defined as raw expressions of emotion untamed by academic tradition. Also coined "outsider art", Art Brut inherently employed both personal and cultural symbolism to illustrate complex feelings that exist outside of written or verbal language. Dada and Surrealism brought this way of working into the world of art with a capital A through their reverence for animistic ideologies and automatism, however the use of *fantasy* in Western Art still feels relatively new.



Axe with Crows by Kelly Agius and *Shatter* by Natalie Lerner

What underlines the group of works in *It Creeps In* at Gallery Mouse is co-operation. While each piece is beautiful enough to stand alone, their conceptual independence becomes challenged when observed holistically. That is not necessarily a bad thing, and it actually maybe allows for a clear bridge to world-building tendencies inherent in storytelling. Fiction or not, in this realm, various elements always work together to deliver a tale. Similarly, artists like Kara Walker produce immersive exhibitions and scenes of interdependent elements that not only draw out traditions of American folklore but also the darkness of American history. The absorption into the living reveries of storytellers can lead to a confrontation with this darkness, which has become understood as a staple of human consciousness across the board. Details are provided at the discretion of the narrator and collaboratively, gaps are filled in by fragments of memory from the personal narratives of the audience members to make it feel real.



Daughter by Kelly Agius, Aluminum, 2024.

Kelly Agius' poem *The Daughter of The Creeper* is a father-daughter story of martyrdom and sacrifice. This piece of writing provides an entry point into the six artworks without necessarily dictating meaning. It becomes clear through a review of the artwork themselves that both Agius and Lerner are invested in topics of memory fragmentation and vulnerability. Here, the monotone objects and images, distorted forms and broken off fractions touch on the fragility of experience as a malleable past reality. To occupy this space means to float amongst subtleties of scent, sound and sight. Whether the reason for the journey into the subconscious is for creating, learning or healing, the immateriality of this wild space secures its preservation forever.

It Creeps In opened on August 31 and was on view through September 28, 2024.

Gallery Mouse

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<https://mousegallery.com/>

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