runner

Shuddering: Chris Schanck at Reyes | Finn

Ashley Cook

November 30, 2020

Shuddering, the most recent exhibition by Chris Schanck at Reyes | Finn, feels like a pseudo showroom for the interior designers of The Fifth Element. This is not a surprise, as this artist has been working in this way for the better part of their career. In many cases, Chris Schanck has been described as a designer, actually. Their work treads the line between these two worlds.

Mum Chandelier © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Shuddering: Chris Schanck at Reyes | Finn © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

One chandelier, two candelabras, three chairs, four tables; without any writing for the show, we are left to navigate the work with the help of the titles and the language of form, aesthetics and material. This does not seem to really be an issue though, because the work is *eye-catching* enough to satisfy the mind without too much of a need for theoretical support.

The thing that makes art so attractive is the ambiguity that it holds, whether conceptually, philosophically or material-ly; in contrast to many works throughout the history of art that leave us wondering *why* it was made, this work is intriguing enough to just sit with and analyze in an attempt to compre-hend *how* it was made. Chris Schanck and their team of sup-port artists have become masterful at manipulating various materials, including found objects, aluminum foil, polystyrene, wood, resin, steel, suede, polyurethane, glass, bronze, and foam.

Shuddering Chair + Shuddering Table © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Despite almost all of the materials being man-made, they have been melted down, built up, cut apart, glued and combined to resemble what we would readily find in the natural world; maybe under the sea (*Mum Chandelier*), on top of a mountain (*Mono Chair),* in a rainforest (*Signal Light*), in a cave (*Twin Stone Candelabras*), in a swamp (*Amoeba Cabinet)...*some convincing enough to seem actually of nature, while others entertain a playful, set-design, toy aesthetic. *Mono Chair* could very well have been made for The Flintstones movie, and I could totally see *Amoeba Cabinet* as an artwork in Beetlejuice.

Mono Chair © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Twin Stone Candelabra © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Amoeba Cabinet © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

The confidence and care with which these objects were made confirms an aesthetic that has the potential to alter our perception of the surrounding environment. Imagine one of these objects outside of the artists studio, exhibition space, or show room. It could almost feel as if there was a glitch in the space-time fabric, where these objects exist without necessarily belonging; like they fell out of a time machine that just returned from a movie set in the distant future or something.

Signal Light © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Veiled Mirror © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

The play between the artists gallery and designer show-room reminds me of the artists Marc Camille Chaimowicz or Cosima Von Bonin, both of whom have consistently sustained a cross-disciplinary practice that utilizes the history of painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, installation, furniture, lighting, ceramics, textiles, and wallpaper, challenging the categorization often used to distinguish between art and design.[1] It is interesting to consider the intention behind this method of working; the interplay between something completely untouchable and something utilitarian provides an avenue to imagine a more playful yet still functional reality. Could we really live like this? What would reality feel like if industrial design more commonly teetered into surreality?

Nite Light: Xenorc © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Serpentine Chair © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Nite Light: Xenorc © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Form holds weight above function, considerably more in some works than others. Though each piece has its utilitarian value, the actual experience of using these objects as functional household furniture would certainly require compromise. There would inherently be an agreement or understanding that the person would need to have that differs from your typical perfectly comfortable "designed for humans" furniture. Owning these pieces with the intent to use them would involve discomfort, awkwardness, precarity; it would require a similar flexibility as one would need to have when in a relationship with another human or an animal. They have their own personality, their own attitude, and if you want to have a functioning relationship with them, you will need to accept that and work with it. I wonder if this isn't something to think about when considering this works'

relevance to the reality around us. Like, perhaps this is a work of Realism, not as a visual representation but in the conceptual sense, working to sneak the unpredictability of true reality into the very predictable reality of the white wall gallery space, or collectors home, under the guise of a shiny expensive object.

Ore Table © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

Deco Bot © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

There are many different links to make from this body of work, but one of the most prominent remains to be with worlds of Science Fiction. Many SF productions often concern themselves with stories of outer space travel or social struggles that derive from advancements in technology. While *Shuddering* presents a more neutral zone that feels absent of these types of concerns, it does explore a twisted relationship between technology and the natural world through a distinct neglect for the usual refinement that technology embodies. There is an exploration of the aesthetic potential that lies within a "dystopian" space that has been left, abandoned by human control, closely resembling elements of an untouched landscape or the ruins of a past civilization. Just as Science Fiction blends ancient and futuristic, natural and artificial, in order to encompass the vast influences of history, this work combines things and pulls them apart from each other, playing with the malleability of what is real just as easily as an amoeba can move around and reproduce so fluidly in the water.

Shuddering: Chris Schanck at Reyes | Finn © Photo courtesy of Reyes | Finn & Clare Gatto

More info at https://reyesfinn.com/

1. "Marc Camille Chaimowicz" October 8,2020, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marc_Camille_Chaimowicz.

runner