

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present L'esprit dans le temple de l'âme, an exhibition of new bust sculptures by Canadian-born, Los Angeles-based artist David Altmejd. The exhibition will be on view in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl., from May 11 through June 15, 2024. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, May 11 from 6 to 8 PM.

Altmejd works in a singular sculptural language, producing largely figurative objects whose scope encompasses everything from the intricate and ephemeral contours of dreams to overarching systems of life that constitute entire worlds. His chosen materials are often as diverse as his subjects, and his formal decisions are, for all the precision of their craftsmanship, indicative of improvisation and exploration. A salient feature of Altmejd's sculptures is their uncanniness: even the most alien, esoterically oriented beings are possessed of a warmth that makes them magnetic, accessible, and open to interpretation from numerous points of view.

In this exhibition, Altmejd brings increased focus to this foundational aspect of his project, presenting a group of busts notable on the one hand for their concision and gravitas, and on the other, for materialized flights of imagination that he inscribes and builds in, through, and around the head, neck, and shoulders of each subject. The works can largely be divided into several groups, including those in which human (or humanoid), feline- and rabbit-like features dominate. Others find him pursuing new, intensive varieties of transformation and hybridization, as in works in which human bodies are shown mid-way through processes of fusion with, or separation from, animals like whales or swans. Even as he leans into the stillness of classical sculpture, Altmejd achieves new levels of fluidity in terms of both his subjects and the forms he employs to compose them. In so doing, he evokes the forces of change and evolution that animate living things as they are born, solidify, decompose, and merge once again with the world that gave rise to them.

Several figures are rendered alongside motorcycle helmets, indicating the presence of speed. As with many of the themes that arise in his work, however, the speed to which Altmejd refers can be viewed from multiple vantages. Quickness of thought guides transitions between materials and types of mark-making. It also characterizes

adjustments the artist is able to make during the development of a sculpture, which are visible not only across its surface in the way material is applied, but in the overall shape it takes as he proceeds with production. This speaks to the highly personal nature of his vision, which is not so much autobiographical or self-referential as it is self-creating, registering spontaneous changes in what it means, feels, and looks like to be a sentient creature.

Luna (2024), for instance, is distinguished by its vivid palette and the markings on the creature's racing suit, which coalesce into the image of a butterfly on its chest. Its poise and gentle grandeur are balanced with its materiality, which is governed by flux. The work, and—the exhibition as a whole—is suffused with the mercurial spirit of drawing, as evidenced by the attention Altmejd brings to the many small details that cover its surfaces, which include pencil marks, writing, and applied elements or other sculptural interventions. He makes plain the building blocks of his vocabulary, allowing viewers to approach his objects not only as illusionistic icons, but as partially abstract constructions. As if to further facilitate such readings, each work incorporates a key that identifies each of its materials, highlighting the resourcefulness of Altmejd's mind when it comes to realizing unexpected compositions.

These indices are not merely informational gestures, however. Like runes in a three-dimensional illuminated manuscript, they also hint at the symbolic potential carried by each component of the sculptures, which seem to exist in two—or more—worlds at once. Even recognizable motifs, such as the grid patterns that appear throughout the exhibition, can be read alternately as metacommentaries on Altmejd's own working methods or as phenomena particular to the inner and outer worlds of the beings he renders. In Le souffle et l'esprit (2024), the lines that crisscross the bust's head and torso are punctuated by holes in each, suggesting that coordinates can be given for external realities as well as less tangible ones in the spaces of the internal world. They suggest that anything can be sketched and drawn, including the contours of life as it constitutes itself according to the laws of physics; the far-reaching vicissitudes of psychological and dream landscapes that obey their own invisible dictates; and the overlaps and crossovers between various art historical and cultural currents.

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Throughout L'esprit dans le temple de l'âme, the artist demonstrates his ever-increasing ability to map out vast spaces of the self by refining and honing his techniques. As the show makes plain, however, these techniques are not limited to the virtuosic sense of invention Altmejd brings to his physical work in the studio, where his curiosity and commitment to confronting the unknown allow him to move among different modes of production seemingly at will. They also encompass the increasingly agile ways in which he abides by the logic of dreams and forges associations between conscious and unconscious images, processes, and intuitions.

David Altmejd (b. 1974, Montreal) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at David Kordansky Gallery (2021); Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels (2016); Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, Netherlands (2016); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark (2015, traveled to Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2014, traveled to Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal and Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean), among other institutions. In 2007, Altmejd represented Canada at the 52nd Venice Biennale, Italy. Recent group exhibitions include Handle With Care, Colección SOLO, Madrid (2024); Art Karnival, K11 Musea, Hong Kong (2022); A Gateway to Possible Worlds: Art & Science Fiction, curated by Alexandra Müller, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, France (2022); In the Spotlight of the Night Life in the Gloom, Marta Herford Museum, Herford, Germany (2019); Zombies: Pay Attention!, Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2018); ANIMA MUNDI, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2018); Voyage d'hiver, Château de Versailles, France (2017). His work is in the permanent collections of museums such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Palm Springs Art Museum, California; and Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris. Altmejd lives and works in Los Angeles.