

# JUXTAPOZ

## The Enlightenment of the Witch: David Altmejd @ David Kordansky Gallery



It's been over two years since we last featured the mind-melting sculptural works by David Altmejd, and lately we kept finding ourselves going back to the images and video tour of his debut presentation which closes this week at David Kordansky gallery in LA. *The Enlightenment of the Witch* is comprising a new body of work which, although clearly presenting diverse manifestations and portrayal of the physicality of the human form, is in reality focused on the "evolution of consciousness."

Continuing the exploration of his unorthodox cast of materials, focused curiosity about "mysteries of consciousness and other facets of the immaterial world", and interest in creating an installation-based presentation, Altmejd dissected the space into four rooms that together form an intense journey narrated through ten inter-related figures. Dominated by elaborately dissected bust-like sculptures, alongside mask-like quartz works, each of these sections can be read as "propositions about the evolution of consciousness" or a metaphorical presentation of "varying degrees of self-awareness". This effort is fully driven by the urge to conduct "explorations of the outer and inner spaces of the human body and mind," all while using the medium which is entirely focused on the physicality of the motif. Such a premise poses a great challenge for the artist, yet goes hand in hand with the Montreal-born artist's persistent demand on setting both intellectual and material boundaries in his practice. Whether it's defining the conceptual framework, limiting himself with unorthodox materials, or working within the limitations of plexiglass vitrine pieces.

Interested in encapsulating and embodying the intensity of emotions, Altmejd developed a body of work which shifts from conscious to completely unconscious states of being. Starting off with *Matter*, 2021, and *Ghost Realization*, 2021, the two busts in which relatable forms of hiding face and bemused observation are reinvented through unorthodox use of materials, the show culminates with a titular piece displayed in its own room. When observed closely, the constructed complexity seems to suggest, or generate a new, otherworldly meaning around each individual work. Simultaneously with the object itself, the artist builds a sense of logic of materials and his oeuvre as a whole, which then continues on other pieces in the show and beyond, giving it a sense of homogeneity, existence in the same universe, as well as constant growth and development.

Conveyed through particular use of both nontraditional materials and ready made objects the works can be seen simultaneously as puzzling, grotesque, and/or captivating. Using such items as pencils, screws, quartz, or hair to anchor the pieces within the sphere of earthly, recognizable, and relatable, it's the way Altmejd manipulates other materials that creates a striking effect and allows for their advancement to another dimension. Capturing the dynamics and the energy of hand gesture in plaster (*Ghost Realization*, 2021), freezing the liquidity in resin (*The Troll*, 2021), and employing the bedazzling effect of multiplication (*The Troll*, *The Unicorn*, both 2021), he is capable of blending reality and fantasy into one. This blend enables him to elevate essentially gruesome scenes into a sphere of mysticism or fairy tale, channeling the essence of each piece directly from the unconscious and stirring up the same processes with the viewer.

—Sasha Bogojev