ArtStuff

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A Minute With Claudia Keep

By ArtStuff

Claudia Keep, 5.15 PM, Night Market, 2022

We spoke about Claudia when we interviewed Maria from March so it was only a matter of time to have her come on. It's good timing because her show opens Dec 15th at March in NYC. It's a no brainer to go if you live close.

I'm not a very good writer, not an art critic, so I don't plan on going all deep into why I like Claudia's work, I just do. There are some works in this particular show of paintings done in LA and titled such. One in particular, called "Rainy Night in LA," is just a perfect painting in my opinion and took me back to those days & nights. Great stuff! MARCH's primary goals have always been to support artists and to promote growth and diversity on every level. Partnerships like the ones with Reyes Finn, Parker Gallery, and Summertime Gallery and our emphasis on community create opportunities for exchange between artists and collectors, but also among curators, writers, coordinators, and teams of people with shared interests and ethics. In that vein––it's easier to do more when you have passionate collaborators!

AS: Where are you based and working from?

CK: In July I moved from Brooklyn, NY to Burlington, VT where I'm currently working and living.

AS: What is currently inspiring you and your work?

CK: Currently I'm looking at and thinking about sources of light and their effect on the environment around them; the sun on water, headlights in the rain, a neon light reflecting off of a water glass. I'm also interested in how things look in different weather, like how a building or electric lights look through the rain or snow.

Over the past few years I've become increasingly aware of insects—there are so many of them around once you start to notice them. They insert such interesting shapes and colors into the landscape. I also have an ongoing series of beds and bedrooms. The road, and car trips are also eternally inspiring to me.

In October I saw the Wolfgang Tilmans show at MOMA—that was inspiring. Color photography has always been very important to me and my work. I also finally got a book of Forrest Bess's work.

My phone background is one of Horace Pippin's peaceable kingdom paintings. I'm always inspired by it.

AS: How did you come to meet and eventually collaborate with March?

CK: Phillip March Jones, the owner of March, found me on Instagram actually. I was living on an island in Maine at the time. Our first project together was a show titled "A Day in Maine" at the university of Kentucky medical center in 2019.

AS: I loved your roaming show across the country with March, how did that idea come about?

CK: Thank you—That was Phillip's idea! I was sending an email of possible images for a show that were related to the theme of night and driving, because I was doing a lot of that at the time (I still am I suppose) and as a joke I titled the email "night moves." We both kind of liked it and the title stuck and grew to inform the "show." Phillip is friends with Tag Christof who is a photographer currently based in LA. Phillip had the idea to have Tag drive the paintings around and place them in the environment. We thought that Tag's style of photography as well as the exercise itself would compliment my paintings of roads, bedrooms, and night-time scenes. The idea was to create a virtual exhibition that lent something to the work that would be impossible in a traditional gallery environment. Instead of something that was just about my work, it became a collaboration, and something that was much more dynamic, I think.

AS: Is there a theme or anything like that for your show coming up at March?

CK: The show is organized around Aubade, a poem by Philip Larkin that confronts the quotidian realities of the human condition. Larkin's poem describes a sort of existential arc of a day. An aubade is classically an ode to the coming of the dawn, or of lovers parting at dawn. The work in the show has a diurnal rhythm, reflecting the literal passing of the day as well the more existential daily arc described by Larkin. A lot of the work in the show deals with specific light and the way it behaves at different times of the day—sunrise, sunset, star light, artificial lights. The paintings are mostly every-day, intimate scenes that I hope speak to the reality, or surreality, of being alive.

Claudia Keep, 6:41 AM, California Sunrise, 2022

AS: It seems like artists are working harder than ever before. Much like anything today, there is so much noise out there and an added element for artists to promote their work online, do you find it exhausting to engage online? Or is it kinda cool to potentially chat with admirers from all over about the work you make?

CK: I don't know if artists are working harder now, I feel like it's always probably been really hard to be an artist. However, there is a lot of noise, and a lot of artists. I think artists are more visible now than before because of social media and the internet.

Social media does seem to have an oppressive hold on us all, but I am forever indebted to the virtual world because that is how I found a community of artists, specifically painters, and ultimately how I ended up finding a gallery. It's maybe a little embarrassing but I really knew very little about contemporary art or artists excluded from the traditional canon until I started to explore online. From school and visiting museums I knew like, every french impressionist and YBA but I had no concept of the current art "scene" or what other artists who weren't in museums were up to.

When I started using Instagram for my paintings, the art world was so opaque and inaccessible to me. Finding other artists and sharing what I was painting demystified it all a bit and also just offered another venue, albeit virtual, in which to be seen.

All that being said, there is a very dark side to social media—it is draining and demoralizing and probably harkens the beginning of the end of civilization or something. I actually recently had my first taste of hate from some internet strangers on Instagram and that was at once humorous and overwhelming. I try, I suppose, to maintain some levity about it all and not take it too terribly seriously.

AS: Who should we have on next?

CK: You should talk to Matt Zaccari—he is a wonderful painter and person based in Brooklyn.

AS: Any plans for 2023?

CK: In 2023, I'm looking forward to painting more. I'll be getting ready for a few shows, the first of which is a group show at the Hole in NYC in January.

Claudia Keep, Morning, Virgina, 2022"

Example of an "installed' work by Claudia from the roaming show.