



In the Belly of the Whale

Henry Hussey

(edited by Dale Adcock)

The story of the lost father rescued by the son is ancient. The father symbolically represents culture - old, wilfully blind and out-dated. The son updates and modifies this, like Horus traveling back to the underworld to give his eye to his father Osiris after battling his evil uncle Set. The sea, symbolically the unconscious. The whale, the thin membrane between the conscious and unconscious, or alternatively order and chaos.

Pinocchio is a crystallisation of this archetypical story. Luckily for Geppetto, Pinocchio, with gaining consciousness adheres to the call of the hero and ventures from safety into the dangerous unknown to confront it and rescue him from the Whale, (symbolically the dragon) chaos and the unknown inhabitant of the abyss. In the time from inhalation to exhalation, you can imagine Geppetto in the belly of the whale deferring his thoughts of survival, rescue and the whereabouts of his son to make a rudimentary table to dine, write and meditate (how else would one spend their time when gastronomically confined?) Bits of broken ship, driftwood and nails pulled from the misfortune of others might be used to build such a useful object but how to finish it? Unite it in some way? Char it with the fire in your hand and make the best of your limited resources.

A version of this table is in the centre of the exhibition, and performs as an artefact to hold the scattered drawings of Dale Adcock. Some of these drawings (selected from an on-going series of works) are traditional working out of ideas for painting, some doodles to find faces in the clouds, they balance on the line between unconscious and conscious content. All the drawings are titled before they are drawn and without looking at the title the image is then made, the conversation between the image and the title always feels serendipitous.

The 2018 painting *Unknown*, by Dale Adcock features a male figure floating through an abstract space. The painting was also made on a table, painted and wiped off, painted and wiped off, until the final form emerged. Contemplating the anima possessed male figure one can imagine that it was also made at a similar table to the ones the drawing are displayed on at a time when the membrane between chaos and order was its thinnest and acrid in scent. The painting inhabits the abyss; the figure is fallible but transcends its encounter, injured but has gained wisdom.

Michael MacGarry's 2016 film *As Above, Is Below* is a fictional account of Charles Darwin's last voyage, in which he disappeared during an expedition in South Africa. The film follows their journey and documents their documentation and there is expansiveness to the landscape yet a feeling of isolation with colonial undertones. However the ratio of the film makes you oddly aware that you are in an enclosed space, never actually discovering the boundary of the environment you exist in. We

follow Darwin as he seeks to ascend and find truth until there is nowhere higher to climb, ultimately entering into the abyss not from above but from below by balloon. As he travels up into the sky and space all he can do is look backwards from where he came, like Satan in Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Symbolically Satan is the spirit of rationality, the brightest and highest of the angels, who has fallen to the depths by pride in the totality of his ideas. This spirit of rationality is also alluded to by the film's title, an alchemical creed that whatever happens on any level of reality (physical, emotional, or mental) also happens on every other level. This mystical maxim was the founding stones that science grew upon.

Michael MacGarry's ongoing series of works *Tontine* consist of industrial cement packets that have been collected by the artist from the areas surrounding his studio in Johannesburg. These are hand washed and dyed then sewn together to form large sails. These works are designed prior to fabrication however due to the nature of reclaimed materials and the sourcing process-there is a level of abstraction from never knowing how the pieces will materialise and change the overall composition. The work alludes to the industrialisation of Africa with Chinese investment, playing simultaneously with the archetypal visual tropes of power. The work in the exhibition is shield shaped-resembling a heraldic coat of arms, emitting a European authority. The lines radiate from the centre in a geometric form, unmistakably projecting resolve and fortitude, self aware of their modernist abstract heritage. The handmade sail undoubtedly evokes-the idea of channelling everything you have learnt from the abyss thus making you stronger as an individual, taking responsibility for your own actions and thereby escaping from the belly of the whale by sailing back to dry land in order to continue your journey.

Both artists understand the importance of adapting. They understand that the abyss is a place to be welcomed not feared, as this is where you gain knowledge and discover your potential. Adaptability is a trait that is increasingly being lost as we are presented with a narrative in which we are told that we should remain within the social boundaries we were born in. The fear is that having any form of discourse might offend or oppress the other in the exchange. Rather than venturing into the unknown where the answers might lie, we as a society have chosen to retreat back to tribalism. We perpetuate echo chambers in which we hear the same malign voice repeatedly, and stupefy ourselves into believing everything is going to be all right. This is not a progression, as it is presented-by society, but rather a regression that leads to the segmentation of race and gender rather than equality. We are losing the ability to cherish the unknown and all it can teach us. We need to acknowledge the horrors that rest within the past yet not allow ourselves to be defined by these actions. We are not destined to make the same mistakes repeatedly, unless we willingly choose to through our own ignorance.

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Dale Adcock & Michael MacGarry

curated by Henry Hussey

23 February – 17 March 2019