

ANDREW HOLMQUIST | HQME
May 2 - May 30, 2020
[ONLINE](#)

With *HQME*, an exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist Andrew Holmquist, Carrie Secrist Gallery celebrates that place where never is heard a discouraging word. Comprising drawings and ceramics, this solo effort debuts recent developments in Holmquist's practice, including advances in his perennial exploration of the kaleidoscopic figure and energetic landscapes that possess a dynamism found only in the wilds of the artist's particular nature. Presented on an occasion when "staying in" means something more urgent than bubble baths and bodice rippers, *HQME* encourages appreciation for all the things that bring comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging.



Andrew Holmquist, *Tree 4*, 2020. Colored pencil, wax pastel, graphite wash, and oil on paper, 44 x 30.25 inches.

Since relocating to Los Angeles from Berlin in early 2019, Holmquist has continuously responded to the landscape, architecture, and geographical elements specific to his novel context. Although he writes in his studio notes that "the works in this show are about looking outward for inspiration during a time of transition and looking inward for strength during a time of uncertainty," they are also enthusiastically about his daily encounters with the light, space, and color of Southern California. This aspect is apparent throughout the exhibition, but it is most telling in his series of *Tree* drawings (2019-2020), which are based on plein air studies generated at sites around the city, from quiet parks to high-traffic street corners.

In these drawings, Holmquist integrates the rich textures created by trace monotype techniques with crisp geometry and landmark signifiers to compose scenes "halfway recognizable to someone seeing them for the first time and halfway rooted in another world of abstract form." "My goal," he writes "is to recreate the experience of seeing these incredible trees and landscapes for the first time." Whereas *Tree #2* advertises the tell-tale signs of its inspirational locale, the more elusive of the series, such as *Tree #5* and *Tree #6*, recapitulate their own intricacies in graphic decals that punctuate the picture plane. The black, biomorphic chips migrating across the former, for example, hover with the uncanniness of a *Looney Tunes*'s "Portable Hole;" in actuality, they are the tree's dappled shadows.

The sculptural works *Hillside* and *On-ramp* (both 2020), share kinship with *Trees*, both stylistically and in their conceptual underpinnings. Again, the artist: "The ceramics are directly related to the hillsides and freeway onramps covered in wild vegetation, which I encounter every day. I am interested in this relationship between wild vegetation and the rigid concrete forms [of Los Angeles's infrastructure], which become stages for these trees and vines to perform upon." Holmquist's attempts to capture the essence of a vista in lithesome clay are further encouraged by the circumstances of sheltering in place. "The hillsides visible from my at-home studio window," he said, "are lined with trees, cast in silhouette as the sun sets behind them. Each tree is remarkable on its own, but it is the chorus effect that is most impactful. I've made these ceramic sculptures in individual pieces to draw attention to this tenuous group dynamic and the overall phrase of a landscape made up of individual parts." Segmented yet bound in solidarity through form and palette, *Hillside* and *On-ramp* are perhaps the works most analogous to our current condition: though momentarily atomized, we nonetheless constitute the panoramas in which we live and upon which we gaze from a distance.

And it is but a small leap from these hillocks into the attitude of the four *Head* drawings (2019), which capture something more than a prismatic state of mind. They contain touches of Joan Miró and traces of urban textures, such as their ubiquitous concrete-gray backdrops and hints of graffiti. Like *Trees*, so too are *Heads* based on preparatory versions, in this case, monotype experiments in which intimate facial studies, rendered in subdued hues, give way to complex, extra-expressive portraits.

Strong LQQKS, a project begun in 2012, enjoys a comeback with three of the newest works on show. Generated from an intuitive impulse, these process-based works on paper are, in a sense, the full-body extensions of *Heads*. Holmquist often describes the beings of *Strong LQQKS* "as performative bodies that can break with the rules of the world and strike bold poses in new possibilities. They are figurative, but never fixed. They are in a process of transformation and discovery. They are in flux...They present endless possibilities when many options in the real world feel closed." They are, in short,

exuberantly Queer in form and content. Their imagery straddles the categorical divide between figuration and abstraction, and their visual structures serve as a record of the artist's material negotiations, i.e. his decisive gesture.

Similarly, the 2020 collection of *Suits of Armor* drawings present the endless possibilities of co-opting the world's network of things for the purpose of what one might call a form of drag. Meditation and contemplation are central to their making. Holmquist explains:

"The suits of armor come from an invented practice that is meant to strengthen my imagination and bring focus to my mind as a warm up routine every day in the studio." Holmquist explains. "Over the course of roughly fifteen to twenty minutes I imagine my spirit leaving my body, traveling upwards as I inhale, and downwards as I exhale. . Once my spirit reaches the surface of the moon and the center of the earth I switch to a moving meditation, where I imagine swelling energy all around me that I can direct with my arms. Much like a conductor of an orchestra I bring these swelling energies to a crescendo, and at this moment I switch to the next phase where I spontaneously and without hesitation list off the components of an imaginary suit of armor that I will wear for that day."

Pancakes, poodles, and giant taro roots are but a few in the vast array of items that Holmquist conjures for his protective gear (and they offer a marked improvement on the now ubiquitous N95 mask). Like the rest of *HQME*, *Suits of Armor* promotes the vitality of the creative spirit, and it serves as a lesson in resilience so necessary for the strength of our morale today.



Andrew Holmquist, *Tree 4* (detail), 2020. Colored pencil, wax pastel, graphite wash, and oil on paper, 44 x 30.25 inches.

Currently the gallery is open by appointment only and will reopen when safe to do so.

To view ANDREW HOLMQUIST | **HQME**, please visit us online.

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