

ARUSHA

GALLERY

Kindred

Kim L. Pace is a maker of charged objects, an animator of mirages. Ceramics are ancient and versatile, close to the earth and crafted by hand, vessels and entities that are capable of summoning alternative material realities. Pace coaxes this primeval medium through the narratives of contemporary art. *Kindred* presents an archaeological folk tale that beckons the surrealist marvellous, toys with *trompe l'oeil*, and tickles a history of grotesque caricature. Pace is fascinated in the writings of Angela Carter and the visual imagery of Leonora Carrington – think of the carnival masks and waxy make-up in Carter's *Wise Children* (1991) or the curious clusters of colourful characters that inhabit a Carrington picture such as *A Sanctuary for Furies* (1974).

Constellation (2022) by Pace is an alternative family tree that expands ideas of kinship. The feminist biologist, Donna Haraway, calls for multispecies “kin-making” and co-mingling that moves beyond the social-unit of traditional familial arrangements (2016). Pace's response is this vibrant composition of unique physiognomies. Forest sprites and pucks erupt from the chance encounters of materials and chameleon-like surface textures. No two are alike morphologically, yet these like-minded, aesthetic beings co-habit in one communal space.

Boulder Girls (2021) offers another interpretation of kin, the daughters of Matryoshkas and megaliths, and a reconfiguration of the nine muses from classical Greek mythology. Poet and cultural theorist, Susan Stewart, writes of the impossibility of a mammoth, petite ballerina (1984), yet Pace's cherubim heads manifest a series of such contradictions – they are each young and old, monumental maidens and diminutive porcelain dolls. Their faces form a range of the subtlest expressions (glum, cheeky, inquisitive), yet they remain as mysterious as stone circles.

Totem (2022) does something similar, an idolisation of ancestry in triptych formation. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Sigmund Freud, the great storyteller of the psyche, speaks of both “benevolent and malevolent” spirits. He tells us that the tribal “clan totem” is an “object of veneration” for the “offspring of a common ancestor.” Pace's *Totem* features three generations of a female lineage – one thinks of a palaeolithic Venus or Dorothea Tanning's novel *Chasm* (2004) which privileges the feminine first name, Destina, over the patriarchal surname.

A folkloric inquiry continues in *Australians* (2019-21). Many of these masks or cameos are named after geo-mythological sites, from the majestic Ayre's Rock to the glittering opal mines of Cooper Pedy. These places are represented through these spirit portraits, each a contemporary homage to the ancientness of the red earth.

Snowy, Timid Raptor and Uhu (all 2021) form another grouping, this time ornithological kin that seem to have descended or hatched from the eclectic nest of Loplop, the German surrealist Max Ernst's bird alter-ego. Such relief sculptural masks are material evidence of the other-worldly beings that emerge from Pace's glowing paintings, such as *Turquoise Spectre (Frontispiece)* (2021) & *Spectral Presents (Pink) 3*, (2022).

In total, Pace's painterly and ceramic emojis have come to reveal as both protectors and disruptors. Many behave like precious amulets or artefacts hewn from another world. Whether through glazing, pigment or flocking techniques, Kim L. Pace summons the critters and figments of our collective dreams. Her work takes us to the edges of the wildest imaginations, carving a space in which to rethink the meaning of kindred spirits.

- Catriona McAra