

UPLIFT

alfredo **aceto** | aline **bouvy** | balthasar **burkhard** | miriam **cahn** | ann **craven**
 thomas **liu le lann** | xavier **mary** | vik **muniz** | jochen **plogsties**
 éric **poitevin** | ugo **rondinone** | joana **vasconcelos** | david **zink yi**

March 20 - May 2, 2020

Opening on Thursday March 19 from 6 pm to 9 pm



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The Xippas Gallery is pleased to present Uplift, an exhibition that brings together big names in contemporary art and young up-and-coming talents to create a strange and enchanting new world.

Conceived as a voyage to a secret land inhabited by extraordinary creatures, this exhibition embraces the fantastical idea of “uplift”, a trope in science fiction that involves one species improving another by endowing it with greater intelligence. The concept originated in H.G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and was popularized by the American writer Glen David Brin in his Uplift series.

Like these masters of science fiction, the thirteen artists featured in Uplift give their creatures shapes, materials and expressions

with which they were not endowed by nature, casting them in plaster, rubber or ceramic, draping them in fabric, making them pop up out of the floor or the wall. So each work raises questions about both beast and beholder, about their identities, their connection and their shared future on a planet that is undergoing an alarming metamorphosis itself.

Pieces of a ceramic octopus by David Zink Yi lie on the floor at the center of the gallery. Face to face with this giant space-devouring cephalopod, we find ourselves literally out of our depth: this fragmented sculptural portrait conjures up the unknown ocean deep, from which, according to myths of old, death once drew such sea monsters. Three other exhibits thematically echo this powerful evocation of the sea. In Jochen Plogsties’s oil painting, the upper jaw of a great white shark floats in animated suspension after the mighty fish has been carved up; its unnervingly haughty razor-sharp grin was clearly impervious to the butcher’s knife. Thomas Liu Le Lann’s oversized cloth-covered lobster claw and Alfredo Aceto’s leather fin seem almost soothing in comparison: the claw is endowed with the soft curves of a cuddly toy and the fin resembles the reassuring ear of an armchair.

Joana Vasconcelos likewise invites us into a realm of softened domesticity. The Portuguese artist has covered an earthenware bull’s head with lace, restraining, if not taming, its male bestiality in the net of an eminently feminine craft and hanging it like a trophy on the wall. Ugo Rondinone plays on the tropes of trophy and symbol too: his rubber-cast goat’s head, also mounted on the wall, harks back to representations of the mythological faun, a joyful personification of uninhibited carnal pleasures.

Xavier Mary and Eric Poitevin's birds are more austere. Mary's silk-screened eagle on industrial sheet metal seems to be taking apocalyptic revenge on a consumer society that is forever consigning this noble bird of prey to emblems and insignia. Poitevin's dead little birdie hangs by one leg in a poetic state of eternal suspension, with its tiny eye shut tight for good. Photographed against a clinical white backdrop, it conveys the finite nature of existence. These dramatic depictions starkly contrast with Ann Craven's paintings of brightly feathered canaries nestled in flowery foliage, all a-quiver with chirping life. Balthasar Burkhard immortalizes a rhinoceros in an almost life-size photograph. The colossal pachyderm stands in profile before a tarpaulin, blatantly imposing its massive presence on the viewer, though without revealing its secrets. Vik Muniz is always enigmatic, as in this transfiguration of Garry Winogrand's famous photo of a racy blonde and an elegant black man strolling through the Central Park Zoo with fully dressed chimpanzees in their arms.

Aline Bouvy's plaster-cast dog, carved right on the wall, exudes a downtrodden homeliness, while Miriam Cahn's blurry creatures on canvas peer at us with a disconcerting grace and defy taxonomic classification.

The works brought together for Uplift transcend fixed hierarchies and secure norms to place beast and man in the vast context of an evolving history whose future is taking shape amid ambient uncertainty. Uncompromising, their extraordinary bestiary confronts destiny, "holding up a mirror to nature" of things natural, unnatural and supernatural. *

* translated from french by Eric Rosencrantz

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Tuesday - Friday : 10-12 am and 2-6:30 pm
Saturday : 12-5 pm

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