

Postmasters 5.0 presents their next exhibition: Aneta Bartos 'Monotropa Terrain'



Monotropa Terrain, 2021, 12:51, Super8 transferred to digital.

NEW YORK, NY.- Aneta Bartos' *Monotropa Terrain* is a two-fold exploration of the deeper and darker nature of the human mind and the functioning of its memory.

Monotropa Terrain pairs a large, projected, almost otherworldly, Super8 film, with five black and white videos (Testimonies I-V) each presenting an individual woman describing her mysterious encounters that question the nature of our accepted reality and explore ideas of duality and that of supernatural.

Monotropa Terrain

Set in the dark world of the *Monotropa*, a plant known as 'ghost pipe' or 'Indian pipe', the seemingly amphibious characters portrayed in Bartos' latest film seem to be in an embryonic process of taking form, merging, or splitting, as if trying to form a hybrid, dual form of creature. Moving through plant infested lakes and puddles of mud, the symbiotic movements of Bartos characters remind us of the sensual and mysterious ballets often seen in early documentaries on cell reproduction, or fungus and insect life.

The *Monotropa* plant is often mistaken for a fungus, due to its white, ghostly appearance. It lacks chlorophyll, which gives plants their green color, hence it does not feed using photosynthesis. *Monotropa* can grow in dark, dense forest floor covered by leaves and debris. It creates a hybrid relationship with fungi that produces sugar by parasitizing on photosynthetic plants. It tricks the fungi into feeding them, effectively reversing the traditional food-chain.

Shot on Super8, the film *Monotropa Terrain* is a continuation of Bartos' former series *Spider Monkeys I & II*, a series equally showing dualistic beings, half human half animal entangled in psychological landscapes.

Where her choice for expired Polaroid film was a deliberate choice of medium to re-create childhood memories in the artist acclaimed photography series *Family Portrait*, the choice for Super8 film as medium to shoot *Monotropa Terrain* again proves to be in line with the film's subjects.

The film's blurry panning, the slowed down scenes which cause images to almost "split", the changing in and out focus all seem to be consistent with the apparent changes its characters are going through. (At times it feels as if watching something alive in a still developing Polaroid.) Meanwhile the women on screen all seem to be versions of a common self, as if they are performing different versions of the same persona.

Monotropa Terrain: Testimonies I-V

For centuries the notion of paranormal and non-physical forces have been regarded as dark and often been hidden and this corresponds to our own dark and hidden parts of ourselves.

These 'supernatural abduction' testimonies feel as if the characters are testifying to situations they can no longer relate to themselves, trying to investigate the nature of their own existence by putting themselves outside of the memory they are describing. It is as if they are trying to describe their own hybrid co-other by distancing through a dark mirror. The testimonies indirectly allude to childhood trauma, brainwashing, addiction and perceptions of mental illness whilst being peppered throughout the narration with humor and abject absurdity.

Aneta Bartos was born in Poland and moved to New York City where she attended The School of Visual Arts. Most recently she was a part of a major group exhibition, *Masculinities: Liberation through Photography* at Barbican Centre in London, which toured to Les Reconstrues d'Arles, Martin Gropius-Bau in Berlin and Fomu in Antwerp, as well as *Give and Give* at Franken Rosen Museum, Argentina. Her most recent solo exhibitions include *Monotropa Terrain* at Tommy Simoens Gallery, *Aneta Bartos: Family Portrait 2015-2018* at Tommy Simoens Gallery in Antwerp, and *Family Portrait* at Postmasters Gallery in New York.

Recent group exhibitions include *Pairs* at Pace/MacGill Gallery, *Family Values* curated by Kate Bush at Calvert 22, London; *Magic Mirror* at Daniel Cooney Fine Art Gallery, New York; *Discursive Selves*, Westbeth Gallery, New York; *NSFW: Female Gaze*, Museum of Sex, New York.

Bartos's work has been reviewed and featured in *New York Magazine*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Sunday Times*, *Modern Painters*, *Interview Magazine*, *Photograph Magazine*, *Foam Magazine*, *W Magazine*, *Vice Magazine*, *Elephant Magazine*, as well as online publications such as *Artforum*, *Vulture*, *Artinfo*, *Hyperallergic*, *Art in America*, *Observer*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Time* among others.