



Deep Dream

Kinga Bartis, Tea E Berglöv, Clara Busch, Cecilia Fiona

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First developed by a team of software interns at Google, "DeepDream" was the name given to a computer program that takes pre-existing digital images and modifies their formal features to create newly vivid and hallucinogenic compositions.

Whilst dreaming has an obvious association with subconscious fantasy, the idea of depth as it relates to both sleep and the Earth's surface implies an interest in both organic structures and forms of regeneration. Thus a "Deep Dream" might suggest a focus on growth and repair just as much as it infers a tendency towards distorted and imaginative visualisation.

All of the artists in this presentation share an aesthetic affinity with ideas relating to deep dreaming. Firstly, in that their images are all somewhat lysergic, but also in that they demonstrate a thematic interest in growth and development, as it relates to both individual change and the natural world.

In works like Kinga Bartis' *Too Wet To Stick* (2020) the viewer encounters a vague sense of eroticism that seems to have sprouted from the head of the sleeping figure at the bottom of the painting and to have enveloped the space around them. The skyline is transformed into an expansive plane of desirous rouge, filled with drifting breast-clouds. In many ways Bartis's paintings seem to take an individual mood and expand it to represent an entire emotional landscape or to place it inside a single anthropomorphised animal, much like Carl-Frederik Hill in his densely atmospheric compositions.

The idea of painting as an expressive outgrowth of self plays a similarly important role in Berglöv's explosive gestural works. Attractive in their powerful aggression, these formidable canvases combine elements of Cy Twombly's irreverent mark-making with a potent and sensitive approach to colour that channels the vital affect achieved by the likes of J.F. Willumsen or Anna Ancher. And whilst colour is wholly absent from the works by Cecilia Fiona that are featured in this exhibition, her richly symbolic and narratively arranged compositions seem imbued with both a grieving turmoil and a somehow pre-historic poignancy that shows a keen appreciation of the works of Edvard Munch and Miriam Cahn.

Clara Busch's pastel and charcoal abstractions engage the same forceful emotional mechanisms but represent human vitality and emotional transition using a more abstract and immersive visual language. Reminiscent of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein in their fractal, kaleidoscopic design, Busch's dense and calligraphic compositions seem to appropriate aspects of digital imagery and reproduce them using physical media in the analogue realm.

When considering the relationship between analogue and virtual representation, the idea of the deep dream takes on additional contemporary significance. As pandemic restrictions increase, so too does our reliance on digital tools to connect with others and to experience the world beyond our domestic sphere. Current discussions about the role of these tools tend to focus on the idea that screen-based experience is somehow artificial, that there is a divide between our online interactions and the lived experience that takes place in the "real world". To a large extent this distinction parallels the traditional idea of there being an obvious separation between real experience and dreams.

In that case, could ideas relating to dreams, and in particular the Deep Dream (with its connotations of technologically aided visual distortion), be useful to us as a metaphor or model as we look to understand the lasting impact of our current situation? In any case, we are left with no choice but to embrace a new understanding of visual culture that accepts the emotional and material significance of intangible representations, because ultimately it is impossible to ignore a dream that you are still feeling the effects of long after you wake up.