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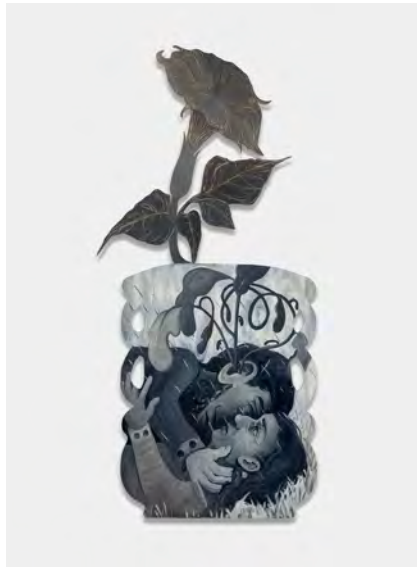
Luján Pérez: *With Our Roots Entwined*

March 11 – April 16, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, March 11, 5–7 pm

“At night I dream that you and I are two plants
that grew together, roots entwined,
and that you know the earth and the rain like my mouth,
since we are made of earth and rain.”

Excerpted from *Rain (Rapa Nui)*, by Pablo Neruda, translated by Anthony Kerrigan



Luján Pérez © *Persecuted Lovers*, after Arthur Boyd, 2021-2022.



Luján Pérez © *I forget what they call the Forgotten beer*, after Nicole Eisenman, 2021-2022

Kapp Kapp is pleased to present Luján Pérez: *With Our Roots Entwined*, which marks Pérez's debut exhibition with Kapp Kapp and her second solo exhibition in New York. Pérez's most recent body of work continues her singular navigation between painting, printmaking, and sculpture through a collective retelling of lovers through art history. Instinctually incorporating her vast familiarity with herbal healing and personal histories of nomadic life between Spain and the United States, Pérez's language sensitively considers and confronts the past, offering a deeply connected reinterpretation for an ongoing lovers' anthology.

Postulations on love, life, and death have long been a part of Pérez's relationship to painting. Whether nostalgia-steeped representations of memory and the unconscious or fictitious plant creations nodding both to their potential healing powers and their ability to kill, Pérez's charm is her ability to digest and divulge these stories and histories alike.

For Pérez, this oeuvre began with a search for, what she believed would be, a preexisting history of lovers through art history and, after discovering but one small reference book, sought to create her own telling. Beginning with a glossary of reference images of works ranging from Diego Rivera to Nicole Eisenman, Arthur Boyd to 19th century entombed lovers in Milan's Cimitero Monumentale, Pérez then interpolates these compositions with oil paint onto sheets of mylar in her signature black, white, and grayscale palette. Translating the language of their original creator into her own, Pérez extends the foundational narrative through a personalized understanding, maintaining the integrity of the original artwork while focusing on the emotive spirit.

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For every interpolation, Pérez affixes the mylar painting to self-made woodcut vessels, each containing a potted plant or flower. Each vessel serves both as a window to their reference image and as allusions to the Spanish ceramics surrounding Pérez growing up, each potted plant selected specifically in response to the soul of each story.

Take *Persecuted Lovers, after Arthur Boyd, 2021-2022*, which looks to Arthur Boyd's 1958 painting by the same name. Drawn to this image for the anguish in what appears to be the last moments of the figures' realities as they look down the barrel of a rifle (a reference, for Boyd, to the violent history of the Aborigine in Australia), Pérez's vessel instead crops and condenses the horror of the original narrative to the detail in the figures' faces, specifically into the female figure's eye. The single flower above in Pérez's vessel is the Jimsonweed flower, the leaves and seeds of which are used to make medicine treating asthma, cough, influenza, and nerve diseases. Pérez, however, chose the flower for its use as a recreational, hallucinogenic drug, to create a heightened euphoria amid the tenderness of this final embrace.

Or take *And when I go, let it be me First, after Cemetero Monumentale tomb, 2021-2022*, which looks to the famous entombed lovers of the Milanese cemetery; this composition, instead, is potted with the *Gloriosa Superba*, or the Flame Lily. The Flame Lily, a plant native to tropical climates, is known, aside from its whimsical, bowing shape and bright colors, for its poisonous alkaloids, which if ingested can cause human and animal fatality. Pérez is fascinated by the flower's existence both as an object with intense beauty and lethality, however in the context of an eternal entombment becomes an allegorical gesture to the powers and dangers of love itself.

Along with Pérez's 12 woodcut paintings, the artist includes 20 standalone drawings on mylar, further abstracting and re-envisioning these art historical romances, looking further back to works of Courbet and to 2nd Century Pompeii frescoes. Pérez's anthology of lovers offers new interpretations of these age-old stories, collecting and repotting them as living organisms themselves, allowing them to grow as new narratives.

With Our Roots Entwined will be on view at Kapp Kapp through April 16.

Luján Pérez (b. 1991, Madrid, Spain) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Pérez earned her BFA in Printmaking from The University of Central Florida and earned her MFA in Drawing from the New York Academy of Art. Recent exhibitions include *Your Nostalgia Created A Non-Existent Country* curated by Anne-Laure Lemaitre, Swivel Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; *In the Margins*, Kapp Kapp, New York; and *Beyond the Streets on Paper*, Southampton Arts Center, Southampton, New York.