

Jenkin van Zyl

'Vore'

17 Nov – 17 Dec 2022

Rose Easton

Text by Jordan Tannahill

On October 5th 2005, rangers in the Everglades National Park stumbled upon the remains of an adult American alligator partially swallowed by a thirteen foot Burmese python. The Burmese python had attempted to devour the alligator whole before its stomach ruptured. When the rangers found the two conjoined corpses, the python's head was missing, presumably having burst from the efforts of ingestion.

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I prefer that the prey have been digested for keeps to become one with the predator, and having the prey reform (in the stomach) afterwards, to me, just cheapens the whole experience and makes the whole endeavour feel like nothing more than casual sex.

– post by LoneliestWolf on aryion.com's Unpopular Vore Opinions forum, May 4, 2022, 2:04 am

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Vore is the latest specimen in Jenkin van Zyl's wunderkammer of latex sculptures informed by various internet fetish subcultures – vore, bestial, latex, looner – replete with the tensions between the erotic and abject, the caustic and supple, the sublime and ridiculous, that have come to characterise his early body(ies) of work. Here, the proverbial indestructibility of the cockroach – of the monstrous in general – becomes

ontologically confused by the fragility of van Zyl's inflated, latex construction. The spiked beast has the slick, playful design of a children's toy, but by way of adult, made-to-order kink costuming.

It is in the process of devouring, or being devoured by, a humanoid figure, the two figures locked in a death-coitus and encased in an infinity mirror vitrine. Like its counterpart in the Everglades, this headless reptile appears to have also succumbed to its own rapacity. Or perhaps reptile and human are two parts of the same being; an image of becoming-beast, a devouring of our self by its bestial counterpart, the ingesting of our ego by its own libido.

Anne Carson writes in *Eros the Bittersweet*, "Eros is an issue of boundaries", and "the main, inevitable boundary that creates Eros (is) the boundary of flesh and self between you and me." She writes that it is only at the moment when we would dissolve that boundary that we realise we never can. But how might we truly dissolve ourselves into the other? Vorarephilia, the erotic desire or sexual fantasy to be consumed or to consume another, might be understood as the ultimate Bataillean limit experience, in which we are not only pushed to the very limit of our being, but beyond, into a full and final consummation (consumption) of eros.

The relinquishing of the self to the devouring maw is not mere death-drive, but rather a desire to merge fully

with another. An unbirth in which we reenter the other, womblike, quite literally dissolving ourselves within their embrace. It is the totalising intimacy sought by the bugchaser: a knitting of selves on the molecular level, resulting in permanent transformation.

There strikes me as something innately queer – and by queer, I of course mean monstrous – about a self-obliterating insatiability. The grotesque hunger that cannot be filled, not even by two fists taken to the elbow. What is the eros we would rupture ourselves for? The figurative stallion penis that perforated the colon of Boeing engineer Kenneth Pinyan, causing his death from acute peritonitis. And in this age of self-pornography and scopophilia, is our own pleasure (our own death) even legible to us if we cannot also behold it? Unless it is reflected back to us in myriad?

Even Pinyan's fatal mounting by Mr. Big, the stallion, was filmed by truck driver James Michael Tait, who himself had first been filmed by Pinyan satiating the same desire. In *Vore*, the figures are suspended in infinite reflection but lack the means to behold themselves, being too consumed with their mutual annihilation. A hall of mirrors reflecting back our own extinction, prefigured by all that have come before.

Jenkin van Zyl (b.1993, Guildford, UK) lives and works in London. He received a postgraduate degree from the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2021 and was the recipient of the RA Gold Medal Prize. Current and forthcoming exhibitions include *The Horror Show!*, Somerset House, London (2022); *Barbe á Papa*, CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux; a new film project *Surrender* will premier at Edel Assanti in January 2023. Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Machines of Love*, Tramway, Glasgow (2021); *Hors Pistes*, Pompidou Centre, Paris (2020); *Kiss My Genders*, Hayward Gallery, London (2019) and *Oblivion Industry*, The Horse Hospital, London (2019).

List of works

Jenkin van Zyl

Loon, 2022

Two-way mirror, windolene,
latex, mild steel, LED lights,
mdf, wiring, PVC breathing tube
215 × 201 × 157 cm

Private View, Wednesday 16 November, 6 – 8pm
Open, Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6pm

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of live events and activations. Programme to be announced. Follow @roseeaston223 to be kept up to date.

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