

Kristin Lucas

POSTMASTERS GALLERY

Recently, a friend remarked to me that she was experiencing her Saturn return—an astrological phenomenon that happens about once every thirty years when, after orbiting the sun, the planet returns to the place it was when a person was born. Her feelings of trepidation, the changes in her life, and her description of the ominous effect led us to the following, from newage-directory.com: “While undergoing your Saturn Return you may find yourself turning inward and reflecting on your individual destiny. You examine your true needs and desires and the role you want to play on the world’s stage.” The definition came to mind while visiting San Francisco-based Kristin Lucas’s third solo exhibition at Postmasters, which, as if the artist were experiencing her own Saturn return, teemed with anxiety, longing, discovery, and a little divination.

There were plenty of acrylic comets and sand-colored fiberglass rocks to make the show feel interplanetary, too. These were interspersed throughout the first gallery in *Whatever Your Mind Can Conceive* (all works 2007), a three-channel video installation projected onto two large wooden roadside billboards and a fiberglass cast of an old computer monitor, so as to create the illusion that the video is playing on its obsolete screen. The installation takes its title from a moment in one of the vignettes in which the artist, playing a retired bingo caller with a ghastly rash, visits a hypnotherapist, who instructs her, “Whatever your mind can conceive . . . it can achieve.” Meanwhile, on the other screens, Lucas is seen wandering around uneasily—in search, perhaps, of something to conceive and achieve, though it is unclear whether she ever finds it. These videos depict her framed against a desert backdrop in northern California, gazing at the camera (sans rash), blocking the sun from her face, and trying to impart

Kristin Lucas,
*Whatever Your Mind
Can Conceive*,
2007, three-channel
video (12 minutes),
fiberglass, monitor,
acrylic, wood,
dimensions variable.



instructions for breathing exercises, as wind buffeting the camera’s microphone and a gentle piano melody alternate as a sound track.

Though the videos’ nonnarrative structure obscures the meaning of the artist’s rash, her agitation and consequent metaphysical journey, as well as the installation’s sense of disconnection and isolation, contributed to the psychosomatic-technological theme of the show as a whole. (The press release states, cryptically, that the rash, which we see Lucas applying while looking in a mirror, “functions as an antenna for receiving bingo call numbers.”) Less woolly, a series of photographic self-portraits displayed on light boxes imagine the effects of a technological virus, while extending Lucas’s previous interest in combining the technological and the corporeal. Like an abject cyborg zombie, Lucas appears half-alive in these images, in a state of digital decay.

The most engaging work in the show was in the second gallery. If the installation and photographs attempt to convey a sense of transformation, *Refresh*, a collection of documents and drawings related to Lucas’s recent government-issued name “change”—from Kristin M. Lucas to Kristin M. Lucas—in an effort to “reload” her identity like a Webpage, most clearly drives this point home. An announcement of the hearing taken from the *Oakland Tribune*, drawings of Lucas in front of the judge, and a transcript of their conversations, in which the judge apprehensively grants Lucas’s request, are intriguing. Accompanying the work here was a multipart installation titled *Before and After*, consisting of portraits of Lucas commissioned from artist friends. Should the “refreshed” Lucas decide to further test the boundaries of her aesthetic practice in the realm of everyday life in this way, it would herald a fascinating step forward.

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