

## Karin Pliem: Symbiotic Unions

December 8, 2016 - January 14, 2017

*"Symbiosis, not chance mutation, is the driving force behind evolution. The cooperation between organisms and the environment are the chief agents of natural selection—not competition among individuals. Darwin's grand vision was not wrong, only incomplete."*

Lynn Margulis, American evolutionary theorist



*Natura Morta Vivente*  
linseed oil and paint on canvas | 2016  
51x59 inches | 130x150 cm

Without bio-mass, molecular genetics, and costly research laboratories, Karin Pliem attempts to convey her ideas and perspectives concerning the problematic relationship between man and living nature. By seducing the viewer into a massive landscape, replete with fantastical planting and vestiges of long past manufacture, She holds that man is neither more nor less than a part of nature. *Symbiotic Union*, Pliem's first exhibition in the United States, invites us to enter a world of constructive communication between a polyculture society's various living organisms. Although humankind is not depicted, we, as the viewer finalize the pictorial plane. There can be no doubt that the Artist's views of nature are not naturalistic.

When comparing works of art and organisms, the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch notes a possible parallel between artistic and evolutionary creations. "We cannot take away or exchange some part of it without causing the most serious damage. The orientation of works of art toward consistency is perfectly analog to the biotic tendency toward the generation of optimized entities. It is in this *structural* sense that art *always* emulates nature." Pliem's canvas construct is broken down into panels which are united through a single-color palette and thread of decay and rebirth.



*Ceres*  
linseed oil and paint on canvas, 2016  
51x43 inches | 130x110 cm

Just as with symbiotic connections between living beings from different ecosystems and regions of the world, the works in *Symbiotic Union* create a conversation between conceptual considerations and the painterly process. At a moment in which the painting achieves dialogue with past and present concerns, Pliem knows the work is finished. This ending process is also one that happens organically and is spurred on with the immediate beginning of the next painting in the series and so on.... her world knows more than just one symbiotic union.

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