

Maria Bonnier Dahlin grant exhibition at Bonniers Konsthall 2021

text from catalogue

GRIEF LESSONS An essay about the art of Ida Idaida by Santiago Mostyn

The word “monster” derives from the Latin verb *moneo*, meaning “to remind, warn, instruct, or foretell.” Monsters predate written history, and live outside the existing moral order, as a kind of distillation of our fears. As children, we take the dark, unknowable forces at the edges of our perception and turn them into monsters. We give form to those fears.

Ida Idaida makes kinetic structures that are at once the manifestation of personal trauma, and a material response to the social and political trauma that society is capable of inflicting on us all. Ida speaks of her sculptures as machines that affect bodies, much in the way that capitalism affects bodies: imperceptibly but profoundly.

Entering the gallery, you’re met with a cast of red light that shifts perception of the room, and brings to mind a photographic darkroom. And in fact, the installation works in the manner of a photo chemical process, in which a negative – in this case the physical sculpture – is loaded with information but needs the light sensitive paper – here, the viewer – in order to develop an impression, to be received in full. Centered in the room is *DEVICE* (fre burns and fames lick my poor remains) (2017), a finely crafted, gallows-like structure assembled using the Japanese joinery technique of *Shiguchi*, and constrained by chains and bolts with handcrafted heads. Like the origin myth of the world carried by four elephants on the back of a turtle, *DEVICE* rests on four bronze domes, all of its monumental psychic weight touching the ground as lightly as possible.

Ida comes from a family of blacksmiths, and has been working with metal and fabric from an early age. Violence and trauma haunted her family, and the works in this installation clone and digest and mutate that trauma, no more so than in the tent-like installation *Truth is not delivered whole but received in parts a rotten corpse flesh slushed acid rain burn the scars* (2018). Maggots feed on rotting flesh to become flies that are trapped and framed in rotating cases, their movement projected onto the walls of the tent. Rotating gears and cylinders orchestrate a rough montage of light silhouettes. “Black Holes” demarcate the corners of the tent, and reoccur throughout the exhibition, suggesting porous thresholds. An edge of dark humour shows up with the wet slapping sound of rags – literally slap-stick – on *Trasa* (From flesh to meat from meat to flesh) (2020), the third machine in the room, and we’re reminded of comedy’s greatest capacity: to take back power from tragedy.

The poet and classicist Anne Carson writes that, “Myths are stories about people who become too big for their lives temporarily, so that they crash into other lives or brush against gods. In crisis their souls are visible.”

Ida Idaida’s machines operate in the afterlife of this trauma. But, hidden within this afterlife are imprints of the world that came before. On the bolt heads and domed feet of *DEVICE*, wax impressions of a fabric pattern are layered and repeated. The pattern is indigenous to *Majagården*, the plot of land in Dalarna where Ida’s ancestors have lived and broken the earth since the 1700’s. This pattern is a structure, too; a reminder of the world that once was, and a fragment of the new world that Ida is creating.



DEVICE (fire burns and flames lick my poor remains)







Trasa (from flesh to meat from meat to flesh)



