



Kate Lyddon interviewed by curator Paul Luckraft, 2 November 2015

**Paul Luckraft:** The exhibition has a central motif of trees and wood morphing into bodies, both human and animal. Can you talk a little about what led you to this?

**Kate Lyddon:** Thinking back, I can see that the image of the tree evolved from an initial drawing, a sketch or doodle really, of a wood-burning stove I made inadvertently from observation. From there the motif of the log became ever more present in works, beginning as a simple log, then logs becoming limbs, or figures morphing into tree form. It wasn't something I was seeking out, but it slowly became more and more apparent, and as it did so gave rise to further research on the subject.

It got me interested in the tree and its connection to characters from ancient mythology and religion, such as Daphne and Apollo, or The Tree of Life, through to fairy tales, such as *Pinocchio* or the lesser-known *The Woodcutter and Death*. Research also led me to look at things like the Log Lady from *Twin Peaks* and Tolkien's Ents, and even a rare skin disease known as Tree-Man Illness [Epidermodysplasia verruciformis]. All this imagery informs the work, albeit indirectly. At the same time, the tree – and the tree becoming human, or vice versa – provides endless formal possibilities.

**PL:** Each image or arrangement of objects you create seems an exploration of both a set of characters indicating a narrative of sorts, but also very much about aesthetic properties such as harmony and dissonance, rough and smooth. Is this process a high-wire balancing act?

**KL:** Yes the process of working is a constant battle, a continuous balancing of all these things. Narrative is something that usually appears in the work during the making, and has to be offset at times by breaking it and opening it up if it becomes too absolute. I never

want to close narrative down to something clear and contained. There is also the balancing of seriousness and humour, and of saying enough but not saying too much. Again, when it comes to aesthetic properties, the work is a constant pull back and forth between polar opposites; of the beautiful and the abject, and of harmony and dissonance. It's not that I want it to be somewhere in the middle, but it's more that I want it to contain both. Finally there is a balancing of meaning through both concept and form; allowing both to have enough substance.

**PL:** Recently, and continued in the preparations for this show, you have been simultaneously working across different scales and media – from drawing, to printmaking, to sculpture and painting. What is the motivation for this variety?

**KL:** It is difficult to say what comes first, if it's the idea, or the desire to work with a chosen medium. But there is always a moment when I choose whatever medium makes sense for the ideas I'm holding in my head. If an idea I have might require more focus on sensitivity, line and tone, I would work with drawing. At other times it might be colour I'm thinking about and painting suits these intentions. And at other times I'm thinking about form and scale, and it feels right that it would manifest as an object, in three dimensions.

Each medium gives a set of possibilities which other mediums don't. At the same time, the history and connotations of that medium all play a part in the work, and can throw up new problems and limitations to deal with. I like that I can move between mediums and be faced with a new set of challenges each time, being aware of a medium's history and weight yet not be tied down to this or feel I have to define my practice by focusing on one medium.

**PL:** Do you see your three-dimensional work having a different energy to the two-dimensional, or are they very much interlinked with each other?

**KL:** I think all the work is very much interlinked, with the same themes, ideas and aesthetic approaches. But the pace and resolution of making three-dimensional work as opposed to two-dimensional is very different. The parts of the sculptures are never really resolved as such, as they can be moved and placed in endlessly different formats. That can make decision-making difficult and often sculptures are left open or unresolved until they are exhibited, and then become unresolved again once taken apart. Whereas all the decisions relating to a painting or drawing are contained within the canvas or paper.

**PL:** In your work there is a strong sense of the body undergoing changes, or even violence. How much do you draw upon the deep-rooted cultural threads of Gothic fairy tales or horror movies directly, and how much does it involve more personal flights of imagination or sets of feelings.

**KL:** In terms of the body undergoing changes or violence even, I think this comes about from a sustained interest in the human figure, and its formal potential. That the human form itself could provide endless possibilities for the imagination is something I use as a starting point. That can sometimes manifest as distortion and can be read as deformity or violence to the body, but mostly this comes about through experimentation with the human form. There are wide and varied influences on the work, both subconsciously and consciously, such as books, films, stories, etc, all of which relate to both dark humour and the uncanny. But, as my work gets underway I find imagery and objects are usually born out of the imagination, or memory, intuitively evolving as I work.

A lot of imagery comes as a surprise to me in the making.

A newly commissioned essay by writer Alice Butler accompanies the exhibition. Printed copies are available from the front desk, and a PDF download can be found at [zabludowiczcollection.com](http://zabludowiczcollection.com)



**Artist's presentation**  
Sunday 6 December, 3pm.

Kate Lyddon (b.1979, London) completed an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art in 2006 and a BA in Fine Art at Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury in 2001. Lyddon has presented solo exhibitions at Standpoint Gallery, London (The Mark Tanner Sculpture Award 2014/15); Galerie d'YS, Brussels; Galerie Charlot, Paris; Fold Gallery, London; and Skellefteå Kunsthalle, Sweden, amongst others. Recent group exhibitions include *Suspicion* curated by artist Dan Coombs at Jerwood Space, London; and *Anti-Social Realism*, Charlie Smith, London.

Zabludowicz Collection Invites is dedicated to solo presentations by UK-based artists who do not currently have representation by a UK commercial gallery.

176 Prince of Wales Road  
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Opening times  
Thursday–Sunday, 12–6pm  
Other times by appointment  
FREE ENTRY

Reverse: *Superhuman Clock*  
*Ticking Backwards Forever*,  
2015, oil, acrylic and collage on  
linen, 170 x 225 cm.

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**Invites**  
**KATE**  
**LYDDON**

**12 NOVEMBER–**  
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