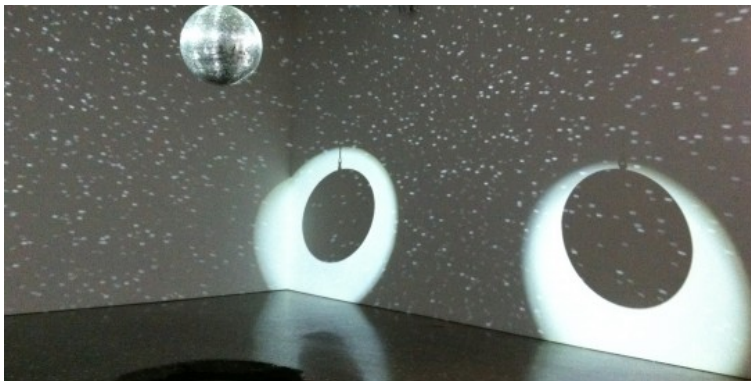


ADOBE AIRSTREAM

Disaster, as in Unfavorable Star: Von Trier, Hodges, Khorramian

Written by Hannah Hughes // January 2, 2012 // Art //



Jim Hodges. Untitled, 2011 Mirror ball, mechanics and water.

Current exhibitions by Jim Hodges at Barbara Gladstone, and **Laleh Khorramian at Nicole Klagsbrun**, along with Lars Von Trier's *Melancholia* evoke the current winter solstice – 2012 zeitgeist. We seem to be especially attracted to disaster, or it to us, but on the positive side, the attempt to think beyond the human via science or mythological thinking is strong. This is fertile ground for paranoid or fanciful internet theories, but also for the production of so-called speculative realist philosophy and theatrical multivalent art. Von Trier's *Melancholia* pulls stylistically from the romantic painting tradition and contemporary realistic cinema to create a hybrid that speaks of entwined individual psychological angst and galactic scale catastrophe. Trier shows us the man of science in crisis, trying despite increasing uncertainty to maintain belief in control until finally confronting the truth of immanent extinction and abruptly committing suicide by pill. On the opposite end of the human behavioral spectrum we witness Kirsten Dunst's character, manic-depressive, but cosmically attuned, turning the end into a conscious act of erotic self-sacrifice. Charlotte Gainsbourg's character probably represents a majority response, first shock and panic, then the Pollyannaish attempt to impose an understandable human form and meaning to the end



Jim Hodges at Barbara Gladstone on 21st street

In *Melancholia*, as in Jim Hodge's current work, celestial bodies have become dramatic protagonists again, after a long sleep as predictable objects of a naive science. No longer mere objects for our subjects, but rulers, or partners, of our fate, simultaneously out there, independent of us, and yet in us, of us. Philosophers currently interested in a rapprochement with science are also moved by the work of H.P. Lovecraft who valued science as an opening into the deeply weird. What Lovecraft wanted, and these artists and philosophers of today seem to want, is to become re-enchanted with the material world in a way far beyond pedestrian realism. Laleh Khorramian's incantatory video animation, *Water Panics in the Sea* is collaged partly from abstract details out of her own painterly monotypes. Her marks are reminiscent of the effects invented by Max Ernst to unleash the inherently expressive power of paint as mutable material, diffuse, runny, viscous, or clotted, suggestive of different life forms. Her primeval landscapes are sometimes inhabited by humans with their boats, runes and seers but always have the feeling of the dawn of man, or perhaps the end of man, a portentous time of almost painful hallucinatory beauty. Khorramian places the viewer in a privileged position that visually speaking could be inside a body or on the sea, but emotionally is somehow like a child or a stranger witnessing a ritual or hearing a song beyond literal understanding but ancient and directly relevant.



Jim Hodges at Barbara Gladstone on 24th Street

Hodges is riffing on disco and cosmos with a blatant theatricality that succeeds in capturing wonder. So the mirrored ball becomes a planet that is hourly dipped and resurrected amid a galaxy of projected stars. A huge round tessellated black mirror piece composed of sections, was rearranged throughout the term of the exhibition, referencing a natural cycle with ebbs and flows, but ending up as a large complete circle. It would be perfect for a corporate lobby, exhibiting a dark seductive whole, a black hole indeed. At the 21st Street gallery are four massive rock chunks with delineated metallic areas, as if they had each been dipped in darkly lurid molten metal. The four asteroids allow a crossed path through the middle, just enough space for us to inspect the ever diminishing, ever more elusive boundary between man-made and not. Upstairs are drop dead large color photographs of gashed and scratched skies. The white of the paper has been brought back to the surface in gestural violation of the image. The pathos of this violent choreography recalls the 2010 youtube video of the guy crying about the incomprehensible beauty of a double rainbow.



Jim Hodges. Untitled (scratched sky, II), 2011. Pigment print; 80 x 59 1/2 inches