

Grim Solo

presents

Solve et Coagula

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29.06 » 11.07 2011

Opening: 29.06 19h



GRIMMUSEUM

Wed.-Sun. 14-19 h.

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"Solve et coagula" — Separate and Join Together (or "dissolve and coagulate" in Latin) is a medieval alchemy quote, which is to say that nothing new can be built if not before we make space, breaking the old.

Alchemy is an ancient proto-science tradition, precursor to modern inorganic chemistry; Jung saw it as a Western proto-psychology dedicated to the achievement of individuation, as substances, physical states, and molecular material processes could be metaphors for metaphysical issues, spiritual states, and, ultimately, transformations.

Solve et Coagula is the essential alchemical process. "Solve" or "solutio" refers to the breaking down of elements and "Coagula" refers to their coming together. In the process of transmuting base metal into gold, this contained both literal and metaphorical meaning. "Solve" referred to the dissolving and vanishing of hardened positions and negative states of body and mind. "Coagula" referred to the coagulation of dispersed elements into an integrated whole, representing the new synthesis.

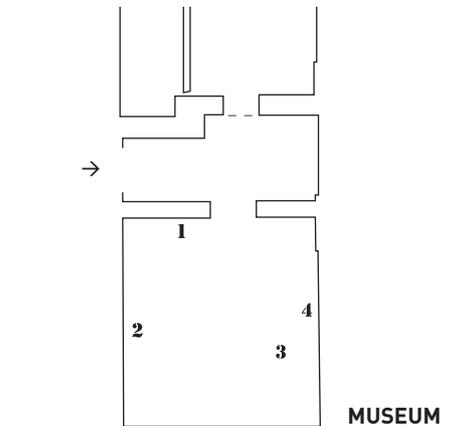
We find this procedure similar to the biological process of metamorphosis, where the ability of a psychical body to decompose and recombine is highly involved. Many observations have indicated that programmed cell death plays a considerable role during physiological processes of multi-cellular organisms. We are particularly interested in Goethe's phenomenology approach to the subject in

plants. Although his ideas of transformation were about the continuous metamorphosis of living things and did not relate to contemporary ideas of transmutation, he arrived to a sophisticated view on changeability and draw the conclusion that organisms may have within itself the ability to take on the shape most suited to its surrounding conditions.

This idea of survival variability may also describe the tendency of chemical species to combine with certain substances in preference to others. In his novel "Elective Affinities", Goethe described people as chemical beings whose amorous affairs and relationships were similar to the pairings of alchemical species. Alchemists stated the existence in nature of two opposing forces. Such energies come from a single source and are manifested in all aspects of creation (mercury and sulfur, sun and moon, feminine and masculine...) Two apparently opposite realities that complementary transcends duality.

This co-eternal binary opposition is present in the artworks displayed on the exhibition and become particularly appreciable in the piece "Untitled (heads)", a two-state sculpture that preserved a metaphysical and philosophical duality discourse, though diluted into a reciprocated harmony, a tasty peace, increasingly dense but necessarily crude.

The large-scale mural of sticker paper on the wall — "Sarcocarp" reproduces the silhouette of a pomegranate cut in half, precisely drawn from a previously taken photograph. Two



1

Melting Down

2011, rubber, wood panels, staples
89x68 cm

2

Sarcocarp

2011, sticker paper, 203x254 cm

3

Untitled (Heads)

2011, polystyrene resin, plaster,
fiberglass, paint, approx. 40x16x26 cm

4

Survival Devices

2011, Print on RC paper, framed
25x25 cm each

congruent parts, not similar in shape neither in size, that keeps this succulent and fleshy middle of the fruit that can be eaten. Like the sexual merging of a man and a woman, an alchemical union which express that the dualistic nature of the material have a oneness self.

In "Melting Down", this concoction of dichotomies turns directly into one single piece by the overlap of solid and volatiles folds that merge incrementally and gradually into a semi-circular spiral where is no longer possible to differentiate its primary elements.

Finally there are three photographs; "Survival Devices", everyday items that we found particularly useful during this creative process that appears here as a conceptual resource to explore the idea of changeability in relation to the environment. By presenting a juxtaposition of ordinary objects into the exhibition context, their meanings and qualities gets dully transformed.

This procedure of decompose and recombine lead us to extract the essence and separate it from the hard crusts, freeing them from any stereotyped action. "Solve et Coagula" as a metaphor to express transmutation from base to a finer state, reflecting what is inconstant in the manifest forms and what is truly enduring.

Tomás Mayo & Laura Valor

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