

REGEN PROJECTS

Simmons, Jessica. "Liz Larner at Regen Projects." Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles (May 13, 2021) [ill.] [online]

Contemporary
Art Review

.la

Liz Larner at Regen Projects

May 13, 2021
Text by Jessica Simmons



Liz Larner, *As Stars and Seas Entwine* (installation view) (2021). Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Evan Bedford.

Liz Larner's exhibition at [Regen Projects](#), *As Stars and Seas Entwine*, centers around a serpentine pile of plastic junk—a roiling, synthetic mass of detritus splayed across the gallery floor. This meandering sculpture, entitled *Meerschaum Drift* (2020–2021), consists of a conglomeration of plastic waste accumulated by the artist over a three-year period: water bottles, milk bottles, takeout containers, scattered labels, other miscellany—all remnants of the unending parade of unnecessary exorbitance that accompanies quotidian life in late-stage capitalist society. Fastened together with plastic zip ties and brushed with varying hues of blue and green acrylic paint (itself a plastic

REGEN PROJECTS

composite), this glassy entrail of artificial refuse mimics the tumbling surface of an ocean or the sinuous curve of a natural shoreline. Commingling in and around *Meerschaum Drift* are 12 craggy, amorphous, and low-lying ceramic sculptures that are also dispersed across the gallery floor, suggesting earthen, organic counterparts to this aforementioned tangle of excess.

As a representation of the destructive afterlives of our cumulative waste (particularly certain byproducts that are hypothesized to take up to an unfathomable five to ten centuries to decompose) *Meerschaum Drift* is relatively uncomplicated: our oceanic landscape is littered with lumps of floating trash and debris—the toxic jetsam of human society. Superficially, the sculpture’s exposition of this point leaves little space for nuance. However, in the context of Larner’s wider research-based practice, which often explores the unpredictable dynamics of material stability and decay, *Meerschaum Drift* suggests a deeper conceptual investigation that extends far beyond a simple condemnation of our habits of consumption. As a commentary on the complex macrocosm of the Anthropocene, the current geological epoch defined by extreme human interference, Larner’s exhibition ultimately elicits a question of boundaries: as our synthetic environment continues to bleed into the surrounding natural one (to devastating effect), at what point does the delineation between the two virtually disappear?

The etymology of the titular word “meerschaum” emphasizes this line of questioning. While the word directly translates to “seafoam” in German—*meer* meaning sea and *schaum* meaning foam—the term does not, in fact, refer to froth on a tumultuous sea but rather to a clay-like mineral substance that floats upon the surface, coagulating in such a way as to resemble seafoam. By drawing a connection between this disguised natural material and superfluous plastic, Larner presages a future wherein plastic particles are as endemic to the marine world as foam and algae—a realistic scenario (i.e., the Great Pacific Garbage Patch) in which this seemingly indestructible waste proliferates like bubbles across the surface of the sea.

Although Larner has titled the 12 ceramic objects after both real and fictitious asteroids, their nebulous shapes and sediment-like surfaces initially recall various forms of terrestrial matter, from wind-whipped boulders to mutable volcanic landmasses. Rather than functioning in sharp opposition to the accumulated plastic (and thus pushing an obvious dichotomy of nature vs. artifice), these ceramics point to the ways in which alien forms—an interstellar rock pummeling through space, or an avalanche of plastic leaching into an ecosystem—can invariably alter the native environments with which they collide. Over time, these inanimate, non-native bodies can infiltrate and disrupt the surrounding natural ecology, torturously colonizing its living rhythms.

By situating these discursive sculptures directly on the floor and within the same physical space as the viewer, Larner not only coaxes an acknowledgment of our complicity in these scenarios but also points to the intrinsic material interconnectedness between the instability of our bodies, the chemical longevity of our waste, and the vulnerabilities of the natural world. Our extant behaviors, and the toxic relics we leave in our wake, don’t exist externally from nature, but rather, become part and parcel of it—a truth that both spoils and blunts our own romantic ideals of a pristine, unadulterated world.

REGEN PROJECTS

Liz Larner: As Stars and Seas Entwine runs from March 27–May 22, 2021 at Regen Projects (6750 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038).



Liz Larner, *As Stars and Seas Entwine* (installation view) (2021). Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Evan Bedford.



Liz Larner, *As Stars and Seas Entwine* (installation view) (2021). Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Evan Bedford.

REGEN PROJECTS



Liz Larner, *As Stars and Seas Entwine* (installation view) (2021). Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Evan Bedford.



Liz Larner, *As Stars and Seas Entwine* (installation view) (2021). Image courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Evan Bedford.