

MARTIN MAELLER

saturnine

2,870 Kilogram per Second

You make objects, but they seem untouched by human hands. Some of the material you use is industrial, some is metallic or a combination of both. To me, they appear like devotional objects that repel anyone who wants to come too close. And yet they are strangely attractive. Like remnants from a far-away past, they impose their presence upon us. Don't you think it is strange how distant things have a profound influence?

Take Saturn. It is the melancholic's favourite planet. Like the spleen, the organ responsible for the black bile permeating the body, Saturn emits rays that hold the entire world under its spell.

In one of his last films, Russian director Andrej Tarkovsky tells the story of a mathematician in a small Italian town. He locked himself and his family up in his house for seven years to wait for the end of the world. It was all expectation, mixed with the knowledge about a God who cannot die, not even if the entity tried to commit suicide. A slow entropy, that's all, approaching zero, but never quite reaching it. The end did not come.

Saturn is also known as the Greek god Kronos, personification of time, and one of the grimmest gods in the Pantheon. He castrated his father Uranus, who, upon dying, prophesied that his son, too, will be murdered by his offspring. Hence Kronos devours his children right after their birth. Very much like time, creating and destroying simultaneously, continually. Kronos is the fearful, bitter, and lonely god without a throne.

He is an allegory, he is a planet, and he is an influence deep within you. Knowledge about the human body has taken adventurous turns from late antiquity to the middle ages. All you need to know now is that it evolved from a theory about different substances within our bodies that influence our characters. It turned into a more complex system according to which those fluids are eventually linked to the stars and planets. As above, so below. Astrology reigned supreme in a system of correspondence. Eventually, Saturn became associated with black bile, and only then melancholy's natural connection to him was universally accepted. Think of it as the sun's nocturnal proxy. Think of it as the sun's dark oppressor. Think of Saturn as the black sun, while its leaden rays pin you to your bed.

The planet will have lost its rings in about 100 million years, it is in the news if you don't believe me. Only the most vulgar among us dare to say out loud that this is an awfully long time, but astronomers tell us that the planet will have had rings only for a very brief moment of its existence. The rings consist of ice, which is electrically charged by the sun's UV rays. This causes the boulders of frozen water to be attracted by Saturn and to crash into its gravitational field, where they briefly light up like candles as they are devoured by the planet's ionosphere, until it has lost its iconic identity, until it is cannibalised in a sad fireworks of tiny, ghostly sparks. The gas planet consumes up to 2,870 kilogram of its icy rings per second.

With only the years from 1990 to 2062 at your disposal, your time is running out. But this life is just like the short sad lights crashing into Saturn every second. The self is exhausted. Isn't it tiresome, being special? All you think about is an incommunicable pain. The incapability of putting it into words, or rather: the incapability of ending the words with meaning. The human mind is prone to organising chaos into recognizable patterns, the melancholic's mind fails at that task. Science has a way of making sense of the world. The interior and exterior world correspond to each other, and both are getting better: this modernist fantasy of a world that tends toward the best possible order is over. The other assumption is that the world trails towards chaos. Energy does not disappear, the only thing that disappears is order. The world will disintegrate, bit by bit. More ice will have evaporated in the ionosphere of Saturn. The years between 1990 and 2062, a life, your life, represent only a small section of that, but that's all the time you have.

Text by Philipp Hindahl

EXHIBITION : June 29 - July 27, 2019 - Sat: 12-6pm and by appointment

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