



Cody Lecoy, *Resonance (detail)*, 2017, acrylic on panel, 48 x 24 in.

RESONANCE

In *Resonance* I depict Snk'lip, the coyote trickster of the Syilx people. Stories of Snk'lip originate with the Syilx People in their traditional territories of the Okanagan. In the painting I included a dark bird figure to represent the shadow that modern ways of life have cast over traditional land, practices, and teachings.



Cody Lecoy, *Momentum (detail)*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 22 x 28 in.

MOMENTUM

Momentum is my interpretation of the demand and depletion of fossil fuels due to rapid industrial and population growth. I use the lion as an imperialist image of power, to represent outmoded colonial thinking about our land as a limitless source of economic gain, and to point to dated resource management practices. In this painting, the frog is a symbol of metamorphosis, a visualization of the need for change in how we manage and extract resources.



Cody Lecoy, *In Still Darkness (detail)*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in.

IN STILL DARKNESS

In Still Darkness focuses on self-renewal and transformation, and seeks to convey how an understanding of ourselves can affect our relationship to our external surroundings. In this painting I reference the unstable environmental conditions that led to the British Columbia forest fires of 2016. These events made me investigate and change my own lifestyle choices that were contributing to environmental destruction. I have included animals that signify my own first steps on the journey to embrace cleaner living: the heron represents stillness, the owl illumination, and the bear introspection.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

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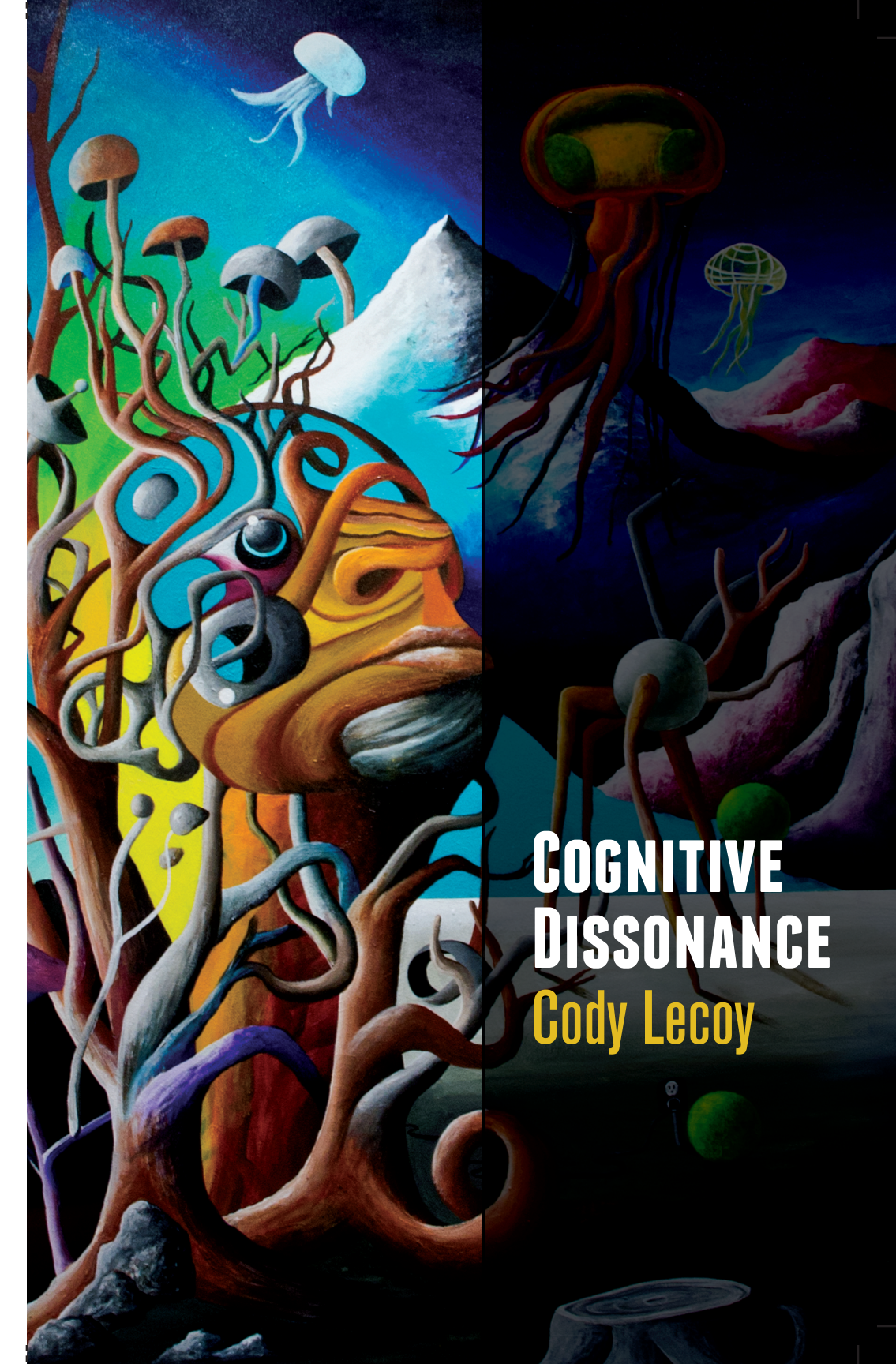
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Front Cover: Cody Lecoy, *Mycelium*, 2017, acrylic on panel, 48 x 24 in.



**COGNITIVE
DISSONANCE**
Cody Lecoy

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Cognitive Dissonance is an exhibition of paintings by Sylx and Lekwungen artist Cody Lecoy. Lecoy is an emerging artist who is dedicated to creating work that focuses on the connection we, as humans, have with the environment. He is particularly interested in the challenge of our reliance on fossil fuels, the inherent instability of this industry, and the race to reverse the damage that it has caused the environment. Lecoy primarily works with acrylic paint and employs a stylized, surrealist interpretation of Indigenous design principles of the Pacific Northwest. Born in 1989, his style has evolved with mentorship by artists such as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Shawn Hunt, Richard Tetrault and Jerry Whitehead, who have aided his artistic development by offering conceptual and technique-based advice.

The title of the exhibition is drawn from psychologist Leon Festinger's theory of the same name which, put simply, suggests that we have a tendency to seek harmony between our beliefs and behaviours. When this balance is disrupted we work to reduce or eliminate the dissonance. Lecoy uses this idea as a framework to explore our complicated, and often contradictory, relationship to the environment. Our methods of non-renewable energy extraction, production, and use continue to threaten the environment but we are slow to adapt to the realities of climate change. Lecoy's recent paintings address the suspended state of cognitive dissonance we exist in because of our reliance on fossil fuels and our failure to adequately respond to the resulting environmental crisis.



Cody Lecoy, *Trypophobia*, 2017, acrylic on panel, 48 x 24 in.

a dark fissure and pitted with holes, the source of the phobia from which the painting's title is drawn. A central figure in this unusual landscape is an affable frog, sitting at the edge of the deep crevice, its brilliantly-coloured body practically aglow. The frog's body is articulated by a combination of trigons and circles and its mismatched limbs are made up of disparate imagery including a one geometric leg resembling

Lecoy uses a combination of Northwest Coast formline (U, S, and ovoid shapes) and Coast Salish design principles (crescent, chevron, and trigon shapes) to create figures that occupy unnaturally colourful surroundings. In works like *Trypophobia*, the artist's bright colours signal an environmental caution in much the same way that many poisonous plants and animals exhibit bright colours in nature. The painting's horizontal composition is bisected by

a matchstick, and another a salmon whose tail cleverly doubles as the frog's toes. As the title suggests, this eccentric landscape is dotted with imagery of utmost discomfort for trypophobics; irregular holes and bumps abound. A barnacle covered rock, a polyp filled tree stump, a seed-encrusted strawberry on a short pedestal, and a spotted octopus tentacle are relentless repetitions of the unnerving circular shape. What to some may appear to be a cheerful, if idiosyncratic, scene to a trypophobic is a conglomeration of unpleasantness. Lecoy's creation speaks to the destructive impact humans have had on the environment through processes of natural resource extraction that puncture and abrade the landscape. While trypophobia itself is an unusual condition, Lecoy suggests that we have a collective responsibility to seriously consider the unnatural holes and marks that we leave on the land, and further, that we need to embrace our agency to find a way out of what may seem like a futile situation.

Lecoy's work frequently explores the inherent connection that humans have with all other aspects of the natural world. Mycelium are the root-like part of fungus that can grow in expansive formations that resemble tree branches, or meandering river systems. He uses this apt metaphor to liken this natural phenomenon to human technological connectivity. In his characteristically vibrant palette, Lecoy depicts a rugged mountainscape in purplish hues that floats down to touch the horizon line. Gigantic, germinated spores create a visual relationship between the figures in the foreground to the expansive mountains in the distance. These animated forms traipse through the eerie landscape, the larger form reaching skyward toward equally massive jellyfish that defy gravity and swim through the air. This imaginative setting is punctuated by two unseemly technological elements, the first of which is a wall socket into which a power cord leads ambiguously behind the trunk of a tree-like figure with branches that intertwine to form a humanoid head and neck. A twisting mass of root and branch-like forms conclude in mushroom caps at their tips, that in turn echo the shape of the wafting jellyfish. One conspicuous limb stands apart in this otherwise organic proliferation of growth, brandishing the second technological anomaly at its tip. A single branch supports a small satellite dish, concave face tilted upward as if to receive an invisible message. In this work, Lecoy conflates mycelium networks with human-made networks, like the digital systems that allow for near-instantaneous access to events occurring around the globe. In exaggerating this parallel, Lecoy reminds us of the modesty of humankind within the larger natural order. Even in our greatest technological accomplishments we are only beginning to replicate the sophistication of the natural world.

We are asked to further consider notions of interconnectivity in the painting *In Still Darkness* which investigates the impact that humans have on animal habitats. Focusing on the decimation of habitat for the expansion of industrial growth, Lecoy visualizes a bleak reality associated with rapid industrialization. Four distant island-like masses span the width of this horizontal composition, suggesting a horizon line where water meets land in an otherwise ambiguously graduated background of sunset colours. Two of the islands support one smokestack each, puffing out long streams of emissions. Three aberrant creatures occupy the foreground of the painting. A bear's head with almond-shaped hollows for eyes is carved out of a large rock formation that floats deceptively in the heavy purple miasma. A stone pillar

thrusts upward next to this monumental face and opens into a miniature forest of evergreens. The long, slim trunk of a pine tree begins outside of the pictorial space and cuts through the centre of the canvas, its needles converging with the other conifers. In this treetop setting, a white-faced barn owl with human-like legs and spindly toes dances through the sky. The third creature, a heron with exaggeratedly long legs and toes like human fingers marches toward the left edge of the canvas, its bent neck supporting yet another lush, needled tree. The animals Lecoy has chosen to depict in this work are reliant on the forests, though in this image they themselves are responsible for holding up the only vestiges of nature to be found in this toxic haze of industrial progress. Nature's ability to perpetuate itself is at risk because of the advanced rate of destruction wrought by human activity.

Lecoy's paintings present a fantastical world where animals, humans, technology, and industry meet in chromatically vivid, yet eerily vacuous landscapes. Formline and Coast Salish designs provide the foundation for compositions that draw our attention to the impact of our actions on the environment and remind us that we are only one small part of the web of existence. Though these works are concerned with the urgency of the environmental crisis that characterizes the present moment, they also recall the time of transformation when humans and animals shared fluid identities. Whether through modern science or deep, inherited knowledge, Lecoy's recent paintings are a call to action. These works suggest that it is time now to align our beliefs and our behaviours, to stop ignoring what we know to be true, and to cease in the destruction of our only home.

- Andrea Pepper, 2017



Cody Lecoy, *Sonar (detail)*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 in.

SONAR

Sonar deconstructs the Canadian Coat of Arms. As a symbol of the monarchy, the nation's colonial heritage, and our current government, I feel that the Canadian crest also represents a power imbalance. This imbalance has far reaching negative impacts, for example favouring corporations over First Peoples and the environment in the process of natural resource extraction. My version of the crest features the Narwhal, which is found in Northern Canada. The title *Sonar* references the navigational abilities of marine mammals and the impact of oil and gas extraction in our oceans on the animals' use of echolocation.



Cody Lecoy, *Messiah Complex*, 2017, acrylic on board, 36 x 36 in.

MESSIAH COMPLEX

In this self-portrait I use imagery drawn from sedimentary rock, glacial ice sheets, and wood grain to illustrate the passing of time and cyclical patterns of growth. We are all affected by the constant fluctuation of growth and decay that occurs in the life forms around us. Through immersion in the intricacies of the natural world I feel we can come to understand the complexities of nature that exists within us.

The title, *Messiah Complex*, acknowledges the delusional and egotistic practice of imposing our beliefs on others in a world that is constantly changing. When we aimlessly follow the words of others, we limit ourselves.