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**Justin Schlepp – *Mr. and Mrs. Pterodactyl*
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Midway Contemporary Art is pleased to present a solo-exhibition by the Minneapolis based artist Justin Schlepp (b. 1980 in Arberdeen, South Dakota). Presented in Midway's galleries two and three, the exhibition *Mr. and Mrs. Pterodactyl* features new sculpture, works on paper, photographs, and mixed media. Highly intuitive and playful, Schlepp's installation is an illuminated manuscript that describes in space-time, the tale of a diastolic strain between its virtual and concrete components.

Central within the exhibition are a collection of carved and modeled objects of DAS terra cotta clay, balsa wood, and polyurethane foam that are positioned on a table, pedestals, and the floor. These detailed forms allude to architectural models, philosophical formulas, musical instruments, runner's starting blocks, and prosthetic devices. Given its diminutive scale, the table maquette is simultaneously a proposition for and a proliferation of such unrealized projects as one made by Isamu Noguchi in the late fifties and informed by a recipe, detained in its employment as a constructivist theatre design. Third and fourth functions are also inherent, indexing the proportions of the body and the trifold meaning of index, cast and font.

The uncertain nature of these objects extends throughout the entire installation in a series of sketches, photographs, clippings, and handmade book covers. Schlepp creates an opaque web of associations to figures such as the Belgian artist Panamerenko, Stevie Wonder, Elie Nadelman, Charles Schultz, Richard Artschwager, Michael Foucault, and architects such as Josep Maria Jujol and Marjetica Potrč. The title of the exhibition itself, *Mr. and Mrs. Pterodactyl*, is an obscure reference to two images from the books *Public Intimacy* and *Struwwelpeter*. In the first, an image shows the German artist Rebecca Horn extending her body into space through elongated finger prostheses that enable her touch and scratch both walls of the room. In the other book, a 19th century collection of cruel children's stories written by Heinrich Hoffman, a character named Slovenly Peter is depicted as a child with overgrown fingernails. Chosen for facile reasons, the centerpiece is evidence from content to cover: a rhizome between intuition and faulty completed by imagination alone.

The fact that these two intertwined references only real presence within the exhibition remains buried in two books inserted into one another (aside from the title and perhaps in another image of a Chinese finger trap that is sandwiched between two book spines) is indicative of not only the submerged connections that exist between the works on view, but also the primary role of books and language. Handwritten notations, formulas, and quotes play a dominant part in the artist's work, with the acts of citing and footnoting forming a major axis of Schlepp's practice. Often forgoing titles in favor of utilizing text directly within the works, he plays with language,

reversing text and typography through mirroring, palindromes, and word associations. In one work that employs these operations, a stretched piece of red fabric has a phonetic palindrome taped to its back referencing the Greek mythological character of Ariadne, who gave a spool of red thread to Theseus in order for him to find his way back out of the Minotaur's maze. Accompanied by a red light the piece simultaneously is a pun for this loose interpretation: "to be read again", and a point of running back (the literal interpretation), a loop, in which Jorge Luis Borges' notion of the line as labyrinth achieves saturation.

Two other linguistic components which appear repeatedly through the exhibition are the punctuation mark } and the typographical glyph of the asterisk *. These marks are used in music, logic, written text for a number of different operations; typically to bracket sets, indicate footnotes, and provide emphasis. Yet by rotating the } or curly bracket 90 degrees in one black monochromatic canvas, the characters begin to represent the hull of boat and a star: tools and vehicles for the hydraulic character of philology and the immersion present in the origins of the written word. For the artist himself they are souvenirs of the two conditions governing the duration of the work.

1. There are two and only days with provisions gathered from one and delivered to the next.
2. The * serves as zero point energy for an economy yet invented.