

Michelle Uckotter  
King's Leap Fine Arts at Independent Art Fair 2023

Text by Alan Longino

Michelle Uckotter's paintings are reportage from a betrayed girl's psyche. The attic sets the stage for this state of affairs. Umbral in nature, the girls' bodies twist and bend in this compressed space, becoming contorted to their solitary confines. But these are not just girls, nor are they precisely human, just as the spaces are not precisely homes or spaces in homes: like an attic, they are the oft-forgotten, infrequently cleaned crawl spaces where the skeletons of old pets and the misplaced childhood toy remain and convene together. Uckotter's figures are the incarnation of a sexual gavel, hammering into form the appearance of women, girls, *naifs* that are superficially desirous and carnal yet more innately driven into being by fury and want of dominance. Their contortions and unseemly forms are the expressions of such dominance, control, and a desire to manipulate from a position of power—these unhinged contortions being the positions these women must place themselves into in order to achieve such power and control. Their bodies do not look physically plausible, because their trajectory to dominance is not one recognized as plausible unto the normative viewer.

While Uckotter's figures could be invoking stories of the *kuchisake*—the Japanese ghost stories of a young, malevolent girl often set to themes of revenge—it is more indicative, and contemporary, to see Uckotter's figures as either *Giantesses* or other crystallizations of *macrophilia*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one of Uckotter's paintings is titled *Giantess*. The giantess is a curious figure. Conventionally seen as a large woman who toys with, controls, squishes, or otherwise devours men, the giantess has enjoyed a resurgence as a popular fetish in recent years. It has not only become one of the most popular searched terms on Pornhub<sup>2</sup> the giantess also features prominently in recent video games and online forums such as DeviantArt or Pixiv. The resurgence of the Giantess is a product of the internet and its numerous subcultures. However, rather than remaining a topic of niche discussion, the Giantess has an inherent lure about herself that creates a growing fascination, dedications

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<sup>1</sup> Lover of giants, a fetish sub-genre.

<sup>2</sup> In January 2015, Pornhub released their most-searched for terms of 2014. The term that enjoyed the highest percentile increase year-over-year, was Giantess, with a more than 1,000% increase from the year before.

and worship. The Giantess, like the Virgin Mary, needs to little but exist in order to be worshipped and have followers do what is requested of them. More, the Giantess—similar to the Virgin Mary—is not a sexual being as much as a being that extends care and compassion and desire through the negation of sex. If there's one thing the Giantess will never give away, it is her sex. So, while the giantess may look feminine or female in character; the female, the feminine, is not what one receives from them, ever.

Uckotter paints the Giantess and other figures less from a place of allegory—one could seek to categorize Uckotter's own trans-identity with the characters in the paintings—as instead they are positioned as concepts arising from an ether, most likely the internet, that are as memetic and algo-driven as any body image is seen in the present. Uckotter paints the giantess, like renaissance painters pictured the Virgin Mary, as a figure not of allegory or narrative but one that arises from a pre-defined body of qualities and elements. And, when the body is formed, it expresses qualities that are pre-determined and pre-conceived. The Virgin Mary was not an expression of individuality, but of commonality. Uckotter's figures hold similar truths about themselves; they are not new bodies to be fetishized or held among rare airs, but are figures as common as the next body. However, the fury, the desire for control that Uckotter paints the figures with is the terror expressed in commonality and the betrayal that commonality brought with it: that no individual is unique, but must be forced into performing such inhuman acts in order to achieve any idea of individuality.