



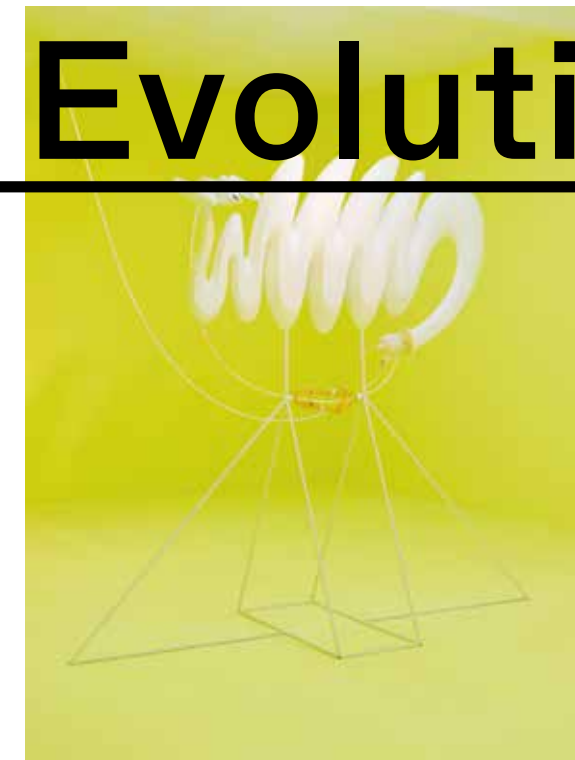
French multimedia artist Marguerite Humeau is reverse-engineering the history of mankind with wireless-enabled beasts, elephant death rituals and the voice of every single human on earth

Putting The Love In Evolution

Portrait **FRANCESCA ALLEN**
Interview **JENI FULTON**

Marguerite Humeau's work investigates the foundations of history, anthropology and science. In her 2012 installation, "Cleopatra 'That Goddess'", the Egyptian queen is revived as a synthetic voice singing love songs in extinct languages. And "Echoes" (2015) features white sculptures of snakes in a space supposedly covered in black mamba venom. Beguiling and startling, the 29-year-old French artist reminds us of the dark corners of human knowledge. Prior to her forthcoming collaborative show at the Manifesta 11 Biennale in Zurich, as well as her June solo exhibition at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Humeau caught up with SLEEK to talk about her new projects.

What are you doing for Manifesta?
Marguerite Humeau: Well, participants have been paired with 'host professionals', in my case, a designer called Matthias Bürki from the Autonomous Systems Lab at ETH Zurich. He creates the decision processes for self-driving cars, and has been helping me 'teach' two mechanical creatures I've designed how to communicate via Wi-Fi.

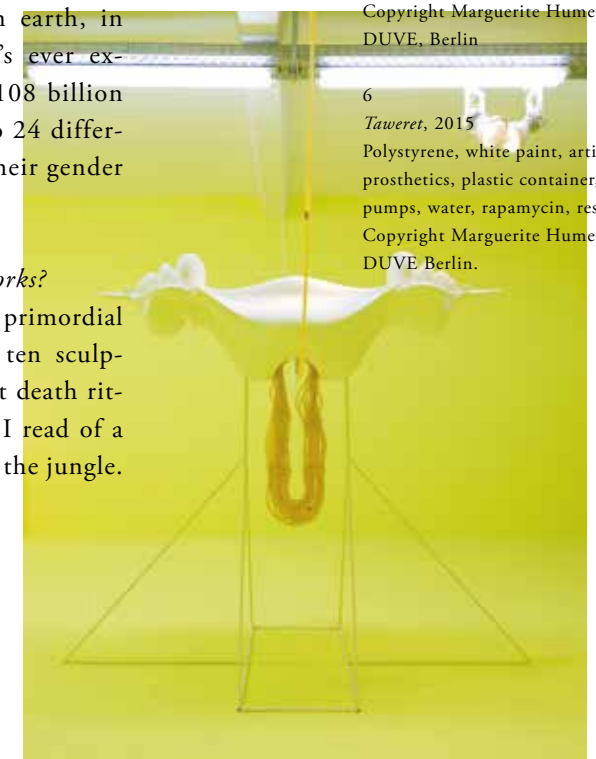


What was your inspiration?
I asked a zoologist which species would have become sentient had humanity not evolved, and he suggested elephants because of these rituals. I'm interested in the evolution of love, and want to explore whether or not these emotions are the result of hormones or other phenomena. The same thing goes for the Manifesta show and the choir of Homo sapiens. It's like we're reverse engineering the history of mankind.

Maybe they need Facebook? What's your exhibition at Palais de Tokyo about?
Sentience. I've been researching the origin of language, and have created a celestial chorus using synthetic approximations of the voices of every human that has existed on earth, in every single language that's ever existed. That's the voices of 108 billion Homo sapiens, divided into 24 different choruses according to their gender and age of death.

And what about the other works?
There's a fresco about the primordial soup featuring a group of ten sculptures mimicking an elephant death ritual. It's based on this story I read of a female elephant that died in the jungle.

5
Wadjet (King Cobra), 2015
Polystyrene, white paint, artificial prosthetics, artificial human saliva, 1g King Cobra venom sourced in Florida
90 x 210 x 230 cm (including stand)
Copyright Marguerite Humeau and DUVE, Berlin



6
Taweret, 2015
Polystyrene, white paint, artificial prosthetics, plastic container, water pumps, water, rapamycin, resvetarol
Copyright Marguerite Humeau and DUVE Berlin