



Flamingo Soup

A presentation of works by

Jean-Marie Appriou

CLEARING, Los Angeles

November 17, 2022 - January 28, 2023

In the exhibition *Flamingo Soup*, presented at CLEARING in Los Angeles, Jean-Marie Appriou's deep fascination with the poetics of evolutionary processes unravels ideas around origin stories, speculative futures, science, magic, and mythology. The gravitational pull of all these concepts is anchored in Appriou's exploration of the medium of sculpture: both from a material and a historical perspective. Through this exhibition, the viewers are immersed in an environment where they are faced with the playful challenge of piecing together the clues of a story. Each sculpture is comprised of a layered system of personal and universal interconnected tales that puts the broader narrative of the show in motion.

The large figurative sculptures are often the result of experiments that Appriou starts off by himself, usually using clay, and that he further develops with the help of craftsmen and foundries through complex processes of casting, glass blowing, and sculpting. He explores materials such as aluminum, bronze, and glass, experimenting further with their textures, patinas, and reflections. Sometimes, the works preserve marks of fingerprints and other ghostly gestures from the physical process of making and molding them. This discerning decision of leaving the marks on the sculptures, highlights, in a subtle and elegant way, how even in a digitally permeated world human touch is still one of the most magical markers of transformation in sculpture-making.

Flamingo Soup presents the story of a recurring cast of characters in Appriou's practice; one that solidifies the overarching narrative that he cultivated over the years. Take the stunning character of the child-astronaut: a skinny, naked, androgynous humanoid, that is always depicted wearing a glass helmet. The little astronauts, with their stunningly vulnerable presence, came to represent an inherited fragility of the future but also the persistence of hope and the necessity of courage. Oftentimes, this character appears standing alone, surrounded by plants - as if extracted from another world - but in one special instance, in *Flamingo Soup*, it is also accompanied by its twin. Together, the twins seem to reinforce the idea of unity, of connectedness, signifying potential new beginnings of social orders, but also an allusion to the very beginnings of life, through something as complex and elegant as cellular division.

Another child-astronaut, in aluminum, uses an abalone shell as a shield. This is not only a nod to Odilon Redon's *La Naissance de Vénus* from 1912 (one of Appriou's favorite all-time artists), but also a nod to his homeland in Brittany, where abalones, a culinary delicacy, are harvested at open-sea. But the abalone is much more than that: it is part of an ancient lineage of primitive snails, a living fossil, with a highly iridescent shell known for its exceptional toughness.



Another set of characters in the exhibition, emphasizing deep time through their ancient lineage, are the Flamingos. They are, like the astronauts, beings that migrate, yet they also feel particularly significant here due to their cohabitation preferences in large colonies, and for the environment in which they thrive: shallow, warm waters. Every work in Appriou's practice is multifaceted like that. A more general appreciation is his interest in the beauty of Ancient Egyptian Art, which feels diffused in the exhibition through the sculptures' restrained style and the reliefs carvings. The reliefs are casts made of patinated bronze and aluminum, each depicting flora that carries its own symbolism: the dream-like intoxication of poppies, the purity of freshly bloomed apple trees indicating new beginnings, and the revered beauty and fertility of water lilies with their umbilical connection to the soil of shallow waters from which they emerge.

Each character plays an important part in this Primordial Soup by emphasizing a return to the quintessence of life and humanity, to open up the possibility of envisioning new worlds. We still don't know for sure, but maybe Darwin was right; "maybe it all started in some warm, little pond."

- Adriana Bildaru

Jean-Marie Appriou (born 1986 in Brest, FR) lives and works in Paris, FR. He received his MFA from École régionale des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, FR.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Villa Medici, Rome; Public Art Fund, New York; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Le Consortium, Dijon; Château de Versailles; as well as C L E A R I N G New York and Brussels; Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; and Jan Kaps, Cologne.

His work has been included in group exhibitions at Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Lafayette Anticipations, Paris; Château de Versailles; Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles; Les Abattoirs, Toulouse; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; La Loge, Brussels; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; MAK, Vienna; and the Amsterdam Sculpture Biennale.

Jean-Marie Appriou's work belongs to the collections of Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Pinault Collection, Paris; Boros Collection, Berlin; Zabłudowicz Collection, London; Dib Museum, Bangkok and Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels.