



CLEARING

MIST

An exhibition of new works by **MARGUERITE HUMEAU**

September 5 – October 19, 2019

What if non-human beings are not just spectators – witnessing the world's slow motion destruction? What if they, too, mourn their dead, and weep for the extinction of other species? What if global warming is triggering the birth of spiritual feelings in non-human beings?

Humeau has heard tell of whales beaching themselves, embracing death by suffocation under their own body weight *for no one else but themselves*. Dolphins, too, committing mass suicide – tired of the sea and life therein. Chimpanzees are piling up rocks – apparently building some kind of temple. Reindeers are self-inducing magic mushrooms, reaching states of ecstatic trance. Elephants wave branches at the waxing moon...

While some of these behaviours seem to be ancient, their number and complexity have increased in recent years. Mass extinction seems to be making animals more conscious of their own mortality; making them hope for some form of existence after death... Clear distinctions between animal and man (indeed, between nature and culture) are blurring. MIST descends:

A cold moon, seen from the below the newly risen sea, casts pale light throughout the space. THE MOON illuminates the exhibition's uncanny scene, where the earth has partially sunk beneath rising floodwaters. On land the air is thick with an invisible layer of toxic gas. It is here that mutant denizens of MIST live out their attenuated, half-conscious days. Reduced to living-death, these creatures are mere lungs, tracheas – respiratory organs – slowly mutating into industrial waste.

A marine mammal is suffocating (THE DEAD), facing the sky. Another one (THE PRAYER) is lifting its body up, searching for some form of transcendence, perhaps invoking celestial bodies. A group of half-submerged beings (THE BREATHERS) look on, performing a breathing sacrament, as if to vouchsafe the former's passage into another realm through a personal offering to the lunar deity – projecting ocean water and whale mucus, sourced during a research expedition off the west coast of British Columbia. All the while, an invisible entity (THE MYTH TELLER) is heard moving throughout the entrails of the building, narrating the first non-human myth of a future deluge. Behind a wall, a large wave seems to have left various disembodied respiratory tracts (WASTE) lying on the shore. In another room, at the back of the gallery, we enter the deep sea. In this ocean a shoal of fish (THE DEAD, THE DANCERS, and THE AIR) are performing a non-human dance, to resuscitate one of their dead.

As Joseph Campbell tells it – *the recognition of mortality and the requirement to transcend it is the first great impulse to the birth of myths and religion*. MIST envisions a world in which mass extinction has accelerated to a point of no return; where non-human beings have become spiritual, capable of self-transcendence and mystical experience, because they have no other choice. It is as if promethean punishment (the trauma of reason) were visited on them for humanity's crimes in the pursuit of planetary mastery.

In keeping with her interdisciplinary approach to world-making, Humeau has developed this new suite of works through consultation with numerous specialists – probing the outer reaches of their competence in search of suggestive material. Drawing upon a range of domains (including behavioral science, anthropology, environmental studies, evolutionary psychology, developmental biology, cognitive science, primatology, ethology, archeology, history, and climate change studies) MIST's conceptual universe is bricolage of exotic and unlikely facts. *The resulting sculptures constitute their synthetic interpretation*: They are players in a grand drama; science-fiction in action; actors on a stage; showing (as much as some scientists have begun to tell) that something major is afoot...

C L E A R I N G

MIST's cast are more than imagined. They are *virtually real* – the products of what philosophers call a thought experiment or possible universe; a kind of filter bubble. However strange the content, the internal consistency of Humeau's world is compelling. Indeed, MIST is unsettling in the degree to which it overlaps with the realm beyond the gallery, incorporating elements from real life, such that frisson is provoked by how much the visitor (almost unwittingly) enters into the artist's imaginary. The more Humeau's speculative ecosystem ingests, digests, and reworks things beyond it (issues of the day, cutting edge science, for instance) the more powerful its impact. A large drawing (HIGH TIDE) maps MIST's heady cosmology.

Humans are the dominant influence upon the global climate. In a very real way, the environment has been transformed into us. Every particle we breath, every drop of water comes from human origin or has been impacted by humans. In MIST, Humeau pushes this scenario towards a dramatic conclusion. At once spectacular and disconcerting, the artist's poetics capture an atmosphere of folly and fascination perfectly in tune with our times.

– *Nadim Samman*

MIST is a project by Marguerite Humeau
Scenography: Juliette Rambaud for Studio Marguerite Humeau
Composition and sound mixing: Lény Bernay
Sound design and voice synthesis : Pierre Lanchantin
3D modeling: Alejandro Medina, Levent Ozruh & William Fairbrother
Electronic and respiratory systems: Nick Williamson
Show Orchestration: Johan Lescure

Marguerite Humeau (b. 1986, FR) lives and works in London, UK. She received her MA from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2011. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at Tate Britain, London, UK; New Museum, New York, USA; Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich, CH; Kunstverein in Hamburg, DE; Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, DE; Nottingham Contemporary, UK; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; and C L E A R I N G, New York, USA. Her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including the High Line, New York, USA; Château de Versailles, FR; Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, DK; Serpentine Gallery, London, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, Sculpture Gallery, London, UK; and FRAC Midi-Pyrénées, Toulouse, FR. Humeau is nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp 2019.