Fragments, the Power of the Supernatural

EXHIBITION Marguerite Humeau TEST

White Cube Seoul, solo exhibition by French artist Marguerite Humeau

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"Dead Skin Hand-blown glass, metal insert, steel 15×35×15 cm 2024. This piece imagines and depicts the falling of dead petals, assuming the artist's large-scale land art Prayer as the seed of the flower."

Sharp Deep-Sea Monster Teeth, the Graceful Turn of a Ballerina, or Mutant Twin Lilies... Marguerite Humeau's sculptures resemble ancient creatures from the distant past or aliens that have crash-landed from far-off space. Her works, which look like they belong in a natural history museum from a science fiction novel, are the result of combining science and art. Recently, Humeau's first solo exhibition in Asia, "Dust," was held at White Cube Seoul from June 7 to August 17. The exhibition featured new sculptures visualizing the forces of nature, along with related photographs and drawings.

Born in 1986 in Cholet, France, and raised in a rural village in the Loire Valley, Humeau spent her childhood exploring vast gardens. Under the influence of her

mother, who was a painter, she developed her creativity by sculpting, baking strange cakes, and weaving stories. Having chosen the path of an artist, Humeau studied textiles at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et des Métiers d'Art (ENSAAMA) in Paris, before enrolling at the Design Academy Eindhoven. However, the artist, who was more drawn to myths and mysteries, felt that practical design was like an ill-fitting garment. After a year, she transferred to the Royal College of Art in London, where she began researching "the origins of human existence," interacting with a diverse group of students, including artists, dancers, performers, programmers, graphic designers, and mathematicians.



Cattleguard, Steel, nylon, polyurethane foam, and paint with mixed media, 60×60×40 cm, 2024



The Twist, Steel, copper wire, and mixed media, 60×60×60 cm, 2024

Indiana Jones of Time Travel

Humeau refers to herself as the "Indiana Jones of the Google era." The areas she explores range widely from prehistoric times to the far reaches of space. She investigates sound, chemistry, machinery, paleontology, and medicine, formulates her own virtual theories, and collaborates extensively with experts such as linguists, zoologists, anthropologists, historians, engineers, scientists, and explorers over long periods to complete her work. "The worlds I create are based on actual reality. When I encounter a subject that fascinates me, I add the condition of 'what if' and expand it into a scenario."

In her 2017 solo exhibition at Tate Britain in London, she transformed the exhibition space into a temple experimenting with immortality. She juxtaposed the afterlife with the real world through sculptures inspired by Egyptian gods and a sound piece that imaginatively recreated Cleopatra's voice. In 2019, she participated in the Marcel Duchamp Prize exhibition, unveiling "High Tide" (2019) at the Pompidou Center in Paris. She invited the audience into the midst of an enchanting "ritual ceremony" featuring pale marine mammals performing

a synchronized dance. By scientifically tracing the connection between climate change and animal extinction, she created a dreamy world based on the hypothesis, "What if mammals experienced spiritual emotions due to global warming?"

Humeau's reputation soared when she participated in the main exhibition of the 2022 Venice Biennale. She contributed supernatural "biomorphic sculptures" to this exhibition, which had a surrealism theme. She dyed carpets using chemicals found in the human body, reinterpreted Paleolithic Venus figurines into contemporary versions, and played sounds mimicking the cries of prehistoric animals. Sound is a device that makes Humeau's work even more peculiar. She attaches transparent oxygen tubes to sculptures or precisely installs sound equipment. The sound, which flows subtly and majestically, gives the impression that these life forms actually exist, yet the sleekly finished artificial white sculptures evoke the chilling feeling of looking at a cold, preserved specimen.



Marguerite Humeau was born in 1986 in Cholet. She has held solo exhibitions at Paris Lafayette Anticipations (2021), Paris Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (Jeu de Paume National Gallery, 2020), Bolzano Museion Museum (2019), New York New Museum (2018), London Tate Britain (2017), Zurich Haus Konstruktiv (2017), and Paris Palais de Tokyo (2016). She has also participated in international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale (2022) and the Istanbul Biennale (2019). Humeau currently resides and works in London.

Last year, Humeau gained attention once again by unveiling a large-scale land art piece, Orisons, in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, USA. Spanning approximately 20,000 pyeong (about 66 acres), this work is considered one of the largest land art pieces created by a female artist alone. She installed 84 sculptures that metaphorically represent the vast plains, the diverse species inhabiting them, the history of the land, and the interaction between life and non-life. In this place without water or electricity, the sculptures move solely with the wind, performing an enigmatic dance.

Her recent solo exhibition at White Cube is an extension of Orisons, featuring small sculptures and drawings, along with photographs capturing the land art site. The exhibition title, Dust, suggests that all living beings in this world are mere specks from the perspective of the universe, yet each speck contains its own vast universe. Ultimately, it hints at the message that dust and the universe are one. While Humeau's representative works have been large-scale sculptures that overwhelm space, this exhibition showcases a more delicate and fragile beauty. The titles, as poetic as the mystical forms of the sculptures themselves, include "Dead Skin," "Bird Extinction," and "Guardian of Earth Immigration."

"Myth has always been a crucial topic in our lives. The oldest sculptures discovered so far are the Lion Man and Venus of Hohlenstein. This demonstrates that the reason humans create art is ultimately due to spiritual forces: to connect with the supernatural world and, eventually, to move toward the sublime."

Humeau is also set to participate in the Gwangju Biennale this September, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud. She plans to collaborate with Kwon Song-hee, a member of the band Leenalchi, which combines traditional pansori with pop music, to present a sound installation work.

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