

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Helen Marten *Therefore, An Ogre*

September 30 – November 6, 2021
8th Floor

In *Therefore, An Ogre*, a giant structure blockades the most immediate part of the gallery. Its aluminium formwork spells a word: ERGO. Beyond this, three walls lie in diagonal parallels, each perforated with a centralised window and each hung with equally sized works on paper – watercolours and pencil drawings. Behind each inset window hides an obscured painting of a clown, in all cases juggling a diagrammed sentence with the absurdist props of boiled candies or eggs. The clown is an all-encompassing psychological allegory: an emblem of political resistance, of satire, of poetry, of self-revelation. The clown wavers between being a concrete vehicle for analytical comedy and more critical or politicized self-abasement, pushing all dynamics to an extreme.

The fictional ogre devours living flesh. It consumes named people plucked out of the world and so with them, the intent of their speech sprung with socially flexible tendons, all these lumps threading through the intestine like a universal alphabet of possibility, a receptacle of hidden noise. And because of this, the ogre must be supposed to delight in language, the jangling flavours or durational artefacts of curtailed speech, of speech in progress – chewed-up grammar. The ogre's body is one with its own rules, its own project; it is a mock body.

Text in the world is read everywhere. Crows on a telegraph wire forget their horizontals, their verticals. They dip with weightlessness, flung out commas and exclamation marks as their dark bodies scorch script on a flattened sky. Any play they might be writing is not a subject in the barest sense but rather an assemblage of invention, fragile marks of destiny in the space between plot and blindness. *Therefore, An Ogre* is an exhibition contained within language. The title itself is a paradox of reversibility and translation, with the words *Ogre* and *Ergo* bound to one another as though seen through a mirror: one a figure of mythological fantasy, the other – meaning: *therefore, for that reason* – a little conjunctive train, pulling ideas between subject and structure out into the space of defiance.

The idea of an ogre, then, is syntax deep, a demonstration of the punning games that can be played by a character who, in living closest to an edge, occupies a space closest to magic. The word *therefore* propels a stern grammatical mathematics: this + this, so therefore that. "Therefore" is assertive. It is conclusive. The *ogre* and the *ergo* devour one another and dribble down the chin. The words twist with provisional heat, move back and forth within noise: language makes myth and myth makes language.

Therefore, An Ogre explores not so much the protagonist of a single fiction, but rather the strange and uncanny hybrid of the falsely liberating power of critical insight against the allure of myth. Every framed work is not a sensible object but an image allegory, a cipher, an extension of symbols and irritations. Through small portals flexing in and out of the real world, draft figures, animals and apparatus lie against abstraction and grotesquery. Each offers an idea as though it is a response to an unasked question: therefore, pleasure; therefore, labour; therefore, indifference; therefore, pain; therefore, neurosis; therefore, eroticism, and so on. Perhaps they are an excerpted "direction" via which to live by or a documented example of what has been or will come: a rebus or a portent.

There are 30 works on paper; 3 paintings on aluminium; 3 steel windows; and 1 sculpture.

Designed in collaboration with Matthew Stuart, Helen Marten has produced a limited edition booklet for the exhibition. Contained in a silkscreened folder, there is a text by the artist and fragments of stolen text dating from 1621-present day.

Helen Marten, b. 1985, is an artist and writer based in London. A diptych of sorts with *Therefore, An Ogre*, her solo exhibition *Sparrows On the Stone* just opened at Sadie Coles HQ, London. Her first novel, *The Boiled in Between*, was published by Prototype in 2020.