

**STANDARD (OSLO)
PRESS RELEASE**

**NINA BEIER
"BUYING AND SELLING"**

22.09.-28.10.2023 / PREVIEW: FRIDAY 22.09.2023 / 19.00 - 21.00

Disney's 1941 animated feature Dumbo follows the struggles of a young circus elephant born with comically large ears. As his nickname suggests, the baby elephant is mocked and ridiculed not only for his physical awkwardness but also for his supposed lack of intelligence. When Dumbo discovers that his huge ears enable him to fly, all of that changes. While the elephant mother hardly speaks, she does at one point refer to Dumbo as Jumbo Jr., thereby revealing the cartoon character's "real" name and its genealogy.

Dumbo is loosely based on the short but turbulent real-life story of the Sudanese elephant Jumbo, a story enmeshed in the currents of trade and the intrigue of the exotic. After losing his mother to poachers in the early 1860s, Jumbo, still a calf, was captured by a German big-game hunter and sold to an Italian animal trader who transported him from Sudan, north to Suez and across the Mediterranean Sea to the port city of Trieste. From here, Jumbo was sold to a traveling menagerie that crisscrossed German-speaking Europe, parading exotic marvels before excited crowds, before joining the descendants of animals from Versailles - a menagerie that had been dissolved in the aftermath of the French revolution and transplanted to the Parisian Jardin des Plantes. In 1865, Jumbo was sold on to the London Zoo where he grew to be known as the largest elephant in the Western world. The enormous mammal rode children around the Zoo and posed for photos making visitors appear small and frail; he became loved by people across ages and class alike. Gradually, his behaviour started to change however. It is thought that his growing aggression stemmed from toothaches, caused by a diet of sticky buns fed to him by visitors. In 1882, despite passionate public protests, Jumbo was traded yet again; he undertook his first transatlantic voyage to become the main attraction of the American entertainer Phineas T. Barnum's travelling Circus. Barnum not only exhibited his new star but found entirely different ways of capitalising on the elephant's popularity. At the height of his fame Jumbo was sent striding across the Brooklyn Bridge to reassure hesitant New Yorkers that this novel piece of engineering could indeed be safely traversed.

Jumbo died before his 25th birthday in September 1885 whilst touring North America by train. According to legend, he was attempting to save Tom Thumb, a younger circus elephant caught walking on the railroad tracks, when he, himself, was hit and killed by a passing steam train. The saga of Jumbo, however, does not end with his passing. Autopsy revealed an eclectic assortment of things in his colossal stomach - a collection of sorts - souvenirs from an extraordinary existence, an indigestible mess of similitude and difference. Jumbo's digestive tract doubled as a treasure trove of objects that can be held by hands, stuff fallen from pockets, things that fit through a trunk: English pennies, French francs, American dimes, keys, rivets, a police whistle. The giant elephant's belly was like a vacuum cleaner bag of global bits and bobs, international bric-a-brac.

Following the autopsy, Jumbo's remains - like a deceased person's estate - were divided, shared, and distributed. The skeleton was donated to the American Museum of Natural History, the heart was sold to Cornell University and the hide entrusted to taxidermist Carl E. Akeley. The stuffed and mounted specimen travelled with Barnum's circus for the following two years, before Barnum donated it to Tufts University. Here, it was displayed in a Hall named after the circus director, until it was destroyed in a fire in April 1975. Ashes from that fire (and amongst this entropic dust possibly some of the elephant's cremated remains) are kept in a 14-ounce Peter Pan Crunchy Peanut Butter jar in the office of the Tufts athletic director, while Jumbo's stuffed tail, removed during earlier renovations, resides in the holdings of the Tufts Digital Collections and Archives.

In hindsight, it is easy to see how the first Jumbo Jet - a particularly wide-bodied passenger aircraft, a bumble-bee-like impossibility which was launched in 1966 - was a forecast of globalism and mass travel made physical. How fitting then that they named the plane after Jumbo the elephant, Globalism's token animal. If the world's largest land mammal could be transported around the world, appear on three continents and literally swallow and act as an indiscriminate container for all he encountered on the way, function as a protagonist in every story, as an emblem of essentially different trades and communities - then surely, they must have thought, everything can.

Only from photographic evidence do we know that Akeley, who today is known as both the hunter and the taxidermist (or, the butcher and the chef) behind the famous Dioramas in the Africa Hall at New York's Natural History Museum, did an awful job. He rendered the enormous elephant cartoon-like, clumsy-looking, dumb founded, cross-eyed even. Still untrained and still practicing, Akeley's taxidermy Jumbo was successful only in justifying the elephant's name: around

STANDARD (OSLO) / Waldemar Thranes gate 86C / +47 22 60 13 10 / info@standardoslo.no
/ N-0175 Oslo / +47 22 60 13 11 / www.standardoslo.no

this time “jumbo” was a term denoting a large and clumsy person, originally deriving from “mumbo jumbo”, a phrase describing something that pretends to make sense but is really meaningless and confusing.

Dumbo, the movie, stands in stark opposition to the spectacular, yet sad conclusion to Jumbo’s journey. Towards the end of the film we see Disney’s hero celebrated as a “Magic Mammal” and a “Miracle Mammoth”, then he bails his mother out of jail, leaves the circus behind and in a train carriage, adorned with the word “private”, Dumbo rides into freedom.

Simon Dybbroe Møller
(Text No 73 from *Outside Awareness*, 2005-2020)

STANDARD (OSLO) is pleased to announce "Buying and Selling", marking the fifth solo exhibition of Nina Beier at the gallery comprising two new sculptural works, encapsulating a knot of structural tensions the artist has grappled with in her practice for over a decade. Using found objects that conjure up outmoded European ideals, Beier stages an encounter between a 1970s Colani bathtub and an elephant-shaped children’s slide, equally heralding another era. Beier’s interest in these objects springs both from their formal, sculptural qualities – distinctive for their organic forms, and negative spaces to be filled by human bodies – as well as the implicit power structures they represent: an entanglement of capital, gender tropes, colonial motifs, and the pecking order of species.

Nina Beier (b. 1975 Aarhus, Denmark) lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark. Beier’s sculpture “Women & Children” – a fountain composed of bronze sculptures weeping from their eyes – was recently on view at The High Line in New York as a part of their 2022 commission series. Her work has been included in group shows at Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin; Malmö Konstmuseum, Sweden; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; CCA Wattis, San Francisco; Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin. Her work has been featured in major biennials including the Lyon Biennale, France; the São Paulo Bienal, Brazil; 20th Sydney Biennale, Australia; Performa, New York. Selected solo exhibitions include “European Interiors”, Spike Island, Bristol, UK; “Cash for Gold” at Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany; “Nina Beier” at Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania, amongst others.

For further information please visit our webpage: www.standardoslo.no or contact Eivind Furnesvik at eivind@standardoslo.no or +47 917 07 429 / +47 22 60 13 10. STANDARD (OSLO) is open Tuesday-Friday: 12.00-17.00/ Saturday: 12.00-16.00. Sunday and Monday: Closed.

Current & Upcoming:

STANDARD (OSLO) @ Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne
01.09.-14.10.2023

Mathew Cerletty
"Mineral Spirits"
22.09.-28.10.2023

Frieze Masters / Spotlight / Simona Runcan
11.10.-15.10.2023

Jinbin Chen
10.11.2023-13.01.2024

"The Sky is Thin"
Curated by Elena Brugnano & Tobias Pils
10.11.2023-13.01.2024

STANDARD (OSLO) / Waldemar Thranes gate 86C / +47 22 60 13 10 / info@standardoslo.no
/ N-0175 Oslo / +47 22 60 13 11 / www.standardoslo.no