

Jean-Marie Appriou

Magnetic

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MASSIMODECARLO is very pleased to present MAGNETIC, an exhibition by French artist Jean-Marie Appriou, which takes the viewer by the hand for a deep dive into his dream-infused, pulsating creative universe — to the beating heart of his artistic practice. MAGNETIC marks Appriou's fourth exhibition with the gallery, and first solo exhibition in Hong Kong.

The sculptures of Jean-Marie Appriou are a savvy fusion of earthly and divine, animal and human, science and mythology, translated into creatures that each present a fragment of his wide-ranging research practice. With MAGNETIC, Appriou has chosen to navigate the unknown waters of magnetism, inviting viewer to explore this new, unknown realm with him.

Articulated across three key notions, the body of work presented in Hong Kong is an exploration of materiality – marking Appriou's first-time use of stainless steel, of electricity – it's whimsical discovery by Alessandro Volta, prompted in part by the study of electric eels, and thirdly, of earth's magnetism, polar opposites, and natural forces that both attract and resist each other.

Indeed, for Appriou, the starting point of the exhibition was medium itself; forever intrigued by its metallic properties, Appriou turned to stainless steel for the first time, inaugurating a new chapter in his sculptural practice.

The title itself, MAGNETIC, is a direct allusion to this metal's attributes of attraction and repulsion, not to mention a direct link to the very subjects of his sculptures: electric eels, astronauts, and squid sculptural lights, which, according to the artist, all embody a certain idea of magnetism.

For Appriou, eels are unique, quasi-otherworldly creatures: dwellers of the abysses, they migrate across the planet from pole to pole, inhabiting rivers, seas and oceans alike. Their innate migratory abilities and sense of direction, informed by the mysterious pressures and flows of water currents, allow them to lead a nomadic life, and return to their place of birth, in the depths of the Sargasso Sea, both to lay their eggs and to end of their lives.

For this exhibition, Appriou has chosen to sculpt these animals for the first time, focusing particularly on the electric eel, a slightly larger, freshwater species from the Amazon. Studied by Italian physicist Alessandro Volta, who incidentally, was born in the Duchy of Milan in 1745 (MASSIMODECARLO gallery's hometown), the electric eel allowed Volta to advance his research in the elaboration of the electric battery, which functions with a system of opposing poles. The eel becomes a symbol of planet earth's polar magnetism.

Appriou's astronauts, a pair of small human figures, just like the eels, are an intriguing duo: two children, perhaps friends, standing side by side and merged at the shoulder, as if frozen in a moment of synchronized, idle contemplation. Interested in the evolutionary aspect of life on earth, Appriou conceived these two astronauts as embodiments of the North and South Pole. Like the eels, which undulate to create a helix, their golden, copper stains are both a reminder of the animal's moult, and the remnants of an electric spark left on their skins. Marked as if sealed together, the astronauts' merged shoulders may also allude to the lost poetry of eternal childhood friendships, crystallized in their immobility.

Appriou's squid mural sculptures represent an important new step in his practice: they are his first electric lamps, and an embodiment of the exhibition's very essence. Creatures that inhabit the depth of the sea, they navigate vertically through the darkness. Their lamp formats are a direct reminder of the exhibition's central theme, and the cables that connect them to the floor are the umbilical cords to their lifeline, sparking them alive, with the magnetic power of Volta's discovery.

The correspondences between Appriou's artistic research and the history that surrounds magnetism, in the artist's own words, rather than a set of fortuitous coincidences, are a testimony to art's ability to "create bridges between realms in a poetic way" which all come together for this exhibition.

Jean-Marie Appriou

Jean-Marie Appriou was born in 1986 in Brest, FR;
He lives and works in Paris, FR.

Jean-Marie Appriou's sculptures evoke archaic forms and are inspired by contemporary, but also mythological and futuristic worlds. His works are often crafted from the very modern material of aluminum, the design possibilities of which the artist constantly expands upon through experimentation and in combination with other metals. By alluding to familiar forms, be they animal or human, and developing his unique, almost alchemical approach to his source material, Appriou has created his own very mythology.

Appriou's work has been exhibited at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Fondation Lafayette Anticipations, Paris; the Fondation Vincent van Gogh, Arles; the Abattoirs museum, Toulouse; the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; the Consortium Museum, Dijon; The Villa Medici, Roma and the Biennale de Lyon. He was invited by the Public Art Fund to present a group of sculptures at the Doris C. Freedman Plaza at the southeast entrance to Central Park in New York, at the Château de Versailles and at the Vienna Biennale. His works have been the subject of solo gallery exhibitions at Perrotin, Shanghai; Jan Kaps, Cologne; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and Vienna, Kaikai Kiki, Tokyo; C L E A R I N G, New York, Brussels and Los Angeles, and MASSIMODECARLO, London.