

Simon Starling
Houseboat for Ho (Presented by The Strawman)
The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane Bricks Space
26th April – 25th May 2024
Preview: Thursday 25th April 2024, 6-8pm

Houseboat for Ho (Presented by The Strawman) brings Simon Starling's *Houseboat for Ho* project into a new alignment, with its themes introduced and elaborated on by The Strawman – a kind of stand-in for the artist himself. 'Attacking a straw man' involves refuting an argument with a separate, unrelated point without acknowledging the separation of the two. One logic is conflated with another. Starling's *Houseboat for Ho* can be understood as engaging in this kind of manoeuvre but in a manner which is artistically and politically productive.

Starling's vessel is a cross-cultural, technical and aesthetic collaboration between Danish thatched roof makers and Bolivian reed boat builders. The various uses and positioning of reed bundles (a sustainable building material) provides the vessel with both buoyancy and a weather resistant covering. Ho is a low-lying village located in southwestern Jutland, Denmark, and given its proximity to the coast it is threatened by the rising sea levels caused by climate change. In Starling's work, two apparently incongruous traditions come together to propose a new way of living with, and combating, the climate emergency.

In the Bricks Space, an image of the boat in situ occupies a specially fabricated wall, and sitting before this is a model of the boat itself produced using the same reeds as the original. Across from this is a drawing of The Strawman in charcoal, framed in burnt wood. This skeletal figure, also made of reeds, wears a mask resembling the artist made in collaboration with Yasuo Miichi 見市泰男, a master Noh mask maker from Osaka, Japan. This automaton figure was originally shown in Starling's exhibition 'Metamorfuoco. Sotto la luce del Tintoretto' at the Modena-Galleria Estense in 2022. In a text accompanying the exhibition, The Strawman's origins are explained, including its relation to the myth of Phaethon, son of the sun god Helios in Greek mythology who was struck down by Zeus to protect the earth from the heat of the sun.

Within the exhibition, the twin concerns of climate change are united by the two poles represented by The Strawman and the Houseboat – fire and water. Increased heat is drying out freshwater lakes such as Bolivia's Lake Titicaca while also causing the accelerated melting of polar ice caps which produces the higher sea levels affecting Ho. *Metamorfuoco* translates roughly as 'transformed by fire', a word which speaks to the challenges of the current moment.

Simon Starling (Born 1967, Epsom; lives and works in Copenhagen. Recent solo exhibitions include: 'TIEPOLO X STARLING', Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin (2023), 'Simon Starling. Metamorfuoco. Sotto la luce del Tintoretto', Modena-Galleria Estense, Modena (2022), 'The Pencil of Menzel & The Path on the Wolf', neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2021), 'A-A', B-B", Galleria Franco Noero, Turin (2019), 'A-A', B-B", The Modern Institute, 14—20 Osborne Street, Glasgow (2019), 'Catherine, Masahiko, Rex et les autres' at Le Plateau, Paris (2019); 'A l'ombre du pin tordu', Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée, Sérignan (2017); 'Simon Starling' at Nottingham Contemporary (2016); 'Zum Brunnen' at Kunstmuseum St. Gallen (2015), 'Nine Feet Later' at The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane, Glasgow; 'El Eco' at Museo Experimental El Eco, San Rafael; 'Bowls, Plates' at Casa Estudio Luis Barragán in Mexico City (all 2015); 'Metamorphology' at Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal (2015) (touring from Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago); 'The Expedition' at Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2014); 'Pictures for an Exhibition' at The Arts Club of Chicago (2014); 'Loft Lift (Stacked)' at Public Art Agency Sweden, Stockholm (2013); 'In Speculum' at Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2013); 'Black Drop' at Modern Art Oxford (2013); and 'Phantom Ride' at Duveen Galleries, Tate Britain, London (2013). In 2016 he presented a major new project 'At Twilight' developed in collaboration with theatre director Graham Eatough and commissioned by The Common Guild in collaboration with the Japan Society, New York.

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| 1 | <i>Strawman (Charcoal)</i> , 2024
Charcoal on paper, burnt-wood
frame
151.5 x 125.5 x 6.7 cm
59 5/8 x 49 3/8 x 2 5/8 in | 2 | <i>Houseboat for Ho (Model)</i> , 2023-
24
Wood, water reed, Tampico fibre
and string
Overall: 160 x 120 x 45 cm
63 x 47 1/4 x 17 3/4 in | 3 | <i>Houseboat for Ho (Wallpaper)</i> ,
2024
524 x 305 cm
206 1/4 x 120 1/8 in |
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