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LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg

Don't be Afraid, There are Treasures Behind These Locked Doors

8 March – 30 April 2025

4/F, Building D7, Yard No.3, Jinhang East Road, Beijing

Opening: 3-6pm, 15 March 2025

Lisson Gallery is delighted to announce its first exhibition of work by Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg in Beijing, following their 2022 presentation, *A Stream Stood Still*, at Lisson Shanghai and *A Moon Wrapped in Brown Paper* at Shanghai's Prada Rong Zhai in 2021. Known for their compelling fusion of visual art, music, and multi-dimensional storytelling, the Swedish artistic duo presents three signature psychologically-charged clay-animation films alongside sculptural works. The gallery is transformed into an immersive environment, engaging viewers on both a physical and psychological level, as the artists navigate the complexities of human emotion—addiction, desire, shame, greed, loss, and vulnerability.

Collaborating for over two decades, Djurberg and Berg have developed a deeply symbiotic creative process. Djurberg meticulously crafts and animates each figure and set in stop-motion, while Berg composes hypnotic soundscapes that heighten the psychological intensity and amplify the drama. This interplay of image and sound produces works that transcend traditional animation, acting instead as a visceral examination of the subconscious, tinged with absurdity and dark humour. Their characters—often anthropomorphic, surreal, and grotesque—function as metaphors for raw human impulses, existing in a world where logic yields to emotion.

The exhibition features three films that exemplify the duo's signature aesthetic and thematic concerns. *Dark Side of the Moon* (2017) unfolds within a shadowy woodland, where a young girl is denied entry to a sentient cottage and tormented by surreal fairy-tale figures, including a smoking wolf, an overweight pig, and a dancing moon. The work traverses themes of fear, memory, and longing, framing sexuality and loss as intertwined experiences. *A Pancake Moon* (2022) follows an anthropomorphised egg on a hallucinatory journey through a forest inhabited by cunning animals seeking to seduce and consume it. As the egg transforms into the moon, it escapes danger, only to fall from the sky, losing its form and identity—a poetic meditation on transformation and selfhood. *How to Slay a Demon* (2019) confronts the theme of gluttony through the eyes of a supine woman, as a looming demon appears poised to consume her. The work offers a visceral reflection on addiction and desire, exposing the fragile boundary between pleasure and destruction.

Accompanying the films, a suite of sculptural works expands the exhibition's immersive atmosphere. The *Enchanted Garden* series—comprising wall-mounted and freestanding sculptures—extends the presence of the forest beyond the screen. Crafted in deep electric blue, these organic forms, adorned with birds, recall Scandinavian folklore and reinforce the artists' exploration of flora as a symbol of fleeting human emotions—joy, sorrow, desire, and vulnerability. Within this surreal landscape, golden beavers and mice gather amidst a tangled mass of branches. Known for building new pathways underground and altering the flow of water, these creatures metaphorically embody the unconscious thoughts that lie dormant before surfacing into awareness, as the title of the series *Possibilities Untouched by the Mind* (2024) suggests.

Nearby, *Wolf and Moon* (2023) depicts a humanised moon resting on the shoulder of a wolf, exploring the inextricable connection between instinct and reason. The tension between the primal and the rational underpins much of Djurberg & Berg's practice, where familiar narratives of fables and fairy tales are reinterpreted through a psychological lens. The duo's practice harnesses the dark potency of folklore, unearthing its contemporary relevance through visceral storytelling. Their works transcend conventional narrative structures, inviting audiences into an uncanny realm where the subconscious unfurls in all its raw and often unsettling beauty.

About the artists

Mixing animation, sculpture and sound, Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg create psychologically charged scenarios dealing with human and animalistic desires. Since 2001, Djurberg has developed a distinctive style of filmmaking, using clay animation to dramatise the basest of natural instincts from jealousy, revenge and greed, to submission and lust. Her partner, the musician and composer Hans Berg, conjures up the atmospheric sound effects and scores the hypnotic music for Djurberg's animations and installations. In 2004 they began working closely together as a duo to create transgressive narratives rich in symbolic meaning and emotional reach, mining allegorical myths and grotesque, nightmarish visions in pieces, such as *Tiger Licking Girl's Butt* (2004), *We Are Not Two, We Are One* (2008), and more recently, *Worship* (2016) and *Dark Side of the Moon* (2017). The artists' interdisciplinary collaborations increasingly blur the cinematic, the sculptural and the performative in immersive environments that pair moving images and musical compositions with related set pieces or built objects.

Nathalie Djurberg and Hans Berg currently live and work in Sweden. Born in Lysekil, Sweden in 1978, Nathalie Djurberg received her MFA from Malmö Art Academy, Sweden in 2002. Hans Berg was born in Rättvik, Sweden in 1978 and is a musician, producer and composer, working mainly with electronic music. Select solo exhibitions include 'Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg: Death or Eternal Delight' at Gelleri F15, Moss, Norway (2025); SONGEUN Art Space, Seoul, South Korea (2024); National Nordic Museum, Seattle, USA (2024); Borås Konstmuseum, Borås, Sweden (2023); Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany (2023); Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France (2023); Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai, China (2021); the Baltimore Museum of Art, USA (2018); Modern Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (2018), touring to Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto, Italy (2018) and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany (2019); Museum Frieder Burda | Salon Berlin, Germany (2017); Stavanger Art Museum (MUST), Norway (2017); Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), Australia (2016); Wanås Konst, Knislinge, Sweden (2016); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2016); Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany (2015); Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne, Australia (2015); ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark (2015); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA, USA (2014); Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow, Russia (2013); and Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2011). They won the Silver Lion for their presentation at the 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy in 2009, and their work is featured in a number of collections around the world, including the Prada Foundation in Milan, Italy and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, USA.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 70 international artists across spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists and others of that generation, from Carmen Herrera and Olga de Amaral to Hélio Oiticica and Lee Ufan. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Liu Xiaodong, Otobong Nkanga, Pedro Reyes, Sean Scully, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Wael Shawky. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists including Dana Awartani, Cory Arcangel, Garrett Bradley, Ryan Gander, Josh Kline, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost and Cheyney Thompson.

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