



RIDDLES

An exhibition by

Marguerite Humeau

May 25, 2017 - July 23, 2017

As is typical of her practice, this new body of work by Marguerite Humeau began with an excavation of the past. Wielding research as a spade, Humeau dug into the science and myth surrounding the origin of war. The artist corresponded with the archaeologists unpacking Site 117, the earliest recorded mass cemetery, as an entry point. Her discussions led her to early depictions of war from Assyria and Egypt where myth and history were foiled by one another. In *Riddles*, Humeau weaves together the speculative tales of fact and fiction to form a new narrative for the sphinx.

Humeau hypothesizes that the mythological gatekeeper of Thebes never went extinct but rather evolved to meet the demands of a high tech world. The sphinx is now a fire-wall, a security camera, a body scanner. Humeau fleshes out this idea with a regulated sequence that calls to mind the checkpoints we pass through at museums, stadiums and airports. By manipulating pre-existing surveillance methods, like anti-climb spikes and facial recognition, Humeau looks at the way the objects and tools we create betray us.

As soon as you enter Humeau's show, you are being watched. *Harry's Eyes*, a sculpture with motion sensors embedded in hand-blown irises, tracks the viewer as soon as they step across the threshold.

Once you pass the eyes of the sphinx, you are in the belly of the beast. The second room is a battlefield, a kind of reenactment of Site 117. Composed of eight new "high definition" sculptures, the CNC carved figures stand like apparitions within the white cube, their shiny bodies recalling classic marbles. Their contorted faces emit soft noises that sculpt the silence. The static set conjures gore but the kind that is kept at a distance.

The climax happens in the third and final room: a sphinx presides over tanks of artificial blood, perhaps the carnage of the battle. The monumental creature feeds on the blood; it is the only way it can survive. It is both a predator and protector. Humeau draws parallels to the way contemporary security functions now. We design these technologies, objects, sculptures to protect and empower ourselves, but did we intend to let them imprison, separate, track us in return?

Marguerite Humeau (b. 1986, Cholet, FR) lives and works in London, UK.

Upcoming solo exhibitions include Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich, CH (2017); Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, DE (2017). Recent solo exhibitions include Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK (2016); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2016). Marguerite Humeau is the recipient of the 2017 Zürich Art Prize. Her work is part of the collections of MoMa, New York, USA and Tate, London, UK.

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