



SUMMERHALL

Not Man The Less, But Nature More

4th June – 15th July 2015

**Cendrine Rovini, El Gato Chimney, Erika Nordqvist,
Esther Pearl Watson, Fred Stonehouse, Rithika Merchant,
Solange Knopf and Zeki Agacan**

There Is Pleasure In The Pathless Woods
George Gordon Byron

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

NOT MAN THE LESS, BUT NATURE MORE

The artists in Not Man The Less, But Nature More have an intimate relationship with nature, creating on impetus, uninfluenced by academic training or contemporary culture. They reproduce the surroundings they inhabit, animating them with the people, creatures and spirits that belong to their mythologies. The exhibition focuses on exploring others' worlds, it reveals what the artists have always had around but perhaps what we have never seen. At first sight, many of the works appear to be personal, verging on private, however, as one spends more time absorbing the details and gestures, it becomes clear that the artists are portraying scenes which we can all relate to, in turn, offering compassion and solace.

The gallery's glass cabinets, create an environment at the intersection between laboratory and Wunderkammer, reminding us of the anthropological observations which have been gathered, appreciated and scrutinized since the Middle Ages. Fred Stonehouse and El Gato Chimney's works appear as if curiosities from medieval times, however, the boldness of their compositions speak of the modern day, offering interpretations on the ways in which we navigate life.

The timeless appeal of the works, pairing the old with the new, occurs not only through material but also subject matter. The works seem naïve, however, on closer inspection it becomes apparent that the works deal with issues that affect us all, such as experiences from childhood, feminine identity, family life and conflict.

Esther Pearl Watson looks to her childhood in Texas; dotting her works with UFOs, touching upon the individuality of childhood, and the way in which it shapes our future.

Rithika Merchant, Cendrine Rovini and Solange Knopf draw the viewer into topics surrounding womanhood. Merchant morphs organic imagery with the human form, making enquiries into the idea of "mother nature", condemning the ongoing superficial worshipping of the female muse. Meanwhile, Rovini and Knopf allude to female anxiety; Rovini's watercolours express the creatures and landscapes which lurk in the shadows of dreams, whilst Knopf's work traces the difficulties of her past through the intensity of haunting figures.

Erika Nordqvist and Zeki Agacan's works portray scenes which we can all identify – illustrating their homelands. Nordqvist creates domestic scenes set in a fictional Scandinavia, allowing us to spy on the intimacy of others' lives. Whilst Agacan offers a window into life growing up in Turkey, his colours bring warmth and happiness, however, as one studies the people in his work it becomes apparent his paintings represent the ongoing suffering caused by both man-made and natural disaster, signifying a hope for peace.

Holly Knox Yeoman and **Michela D'Acquisto**
Curators of *Not Man The Less, But Nature More*

Fred Stonehouse on “Bats”, USA

The image of the bat has been present in my work for many years. The bat as a symbol is particularly intriguing to me because of the fact that it is commonly understood to represent a figure existing between the realms of the living and the underworld or world of spirits. It is also commonly misunderstood and dreaded or feared, or at the very least thought of as mysterious. It navigates its environment using senses not available to the average creature, moving deftly past and around obstacles in the dark of night and hiding from what is seen by others in broad daylight. It is perceived as an outsider with rare and exceptional gifts and behaviours that are other and somewhat inaccessible and for these reasons it serves as an apt metaphor for the condition of the artist in the world.

My use of the image flirts with notions of the absurd, the psychological and the poetic. My bats are carriers of cryptic messages from lovers or the dead or perhaps the deep psyche. They have an intelligent mischievous air about them, as if they know more than they let on. Their intelligence stems from the fact that they see two sides to every statement, that their experience crosses boundaries from night to day and from life to the beyond.

El Gato Chimney, Italy

El Gato Chimney was born in 1981 in Milan, where he currently lives and works. He started his career as a self-taught artist, developing an early interest in graffiti that made him pursue a successful journey into street art. As the years went by, the artist began to prefer working in his studio, dedicating his time to research and spending time considering the immaterial such as emotions and inner visions.

El Gato Chimney's work makes enquiries into alchemy, ancient and modern art, magic, occultism, popular folklore, primitive art and spiritualism. The universe he portrays is deceptive and has dual meanings, like a good nightmare: a magical and religious syncretism animates the inhabitants of these lands, mixing cultures and eras, celebrating life and escaping death. Instead of answering directly to the inevitable questions of the observers, he fills his paintings with clues and appeals to our imagination, offering interpretations of the modern world.

Esther Pearl Watson, USA

Esther Pearl Watson portrays human figures and animals moving between Texan hills and rural towns, whose skies are dominated by UFOs and flying saucers. These represent an autobiographical reference to the artist's childhood; her father used to create flying saucers using old scrap cars and waste materials, believing someday they might be used as alternative means of transportation.

Similar to children's illustration both in the way she simplifies the shapes and the narrative details, Watson's works, like postcards or pages of a diary, subtly acknowledge the place or the event that inspired them, stimulating the imagination of the viewer.

Rithika Merchant, Spain, originally from India

My work deals with creating mosaics of myths that question received histories. An inherent feminism exists in my decoration, undermining the minimalism of modernity that views the woman just as a muse.

My paintings explore superstition, myth and ritual as well as depicting scenes from my own internal folklore. Many of my creatures are hybrids. I love the idea of two creatures gently merging or emerging, embodying the duality that is within everything in nature. I also explore the idea of many selves in conversation with one another.

I am also keen to explore the common thread that runs through different cultures and religions. Similar versions of all these myths, stories and ideas are shared by cultures all around the world. My paintings explore this concept whilst also featuring creatures and symbolism that are part of my visual vocabulary.

Cendrine Rovini, France

I live and work in Aurillac, a little town in the central mountains of France; I use paper, fabric and wood with drawings and mixed Medias.

For this exhibition I wanted to express my sentiment about the qualities that are shared between humans, creatures and nature: a luminous creature sits in a cave, with her head horned with stalactites, an obscure beast drinks the red thin fabric of a woman's dress as if it was a source of nourishment, a semi-conscious woman's head grows like it were a tree, dwarfing her naked body...

These inclusions and my use of materials represent something beyond mere metamorphosis. My use of watercolour, merged with ink, gouache and coloured pencils has led me to new realms.

Solange Knopf, Belgium

Solange Knopf was born in Brussels in 1957. Like many others of her generation she dipped in and out of the world counterculture of the 60's and 70's and travelled the globe. Circumstances led to some personal tragedies and drawing became a way of assuaging pain, depression and confusion, confronting her own and other's demons to give her life a focus. They reflected a passion in the artist that immediately differentiated her; describing the landscapes of ravaged female psyches and seeking a way through the trees by virtue of vision.

Knopf is dark and light, sensuality and Eros, mystical and mythical. She isn't locked into tragedy, her world is huge and she expands and adds to it as if paper were her own cave walls, an arena for female imagery that owes nothing to New Age or modernism. Her drawings chart the map of her life and reflect our lives in them.

Erika Nordqvist, Sweden

You have bought a lamp

by Thomas Tidholm

You have bought a lamp so you can see your furniture

You have the furniture so
you can be human beings
and sit in them

You sit in them and smoke
those cigarettes

You embrace one another
and long to return to the savannahs

Seconds go by
minutes and hours
Days weeks and years
Centuries divide you
from the savannahs

You have already chosen
the lamp and furniture and cigarettes
not the savannahs

Zeki Agacan, Scotland, originally from Turkey

Zeki Agacan moved to Dundee in 1974, his work tells people "Who I am." He depicts life in Gölcük, a town on the coast of the Marmara Sea, in 1999 the town, known for being one of Turkey's main naval bases was hit by a devastating earthquake. Agacan's work portrays family and community gatherings and ceremonies of joy and loss. The works portray the cultural landscape of Turkey, his colour palette showing the rich heritage of the land. At first, his vivid use of colour gives an impression of celebration; however, as one spends more time exploring the expressions and stillness of the works, notable in the seas of people, there is a melancholy that pervades.

The works not only reflect both the tragedies which have struck and stayed with the Gölcük and Turkish people, but go wider, touching upon the Iraq War and other conflicts which our countries play a part in. The sobering thoughtfulness Agacan presents in all his work represent his hope for peace between the nations.

Information on the curators

Michela D'Acquisto is an independent curator and graduate of Brera Fine Arts Academy, Milan, specialising in Art Brut and Outsider Art, focusing on Folk Art, self-taught art and visionary environments. Her artistic mission is to narrate the other side of the history of art. D'Acquisto's curatorial work has featured in leading international art magazines; - Arte, Repubblica and High Fructose.

Holly Knox Yeoman is the senior curator at Summerhall, she is a graduate of Art, Philosophy and Contemporary Practices, Duncan of Jordanstone, Dundee. Her independent curatorial work has featured in Artists' DIY Soapbox, part of Collective Gallery's New Work Scotland Programme and on a-n - The Artists Information Company website. Later this year she will feature as a contributor in the book *Independent Minds: Critical Perspectives on Scottish Art Since 1997*.

Special thanks to

El Gato Chimney, Esther Pearl Watson and Fred Stonehouse's gallerist Antonio Colombo
Arte Contemporanea, Milano, Italy
www.colomboarte.com

Solange Knopf's gallerist Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, USA
www.cavinmorris.com

Stephen Romano Gallery, New York, USA
www.romanoart.com

Some of the artworks are for sale, please email holly@summerhall.co.uk for further details.



SUMMERH@LL