



17.01.2019  
PRESS INVITATION

**CLAUDIA COMTE**

*I HAVE GROWN TALLER FROM STANDING WITH TREES*

08.02. – 01.09.2019

**MARIANNA SIMNETT**

*SEIZURE*

08.02. – 26.05.2019

**Copenhagen Contemporary (CC) proudly presents two of contemporary art's great talents to a Danish audience for the first time. In Hall 1, Claudia Comte (b.1983) opens her largest solo exhibition to date: a total installation covering 1100 m2 entitled *I Have Grown Taller from Standing with Trees*. In Hall 3, Marianna Simnett (b.1986) presents her exhibition *SEIZURE* featuring the large-scale installation *Faint with Light* and video work *The Needle and the Larynx*.**

**CLAUDIA COMTE**

*I HAVE GROWN TALLER FROM STANDING WITH TREES*

For her first exhibition in Denmark, the Swiss artist Claudia Comte has created an immersive installation for CC's largest hall. The presentation brings together sculpture, sound and 3D prototyping with the artist's interest in archaeology, biodiversity and forestry.

Inside the hall, rows of six-metre-tall debarked spruce trees are positioned along a grid of millimetric precision that directly corresponds to a digitally printed graphic carpet. A large ceramic sculpture sits at the centre of this seemingly peaceful forest, which is enveloped by filtered light, sound and the mild scent of resin released by the pale spruces.

Moving through the exhibition, however, a collapse of order becomes apparent. The trunks have been struck by a powerful force and are suspended in a state of disorder. The geometrical grid of the carpet evokes the root system of the trees, which, via underground fungi networks, communicate with other trees along the forest floor. The grid – a structure which relays order and clarity – is also distorted, visualising the effects of this large-scale disturbance upon the forest ecosystem, above and below ground.

Comte's particular interest in the forest stems from her childhood spent in the Swiss countryside. In a period when many traditional methods are being replaced by automated technologies, the artist highlights the virtues of traditional craftsmanship by prompting a dynamic conversation between organic forms, new media and rendering software. The spruce trees of *I Have Grown Taller from Standing with Trees* may be viewed as time capsules in the way the trunks' annual rings grow at different

rates depending on climate conditions. This is worth bearing in mind when walking among the spruces, all approximately one hundred years old.

A soundscape by the composer and longtime collaborator Egon Elliut accompanies the exhibition. The composition reflects the life and movements of the forest ecology in real time, and visitors will thus hear an acoustic spectrum of past and present denizens, from dinosaurs to ants, as they inhabit the forest at different times of the day. A new seasonal soundscape will be devised in the spring to reflect the sounds of the forest in warmer months.

As a totalising experience of light, scent and sound, *I Have Grown Taller from Standing with Trees* embraces the full force of nature. At the same time, it is nature's cemetery of felled trees, mirroring the effects of our current era in which human activity directly impacts Earth's biological systems. The installation reminds us that we are part of a greater whole where strong cooperative networks are as vital for trees as they are for humans.

Visitors are invited to walk amongst the trees, climb the fallen trunks and take in the views of the collapsed forest. Evoking childhood memories of visiting the woods, visitors may carve their names or leave messages on the trunks. The artist also invites visitors to participate in a number of performances scheduled during the exhibition period.

Comte was personally involved in the entire process of sourcing the trees, felling, cutting and sanding the trunks. Importantly, for every tree felled the artist has planted two new trees.

## **ABOUT CLAUDIA COMTE (b.1983)**

The Swiss artist Claudia Comte is known for her site-specific installations that bring together handmade sculptures, graphic works, digital technologies and interactive installations that invite the audience to participate in activities such as arm-wrestling and dancing. Comte studied at the Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) and the Haute Ecole Pédagogique, Visual Arts. Recent exhibitions include: *The Morphing Scallops*, Gladstone Gallery, New York (2019), *Electric Burst (Lines and Zigzags)*, Contemporary Art Museum, St Louis (2018), *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, König Galerie, Berlin (2018), *Zigzags and Diagonals*, MOCA Cleveland (2018), *Swiss Performance Now*, Kunsthalle Basel (2018), *KölnSkulpture #9*, Cologne (2017), *La Ligne Claire*, Basement Roma (2017), *NOW I WON*, Messeplatz, Art Basel (2017), *Desert X*, Palm Springs (2017) and *10 Rooms, 40 Walls, 1059 m2*, Kunstmuseum Luzern (2017).

## **MARIANNA SIMNETT**

### **SEIZURE**

*SEIZURE* is the first solo exhibition in Scandinavia by Marianna Simnett. In her mesmerising installation *Faint with Light* and video parable *The Needle and the Larynx*, normative bodies and genders undergo radical transformations. The artist's own body, mutated and remodeled, becomes the site in which her hypnotic fantasies are played out.

The exhibition presents two of Simnett's most arresting works, in which the body either metamorphoses or momentarily vanishes. A seizure, according to the writer Marina Warner, describes the effect of the passions on the body. The inner forces

such as madness and folly personified in tragedies of the Greek poet Homer as feminine, snatch and grab the interior of the human creature and take possession. Together, Simnett's works function as a portrait of an untamed body.

*Faint with Light* (2016) records Simnett inducing a cycle of fainting attacks through hyperventilation. The sound of her breath is monitored by ultra-bright lights that rise and fall on a twelve-metre screen dividing the space. Simnett's blackouts provide an alarming soundtrack, alerting us to our most vital bodily function. Intense flashes of light dance to choked gasps for air: an uncomfortable reminder of the fragile border separating consciousness from unconsciousness, life from death.

With this installation, Simnett writes herself into a lineage of performance artists who subject themselves to extreme actions in order to challenge the limits of the body and to test the stomach of the viewer. However, in contrast to the work of artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Vito Acconci, and Chris Burden, Simnett's physical body is hauntingly absent. We do not see her pass out – instead we witness a never-ending loop of her collapse and revival.

In *The Needle and the Larynx* (2016), Simnett once again subjects her body to an invasive procedure. A voice surgeon injects Botox into her larynx, which effectively paralyses the muscles responsible for pitch and causes her voice to deepen for several months. This procedure is typically reserved for men whose voice does not deepen after puberty. Footage of the treatment being administered to Simnett is accompanied by a fable about a girl who asks to have her voice lowered and threatens the reluctant doctor with a plague of mosquitoes, should he refuse. *The Needle and the Larynx* caricatures gender stereotypes and undermines the demands of a repressive society on women's bodies. Capturing her own experience as a patient, Simnett questions the history and orthodoxies of the medical profession.

### **ABOUT MARIANNA SIMNETT (b.1986)**

Marianna Simnett lives and works in London. Through performance, video, watercolour, and installation, she challenges how bodies are perceived and imagined. Uncanny narratives display the body as a site of dispute, performing surgical interventions and gestures of collapse and ecstasy.

Solo exhibitions and commissions include the forthcoming FACT, Liverpool (2019) and the Frans Hals Museum, Amsterdam (2019), as well as the New Museum, New York (2018); Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2018); Zabudowicz Collection, London (2018); Matt's Gallery, London (2017); Seventeen Gallery, New York and London (2016). Her work will also be included in forthcoming group exhibitions at Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2019); the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2019); Sadie Coles, London (2019).

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**The exhibitions will be open to members of the press Wednesday 6 February 2019 from 14.00–15.30.**

The artists will be present and give presentations of their work. CC's curators and Director will be present as well. After the press viewing refreshments are served in the foyer.

**The official opening is Thursday 7 February from 17.30–21.**

Press kit and images are available for download from the CC website:

<http://cphco.org/en/presse/>

Read more about the event here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/313414616187514/>

**For attendance at the press preview or interview requests please contact no later than Tuesday 29 January:**

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