

For immediate release



As I Live and Breathe
New works by internationally exhibited artist Claire Morgan on display at the Horniman

A series of stunning, thought provoking works by award-winning, internationally exhibited visual artist Claire Morgan are to go on display at the Horniman Museum and Gardens in Forest Hill, south east London this May.

As I Live and Breathe features new pieces specially commissioned by the Horniman and explores our relationship with nature, drawing on the theme of waste and the impact that humans have on their surroundings.

A dramatic large scale installation suspended from the ceiling and descending over two floors captivates visitors as they enter the Museum. The three forms are composed of thousands of fragments of colourful waste polythene, torn by hand from used shopping bags. These suggest a dramatic movement, being pulled by gravity from overhead down to the ground below, but here the movement has been halted in order to freeze a fleeting instant in time.

Claire says of the installation: 'I wanted to make something suggestive of our constant resistance to the forces of nature, and of a situation on the point of dramatic change, of collapse. The synthetic ball-like forms are reminiscent of comets or meteors.

'For me, both in this work and in life, there is a jarring between the disruptive, unstoppable cycles of life and death, that ultimately govern us, and the superficial, seductive, safe and easily consumable things: colours, materials, objects that we choose to use to entertain and distract ourselves.'

Inside the Horniman's historic Natural History Gallery will be a display combining plastics and nature featuring four taxidermy specimens of prolific residents of urban London: grey squirrel, red fox, carrion crow and rose-ringed parakeet. A conical form – made from fragments of torn black polythene from bin bags - protrudes from the mouth of each animal.

Claire says: 'The forms are harsh, and the animals hang from them, yet I want to retain an element of ambiguity. These animals are dwarfed by the synthetic forms and materials they cling to, but there is a lack of clarity as to whether these forms are inflicting violence on the animals, or the animals are clinging onto them; whether the forms are emerging

from the animals, or moving into them; whether these represent literal relationships between animals and things, or they signify subtler, hidden forms of violence; whether the animals are presented as living or as dead. Any or all of these could be true.'

Claire's drawing process includes laying the bodies of animals on the paper during the taxidermy process, recording their measurements, drawing around them, using them as drawing tools, as well as using them as reference for detailed drawings.

'The drawing process enables me to explore the physicality and morality of the animal in a spontaneous and intuitive way,' she says.

Claire says of her work: 'My awareness continues to be drawn to waste, and this concern tends to manifest itself in the inclusion of post-consumer single-use plastic in my sculptural work. For me this material is like a contemporary artefact that embodies our lazy, indulgent, throwaway culture, and it provides a very clear and literal example of the impact we have on our surroundings. But I am not making work about rubbish. More than this, it embodies the social and psychological toll this culture can take on us, as individuals and as animals.

'My works reference contemporary interactions between humans and animals / the natural world. I hope that placing these works within the context of an historic natural history setting will encourage people to trace the (not necessarily positive) development of these relationships over time and encourage discussion as to what choices we ought to be making for the future.'

Jo Hatton, Keeper of Natural History says: 'We are delighted to present the work of Claire Morgan at the Horniman. ***As I Live and Breathe*** asks questions of us all - our purpose in life, our choices, our relationship with nature, our futures and ultimately, our very survival.

'Claire's work encapsulates the beauty and fragility of life, but also our impact and the harm that we continue to inflict on the planet. The recurring use of single-use plastics and taxidermy, presented in unfamiliar and occasionally unsettling situations, somehow captures our determination to mould and manipulate the world around us, most often to the detriment of nature. It also invites us to reflect upon how we might all act to change this.'

As I Live and Breathe forms part of a wider programme at the Horniman to increase sustainability, improve awareness of environmental issues and encourage everyone to reduce their environmental impact. Further information can be found at www.horniman.ac.uk.

As I Live and Breathe is at the Horniman from Saturday 18 May 2019 until Monday 4 May 2020. Entry to the Horniman, and to see Claire's work, is free.

Pictures attached show:

As I Live and Breathe

2019

37 x 28.2cm (h x w)

Pencil and watercolour on paper

© Claire Morgan

Photo credit: Colin Davison

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve,

Cologne, Paris, St Moritz

By the Skin of the Teeth

2019

67 x 101.8cm (h x w)

Pencil, watercolour, graphite, pastel on paper

© Claire Morgan

Photo credit: Colin Davison

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve,

Cologne, Paris, St Moritz

For hi res versions please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

- Claire Morgan was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland and lives and works in Gateshead. Her work reflects a desire to understand the cycle of life and death, through exploring human beings' relationship with the natural world and has been shown in galleries, and is in private collections, around the world. Best known for her fragile suspended sculptures Claire's work also includes painting, drawing and taxidermy. Claire is the winner of The 2019 Daniel and Florence Guerlain Contemporary Art Foundation Drawing Prize. More information can be found at claire-morgan.co.uk and @clairemorganstudio on social media.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include natural history, music and an acclaimed aquarium. A new World Gallery of anthropology opened in June 2018 and a new arts space, The Studio, opened in October 2018. Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. horniman.ac.uk
- The Horniman Museum and Gardens is core-funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725. The Horniman Museum and Gardens also receives funding from Arts Council England as one of its National Portfolio Organisations.
- **Opening times and admission.** The Horniman Museum is open daily 10am-5.30pm, except 24 - 26 December, when it is closed. The Gardens open at 7.15am Monday to Saturday and 8am on Sunday and Bank Holidays, and close at sunset. Entry to the Museum and Gardens is free but charges apply for the Aquarium, Butterfly House and some special exhibitions and events. Horniman Members and Benefactors go free – horniman.ac.uk/members.
- **Access.** The Museum and the Gardens are both wheelchair and pushchair friendly with accessible toilets. Limited on-site parking is available for Blue Badge holders. horniman.ac.uk/visit/disability-and-access.
- **Travel.** The Horniman is situated at 100 London Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 3PQ on the South Circular Road (A205). It can be reached easily by train to Forest Hill station (London

Overground/Southern, travel time approx.15-20 minutes from east/central London or East Croydon) and by local buses (176, 185, 197, 356, P4).