

Marianna Simnett: *OGRESS*  
16 September – 22 October 2022

The ogress is a shape-shifter. A devourer. She entices, lures, and captures. In fairy tales and folklore, the ogress is a voracious monster who deceives men and torments children in her quest to ravish them whole. Marianna Simnett wields the ogress' insatiable hunger as a radical force that allows for a porosity with other beings and technologies. Simnett's video, sound, watercolor, and sculptural works intertwine personal and mythological worlds to delve into our innate drive towards collection and collectivity. *OGRESS* revels in the mutual metamorphosis that occurs through our psychologically charged attachment to the objects we possess—and which in turn possess us.

Coursing through the show is the myth of Athena crafting the first flute from a deer bone. While enthralled with her creation, she was mocked by the other gods; as she played, her cheeks puffed out and her face turned blue. Humiliated, Athena cast the flute away and cursed anyone who touched it. Simnett warps this myth to probe the links between transformation and possession. A series of large-scale watercolors reclaim Athena's horror at her transfigured face. Woodwind music lilts throughout the gallery, luring visitors to the garden where a multi-headed skeletal deer rears on its hind legs.

"In myth, women's boundaries are pliant, porous, mutable," the poet and essayist Anne Carson writes in her collection *Men in the Off Hours*. "The women of mythology regularly lose their form in monstrosity." The characters that appear in *OGRESS* don't succumb to monstrosity but embrace it. Metamorphoses are willed, not suffered—a tendency exhibited by mutant casts of Simnett's own form. In one, a reclining figure speaks through the many mouths that riddle their body: jeering, grimacing, groaning, slack-mouthed. Another figure crouches over a large lightbox scanner, in thrall to their own continuously generated image like a techno-narcissus. Underlying *OGRESS* is the conviction that "archaic" tools like the flute are themselves a form of technology. The Athena myth mutates once more in a video generated by a custom-built AI model, trained on videos of Simnett playing the flute. A glitching female figure, trapped inside technicolor blue woods, continually morphs, her face occasionally coalescing to resemble Simnett's own. If a monster's body is necessarily a social body<sup>1</sup>, its form determined by accumulations of cultural anxiety, obsession, and desire, then Simnett's *OGRESS* celebrates "the promises of monsters."<sup>2</sup>

On October 6th, there will be a flute performance by the artist to coincide with the release of a one-hundred piece NFT collection that multiplies and exaggerates the AI-generated Athena. In addition a series of mutated casts of friends will be revealed.

Marianna Simnett (b. 1986) lives and works in Berlin. In 2022, Simnett's film installation *The Severed Tail* is included in the 59th Venice Biennale: *The Milk of Dreams*, and her work *Prayers for Roadkill* is currently exhibited in *Espressioni: The Epilogue*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, and was shown at the 52nd edition of Art Basel. Simnett's work has been exhibited internationally in solo exhibitions at venues including Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Kunsthalle Zürich; MMK, Frankfurt; and the New Museum, New York.

1 See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996).

2 See Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others" (1992).