

MARC JANCOU CONTEMPORARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Marnie Weber
The Bondage of Decay
April 23-June 6, 2009
Opening Reception:
Thursday, April 23rd, 6-8 pm



Who Will Save Us Now?, 2009, collage on light jet print

Marc Jancou Contemporary is pleased to announce the exhibition, *The Bondage of Decay*, by LA based artist Marnie Weber. This is the artist's first solo show with the gallery.

Marnie Weber invents fractured narratives that conjure up twisted fairytales and haunting, dream like worlds populated by fantastical characters. The exhibition, *The Bondage of Decay*, presents one of the final chapters of the invented narrative of the Spirit Girls, an all female band who die tragically and return as ghosts in a quest for spiritual enlightenment. In this tale, the lead Spirit Girl guides a group of 12 clowns through varying adventures until she ultimately rejoins the spirit world, leaving them alone to grieve. In addition to an installation of clown sculptures and collages, the exhibition will feature two significant large-scale sculptures: a marble ghost clown and a painted wood circus bear. These are the most ambitious sculptures that the artist has produced, standing approximately 6 feet and 9 feet tall respectively. We are excited to feature them in this exhibition.

Marnie Weber is based in LA and received her BA from the University of California, LA. Recent solo exhibitions include Bernier/ Eliades, Athens; Praz-Delavallade, Paris; Emily Tsingou, London; and Patrick Painter, Los Angeles. Group exhibitions include *Busan Biennial*, Busan Museum of Modern Art, Korea; *Sympathy for the Devil, Art and Rock and Roll*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; *Marnie Weber: an Evening of Video and Performance*, Billy Wilder Theater, Hammer Museum. Her work is included in the following public collections: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Neuberger Berman, Inc., New York; Progressive Corporation, Mayfield, OH; and FRAC, Paris.

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Interview with Marnie Weber

*Where does the title of the show, *The Bondage of Decay*, come from?*

The term "Bondage of Decay" originally came from the bible. My interpretation of the phrase is the idea of being bound to the physical world and thereby not living in the world of the spirit or the unseen.

*Your recent body of work, *Sing a Western Song*, was based on the ongoing narrative of the *Spirit Girls*, a tale of an all female band who die tragically and return as ghosts in a quest for spiritual enlightenment. How is this new narrative related to that body of work? Does *The Eternal Garden* sculpture symbolize the culmination of the series?*

There is a loose narrative that surrounds the show which is that the lead spirit girl has been leading a group of 12 bumbling, hapless clowns in the role of their protector, voice of wisdom, guiding light, their savior. She transitions back into the spirit world through the form of a bed of flowers thus leaving them alone to grieve in their world of materialistic decay. The choice of a group of clowns for the wake scene is meant to exemplify the idea of remembrance through joy and laughter rather than sorrow alone.

**The Eternal Garden* symbolizes a transition in the *Spirit Girls* series, which is spiraling towards a conclusion, but since the series never functioned in linear fashion it won't end immediately or abruptly. This is definitely the end of the lead spirit girl on her solo journey. She will have to take the other spirit girls with her when she completes the final transition.*

*You've said in the past that the *Spirit Girls* were inspired in part by the American Spiritualist movement of the 1850s, which is credited with giving women their first public voice as "performers" in this country. Does this continue to influence your work?*

Yes the spiritualist movement does continue to influence the work; this can be seen especially in the wake installation. The clown is typically considered a symbol of the fool or a buffoon, a sad comic personality. In my narrative a clown is a symbol of those without their own inner wisdom who are looking for someone to follow as a conduit to the spirit world. The clowns are unable to believe in themselves to reach this spiritual place on their own so they look towards the spirit girl to rescue them spiritually and in the collage of them in the boat going over the waterfall, *Who will Save Us Now?*, quite literally. The female "performers" who went into trances and channeled the spirit world were conduits for the audience to reach their own spiritual essence. For the non-believers in the audience the spiritual channelers could raise enough questions to open up the members of the audience so that they could find the "spirit" within themselves rather than the traditional belief that spirituality is something outside of oneself to be controlled by an intervening god.

This idea of tapping into one's own spirituality through the medium art can be equated to the role of art in modern society. Art is a formal tool with which one can give pause to a moment on earth where one can tap into one's own spirituality.

Where does your interest in the genres of Vaudeville, Fairytales and the Circus come from?

They are all art forms with their own unique fictional narratives, which for me crystallize the paradox of tragedy and comedy, joy and sorrow, death and rebirth. The world of make believe is a safe place to explore human emotions and art is a place to present them in a formal manner. It is hard for me to watch a circus act without the conflicting emotions of joy and sadness coming over me. The circus bear is a good example of this as cute and amusing as he is there is a great deal of sadness expressed in his eyes and body posture. The bear also expresses strength and power and is at the same time deceptively huggable. Vaudeville acts are riddled with skits, which create laughter from pain. It is in the dichotomy of emotional conflict that I find makes for the most interesting work.

Can you discuss the significance of the large marble ghost clown in this show?

I am very much interested in the tradition and history of funerary sculpture so I wanted to create one of my own. It is a way of immortalizing one's loved ones as well as a personal expression of the enormity of one's emotions and grief solidified in an object. The choice of marble is important as it is traditionally the most precious stone in the making of funerary sculpture. The idea of a ghost of a clown seems funny and sad at the same time.

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You are often depicted in your collages and videos; how does the idea of self-portraiture play out in these fictional narratives?

I am always depicted "in character" in the theatrical sense of the expression in my work. This is a formal tool for presenting my "real" self. With these characters I can explore greater emotional extremes than just presenting myself as I am in everyday life. It is all aspects of myself but with a step back. Much the same way a traditional artist paints a self-portrait using the canvas as a tool. It is a distancing mechanism for me. It is a way to step out of myself to see myself. Although I create a character it is inevitably a form of self-portrait because the narratives come from me, not adapting pre-existing narratives. So it is all like one big fictional dream sequence in a Jungian sense.

Throughout your work, various characters appear across different media; how does the relationship between the sculptures and collages in this show function?

I wanted to see if I could carry the same feeling of joy and sorrow, which creates a feeling of emotional upheaval because of the contradiction. This comes quite easily through film for me but becomes more difficult when working through the collages.

The collages to me are like frozen scenes in a movie where I only get one chance to express what is going on. I don't want to tell too much to the point where the scene is closed off. I want to create a feeling of mystery. I wanted to see if I could achieve this crystallization of the contradictions of emotion in the formal sculptures. The collages and the sculptures both function for me in the same way. I am given just one moment in time to express emotional paradox.