

Marcus Coates

You Might As Well Ask A Crow

WORKPLACE LONDON

61 Conduit Street
Mayfair
London, W1S 2GB

Exhibition continues:

9th June - 29th July 2016

Thursday - Friday

10am - 5pm (or by appointment)



"Have you brought a question with you? Could you write it down please. I need to understand this as if it were my own. Your question will become my question."

Workplace London is delighted to announce a presentation of Marcus Coates' new work in the Mayfair gallery. The work draws from Coates' ongoing investigation into the role of the artist as a mediator and vicarious agent. Coates believes that our vision of the world can be extended to encompass all the invisible energies with which we have lost contact. To this end, Coates undertakes specific performative processes, or rituals, whilst addressing the questions, experimenting with the role of physical movement in approaching and understanding each query, aiming to create works that are in themselves answers to questions asked of him.

During a schedule of private consultations in recent months, Marcus Coates has met with individuals from diverse backgrounds, who have each come to the artist with a question that bears a particular significance to them. The questions posed to Coates have taken myriad forms from political and ethical to deeply personal, the only limitation being that they could not be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', nor could the solution be found using an internet search engine. Utilising the gallery space in a manner of a consultation room, Coates has discussed and worked through the questions privately with each individual by using processes and forms of reasoning that rely less on conscious rationalisation and more on imaginative experience to provide insight.

"Try not to think, just watch and notice. Once you are in this world forget about being in control or directing the action. Although this world is part of you, you must allow it to invent itself."

The details of the information generated during these consultations, which remains confidential between Coates and the 'client', forms the basis for the artworks/answers displayed in the gallery. As an answer to one of the client's questions, *"To what extent can I blame Margaret Thatcher"* Coates has presented a large oiled Bracket fungus. The fungus itself is a bracket shaped fruiting body seen on the trunk of trees. These fungi usually lead to the weakening and eventual breakage of the trees. By the time the fungus appears there will usually have been extensive heartwood decay.

For, *"How can I have more impact with what I do?"* Coates has filmed himself submerged in his bath, making vocal sounds on the limits of what his body is capable of, without air. A hydrophone (underwater microphone) records his utterances which resemble the calls of certain sea mammals like the Humpback whale and Orca.

For Coates the critical aspect of this process begins during the consultation time while accessing information together with the client and involves an immersion into an irrational form of sub-conscious enquiry that sets up a discernible direction. The focus on a question and answer structure seeks to establish a purposeful relationship between the artwork and the client/wider audience. What is at stake for Coates is the artwork's success or failure as a conveyor for insight, each work having a discernible criteria for judgement, however subjective. The interpretations Coates aims to offer are therefore guided by the utility of the object and its totemic potential.

The artwork/answers produced as a result of the gallery being used as a consultation space are exhibited here for the returning clients to view and discuss with the artist for the first time. It is important for Coates that this display can also be seen/used by the public in order to test the work's wider relevance. Coates attempts to not only redefine the role of the artist but also to explore the part played by a commercial gallery space and the audience. By raising questions about the products of artistic activities and the very purpose of art, Coates challenges our intuitions concerning the limits of what it is an artist does, but also what we consider as art.

Marcus Coates was born in 1968 in London, UK. In 2008 he was the recipient of a Paul Hamlyn Award and in 2009 he won the Daiwa Art Prize. In 2013 Coates was shortlisted for the Fourth plinth, Trafalgar Square artwork (2015/16). Solo exhibitions include: *The Trip*, Serpentine Gallery, London; *Implicit Sound*, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona; *Psychopomp*, Milton Keynes Gallery and *Marcus Coates*, Kunsthalle, Zurich, Switzerland. Group exhibitions include: *Private Utopia: Contemporary Art from the British Council Collection*, Tokyo Station Gallery, Japan; *Station to Station*, Barbican Art Centre, London; *THE BEAUTY OF DISTANCE: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age*, Sydney Biennale, Australia; *ALTERMODERN*, Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London; *MANIFESTA 7*, Trento, Italy; *Transformation*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; *Laughing in a Foreign Language*, Hayward Gallery, London; *Hamsterwheel*, Malmo Konsthall, Sweden and Venice Biennale. Coates lives and works in London.