



For Immediate Release:
MARY-ANN MONFORTON | SANCTUARY

November 12 - December 27, 2020

High Noon is pleased to present **Mary-Ann Monforton's** New York solo debut, ***Sanctuary***, a co-mingling of sculptural objects ripe with a childlike anamnesis that will transform the gallery's concrete floors and stark white walls into a dreamy installation that rises subtly to meet the current national discourse on multiple levels. To create the sculptures, Monforton uses a blend of simple materials both craft and industrial— wire mesh, plaster, concrete, cardboard, etc.— to a surprising effect that embraces a naive understanding of form, or the limitations of form within her chosen media. Many objects, such as balloons, soccer balls, and tree stumps are simple, while others, most notably a giraffe calf or Radio Flyer (both life-sized) require more engineering. Regardless of the mechanics, the works form a successful cohesion by never *fully* succeeding in and of themselves.

Engagement with the pitiful is a hallmark of Monforton's work, constituting the backbone of her fearlessness to hand-construct such impractical sculptures and simultaneously rendering them with tenderness and tragedy. As such, ***Sanctuary*** taken as a whole reads like something of a fantasy playroom in transition to something else. The lack of finish forces a confrontation with things left undone; existing halfway between what is real and what is imagined, and teasing the vulnerability of memory and perception. The stoic faces on the baby animals stare expectantly, wondering why we no longer answer them back. These species— a giraffe, a polar bear, a rhino— are listed as endangered in the wild, a sobering overlap between the dissolutions of fantasy and reality.

Accompanying the mix of living creatures are a series of playful objects. Though inanimate, one gets the sense that they are no less alive; certainly they are not lacking in personality. Handled with the same calculated carelessness, these objects take on a memorial quality— childlike monuments filled with wonderment and loss. For many, a Radio Flyer will always evoke the feelings of the eponymous film in which two boys transform the wagon into an airplane to escape an abusive step father. The slouching wheels and slumped handlebar on Monforton's Radio Flyer suggest the exhaustion of a wagon that has just flown around the world. Similarly, the bone-white tricycle (the only sculpture in the show cast in resin in an edition) leans delicately to one side, like a dog favoring an injured paw. Easily the most haunting work in the show, it is also the child in the room. The starkly contrasted expectation of the object to be pink and sparkly implies something stripped of substance, and referencing "ghost bikes" placed at sites where cyclists have been injured or killed. Three pastel colored balloons, dented and puckered, are held aloft, awkwardly, against the white sky of the gallery wall. They float amongst innocuous clouds whose silhouette is created by a single wire. Occupying little more presence than a graphite line drawing, they have no hope of being imagined as anything other than exactly what they are.

In the animated show *South Park's* fifteenth season, the episode "You're Getting Old" has one of the show's main protagonists, 9-year-old Stan, wrestling with the gradual onset of an existential crisis. After receiving a Tween Wave album as a birthday gift, Stan is surprised that after a number of listens, the music one night suddenly start to sound like shit. As viewers, we hear what Stan is listening to as a soundtrack of literal farting and defecating noises. As the episode progresses, Stan's cynicism grows as more things around him continue transforming into literal shit. At the end, completely alienated from his friends and staring out at a lake surrounded by flowers with blossoms of shit, under a sun made of shit, Stan's father Randy is seen speaking seriously to his son before a montage ensues to Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide" of boxes being packed and a house being put up for sale— Stan's parents are getting divorced.

The episode highlights with appropriate crudity the soft violence implicit in coming to understand the world as a complex place, a place that doesn't guarantee safety, where perception and reality are muddled with jarring contradictions. Somewhere within these contradictions is where the work in ***Sanctuary*** finds it's resonance by playing on our latent thoughts, where Monforton's keenly attuned political and humanitarian concerns collide with an impulse to create her finely articulated nonsense.

Mary-Ann Monforton is the long time Associate Publisher of *BOMB Magazine*. She has been a curator involved in the downtown New York art scene and has since 2013 re-engaged with her own studio practice and was recently shown at the 2019 Spring Break Art Fair as well as featured in and co-curator of the traveling art exhibition, *Zeitgeist: The Art Scene of Teenage Basquiat*, which ran from May 2018 - March 2019 and accompanied the acclaimed documentary *Boom for Real* by Sara Driver. Monforton has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In the Spring of 2019 she received the Prix de Print in *Art in Print Magazine* for her lithograph, *e-cigarettes*, printed and published by Maurice Sanchez of Derriere L'Etoile Studios LIC, NY.