



## **Jocelyn McGregor: Mantle**

**16 January - 20 February 2022**

*Mantle* is the first major solo exhibition of work by Jocelyn McGregor. McGregor's work involves sculpture, installation and animation. Taking inspiration from folklore, surrealism and supernatural fiction, she dismantles the ways in which female identity is associated with nature, the home and the machine. McGregor finds parallels between the treatment of the body in horror films and her everyday lived experience of the female body which is often visually dissected to be valued and judged. In McGregor's work a monstrous and fragmented body comes back to haunt the viewer.

In shelled molluscs, the mantle is the organ that forms the shell. From the original Latin word *mantellum* we also get mantle as the name for a cloak like garment worn over indoor clothing and mantelpiece a shelf or structure located above a fireplace. Like the calcified layers that separate, support or protect the softer mollusc tissue, the mantle garment and mantelpiece, form boundaries or thresholds between internal habitats and external worlds. Working with domestic fabrics, beauty products, earth pigments and industrial materials, McGregor traverses the perceived boundaries between human, nature and machine, where they meet and overlap, demonstrating the difficulty in defining their edges. The work slips and shifts between states, the recurring presence of clothing and soft fabric pieces references their closeness to the body and also their role in transporting us between conscious and unconscious dream worlds. As our lives are increasingly played out onscreen McGregor has been experimenting with stop-motion animation. A medium which enables otherwise inanimate objects to interact with 'real' life environments, blurring the line between the real and fantastic.

In many of McGregor's works so-called lower animals and creatures often thought to be pests, associated with infestation, disease and decomposition are enlarged and disjointed. New works for this exhibition include sculptures that could be worn, combining synthetic hair, natural latex and false nails which mimic nature with machine and handmade elements. As appendages they extend the human body into creaturely realms, like prostheses for limbs we didn't realise we were missing. They form a monstrous body which incorporates both the wretched of nature and artificial materials. This contact with what we may find disgusting and disturbing is a regular feature of horror films, a rich source of inspiration for McGregor and a genre with continued if not increasing mainstream appeal, perhaps not in spite of the pandemic but because of it.

Nature in McGregor's work is neither benign or simply aggressive as is sometimes the case in the sub-genre of Ecological Horror, when nature appears to take revenge on our problematic species for the damage we have done to it. Like leftovers from a dream, McGregor's works crawl and creep into the gallery, climbing over it, snaking round corners and hanging down walls. Encroaching into the space like unclipped fingernails and

overgrown hair, reclaiming space like roots and vines. McGregor's work might prompt us to consider the useful roles performed by snails, insects and worms in nature and how they ultimately contribute to sustaining human life. Crucially though, this close encounter with nature does not point towards an easy resolution, a simple becoming whole again, or being one with nature. The fragmented elements in McGregor's work suggest something inconsistent and incomplete at the heart of what humans are, and of nature itself.

*Jocelyn McGregor: Mantle*, was selected from proposals submitted by Castlefield Gallery Associates by guest selector Mariama Attah curator at Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool and Castlefield Gallery Curator Matthew Pendergast. Attah is a photography curator and editor with a particular interest in overlooked visual histories, and in using photography and visual culture to amplify under and misrepresented voices. Before joining the Open Eye Gallery team, Mariama was assistant editor of Foam Magazine (Amsterdam). Prior to that, she was Curator of Photoworks, where she was responsible for developing and curating programs and events such as the Brighton Photo Biennial and was commissioning and managing editor of the yearly magazine Photoworks Annual. She has also worked for inIVA (London), Compton Verney (Warwickshire), and Arts Council England. In 2021 Attah joined Castlefield Gallery's Board of Directors and Trustees

**Jocelyn McGregor** (b. 1989, Lincolnshire) currently lives and works in Nottingham. She studied Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Fine Art, Oxford University (2010); and completed her MFA in Sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL (2017). Awards include Sculpture in the City: Aldgate Square Commission 2022-23; British Council SWAP UK/Ukraine Artist Residency Programme 2019-20; Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2018; and the Lee Alexander McQueen: Sarabande Foundation Emerging Artist Award (2017). Recent exhibitions include 'Around the Table', No.20 Gallery, London; 'Trespassers Will Be Detected', Dnipro Centre for Contemporary Culture, Ukraine (2020); 'A Field Guide to Getting Lost', The Art Foundation, Athens, Greece (2018); 'Mei Yahn Yu', Kaitak Centre (AVA), Hong Kong (2018).

[www.jocelynmcgregor.com](http://www.jocelynmcgregor.com)

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