

Madeleine Bialke: Giants in the Dusk

2nd June – 8th July 2023



THREE FATES (2023), MADELEINE BIALKE

Huxley-Parlour are delighted to present *Giants in the Dusk*, the gallery's second solo presentation by Madeleine Bialke. Comprising nine new large-scale paintings, the exhibition responds to the shifting cultural place of the natural, taking imaginative departure from Bialke's recent time spent on the Treberfydd estate in rural Wales.

The dusk in the title of the exhibition alludes to the current crisis-fuelled moment: a potential sundown on globalisation, environmental uncertainty and other mechanisms of late capitalism. The gnarled and swollen trees that anchor the exhibition are, too, in the dusks of their lives; some of them entering the last juncture of their long life spans. Many of the trees depicted in the exhibition are Welsh Oaks, which have three three-hundred year phases in their life cycle. *Staghead* depicts an elderly oak that is losing its crown, while *Deadheart* describes a hollowed out oak, whose central core has rotted away.

The titular 'giants' not only refers to these grizzled and swollen arboreal bodies, but also suggests something even more ancient - Bialke uses the tree as a symbol to consider the place of mythology and storytelling within the landscape. *Spider* depicts a Cedar of Lebanon that, removed from its dryer, warmer homelands has thrived in the dampened soil of Wales, subsequently mushrooming outwards and upwards into enormity. There is something of the physiognomic about Bialke's Cedar colossus, a motif repeated across the entire suite of paintings. Many of the trees in the exhibition are rendered resolutely anthropomorphic: spindly arms, legs, and even abdominal muscles emerge

from the undulating bark. Giants, as described by Hesiod, were creatures born from the droplets of blood as Ouranos was castrated by Cronus. Much like trees, they grew from the bloodstained earth as small seedlings and soaked up the sun, growing slowly as the seasons turned.

Drawing on these classical mythological narratives, as well as mediaeval and nineteenth-century sources, Bialke creates psychologically charged monoliths whose forms nod to an old, enduring bond between the natural and the supernatural. The Witch Elm in Ian Forrester's *Howard's End* holds particular significance for Bialke, where teeth embedded into the tree's trunk signify society's lost link with the landscape. While Forrester's novel explored the relationship between society and the environment at the dawning of the industrial age and waning of rural life, Bialke's work takes a longer view. The compositions in *Giants in the Dusk* are quietly eerie, with a markedly darker palette than previous bodies of work. The ancient oaks of Powys are rendered in sci-fi hues of purples and greens, their leafless, twisted trunks signalling a cinematic, gothic sensibility.

Madeleine Bialke (b. 1991) received her BFA in Studio Art from the Plattsburgh State University of New York, and earned an MFA in Painting at the Boston University, Massachusetts. She has shown widely across Europe and the USA. Bialke was the Artist-in-Residence at North Western Oklahoma State University in 2018 and was awarded the John Walker MFA Painting and Sculpture Award in 2016. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Notes to Editors

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Private View: Thursday 1st June, 6-8pm
Huxley-Parlour, 3-5 Swallow Street, W1B 4DE

Opening hours Monday to Saturday, 10:00am - 5:30pm
Additional information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com