

Birds of a feather: Kate MccGwire's gentle sculptures at La Galerie Particulière, Paris

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September 7, 2016

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Art / 7 Sep 2016 / By Amy Verner



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Information

'Kate MccGwire: Scissure' is on view until 15 October. For more information, visit La Galerie Particulière's [website](#)

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Kate MccGwire arrived in Paris nine days before her second solo show at La Galerie Particulière. The trip from her home near Hampton Court, however, was far more extended and circuitous than the typical Eurostar commute; she and her partner had spent the past ten weeks traveling along the Thames, across the Channel and down into Belgium and France on their 108-year-old Dutch barge. Along the way, inside her 32 sq m floating studio, she was producing several of the plumed pieces now on display, allowing the changing scenery to guide her creative process.

Granted, her collection of forms—at once animal, anthropomorphic and abstract—do not aim for any single representation. The twisting mass of meticulously applied magpie feathers housed in a glass cabinet could suggest myriad interpretations, making it somewhat of an otherworldly, sculptural Rorschach test. ‘I like to ask people what they see,’ MccGwire tells Wallpaper* during a walkthrough. As for her reading: ‘I think of it as being a three-dimensional presence of a state of mind – trapped and convoluted, but beautiful. It’s a confusing thing; the work is never just beautiful.’

This is among the pieces MccGwire made over the course of her journey; and she notes how the iridescent blue hue of the feathers now reminds her of the Marne river. Certainly, it offers a dramatic contrast to the works composed of pristine white feathers on the other side of the gallery. Here, a goose-covered sculpture might conjure up coiled swan necks or, as the artist reveals, a fleshy close-up. ‘These could be creases and crevices of the body.... The hybrid creature of human and animal has been with us forever. I think it’s deep-seated in us to make that connection.’

Three wall-mounted works in goose feature a central cavity emphasised by pigeon quills. Here, there’s an unmistakably erotic aspect that dovetails with the concept of spatialism proposed by Lucio Fontana. This show’s title, ‘Scissure’, comes from this series, which MccGwire continues to explore. ‘Each time I’m doing one, I’m thinking ahead towards the next piece,’ she says.

As a result of this finessing, and because each creation is unique, the artist is ultimately moving through her own evolutionary process. *Pelt*, a different wall-mounted grouping consisting of kid leather punctured with crow quills, yielded an interactive piece whereby viewers can place their hand under the base through a hole in the pedestal. ‘Have a fondle!’ she quips.

For all MccGwire’s labour – extensive sourcing, cleaning the feathers and quills, manipulating each one by hand, applying them with remarkable precision – the effort is matched by the effect, which ultimately, is her aim. ‘I don’t like to explain too much,’ she says. ‘I prefer people to be transported.’

Yet, with noticeable delight, she divulged the medium that allowed her to achieve the wayward, watery lines in a drawing series she is exhibiting for the first time: graphite powder-covered maggots. Titled *Vermiculus*, the idea came about from observing fisherman with their boxes of maggots and wondering what marks the creatures might make. The gross-out factor notwithstanding, it confirms MccGwire’s wildly imaginative application of the natural world. And go figure, the blackened larvae left a wondrous tangle of trails.



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