

Ehrlich Steinberg
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Tuesday - Saturday 12-6pm

January 11 - February 17 2024
Opening: Thursday January 11 6-9pm

Lou Lou Sainsbury
A Cloud That Bites

Ehrlich Steinberg is pleased to present the solo exhibition, *A Cloud That Bites* by Rotterdam-based British artist Lou Lou Sainsbury. The exhibition includes a newly commissioned multi-channel video installation, sculpture, photography and drawing.

Constructed around two semi-fictionalized characters - Sunbeam and Fowelley - *A Cloud That Bites* moves between a historical and imagined past, reconstituted through Sainsbury's own understandings of present and future lifespans. Throughout the exhibition, the artist evokes the spirits and figures of trans ancestors, describing a "process of making communion and communication with the dead". Drawn from Clarice Lispector's 1942 novel *Near to the Wild Heart* in which the narrator confessionally recalls dreams of being "above the rain", *A Cloud That Bites* roots itself in Sainsbury's own experiences of her body, encounters of touch and what she speaks of as a "pain in my chest". The exhibition explores this through varying states including climate crisis anxiety, living in an 'unnatural' body, dysphoria, trans sociality, trans death, the category of human in relation to the weather and desire to become almost-nothing, to become mist.

These states are personified in Sainsbury's reconstruction of two semi-historical, semi-fictionalized figures that materialize, repeat and overlap throughout the exhibition. Sunbeam - an invocation of the trans ancient Roman empress, Heliogabalus - sits in the window in puppet form with a split and restitched body. Featuring as the main character in Sainsbury's 2024 film *A Fantastic Body*, installed in the upstairs gallery, Sunbeam is shown being made and unmade as their body is stuffed with objects collected by the artist. These include peach pits for a brain, locks of the artist's hair, pharmaceutical hormones and ceramic rib bones. The film shows Sainsbury both handling the rib bones outdoors in mud and washing them in a domestic kitchen sink.

Installed in the gallery's upstairs office, a collection of ceramic bones, illuminated by a yellow glow, now rests clinically on top of a glass table. Reminiscent of religious relics and suggestive of divine alien autopsy, the bones embody a simultaneous historic and futuristic quality.

Fowelley - departing from the Middle English poem, *Foweles in the frith* - manifests as a "more-than-human saint" whose bones, coat and bottled body scent scatter the gallery. Fowelley appears as flesh, inanimate material and spiritual relic, evocative of Christian mystical traditions. Placed within an antique cabinet, Fowelley's scent, made in collaboration with artist Gabi Dao, faintly mists continuously through the gallery. Condensed into a perfume, the work references 'Osmogenesis', the phenomenon of a sweet smell emanating from deceased saints. A mixture of natural and synthetic perfumers ingredients, the scent recalls forests, mushrooms, gasoline, rain, ocean air and animalic sweat.

A logic of repetition, copies and doubles encapsulates the exhibition. The infesting peach pits act as stand-ins for brains, Sunbeam and Fowelley's pearls are at once tears, as are the raindrops hanging from rope, steel stars

mirror weathervanes, ceramic bones act as hangers, puppets become “real” and fictional ancestors enter the present. *Car Seat*, an anthropomorphic sculpture positioned with its back to visitors, stands on its hind legs with its chest confrontationally stretched out.

These trickster-esque copies are grounded in Sainsbury’s understandings of queer and trans theory and experience today. The artist re-routes the concept of the “trap”, a slur used on platforms such as 4chan and reddit to describe a ‘passing’ trans woman as a ‘trap’ to lure heterosexual men. *Body diary I and III* (2024), autobiographical prints on transparent mylar show Sainsbury in her bedroom and studio. The prints connote the ritualized documenting and sharing of images within the trans community via online platforms to self-represent their bodies, experiences and transformations.

Extracts from the artist’s 2024 poem *A Cloud That Bites* punctuate the gallery. Moving across its walls, the spray-painted wax letters begin above the entryway with *brain says* and end in the corner of the final upstairs room with *parasitic girl*. They reflect Sainsbury’s overarching investigation into how bodies, the self, language and in-/animate objects inhabit, reproduce and continually haunt space. This architectural intervention is further realized through *Celestial Boymode*, an acid yellow light source installed in the gallery’s two skylights. The cast yellow light references the weather modification technique known as ‘cloud seeding’ which chemically changes the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, most commonly achieved through the use of the bright yellow colored chemical compound silver iodide.

A Cloud That Bites foregrounds the ongoing permeability between Sainsbury’s film, sculptural, photographic, and drawing practices. The exhibition speaks to passages of life and death, resurrection/revival, communion, possessions and invocations, exploring the transformative properties of a body that lives in and of the weather.

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Lou Lou Sainsbury (b. 1994; London, UK) lives and works between Margate, UK and Rotterdam, NL. Sainsbury received her MA in Art Praxis from the Dutch Art Institute in 2021 and her BA in Moving Image at the University of Brighton in 2016. Previously she was an associate artist at Open School East (2017). Previous solo exhibitions include *DESCENDING NOTES/LIKE RAIN IN THE ABYSS* at Roodkapje, Rotterdam, NL (2023); *Earth is a Deadname* at Gasworks, London, UK (2022) and Humber Street Gallery, Hull, UK (2022) and *my hole is the place where i call myself a mother* at Well Projects, UK (2021). Recent performances and group exhibitions include *descending notes (Video Library)* at Rencontres Internationales, Paris/Berlin, FR/DE (2023); *INTRA (depend on me, bby)* at Ugly Duck Gallery, London, UK (2023); *descending notes - Except for Caresses* at Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, SCT (2023) and Whitstable Biennale, Whitstable, UK (2022). Recent publications and press include *Trans Sexuality #12*, Almanac Journal of Trans Poetics, FR (2023) and *How to Sleep Faster #13: Empathetic Earth*, Arcadia Missa Publications, UK (2023). Sainsbury has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including Mondriaan Fonds (2023) and Freelands Gasworks Partnership Programme (2021-2023).

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