

## PRESS RELEASE

**Mary Helena Clark***Art Basel | Statements*

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Mary Helena Clark's background in experimental cinema stimulates her research driven work. Her films and photographs often recreate technical, instructional, or scientific images presumed to be neutral but, in a new context, surface psycho-sexual undertones. Her sculptures subvert and reimagine the function of found objects by creating new hybrid forms that allude to sentience and affect: an oxygen tank amplifying a voice (*Inset Speech*, 2018), or a motorized lock that walks (*Driver*, 2024).

Clark's new works synthesize her interests in animality, artifice, and perception. *Ideomotor (Sexing a canary)*, 2025 is a trio of photographs capturing the traditional practice of *needling*. A debated folk practice, needling involves dangling a metal object over a bird's body. The direction the object swings is said to indicate the animal's sex. This is an 'ideomotor response' -- a psychological phenomenon where involuntary muscular movements occur in response to unconscious thoughts, expectations or desires, not unlike a divining rod or a Ouija board.

*Decoy 1,2,3*, 2025 are steel sculptures made from motorcycle tanks equipped with electric heaters. When powered, the tank's warmth hovers around 100.4°F (38°C) the average temperature of a human fever. The tank's warmth signals a sentience that borders on sickness; The switch boxes act as both life source and life support – monitors of care and control.

Clark's sound piece, *Einstein*, 2025, rearranges mimicked speech clips from archived livestreams of an African Grey Parrot named Einstein. The bird's utterances appear as intelligence, intimacy and even an internal monologue. It's a persuasive illusion, a magic trick of our own affective response.

Mary Helena Clark (born 1983, USA) lives and works in New York. Her work has been exhibited and screened nationally and internationally, including presentations at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge; Sundance Film Festival, Park City; Swedish Film Institute, Stockholm; The Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago; Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus; Anthology Film Archives, New York; Yerba Buena Center; San Francisco; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and at the New York, London, Rotterdam and Toronto International Film Festivals.