

Bowdoin College Museum of Art to Present Exhibition of Work Created and Curated by Emile Stark-Menneg

Featuring new artwork by Emilie Stark-Menneg inspired by historic and contemporary artwork from the collection of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art and the Wyvern Collection

Brunswick, ME—June 23, 2023—The Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) will present *Emilie Stark-Menneg's Supernatural*. The seventeen-piece exhibition features new artwork by Emilie Stark-Menneg inspired by the holdings of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art and the Wyvern Collection—on long-term loan to the Museum—and places these historic and contemporary objects in dialogue with one another. Responding to masterworks from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century, Stark-Menneg has created eight complex and interrelated works, including paintings, three-dimensional photographs, three-dimensionally printed sculptures, and augmented-reality animations. This combination of curation and creation represents a first for both Emilie Stark-Menneg and the Museum.

Emilie Stark-Menneg's Supernatural weaves a complex tale of love, death, and rebirth inspired by the myth of Apollo and Daphne. The ancient myth, as recounted by Ovid, forms the basis of the Museum's 1513 oil on canvas by Pontormo, which depicts the god's vain pursuit of the nymph, who eludes him by metamorphosing into a tree. Delving into the tale, Stark-Menneg reconceptualizes it as a story of interconnection and mutual transformation leading to rebirth. In so doing, the artist interrogates the porous boundaries between the natural world and human experience, between fantasy and the everyday, and between life and death. These slippages are explored not only thematically by the artist but also through the broad range of mediums she employs: painting, photography, sculpture, and augmented reality.

The carefully orchestrated installation, illuminated by the lighting designer Austin Shull, positions the viewer within the environment of an enchanted forest, opening onto clearings that reveal startling sights. The dark walls of the gallery accentuate the shimmering surfaces of Stark-Menneg's own artworks as well as those that have inspired her, including works by Pontormo and other masters of the early Renaissance and—closer to our own day—pieces by Ana Mendieta, Chris Ofili, and Folkert de Jong. As Stark-Menneg observes of these artworks: "In many instances, the artists attempted risky if not impossible pictorial feats, seeking to create illusionistic space and life-like representations in rare or newly adopted artistic mediums such as mother-of-pearl, minerals, Super 8mm film, and photorefractive crystals." Following suit, Stark-Menneg energetically pushes the limits of the materials she uses, fashioning large paintings, photographic anaglyphs that assume an illusionistic third dimension, and sculptures with iridescent surfaces that are in turn further enhanced by the augmented reality narratives conceptualized by Stark-Menneg and animated by Elijah Ober.

"*Emilie Stark-Menneg's Supernatural* demonstrates the exciting result of encouraging an artist to mine and respond to the rich artistic legacy of the BCMA, leading to a new and dynamic body of work," observes BCMA co-director Anne Collins Goodyear, who worked closely with the artist in the realization of this exhibition. "This project has provided me with a unique opportunity to research and to experiment, and to push my practice in new directions," notes artist Emile Stark-Menneg. *Emilie Stark-Menneg's Supernatural* is accompanied by a brochure published by the Museum and is view from June 24th until August 20th.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is the cornerstone of the arts and culture at Bowdoin. One of the earliest collegiate art collections in the nation, it came into being through the 1811 bequest of James Bowdoin III of 70 European paintings and a portfolio of 141 old master drawings. The collection has been expanded through the generosity of the Bowdoin family, alumni and friends, and now numbers more than 20,000 objects, including paintings, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts and artifacts from prehistory to the present from civilizations around the world. www.bowdoin.edu

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