



FLIGHT OF FANCY

Words: SUSAN WILSON

BRITISH SCULPTRESS **KATE MCCGWIRE**, KNOWN FOR HER DIVERSE USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS, BEGAN COLLECTING FEATHERS YEARS AGO TO CREATE HER VISCERAL AND OTHERWORLDLY PIECES. FROM NOVEMBER 23, 2012 TO JANUARY 26, 2013 SHE WILL BE DISPLAYING HER LATEST WORKS IN A SOLO EXHIBITION IN LONDON.

As human beings we have a complex relationship with our feathered neighbours. Parrots we keep as pets, pigeons we call termin and disease carriers, rats with wings. Nightingales sing the sweetest music, crows signify bad luck, even death, and magpies are all thieves. Each bird carries its own story, and each human has their own response - curiosity, affection, unease, and even fear. It is these emotions that war within us all as we take in the feathered sculptures of artist Kate McGwire.

Her recent work will be displayed in a solo exhibition at the All Visual Arts Gallery in London. Here she delves deeper into the unease her creations

evolve, exhibiting them bound and trapped in antique glass cabinets like exotic creatures on display. Her sculptures take on an anthropomorphic quality. They are brooding, physical creations that both compel and repulse the viewer. One sculpture, entitled 'Cleave', is a powerful and alluring presence, created from white pigeon feathers that the artist intends as a challenge to our ingrained perception of the uncleanness of pigeons. They are after all, the same species as the dove, a world symbol for peace and purity, or, in truth, a pigeon with white feathers.

Another piece, entitled 'Taunt', is clamped to the wall of the exhibit, and curls in on itself with an almost serpentine quality, tethered and constrained. This is

Thank, Kate McGwire



ABOVE: Cleave, Kate McGwire



LEFT: Taunt, Kate McGwire

→ another theme within her work, she creates pieces that straddle the balance of life and death, at once straining to be free and alive, yet constrained and statutory in nature. Each of the sculptures on display are, in her own words, both sensual and deviant in equal measure.

Her use of feathers came about naturally. Surrounded by birds on the Dutch barge she uses as her studio on the river Thames she had plenty of feathers at

hand. When the scale of her sculptures emerged it became clear to the artist she would need thousands of feathers to complete her work. So she contacted pigeon racers, farmers and gamekeepers, and now has around 200 individuals who regularly send her feathers. What would once have gone to waste instead creates these powerful and visceral pieces of art.