

**PRESS RELEASE****POLLY MORGAN*****Psychopomps***

21 July – 18 September 2010

Photo: Tessa Angus

Psychopomps is Polly Morgan's first solo exhibition with Haunch of Venison. It consists of four spheres suspended from the ceiling, each covered in the wings of either a crow or pigeon. Planted one on top of the other, each successive wing unfurls to display – as if this were a flick book or an Eadweard Muybridge photo series – the full range of the bird's motions in flight.

These hanging mobiles are named *Psychopomps* after the mythical creatures that transport souls into the after-life. Their historical representation includes Hermes and Charon from Greek mythology, the Valkyries from Norse myth, Anubis, the jackal-headed Egyptian God, and in various cultures, horses, bees, birds and shamans. Poised between movement and inertia, Morgan's *Psychopomps* are hybrids that evoke on the one hand, the metamorphic nature of these soul conductors, and on the other, the traditions of taxidermy and its attempt to reinvigorate the bodies of dead animals.

Morgan is known for presenting animals outside their natural habitats – rats in champagne glasses, chicks harnessed by balloons or bursting from the seams of coffins or the earpieces of a telephone receiver – but in *Psychopomps* she has taken this subversion a stage further. The dead bodies are no longer recognisable from life; these reassembled creatures are a fantastic distortion of nature, as if dredged from a dream. Rather than seeing a crow or a pigeon, each *Psychopomp* is an abstracted composite consisting of a mass of wings and a single amorphous body.

This contest between animal part and mutant whole implies a disjunction, whereby the cunning seamless of traditional taxidermy is replaced with something eerily beautiful and unreal. The abundance of wings and its nightmarish connotations add a surreal psychological dimension to these elevated spectres, which fan their plume but remain disembodied and faceless.

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For information and images please contact Bomi Odunade:

T +44 (0)20 7495 5050

E bodunade@hofv.com

EDITORS' NOTES

Polly Morgan

Polly Morgan was born in England in 1980 and lives and works in London. She studied taxidermy under George Jamieson in 2005 and has since worked with animals repeatedly. Solo exhibitions include *The Exquisite Corpse: A Reconstruction Project*, at 1 Marylebone Road, London, 2007 and *Still Life After Death* at Kristy Stubbs Gallery, Dallas, 2007. Her work features in, among others, the Thomas Olbricht Collection, the Anita Zabłudowicz Collection and the David Roberts Art Foundation. Group exhibitions include *Wonderland*, Assab One, Milan, 2010, *The Age of the Marvellous*, All Visual Arts, London, 2009, *Mythologies*, Haunch of Venison, London, and *You Dig the Tunnel, I'll Hide the Soil*, White Cube, London, 2008.

Haunch of Venison

Founded in 2002 by Harry Blain and Graham Southern, contemporary art gallery Haunch of Venison works with some of the most important and exciting artists working today, presenting a broad and critically acclaimed programme of exhibitions at international gallery spaces in London, Berlin and New York. In March 2009, Haunch of Venison moved their London programme to the 21,500ft gallery spaces at 6 Burlington Gardens.