

# Charles Avery

## *The Nothing of the Day*

May 25 – July 8, 2023  
2 Bourdon Street, London (UK)

GRIMM is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new works by Charles Avery, on view at the London gallery from 25 May to 8 July, 2023. This is the artist's first exhibition at GRIMM's recently-opened London location. The exhibition coincides with the third edition of London Gallery Weekend (2 – 4 June).

Something is happening on the Island. Something beyond the usual business of daily life, with its cycle of work and leisure, of commerce and consumption, of tourist ships rolling in and rolling out again. This 'something' is difficult to place a finger on, or to give a name to. Call it the amplification of an energy — tense, discontented, hungry for change — that's perhaps always been present at the Island's ragged edges. Call it a gathering storm. And yet, all this may still dissipate, may for now at least come to nothing, and remain unremarked.

Charles Avery's exhibition begins with a work in the form of a poem, presented in the gallery's window space. In short, oblique vignettes, the narrator describes a series of events taking place on the Island over the course of a single day, which are also detailed in the six paintings (Avery prefers the term 'pictures') that hang in the gallery's interior, alongside numerous poster designs promoting aspects of the Island's culture, and a large sculpture featuring containers of blown glass eels and other, more exotic creatures, whose gleaming bodies feel somehow realer than real. The sense of temporal continuity evoked in the poem appears to be a new departure for the artist. Hasn't he long maintained that the Island is a place that operates outside of time as we commonly understand it? That events, here, may be spatially remote, but do not exist in a chronology? Now, it seems that something like history is being made. Or maybe not. Perhaps the old woman in blue — entering stage right, exiting stage left — is an eternal harbinger, perpetually ushering in an apocalypse until her hour comes round at last.

A careless mislaying of a gift. A stiffening of animal muscles. A scruffy band of armed rebels mustering in the desert, while an ornate palace shimmers above the distant horizon line. Viewed in isolation, even the most dramatic of these scenes might feel part of the ordinary run of things (what society does not have its pockets of ineffectual malcontents, endlessly plotting to overthrow the system?), but seen together, they suggest a new and restive climate settling over the whole Island. As the poem has it: *'Quite suddenly, from the nothing of the day / Though the beginnings were long and marked / The wind comes about and the air is cold.'*



Charles Avery | *Untitled (Couple with Beast, Phenomenon of Sense)*, 2023

Avery has been charting the contours of his imagined Island since 2004, through drawings, paintings, sculptures, texts, and ephemera. A vividly realised fiction, teeming with sights both familiar and uncanny, it also serves as a petri dish in which the artist tests ideas from the fields of epistemology, aesthetics, mathematics, economics, architecture, and beyond. While the project had what the artist describes as an 'axiomatic, rigidly logical' inception, in recent years his approach has become markedly more intuitive. Having evolved the Island over almost two decades — constantly expanding its parameters and deepening its textures — he has arrived at a point where he allows his invention to plot its own course, seemingly with its own consciousness, and its own agenda. Lately, Avery's imaginary realm appears to be responding ever more directly to the world that we inhabit. This, surely, is why the energy that pulses through the works in *The Nothing of the Day* feels so febrile. Call it a distress signal. Call it a warning of what is to come.

- Tom Morton, London (UK), 2023

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Charles Avery | *Untitled (Woman Reading, The Egg Eating Egret)*, 2023 | detail

#### About the artist

Charles Avery (b. 1973, Oban, UK) lives and works in London and on the Island of Mull (UK). Selected and recent solo exhibitions include: *The Hunter returns / goes away from*, GRIMM, Amsterdam, (NL) in 2022; *Zoo, Hat, Bridge, Tree: Architectural Propositions of Onomatopoeia*, Vistamarestudio, Milan (IT); *a wall, a bridge, an arch, a hat, a side-show, a square circle, a group of friends, and two one-armed snakes*, GRIMM, New York, NY (US) in 2021; *The Tail of the One-Armed Snake*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL) in 2020; *The Gates of Onomatopoeia*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh (UK) in 2019.

Selected group exhibitions include: *GLASSTRESS: Venetian Glass Today*, Millesgården Museum, Lidingö (SE); *Cubitt 30th Birthday Fundraising Exhibition*, Victoria Miro, London (UK); *Planet B. Climate Change and the New Sublime*, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, Palazzo Bollani, Venice, (IT); *We, on the Rising Wave*, Busan Biennale 2022, Busan (SK); *The Hunter's return, Paradys, Arcadia*, curated by Hans den Hartog Jager, Triennial of Friesland, Oranjewoud (NL); *Le Voci della Sera*, Vistamarestudio, Milan (IT); *Art is the Antidote*, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL) in 2022; *The City & The City & The City*, curated by Tom Morton, Frestonian Gallery, London (UK); *Other.Worldly*, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden (NL) in 2020.

His work is part of numerous collections including: AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL); Arts Council England Collection, London (UK); The Roberts Institute of Art (RIA), London (UK); Deutsche Bank Collection, Frankfurt am Main (DE); THE EKARD COLLECTION; FRAC Île de France, Paris (FR); Kunstmuseum, The Hague (NL); Kadist Art Foundation, Paris (FR); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (NL); Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL); National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh (UK) and Tate, London (UK), among others.

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