

CHARLES AVERY

The Tail of the One-Armed Snake

Feb 29 – Apr 25, 2020 Frans Halsstraat 26

Public opening: Saturday February 29th, 4–6pm

GRIMM is proud to announce *The Tail of the One-Armed Snake*, a new solo exhibition by Charles Avery at GRIMM in Amsterdam.

Since 2005, Charles Avery's work has focused on a fictional island: an all-encompassing investigation of the fabric and mentality of another place. Through drawings, texts and objects the artist describes the inhabitants, architecture, philosophies, customs and idiosyncrasies of this imaginary territory.

With accents of the Scottish Hebrides and East London, the Island is located at the centre of an archipelago of innumerable constituents. The gateway to the Island is the port of Onomatopoeia, once the stepping off point of the pioneers who first arrived, turned colonial outpost, turned boom town, bustling metropolis, depression ravaged slum, and regenerated city of culture and ultimately tourist destination. It has many stories, played out within the limits of a monumental city wall that separates the dark and violent wilderness beyond.

The title of the show, *The Tail of the One-Armed Snake*, takes its name from a bill pasted on the wall, under the porticos, where a market takes place by day. The poster is surmounted upon layers of other notices, stuck up, torn down, peeled off: signs to and remnants of the Islanders' cultural activity.

Several large and medium scale drawings provide a textural insight into life in, on, around and beyond the city wall: from the bustling society of the market to a lonely oarsman bringing wood by boat to fire the twin lighthouses forming the sea-facing gate of Onomatopoeia. Cultivators tend to their crops outside a Utopian fort, a satellite of the city-proper. The attractive red-headed student with the weak chin muses in a cafe. Saltimbanques practice beneath the arches, whilst beasts devour scraps left over from the market.



Charles Avery | Untitled (Design for a Poster: Assorted Fruits) | 2020

These scenes of Island life are offset by isometric projections and plans of the City wall and the fort, giving us a god's eye view of the constructions and the rigorous mathematics that underpins many of their systems.

The centrepiece of the show is a large glass installation of multiple parts: a section of a fish market, with all manner of re-purposed container used to display various species. Immediately familiar, under closer inspection the creatures can be seen to embody various geometries: the hexagon, the tetrahedron, the pentagon. Predominantly on offer on the stalls are the 'ninth', the sacred mainstay of the Islanders' diet and economy: dog-faced eels of all different colours and girths. Described by Avery as 'muscly lines with faces' they represent the simplest form, primitive beings of pure, directional will.

The Tail of the One-Armed Snake is a multitude of stories, ideas, and percepts interwoven to create the rich fabric of the Island.

not for publication

For more information, interview and royalty free image requests, please contact the gallery manager Jorien de Vries: press@grimmgallery.com +31 (0)20 6752465

Frans Halsstraat 26
1072BR Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Keizersgracht 241
1016EA Amsterdam
GRIMM Fine Art BV

202 Bowery
New York 10012
United States

Tel +31 (0) 20 6752465
info@grimmgallery.com
www.grimmgallery.com

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Charles Avery | *Untitled (The gates of Onomatopoeia with landform in background)* | 2020

About the artist

Charles Avery (b. 1973 in Oban, UK) lives and works in London and on the Island of Mull (UK). Recent solo exhibitions include *The Gates of Onomatopoeia*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh (UK); *These Waters*, GRIMM, New York (US) and *Study #15*, David Roberts Art Foundation, London (UK).

Avery's work can be found in the collections of Tate, London (UK); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (NL); David Roberts Art Foundation, London (UK) and Kunstmuseum, The Hague (NL), amongst others.

Avery's work is now on view at the Fries Museum in Leeuwarden (NL), as part of the exhibition *Other Worldly*. Recent exhibitions include the 16th Istanbul Biennale (TR) titled *The Seventh Continent*, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud; the Royal Academy of Arts, London (UK); *NOW* at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (UK); *Auto fictions – Contemporary drawing Prix de dessin Guerlain*, Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein (DE); *Rhapsody in Blue*, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL) and *GLASSTRESS*, Palazzo Franchetti, 57th Biennale di Venezia, Venice (IT).

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