

The Auguries

Diane Chappalley and Anna Reading

August 26th until September 25th

11 Market Place, Henley on Thames, RG9 2AA



Left: Diane Chappalley, I cannot carry this body with me, it is too heavy, 2021, oil on flax, 170 x 220 cm

Right: Anna Reading, Feeding Frenzy (part 3), 2020, Concrete, shells, sand, bitumen, wire, chip forks, gloves, board, metal, 128 x 70 x 45 cm

Informality is delighted to announce 'The Auguries' an upcoming duo exhibition between British artist Anna Reading and Swiss artist Diane Chappalley. 'The Auguries' will exhibit recent work created over the last year, showing in harmony with one another, Diane Chappalley presents ethereal, imagined, symbolic contemporary paintings with Anna Reading's physical relics of flocking birds uncovering an archaeological past.

For thousands of years, birds have been associated with dreams and fortune-telling. They are often seen as omens, the harbingers of prosperity or danger. Augury is the ancient practice of interpreting prophecies from the flight patterns and behaviours of birds. The process of interpretation is known as "taking the auspices", a term taken from a Latin word meaning "someone who looks at birds."

Birds are central to Diane Chappalley and Anna Reading's duo exhibition at Informality. Flocking, diving, gliding, or soaring; the motif flits between the two artists' media, taking on a chimerical set of associations and portentous meanings as the exhibition unfolds. Waterbirds emerge as key protagonists, perhaps because they embody the human dream of escaping our earthbound condition; they are at home in the air and the water as well as on land, metaphorically inhabiting the liminal space between life and death, dreaming and waking, past and future.

The forms of Anna Reading's sculptures evoke the frenzied motion of birds feeding in a flock, while their surfaces recall the aftermath: empty oyster shells and discarded chip forks littering a concrete and bitumen surface that resembles a silted-up riverbank or seashore. The birds are interspersed with planet-like orbs, hinting again at fortune-telling and a human impulse to look for meaning in the more-than-human world.

There is something tidal about Reading's works; as though in its receding, the sea has left behind the relics of an unidentified natureculture, encrusted with a protective rime by the combined forces of waves, rocks, and marine life. They hover between an ancient civilisation and an undefined future world.

With platforms raised on spindly legs and amorphous stabilising bases, the sculptures are both landscapes and objects, simultaneously representing horizon lines and holding an objectual relationship with the vertical and horizontal dimensions of their surroundings. They revel in the awkwardness of sculpture as a medium, insistently interrupting the viewer's eyeline and bodily experience of the space.

By contrast, Diane Chappalley's large paintings present a picture plane that is closed off from the viewer. Each canvas is a self-contained world, precluding the viewer's wish to inhabit it through Chappalley's subversion of perspective and horizon. Scenes emerge from mist as if scried through a curved glass and the differentiation between earth, water, and sky becomes unclear. It feels as though the viewer is hanging impossibly above the landscape, or perhaps gazing down into the ambiguous depths of a rockpool; a bird's eye view.

In these paintings, bodies pulse and blur into their expansive surroundings; shadowy Ophelias drifting downstream surrounded by the blooms of a discarded posy, as the flowers leach their potency into the surrounding elements. In *I saw me seeing myself* (2021), a glowing figure floats in a red womblike tide of flowers, curled in sleep as if in preparation for birth or laid out in the gentleness of death. Chappalley's paintings evoke a dreamlike sense of the disassociation that manifests itself after trauma. Narratives are hinted at but never resolved, rife with mysterious symbolism.

The large expanses of Chappalley's glowing canvases make a bold counterpoint to the discomforting armatures of Reading's sculptures, creating a complex interplay of forms and materials. The pairing is auspicious in an ancient sense, replete with the enigmatic messages of birds and the uncertainties of the future.

Text by Anna Souter, July 2021

About the Artists

Diane Chappalley is a Swiss born, London based artists working primarily with paintings. Her large, imagined scenery populated with flowers, shadows, birds and trees exist in a world of silence. In a reflection on intimacy and our relationship with the environment, Chappalley's symbolic painting articulates and confronts the fragility of ourselves and of the world we inhabit.

Diane graduated from her Master's Degree at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2017 where she was awarded the UCL Dean's list prize, following on from her BA at City and Guilds of London Art School where she received The Chadwyck-Healey Prize for Painting (2015). She was artist-in-residence at the Academy of Visual Art at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and Unit 1 Gallery Workshop in London.

She has exhibited in the UK, Switzerland and Hong Kong and her work has been selected for exhibitions, including forming part of The Marmite Painting Prize (2016) and FBA Futures (Mall Gallery, London 2018). In 2018, she was also awarded the Alice Bailly Award in Switzerland. Her work is held in public and private collections, including HBSC Art Collection, UK and CHUV Contemporary Art Collection in Lausanne.

Anna Reading is a London based artist working in sculpture, performance, drawing and text. Her work celebrates growth and material accumulation. Using modified grotto techniques, she combines aggregates, such as oyster shells surplus from pearl farming, wooden chip-forks and lumps of asphalt extracted from road surfaces. The sculptures appear as relics from an unknown future, existing in between the organic and the synthetic. Taking inspiration from the harsh but abundant ecologies of coastal landscapes, the works appear populated by marine accretions. Rooted in experiences of human vulnerability and exposure, her work foregrounds forms of shelter, synthesis, and regeneration within the organic world.

After graduating from MFA Sculpture, Slade School of Fine Art in 2017, she was selected as a Bloomberg New Contemporaries Artist in 2018, which toured Liverpool Biennial and South London Gallery. During 2017 she was an Artist in Residence at Hong Kong Baptist University. She held the Mark Tanner Sculpture Award 2018-2019. Her recent solo exhibition *The Pothole*, toured the UK to Standpoint Gallery, London (2019), Cross Lane Projects, Kendal (2019) and Bury Art Museum and Sculpture Centre (2020). She is currently showing as part of Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer. Her work *Flock* was presented on the Broadway Plinth in Letchworth Garden City in 2019. Recent group shows include *Five Hides*, curated by ThorpStavri and *Snails For Eyes*, at Kingsgate Project Space, London (2019). Two person shows include *Shell Shelter* and *Raven Ravine*, at The Bomb Factory Art Foundation, London (2019) and *POND*, Kaitak Gallery, Hong Kong (2017).

About Informality

Informality is a contemporary art gallery which opened in 2019 in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. The gallery holds a programme showcasing International contemporary artists' through solo and group presentations that explores topics of the environment and co-existence.

Informality enhances its exhibition programme with accompanying talks and lectures. These are tailored to aid emerging collectors in researching artists and understanding the art market. Outside of the gallery's own walls, Informality has committed to site-specific collaborations. In late 2019 Informality collaborated with Jamie North and Pi-Artworks to bring the artists first solo exhibition in the United Kingdom, *Inflection* (11–17 November 2019, Pi Artworks), to Central London's Fitzrovia district. The bustling metropolis provided a poignant location for a show exploring the current climate crisis and the fragility of human cities in the face of nature.

In 2020, Informality collaborated with the Sidney Nolan Trust to exhibit works of gallery artist, Anthony White in *Anthony White at The Rodd* (May 21 - June 25, 2020). White's work was displayed digitally throughout The Rodd, a 17th-century property and outbuildings in Presteigne, Wales where renowned Australian artist, Sidney Nolan resided for 10 years. The project supported Anthony White's award of the Creative Arts Fellowship which was postponed due to Covid 19 and international travel restrictions. In July 2021, Informality hosted the first ever exhibition of Sidney Nolan's photography, *Sir Sidney Nolan - Polaroids* (June 17 - July 31, 2021) in partnership with the Sidney Nolan Trust.

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