

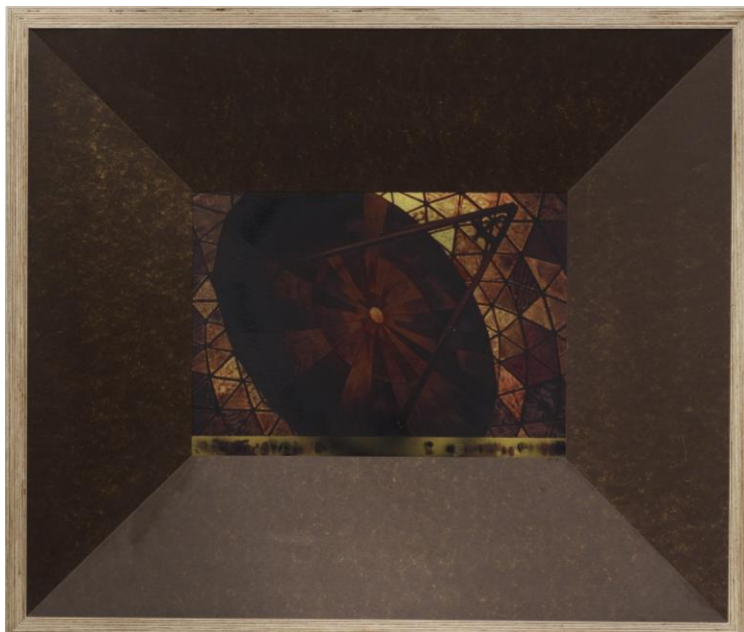
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**STEVEN CLAYDON**

***Analogues, Methods, Monsters, Machines***

**17.09 — 22.11.2015**

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**CENTRE D'ART  
CONTEMPORAIN  
GENEVE**

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## STEVEN CLAYDON

### *Analogues, Methods, Monsters, Machines*

17.09 — 22.11.2015

The Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in a Swiss institution by British artist Steven Claydon, from 17 September to 22 November 2015.

Encompassing a range of media including sculpture, installation, video, painting and performance, Steven Claydon's work addresses the various ways in which objects mutate in nature and function across time. It maps the curious, culturally-determined territory in which objects exist, oscillating between raw matter and socially-operative signifiers. Integrating divergent aesthetics and techniques – from high-tech manufacture to traditional artisanship – Claydon deconstructs the ingrained categories and taxonomies via which information is habitually transmitted and cultural capital is co-opted. He thereby allows a rudimentary language to emerge – non-didactic and autonomous – which functions in the open-ended style of haptic poetry or ritual stagecraft. His works combine to engender a charged environment in which things enter into limitless new relationships, metamorphosing prolifically in status and signification. The 'gravity' afforded to ideas and objects is replaced by a kind of polyvocal weightlessness.

For his exhibition in Geneva, Claydon has created a new body of works exploring the prevalent cultural dichotomy between history and technology, by means of a radically associative methodology. A principle of hidden or 'forced' equivalences underlies the display, mirroring the inherent connectivity of the human brain, but also evoking the brain's capacity to make counterintuitive, irrational or fantastical leaps: "by creating semi-artificial bridges between the formal and the functional, material utility and flagrant subjectivity, social-agency and thingly interiority, I mean to ignite little fires that bloom and catalyse fruitful collisions and new material. I want to create a lateral web of connectivity that builds intuitively, relatively, physically and psychically." In *chimera suspended* (2015), Claydon has transformed an effigy of the Roman philosopher Seneca into a polyglot figure of the imagination whose legs consist of steel rods and gold-plated reptilian feet. Emblems of antiquity, mass manufacture, utilitarianism and the grotesque collide and converge into a kind of allegory of 'knowledge' itself, in all its error, optimism and folly. As Claydon observes: "these migrations and accretions of fragments and objects are no less real than the transportation of a boulder hundreds of miles along a glacier, or a lost FedEx package arriving in a remote location."

Sewn into the fabric of the exhibition are specific references to the history and culture of Switzerland and Geneva. In several works, Claydon has harnessed the contrarian pseudo-scientific theories of Swiss-born author Erich von Daniken, who notoriously claimed that extra-terrestrials shaped human culture in its early stages. This projection or 'shoehorning' of Science Fiction into the sphere of ancient history reflects the artist's wider interest in the ways that contemporary culture garners spurious legitimacy from the past. Science Fiction is invoked in the literal sense of the 'fictions spun by science'; and a number of works wryly highlight the fact that technology sometimes

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## Press release

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inexplicably fails. Accumulating examples of human folly and projection, Claydon seeks to dismantle populist fallacies and academic orthodoxies, interleaving and conflating the concepts of ethnography, cultural history, electron microscopy, particle physics (specifically the experiments facilitated by the large hadron collider at CERN) and the properties of noble metals such as gold.

A concurrent theme seeded throughout the exhibition is the relative and shifting value of objects, as dramatized through the substance of gold. Claydon's latest works trace the metal's scientific and anthropological origins, namely its emergence at an early stage of the universe's expansion, and also the cultural status that has arisen by virtue of its physical rarity and chemical stability. Known by the Incas as the 'sweat of the sun' and by the Aztecs as the 'shit of the gods', gold is explored in terms of its pre-fiscal, pre-Columbian qualities. Through this leitmotiv, Claydon makes leaps – dually historical and epistemological – between cultures and knowledge systems. His works for instance derive influence from the use of gold in scanning electron microscopy, whereby minute specimens are freeze-dried and electroplated with micron-thin layers of gold, allowing electrons to identify the surface of an object more readily (a process which has similarities to the use of stimulating electrodes in neuroscience). Claydon has wrested gold from its commercial agency and employed it for utility's sake alone, mirroring the metal's use in electrical, satellite and space technologies.

Primarily consisting of new work, the exhibition also includes a number of pre-existing pieces that anticipate the ideas at the heart of this new project.

An artist's book will be published by Mousse Publishing on the occasion of this exhibition.

Steven Claydon (b. 1969) lives and works in London. He studied at Chelsea School of Art & Design and Central Saint Martins, London. He has exhibited internationally, with major exhibitions including *The Fictional Pixel and The Ancient Set*, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen (2015); *Culpable Earth*, Firstsite, Colchester, UK (2012); *Mon Plaisir... Votre Travail...*, La Salle de Bains, Lyon, France (2011); *Golden Times*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2010); and *The Ancient Set and The Fictional Pixel*, Serpentine Pavilion, London (2008). In 2015 he curated (with Martin Clark) *The Noing Uv It*, at Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway; and in 2007 he curated the exhibition *Strange Events Permit Themselves The Luxury of Occurring* at Camden Arts Centre. In addition to his practice as an artist he has also been involved in experimental electronic music for over 20 years, most notably as part of the bands Add N to X, Jack to Jack (with Mark Leckey) and Long Meg.

Curator: Andrea Bellini, Director of the Centre.

Vernissage: 17.09.2015, 6PM

Exhibition from 18 September to 22 November 2015, free guided tours upon request on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 3PM and 5PM.

This exhibition has been made possible thanks to the generous support of the City of Geneva and the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation.

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· · · · · PAR · LA  
VILLE · DE · GENÈVE



STANLEY THOMAS  
JOHNSON FOUNDATION

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## Our Rendez-vous

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### SEPTEMBER 2015

#### Thursday 17

18.00-21.00 VERNISSAGE  
Steven Claydon

#### Thursday 24

18.00-21.00 VERNISSAGE  
Miroslav Marsalek  
Project space

#### Wednesday 30

15.00-16.00 ANIMATOU  
Animation films for all

### OCTOBER 2015

#### Tuesday 6

19.00 SCREENING  
Lucile Chaufour  
Cinema Dynamo

#### Wednesday 7 – Friday 10<sup>th</sup>

11.00-18.00 SCREENING  
Animatou  
Cinema Dynamo

#### Thursday 8

12.30 GUIDED TOUR  
Steven Claydon by  
Andrea Bellini, Director

#### Thursday 29

19.00 SCREENING  
Sextoy  
Cinema Dynamo

### OTHER RENDEZ-VOUS

#### Boussoles

Free guided tours available for visitors on  
Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays 15.00-17.00.

#### Free Sundays

Every first Sunday of the month, free entry

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