

# Toute-puissante

DELPHINE DEGUISLAGE

Opening September 19th at 15h,  
Exhibition from September 19th to October 31th 2015

Thursday 22th October at 19:00 conversation with Delphine Deguislage and Julian Elias Bronner.



The work of Delphine Deguislage whispers with a trauma that is at once universally understood and entirely her own. The Belgian artist employs a vocabulary of highly personal mementos, psychosexual motifs, and materials that reference childhood memories, loss, ancestry, and psychic injury. "Toute-puissante," (Almighty) her third exhibition at Galerie melanie Rio revisits the longings and self-imaginings of the infant; the title refers to the magical thinking of a child by which he or she falsely attributes themselves as a cause of events outside their control ("If I didn't fight with my brother, Mommy and Daddy wouldn't get divorced"; "If I'm a good girl, Mommy will stop being sad"). Rooted in helplessness and desire, these naive and early conceptions of responsibility—both self-defined and imposed—engender filial guilt as one of most potent and fragile of human motivations.

The works on view confront us with an overtly grievous history, alluding possibly to Deguislage's own biography, possibly to our own collective traumas. As a child is both hypersensitive and inarticulate when it comes to psychological stress, these pieces commune by dint of an intuition that is naive, vulnerable, and potent with symbolic implication. The size of a pre-adolescent, *L'enfant* (The Child), 2015, is a phallic token that stands in for the figure of a child, just as a child can be used to fill in for the emotional void and shortfalls of marriage. *Poison*, 2015, intimates potential toxicity of parent-child relationships in the guise of breasts as transmitters of nourishment, depression, and mutual dependency from mother to newborn.

In her complex treatment of the figures of mother and father as both nurturing and caustic, Deguislage calls to mind the work of Louise Bourgeois: Both artists audaciously expose their inherited scars in a practice that elevates the artwork beyond the limits of mere biography. *Je t'ai toujours aimé* (I always loved you), 2015—a turbulent portrait of the artist's father in wood—is aggedged with the markings of years of rage and resentment regarding his unexpressed grief for the early death of his parents. Supported by this tortured figure is a plaster mold of Deguislage's two feet, suggesting tacit remorse, loss and, abandon as the basis for her own psychological understructure.

Also on view is a new video work by the artist. Exhibited on a domestic display used for viewing family portraits, the work shows Deguislage against a blue CGI screen as she slowly layers her face with the same color composite. Here, the artist consciously becomes one with her background, sublimating her history with void and possibility of the present.

Julian Elias Bronner