

# Polly Morgan

## *How to Behave at Home*

14 October – 2 November 2020  
The Bomb Factory Art Foundation

Private View:

Wednesday 14 October 2020, 6-9pm



Polly Morgan, *Understand Your Audience*, 2020, Courtesy the artist.

The Bomb Factory announces *How to Behave at Home*, a new solo exhibition by British sculptor and taxidermist Polly Morgan. Social media and the COVID pandemic provide the context for new abstract sculptures that use the highly decorative hides of snakes and the trompe l'oeil designs in nail artistry to comment on the disparity between surface and reality.

In an age where our digital selves are experienced by more people than our physical selves, Morgan uses veneers as a metaphor to examine our need to contain, control and conceal. The exhibition takes as its title an admonition from a book on Victorian etiquette, and in her juxtapositions of animal forms constrained within man-made structures, the artist highlights the unavoidable creep of nature in our lives and the impossibility of absolute restraint.

Corset-like concrete and cast polystyrene structures struggle to contain taxidermy snakes that contort and spill from openings, alluding to the distorting effect that social media has on our physical selves. As Morgan writes: '*Confined to our homes this spring, communicating via binary code, engaging with friends, lovers and family in two-dimensional hyper-reality, our avatars have taken over, increasingly shaped by the rapidly evolving social strictures that dictate our lives*'.

### PRESS RELEASE

**Want to know the right thing to say about this show? I do, and I'm writing the press release. You're going to have to post about it on Instagram, and talk about it at the party, if there is one. Is her work about the thin veneer, or is it about the substance that may not exist under it? You really better be able to say something relevant.**

**Are you going with the flow, or standing against the tide? Did you march or isolate? Are you going to use a handle or the name you were born with? Who are you now? How many personalities do you have? How contorted can you make yourself, trying to please everyone, except yourself? I know the answer to that one: very. Until your seams squeak and you explode all over the gallery with a desire simultaneously to fit in and stand out, to talk sense and to talk artspeak, to comprehend and to remain in blissed-out ignorance.**

**There's a snake painted with nail foils and lacquer coming out of that crevice. It wants to be protected, attack, hide, reveal itself, scare and delight. Was lockdown too late coming or never even warranted? Was the threat greater outside than in? Does Instagram even matter? It does. It doesn't. But what if it does? Have you worked out your post yet? Polly Morgan's *How to Behave at Home*.**



Ravaging forces bear down on us all. No-one can handle this strain. But we're not going to crack. Or have we already? Look more closely at that snake. Does it fit comfortably? Or has it been forced in there?

We protect ourselves with political correctitude and phony profiles, but the veneer is thin. We hide our feelings with virtuous postings, and paint our nails to coat ragged cuticles, like cladding plywood with marble and oak, and we end up with identities like split fingernails and cheap furniture.

What can you do about it? Isolate and shield others or protest and show them you care? Which makes you look better? Wear a mask to reveal who you are. Or who you want to be. Say anything to be acceptable. Anything. Post anything. Post nothing. Post a picture of nothing. Sentimentalise death and feel nothing at all.

Surrender your instinct and cede your power to a public narrative which is no more than a confused consensus of noise.

We thought it was about natural beauty versus synthetic perfection. But we can't even tell the difference any more.

Is your home a sanctuary or a snake pit? How about this show?

You are banged up at home, stuck to your dirty screen communicating in binary code, yearning for connection with friends, lovers and family in a two-dimensional hyper-reality. Your avatars have taken over, contorting to meet the ever-evolving social strictures that they must live by. Be careful what they say or they might wind up homeless.

A snake is twisting through that aperture. Your nail varnish is chipped. Polly Morgan: *How to Behave at Home*. Share this. Now.

There's no conflict here. And there's nothing to look at.

Polly Morgan: *How to Behave at Home*.

For further information on the exhibition, please contact Laura Callendar or Sophie Campos:

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Notes to Editors

### About the Artist

Polly Morgan (b.1980) is a British artist living and working in London. She is self-taught with no formal education in art and rose to attention after learning taxidermy in 2004 when she began to dismantle taxidermy traditions, creating unsettling still lives where the animal was observed in death rather than life. Recent works, making use of her model-making and painting skills, are illusory sculptures that combine taxidermy with cast objects and painted trompe l'oeil veneers and lie somewhere between figuration and abstraction.

Her work has been shown internationally and belongs in many notable collections including the Zabludowicz Collection, Thomas Olbricht, David Roberts Art Foundation and The New Art Gallery Walsall. She was chosen to represent Britain in *Women to Watch 2015* at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington and her work *Departures* was featured in the Thames and Hudson book *100 Works of Art that will Define our Age*.



## About The Bomb Factory

The Bomb Factory Art Foundation was founded on the premise that art, artists and creative culture offer significant value in our society. Our mission is to support artists, cultural organisations and educational institutions to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in the viewing and creation of art. The Bomb Factory enables contemporary visual arts practice to thrive through the provision of affordable studio and exhibition space as well as a supportive network of artists where peer collaboration and critique is encouraged.

### **Polly Morgan: How to Behave at Home.**

**Private View:** Wednesday 14 October 2020

**Dates:** 14 October – 2 November 2020

**Location:** The Bomb Factory, Unit 2, 9-15 Elthorne Rd, London N19 4AJ

**Opening hours:** Thursday to Sunday 11am - 5pm

For alternative dates, book by appointment via [info@bombfactory.org.uk](mailto:info@bombfactory.org.uk)

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