

MARNIE WEBER • SWEET RAVAGING TIME

WORDS BY ALLAN GARDNER

In “Sweet Ravaging Time” (September 14–October 22, 2022), HEIDI (Berlin) presents a decade-spanning body of work by American artist Marnie Weber. The exhibition centers around a film that began production during the 2020 lockdowns at the artist’s mountain cabin in Lakewood, CA, titled *The Cabin of Mothra Crone* (2021); the film is centered around an aging artist slowly losing her mind while working in isolation.

The earliest works in the show date to the 1980s and range from collage, painting, and sculpture to a collection of the artist’s video works on the theme of the crone, of which *The Cabin of Mothra Crone* will be the last.

Weber’s work has a very specific way of playing with aesthetics of the grotesque, managing to avoid the trappings of fairytales whilst remaining in cahoots with them. What makes her use of these two worlds so effective is her ability to put enough real-world humanity into the work that we are able to connect to it whilst managing to retain the sense of disconnect that allows fairytale logic to play with horror. From childhood, we develop an awareness of the semiotics of storytelling—what thematic or structural clues there are to allow us to submit to the unreality of a subject—oftentimes with the purpose of revealing a moral, lesson, or allegory to a far more fixed kind of reality.

The repetition of Weber’s crone in “Sweet Ravaging Time” is the allegorical Gingerbread House. It creates the sense of impossibility that makes us feel secure as a viewer—there is no real crone, no witch in the woods. The allegory is not deeply hidden, like the moral never is in a Grimm Brothers fairy tale; “Sweet Ravaging Time” deals with the world’s bad habit of disregarding the work of women artists, especially as they reach later stages of their career. The body of work on show here manages to share the emotional turmoil of aging with the viewer without becoming didactic or admonishing us for our complicity, instead toeing the line between concept and narrative, a mastery built over decades of practice.



Image courtesy of the artist and HEIDI, Berlin. Photo credit: Diana Pfammatter.



Los Angeles-based artist Marnie Weber’s work spans photography, film, installation, sculpture, and performance. Her show “Sweet Ravaging Time” opened at HEIDI in Berlin in October and centers around the video *The Cabin of Mothra Crone*, about an artist losing her mind while in isolation.

“Grotesque fairytales exploring the emotional turmoil of aging, while celebrating rebirth.”