

# Marco Giordano's Nocturnal Visions at The Modern Institute in Glasgow

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At The Modern Institute's Aird's Lane Bricks Space in Glasgow, Marco Giordano explores the sleeping subconscious in *To Disturb Somnolent Birds* (1 February–4 April 2020), a nebulous environment of unusual, glowing objects that sit atop a polished black table in a darkened room.



Exhibition view: Marco Giordano, *To Disturb Somnolent Birds*, The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane Bricks Space, Glasgow (1 February–4 April 2020). Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow. Photo: Patrick Jameson.

Beneath this table, speakers emanate swells of ambient electronic music. A hypnotic cadence of 'Sing and sink / Sing and sink / The world shrinks / Sink and sing' is chanted, accompanying the steadily changing tones like a foreboding lullaby. In his practice, Giordano works between a variety of media, including sculpture, painting, performance, and site-specific installation. As one quarter of the Glasgow collective Thank You Very Much (TYVM), who have exhibited in the Aird's Lane Bricks Space before, *To Disturb Somnolent Birds* is reflective of the collective's earlier immersive installations, particularly as it cultivates an illusory atmosphere via a mixture of sound and light.



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Central to this show is a grouping of illuminated sculptures rotocast in multicoloured resin: uncanny and imaginative forms that vaguely resemble things found in life, such as penguins huddled in an embrace, a fishtail cascading into water, or a cob of corn tufted with something like fluffy clouds. Positioned together on a reflective black surface—a Perspex replica of Giordano's studio workbench—the light of their glowing forms is reflected in their smooth surfaces, creating an illusion of gazing into an abyss of the psyche. These are at once concrete yet abstract bodies, doubly suggesting billows of cosmic dust as if to reinforce the cerebral quality of the subconscious and the ambiguity between dreams and nightmares.



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*To Disturb Somnolent Birds*—the somewhat abstruse title of the show—is a line borrowed from a 1928 lecture on cradle songs by Spanish playwright, theatre director, and poet, Federico García Lorca, whose interest in the genre was determined by the often-sombre quality of Western European lullabies. While Lorca observed that sleep songs tend to express the fatigue of work, rather than the shelter of parental love, it is the eccentric darkness of dreams that seems to interest Giordano, who cites a core interest in hypnagogia—the phenomenon of lucidity experienced during the transitional phase between waking and slumber—and its ability to psychically disturb.



Marco Giordano, *Dopey Birds* (2020). Resin, pigment, LED, Perspex. Sculpture: 17 x 12 x 9 cm; Plinth: 30 x 30 x 30 cm. Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow. Photo: Patrick Jameson.

An accompanying essay by Ari Nielsson further develops the exhibition's conceptual material, drawing links between the labour-weary caregiver of centuries past—those songwriters of Lorca's discourse—the present capitalisation of 'downtime' furnished with podcasts and meditation apps, and the commonly unsettling experience of 'falling into sleep,' a phrase that suggests a lurch of the stomach into the mouth as one begins to doze. Concerning somnolent birds, one can only imagine those usually lively morning creatures tormented by nocturnal visions. —[O]