

Sam Williams  
*Deep in The Eye and The Belly*  
*(Part One)*

23 February – 8 April 2023

PV: Weds 22 Feb, 6-8pm

Image credit:

Sam Williams, *Deep in The Eye and The Belly* (production image), 2022. Courtesy of the artist.



San Mei Gallery presents a solo exhibition by London-based artist Sam Williams. This show features the first chapter of *Deep in The Eye and The Belly (Part One)*, a new moving image work entwining stories of cetacean bodies with imagined oceanic futures in which these bodies become shelters for humans who have returned to the oceans in the wake of climate collapse.

Interlacing actual historical events and speculative narratives, Part One details stories of the deconstruction and reconstruction of whale bodies housed in museums in London and Gothenburg and hints at a crossing into a possible future where whale bodies become new worlds.

An unseen storyteller recounts the real-life tale of a young blue whale who beached on rocks not far from the city of Gothenburg in 1865. After being violently killed, the whale's carcass was purchased and preserved for a dramatic museological display that saw it mounted with its jaw agape, allowing access inside the decorated body. Sometime in the 1930s a couple was found having sex inside the creature, and from then on, the museum decided to only open it up on special occasions, including mayoral speeches and elaborate meals for the wealthy.

The narrator recalls a conversation that takes place in an unmarked facility full of cetacean bodies in various stages of preservation and assembly: an inflated stomach is taken from a cupboard; a time capsule of ear wax and deconstructed whalebone arches. From these museum artefacts, the film threads together other cetacean-body stories: a spa in which people find cures in the bodies of dead whales, the whale stranded in the Thames, and the travelling carcasses of a trio of whales the whereabouts of which are now unknown.

*Deep in The Eye and The Belly (Part One)* leaves us on a watery crossing at an unknown time, a lone singer laments for the disappearance of the world's last whale.

For further information and high resolution images please contact Rufus Rock: rufus@sanmeigallery.co.uk, +44 (0) 20 7095 9771.

## Notes to editors

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## Artist Biography

Sam Williams is an artist with a multidisciplinary practice, working with moving image, collage, choreography and text. Sam is based in London where he is a resident at Somerset House Studios. His ongoing research focuses on multispecies entanglements, ecological systems, bodies-as-worlds and folk mythologies and how they can inspire ideas for present and future ways of non-human-centric living. He has exhibited and screened work at institutions including Arnolfini, Baltic39, Siobhan Davies Dance, Somerset House, Tate Britain, Studio Voltaire and South Kiosk (UK), She Will (Norway); Kino Arsenal, Akademie der Kunst, Tanzhalle Wisenberg and B3 Biennale (Germany). Artist website: <https://sam-w.com>

## About San Mei Gallery

San Mei Gallery is an independent non-profit space for contemporary art in South London, committed to research-led, educational and collaborative exchanges. Operating with an artist-led approach, we support artists and curators to experiment with new ideas.



Above: Sam Williams, *Deep in The Eye and The Belly* (production image), 2022. Courtesy of the artist.