

Christiana Soulou
The Book of Imaginary Beings after Jorge Luis Borges

26 January – 20 February 2016
 62 Kingly St London W1
 Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6pm

The line is a feeling that opens up space. It expands space and distends space. The line goes through space and splits it.

Christiana Soulou

Christiana Soulou's 2016 exhibition at Sadie Coles HQ comprises a group of drawings after Jorge Luis Borges and Margarita Guerrero's *Book of Imaginary Beings* (1957) – a fantastic anthology of "strange creatures conceived down through history by the human imagination." The project has evolved and expanded over more than two years, originating in a presentation at the 2013 Venice Biennale, where Soulou's drawings were presented as part of 'The Encyclopedic Palace'. The current series, numbering almost fifty drawings, is not limited to what might immediately be suggested by the term 'imaginary beings', but embraces the original desire of Borges to include "the point, the line, the surface, n -dimensional hyperplanes and hypervolumes, of all generic terms, and perhaps of each one of us and of the godhead. In brief, the sum of all things – the universe." The series is documented in a new book – an extension of the overall project – which includes Soulou's writings on Borges.



Soulou's work occupies the significant space between inspiration and redefinition. Her drawings imply the possibility of an image, enacting a dialogue between literary medium and visual domain. In response to Borges's aniconic encyclopaedia of monsters, almost inconceivable in visual terms because it belongs so exclusively to the world of language, she replies by conjuring creatures which are believable in shape, physiognomy and character, subverting the visual impossibility of the text. Executed in coloured pencil, Soulou's drawings are at once evanescent and insistent, elusive and precise. They appear to be timeless – emerging out of subtlety of tone and exacting line – and in their precision, they invoke the works of Renaissance draughtsmen such as Pisanello and Dürer. As writer and critic Donatien Grau has observed, "If we are to use the phrase 'drawing inspiration' in relation to her work, it will perhaps be less in the sense of 'drawing inspiration from' than in, literally, 'drawing inspiration': making a drawing that expresses, transcribes, and eventually is inspiration itself, once made visible."

Several of Soulou's drawings depict animals that exist in the real world: actual creatures are cast as imaginary ones. In this way, she both wills us to believe in impossible creatures and re-envisions familiar ones as uncanny spectres of the imagination. Soulou writes: "To say that this is a crocodile is as absurd as to say that this is not a crocodile (because it ends as a lion)." Each imaginary being is therefore mobile and mercurial – it is given existence by the action of line and colour.

Christiana Soulou was born in Athens, issuing from a Greek family in Alexandria, where she spent much of her childhood. She studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Recent solo shows include *Les enfants terribles*, Jean Cocteau, Galerie de France, Paris (2015), and those at Capitain Petzel, Berlin (2012), Sadie Coles HQ, London (2011), Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York (2010), and Bernier/Eliades, Athens (2010). Group exhibitions include *Salon du Dessin 2014*, Palais Brongniart - Place de la Bourse, Paris (2014); *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace)*, 55th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2013); *The System of Objects*, Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens (2013), and *Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, New Museum, New York (2010).

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or press@sadiecoles.com