

# Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC



**Sterling RUBY (b. 1972)**

Vampire 97

Fabric and fiber fill

79 1/2 x 34 1/4 x 5 1/2 in (201.9 x 87 x 14 cm)

2013

Signed, titled and dated 2013 on a label affixed to the reverse

## PROVENANCE

Hauser & Wirth, New York

## EXHIBITED

*Disruptive selection*, Fall 2019, Popcorn Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Los Angeles  
*Of Mice and Men*, October 5 - December 5, 2020, Popcorn Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Los Angeles

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## NOTES

Writing in 2011 about a Sterling Ruby solo exhibition in Beijing, critic and curator David Spalding begins:

*Caught in that dark crawlspace between the living and the dead, hounded by a destructive, unending hunger and burdened with the need to indoctrinate: this is today's American empire as it appears in "Vampire," Sterling Ruby's exhibition of new and recent work [in] Beijing.*

<https://www.art-agenda.com/features/233103/sterling-ruby-s-vampire>

Close to a decade later, in the midst of a massively divisive presidential election, and against the backdrop of 200,000 deaths on account of the American government's gross mismanagement of the COVID-19 crisis, if there was any skepticism about the way in which Spalding read Sterling Ruby's rendering of the exhibition, America certainly now seems to have morphed into this bleak reality.

Spalding continues:

*Ruby has a flair for the theatrical. With its star-spangled smile and dripping fangs, the soft sculpture Double Vampire 6 evokes the Rolling Stones's lascivious tongue-and-lips logo, high on meth and out for blood. It's plagued by a grimacing hunger without conscience, sitting in a gridlocked SUV, gobbling Oldenburg's burgers after a visit to art history's drive-thru. Though undead, it must continue to feast: gluttony has become its eternal curse. The only word it knows is "more."*

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This time, it is the current president who has comfortably slid into a realistic impersonation of this sardonic caricature. In many ways, this makes Sterling Ruby uncannily prescient. Nevertheless, to restrict his work to the purely political would not do justice to the social elements that permeates his oeuvre.

In the words of the artist about 'Soft Works':

*'Soft Work' is only a didactic term. It's not hard, it's not solid, it's malleable. This term refers to what the installation is. It's a fiber sculpture but it's also in reference to several centuries of art using textiles, to art therapy, and to feminism, especially. In America, there is a domesticity that is not associated with masculinity – or if it is, it's usually associated with a difference, a contradiction.*

Sterling Ruby, quoted in: Juliette Soulez, 'A Hard Look at "Soft Work," Sterling Ruby's Cushy and Satirical Solo Exhibition in France', Blouin Artinfo, 3 June 2012, online resource

Now going back in time, precisely to Sterling Ruby's breakthrough exhibition, his first solo museum presentation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA) in 2008:

*Collages nearby provided the visitor with a glimpse into the multifarious image bank the artist regularly mined—more thoroughly chronicled in the exhibition catalogue—which included prisons, crafts, Minimalist geometric structures, natural forms, knives, domestic interiors, transsexuality, banal landscape paintings, graffiti, and the casual images of sex and violence that pervade contemporary life. The dense installation evoked the exhibition's title, SUPERMAX 2008, referring to the prisons that supposedly hold the most violent inmates, in both its overwhelming presence and the sense of confinement and control it imposed on visitors. The exhibition also provided a thorough and palpable summary of the issues—artistic, philosophical, sociological, political, and personal—that preoccupied Ruby's work to that point.*

<https://www.nashersculpturecenter.org/read-watch/articles/article/id/120>



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