

Grosse Fatigue explores a dream as old as humankind itself: to know all, to see all, to understand all. The title, which translates to enormous fatigue or exhaustion, suggests that the pursuit of such all-encompassing knowledge is an exasperating and impossible task. This idea was prompted by French artist Camille Henrot's (b. 1978) Artist Research Fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, the largest conglomerate of museums and research centers in the world—with holdings totaling some 137 million artworks, objects, and specimens. In an effort to depict this dizzying wealth of resources, Henrot suggests that the attempt to order such vast amounts of information can produce its own kind of chaos.

The work illustrates the expanse of the institution's collections through a ceaseless collapsing and popping-up of video screens. The effect is one of frenetic anxiety induced by the proliferation of knowledge at such an unruly scale. The videos are accompanied by narratives and stories of origin from the sciences, religions, and oral traditions, presented in the form of original music by Joakim with the voice of performance artist Akwetey Orraca-Tetteh. At times, the variations in the rhythm and cadence of the video's sound and imagery suggest a cultural accumulation that can feel burdensome, but the work is also punctuated at the beginning and end with human breath, alluding to Henrot's interest in moments of respite for more intuitive learning. *Grosse Fatigue* is an incisive meditation on knowledge production and the contemporary circulation of images.

Camille Henrot
(French, b. 1978)

Grosse Fatigue, 2013
Single-channel HD video
(color, sound)
13 minutes, 46 seconds
Collection Museum
of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mary
and Earle Ludwig
by exchange, 2013.23

MCA SCREEN

This exhibition is organized
by Joey Orr, Andrew W.
Mellon Postdoctoral
Curatorial Fellow.

Camille Henrot
(French, b. 1978)

Letter to Michael Darling, 2014

Ink on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,
gift of the artist, 2014.46

Camille Henrot's drawing of a half-human, half-animal playfully evokes both natural history and the erotic. The work reflects the artist's ongoing impulse to organize objects and images across categories of classification, suggesting that in our desire to order the world, disorder is imminent.

The artwork accompanied a letter to the MCA's James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator, Michael Darling.