

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PAULINA OLOWSKA: DESTROYED WOMAN
CURATED BY CLÉMENT DIRIÉ**



**11 OCTOBER – 16 NOVEMBER 2019
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER, 6 – 8PM
SIMON LEE GALLERY, LONDON**

Paulina Olowaska's exhibition at Simon Lee Gallery constitutes the latest chapter in the artist's continuous and fertile research into image-making, exploring the ways in which she interprets painting as a vehicle for her idiosyncratic visions and as a facilitator for the exchange of feelings and sensations with the viewer. Spanning the gallery's three floors, *Destroyed Woman* puts forward a visual and emotional landscape through which to contemplate the self and the other, provoking our consideration of themes such as womanhood, ageing, the power of tradition and the spectator's gaze. With this exhibition Olowaska invites us to thoroughly re-contemplate representations of women, particularly within an art historical context, and to redefine the purpose of their portraiture; how, she asks, can we reformulate tradition to encompass what has been destroyed, what must be recovered, and what needs to be invented?

In Olowaska's latest series of paintings female figures are captured posing, working or acting in diverse backgrounds. For the most part they are represented alone, engrossed in their own thoughts or activities. They watch us, watching them absorbed in both past and future.

Olowaska's women are born from the pages of magazines and popular legend – they are the sum of varying references and iconographies: their choice of clothing, attitudes and locations come from fashion editorials and popular images, while some of their traits are directly inherited from mythology and the tradition of classical painting. They constitute a tribe of modern-day deities, forming a collective of contemporary muses: engaged, empowered, iconic, each conveying a deeply personal sense of self-possession.

Though painting takes centre stage, the manifold mediums in which Olowaska chooses to express herself are simultaneously gathered in this extensive exhibition: ceramics, textile works, sound, object-making, creative writing, and collaborative processes, in this case with artist Bonnie Camplin, art critic and curator Clément Dirié and fashion designer Michal Wisniewski. In partnership with Wisniewski, Olowaska has created a new series of sculptures based around the designer's dresses, which have been first buried in the ground, then excavated, their petrified forms encased by a metal frame and crowned by a ceramic house, which takes the place of a mannequin's head. With Camplin, Olowaska has conceived a sound environment in the basement of the gallery: a monologue on the subject of growing older accompanied by a monumental hand mirror, inviting the viewer to meditate.

Olowaska's sources, inspirations and personal ideologies are as varied and compelling as her unique manner of blending together her intuitive understanding of the emotional complexities of our reality. Chief amongst them are her considerations of the implications of life in a rural and remote environment—for years she has been living and working in Rabka, Eastern Poland—in a world centred around the accelerated existence of the megalopolis. Of pivotal importance to the conception of the exhibition is a collection of three poignant short

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stories published by Simone de Beauvoir in 1967 and entitled *The Woman Destroyed*. Out of these tales of women confronted with the ambiguous effects of age, Ołowska developed her central thesis: 'Once you have grown into womanhood, how do you defend or preserve your freedom to be the woman you want to be?' In asking this essential question, Ołowska delivers a contemporised interpretation of de Beauvoir's characters, offering new perspectives on female representation.

By way of warning, de Beauvoir prefaces the second story in her collection with a sharp epigraph by Gustave Flaubert: 'the monologue is her form of revenge'. For Ołowska, painting acts – if not as revenge – then as a means to give voice and form to her characters, clearly coming from her unique visual universe but at the same time so close to us.

— Clément Dirié

On the afternoon of Saturday, October 12, 2019, a conversation between Paulina Ołowska, Clément Dirié, Natalia Sielewicz, curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw where she recently organized the show *Paint, Also Known as Blood: Women, Affect, and Desire in Contemporary Painting*, and French critic and cultural writer Elisabeth Lebovici will propose a polyphonic interpretation of the exhibition stemming from their own experiences and research.

Please see details below:

Paulina Ołowska, Elisabeth Lebovici and Natalia Sielewicz in conversation with Clément Dirié

12pm, Simon Lee Gallery, London

Please note this event is free to the public, but booking is required: events@simonleegallery.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Paulina Ołowska

Paulina Ołowska was born in 1976 in Gdansk, Poland and lives and works in Rabka, Poland. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL and her MFA from The Academy of Fine Arts, Gdansk, Poland. She was awarded The Aachen Art Prize (2014). Ołowska's work has been shown extensively internationally and has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions and projects, including Fondazione Furla, Museo del Novecento, Milan, Italy (2018), The Kitchen, New York, NY (2017), Tate Modern, London, UK (2015), Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany (2015), The Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2014), The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2013), Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2013), CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, CA (2010), Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2009), Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2009) and Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany (2007). Ołowska's work has been included within major group exhibitions organised by the world's leading institutions in Europe, America and Australia.

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme. In 2014, Simon Lee Gallery opened an office and private viewing space in New York. In 2017, this space was re-launched with a year-round programme of exhibitions and events, showcasing the work of emerging and established artists in dynamic group and solo exhibitions.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery

www.simonleegallery.com

Reference Image. Courtesy the artist.

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