

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DONNA HUDDLESTON: IN PERSON



21 JANUARY – 26 FEBRUARY 2022
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 20 JANUARY 2022, 6 – 8 PM
SIMON LEE GALLERY, LONDON

Simon Lee Gallery is pleased to announce *Donna Huddleston: In Person*. For her inaugural exhibition with the gallery, the artist presents new works on paper that explore themes of doubles, stand ins and performance.

Huddleston's dramatic compositions collapse the boundaries between life and theatre, inspired by a range of influences from the worlds of film, literature, design and the visual arts. An early career in set and costume design precipitated a preoccupation with the ephemerality of scenic design and performance, evident in her works' careful staging. The enigmatic figures that occupy Huddleston's richly decorative world seduce with mystifying gestures and sideways glances that evade clear-cut narrative. This cinematic quality is echoed in the time-based process of drawing itself, each work's suspenseful narrative unfolding as though a scene from a screenplay. Underpinning Huddleston's research for these latest works are the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Chantal Akerman.

At the centre of this new body of work is Huddleston herself, whose profile resonates across a number of pictures, from the poised, highly-coiffed figure in *The Stand In* to the graphic contours of pharaonic-seeming statuary that spool across a suite of silverpoint drawings. Nevertheless these works forgo the traditional hallmarks of self-portraiture and in this way, the artist acts out a range of theatrical roles, from master of ceremonies to understudy, waiting impatiently in the wings to reveal herself as the leading lady. Playing more literally with the process of doubling up, in *Time Passed*, Huddleston layers one drawing on top of another, obscuring the rippled glass of a to-scale window.

Several other works extend the romantic pictorial motifs that have filtered in and out of Huddleston's work since her early career, from the piano keyboard of *New Moon* to the tulip-laden composition of *Eclipse*. The evocation of memory through texture has long since been the formalist ambition of her drawings, epitomised by a carnation motif executed in Caran d'ache colour pencil that ripples throughout the exhibition, most prominently in *Personal Development*, where it blossoms near-sculpturally from the page. A revivalist atmosphere permeates Huddleston's new work, from the Art Deco-like appropriation of Egyptian culture, to her subjects' 1970s and 80s costume and styling, ultimately creating a dream-like sense of unreality akin to the make-believe world of the stage.

12 BERKELEY STREET
LONDON W1J 8DT
T +44 (0) 20 7491 0100
F +44 (0) 20 7491 0200
INFO@SIMONLEEGALLERY.COM

SIMON LEE GALLERY LTD
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND 4316341
GB 788 061 692

To coincide with the exhibition, there will be an artist talk at the gallery:

Donna Huddleston in Conversation with Katy Hessel, Curator, Art Historian, @thegreatwomenartists

Wednesday 9 February

6:30pm, Simon Lee Gallery, London

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

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Donna Huddleston

Donna Huddleston was born in 1970 in Belfast, Northern Ireland and lives and works in London, UK. She was raised in Australia and studied at the National Art School in Sydney in 1994, before graduating in Stage Design from the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 1997. In 2020 she was a recipient of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award and in 2018 was awarded grants from Arts Council England and the Henry Moore Foundation. She has twice previously been awarded the Elephant Trust Grant (2013 and 2018) and was shortlisted for the inaugural Max Mara Art Prize for Women in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include Drawing Room, London, UK (2013 and 2019); Charles Asprey Tyers St., London, UK (2019) and Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, UK (2012). Recent group exhibitions include Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK (2019); Reading Art Gallery, Reading International, Reading, UK (2017); White Cube, London, UK (2017); Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2016); Isabella Bortolozzi Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2015); Arts Council Collection, Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, UK and touring (2015) and Jerwood Space, London, UK and touring (2010 - 2011). Her works are held in private and public collections including British Arts Council, London; Tia Collection, Santa Fe, NM and Saastamoinen Foundation, Helsinki, Finland.

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.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery

www.simonleegallery.com

Image: Donna Huddleston, *Personal Development*, 2021, Caran d'ache and graphite on paper, Framed: 70.2 x 55 x 3.2 cm (27 5/8 x 21 5/8 x 1 1/4 in.), Unframed: 66 x 51 cm (26 x 20 1/8 in.) Courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

For further press information, images and requests please contact Zoe Gorell: zoe@simonleegallery.com / +44 (0) 207 491 0100.

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