

**Andrew Sim**

**a sunflower, six trees, three birds and two horses (one with wings)**

**The Modern Institute, Osborne Street**

**31 March 2023 – 20 May 2023**

**Preview: Thursday 30 March 2023, 5 – 8pm**

*a sunflower, six trees, three birds and two horses (one with wings)* is Andrew Sim's second solo exhibition at The Modern Institute. In this presentation, Sim elaborates on and expands the set of motifs and characters from their show at the Aird's Lane Bricks Space last year, once again mixing the archetypal with the autobiographical, the Queer and folkloric.

The title of the show is a brief list of its contents and this uncapitalised summary has a plainness and modesty. However, the various animals and plants depicted shine joyously against their charcoal black backgrounds – almost appearing to emit light themselves. The subject of each pastel work originates from Sim's personal experience following a long period of gestation and thought. The various motifs have produced a lasting impact on the artist. As such, they are often repeated, twinned and reconfigured to create a series of connections and synchronicities either within or across works.

Three works depicting monkey puzzle trees relate to a monkey puzzle which was planted near Sim's childhood home when they were young – on a patch of grass the artist has still never approached. *portrait of two monkey puzzle trees (with spring growth)* seems fundamentally a picture of friendship, of two things living and growing together. Meanwhile *portrait of a monkey puzzle tree (Glasgow)* depicts a singular tree in two parts and has a commanding elegance and symmetry.

Each non-human subject is imbued by Sim with compelling anthropomorphic qualities and the use of the word 'portrait' in many titles underscores this, reflecting the way significant moments and images in our lives become part of us. As with the monkey puzzle tree pieces, two works depicting birds taking flight allude to growth and newfound freedom. These images initially appear simple and innocent, but we could equally consider that these startled birds have moved in defence or fear. *black horse with pink wings* also appears ready to take off. This black coated Pegasus has a placid attitude and the freedom of flight.

Two works depicting Christmas trees have a gorgeous loneliness, mixing the natural and synthetic. They stand in contrast to the growth of the monkey puzzle trees and the freedom of the birds and horses. Both are unmoving and richly adorned. This subtly references the construction of Queer identity and also has an autobiographical root – in one of Sim's old flats they used to decorate the Christmas tree with necklaces, earrings and a friend's drag jewellery.

The exhibition is accompanied by a newly commissioned text by Shola von Reinhold. The piece responds to the work in the show and Sim's practice in general, elaborating on their interest in Queerness, utopia and symbols through a series of fictions and textual fragments, including a play and diary.

Selected exhibitions include: 'To be a giant and keep quiet about it', Margot Samel, New York (2022); 'Four Horses and a Sunflower (Actual Size)', The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane (2022); 'Heal the sick, raise the dead', Part of Glasgow International (2021); 'We Two Bigfoots Together Clinging,' Prouddick HQ, London (2020); 'New Sodom will be a shining city on a hill', Summerhall, Edinburgh (2019); Karma Gallery, New York City (2019); 'Heaven To See', (Group exhibition), Part of Glasgow International (2018); and 'The Second Coming', The Pipe Factory, Glasgow (2016).