



Holly Lowen, *Shared Myth*, 2026. Oil on linen. 48 x 58 inches. Oil on linen. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

HOLLY LOWEN *COLOSSEUM*

June 10 - July 31, 2026

Perrotin is pleased to present *Colosseum*, the gallery's first exhibition with Holly Lowen and her debut in New York. Through rhythmically charged compositions, she interrogates the thin line between instinct and control. Known for high-energy scenes of athletes and animals, in her new body of work, Lowen expands these motifs into complex portraits that examine patterns of behavior both on and beyond the court.

Originally trained in interior architecture before earning an MFA in painting, Lowen's work is grounded in a strong understanding of color, form and composition. Working across oil, pen, charcoal, and pastel, she builds surfaces on top of an absorbent vinyl paint that creates a rich tonal depth, recalling Peter Paul Rubens' use of opulent colors. In *Colosseum*, Lowen's paintings of tennis players operate as studies in behavioral performance, where bodies cycle through moments of intensity, collapse, and recovery. While their movements echo the rhythm of battle, her figures are dressed in classic white uniforms, projecting a façade of extreme composure. This tension underscores the psychological stakes of her scenes, where control is both performed and at risk of unraveling.

Lowen uses figuration as a pathway to abstraction, entangling subjects in environments that exist just beyond the threshold of reality. Throughout the exhibition, bodies are fragmented, elongated or obscured, disrupting our understanding of the figures before us. In *State of Nature*, Lowen employs sequential fragmentation, reminiscent of photographs by Eadweard Muybridge, to convey bursts of motion across time within a single frame. Similarly, in *Leviathan*, male figures' limbs are intertwined in a composition charged with latent sexuality. The artwork titles reference English Philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who defines Leviathan as an authority who enforces our social contract, and *State of Nature* as a condition where humanity would collapse in the absence of authority. Elsewhere in the exhibition, figures appear in fallen states: such as in *Collapse*, where bodies recline and fold into one another. Lowen's scenes carry a disquieting, dreamlike ambiguity, where impossible anatomies and unstable compositions blur the line between familiar and uncanny.



Holly Lowen, *Social Contract*, 2026. Oil on linen. 60 x 60 inches. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Holly Lowen, *Chicken on Green*, 2026. Oil on linen. 40 x 30 inches. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Lowen's new body of work marks a departure from purely high-energy action toward moments of suspension, focusing on figures who are not playing but orbit the game, encompassing a broader social commentary. In *Dunbar's Number*, a ball boy watches a match from afar, embodying a system structured by aspiration and subordination. Nearby, in *Shared Myth*, a group of teenage girls focus intently on a string with a stark red hue that unsettles the scene, reminiscent of the mythological Ariadne's thread. Deprived of facial expressions, we are left to wonder whether they are friends or rivals, a strategy that recalls the work of René Magritte, for whom facelessness transformed ordinary scenes into philosophical puzzles. In Lowen's work, hidden identities become an ominous critique on societal repression.

An animal counterpart appears in *Fragile Society*, where chickens are suspended mid-fall, locked in the violent choreography of a cockfight, an ancient blood sport shaped by human intervention. This recalls Lowen's early series of intertwined flamingos, painted as symbols of both grace and strength. Her depictions of birds stem from an interest in the juxtaposition between their refined

appearance and fierce, instinctual behavior. Though now largely domesticated, chickens retain a deeply ingrained hierarchical structure, particularly among roosters where dominance is enforced. This underlying aggression calls attention to the limits of imposed order—a parallel that resonates with her scenes of tennis, a sport that masks aggression within a controlled social framework. Lowen is ultimately interested in the human desire to impose order on chaos, and the consequences of repressing primal instincts. While society channels these impulses into acceptable outlets like sports, Lowen posits that such instincts do not disappear, but accumulate, potentially emerging in unpredictable ways.