

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

RACHEL GOODYEAR

Solitary Acts

7-30 April 2021



Slip, 2021, pencil and watercolour on paper, unframed, 31 x 31 cm, 12 1/4 x 12 1/4 in

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present *Solitary Acts*, a solo exhibition of drawings, collage and animation by British artist Rachel Goodyear. Exploring the agency of the individual, the artist navigates between divergent modes of existence – conscious and subconscious, interior and exterior, fear and desire. Highlighted are new works on paper alongside a new single-screen version of *Limina*, an animation originally presented at York Art Gallery, UK (2020).¹

The exhibition's title, *Solitary Acts*, takes on particular significance in the context of the past year, highlighting the intense interior drama expressed within the artist's work. Goodyear's exploration of the human experience engages with present anxieties as restrictions on daily life puncture the comfort of the recognisable, rendering it strange and intensifying the import of mundane actions. At a moment of heightened isolation and introspection, Goodyear's return to the solitary female figure resounds with greater intimacy and familiarity. The artist continues to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty of meaning, with recurring motifs taking on new signification, adaptive to the present. Yet *Solitary Acts* draws attention not only to confinement, but also to independence – the deliberate actions of the individual.

Within her new drawings each figure floats against a stark landscape, often described only with a faint shadow. Underlining the lack of context and narrative, each work captures a singular moment suspended in time – an experience extracted or a memory half-recalled. The notion of fragmentation forms a dialogue with Goodyear's 2015 series of collages – figurative compositions cut from vintage magazines – whilst slippage within the self is further explored in drawings of multiple figures, uncannily alike. Goodyear addresses interior conflict through the natural world, drawing on the hierarchies found both in nature and human classification of our environment. Prowling predators speak to the power dynamics enacted within the food chain, whilst fungal growths represent parasitic relationships and hidden networks of activity.

¹ Co-commissioned by York Mediale and York Museums Trust. Supported using funding by Arts Council England. Originally presented as part of Human Nature which opened at York Art Gallery, as Part of York Mediale, in October 2020

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

However uncomfortable or inexplicable their situation, Goodyear's women hold their own space unapologetically. Each engages in specific tasks or movements – whilst the logic of the activity is often unclear, concentration or the exertion of will is demonstrable. Compulsive forces are at play resulting in struggle, balance or release. Certain images draw on the punishments meted out to those in the Underworld of Greek Mythology, relishing a cartoonish sadism – swarms of insects envelop a face or buzz around a mouth smeared with jam. Goodyear's women disregard expected behaviour, embracing, and even seeking out new sensations. Forming a response to contemporary feminist surrealism, the artist treads a fine line between beauty and terror, playfulness and the macabre.

Rachel Goodyear (b. 1978, UK) has had solo exhibitions at The Drawing Center, New York; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield; The New Art Gallery Walsall; Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London and The Lowry, Salford, amongst others. She was selected for the 2016 Innsbruck International Biennial of the Arts, Austria, and the 2013 Curitiba Biennial, Brazil. Her work has also been presented at Tate Liverpool; Museum Folkwang, Essen; The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Drawing Room, London; Weserburg Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen; York Art Gallery, York, and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. The artist has recently given talks at Tate Modern and the Henry Moore Foundation. Goodyear's work is held in collections internationally, including Museum Folkwang, Essen; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; The Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool and The New Art Gallery Walsall, amongst others. The artist's work is featured in Phaidon's latest *Vitamin D3: Today's Best in Contemporary Drawing* (2021). Goodyear lives and works in Manchester.