

Crapula

Henry Hudson's latest exhibition *Crapula* launches at 20 Hoxton Square Projects

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Following a pattern of titling his shows with peculiar or obsolete words, artist [Henry Hudson](#)'s latest exhibition *Crapula*, a Latin word meaning sickness or indisposition caused by excessive eating or drinking, explores society's vices, many of which are as prevalent in 21st century London as they were in Hogarth's 18th century depictions of the city, something which inspires Hudson and forms the foundation to work featured in this, his latest exhibition. In keeping with previous shows *Knappin* and *Dewlap*, *Crapula* showcases a year's worth of paintings and sculpture using unconventional materials such as children's plasticine, human hair and chalkboards. One sculpture, a cast of Hudson's own head, is filled with human hair he collected himself from the London Underground over a six month period.

"The hair is stuffed into a cast of my head and has a light in it. It's kind of looking up so it's quite hopeful and I suppose it reminds me of the Oscar Wilde's quote, "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." I'm taking something that's aesthetically disgusting from the tube i.e. human hair, but in a beautiful way it has a unity to it which is that it has a little bit of everybody in London. The work is about aesthetics; it's about taking something that isn't necessarily beautiful and turning it into something beautiful."

Hudson also recreates the final three plates of Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*, 1735. The Hogarth original is based on the story of Tom Rakewell, the son of a rich merchant who squanders his fortune through whoring, drinking and gambling, ultimately ending up in an asylum. Hudson contemporises the plates by painting with plasticine and replacing the central character Tom with a self-portrait. He says, "The first of the plates is him blowing all his money in the gambling house, the next one is him in Bedlam being surrounded by the people of his past, illegitimate children, his first wife, second wife, and in the third one he is in the madhouse being looked at by his physician or whatever. What I've done is replace Tom with myself as a young artist as a comment on the dangers or the possibilities that can forsake a young artist still in London today."

For Hudson the themes Hogarth satirised nearly 300 years ago, "the anti social behaviour, the drinking culture, the gambling" are still just as prevalent in 21st century London. The work of the 18th century painter has even influenced the way Hudson thinks about very contemporary ills of society such as the banking culture. His bronze painting of a banker depicts a man in a suit grinning grotesquely. "I was trying to think if Hogarth was alive what would he be saying or having a go at", says Hudson. "The reason I did it in bronze was so I could elaborate on that idea of something being very expensive and looking like gold which of course ties in with the fact that the banker works in the city. He's got this big grin on his face, probably had too much cocaine."

Despite being cited as "an astonishing young painter" by The Telegraph's Richard Dorment, Hudson's satirical voice is not something that sits comfortably with everyone in the art world. "People have a problem in the art world with humour in art", he says "but I don't think they have to as long as it's bringing something to the table... I think humour helps because I think it allows people to open up and once they are open they allow themselves to consider other ideas." His chalkboard drawings of the toilets in public art institutions are a message to the art establishment too, "they are drawn on the blackboards and varnished so it can never be drawn on again so I've had the final say," he says.

Henry Hudson "Crapula" is at [20 Hoxton Square Projects](#) June 3rd - June 26th

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