

Henry Hudson

23 Apr — 29 May 2015 at S|2 Gallery in London, United Kingdom



Henry Hudson, Plate 8, Rehabilitation, varnished plasticine on board, 183 by 245 cm.; 70 by 96 1/2 in. Executed in 2014.

William Hogarth's 1733 masterpiece, *A Rake's Progress*, is one of art's great works of satire, charting the rise and fall of Tom Rakewell as he descends a path of vice and self-destruction. On 23 April, Sotheby's S2 in London will unveil a landmark 21st-century reimagining of this hugely influential tale: "The Rise and Fall of Young Sen - The Contemporary Artist's Progress". This monumental series, created over three years by the London-based artist Henry Hudson, displays the artist's virtuoso use of Plasticine as a medium. Hudson employs the modelling clay to craft extravagantly detailed, painterly compositions that blur the boundaries between painting, sculpture, drawing and engraving.

"We're delighted to present a project of such scale and ambition by one of the most innovative young artists working today. Through his painterly application of plasticine, Hudson has developed a truly unique artistic language and created a remarkable contemporary re-interpretation of Hogarth's famous work of satire." - Fru Tholstrup, Director, Sotheby's S2, London

Hogarth is renowned for satirising the absurdities and excesses of 18th-century London, his series of paintings and etchings for *A Rake's Progress* stand as a landmark achievement in history of British art. Through this seminal work - a riches to rags story - the artist encouraged the public to examine the state of the nation; it's morals and sins. Hogarth called this groundbreaking approach to painting "the modern moral subject". More than 250 years later, in the "The Rise and Fall of Young Sen - The Contemporary Artist's Progress", Henry Hudson gives us a "modern moral subject" for the 21st-century: the contemporary artist. The series follows the plight of Young Sen, tracing the protagonist's journey from his home in rural China, to his rise to prominence on the international art scene and his eventual demise embroiled in a world of drugs, vice and the darkest corners of global politics.

William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress III: 'The Orgy'*, 1733-34, Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum and Henry Hudson, Plate 6 *The After Party*, 2014

The intricately detailed panels seamlessly combine allusions to the greats of art history with references to pop-culture and politics. In Hudson's labyrinthine world one finds Bosch, Breugel and Rembrandt alongside Nigel Farage, Tommy Hilfiger, Hello Kitty and Instagram. Like Hogarth before him, Hudson satirises and celebrates the absurdities of modern life, bringing together the traditions of the great painters with the visual language of the digital age.

Laying It On Thick

As an aspiring artist, Hudson was inspired by School of London painters such as Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach. Dismayed by the significant cost of the many tubes of oil paint required to replicate the heavily impastoed, painterly technique of these artists, he turned to the children's section of the art store where he discovered Plasticine at only 20p a tube. Over the proceeding years, Hudson has refined a truly unique artistic practice - applying the clay-like substance with brush, pen and pallet knife - a process which the artist suggests is more akin to sculpting than painting. "I like the idea that you can take something that is a cheap, throw-away product and it can become something greater", Hudson says. It is a hugely labour intensive process, with each of the ten works taking the artist and a team of five assistants at his Bethnal Green studio roughly two months to complete.

The handcrafted nature of these works - an innovative and painstaking technique that Hudson employs in manipulating his choice of unusual media - is juxtaposed with the immediacy of the subject matter he often portrays: rampant consumerism, self-indulgence and a culture of instant gratification. These are hallucinatory vignettes of a world viewed through the prism of the digital age, populated with imagery unearthed by Hudson through Google searches, Instagram feeds, artist's monographs and magazines.

The exhibition at the S2 Gallery will be the first time this extraordinary body of the work has been exhibited to the public and will feature ten large-scale works in Plasticine, ten original drawings and 30 studies.

S|2 Gallery

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Opening hours

Monday - Friday
From 10am to 6pm