

Henry Hudson

Sun City Tanning - Sotheby's New York

14th September to 14th October 2016

"The jungle I see it full of obscenity; the nature here is vile. . . I see nothing erotic here, I would see fornication and asphyxiation and choking and fighting for survival."

Werner Herzog, *My Best Fiend*, 1982

For his inaugural New York exhibition, Henry Hudson will create an entirely new body of work. The artist has gained recognition for his figurative paintings made from Plasticine, works charged with social commentary, steeped in references of city life and excess. For this show Hudson will produce eight large scale nature paintings which, while figurative, offer an abstract investigation into the artist's philosophy of transgression and transcendence. Here, Hudson will be taking on the great and awe-inspiring subject of botany, observing the constant struggle for survival in the life of plants as well as hinting at Shamanic rituals of spiritual healing. These luxuriant jungle scenes allow the artist to really expand the medium of Plasticine in creating very sculptural landscapes, rich in details, colour and texture.

From his studio in East London, Hudson will assemble large imagined tropical environments drawn from a wide range of sources, including photographs taken at during visits to Kew Gardens, internet images and historical books of botanical illustration. He will draw similarities to the practice of French Post Impressionist Henri Rousseau and the American painter Martin Johnson Heade. Although these new works offer a departure from the human figure, Hudson here continues his playful use of storytelling within his practice, using the jungle as an allegory of the human condition. The subjects are fantasy - even psychedelic - landscapes, brought to life by varying light sources, temperamental weather patterns and the scramble for survival. References to Shamanic rituals further explore issues of lawlessness, morality, fulfilment and enlightenment.

With this body of work, Henry Hudson willingly blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction. In obscuring truth from fantasy, the work makes a clear statement of intent. The artist negotiates topics of anxiety, trauma and repair by approaching them from the point of view of social scientist, exorcist and healer. For the first time in his career, Hudson allows the artist to become the protagonist, with the jungle as the backdrop: inviting comparisons to Joseph Beuys who, likewise, turned injury into fable and used a variety of mediums to propose magical strategies of healing.

Shown alongside the paintings will be a collection of eight hand coiled ceramic pots, made in collaboration with the artist's brother Richard WM Hudson (b 1980). These tricolor painted vessels, organ-like in appearance, will be comparable to carnivorous plants. The vessels also refer to sacred vessels employed in Shamanism, ayahuasca ritual and ceremony.

Hudson's playful narratives, imagined or otherwise, will reveal a true exploration into the artist's medium and his craft. For the first time Hudson will experiment with mixing his own colour pigments. With nature as his subject, he will traverse techniques hitherto unexplored in his practice. This series acts to transport the viewer into other realms. While offering an often humorous metaphysical enquiry into human behaviour and endeavour, this is work which also expands the common thread running through the oeuvre of this exciting artist. Here are themes of human enquiry, transgression and the confrontation between the modern world and wilderness, as well as the individual and society.