

HENRY HUDSON *PATHWAY*

Henry Hudson has a go at polymathism with this ambitious new exhibition, **Pathway**, at Galerie Kandlhofer. This spluttering of works - from his notable, pulsating Plasticine Jungle Series, to new collaborations and investigations into ways of making, Hudson's varying approaches confront the ideas and ideals surrounding nature, with the gusto of a dreamer.

Hudson's plasticine jungles encapsulate our complicated relationship with nature; as we revere and seek to preserve yet are enamoured by man-made materials. Compositions originate from his reflections on nature in London, extrapolated by visits to the Caribbean - and so not direct responses, but 'mind states', as Hudson asserts. An existential anxiety runs through the image - plasticine in its dexterity is akin to a stress ball - it moulds, and submits to human force. We project this psychosis onto nature. Notably, in the series, the scenes are free of animals and birds; as if God finished prematurely. A push and pull between order and chaos reflects our human nature. They are impressive, all knowing and utopical. Could these colours really exist? Could all these flowers and lush green leaves? Hudson works with the improbable to create dystopian dreams that underpins all of our anxieties.

They are playful too. Plasticine and wax have a childlike whimsy and nostalgia with a touch of Arte Povera.

Alpine landscapes are dusted with snow in **A Waltz With Danaë** (2020), as Hudson's narrative figuration evolves and dissolves. The typical (for Hudson) textural application of plasticine is moved forward with the introduction of encaustic wax, spray paint and plaster - a chaotic normalcy of feeling and being. A potent feeling of psychedelia or a distorted memory of compromised nostalgias. Indeed, Hudson reflects specific mental states, referencing moments of clarity, and the opposite, throughout his life thus far. More than chronicling the state of being, Hudson challenges how we remember and believe to be true - the fissures in-between memory and truth, and the haziness and inherent ephemerality pertaining to how we view and interact with the world.

Strong and steady, the iambic pentameter of effervescent glory pulsates through many of the oeuvres explored. Heavily textured paintings such as, **The Walk I Took With My Father** (2020), are built up with plasticine and push back with wax to create relief. The surface becomes a journey, as the eyes climb upon hilltops and jump into the crevices and battle the candy floss terrain. It is a feast and a fight for the eyes. A layered pictorial language to encourage a sense of duality and multiplicity - it is laboured but free. The image sinks into its aesthetic components and does the dance between figuration and abstraction that Hudson has so skillfully well rehearsed. The narrative reveals itself through the materiality and offers the viewer to take hold of it, and swerve into your own reality. Although not always topographical, the romance of the landscape painting tradition allows for great breadth of interpretation and a depth of consideration. It is exposing; voyeuristic and open.

Ceramics fizzle and reverberate with gradient colour that reflect the Molecular Colour Field works. Developed in collaboration with his brother, Richard Hudson, the ceramics swell and pop with a similar atomic energy. Jules Olitski, a hungarian-american artist, left an impression on teenage Hudson. Organic and cellular shapes emerge in **Molecular Colour Field Painting 1** (2020) and take body in ceramic collaborations. Hudson scanned one of his Jungles, and then, using metallic automotive paint - chosen for their likeness to oil slicks and for their iridescent movement - layers images of bacterial, viral and molecular cells from the Internet.

Created during a time when the world experience small-scale epidemics such as Swine Flu, the work becomes prophetic in the chaotic era of COVID-19. Themes of anxiety once again come to the fore - as the beautiful but deadly reality of viruses, and their vibrant, and at times, beautiful structures, when examined under the microscope.

Let us walk as Hudson does. **Pathway** is an opportunity to see through his eyes throughout various moments of his life; and look back in clarity. We are both time travellers; the mind is our time machine, these paintings, our eyes.

Aindrea Emelife

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