

The Inhuman /difficult transition/

Alice Browne/ Günther Herbst/ Robert Holyhead/ Rannva Kunoy/
Scott McCracken/ Andrea Medjesi-Jones/ Selma Parlour/ Yelena
Popova/ Kes Richardson/ Josh Pye/ Shaan Syed/

Recording the contemporary is a tall task, a responsibility that comes with much trepidation including interpretation, history, diversity and increasingly so the networks of communication highly visible and accelerated. More than ever, our understanding of the real is fractured between the actual and the virtual, the truth and the lie. The transition into a new century was, so far, uneasy, and many Modernist preoccupations still loom large in our consciousness and knowledge, some relevant others contentious.

The question of representation is an example of both relevance and contempt. Its responsibility to account for diversity of our democratic voice made more urgent in a globalized yet fractured and divided world. The crisis of representation and the scrutiny of democratic method and transparency in both political and cultural spheres of the human generate equally reciprocal, also reactive responses to the meaning and the representation of the inhuman.

The proposed framework for **The Inhuman /difficult transition/** is a consideration, and a reflection on the context defined. In Jean- Francois Lyotard's words a question of "*what shall we call human in humans?*"¹ is apt and timely.

Is it "*its capacity to acquire a 'second' nature which, thanks to language, makes them fit to share in communal life, adult consciousness and reason?*"¹

Another proposal is to seek answers through painting, as a form of community able to sustain its shared language and to voice the inhuman in the context of our humanity.

In **The Inhuman /difficult transition/**, the exhibition centered around 11 contemporary painters, a dialogue emerges with an aim of discussing the institution of painting in the most immediate and urgent of circumstances. Set against the backdrop of our time and paintings' history, it questions the notion of inhuman in view of our humanity, also our inability to represent it through singular channels. The question of what the inhuman looks like is here considered through multiple means and processes: formal abstraction, spatial referencing, collage, material presence also restraint, fragmentary compositions and interrupted gestures, temporal thinking, painting performance and labour. Unlike chronology, and possibly in analogy to the inhuman, these methods are staggered and differently timed, worked on in stages, constructing meaning and the record of paintings' presence. The inhumanity here is embodied through complexity of paintings' power to manipulate and be manipulated, to influence and be influenced by and, above all, its contentious status to actively respond to the circumstances in a timely manner. For it simmers, and calls upon its completion through duration; there is nothing instantaneous about its meaning as,

¹ Lyotard, J.F, 1991, *The Inhuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press

chameleon like, it changes the very perception of the knowledge we once thought we possessed. This is where its humanity resides, not in its relevance but pursuit of its truth which forever evades us.

Andrea Medjesi-Jones, 2019

Thames-Side Studios
Harrington Way, Warspite Road
Royal Borough of Greenwich, London SE18 5NR
T +44 (0)20 8301 8844
info@thames-sidestudios.co.uk

www.thames-sidestudios.co.uk/exhibitions