

Jakob Rowlinson: Thirteen Fools

18 April - 06 July 2024



UNTITLED (2024)
JAKOB ROWLINSON

Huxley-Parlour are delighted to announce *Thirteen Fools*, a new exhibition of works by Jakob Rowlinson opening at the gallery's project space in April 2024. The exhibition, the artist's first solo presentation with the gallery, incorporates sculptural and wall-based works that ruminate on themes of esotericism, Queerness and the archive. Rowlinson has created a new suite of anthropomorphic masks that sit alongside heavily collaged assemblages that draw inspiration from Tarot, medieval iconography and decorative marginalia.

Responding intuitively to his materials, Rowlinson incorporates leather, metal, beads, studs, painted eyeballs and metallic charms into his work. The process is iterative, tacking or placing elements in a shifting understanding of composition before weaving and pasting together: a white rose emerges from a harlequin print background, buttons and charms embellish, leather surfaces are gilded with gold leaf. Incorporating an expansive range of media, Rowlinson allows the works to take on a hybridity. Blending the material and the symbolic, the works offer a renewed interrogation of semiology and the categorisation of meaning, presenting a Queering of vocabularies and iconographies.

Using both raw and repurposed leather, the artist draws on the material's historical associations with tanners - often marginalised figures due to the nature of their work - while also alluding to its Queer coding through the use of chains, studs and human/part-human masks. With tongues sticking out, nostrils flared, Rowlinson's anthropomorphic masks echo the forms of gargoyles and symbols of Gothic architecture in playful reference to the grotesque. Updated with contemporary signifiers and animated with a viscerality, the masks undermine established assumptions of Medieval ornamentation. Collapsing historical motifs with the contemporary quasi-erotic, Rowlinson brings the past and the contemporary to bear on each other.

The artist's wall-based works collage disparate media to create richly adorned pieces that speak to artifice and costume. The Fool, variously known as the jester or the harlequin, an archetype rooted

in Medievalism, is a point of departure for Rowlinson. Originally a derogatory figure often conflated with Queerness, the artist takes from its visual iconography and dress, such as its harlequin motley, or lolling tongue, to point to the performativity of these stereotypes. In seeking to disassemble these preconceived notions, Rowlinson's work proposes surrogate potentialities for consideration.

The artist turns towards the esoteric and alchemy as a route towards healing, but also as a means to create new histories and mobilise new understandings. Esotericism suggests the possibility of concealed meaning, and in so doing the potential of an alternative course to counter the disenchantment produced by existing conditions and traditions. In one wall-based work, Rowlinson replicates the form of a fan of cards, offering us the possibility of agency and the potential for the polysemic. The palette of the works similarly speaks to the evolution towards heterogeneity. The tones of the work, whites, gold, pinks and blacks, take from the alchemical colour chart, which delineate different stages in the journey towards purity and individuation. Drawing together diverse media and visual lexicons, Rowlinson excavates coexisting opportunities for meaning and understanding. His works act as an active archive, not as a repository, but as something that is fluid and malleable. Working against the categorising and determinative impulse of the archive's organising framework, the artist allows disparate symbols and codes to coalesce. In Rowlinson's iteration, the archive allows for playful connections to germinate between the arbitrary and the unconventional.

Rowlinson, born in 1990, studied Fine Art at Ruskin School of Art, before completing an MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art. He completed a residency at Fores Project, London in 2022 and has had solo exhibitions at the Dowse Museum, New Zealand, OOF Gallery, London, Quench Gallery, Margate, Tandsticksmuseet, Sweden, and Clearview, London. Rowlinson lives and works in London.

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HUXLEY-PARLOUR

3-5 Swallow Street, London W1B 4DE

Opening Hours Monday to Friday, 10:00am - 5:30pm

Saturdays, 1:30pm - 5:30pm

Entry is free

More information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com

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