

Holly McLean

*If you get the knees right the rest should follow*

05.12.20 — 31.01.21

*If you get the knees right the rest should follow* is a new installation by Glasgow-based artist Holly McLean. The exhibition features work in film and collage that build a portrait of Alice Vandeleur-Boorer. Holly's film uses the language of documentary film-making to focus on alternative models of woman- and motherhood. The exhibition space has been organised so that the collage and the film mirror each other, with a bench upholstered in faux hyena-fur sitting in the middle. The works reflect back and forth, one informing the other; they accent each other and reinforce shared themes.

This exhibition draws on Holly's research into fertility, reproduction and motherhood: aligning discoveries and discrepancies between science and nature that challenge norms of representation. *If you get the knees right the rest should follow* is the next in Holly's developing series of polyvocal film portraits of women - including *This Is My Sister* (2017) and *Saturnrania* (2019) - that draw on aspects of science-fiction, anthropological film-making and home-movie making.

The series confronts us with new narratives that expand our conceptions and challenges the historic lack of diverse representations of women in film and image-making. Holly intervenes in, or 'disorders', the language of documentary by foregrounding the plural

identities of the women she works with, and blends their lived realities with their speculative fictions.

The film is a portrait of Alice, a partial 'picture' that shows her in three distinct moments. But it can also be read as an alternative archetype, sitting in relation to the other films in this series and the wider stories Holly explores in her practice: including matriarchal social structures and diverse models of child-rearing. The depth of this short and subtle film comes, in part, from the how much Alice is willing to expose to Holly and share with her camera. The intimacy and frankness between Holly and Alice enables an honest and unguarded portrait.

The collage that faces the film screen in the exhibition has layers of meaning and references that sit in dialogue with the film, including photos of Alice breastfeeding and out-and-about with her children. The collage deepens and contextualises Holly's study of Alice, building a network of associations in juxtaposing religious imagery that portray outdated, binary constructions of women; with the matriarchal spotted hyenas, a species in which the female is dominant; and a Rottweiler dog. A mass of seaweed sits with these powerful animals, interrupted by visceral, gestural marks, to inflect the film's portrayal of Alice.

*If you get the knees right the rest should follow* is a statement about process, it is a learned and practiced process of getting into a wetsuit, shared with Holly as Alice changes. It is a phrase that speaks of a practical process in Alice's life, but also to the themes addressed in the exhibition; once the you get the hard bit right, everything else should fit into place. It is an incidental poetic phrase that speaks to the hope and belief integral to the human project.

Holly McLean (born 1989, London) lives and works in Glasgow. Recent exhibitions include; *Visions in the Nunnery P1* (Bow Arts, London) and Bloomberg New Contemporaries in 2019. *Saturnrania* (2019) was selected for and produced through the BBC/LUX Now & Next programme. Her work has screened at film festivals at centres in London, Kassel, Leeds, Glasgow, Albuquerque and Berlin.

Satellites Programme is Collective's development programme for emergent artists and producers based in Scotland. The 2020 participants are Alison Scott, Sulaiman Majali, Holly McLean and Becky Šik.

# THE HILLSIDE

1. Holly McLean, *If you get the knees right the rest should follow*, 2020.

Film: HD Video (10 minutes).

Bench: Faux hyena Fur

Collage: Acrylic sheet, glue, glitter, spray paint, photographs & found images.

Please ask the member of staff at the front desk if you require alternative seating.

Captions for the film are available.

During the run of the exhibition, there will be an online event. More details will be released in January 2021.

Visit Collective Matter in the City Observatory to browse books selected by Holly that accompany this exhibition.

