

SI

Hayley Silverman

Protect Me from What I Am

November 20, 2018 – January 13, 2019

Swiss Institute (SI) is pleased to present the first institutional solo exhibition in the United States by New York-based artist Hayley Silverman. *Protect Me from What I Am* explores objects, images and bodies that have been understood as vessels for divine information within interlacing histories of art, religion and value.

Silverman's sculptures often take the form of intricate dioramas and tableaux, some suggesting votive shrines common to historically Catholic regions. At SI, a group of newly commissioned works features industrially produced Catholic figurines purchased from factories in Italy and the United States. Seen *en masse*, the plastic icons suggest repetitive affirmations, troubled by the presence of faulty figurines that Silverman acquired alongside their finished counterparts. As a result of accidents in the production process, certain characters appear in states of headlessness, dissolution or recombination, suggesting a form of ecstatic decreation or even divine intervention. For a work titled *Assimilation* (2018), Silverman constructed a cube from the faulty icons, on which an arrangement of taxidermy birds are arranged. Seen among the crush of forms, reminiscent of the multiplicity of bodies seen in Renaissance depictions of Heaven and Hell, are misshapen or semi-formed likenesses of saints and angels, as well as a primordial plastic ooze.

A constructed shadow box, *The Shadow of a Shadow* (2018) contains a *mise en scène* depicting the implausible moment in 2014 when Pope Francis released peace doves from the Vatican and one was immediately attacked mid-air by a crow. Recreated by a taxidermist, the dove and crow are displayed hovering mid-status between object and symbol, placed in a hall of broken mirrors that suggests an infinite quality to the encounter. In *repatriation of the aura* (2018), a glass vessel with subtle suggestions of an angelic form envelops a pair of wooden praying hands, as though a dancing spirit is both protecting and claiming a prayer.

A series of photographic works, entitled *The Mirror of the Simple Souls Who Are Annihilated and Remain Only in Will and Desire of Love* (2018), is displayed on light boxes. Wearing theatrical, brightly colored costumes reminiscent of those used in school nativity plays, as well as prosthetic ears, wings and noses, a group of Silverman's friends are pictured posing at a farm in upstate New York. Using familiar compositional strategies from Catholic iconography as well as William Blake etchings, the figures are captured in scenes of prayer and mischief, in a form of Biblical cosplay that suggests the endless variations on those scenes as well as a potential for infinite, and even subversive, interpretation.

About Hayley Silverman

Hayley Silverman (b. 1986, New York) is an artist working in sculpture, performance, photography, and theater. She is broadly concerned with the technologies and artifacts of moral and political surveillance, the aural and spatial materiality of borders, and the embodiments and custodians of narrative and belief. Solo exhibitions and performances include *Twister* at MoMA P.S.1 (2016). Group exhibitions include *Greater New York*, MoMA P.S.1 New York (2015); *It Can Howl*, Atlanta Contemporary, Atlanta, Georgia (2016); and *I Surrender Dear*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria (2016). Her work has appeared in *Artforum*, the *New Yorker*, BBC Radio, *Art in America*, *Flash Art*, and *Art Papers*, among others and her book “*Is It Soup Yet?*” can be found at Printed Matter / St Marks.

Hayley Silverman would like to offer special thanks to Veda, Florence for supporting the project. Silverman also offers the following thanks: “This show was made by a village of sweet and intense support, thank you to Laura Mclean-Ferris for inviting me and for your trust and Alison Coplan for all your research and help, Cyrus Dunham for our affinities and writing and commitment to naming, Gianluca Gentili for your meaningful belief and support, Bobbi Salvor Menuez and Emily Shinada for your always advice and bursting friendship, Willa Nasatir, Quori Theodor for being so present and available, Precious Okoyomon for your goddess evil, Emily Schubert for your prosthetics and ease, Ren Cook for your costumes, Matia Emsellem, Doug Campos, Ser Serpas for being amazing biblical performers, Tomás Hernando Kofman for your continued commitment to puzzles, Zanny Allport for careful editing, Harris Chowdhary for your renderings, Maggie Hewitt for your 3D modeling genius, Divya Anantharaman and Richard G. Santomauro for taxidermy, James Moore and Yaron Pardo for your fabrication work, Dominique Fenichell for mirror tunneling, Jeannine Han for your beautiful construction work, Logan Jackson for your eye and images, Sprout Creek Farm for letting us into your goat pen and to Bodega for additional help. Thank you to the Swiss Institute team and thank you Larry and Laura for your assistance with all of those heavy materials. I couldn't have done any of it without you all.”

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, SI is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new contexts for celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. Open to the public free-of-charge, SI seeks to explore how a national perspective can foster international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design and architecture.

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Press Contacts:

Nadine Johnson, Nadine@NadineJohnson.com

Evan Lenox, Evan@NadineJohnson.com

212-228-5555