

Helen Beard's Largest Solo-Exhibition to Date *It's Her Factory*

07 September – 06 October 2019



Helen Beard in her studio, 2019

This September, Unit London presents, *It's Her Factory*, the largest solo exhibition to date by British, Brighton-based contemporary artist, Helen Beard (7 September – 6 October 2019). The exhibition introduces a new body of Beard's large-scale, vibrant works – including the artist's first sculptural piece – that examines contemporary portrayals of sexuality.

In a world that promotes sexuality and relationships through idealised and arguably unrealistic body expectations, Beard's kaleidoscopic oil and acrylic paintings reclaim ownership over depictions of the body from the predominant male gaze. With their graphic depictions of explicit sex acts and entwined bodies, the paintings confront the viewer, forcing the audience to engage with the scenes on the artist's terms.



Helen Beard, *Tender Pink*, 2019

The new works in, *It's Her Factory*, focus particularly on female self-pleasure, body positivity and empowerment. In paintings such as *The Seducer* (2019) and *Poetry in Motion* (2019), sanitised, chauvinistic representations of lust are replaced by intimate portrayals of the female form.

In recent years, Beard has also expanded her practice to document queer intimacy, ensuring that all types of sexuality and sexual activity, particularly those often censored in the media, are allocated due attention. Beard aims to foster conversations and a sense of openness around our bodies through her practice, emphasising that an individual's power and authority over their body rests solely in themselves.

The composition of Beard's imagery, which principally focuses on close crops of the body, draws heavily on the artist's 15-year career in the film industry. It was during this time that Beard studied the ways cinematographers frame their shots, especially the tight angles and zoomed-in focus they employ to imbue an image with tension and sense of narrative.

Beard's application of oil paint draws on these feelings of intimacy and desire. Though the canvases appear as blocks of colour from afar, their surfaces are abundant with rich textures that mimic the ripples and suppleness of human flesh. In the artist's words, it is 'like fingers stroking the skin'.

The exhibition follows Helen Beard's inclusion in last year's critically-acclaimed Unit London group exhibition, *21st Century Women*, and *True Colours* at Damien Hirst's Newport Street Gallery, where she has also exhibited.

NOTES TO EDITORS

HELEN BEARD

Born in Birmingham in 1971, Helen studied at Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design, graduating in 1992. After graduating, Helen worked as a freelance wardrobe stylist and assistant art director in the film industry for 15 years whilst continuing her art practice, working in various mediums including paint, collage and needlepoint. In 2018 she exhibited her works as part of *True Colours* - an exhibition showcasing the works of three forward-thinking emerging artists hosted at Damien Hirst's private museum, Newport Street Gallery in South London. She has since exhibited in *21st Century Women*, a group exhibition celebrating 18 of the best female artists practising in the UK today, curated by Fru Tholstrup and Jane Neale at Unit London.



Helen Beard, *The Seducer*, 2019



Helen Beard, *Poetry in Motion*, 2019

UNIT LONDON

Unit London remains firmly committed to its core principles that art should be celebrated, inclusive and undivided. Founded in 2013, Unit London was born from an innate desire to break down the barriers of elitism and create new innovative pathways into the contemporary art world, recognised for its pioneering approach to digital media and role in expanding and diversifying audiences using new technologies.

Since its inception, Unit London has strived to provide a unique and experimental platform for the world's most distinctive emerging talent, showcasing their work to a culturally curious audience across the globe.

Exhibition Helen Beard *'It's Her Factory'*
Private View Friday, 06 September 2019, 18:30 - 21:30
Dates 07 September - 06 October 2019
Venue Details Unit London, 3 Hanover Square, London, W1S 1HD
Monday - Saturday from 10:00 - 19:00, Sunday from 12:00 - 18:00

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