

Rebecca Ackroyd: Human Debris



words by Federico Sargentone

Two seemingly human figures squat on the floor of a gallery booth at Independent New York. They lean their hands on the ground, lifting their backs up, as if they expect to stay there indefinitely, contemplating their surroundings. The two bodies, which one could emphatically register as women, rest one aside of the other. Both equipped with motorcycle helmets covering locks of synthetic brown hair, *Glory Still* and *Glory Slips* (2018) are the result of a raw amalgam of steel rebar, chicken wire, plaster, wax, acrylic and jesmonite. For her New York debut, Rebecca Ackroyd (b. 1987, Cheltenham) has created a microcosm where human bodies and urban landscape are entangled and compared through the lens of unrefined, industrial materials. Presented by the Berlin-based gallery Peres Projects, the installation finds Ackroyd challenging the boundaries between fiction and reality, proposing an escape from the frantic environment which we all happen to inhabit. Ackroyd's practice is deeply informed by the exchange between metropolitan areas, everyday objects and the aesthetics of the globalized world; her sculptural objects translate as a gesture of sublime meditation upon today's gritty debris, while serving as a reality-check tool for the human being.

As a prelude to "The Mulch"—Ackroyd's first solo exhibition at Peres Projects, set to open during the Berlin Gallery Week in late April—the presentation at Independent pairs new large-scale sculptures with abstract drawings. The wall sculptures from her

ongoing series "Carriers" features large textured panels made from graphite powder, rendered to evoke weathered storefront shutters, their surfaces partially collaged with found images. These works function as symbols of the forgotten elements of the urban architecture, toying with the relationship between the high-street shops and the gallery space.

After graduating from the Royal Academy in London in 2015, Ackroyd has exhibited across the UK and internationally. Her recent commission at Zabłudowicz Collection (London, 2017) confirmed the artist's interest in juxtaposing the street and the domestic space: a jacquard carpet, reminiscent of a traditional English pub, covered the floor of the gallery, in the center of which sat a sculpture of a metal manhole cover, engraved with the initials of the artist. She adopted a similar approach in "House of Fire," her solo exhibition at Outpost (Norwich, 2017), where steel, graphite powder and iron pipes cohabited with silky, pale-colored gouaches. In the artist's work, the dichotomy between architecture and body, formal and intimate—often translated into a raw, figurative language—suggests a parallel antithesis between the feminine and masculine: just as the use of building supplies to simulate the relics of an inner city collides with the gentle gestures at the core of the abstract drawings, the hyper-materialism of metallic shutters, corroded by the rain of a grimy day, hijacks the dominant narrative of feminine representation. **K**