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Exhibition 11

LOVE IN THE MISANTHROPOCENE

18.09.25 - 21.10.25

Private View:
Wednesday 17th September, 6-9pm

ANDY HOLDEN

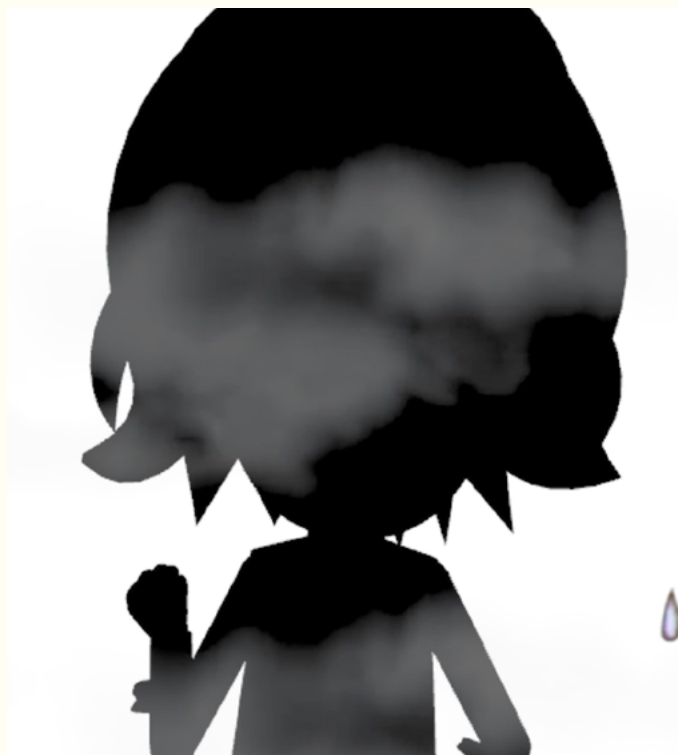
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THE GRUBBY MITTS

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Love in the Misanthropocene is a concept album in expanded form. The suite of ten songs around which the exhibition is structured were recorded between 2016 and 2024 by Holden and his band in their studio in Bedford, U.K, in an attempt to capture a time when the political and personal were becoming increasingly intertwined. Each track sits under the umbrella of the album's title *Love in the Misanthropocene*, with 'Misanthropocene' as a portmanteau combining 'misanthrope' and 'Anthropocene'.

Holden revived his band, which has been an extension of his visual practice since 2007, as he felt pop music was the most sufficient form to communicate the contradictory textures of the present moment, as it enabled two distinct feelings to be communicated simultaneously. The concept of each track is then extended further through a unique accompanying video work. The band returned to the 'M!MS' manifesto that Holden, along with Grubby Mitts co-writer Roger Illingworth, authored in 2003. Their declaration of, 'Maximum Irony! Maximum Sincerity', claimed, with adolescent pretentiousness, that art must now aspire to be both ironic and sincere at the same time if it is to avoid clichés while speaking to perennial truths. The album as a whole moves between sincere love songs and a more cerebral grappling with the current political climate, all enveloped in a depressive, melancholic turn.



Love in the Misanthropocene, Film Still, 2025



I am a Swift, Film Still, 2025

The songs utilise the formula of often joyful, melodic pop songs whilst simultaneously drawing on the history of avant-guard techniques. The Grubby Mitts Post Truth Clickbait Blues was devised through the band's practice of collecting newspaper or website headlines that appear as self-contained short stories, with each one pointing towards the absurdity of contemporary living, and then combining them into disjunctive lyrics. The tuned percussion on *Ever Not Quite* is arranged around transcriptions of bird songs, with the simple melodies played on various xylophones, evoking a sunrise and dawn chorus after a night of hedonistic revelry. The body of work often combines the ancient with the very contemporary: *Author's Guide to Melancholy* takes its lyrics from Robert Burton's 1621 opus, 'The Anatomy of Melancholy', with the words sung by Holden through autotune over heavy guitars and squealing saxophones, whilst the title track *Love in the Misanthropocene* builds with a baroque string arrangement as the band evoke the common internet response of, 'hello, well well well, if it isn't the consequence of my own actions come to visit me'.

The songs are diverse and contradictory, often shifting between genres, but taken as a whole provide an expression of a moment in which the body is tangled with, and deeply affected by, a world beyond its immediate surroundings. The Grubby Mitts, as a ten-piece DIY pop ensemble, was initially embraced by Holden as an antiquated but powerful political tool, allowing ideas to circulate away from the guarded halls of art and academia. The exhibition, as an extension of the album, allows a fixed spatial arrangement, and is conceived as a response to the increasingly disposable consumption of music through streaming.

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The video works use a myriad of techniques, riffing on the traditional format of the music video to create a labyrinth of vignettes for the viewer to navigate. Holden calls on his proficiency with 2D animation and augments many of the videos using AI technology; feeding images into various software to create 'untrustworthy' sequences that reflect the anxiety embedded in the lyrics while acting as a counterpoint to the often melodious and sincere tone of the band's instrumentation. Using Victorian etchings, cartoon stills, found footage, newspaper clippings and green-screen, the video works augment the lyrical songs and foreground the conceptual nature of the album. The videos are framed by a number of new paintings and sculptures by Holden which were used either in the creation of the album's cover-art or as part of the band's stage set, transforming the gallery into a stage into which the viewer may be immersed.

About Andy Holden

Andy Holden's work comprises large installations, sculpture, painting, music, performance, animation, curation and multi-screen videos. His work is often defined by very personal starting points used to arrive at more abstract philosophical questions.

As a teenager, Holden wrote a manifesto for art titled, "Maximum Irony! Maximum Sincerity", which can be seen to inform his subsequent work. For his first major exhibition 'Art Now: Andy Holden' at TATE Britain (2010), he exhibited Pyramid Piece, a vastly enlarged knitted replica of a piece of stone he stole from the Great Pyramid at Giza as a boy, and later returned. From 2011-2017 Holden worked on Laws of Motion in a Cartoon Landscape, an hour-long animated film which explored the idea that the world was now best understood as a cartoon. The sequel, Structure of Feeling, was presented in 2021 with the exhibition taking the form of a ghost-train ride which could only be navigated by motorised carts. Holden's Natural Selection, commissioned by Artangel in 2017, was made in collaboration with his father Peter Holden and utilised a detailed exploration of birds nests and eggs to explore questions of nature and nurture, and mankind's changing relation to the natural world. His recent work for British Art Show 9 (2022-3) and exhibited in full at The Gallery of Everything (2023), was an animated film about an unknown 'outsider' artist, Hermione, whose work he discovered in a charity shop, and explored notions of time, sickness, and legacy. In 2021 Holden curated Beano: Art of Breaking the Rules at Somerset House.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Kroller Muller Museum, NL (2024), The Perimeter (2024), Tate St Ives (2024), Charles Moffett, New York (2024), Seventeen Gallery London (2023), Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool (2025). Holden's work is in the permanent collections of Tate, Arts Council Collection, Bristol Museum, Kroller Muller Museum and numerous private collection in the UK, Europe and America.



Love in the Misanthropocene, Film Still, 2025

About The Grubby Mitts

The Grubby Mitts are a nine piece band from Bedford U.K, fronted by artist Andy Holden in collaboration with composer and multi-instrumentalist Roger Illingworth, alongside Rebecca De Winter, Adam Knowles, and Steven Fothergill. The line-up is completed by a brass section (Simon Gutteridge, Simon Martin, David Copperwheat, Jacob Atkinson) and Rose Gleadell on violin.

The band released their debut album What The World Needs Now Is in 2015. The singles, 'To a Friend's House the Way is Never Long', 'Standard' and 'Worm of Eternal Return' were all played on BBC 6 Music. The album picked up radio play across Europe and the band were subsequently invited to play Donau festival in Austria, sharing a stage with Einsturzende Neubauten. The same year, The Grubby Mitts were invited to play Latitude festival and performed live with Dama Suzuki. They are noted for elaborate live shows often accompanied by Holden's video projections or performative actions, such as Cat-tharsis, in which Holden unboxed two-hundred ceramic cats, accompanied by a long monologue. The live show was later transformed into an exhibition and toured as part of the British Art Show 9. They have performed at numerous galleries including Tate Britain, Hayward Gallery, Milton Keynes Gallery.

The Grubby Mitts returned this year with two new records. The first, Valediction, was recorded in the wake of the sudden and tragic passing of Holden's partner in 2022. The EP centres around The Grubby Mitts' version of David Lang's composition Just (After Song of Songs), with Holden's voice transformed through a vocoder. The ten track album Love in the Misanthropocene sees the band shifting between genres, mixing irony and sincerity, optimism and pessimism, resignation and triumph, in an often perilous state of equilibrium. With Freddy Lomas' (Kinn) production the album is the most coherent statement of the band's philosophy and a continuation of many of the ideas explored in Holden's varied practice as a visual artist.

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