

RUSSELL/PROJECTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HELENA WURZEL, *VANITAS*
January 21 to March 7, 2010

Receptions for the artist Thursday January 21st & Friday January 22nd, 2010

Russell/Projects is pleased to announce *VANITAS*, the gallery's inaugural exhibition. This exhibition acts as the first solo exhibition for emerging artist Helena Wurzel. The artist's *oeuvre* includes oil paintings on canvas and hand-cut paper collages. Wurzel explores the physical and emotional demands and influences of popular culture placed on young women to 'be perfect' by transforming every-day moments of herself and her friends into both contemplative and celebratory glimpses of private rituals and relationships.

Wurzel employs a multi-dimensional approach to the subject of vanity, in subject matter, material and scale. For example, *Second Silence* and *Beautiful Marian* contain few figures in scenes of self-reflection and introspection, balanced by the plethora of figures in vivacious moments, in *Girls Getting Dressed* and *Slide Show*. The artist's mastery over scale and composition adds a lyrical component to the exhibition, with intimate paintings such as the artist's self portrait, *Vanitas* at 16 x 12 inches balanced by panoramas including *My Mac* measuring 45 x 97 inches.

Wurzel's complex works on paper are intricate wonderlands of visual information. For example, *Darkly Dreaming* and *Shedding* consist of multiple layers of large, single sheets of colored paper, each laboriously and precisely hand-cut by Wurzel into lace-like patterns, with up to ten layers of paper laid atop another, with painted elements often included.

The element of 'reveal/conceal' is a theme that runs throughout the exhibition. Wurzel intentionally creates dramatic tension in works that might otherwise be mistaken for just a 'pretty picture'. In *Do I Look Expensive?*, her lone female subject's back is to the audience so that we cannot see her face or expression as she gazes at a large painting in a museum setting of a bathing woman. The museum painting stares back at the young woman and also directly at the viewer behind dark sunglasses. The tension here heightens the simple yet

powerful composition and color palette of the painting. The title explores issues of self-worth in young women, begging the question: which is more valued in contemporary culture, the young woman herself, or a famous painting of a woman?

For more information on the artist or to request images and price lists, please call 804-901-0284 or email Heather@ RussellProjects.com.

About the Artist:

Helena Wurzel was born in Newton, MA in 1980. She received her undergraduate degree from Brown University and received her MFA from Boston University. She currently teaches painting at RISD (Rhode Island School of Design). The artist lives and works in Boston, MA. www.helenawurzel.com.

About the Gallery:

Russell/Projects (www.RussellProjects.com) is a contemporary art gallery representing emerging and mid-career artists in all mediums. Located in a 2-story 1,500 sq foot space in the renovated Plant Zero art warehouse, located in Manchester, the heart of the arts district for downtown Richmond, VA. We are open Wednesday to Sunday from 11:00 to 5:00 pm.

The owner and director, Heather Russell, was formerly an Assistant Director at James Cohan Gallery, NY, and Associate Director at Irvine Contemporary, Washington, D.C., Director at Phoenix Ancient Art, NY and Geneva, Switzerland, as well as manager of Private Client Development at Sotheby's Auction House, NY. As a gallerist and art advisor since 2000, Russell has placed works with many top collectors and museums, including the The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, The Corcoran Museum of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts-Houston, The Kimbell Museum, TX, Princeton Art Museum, and the Tampa Museum of Art, amongst others.

She possesses a B.F.A , an M.A. in Ancient Art History and Classics from the University of Arizona, as well as Doctoral studies in Art History at The Institute of Fine Arts, NYU. She is also currently an adjunct professor of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, VA.