

Andy Holden

Song of Songs

September 15th - October 21st 2023

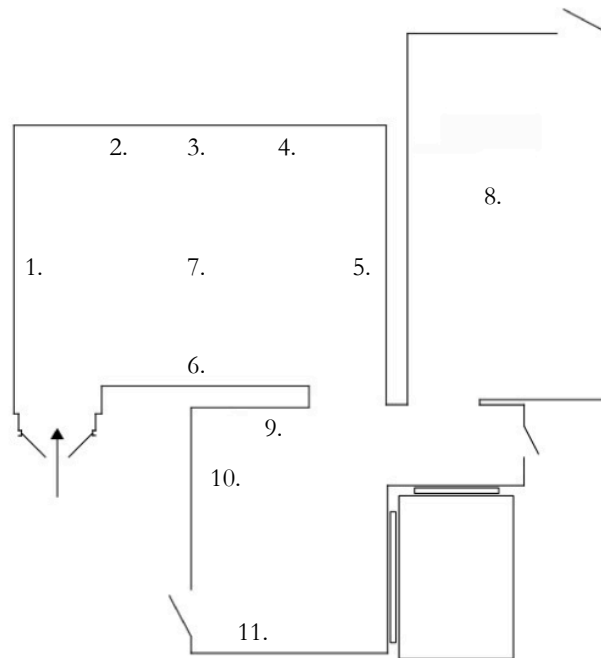
For his first exhibition in a commercial gallery in fifteen years, Andy Holden presents two installations at Seventeen. Linked by personal loss, each work is an attempt to process distinct moments from the past, within the context of the artist's continued inquiry into the nature of time.

The first room presents a new musical arrangement of *Just (Song of Songs)* by David Lang, the text for which is based on the Old Testament poem, also known as Song of Solomon. Recorded by Holden and his band **The Grubby Mitts** the sixteen-channel spatialised mix begins with Holden's voice, sung through a vocoder, which is gradually enveloped by vocal harmonies, piano, violin, brass section, shifting electronic loops and percussion. The tender depiction of a relationship through an unfolding list of disjunctive nouns, prefaced with, "Just your...", conjures a sense of timeless mourning and loss.

The darkened gallery also contains a series of six new prints titled *Infinite Resignation*, taking its name from the state of mind that Danish theologian, Søren Kierkegaard, identified as necessary before the leap towards faith is possible. These prints adapt the recent James Webb Space Telescope images that depict the furthest back in time that the human eye has yet perceived, and are adorned with hundreds of cheap plastic 'googly' eyes. The images show us the night sky looking back; a paranoiac pareidolia, evoking a cosmic sense of being watched, or watched over, by a sky with many Gods. The use of inexpensive and playful material to attempt a sweeping eschatology can be seen as a continuation of Holden's 2003 manifesto *Maximum Irony! Maximum Sincerity*, that declared art must be both ironic and sincere at the same time. The expansive galactic works provide an apathetic, alienated backdrop in front of which the intimate *Song of Songs* plays out, creating an affecting tension between the indifference of the vast universe and the intense, sincere subjective longing of love interrupted by death.

For the back room Holden has built on a key work from 2011: *Library for the Unfinished Concept of Thingly Time*. First made for his solo exhibition *Cheny Cosmos, Thingly Time* at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, the exhibition was marked by tragedy when Holden's collaborator Dan Cox was killed in a road accident during preparations for the exhibition. The library is dedicated to the completion of an idea the pair had been developing, provisionally titled 'thingly time'. The concept proposes that all objects contain a hidden duration that artworks can unlock. It is a non-teleological, congealed temporality and does not move with the passing of time as experienced by human perception.

The new work takes the form of an expanded memorial library that houses multiple sculptural works. Alongside furniture designed and made by Holden from laminated woods, the library contains: all the books in Cox's possession at the time of his death; numerous small sculptures in bronze and wood; totemic geological plaster works; found natural objects; ceramic studies, and 3D printed pieces that allude to other works by Holden. The work also houses an archive of the project's evolution, including correspondence with Ursula K. Le Guin who contributed a key text for the library's inception. The library has been expanded for this iteration to accommodate new literary acquisitions and recent intimately scaled works. The installation can be seen within the tradition of memorial libraries, where the collection of one individual is considered of significant value to be housed and maintained for future research. Holden's library alludes to, despite the chip-board veneer of contemporary living spaces, the interior of a Renaissance study. The books and sculptures together create a 'wunderkammer', in which texts and objects are placed equally at our disposal for future understanding of the unfinished concept of 'thingly time.'



Andy Holden - *Song of Songs*

Room 1

1. *Infinite Resignation (Unus instar omnium)*, 2023

Collage on archival pigment print on cotton rag paper, framed

152.6 x 102.9 cm

2. *Infinite Resignation (We Are The Size of What We See)*, 2023

Collage on archival pigment print on cotton rag paper, framed

152.6 x 102.9 cm

3. *Infinite Resignation (Amor Fati)*, 2023

Collage on archival pigment print on cotton rag paper, framed

152.6 x 102.9 cm

4. *Infinite Resignation (To Begin Again)*, 2023

Collage on archival pigment print on cotton rag paper, framed

152.6 x 102.9 cm

5. *Infinite Resignation*

(Time is What Stops Everything Happening All at Once), 2023

Collage on archival pigment print on cotton rag paper, framed

152.6 x 102.9 cm

6. *Infinite Resignation (Future Anterior)*, 2023

Collage on archival pigment print on cotton rag paper, framed

152.6 x 102.9 cm

7. *Just (Song of Songs)*, 2023

16 channel sound installation

16 minutes

Room 2

8. *Library for the Unfinished Concept of Thingly Time*, 2011- 2023

Furniture, books, carpets, bronze, plaster, ceramic, shellac, wood, stop motion animation, HD video, resin, various prints, laminated chipboard, furnishings and archival materials

Room 3

9. *Studies for Infinite Resignation*, 2023

Three unique collages on paper
30 x 23 cm

10. *Uchronian Self-Portraits*, 2023

i. *Eternal*

Hand-painted 3D printed sculpture
30 x 30 x 10 cm

ii. *Rock*

Hand-painted 3D printed sculpture
18 x 12 x 12 cm

iii. *Anvil*

Hand-painted 3D printed sculpture
8 x 20 x 16 cm

iv. *Float*

Hand-painted 3D printed sculpture
3 x 17 x 6 cm

11. *Extracts from the Library for the Unfinished Concept of Thingly Time*, 2023

i. *From the Anacholuthic Fresco's*

Plaster
34 x 28 cm

ii. *A Short History of Decay*

Plaster, paint, books
30 x 23 x 15 cm