

BEN BROOME

AFTER PHEIDIAS

EXHIBITION

8th March — 5th April 2025

After Pheidias is an exhibition of works by presently unnamed or unknown artists curated and authored by Ben Broome. The exhibited works were collected by Broome in late 2024 at flea markets across Paris where, guided by his own aesthetic sensibilities, he purchased only artworks and objects that have no practical use beyond ornament or aesthetics. In *After Pheidias*, Broome interrogates the processes by which an artwork is imbued with a perceived value or cultural importance. His own position, existing in a grey area between curator and artist, is also under scrutiny: If, in their current circumstance, the artists who made these works are unknown, when does the curator (the person responsible for the contextualisation) become the author? Curators have authority to aestheticise, name or contextualise an object — a power that should be wielded with care — this collection of works is organised according to the limitations of a single person's knowledge and perspective.

Considering the life-cycle of an artwork, Broome positions the flea market as a place where forgotten artworks are either further buried or re-remembered. When an artwork arrives at a Paris flea market it has likely lost its attribution to the hand that made it. It may be in poor condition, exposed to the elements amongst a million other objects. Any context or conceptual grounding it could have once had has long been forgotten. It's probable that its value is based on its decorative appeal and, if a new custodian cannot be found, its existence hangs in the balance. The act of preserving and re-exhibiting these works attempts to extend their life-span, re-remembering them with a new audience.

After Pheidias comprises six artworks of various mediums — photography, painting, drawing and sculpture — all of which experienced a process of transformation to the point of exhibition. Works on paper were mounted and framed with non-reflective glass, sculptures were cleaned, a plinth was constructed. The works were photographed against a white backdrop before being hung and lit by a professional technician. Broome's own curatorial direction, his act of selection and subsequent exhibition, asks the audience to look closer through the context of contemporary art and art history.

The exhibition's title *After Pheidias* refers to an artwork in the exhibition for which a form of provenance can be established — *Horse's head, Porte de Vanves, 23 November 2024*. Whilst the sculptor of the exhibited object is unknown, it appears to have been modelled on a horse's head from The Parthenon Marbles. The original sculpture was carved by Pheidias, one of the most famous sculptors in antiquity, between 438BC and 432BC for the east pediment of Athens' Parthenon. Broome's horse, formed from plaster, lacks the detail of its Grecian mother and was likely formed by a student of sculpture copying ancient masterpieces. We can imagine that the amateur hand responsible might have aspired to have their work treated with the same reverence as sculptures by the master they were copying. In *After Pheidias*, Broome sets out to revere these unloved and forgotten works.