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Joanna Allen: Subconscious Playground

Art Plugged Exhibition April 11, 2025

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Artist Joanna Allen image courtesy of Bowman Sculpture

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Joanna Allen: Subconscious Playground
1st May, 2025 – 30th May, 2025
Bowman Sculpture
Gallery 6
Duke Street
St James's
London

Bowman Sculpture Gallery is pleased to announce ***Subconscious Playground***, the inaugural solo exhibition by emerging British contemporary sculptor **Joanna Allen**. The exhibition will run from **1st to 30th May, 2025**, at the gallery's Mayfair location: **6 Duke Street, St James's, London**.

Subconscious Playground is an exploration of human psychology, offering an alternative reality that strips away the illusion of normalcy to reveal a more complex, sometimes dark, yet playful perspective on the subconscious. Joanna Allen's exhibition is particularly timely, arriving shortly after the **Centenary of Surrealism in 2024**, a hundred years since André Breton penned the *Manifeste du Surréalisme*.



Joanna Allen: *Shadow*
Signed Allen Numbered
Bronze with charcoal patina
Height: 17" (43.5cm)
Edition of 9 + 2 EA
Image courtesy of Bowman Sculpture

Allen is an innovative and exciting contemporary Surrealist whose work moves seamlessly between figuration and abstraction, often culminating in fully abstract pieces that reflect the shifting boundaries between our conscious and unconscious minds. Through her sculptural practice, she examines the tension between intellectual aptitude and primal instinct, as well as the way personal and inherited experiences shape individual identity.

The exhibition includes works that visually dissect these themes. In earlier pieces such as *Shadow* and *Horizon*, Allen employs striking imagery—an adult skull posed as a child's helmet, an eye-level plane of solid bronze slicing through a floating head—to explore the intrinsic nature of our learned and inherited psychology. *Shadow*, in particular, is deeply personal, emerging from Allen's own childhood memories.

The piece reflects her sense of feeling insubstantial both in the presence of adults and within herself. During these times, her imagination offered refuge—an expansive, safe space for creativity and development. The skull on the child's head symbolizes both psychological armour and the contrast between vulnerability and the mind's capacity to construct internal sanctuaries.



Joanna Allen: *Monument*
Signed Allen Numbered
Bronze
Height: 21.7" (55 cm)
Edition of 9 + 2 EA
Image courtesy of Bowman Sculpture

Other works, such as *Monument* and *Diminishing Capacity*, convey similar themes, distorting figures in ways that suggest we are permanently and generationally shaped by experience. Allen's work resides between **Symbolism** and **Surrealism**, balancing deeply personal narratives with broader, universal themes of psychological introspection.

In her abstract sculptures—such as *Inherent*—Allen pursues a purer representation, visually and metaphorically turning bodies inside out to reveal the nature of our psychological imprints. Throughout her work, she poses the question: *What is normal?* Her suggestion is compelling—perhaps deviation from the norm is, in fact, what defines it.

See also

Allen's signature sculptural language includes recurring motifs such as distorted forms, floating ovoid or egg-like heads, and dissecting planes. Though abstract, her works retain a figurative presence, reminding viewers that they are confronting the complexities of the human psyche. The interplay between fluid, buoyant forms and jagged, angular elements underscores the duality of the self.

Her materials—**patinated bronze**, **bold ink lines**, and **layered strokes of paint**—further enhance the dreamlike and surrealistic quality of her practice, evoking aesthetics that are at once ancient and futuristic.

A key aspect of Allen's process is the use of **mindful meditation** to access the subconscious. Through blindfolded, one-stroke drawing sessions, she creates what she calls *psychomorphs*—shapes that often take on personal or archetypal meaning. Whether these forms act as Rorschach-like reflections of the mind or emerge from deeper psychological imprints remains an open question. This engagement with the subconscious places Allen's work firmly in dialogue with the legacy of Surrealism.

The exhibition catalogue will feature a foreword by **Dr. Jon Wood**, art historian and curator specializing in modern and contemporary sculpture. Formerly Head of Research at the **Henry Moore Institute**, Wood has written extensively on major sculptors including Henry Moore, Tony Cragg, and Emily Young, and has curated exhibitions internationally. His insights will provide a rich contextual framework for Allen's exploration of the psychological and sculptural interplay between form, abstraction, and meaning.

Joanna Allen: *Subconscious Playground* opens on 1st May 2025 and runs until 30th May 2025 at Bowman Sculpture Gallery, 6 Duke Street, St James's, London.

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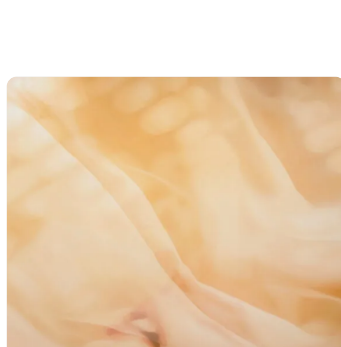
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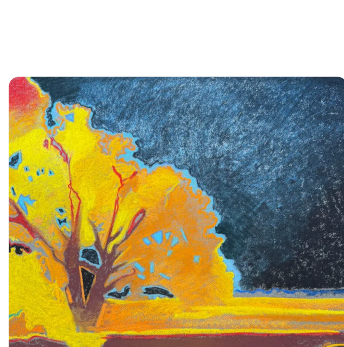
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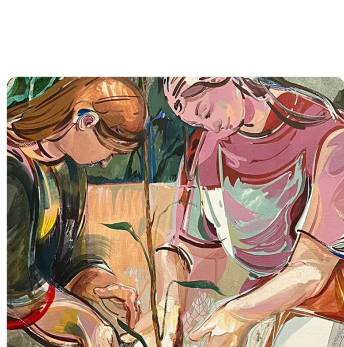
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