

## PRESS RELEASE

### **SUE DUNKLEY: WORK FROM THE 1960s & 1970s** **30 JUNE – 29 JULY 2017** **OPENING: THURSDAY 29 JUNE, 6 – 8PM**

*"My house was built in 1834," Sue Dunkley told the Islington Express in 2003. "It speaks to me and inspires me all the time. You can be anonymous here. Eight exhibitions have come out of this house since I've been here. And all of the time only four people have knocked to ask what I'm doing."*

Sean O'Hagan, *the guardian newspaper*, 2 September 2016.

Alison Jacques Gallery presents a solo show of British artist Sue Dunkley (b.1942, Leicester). This exhibition follows the 2016 solo show curated by Sue Dunkley's daughter, playwright Jane Bodie, and her brother Jim Dunkley, in the artist's Islington home and studio where she had lived and worked for over 50 years. Sue Dunkley now sadly suffers from dementia and has recently moved to a local care home. The current exhibition at Alison Jacques Gallery focuses on a series of large-scale paintings from the 70s and works on paper from 1969 through to 1973. This will be the artist's first major gallery show in over a decade.

Sue Dunkley was close to many key figures of the 60s, 70s and 80s in London. In 1968 she interviewed Barbara Hepworth and was friends with British artist Phyllida Barlow and Irish poet and playwright Seamus Heaney. Dunkley was the subject for a painting by Howard Hodgkin and she collaborated on the 1991 film *The Railway Station Man* starring Julie Christie and John Lynch. Collectors of her work include Harold Pinter, Salman Rushdie and Donald Sutherland.

Dunkley often depicted cultural icons from the 60s such as the Kennedy family, inspired by the films and magazines she came across in her daily life. She returned to Marilyn Monroe as a protagonist in numerous works, fascinated by her seemingly irreconcilable sexuality and vulnerability. Dunkley often confronted the role of women and the portrayal of the female body in the ever-changing socio-cultural landscape of the 60s and 70s. In *Bikini Nudes* (1971) and *Two Blondes* (1970) she painted stereotypical blonde beach babes in bikinis whereas in *Woman in Mirror* (1970) she portrays a black woman with short cropped hair. In *Flapper* (1970) her subject is the thoroughly modern woman flaunting accepted norms of the period.

Dunkley's paintings also served as autobiographical explorations of her own personal experiences. People close to Dunkley feature regularly in the artist's paintings: her former husband Don Bodie bears a striking resemblance to the bespectacled Gilbert Proesch, one half of the collaborative art duo Gilbert and George, portrayed in two paintings the artist made in 1969. The artist herself often appears in her work, acting as a witness to the trials and tribulations of her time and her subjects, struggling with her role as woman, mother and artist. In the self-portrait *Yerma* (1973), we see Dunkley depicted as the tragic protagonist of Federico García Lorca's play. *Yerma's* desperate obsession for motherhood, in a society which expects her to fulfil this role, drives her to commit a horrific crime.

Sue Dunkley was born in Leicester in 1942. Between 1959 and 1965 she studied in the UK including Chelsea School of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art. Solo exhibitions of Dunkley's work include *Sue Dunkley, A Retrospective: Work from 1968-2008* at the artist's studio (2016), *Journey*, Curwen Gallery (2003), Jill George Gallery (1993) and Thumb Gallery (1982). Dunkley has taught at numerous art schools, including Goldsmiths, Central Saint Martins and Chelsea School of Art. Recent press includes *Christie's Magazine* "Held in Suspense" by Jonathan Bastable (2017), *Porter* "Britain's forgotten POP artist" by Ajesh Patalay (2017) and *the guardian newspaper* "Wild and free: inside the home of Sue Dunkley, pop art's forgotten gem" by Sean O'Hagan (2016).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ISABELLA RUSSELL:**  
**TEL: +44 (0) 20 7631 4720 or EMAIL: [info@alisonjacquesgallery.com](mailto:info@alisonjacquesgallery.com)**

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