A Hyena Wore My Face Last Night
Amelie Peace & **Holly Stevenson**
Duo show
Curated by **Joséphine-May Bailey**

Opening: September 18, 2025, 6 – 9 PM
On view until October 18, 2025
C+N Gallery CANEPANERI
Foro Buonaparte 48 - Milano

"The hyena found it difficult to walk in my high-heeled shoes."
– Leonora Carrington, *The Debutante*

C+N Gallery CANEPANERI is pleased to present ***A Hyena Wore My Face Last Night*****,** a duo exhibition curated by **Joséphine-May Bailey**, featuring new works by sculptor **Holly Stevenson** and painter **Amelie Peace**. Opening on **18 September 2025**, the exhibition takes its title from Leonora Carrington's short story *The Debutante*, in which a young woman enlists a hyena to attend a society ball in her place. Disguised in the skin of a maid it has devoured, the animal stumbles through the absurd rituals of aristocratic life with barely concealed contempt. The story is comic and macabre, absurd, and subversive. In this spirit, the exhibition explores femininity, transformation, concealment, and the blurred line between human and animal. Through ceramic sculpture and painting, Stevenson and Peace each consider the feminine as a space of doubling and becoming. Identity is presented not as something fixed, but as something provisional and shifting - something worn or borrowed, something that can be exchanged or undone.

Holly Stevenson presents a group of new ceramic works whose titles directly quote Carrington's text. A series of five figures is titled "I feel I'm in very good form." 1–5. These idiosyncratic, figurative forms embody the hungry desire of the hyena. Stevenson frequently works within the psychoanalytical realm of the uncanny, a recurring theme in her practice, exploring transformation, identity, and the subconscious. As artist-in-residence at the **Jane McAdam Freud Estate**, Stevenson recently held a solo exhibition at the Freud Museum, London. Her LED-style facepieces, inspired by beauty therapy devices, are distorted into animal visages. The results are playful, grotesque and carnivalesque. These works speak to transformation, but also to the anxieties and rituals that accompany it. Alongside them, ceramic tabi-style heels suggest paws and hooves, referencing the Surrealist interest in shoes as objects of fetish, artifice, and identity. Stevenson's sculptures sit between body and costume, interior and exterior, mask and relic.

Amelie Peace, presenting her third exhibition with the gallery, offers a series of paintings in which figures drift between states. Her women raise their hands to mimic ears, wear fur, or press close to one another in ambiguous, intimate gestures. *So Soft (Si Douce)* repeats these gestures. They are not quite animals but are no longer entirely human. In *Together We Are Animal*, two women appear to be stacked or intertwined, looking directly at the viewer with a calm but unreadable expression. This direct gaze recurs in Peace's work, where the act of being seen becomes both a challenge and an invitation. Her language of surface, gesture, and animal mimicry opens questions of desire, closeness, and identity.
Alongside paintings, Peace also presents three framed etchings: *Wolf Skin, Entre Chien et Loup (Between Dog and Wolf),* and *Méconnaissable (Beyond Recognition)*. These works extend her exploration of metamorphosis and dual identity. In Wolf Skin, a woman dons the pelt of a wolf; in *Entre Chien et Loup*, her face merges with that of an animal; in *Méconnaissable*, she ties a delicate bow into the wolf's fur. These images speak of tenderness and violence, care, and camouflage. Like Carrington's hyena, they wear their strangeness unapologetically, moving between the human and the bestial with ease.

Both artists have developed this exhibition in close dialogue with one another and the curator, drawing from shared research into Leonora Carrington and the broader legacy of women surrealists including Remedios Varo, Dorothea Tanning, and Leonor Fini. Their interest in the mask as both concealment and revelation runs through the show. Stevenson's objects seem to speak in the polished, coded language of artefacts, while Peace's paintings and etchings breathe with scent, warmth, and skin. The hyena, in this context, is not only a figure but a tactic - a way of moving through the world with mischief, defiance and curiosity.

An intergenerational dialogue is also at play. Stevenson, a mid-career artist, brings a nuanced engagement with psychoanalysis and surrealism. Peace, a mid-emerging artist, offers a fresh and intuitive visual language that seeks to refine the art of gesture through carefully composed images exploring the sexual, emotional, and social ideologies surrounding touch. Carrington, whose writing and art remain seminal across generations, weaves through both practices as muse, myth-maker, and agent of subversion.

“She looked human. But she had forgotten to put on gloves, and her hands were terribly hairy,” Carrington writes. In *A Hyena Wore My Face Last Night*, the gloves have already been discarded. What remains is the look, the pose, and the sense of something wild still flickering beneath the surface.

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Amélie Peace (born in Cannes, France, 1997) is a French artist based in London. She examines the human condition through her evocative “intimacy-landscapes” in painting and printmaking. Her art seamlessly blends imagination with queer literature, drawing on socio-historical influences to challenge societal norms surrounding sexuality, emotion, and connection. She graduated from City & Guilds of London Art School (BA (1st class Hons) Fine Art) & Foundation Diploma (Distinction). Among her last Residencies are Palazzo Monti (2025) & Good Eye Projects Residency (2024).

Peace explores the power of human touch through fluid gestures and layered compositions, revealing enigmatic figures that embody both vulnerability and strength. Her characters, often interwoven as if they once shared a body, evoke a sense of physical dependence, illustrating how every interaction might reveal one's self-perception. Acting as a narrator, Peace unpicks the intricate and often contradictory nature of human behaviour. Transitioning seamlessly from gesture to emotion, she weaves stories that invite observers into a psychophysical dialogue. Each painting acts as a stage negotiating the tension between connection and disconnection - a tension grounded in reflections on historical absence and the indeterminacy of what is yet to come. Colour plays a central role in activating the psychological depth of her characters. Pops of orange or crimson call attention to instances where bodies split and double. Darkness creeps in too, throwing a subject’s face into relief or tracing the shadow of a hand. Hands, whether poised or in motion, serve as symbolic anchors, guiding the audience through the precise interplay between movement and emotion. With a balance of focus and ambiguity, Peace conjures dreamlike scenes that flicker between reality and illusion.
Every gaze in Peace’s work is both comforting and confronting, drawing the viewer into a complex web of relational dynamics. Through layered compositions and theatrical framing, Peace suspends time, drawing us into a space where intimacy and estrangement intertwine — asking not just what we see, but what awakens in us when we truly dare to look.

Holly Stevenson (born in Norfolk, UK, 1975) is a British artist living and working in London. She graduated from Chelsea College of Art and Design, fine art MA in 2011 and was awarded the MFI Flat Time House Graduate Award, supported by the John Latham Foundation. Ceramic and psychoanalytic processes are enmeshed in Holly Stevenson’s practice and her idiosyncratic forms play with associations trapped between mind and bodily matters. Her focus on ceramics in the expanded field led her to take part in Frieze Sculpture 2023 where she showed The Debate, an installation that reinterpreted the symbolic egg. Psychoanalysis is understood to be both a practical and informative part of art making and her ongoing projects involve everyday objects and artefacts: Sigmund Freud’s Ashtray series explores the father of psychoanalysis’ favourite ashtray in clay as a foundation stone for fluid bodily metaphors. Stevenson’s shoes reimagine female footwear as a fertile playing ground for an eco-feminist who walks where she wants and her beauty masks acknowledge the feminine as a surreal place. Recently as the recipient of an Arts Council England Unlocking Collections Grant Stevenson held a solo exhibition at the Freud Museum, London in 2025.

Josephine-May Bailey (she/her, born in 1997, London) is a Curator, Arts Writer, and Art Historian specialising in Contemporary Art and Feminist Theory. She has curated over 30 exhibitions across the UK and Europe, working independently as well as within institutions and commercial galleries. Her practice foregrounds artist-led approaches and research-driven projects, often focusing on emerging practices, feminist narratives, and material culture. She has supported more than 150 international artists through exhibitions, residencies, public programmes, and critical writing. Institutional projects include Rebel Rebel by Soheila Sokhanvari at the Barbican. Josephine was formerly Director and Curator of Pictorum Gallery, and is currently Director of Sales at gallery rosenfeld. She has previously held positions at Christie’s, Timothy Taylor Gallery, and Gagosian Gallery. She holds an MFA in Curating from Goldsmiths, University of London, and a BA in History of Art from Christ Church, University of Oxford. Alongside her curatorial work, Josephine writes extensively on contemporary art, producing catalogue essays, exhibition texts, artist biographies, and critical reviews. Her writing and curatorial approach are grounded in feminist theory, critical discourse, and an ongoing engagement with the politics of display.