

Soft Opening,

Rhea Dillon

Leaning Figures

17–22 June, 2025

Statements, Stand M9

Art Basel, Basel

Leaning Figures

Rhea Dillon presents *Leaning Figures*, a group of wall-based sculptures that reimagine and reinterpret both the museological vitrine and the domestic dinnerware cabinet. While the former is typical of ethnographic displays exhibiting objects often displaced from colonised nations, the latter is a quintessential household item within the Caribbean diasporic community in the UK. Traditionally, these cabinets hold cut crystal glassware: plates, cups and bowls, only to be used on special occasions and even more rarely among lower class Black families, with the view to elevate the household. *Leaning Figures* represents an extension, abstraction and breakdown of the Caribbean cabinet, a revisited motif, which for Dillon symbolises both boat and casket, to engage with the history of the movement of Black bodies across water.

Dillon continues her material engagement with both sapele mahogany and resin-cast organic materials in these new works. Sapele mahogany reappears in the artist's sculptural practice, to consider indigeneity and identity. Originating in West Africa, this material is often exported to offer an inexpensive alternative to genuine mahogany. This wood was also harvested by slaves and then assumed to have been used in the fabrication of slave ships in the 19th century, thus carrying bodies to the Caribbean. Each of these glass-paneled cases contains a cast resin version of a cut crystal plate — the majority combined with molasses. The use of this destabilising material alludes to the labour worked in the Caribbean colonial sugar cane plantation. With these works, Dillon re-labours this labour and considers what it means to push a material to its limit. Alongside these, a single plate includes soil the artist retrieved from her family's historically owned land in Jamaica, situated in what would be considered a marronage area, where a sugar mill operated and Dillon's great-great-grandfather once owned and ran a stud farm. For Dillon, certain elements of the casting process are retained by the sculpture — blown out details or enlarged protrusions — recall the prosthetic reality of being a diasporic person: repeated as descendants and yet rejected by a foreign body.

In *Leaning Figures*, Dillon scales the works to reflect the rough dimensions of an average shoebox, a common domestic object often reused to store precious personal items that accompany individuals on every house move, to be later stored under the bed or in a closet. As such, these works reference the repurposing of containers in Caribbean elder's homes (much like the ice cream tub storing last week's soup or stew in the fridge, or the Quality Street chocolate tin where the sewing kit is located) including those often mistakenly found by the artist in her maternal grandmother's home in London. In this consideration of movement and relocation, Dillon seeks to understand what people are able to carry with them as they are removed, exiled, or migrate across borders. In these new sculptures, each plate fits tightly within these restricted dimensions, in reference to the rigidity felt by bodies

shipped and people in migration. Leaning within their cases, the plates speak to a Black labour force constricted by space and time, even after work, when a body deserves to lean, to rest.

The fractal, or the never-ending pattern, offers a necessary logic to understand the repetition within this body of work: the designs of the original cut crystal plates that Dillon works from, recall these infinitely complex geometric designs. For the artist, each individual work in *Leaning Figures* constitutes one part of a larger whole and is therefore Caribbean at its most essential.

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6"23°52'17.3"25: I, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, soil
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1104)

£ 15,000

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6" 23°52'17.3" 25: I
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6"23°52'17.3"25: I
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6"23°52'17.3"25: I
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6"23°52'17.3"25: II, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, soil
34 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1105)

£ 15,000

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6"23°52'17.3"25: II
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6" 23°52'17.3" 25: II
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°78'10.6"23°52'17.3"25: II
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: I, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1106)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4" 94°06'40.2" 25: I
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4" 94°06'40.2" 25: I
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4" 94°06'40.2" 25: I
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: II, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1107)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: II
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: II
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: II
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: III, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1108)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: III
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4" 94°06'40.2" 25: III
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: III
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: IV, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1109)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: IV
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: IV
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: IV
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: V, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1110)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: V
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



$71^{\circ}67'55.4''94^{\circ}06'40.2''25: V$
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: V
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VI, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHDIII)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VI
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VI
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VI
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VII, 2025
Sapele mahogany, glass, resin, molasses
33 × 13.5 × 26 cm
13 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 10 1/4 inches
(RHD1112)

£ 14,000

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VII
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VII
(alternative view)

Rhea Dillon



71°67'55.4"94°06'40.2"25: VII
(alternative view)



Rhea Dillon

Rhea Dillon (b. 1996, UK) is an artist, writer and poet based in London. Dillon's first institutional solo exhibition *An Alterable Terrain* was held at Tate Britain in 2023 as part of the Art Now series, with an accompanying book published by Tate Publishing.

Recent and forthcoming exhibitions include *Gestural Poethics* at Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg (2025, forthcoming, solo); *On Collecting, Growth and Excess, Second Sequence* at The Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich (2025, forthcoming); *Fractal Being* at Cordova, Barcelona (2024, solo); *Gestural Poethics* at Soft Opening at Paul Soto, Los Angeles (2024, solo); *Each now, is the time, the space* at Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore (2024); *Berggruen Arts & Culture in Partnership with The Kitchen* at Fondamenta Diedo, Venice (2024); *The Black Fold* at Kevin Space, Vienna (2023, solo); *We looked for eyes creased with concern, but saw only veils* at Sweetwater, Berlin (2023, solo); *The Sombre Majesty (or, on being the pronounced dead)* at Soft Opening, London (2022, solo); *Real Corporeal* at Gladstone Gallery, New York (2022); *Love* at Bold Tendencies, London (2022) and *Nonbody Nonthing No Thing* at VO Curations, London (2021, solo). Dillon was an artist in residence at Triangle - Astérides, Marseille (2022) and V.O. Curations, London (2021). The artist presented *Catgut – The Opera* as part of Park Nights 2021 at the Serpentine Pavilion.

Dillon's work is in the public collections of Tate Collection, London; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore; Arts Council Collection, UK.

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