



Words Chrissie Iles

# Alba Hodson



“EGON SCHIELE, AUGUSTE RODIN, PABLO PICASSO, LUCIEN FREUD ... I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER HOW ALL THE WOMEN PORTRAYED IN THEIR DRAWINGS, PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES WOULD DEFINE THEMSELVES, HOW THEY WOULD COMMUNICATE THEIR EROTIC IDENTITY.”

Chrissie Iles: Can you talk about the timing of the naked body’s appearance as an ambiguous semi-abstract erotic form in your work, at a moment in which women are resisting outdated patriarchal norms around the female body more definitively than at any other moment in history, and in which binary sexuality is being dismantled?

Alba Hodsoll: Looking at my latest series *PoV* and *Glory Holes* (featured here in the magazine) I am attempting to find my own ‘point of view’ of the naked body’s appearance and its erotic nature by exploring through, in this case, the vessel of pornography, which is birthed straight out of patriarchal norms. What was originally the male’s point of view has become my PoV through my paintings and then in turn will become the viewers PoV, breaking down the level of power the original viewer had over the woman in the porn film.

Regarding binary sexuality being dismantled at this point in time, I believe in applying the saying ‘write what you know’ to the way I approach my work. I cannot attempt to make work about a sexuality I am unrelated to, nor can I create work depicting anything other than what I know just because I exist in a time when certain things are being dismantled. Those are other people’s stories to tell or to show.

CI: What does it mean to both assert the erotic and complicate it through abstraction at a moment of high anxiety around body image, and how our bodies should appear, publicly and privately?

AH: It is easy to assert the erotic, but then what? Regarding my *PoV* series and the *Glory Holes* where the original imagery was taken from pornography, I could have collected my screen shots, selected which part of the composition was most interesting or confusing to me and presented this as the works. However, if I had done this, I would have been left feeling just as flummoxed as I was in the first place, so much so I had to make a series of work out of it. It wasn’t enough to look and say, “Look!” It is in the abstraction and ambiguity that one is seduced inward, made to see and not look, compelled to question what it is they are looking at.

CI: How is your work influenced by the depiction of the female body in photography, social media, and the history of art?

AH: The camera was absolutely key in the way I began to really look at the way women are depicted. First through images by

photographers such as Irving Penn, then through my own camera lens, then from *Playboy* when I started collecting the magazines. Later I looked at photographers such as Francesca Woodman and Ana Mendieta who both experimented with a lot of self-portraiture, turning the lens on themselves. A little later on I looked at a lot of pornography, where the lens is very much directed by men.

Regarding art history, it is impossible not to be influenced by the depiction of the female body. The female form has always been the most fascinating subject matter, the fact that artists today are still exploring it is a testament to this. For me it is still a truly alluring thing, still so much more to be revealed and defined and attempted.

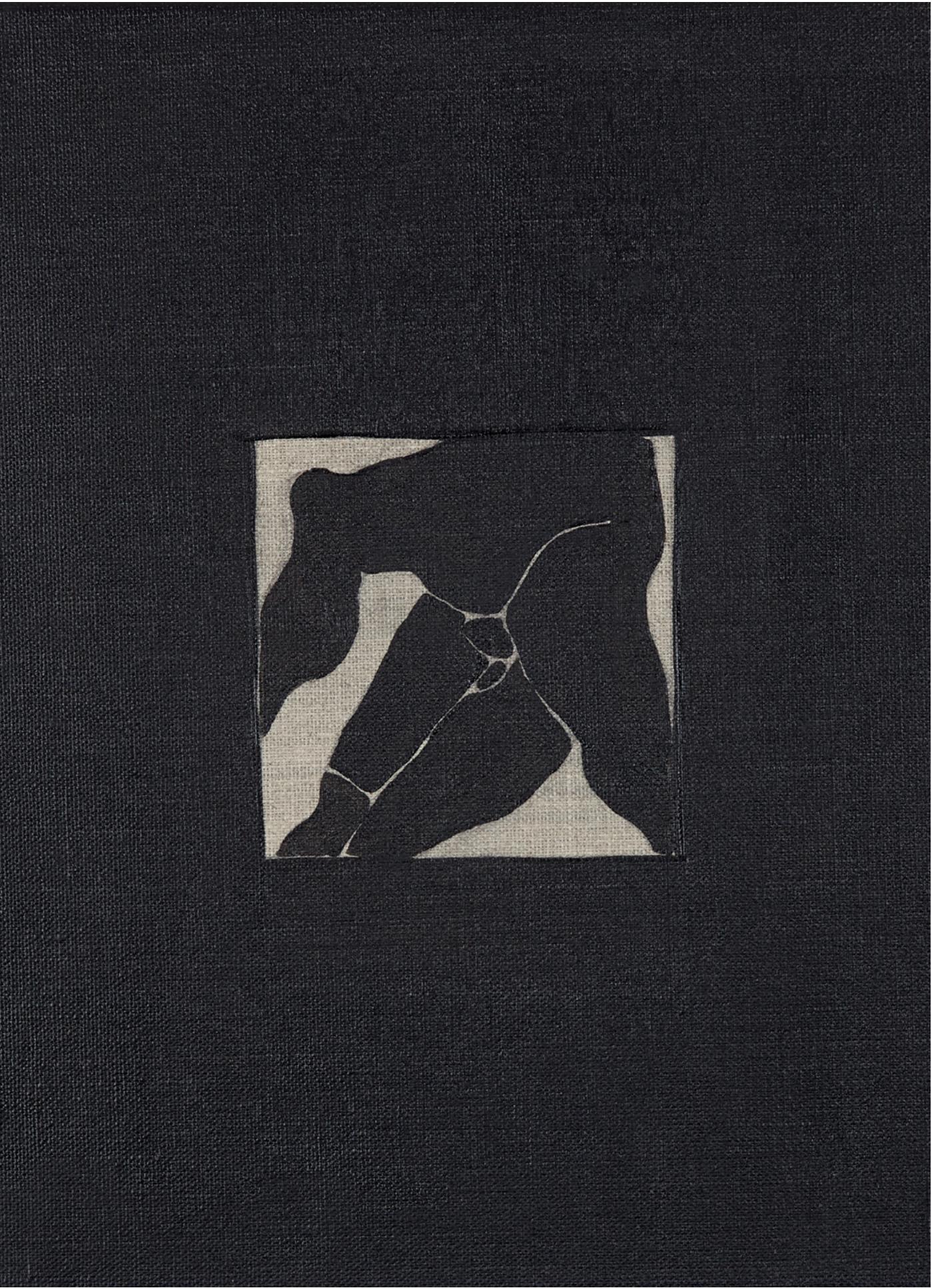
CI: How did you arrive at the reductive simplicity of line and space in your images, which evoke the tracing of the body as mark-making on a translucent surface, life drawing, and the cut-out technique of Matisse?

AH: Whatever the medium, be it photography, silk screen, drawing or painting, I have always enjoyed the process of elimination. There is often a lot of space around the figures in my work, space to enter the work, hopefully space to breathe. I am interested in the zooming in, homing in on the element of something that at first inexplicably grabs me, grabs my attention. It is not until I have made a mark over and over and over again, cutting away, reducing, reducing and then purging a body of work out of it that I am finally able to understand what it is that grabbed me in the first place.

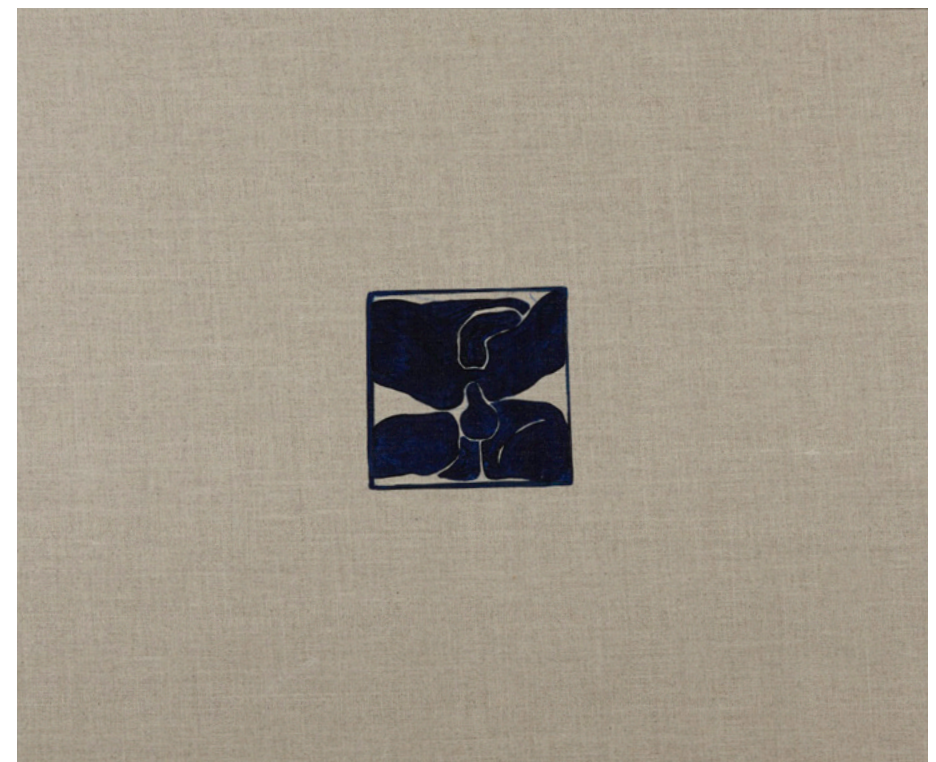
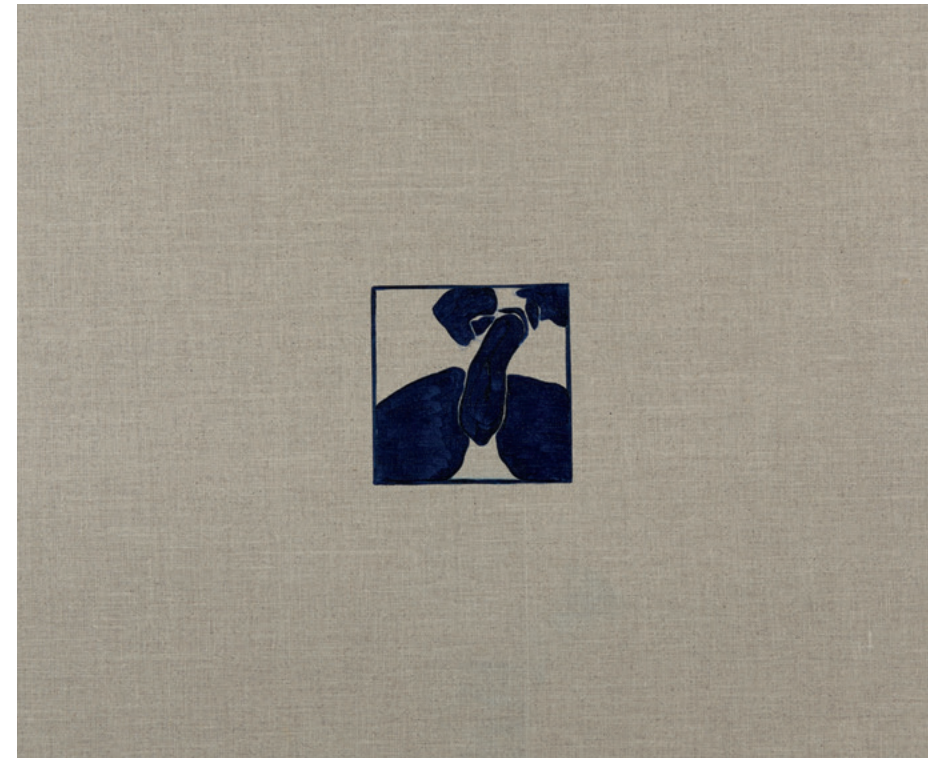
CI: You have been involved with the curator Antonia Marsh’s female body-positive ‘Girls Only’ project, and have shown your work in exhibitions that assert the female body’s erotic identity as defined by women rather than by men. Can you talk about the importance of this for and in your work?

AH: A woman’s erotic identity is as much a part of her identity as any other aspect or other defining features. For a long time, women’s relationship to the erotic has been decided, defined and depicted by men. Especially in the arts, Egon Schiele, Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, Lucien Freud, although an admiring fan of them all, I cannot help but wonder how all the women portrayed in their drawings, paintings and sculptures would define themselves, how they would communicate their erotic identity.

The way a man might define the female body’s erotic identity compared to a woman is the difference between day and night.







From the series *Glory Holes*  
 Photography George Darrell  
 Courtesy of the artist and Cob Gallery, London