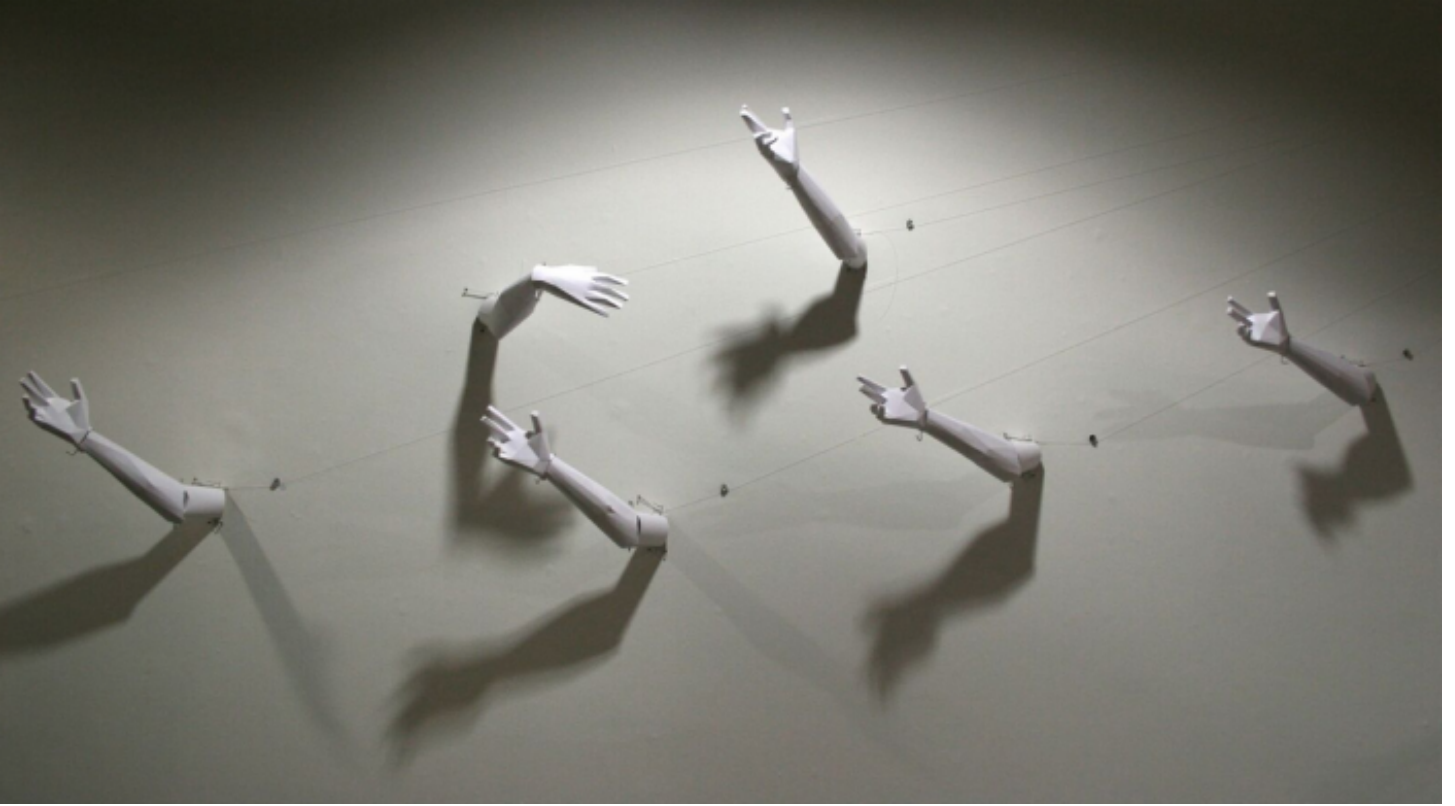


# REVIEW: PLUNGE



Vera Klute: *Plunge*

Sep 8 – Oct 22 | RHA Gallery

“Leave your head at the door.” Nowhere is this command given, but it’s not bad advice. Vera Klute’s *Plunge* takes its title and runs with it, asking the same of you: to stop is to ossify. A collection of her work to date, the exhibition is a multidisciplinary storm, restless and giddy like a congregation of cherubim.

An old, milk-white, spectacled woman buried to the waist greets you at the exhibition’s entrance, looking like a slick modern-day Winnie from Beckett’s *Happy Days* exuding fierce determination in the face of certain decline. In *Plunge*, place is never a promise of belonging, and this is epitomized in “Move Along” (2014) her most startling installation, where a wall of white arms twitch and wave you on in impatient domino-style. (The noise of each paper hand clapping the wall is irresistibly close to a tight-lipped “shoo!”).

How far do you think you are from searing degradation? Klute's mighty projection "The Grand Scheme" (2013) shows Heaven, Hell, and the tenuous in-between stacked in four hierarchical sections: mortal figures stroll under an Edenic plain, while hooves storm below, sometimes matching human footfall in eerie coordination.



Down below from hell's pit pleas are raised in the form of supplicatory hands, while in that burnt out sky squirms a blimp-like bug – might it be so easy to fall in line with the wrong crowd? It looks like a freeze-frame from a Hieronymus Bosch nightmare.

Next to this is "Plunge," (2017) the titular installation, a tangle of cloud-white limbs suspended from the ceiling so that it looks like all the gods from Olympus got into a filthy, gleeful scramble: you can practically hear the poolside shouts as they plunge toward you. "Stampede," (2015) a rush of legs, made entirely out of paper, is frozen in sprint below. As a backdrop

to this section there is a white wall with wispy, frieze-like figures caught mid-swim and cut off at the shoulders. So much is given away in apprehensive forethought, it's as if Klute has chopped the heads off her figures on purpose just to relieve them of inhibitions. Lessons like these are rare. This intensity of presence is also in her portraits, which are vivid and so saturated with colour you'd think they're still wet. She opts for a bold, striking backgrounds: orange belches up around her subject like impetuous soda-pop.



“Stampede” (2015)

If Klute were a conductor, she'd revel in dissonance, stirring up confusion and having a wicked amount of fun. She pulls together sculpture, portraiture, anatomical illustration, and video art, and coaxes an oddball reassurance out of them, revealing some order to what can seem at times like white noise. Take the piebald twins, “Black Cloud” (2017) and “White Cloud,” (2017) an installation described as “ephemeral rotating cloud cogs,” in which both clouds darken and lighten when the transparent cogs, filled with soot, align or separate, like yin and yang. It is a calming, if numbing experience, sitting still and knowing that for now is dark, to come is light, with bold zero to be done about either. You skirt around zero, unsure of it, before plunging headless into its infinite pit.