

*Deborah Hede: Shadow Shadow*

May 18—June 8, 2025

Cast by form and shaped by light, a shadow is always an index of relation. *Shadow Shadow* brings together works by Deborah Hede, Luchita Hurtado, and Lee Mullican that consider the shadow as both a perceptual and psychic structure, where meaning takes form through chance, proximity, and the unresolved.

In Jungian terms, the shadow names what the self can't claim: disowned traits, latent desires, unseen bonds beyond conscious control. Within the frame of the archive, this offers a way of thinking about what lingers unspoken or unlinked, like a field of deferred correspondence that nonetheless shape perception.

Among Hurtado and Mullican's library are several references to Jung, including his introduction to *The I Ching (Book of Changes)*, where he outlines a method for letting significance surface through close attention to chance. Jung described this process as a way to make room for what can't be summoned or directed by intention alone. "The method," he writes, "consists in observing the chance details..." In this light, archives articulate most clearly when their patterns appear according to their own logic.

Hede formally engages these relations as her mended sculpture holds more space than its shadow suggests. Her monochrome charcoal drawings, many made after night walks through the New Mexican foothills, render the earth's shadow as a densely textured threshold. Following Hede's move to Los Angeles she continued this inquiry in the larger drawings shown alongside charcoal works by Hurtado during her years in New Mexico, which recently returned from the Harwood Museum in Taos. Passing from New Mexico to Southern California, Hede and Hurtado's gestures of shadow meet here; alongside two works from the 1940's by Lee Mullican.

The conversation that follows sheds light on Hede's practice, tracing how artistic and archival practices might stay attuned to what evades certainty. Rather than imposing a fixed coherence, the shadow reminds us that refusing to control or neatly resolve is itself an act of care by honoring what resists possession.

**Marie Heilich:** The opera *The Woman Without a Shadow* first set a constellation of thought in motion for you, where the shadow becomes a vessel for legacy, power, or its absence. What lends the shadow such expressive pliability in your view?

**Deborah Hede:** This opera's libretto is controversial from a contemporary standpoint. Yet the story's origin in Indian mysticism embraces paradox, and plays with the illusion of differences. Eastern and western mythologies offer variations upon this theme; divinity touching transitory reality, the material substance of our shadows.

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**MH:** Across time and place, the contrast between light and shadow recurs as a powerful metaphor, probing good and evil, truth and illusion, knowledge and unknowing. How do you find your way inside such a heavy and enduring symbolic field?

**DH:** I think about physicists trying to address the phenomena of quantum entanglement; discoveries already revealed in spiritual traditions. I've always experienced presence and absence as being in flux; not fixed by notions of time, space, causality. Time is incredibly elastic. There's a reciprocity between consciousness and the orientation of what is around the consciousness.

**MH:** Your work often mediates between what's illuminated and what's withheld. Where do you find the tensions, or the resonances, between your use of shadow and Hurtado's?

**DH:** Of particular interest to our project, Luchita's shadow imagery conveys a fluidity in her self portraiture. It suggests a temporal void, and might also imply how she shaped absence into presence. I sense that our respective compositions share many qualities that you describe. My concern is mostly the fragments of these encounters; having a framework for fleeting impressions to land.

**MH:** A work on paper by Hurtado reads: "The only reasonable facsimile of me—is in my shadow." A shadow is a likeness, but never fixed. It stretches, contracts, disappears, reappears, framing identity as cumulative, provisional, fractured. Rather than sealing meaning, it invites a constellatory logic where fragments cohere momentarily. How has your movement through biographical, geographical, and psychic space informed the contours of your work?

**DH:** Translating all that into form is a malleable process. Life is unpredictable, with a fair amount of loss; shadows scatter and reconstitute. Making constellations from fragments is a good description of what happens in the studio. Those constellations accrue meaning and offer clues to the whole of one's efforts.

**MH:** Shadows and photography are inextricable, light carving absence. In Hurtado's shadow photographs, her silhouette dissolves into the land itself. What is your relationship to photography, and how has it shaped your thinking about framing, perception, and trace?

**DH:** I had an early interest in photography, given family history with the Leitz company and the Leica camera. My father gave me my first camera, a Leica M3, that I still use. My initial photographs captured a blurred component within the frame. The compositions complicated the shadow element since the subject matter fragments in movement.

Photography led to other interests. Japanese aesthetics were part of art history courses at SAIC. Chicago was an opportunity to work within a community of artists—the presence of Miyoko Ito always resonated with my life in that city. Ito's acknowledgment that she had nowhere else to go but painting is essentially an artist's reality.

New York and New Mexico followed, and I was introduced to Jungian psychology through the lens of dreams. I began to walk along Tesuque's foothill paths at night; a vast network of stars in the sky. It all seeped into my drawing. Framing, perception and trace are all there.

**MH:** The connection to Miyoko Ito really resonates. Like hers, your work radiates outward quietly, at once flattened and full of depth. Did you feel more kinship with Ito and the "Allusive Abstractionists" than with the more figurative Imagists in Chicago?

**DH:** The flatness in my work is actually a result of a visual condition. It's how I see. Also, it's there in Japanese art; along with subliminal impressions that connect certain artists to the way my art developed along abstract lines.

**MH:** The nebulous figure of the shadow moves through both the exhibition and the archive. I'm interested in how dreams arrive in your work; do they emerge as active material, or more as an ambient influence?

**DH:** A formal approach to Jungian dream work is the privilege of analysis, and it wasn't a pursuit I could indulge. I try to make legible the unconscious viewpoint; a synchronistic feeling that threads through the art. Robert Smithson's brilliant take on the art of Eva Hesse is understanding her work as psychic models. Any creative endeavor, deeply entered into, reflects the artist's psyche.

**MH:** Your night walks through New Mexico linger as a vivid image: the body moving through darkness, sensing beyond vision. The charcoal drawings from that time seem charged with that atmosphere, then later, in Los Angeles, the materials shift, the air itself altering the work. How did those different geographies and rhythms of walking translate into your mark-making?

**DH:** Walking became a bridge between two radically disparate locations and situations. The night walks in Tesuque felt like an extension of a dream-like state. Perception in darkness is distinct from daylight, and changes awareness. Drawing in charcoal corresponds to that, and the simplicity of this way of working matched the conditions of my life. Years later, walking served to orient myself in Los Angeles, and that wove into a series of work using different materials; paint, plaster, stencils, pastels, discarded materials. An altered sensibility emerges in walking, and ambient awareness ultimately lingers in the making of art.

Deborah Hede's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions with Extended Play, Pacific Palisades; Shoot The Lobster, Los Angeles; Commonwealth & Council, Los Angeles; Santa Monica Prefecture; and Ambach and Rice, Los Angeles. Her work has been exhibited at the Phoenix Art Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, and is held in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, among others. Hede lives and works in Santa Monica, California.