

**CHRISTIANA SOULOU**  
***Les Enfants Terribles***

**02 November 2011– 14 January 2012**  
**69 South Audley Street London W1**

For her third show with Sadie Coles HQ, Christiana Soulou presents a major new series of drawings and watercolours inspired by Jean Cocteau's novel *Les Enfants Terribles* (1929). Spectral and fragmentary, Soulou's compositions range from episodes to emblematic portraits which seek to capture the movement and dominant "sensations" of particular characters. Soulou has written, "to create these characters, I didn't have to invent features for each one but rather it was their *sensation* which gave rise to their physical form. It is sensations which I draw. In making Dargelos, Elisabeth and Paul, I wanted to produce 'living beings so animate as to be liveable or lived'. For me, their intensity alone counts."



Cocteau's story revolves around a "game" of seduction played by the characters. For Soulou, this "game" (a term that is "by no means accurate" according to Cocteau) is not simply about transformation, but involves a process of becoming, which – to quote Cocteau – "restores to things their veritable meaning." Cocteau's immersive game serves for her as a metaphor for the process of drawing and "the detached moment of the artist facing their creation."

A number of Soulou's drawings, which are executed in sanguine, graphite and coloured pencil, show scenes in the novel. *Blow (Le coup)* alludes to Dargelos hurling a stone concealed in snow at Paul. Other drawings present characters in distinct moods or guises, such as *Instructive Session* and *Skinny Rabbit*, or *Sly Elisabeth* and *Obstinate Elisabeth*. The intense precision and delicacy of Soulou's drawings recalls Cocteau's own linear drawings for the book, as well as the works of Surrealist contemporaries such as Pierre Klossowski. At the same time, the characters' costumes locate them in an indeterminate epoch and create an air of performance or artifice. Soulou has revealingly stated that the Game is "not of the order of nature but belongs to the order of sign and ritual. Dargelos, Paul and Elisabeth are caught in a game of seduction which excludes desire: they are playing."

Soulou's new watercolours exhibit an animated and calligraphic quality which is reminiscent of the florid sketches of Pisanello and choreographed forms of Cranach. Titled *Head Quarters (le quartier general)*, the series re-imagines a schoolboys' snowball fight in a Parisian courtyard memorably described by Cocteau at the opening of the novel in terms of a pitched battle, amidst which a love-struck Paul searches for Dargelos.

Christiana Soulou was born in Athens. She studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris. Recent solo shows include *Dancers* at Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, and *Tarot*, Bernier/Eliades, Athens. She is currently included in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thessaloniki Biennale, Greece. Other recent group shows include *Νεπτι Humanism*, Faggionato Fine Art, London (2011); *Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, New Museum, New York (2010); *Heaven*, 2nd Athens Biennial, Athens (2009); *In Praise of Shadows*, IMMA, Dublin, Ireland, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, and Museum Benaki, Athens (2008-09); *Dream and Trauma: Works from the Dakis Joannou Collection*, Kunsthalle Wien (2007). A book of the artist's writings was published by DESTE in 2007 to complement the foundation's exhibition *Fracture: Figure*. In 2008 Sadie Coles HQ published *Christiana Soulou: Water* - a book documenting a series of drawings made from 1983 to 1985. Soulou lives and works in Athens.

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 Opening hours Tuesday – Saturday 10 – 6pm