

PRESS RELEASE (English)

Andy Holden

Lecture on Birdsong

03 September – 24 October 2026

Hamburg, Germany — Hidde van Seggelen is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Andy Holden, opening in conjunction with the inaugural edition of Hamburg Art Week. The exhibition features a dialogue between a newly completed body of sculptural work and the premiere of an extraordinary, long-form film developed in collaboration with the artist's father, the ornithologist Peter Holden.

Coinciding with this exhibition in Hamburg is the announcement of a new monograph titled *Weight of Imagination* (text by: Jennifer Higgie) documenting Andy Holden's prolific practice.

The Film: A Fifteen-Year Study of Landscape, Science, and Translation.

Developed over fifteen years and adapted from a series of live performances first presented at Tate Britain in 2011, *Lecture on Birdsong* (2011–2026) follows six walks undertaken within a one-mile radius of the Holdens' home, from the end of winter through spring. Combining walking, literature, music, natural history and autobiography, the film explores the persistent human desire to understand and translate birdsong while acknowledging the limits of that endeavour.

Drawing on traditions of nature writing, the film unfolds as a dialogue between father and son while tracing and questioning the process of learning. Peter Holden, one of Britain's most respected ornithologists and educators, teaches Andy to identify birds through sound rather than sight, revisiting knowledge that Andy never fully absorbed as a child. As they move through hedgerows, churchyards, riverbanks and farmland, discussions of territory, ecology, mimicry and evolution unfold alongside Romantic poetry, classical music and the history of ornithology. The work moves from subjective responses to birdsong towards increasingly sophisticated methods of scientific analysis, only to encounter the same impasse: birdsong can be studied, described and reproduced, but never fully translated.



Poster for *Lecture on Birdsong*, TATE Britain, March 2011

The exhibition also presents a series of screenprints documenting each public iteration of *Lecture on Birdsong*. Produced over the course of the project, the prints function as records of performances that have gradually evolved into the film now presented in Hamburg. Together they chart the development of the work across fifteen years, from lecture-performance to cinematic form.

Alongside the film and prints, Holden presents *Auguries (Dawn Chorus)* 2026, a group of sculptural works derived from the recorded soundwaves of the bird species discussed throughout the film. Produced as turned wooden forms and displayed on reclaimed railway-sleeper plinths, the sculptures translate acoustic information into physical objects. Neither illustration nor scientific model, the sculptures occupy a space between notation, ornament and artefact. Resembling modernist toys, devotional objects or mechanical components, they give material presence to sounds that are otherwise fleeting and immaterial.

Lecture on Birdsong provides a framework for considering how our understanding of the world is shaped by both inheritance and experience, while showing how learning is inseparable from the environments in which it takes place. The exhibition can be understood as a companion work to *Natural Selection*, Andy and Peter Holden's major collaborative project commissioned by Artangel in 2017.

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Presented at nine museums across the United Kingdom and subsequently restaged at Tate St Ives and the KröllerMüller Museum, Otterlo, Natural Selection established an expansive dialogue between contemporary art, ornithology and family history. Works from that project are now held in the collections of Tate, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Leeds Art Gallery and numerous private collections.

Across film, print and sculpture, *Lecture on Birdsong* reflects on learning, inheritance and the relationship between place and knowledge. Grounded in a specific hyper-local landscape yet attentive to wider histories of listening, the exhibition considers what remains beyond interpretation and what might be gained by paying closer attention to the non-human voices that surround us. At its centre is an extended conversation between father and son, unfolding across a shared landscape and over time.

About Andy Holden

Andy Holden is a multidisciplinary artist working across installation, sculpture, painting, music, performance, animation, curating and moving image. His practice often begins with personal experience before expanding into broader philosophical and cultural questions. As a teenager, he wrote the manifesto *Maximum Irony! Maximum Sincerity!*, a proposition that continues to inform his work. His breakthrough exhibition, *Art Now: Andy Holden*, was presented at Tate Britain in 2010 and featured *Pyramid Piece*, a large-scale knitted replica of a stone he removed from the Great Pyramid as a child and later returned. This work became part of the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum in 2024. Between 2011 and 2016 he created *Laws of Motion* in a Cartoon Landscape, an ambitious animated film cycle in which the artist appeared as a cartoon character while exploring the possibility that reality itself might be understood as a cartoon.

In *Natural Selection* (2017), made in collaboration with his father Peter Holden, he used birds' nests and eggs to explore questions of nature, nurture and inheritance. Andy Holden was included in British Art Show 9 (2021-22) and at the same year he curated Beano: The Art of Breaking the Rules at Somerset House, London (2021). He continues to perform and record with his band *Grubby Mitts*, whose most recent album was released in 2025.

A monograph *Weight of Imagination*, written by Jennifer Higgie and published by HENI, will be released in Autumn 2026.

In March 2027, Milton Keynes Gallery will present the first survey exhibition of Holden's work in the United Kingdom.

Preview on Wednesday 2 September 2026.

For further information and images, please contact the gallery at mail@hiddevanseggelen.com