

YOO GEUN-TAEK, KAZUHITO KAWAI, CHRISTOPHER PAGE, STEFAN RINCK, JENNIFER ROCHLIN,
ANTONIA RODRIAN, PAULINE SHAW, RAQIB SHAW & ALYINA ZAIDI.

Foolish Fire

May 12 — June 15, 2023

The artworks in *Foolish Fire* circumvent reason and logic to present us with images fringing on illusion, with depictions in the form of sculpture, painting and tapestry that challenge the nature of perception allowing us to see beyond the surface of the object. Painter **Christopher Page** transforms architectural spaces into uncanny mise-en-scènes that disrupt the viewer's sense of reality. **Pauline Shaw** applies her cultural and ancestral history to create detailed felt tapestries. In the ceramic works of **Jennifer Rochlin** and **Kazuhito Kawai**, personal histories and memory are the catalyst. The intriguing canvases of **Antonia Rodrian** depict objects freed from their context to convey absurd narratives, while **Yoo Geun-Taek** uses repetitive elements to create meditative scenes of visceral textures on hanji paper. **Stefan Rinck**, **Alyina Zaidi** and **Raqib Shaw** use mythology and mysticism to create meticulous paintings and sculptures that redefine divinity.

The exhibition takes its title from the Latin term ignis fatuus or "foolish fire", a flickering bluish light that appears in the darkness and is believed to be caused by the spontaneous combustion of natural gases. Legend has it that these lights were carried by mischievous spirits, leading travellers and hunters astray and causing them to behave foolishly. In *Foolish Fire*, the exhibited works resort to illusion, mythology and ritual to lead the viewer through divergent paths of serendipity, unveiling reimagined worldviews achieved by the artists' reflective acumen.

In *Foolish Fire*, the textile works of Pauline Shaw reveal meditations on the relationships between body and spirit. Using MRI scans to map personal memories, Shaw creates large-scale felted tapestries made of wool, silk, and other fibres. Her work *You and Me*, for example, is based on a scan of her brain while she was thinking about early memories with her mother. Through these works, Shaw underscores questions about how personal history and cultural knowledge are acquired, preserved and rendered. Other artists in the exhibition, whose personal stories and memories provide an impetus in their work, are Jennifer Rochlin and Kazuhito Kawai; both use ceramic vessels to embody the emotions of lived experiences. Rochlin's ceramic *Red Tapestry* is an irregular vessel, imprinted with her physical presence directly onto the clay itself, giving the work a sense of immediacy and vitality. Meanwhile, Kawai's sculpture *Kamikazee* embodies the bewilderment of adolescence and the tragedy of ideology. The artist spent months researching the base camps where the young soldiers who went on suicide missions "Tokkou" during the Pacific War lived, reading their diaries and other materials to capture the complex emotions of youth in this historical period.

Drawing from environments with traces of human gestures, the objects in Antonia Rodrian's intriguing paintings take on a life of their own. Tools cooperate, either building spaces or breaking them down without a subject operating them, like autonomous protagonists of a covert tale. In her work *Layers*, a series of chisels working in unison can be seen shaving thin layers of a cobalt teal surface. The wood shavings fold and create a new composition, rhythmic and architectural. For Rodrian, collaboration plays an important role; in 2017, she founded the off-space *sonneundsolche* with two fellow artists, and she is also a member of the artist collective Gruppe Kilo.

Combining hard geometry with soft illusion, Christopher Page's works collapse traditional painting techniques to ponder the contradictions of visual perception. His uncanny works depict, in subtle variations of light and shadow, reflectionless mirrors, depthless windows, and unusable portals that create a sense of artificiality and disorientation. According to Page, the fact that painting can come from either mirrors or shadows reveals its connection to absent presences, prompting him to explore how shadows can disrupt the image we see and encourage us to contemplate the intangible. In his painting *Without End*, Page materialises these contradictions by accurately depicting a divided-light window against a cadmium orange sky that appears both infinite and claustrophobically near.

In *Foolish Fire*, the poetic works of Yoo Geun-Taek exude subtle melancholy. As a prominent figure in contemporary Korean painting, Geun-Taek has been redefining visual narratives since the 1990s. He draws inspiration from observations and the *Dansaekhwa* movement that dominated Korean painting in the 70s and 80s. In the exhibition, his work *Spoken Garden* illustrates a mundane image of a dog sniffing a semi-arid landscape dotted with scattered plants. The strong outlines in every element of the composition break the image into particles that appear to defy the laws of physics. Geun-Taek's metaphysical approach to art-making reveals singular realities through monotonously dense motifs, highlighting the uneventful, yet continuous stream of events in our lives.

Several works featured in *Foolish Fire* employ mysticism and mythology to redefine and explore personal belief systems and our understanding of divinity. Stefan Rinck's stone sculptures, for example, embody hybrid semi-god animal-like figures infused with a self-awareness that recall the legends of "foolish Fire" where devils deceive and lead humans to their downfall. His work *Tourette Royal* is an imaginary character that has an almost totemic quality, akin to how idols and fetishes represent the purest essence of their respective cultures, with physical features that are simultaneously abstract, technical, and mimetic, evocative of ritual masks or folk illustrations.

Similarly, Alyina Zaidi's circular-shaped paintings in *Foolish Fire* employ folkloric tales and Persian and South Asian miniatures as her source of inspiration. Growing up in Kashmir, she presents a unique version of nature and spirituality, combined as one mystical tale that merges different perspectives on the divine. Her works highlight the fusion of cultures and beliefs, evoking a sense of wonder and enchantment. These works offer a glimpse into the origins of the artist's personal belief system, while also illustrating the universal nature of divinity and mythology in shaping our understanding of the world.

Another fellow Kashmiri, prolific artist Raqib Shaw, presents two intricate drawings, *Hounderel I* and *Cock-A-Liki* from his series *Whimsy Beasties*. These strong representations of his signature style, depict mythological characters through intricate drawing and assemblage, often developed from a wide range of literary, art historical and mystical sources. The works, made of graphite, watercolour, glitter and rhinestones, illustrate two hybrid creatures standing on pedestals of intricate detailing. A fusion of epochs, cultures and living beings.

The works in *Foolish Fire* weave together myth, illusion, and metaphysical concepts to create a dialogue around the fundamental human search for meaning. Through a combination of artistic traditions and a rich array of references from diverse spiritual, visual, and scientific backgrounds, the works in this exhibition explore themes that have been central to mankind's search for truth and understanding across centuries. The artworks highlight the mischievous conditions that often arise when we search for truth based solely on appearances, underscoring the importance of looking beneath the surface where deeper meanings and worldviews are ready to be uncovered.

Foolish Fire will run from May 12 to June 15, 2023. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.