

HELL/O ARCADIA?

SPRING/BREAK LA, 5880 Adams Blvd, Culver City, CA

February 16th – February 20th, 2022

We are excited to present an independent curatorial project *HELL/O ARCADIA?* featuring works by **Haley Hughes, Emily Oliveira, Sarah Fuhrman, Zoe McGuire, Luke Silva, Katrina Jurjans, and Maria Petrovskaya**. The booth is based on the iconic work *Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. His painting is divided into panels of light and darkness. A quiet nearly vacant Eden is on the left, with God reigning. The central panel is filled with unobstructed indulgence and happiness, depicting a joyous idyllic landscape populated with naked figures and filled with exotic fruit. The right panel is a hellscape, with a black background and ravishing fires and torture scenes. It's a dire warning to humanity.

The booth will follow the same concept. One part (Hell) will feature artists whose work focuses on the dark aspects of contemporary life and connects with the darkness of the Bosch hellscape. Another part (Arcadia) will feature idylls, pastorals, and the earthly joys of life. Artists selected for both sections work with traditional medieval concepts such as aerial tableaus, tapestry, and medieval formal compositions, but thematically feature scenes from contemporary life.

Philosophically, this curatorial project raises a question – what is our life as we know it, Hell or Arcadia? And of course, the answer largely depends on who you ask, despite the so-called “great equalizers” like Covid. The scientific progress in the developed world leads to a better quality of life and longer life spans, and one would think that we were nearing Arcadia. Yet, the rise of inequality makes you realize that we are as far from Arcadia as were people in the Middle Ages. Climate change brings catastrophic events of unprecedented nature: devastating fires that destroy vast swaths of land, houses, millions of animals and pollute the air. Rising water levels threaten cities, and devastating floods happen regularly. If we thought that the Great Plagues were our distant history, then the years 2020-2021 proved otherwise. Mass shootings, extremism, and rising violence show that there are no safe spaces anywhere in the world now.

This stark divide between (a fragile) Arcadian life and Hell, and a hair-thin crossline that divides the two is ironically most evident in Los Angeles, California. Idyllic landscapes and manicured lawns of the super-rich and movie stars that present the Arcadian utopian myths to the world through the Hollywood movies dream factory are threatened by the grim reality of devastating fires, homeless camps, robberies, and violence that rapidly grow out of control.

Having witnessed a loss of a family home in a fire, and subsequent mental illness and institutionalization of his family members, **Luke Silva's** works explore destructive forces of life. His paintings feature burning forests and houses that literally and figuratively have become the signifiers of our times - and closely relate to Bosch's hellscapes.

Haley Hughes makes colorful and critically incisive works that are abstracted narratives of current events, drone attacks, global warming, politics, and politicians as seen through a Technicolor dreamscape. She is influenced by the colors, patterns, and symbolism of Islamic and Indian art.

Sarah Fuhrman's signature aerial tableaus and panoramic vistas of contemporary life are as ironic and precise in depicting humanity in its everyday life as were her famous artistic predecessors – Bosch and Bruegel.

Zoe McGuire creates mystical landscapes with colors and compositions reminiscent of the Limbourg Brothers' illustrations. Her works are subtly alluding to the supernatural, Arcadian life, and sensuality. Bright colors, graphic geometric shapes, and soft light emanating from within make them akin to contemporary stained-glass windows.

Katrina Jurjans creates semi-abstract paintings that reminiscent Persian miniatures in their calibrated balance and meticulous attention to detail, Giotto in their approach to depicting people, and Bosch in their lush garden vegetation. Her works are focused on the representation of contemporary women in their domestic environment.

Maria Petrovskaya makes works that usually reference female figures and sexuality. Her sculptures combine arcadian motifs and a medieval tradition of making polychromed sculptures before the whiteness of antiquity took hold in the renaissance era.

Emily Oliveira's particular focus is textile and making handmade quilts that are displayed on the walls, like tapestries. They continue the storytelling tradition that has persisted through the ages, but instead of the medieval characters, her works are populated by contemporary queer heroines and dystopian scenes of hell and apocalypse.
