



KING'S LEAP

105 Henry Street (Store 5)
New York, NY 10002
www.kingsleapfinearts.com
info@kingsleaprojects.net

geetha thurairajah

The Buddha of Suburbia

March 03 to April 16, 2023

geetha thurairajah's exhibition borrows its title from Hanif Kureishi's 1990 book *The Buddha of Suburbia*, a novel that begins when the main protagonist leaves the suburbs of South London. The story's departure from this context propels the narrative towards the typical intrigues of the urbane social fabric where ethnic, political and religious identity is experimented with over and over again through the fantasies on offer in the metropolis. In this exhibition, thurairajah reverses the spatial hierarchy between metropole and suburb and frames the suburban basement as the site where cultural excitements are encountered, researched, and shaped into personal identity.

The paintings and drawings exhibited on the street level continue thurairajah's pattern of selecting visual "quotations" of culture, sociality, and power, spanning art history from the Edo period to the Dutch and Italian Renaissance. The gathering of art historical citations rendered in various genres of painting echo the exploratory sampling in the Bildungsroman* that inspired the title for this exhibition. *(“A novel of education” or a genre of novel that focuses on the character arch of a person's formative years). The upstairs work recasts these loaded motifs as decorative archetypes, such as lawn ornament, pet portrait or scenes of orientalist landscapes. This “putting into place” of art historical status markers and taste indicators results in a series of compositions that tender some comic relief to how art history is often employed in cultural posturing. Such compositions retrieve art from this agenda and posit them as something to brighten the room or explore personal taste.

Despite the money, power, and respect that were invested into images that express historical relations of institutional property and orientalist fare, there is some playful relief on the lower-level where the artist has installed an operational basement bar, called *Rosebud*, with reference to the infamous cheat code from *The Sims*, which comes with its own layer of reference to a moment from Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* when a significant realization about material and social desire descends upon Charles Foster Kane. Over the course of the exhibition, the artist has invited friends to perform in the installation where thurairajah's corresponding fan art for each act will be displayed. These posters contrast the weight of assorted historical citations and cultural distinctions upstairs. Here, the basement is staged as a familiar site of curiosity, where exploring taste and developing a desire for cultural participation is forged away from the performance of social and self-mythologizing, and perhaps recuperated as the origin of sincere aesthetic attraction and enjoyment.

–Steff Hui Ci Ling

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geetha thurairajah (b. 1986, Waterloo, Canada) lives and works in New York. Selected solo and two person presentations include Center CLARK (Montreal, CA), Jack Barrett (New York, NY), Unit 17 (Vancouver, CA), Projet Pangée (Montreal, CA) and Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (Ontario, CA). Recent exhibitions include Foxy Production (New York, NY), Arsenal Contemporary Art, (Toronto, CA), Invisible Exports (New York, NY), Fourteen30 (Portland, OR), Oakville Galleries (Oakville, CA), American Medium (New York, NY), The New Gallery (Calgary, CA), Loyal Gallery, (Stockholm, SE) and 8eleven (Toronto, CA). thurairajah is currently in her second year at Bard MFA Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts. She studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Rhode Island School of Design and Wilfrid Laurier University.