



KING'S LEAP

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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.

These recent 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 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 as decorative motifs results in a series of compositions that tender some comic relief when we think of how vulnerable the often elite posturing of canonical artworks are to being rendered simply as something to brighten the room or express 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*. 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 citation and cultural distinction 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.

–Stef Hui Cí Ling

geetha thurairajah (b. 1986) 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 Beleven (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.