

The Triumph of Death

October 25 – December 9, 2023

Opening October 25, 6-8pm

Marinero is pleased to announce *The Triumph of Death*, a group exhibition inhabiting Gallery Two and including work by Helene Appel, Ever Baldwin, Ryan Johnson, Bridget Mullen, Sheila Pepe, Catalina Ouyang, Curtis Talwst Santiago and Hannah Wilke.

The exhibition interrogates the formalism and material usage of the Renaissance period, as well as delves into the conceptual underpinnings that defined the era. Using Bruegel's *The Triumph of Death* as a title reference, the works examine how these concepts have evolved into a contemporary context, across intergenerational and multimedia practices.

Helene Appel renders a piece of meat and pieces of pasta in exquisite, life size detail. The resulting paintings pay homage to the vanitas still life, expounding the idea of the futility of earthly pleasures. Dutch still lives depicted bounties of fruit, vegetables and libations often mixed with memento mori symbolism from skulls to candles, fruit to flowers. Appel brings these paintings down to their most minimalist form, focusing on an individual element, presented on a raw linen canvas. Ryan Johnson similarly uses vanitas imagery, in this sculpture a flower form, abstracted and bending precariously, alluding to a boundary of life and death.

Appel and Curtis Talwst Santiago's works both reference the Renaissance miniature, which were used for a variety of social and practical functions. Santiago's work is from his *Infinity* series, composed of carefully constructed miniature dioramas built within antique and reclaimed jewelry boxes. Santiago began the *Infinity* series in 2007 as a way to unearth and critically address histories of migration and colonialism. Initially drawn to the antique jewelry boxes for their implicit associations with trade and wealth, he quickly realized the inherent functionality of the self-containing objects. In this work, Santiago imagines himself at the precipice of a dream, inhabiting the space that exists in between awake and asleep.

Ever Baldwin's works surround abstract paintings with charred wood frames. The frames pay tribute to Renaissance alter pieces and *The Triumph of Death*, in that these works used elaborate frames to affect the reading of the paintings themselves and bestow a sense of grandeur. In Baldwin's work, the frame is an extension of the painting, continuing lines and forms outside of the confines of the canvas and creating an immersive experience for the viewer. Religious references are also present in Catalina Ouyang and Sheila Pepe's works. In Ouyang's sculpture from their *reliquary* series, the artist updates the form and implication by confronting painter Balthus' use of Thérèse Blanchard, an 11-year-old girl, as a model in his work. The figurative posture is derived from a Blanchard pose, and reconfigures the reliquary as a container of desire and cruelty. Sheila Pepe's sculptures are part of an

ongoing series, started in 1994, titled Votive Moderns. Pepe started making them in homage to the only sculptures she saw at home as a child—small Virgin Mary statues, Infants of Prague and crosses. The resulting works imitate form without any identifying features, creating abstracted sculptural totems.

Bridget Mullen's painting shows a female form pushing forward while being held back by lines of spider web. In context with Hannah Wilke's photograph, both artists present side views of females, their bodies contorted in the picture plane. The figures exude power and strength, while also presenting a vulnerability—in Mullen's work through the restraint of spiderwebs and in Wilke's through the subject's nudity. Both works orbit closest to the violence in Bruegel's painting, alluding to both natural and man-made components that can lead to human destruction.