

CHRIS OH

Landscapes

October 28 - December 5, 2021

FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE

21 East 3rd St. NYC 10003

www.fortnight.institute

Appropriation has long been understood as one of the defining practices of modern art. This art of the copy, however, is not limited to that which came after the age of reproduction. The conscious duplication of preexisting artworks is as present in Warhol as it is in Ovid's reconfigurations of Virgil. The push and pull between homage and authorship is central to an artist forming their own language; and just as Rubens copied and contorted the work of Titian, Chris Oh co-opts masterpieces from the Western canon in order to forge his own singular oeuvre.

With each exhibition Oh mounts, he selects one of the great Old Masters from Western art history as his primary reference. For *Landscapes*, that artist is Hieronymus Bosch, and more specifically, his masterpiece, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503-1515). In the words of Northern Renaissance art historian James Snyder, this is a work that is "so surprising, so overwhelming, that we momentarily forget all others we have seen." In taking in this sublime triptych, Oh focuses his telescopic lens on individual moments of wonder within the frenzied scene, offering us precious fragments parsed from the Rablesian panorama. Oh mimetically renders these majestic images with astounding technical skill, made even more impressive by his choice to replicate these visions on the unyielding surfaces of found objects, which in this show range from seed packets, to crystals, bookstacks and terrariums. Many of these objects relate to imagery found within *Earthly Delights*, which features an abundance of crystalline objects, wild fauna and curious tomes. Each found surface presents its own challenge of dexterity, which Oh zealously embraces, molding his images around their slick and cragged planes.

Oh's exhibition titling suggests a focus on Bosch's mystical environments, his hazy renderings of Dutch lowlands that are punctuated by bubbling swamps, the pastoral idyll that leads into Tartarus' burning hellscape. However, the landscapes Oh is speaking to are more nuanced. It is an acknowledgement of Bosch's cultural context, and reflexively, of Oh's own. Bosch created a visual language that combined mysticism, scripture and realism to cater to the desires of a burgeoning secular intelligentsia, whose love for novelty and preciousness led to the creation of the wunderkammer. Oh speaks to his own landscape in creating curios that combine two touchstones of contemporary art: the icon of the readymade and a phenomenal understanding of one's medium.

Beyond the alchemical visions of Bosch, this exhibition sees Oh consume the work of Northern Renaissance masters Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, Rogier van der Weyden and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. From here, Oh makes a leap into the domain of the Italian masters, transporting us to Rome and Florence via the startling tableaux of Botticelli and Caravaggio. All together, Oh's work is a resurrection of art history. To view these delicate paintings is to see the artist recall some of the most sublime reflections on 15th and 16th century life, and use them as mirrors through which to observe our own moment in time.

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Chris Oh (b.1982) Portland, Oregon. Lives and works in Queens, NY. The artist received his B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts, NY. Oh's first solo exhibition, *Plays*, was at Fortnight Institute in 2016 and in 2018 he had a solo exhibition at Sargent's Daughters, NY. Recent group exhibitions include *Painting is Panting's Food: Art History as Muse*, curated by Alison Gingeras, South Etna, Montauk, NY; *Hunters in the Snow* at 303 Gallery, NY; *Balloons Dropping from a Ceiling Fan*, Curated by Morgan Blair, Left Field Gallery, Los Osos, CA; *Interiors*, Venus Over Manhattan, NY; *Desire Encapsulated*, Make Room, Los Angeles, CA; and currently *In Search of the Miraculous*, curated by Jonathan Rider, Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY. Chris Oh is represented by Fortnight Institute.