

DEMISE



# DEMISE

Organized by John L. Moore

Rina Banerjee

Esperanza Cortés

Jae Rhim Lee

Brian Maguire

Paolo Pelosini

Levent Tuncer

August 31 - October 5, 2018

*The* GALLERIES  CSU

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Galleries at CSU wish to gratefully recognize the significant contributions of the many individuals who made this noteworthy exhibition possible.

First and foremost, we want to acknowledge the curator of *DEMISE*, artist and Cleveland Arts Prize winner, John Moore whose brainchild this exhibition is.

The Galleries are also indebted to the presenting artists, Rina Banerjee, Esperanza Cortés, Jae Rhim Lee, Brian Maguire, Paolo Pelosini and Levent Tuncer who not only graciously lent the works but helped shape the vision of the exhibition.

The Galleries are also grateful to the contributing scholars Danni Shin, Esther Jun, Enid Shomer, William Robinson, Reto Thuring and Clodagh Keogh for their thoughtful catalog essays, whose insights, both esthetic and historical, have revealed the profound connections in these works and the underlying state of the human condition and resilience.

We also want to thank the Cleveland Museum of art for permission to use and reproduce a series of famed paintings on death held in their collections including Albert Pinkham Ryder's *The Race Track (Death On A Pale Horse)*, Pablo Picasso's *La Vie*, and Anselm Kiefer's *Lot's Wife*, a group of works that formed the basis for the concept of this exhibition.

Special thanks go to Debra Jenks, for the stunning design of the catalog and her patience with many revisions.

The Galleries are also eager to acknowledge, the support we enjoy from the University, past President Dr. Ronald Berkman, and current President Harlan Sands, as well as Dr. Gregory Sadlek, the Dean, the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, for his sustained and tangible support for the gallery program.

We are grateful for the encouragement for the gallery program from the faculty of the Department of Art & Design, Irina Koukhanova, Chair, and the tireless work of the Gallery committee: Art Faculty Qian Li, Chair, Irina Koukhanova, George Mauersberger, and Mark Slankard; Vice President Robert Spademan; Community Representative Anne Albano, Executive Director, The Sculpture Center; Graduate Student Representative, and Gallery Intern Elizabeth Sisley, and undergraduate Student representative Justine Sommer.

Particular thanks are due the staff of University Marketing, especially William Dube, Director of Communication and Media Relations, and Graphic Designer Jo-Ann Dontenville-Ranallo for important help with the catalog. We also wish to thank gallery staff, Assistant Art Gallery Director, Tim Knapp; the crew, Tatiana Fry, Madison Reep, Justine Sommer, and Mariah Workman, as well as Gallery Intern, Keanu Hallowell.

We also gratefully acknowledge our funders: The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, The Ohio Arts Council, private benefactors, as well as faculty, staff, and community supporters.

Robert Thürmer  
Director and Chief Curator

I acknowledge with gratitude the following colleagues for their expertise and help in realizing this exhibition and catalog. Thought the process of developing *DEMISE* the artists have been generous with their time and patience in the many details. It has been a pleasure to work with everyone.

My thanks to William Robinson, Curator of Paintings, and Reto Thüring, Curator of Contemporary Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art; Francois Michaud, Senior Curator, Musee D Art Moderne De La Vill De Paris, France, for their early support of the idea of this exhibition, when I said to each, “I have this crazy idea for an exhibition on death as the last frontier.” I thank James Kohler of the Photographic and Digital Imagery Services of The Cleveland Museum of Art; Geanna Barlaam, Global Director of Operations, Fergus McCaffrey Gallery (New York) in regards to the paintings of Brian Maguire; Eva Konig, Atelier Anselm Kiefer (Paris, France) and Jacqueline Simon, for the Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), (New York) for permission to use their images for the catalog and wall text. I am very grateful to Danni Shin, Esther Jun, Enid Shomer, William Robinson, Reto Thüring and Clodagh Keogh for their thoughtful essays. I thank Eleanor Heartney for her good suggestions and forever Jane Farver.

My thanks to Robert Thumer, Director, The Cleveland State University Art Galleries for presenting *DEMISE*, and his staff, and Tim Knapp, Assistant Art Gallery Director. I am also very grateful to Esther Jun and Danni Shen for whom and without their assistance I would still be laboring on this project and to Debra Jenks for the catalog design.

John L. Moore  
Curator

# INTRODUCTION

John L. Moore

The exhibition is inspired first by three major historical works in the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art: Albert Pinkham Ryder's *The Race Track (Death On A Pale Horse)*, 1896-1908, is a painting the American

painter worked on for several years and was deeply reluctant to part with. The painting was inspired by a friend's suicide following a lost \$500 wager on a horse race. Picasso's *La Vie*, 1903, the renowned Blue Period portrait depicts Picasso's friend, the painter Carlos Casagemas, and was painted not long after Casagemas committed suicide. Picasso also created a series of paintings and drawings referring to Casagemas' death.



*The Race Track (Death on a Pale Horse)*, c. 1896-1908

Albert Pinkham Ryder (American, 1847-1917)

Oil on canvas, Framed: 84.5 x 102 x 6.5 cm (33 1/4 x 40 1/8 x 2 1/2 in.); Unframed: 70.5 x 90 cm (27 3/4 x 35 3/8 in.). Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1928.8

Anselm Kiefer's *Lot's Wife*, 1989, renders railroad tracks as a symbol of transporting Jews to concentration camps. In this painting the transformation of land provides a powerful metaphor for human suffering and death.

Demise presents six contemporary artists' own narratives, deeply personal to symbolically societal, through their works in the exhibition. The subject of death has long been a significant focus in their art. Rina Banerjee is most widely renowned for her sculptural assemblages that are created out of natural, commercial, as well as cross-cultural detritus. In her figurative works on paper, otherworldly chimeras leave the earth. All lines of difference diminish with age and last death "and those greener pastures are promised in heaven where all material things end. Esperanza Cortés uses a diverse variety of materials and sculptural methods. She often combines reworked found objects impregnated with cultural symbols and archeological qualities that act as sites of memory. Beyond the death of individuals and icons, Cortés looks to the processes of cultural death, following the ending of one moment in human civilizations onto the next. The Infinity Burial Project by Jae Rhim Lee explores the choices humans face after death, and how those choices reflect either denial or acceptance of death's physical implications. The artist has developed a strain of fungus, the Infinity Mushroom, which feeds on and remediates industrial toxins stored in the body, and ultimately converts the body into clean, nutrient-dense compost. Since 2010, Brian Maguire has worked in Juárez, Mexico, creating work in response to the proliferation of deaths that have followed in wake of the Mexican drug war. Through portraiture, the works seek to shed light on the staggering number of women murdered in Juárez (a practice known as feminicidio). Educated

in classical painting in Italy, after then moving into large-scale sculpture, Paolo Pelosini has worked on a most recent body of paintings reflecting what the artist notes as his "personal and collective anxiety for the human race and the planet earth". Levent Tuncer establishes a dialogue about cultural dualities using imagery derived from art, architecture, tiling and textile designs. The paintings on view in Demise, are part of his most current body of work, *Jinndom*, inspired by an anonymous fifteenth century Iranian drawing, and are what the artist describes as "portraits of grief."

Two of the artists have Cleveland Connections: Rina Banerjee is a graduate of Case Western University and attended Cleveland Institute of Art. Paolo Pelosini was on the Faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Art and won Honors in the CMA's May Show.

The exhibition is presented by The Cleveland State University Art Galleries and Director, Robert Thurmer.



*La Vie*, 1903

Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881-1973)

Oil on canvas, Framed: 239 x 170 x 10 cm (94 1/16 x 66 7/8 x  
3 7/8 in.) Gift of the Hanna Fund 1945.24

© Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York

# DEMISE

Reto Thüring

Albert Pinkham Ryder's *The Race Track, or Death on a Pale Horse* as it is also known, is an extraordinarily dark painting – literally as well as metaphorically. Painted in a muted palette of murky browns, blues, yellows, and greens, the modestly sized work depicts a skeletal figure riding on a pale horse with a scythe in its right hand. Galloping counter-clockwise, the horse follows the elliptical path of the race track, which is confined by a deteriorating wooden fence. A snake in the foreground echoes the horse's movement, winding towards the left, while a dead, limbless tree creates a counterbalance to the group made up of rider, horse, and snake.

It is interesting to note that Ryder's "uncensored archetype from some collective folk memory" goes back to a very personal story. The *Race Track* was inspired by the death of a friend of the artist, who bet on a losing horse in a race, squandering all his life savings, and subsequently committed suicide. While a short written account by Ryder himself recounts the tragic event, nothing in the picture alludes to a particular moment. Instead, the bleakness of the scenery is blatant and all-encompassing. The forthright message sets Ryder's painting apart from Pablo Picasso's *La Vie* and Anselm Kiefer's *Lots Frau*. Similar to Ryder's *The Race Track*, Picasso's *La Vie* has its roots in the suicide of a close friend. But unlike Ryder, Picasso translates that intimate story into a complex, deliberately unresolved composition. Even though the figures in *La Vie* are arranged within a shallow pictorial space, the narrative is extremely layered, various stories overlap and intertwine, and the connections and relationships between the seven characters remain enigmatic. The German

artist Anselm Kiefer, on the other hand, engages his and his country's history by combining a literal reference to a biblical story (the story of Lot's wife, who turned into a pillar of salt after she looked back at the city of Sodom) with a figurative reference to the Holocaust (the train tracks, recalling the deportation and death issued by the Nazi party).

While *The Race Track* was borne out of a deeply personal incident, the actual painting has no hint of particularity. Instead, Ryder renders death universal; a natural law of biblical magnitude that is making its rounds, eventually encountering all of us.

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1 Susan Hiller, On Albert Pinkham Ryder. In Grant, Simon. 2012. In *My View: Personal Reflections on Art by Today's Leading Artists*, p. 101. Hiller's account of her early encounter with *Race Track* at the Cleveland Museum of Art resonates with Hughie-Lee Smith's acknowledgment of the influence of the "mood and aura of unreality" of the same painting on his art. Virginia Spottswood Simon, *Qualities of Loneliness and Light*. In *International Review of African American Art*; 1999, Vol. 16 Issue 1, p. 4.



*Lot's Wife*, 1989

Anselm Kiefer (German, 1945-)

Oil paint, ash, stucco, chalk, linseed oil, polymer emulsion,  
salt and applied elements (e.g., copper heating coil), on canvas,  
attached to lead foil, on plywood panels.

Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Fund 1990.8

© Anselm Kiefer

# RINA BANERJEE

Danni Shen

Renowned for her sculptural assemblages born out of natural, commercial, and cross-cultural detritus, Rina Banerjee has undertaken a parallel, ongoing contemplation on “the end” through figurative painting. The work selected for this exhibition is perhaps in the most optimistic way, about leaving the earth as a subject. Made when the artist herself was battling illness, many of her lush, otherworldly, acrylic wash paintings in particular, illustrate a journey to a spirit world beyond.



*Taste my Tongue*, 2017  
Rina Banerjee  
Acrylic, ink on paper, 18 ¾ x 13 13/16 inches

In one such painting entitled “Taste My Tongue”, is a reference to Kālī, goddess of destruction, death, renewal in Hindu mythology, often remembered by her hanging tongue. The deity’s dark skin and necklace of severed heads or skulls are also key visual motifs recalled in imagery when evoking her presence. The body in movement is also a key motif in the artist’s work, as a way to imminent transformation by renewal, which according to the artist, is passage into death. Ending or stopping the person one was before becomes a shedding, scattering, and dispersal of ones being. And many of Banerjee’s other figures, at once delicate and grotesque, are floating, or seem to be traveling away from the

ground. With no distinct landscape, they drift above the nebulous vegetation, horizon, and joyously, beyond the perils of the earth. As suggested by these paintings, that is one of the ecstasies of leaving this world, which is to be relieved of the pains and struggles of being human within the physical realm. As such referenced by the title of another work on view “Searching for Greener Pastures”, it is to the greener pastures promised in the afterlife, where all material things end.

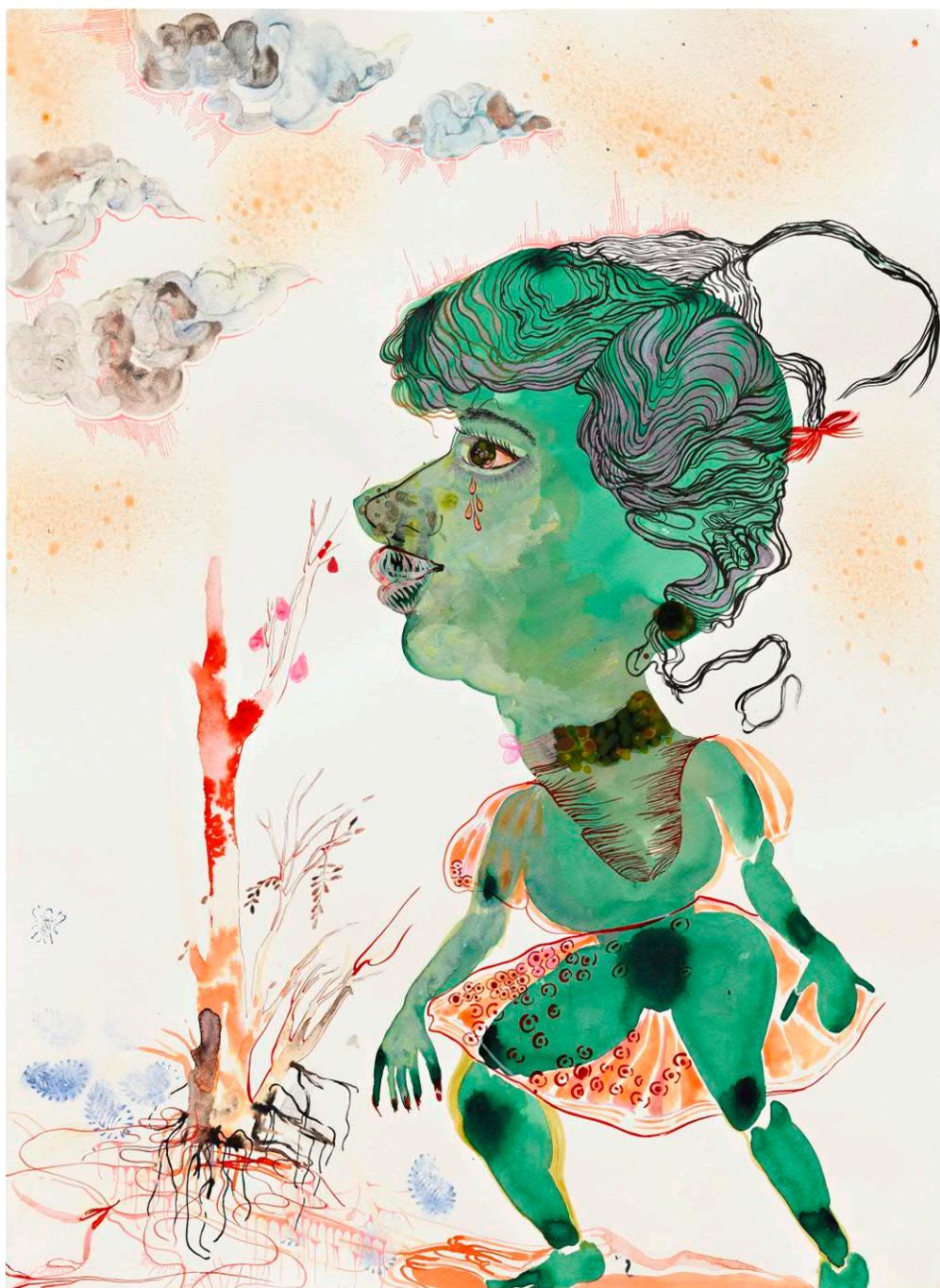
In terms of death, the artist herself seems a practical optimist. “I think we perish and get recycled back into the earth. I think when you think about dying, you think about the timeline of your life and the era you’ve lived in. It’s easy to mourn for death itself in the people who have died before. You reflect on yourself in the different stages of your life, visiting the different people that you were. So in that context, reflecting on death and mortality, is not only reflecting on the new person you will be, but also saying goodbye to the life you knew. Being entangled in objects, real estate, people, experiences, places – it’s as if life is a container; you put all these things in

like a jar, and when you leave, the jar is no longer yours, right? So there's a kind of springboard – a new feeling of being sprinted up or out, to care less about things, which is one to enjoy. Everything is limited. All of life's

stress is negotiated on the promise of being alive in the future. All contracts are off once you die. You're safe in some sense.”



*Like honorable, 2011*  
Rina Banerjee,  
Acrylic, ink on paper, 22 x 15 inches



*Searching for greener pastures*, 2010  
Rina Banerjee  
Acrylic and ink on paper, 30 x 22 inches



*Dangerous World*, 2010  
Rina Banerjee  
Acrylic, Ink, Collage on paper, 30 x 22 inches

**Rina Banerjee** was born in Calcutta, India in 1963. She grew up in London, England, and eventually moved to New York, NY. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Polymer Engineering at Case Western University in 1993 and took a job as a polymer research chemist upon graduation. After several years, she left the science profession to receive her Masters in Fine Arts from Yale University in 1995. Banerjee's work has been exhibited internationally, including but not limited to New York, NY; Paris, France; London, England; Tokyo, Japan; Los Angeles, CA; New Delhi, India; Milan,

Italy; Singapore; and notably a solo exhibition at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC in 2013. The artist's works are also included in many private and public collections such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Queens Museum, Queens, NY; and the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY. Rina Banerjee currently lives and works in New York City.



*Hanumans Flight*, 2012 -2017  
Rina Banerjee  
Wire basket, silk, Chinese umbrella. 6 x 6 x 2 feet

# ESPERANZA CORTÉS

Danni Shen

Cortés uses a diversity of materials and processes often in combination with found objects that act as sites of cultural and archaeological memory. Often in reference to displaced communities, cultures, and entire civilizations, the artist's works further serve as uncanny reminders to the patterns, continuations, and evolutions of colonialism around the world today.

Colombia, the artist's country of birth, holds the second largest population of displaced peoples in the world, at around 570 million. Within the country's mountains saturated with mineral riches such as gold, emerald, and coal, both men and women work the mines, often their entire lives. In one of the artist's work entitled *Aftermath*, the ghostly silhouette of a skull rests beneath a cascading metallic headpiece. The sculptural installation formally reflects on the overexploitation and consumption of resources, both material and human, begging the question: when the artisanal miner is removed, what is left? When those who have been working and living off the land are removed by big miners, the resultant strip mining removes the earth, poisoning the land and the water. Even if a legal case filed against strip mining is won, if the land has been destroyed, what has really been won?

Growing up in Harlem during the 1980's, witnessing the deaths of cultural figures one after another, such as Malcom X, Medger Everts, John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, made a profound impact on Cortés. Beyond mourning, the artist became obsessed with the

connections between the assassinations and their geopolitical implications at an early age. Her practice today ruminates not only on the death of people and individuals, but also to the deaths that societies go through culturally – on the ending of one moment that cannot be reproduced, particularly without those certain individuals become historical and cultural icons.



As the artist ruminates in her studio, “I’m talking about situations that have been repeated and repeated. Any political person that gets in the way of that connection to power is preventing the wealthy from becoming wealthier; this is a huge disruption – the same way that indigenous everywhere and diasporic peoples are getting cut off from their possibilities – it’s the end to

*Aftermath*, 2015  
Esperanza Cortés  
Metal chain on clay sculpture, 64 x 20 x 8 inches  
Photo: Max Yawney

a possibility. And then who are we afterwards? How does that affect us? It's all part of the same gravy train, like Martin Luther King, gentler at the beginning, more powerful at the end. Same money, same banks, all of these things are connected. It's a loss of culture, but also the severing of possibilities that would be informing our

lives now. I'm talking especially about the Americas, that's the Western colonial mentality. A hundred years later, Trump is the embodiment of that stupidity. Yet the people that have been most affected still have that resilience to keep going, celebrating, and being beautiful, instead of being squashed down like bugs."



*La Dorada*, 2017  
Esperanza Cortés  
Clay sculpture, gold beads, 60 x 18 x 20 inches  
Photo: Max Yawney



*November 22, 2013*

Esperanza Cortés

Glass beads on clay, metal bead and metal base, 24 x 12 x 12 inches

Photo: Max Yawney

*Esperanza Cortés* was born 1963 in Bogotá, Colombia and is based in New York City. She is a multidisciplinary artist whose exhibitions include Neuberger Museum of Art, Bronx Museum, Queens Museum, El Museo Del Barrio, and MoMA PS1. She has exhibited in Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, Greece, Mexico, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Japan. Awards include the 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship; BRIC Media Arts Fellowship; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Grant; Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant and

Puffin Foundation. Residencies include Museum of Arts and Design, Joan Mitchell Center, Sculpture Space, Fountainhead and Socrates Sculpture Park. Cortés's work is in private and public collections including the American Embassy in Monterey, Mexico.



*Cumbia*, 2014  
Esperanza Cortés  
Emerald shell on clay, wood, 20 x 24 x 8 inches  
Photo: Max Yawney

# JAE RHIM LEE

Esther Jun

In a 2016 interview with NPR, Jae Rhim Lee (JR) begins the conversation by calling herself J Grimm and J Reaper, names that seemingly contradict the laughter with which those words are delivered. Through this introduction alone, one can understand JR's relationship with death and her approach to working with this universal end. But to JR, death is not an end at all.

JR's affair with death reaches as far back as her childhood when she witnessed on a loved one the impact of death and the inevitable period of grief that follows. This encounter and subsequent need to embrace the process stayed with JR and carried into her art practice, first notable in the work she produced during her years as an MS student at MIT. She wanted to make sense of death and everything that came along with it—the waste, the pollution, the decomposition of the body, and the transformation of energy. The objects and systems JR created as a student served as a reflection and as commentary.

So how did she evolve from detached commentary to creating utilitarian bodysuits as a very real alternative to our burial practices today? Following her time at MIT, JR studied mycoremediation, the process of environmental rectification through fungi. This became the turning point of her professional career offering up this realization: “Could mushrooms be the symbol and tool for a cultural shift in how we think about death and our relationship to the planet?”

The first Infinity Burial Suit was created and death became not an end but “a moment of transformation,” as she puts it. When buried in the Infinity Burial Suit, death becomes an opportunity for our bodies to benefit the earth and return nutrients to the planet. Today, JR presents the most recent editions of these suits through her company Coeio. Founded in 2014 as the only green burial company of its kind, Coeio is a culmination of all of JR's research, obsessions, and personal devotion to a subject that has haunted her since a young age.



The term “coeio” means “assemble” or “come together,” offering again a clear picture of JR's relationship with death and steering away from the often negative and morbid connotations of the topic.

Jae Rhim Lee poses for a portrait wearing the *Infinity Burial Suit* she created. The suit is seeded with mushrooms bred to feed on the toxins stored in our bodies.

Photograph on paper

JR is an artist and remediation is her art. But under this umbrella term, she can easily be labeled as an entrepreneur, a scientist, an environmentalist, a mortician, and of course a contemporary Grimm Reaper. The first adopter of the suit, Dennis White, has already become well known within JR's circles, and his voice is perhaps the best to argue the case for her initiative: "It IS the future of burial."

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- 1 "Is There A Better Way To Be Buried?" NPR, 29 Jan. 2016.
  - 2 "The Story of a Green Burial Company." Coeio, coeio.com/coeio-story/.
  - 3 "Is There A Better Way To Be Buried?" NPR, 29 Jan. 2016.
  - 4 "The Story of a Green Burial Company." Coeio, coeio.com/coeio-story/.



*Infinity Burial Suit*, installation view, DEAF Expo. Rotterdam, 2012  
Jae Rhim Lee  
Photograph on paper  
Photo: Ed Jansen



*Infinity Burial Suit*  
Jae Rhim Lee  
Photograph on paper

Born 1975 in Gwangju, South Korea, **Jae Rhim Lee** graduated from Wellesley College in 1998 with a BA and from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2006 with an MS. She has continued to work at the cross-over between art and science with a lasting interest in death and burial practices. Her work has been exhibited in Europe and the US. In 2011, JR was invited to give

a talk at the TEDGlobal Conference in Edinburgh. The video of her presentation spread her work worldwide and brought in a slew of new supporters. Today, Jae Rhim Lee produces her Infinity Burial Suits through the company Coeio.



*My mushroom burial suit, 2011*  
Jae Rhim Lee  
7:30 minutes, TEDGlobal .mp4, July 2011

# BRIAN MAGUIRE

Clodagh Keogh

In a carefree world, artists paint landscapes, portraits and still lifes. These traditional genres that people know and gravitate towards are presented in the current selection of works by Brian Maguire. Yet those familiar with the artist know well that neither he nor his artwork have ever inhabited a carefree world. Brian Maguire came of age at the height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and without a doubt it was from there that his subject matter emerged.

Since that time, he has been drawn to other places of intense conflict where life is at its most brutal. Places where a 'peaceful death' does not exist. Maguire's response has been fiercely expressive paintings that capture and convey the circumstance and aftermath of death. He considers his work a necessary intervention: "Art is important when justice fails."

What is astounding are the lengths to which Brian Maguire goes to in order to achieve his work. Heeding photojournalist Robert Capa's statement, "If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough,"



*Juarez, 2014*  
Brian Maguire  
Acrylic on linen, 57 ½ x 82 5/8 inches

he has placed himself in parts of the world rife with violence and injustice. A recent series of immersive, large-scale paintings depicting the destruction of Aleppo, is the outcome of his journey to Syria last year. The visceral visions displayed in *Demise*, results of an assignment he undertook in the notoriously violent city of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Strategies to enter these places are key to his approach. He goes undercover in search of an image to expose the story of immense cruelty and ensuing impunity.

In contrast with the speed of media coverage where photographs appear and disappear instantaneously, Maguire strives, in his own words, “to protect and husband the image” through paintings that draw us in and demand that we look. “Paintings remain still, you can’t see a painting without sitting in front of it, taking time, giving it time. It appears in silence, there is no sound with painting.”

The paintings presented in *Demise* do just that. Still, quiet and personal portraits of three young Juárez women imbued with the horror of their brutal deaths grasp our gaze. Their presence deftly painted back to life by Maguire’s brushstrokes.

Nature Morte No 2, 2014 is one of a series of eight paintings that graphically depict the heinous way in which Juárez men have met their death. It is compelling and shocking at once. Swept paint and washes create a mirage, a severed head resting on a block of ice appears as a sculpture on a plinth. Preserving its personhood although rendered as an inanimate object...a still life.

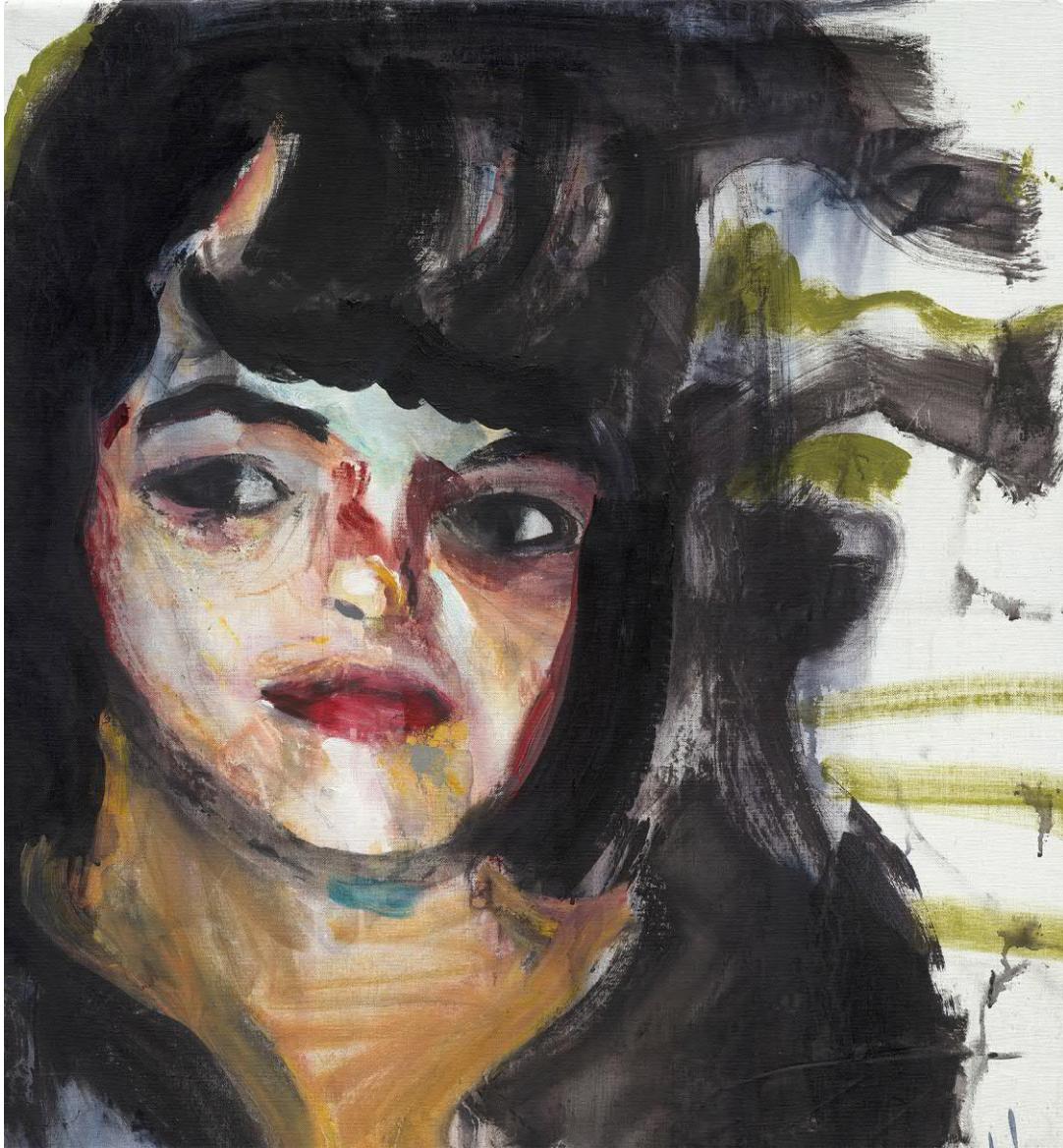
The seductive power of the painting is disturbing. This

is Brian Maguire’s strategy at work, luring us in, “We see the beauty and then we see the obscenity.” This inherent paradox once led art critic Donald Kuspit to



write: “Given a competent level of technique, the question is, why?”. To answer the “Why?”, we need look no further than the title of the first exhibition where these paintings were shown in Northern Ireland. His paintbrush is his weapon.

*Brenda Bernice Castillo Garcia, 2011*  
Brian Maguire  
Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 21.7 inches



Guadalupe Veronica Castro, 2012  
Brian Maguire  
Acrylic on linen, 82 x 76 cm / 32.3 x 29.9 inches

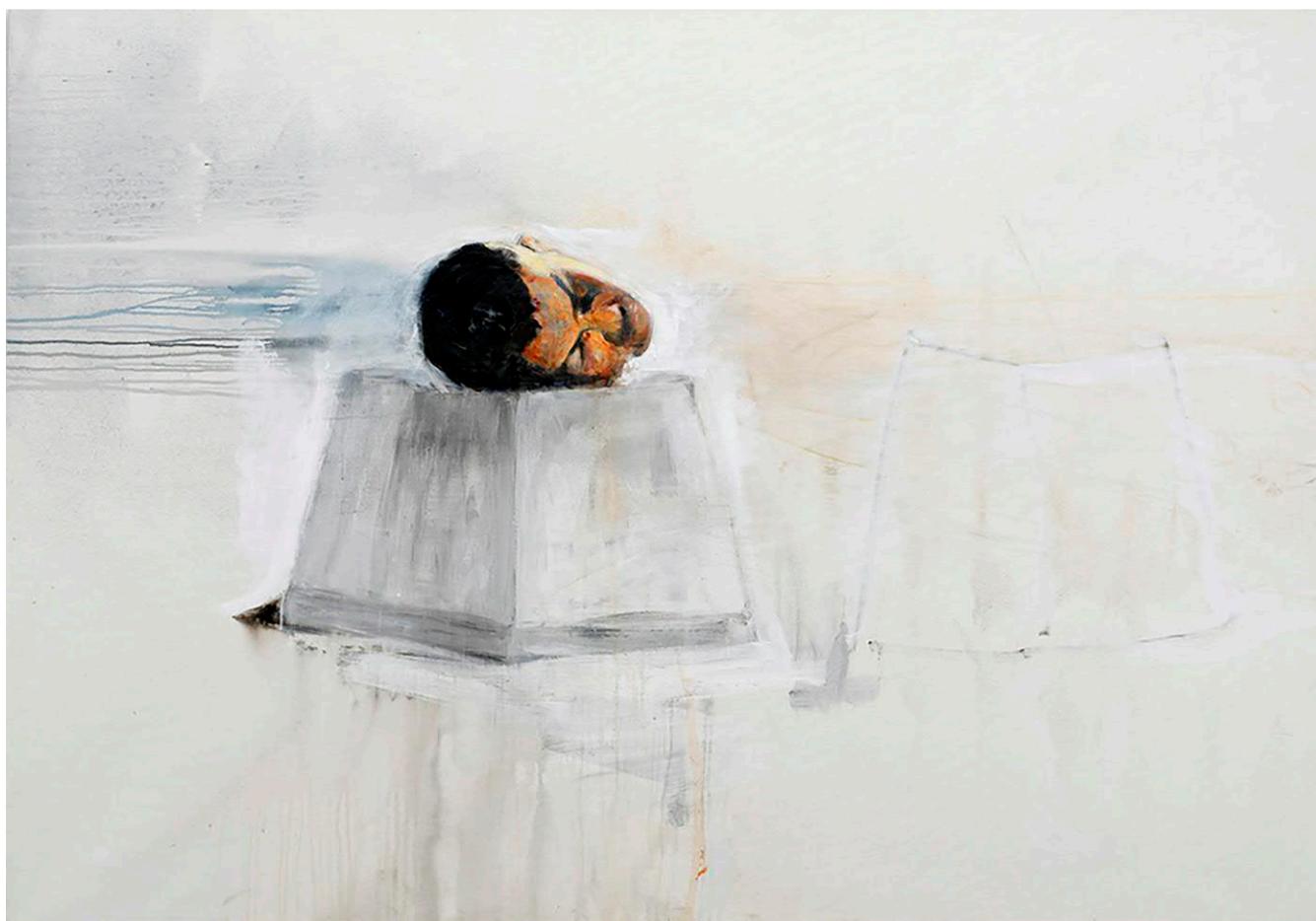


*Rubi Marisol Fraire Escobedo, 2012*  
Brian Maguire  
Acrylic on linen, 16 x 12 inches

**Brian Maguire** has shown extensively in Europe and the US, also participating in shows in Korea, China and Japan. Recent solo exhibitions include *War Changes Its Address: The Aleppo Paintings*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2018); *Over Our Heads the Hollow Seas Closed Up*, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin (2016), *J'accuse, The Void*, Derry (2015–2016); *Fergus McCaffrey*, New York (2015); *X Espacio de Arte*, Mexico City (2013); *European Parliament*, Brussels (2012) and *Cultuurcentrum de Werft*, Geel, Belgium (2012). In 2000, a major retrospective toured from Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane to Crawford Art Gallery, Cork and the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston.

Group exhibitions and biennales include IMMA-Irish Museum of Modern Art; WIELS, Brussels; VISUAL, Carlow; Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane; RAM Foundation, Rotterdam; National Gallery of Contemporary Art, Korea; Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, Japan; Dublin Contemporary (2011); the Beijing Biennale (2008) and the 24th São Paulo Bienal (1998).

Maguire's work is held in numerous public and private collections including the Museum of Fine Art Houston, USA; IMMA; Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane; Trinity College Dublin; Alvar Aalto Museum, Finland; Gemeentemuseum, Den Hague, Netherlands; Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK; and Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.



*Nature Morte (2)*, 2013  
Brian Maguire  
Acrylic on linen, 55 1/8 x 78 3/4 inches

# IF I WERE FIRE: PAOLO PELOSINI

William H. Robinson

Paolo Pelosini wrestles with death like a Samurai warrior entering a contest he knows he can never win. He faces his fate stoically, unafraid, even welcoming the inevitable demise. Appearing in *Death is My Chance* (2016), a short documentary film about his life as artist, Pelosini observes that death maybe his only opportunity to achieve fame. Ten years earlier he had published a book with Claudio Giumelli titled *Il trionfo della morte* (*The Triumph of Death*).

Death also haunts Pelosini's paintings. Strange, frightening creatures inhabit *The Dump* (2016) and *If I were Fire, I would Burn the World* (2017), paintings that recall last judgement scenes by Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and medieval Italian artists. Pelosini conjures up terrifying scenes of fires scorching the earth, igniting above pools of water, illuminating the distant horizon, and darkening or obliterating the sun. The light generated by these fires are but momentary fissures in a sea of darkness, providing just enough illumination to expose vast, hellish landscapes of dead and dying creatures. A luminescent green snake crawls toward us in *The Dump* surrounded by a severed animal heads, monstrous fish with razor-sharp teeth, rats, salamanders, worms, human skulls, eggs, an elephant skull, and the corpse of a woman. Frightened animals in the background move inexorably toward a host of rotting dead creatures in the foreground as reminders of our fate.

An equally terrifying scene of dead and dying creatures overseen by an owl perched on a defoliated tree appears in *If I were Fire, I would Burn the World*. There is no

archangel in these scenes weighing souls and separating the saved from the damned. No one is redeemed by mercy or grace, there is no earthly paradise for the righteous, we are instead trapped, surrounded the damned in a hell of eternal perdition, prisoners of the lowest ring in Dante's *Inferno*. Feelings of torment and anguish are made all the more intense through the artist's technique of mixing oil paint with tar.



What inspires such pessimism? Perhaps years of living and studying art in Italy. Pelosini observes that death is a more important subject in European than American art. Yet, while acknowledging that his paintings are informed by the Tuscan tradition of viewing death as part of life, he also aspires to confront the demons and anxieties of our own time, to face our tragic and ironic fate directly, unafraid, without pity or remorse.

*Nocturne #12, 2018*  
Paolo Pelosini  
Oil and tar on canvas, 33 x 29 inches



*The Dump*, 2016  
Paolo Pelosini  
Tar & oil paint on canvas, 77 X 110 inches



*Si Fossi foco arderei lo mondo (If I Were Fire, I Would Burn the World)*, 2017  
Paolo Pelosini  
Tar & oil paint on canvas, 77 X 110 inches

Born in Massarosa, Italy, **Paolo Pelosini** graduated from the Istituto D'Arte of Lucca in 1964 and the Accademia D'Arte in Florence in 1969. He moved to the United States later that year to study in the MFA program at the University of Minnesota and began making conceptual art in 1970. After teaching at Cleveland Institute of Art for two years (1974-1975), he moved to New York City and in 1982 began using an ax to produce metal sculptures out of found objects. Pelosini has exhibited widely from 1965 to the present, including at Oberlin College

(1968), in the Cleveland Institute of Art faculty show (1974), in the May Shows of the Cleveland Museum of Art (1974, 1975), in the Venice Biennial (2011), and at numerous galleries in the United States and Italy.

Today, Pelosini maintains studios on the upper eastside of Manhattan and in Massarosa. He does not believe there are any movements in art anymore and aspires to make art that is symptomatic of our time, understandable to everyone, and yet remains "competent."



*Nocturne #13, 2018*  
Paolo Pelosini  
Oil and tar on canvas, 33 x 29 inches

# LEVENT TUNCER

Enid Shomer

Levent Tuncer is a Turkish-American artist. The four paintings on display here are part of his “Jinndom” series, initially inspired by an anonymous fifteenth-century Iranian drawing. Among other themes, the series explores the mythical jinns featured in eastern lore from China and Japan to the Middle East and Turkey. A class

of trickster spirits capable of appearing in human and animal form and of influencing society for good or ill, the jinns of eastern art are typically found in miniatures and manuscript illustrations. Here, however, they are depicted in a modern, western way, with scale, depth, and perspective radically and playfully different from their original renderings. Sometimes delicate and ethereal, other times bold and ominous, Tuncer’s figurations invite his viewers to discover their own creaturely presences within the animated reality of the canvas.



*Bitter Loss*, 2015  
Levent Tuncer  
Oil on canvas, 12 x 16 inches

The paintings are also informed by three losses Tuncer suffered in a brief span of time: the death of a colleague, of a friend, and of his mother. The paintings confront grief in the face of the utter finality of death and its enduring effect on those left behind. Sometimes the relationship between the death motif and the image is direct, as in the painting “Bitter Loss,” where a dead bee and the shadow beneath it that suggests an agonizing human form convey a pure correlate of death’s dominion. Usually, though, the visual metaphors are more nuanced. For example, the blue-winged dragonfly in #29 hints at sinister overtones of threat and violence. Likewise, in the center of painting #42, a bee’s wings seem to morph into a bloody, cut throat.

Tuncer’s work is intricately and intimately connected to his life through what he calls the “Proustian space” from which he conjures his art. In this Proustian space, a cultivated, meditative state halfway between sleep and wakefulness, memories fluoresce and shift, often defying clear retrieval. The parameters of this consciousness are elastic and porous, like memory itself, and lend Tuncer’s work the innate malleability apparent to any viewer who contemplates it for more than a moment.

These are essentially hybrid paintings that mine the fertile intersection of eastern and western art historical traditions. And like the artists before him, east and west, who worked within highly stylized genres, Tuncer embeds hidden images and visual puns in his work that serve as memory triggers and expressive guideposts—portraits of people, plants, animals, and other talismans from his life.

Using his own cross-cultural painterly lexicon, Tuncer probes the resources of memory, that transformative mindset with which we recapture the past and color the future. Ultimately, these paintings reflect not only pain

and loss but also the way Tuncer mediates them—by creating the flexible narrative that is memory. All these elements—jinns, memory, pain, loss, and cross-cultural disjuncture—contribute to his art. But the ineffable world these paintings create is both a more complex and less describable place.



# 29, 2015  
Levent Tuncer  
Oil on canvas, 85 x 77 inches



# 44, 2016  
Levent Tuncer  
Oil on canvas, 87 x 77 inches

Born 1952 in Edirne, Turkey, **Levent Tuncer** moved to London where he attended St. Martins School of Art and graduated from the Hornsey School of Art. He won a full scholarship to the University of Hartford, Connecticut, and there earned his MFA in painting. He has received grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and Artists' Space (NYC) and has twice been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Recent exhibitions include

*“Come Together: Surviving Sandy”* (2013, a Brooklyn show); *“Talisman,”* at the Painting Center in Manhattan in 2015; and *“In the Shadows: Contemporary Artists and Obsessive Memory”* (2015, Western Michigan University).



# 42, 2016  
Levent Tuncer  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 83 inches

## CONTRIBUTORS

**ESTHER JUN** is an artist and non-profit professional focusing on programming and development. She lives and works in Arlington, MA. Following her graduation from Cornell University's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning in 2015, she has worked for a number of organizations including ArtWorks, The Naomi Cohain Foundation and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Currently she is concentrating on her studio practice while freelancing in development work."

**CLODAGH KEOGH** is an independent curator based in Paris. She worked on the British Council and Goldsmiths collaborative project, *Tales of the City*, for Arte Fiera di Bologna, Italy and the 54th Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Exhibitions she curated include: *Drawn*, at the Schick Gallery, Skidmore College, New York; *Cent: 100 Drawings*, for Galerie Defrost, Paris; and *Precarious Status*, at the University of Florida Galleries, Florida. Her co-curated exhibition *5C5C* was presented at the Centro Internazionale per l'Arte Contemporanea in Rome and travelled to the KT&G Sangsangdang Gallery in Seoul.

**WILLIAM H. ROBINSON** is Curator of Modern Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art and adjunct Professor of Art History at Case Western Reserve University. He received his doctorate in Art History from CWRU and a certificate in Spanish language studies from the Universitat de Barcelona. A prolific author of scholarly books and articles, he has organized over thirty exhibitions and written extensively about nineteenth and twentieth century art in Europe and America, covering

a broad range of subjects, including Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet, Burchfield, Diego Rivera, modernist movements in Spain, technical art history, and the dissemination of Cubism.

**DANNI SHEN** is Curatorial Associate at Empty Gallery, a black-cube space dedicated to time-based and non-object-oriented practices, physically located in Hong Kong. She is chiefly based in New York, where she was previously the Curatorial Fellow at Wave Hill and Curator in Residence at Residency Unlimited. She is a contributor at various publications including *Hyperallergic*, *Rhizome*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Two Coats of Paint* and *SCREEN界面*, and guest curates for *OUTPUT*, a digital art platform based in Shanghai.

**ENID SHOMER** is the author of eight books of poetry and prose. Her poems and stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Paris Review*, etc. She won the Iowa Short Fiction Award for her first collection of stories, *Imaginary Men*, and the Florida Book Awards Gold Medal for her second, *Tourist Season*, which was also selected for Barnes & Noble's Discover Great New Writers series. National Public Radio named her book *The Twelve Rooms of the Nile* one of the six best novels of 2012. In 2013, Shomer received the Lifetime Achievement Award in Writing from the Florida Humanities Council.

**RETO THÜRING** is Chair of Modern, Contemporary, and Decorative Art, and Performing Arts and Curator of Contemporary Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art,

where he is responsible for overseeing the museum's collection of contemporary artwork and the programming of exhibitions at the museum and the Transformer Station. He studied at the University of Basel and wrote his dissertation on Venetian portraiture of the 16th century. Projects at the Cleveland Museum of Art include installations and solo exhibitions with Albert Oehlen, Kara Walker, Dan Graham, Roman Signer, Jae and Wadsworth Jarrell, Martin Creed, Jennifer Bartlett, Scott Olson, Fred Wilson, Janet Cardiff, Ai Weiwei, Damián Ortega, Ragnar Kjartansson, and the group show *The Unicorn*.

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST:

All works courtesy of the artists unless otherwise noted.

### RINA BANERJEE

*Dangerous World, 2010*

Acrylic, Ink, Collage on paper,  
30 x 22 inches

Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/  
Bruxelles

*Searching for greener pastures, 2010*

Acrylic and ink on paper  
30 x 22 inches

Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/  
Bruxelles

*Taste my Tongue, 2017*

Acrylic, ink on paper  
18  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13  $\frac{13}{16}$  inches

Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/  
Bruxelles

*Like honorable, 2011*

Acrylic, ink on paper  
22 x 15 inches

Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/  
Bruxelles

*Hanumans Flight, 2012 -2017*

Wire basket, silk, Chinese umbrella.  
6 x 6 x 2 feet

Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/  
Bruxelles

### ESPERANZA CORTES

*Aftermath, 2015*

Metal chain on clay sculpture  
64 x 20 x 8 inches

*Cumbia, 2014*

Emerald shell on clay, wood  
20 x 24 x 8 inches

*La Dorada, 2017*

Clay sculpture, gold beads.  
60 x 18 x 20 inches

*November 22, 2013*

Glass beads on clay, metal bead and metal base  
24 x 12 x 12 inches

### BRIAN MAGUIRE

*Nature Morte (2), 2013*

Acrylic on linen  
55  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 78  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Courtesy of the artist and Fegus McCaffery,  
New York

*Juarez, 2014*

Acrylic on linen  
57  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 82  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches

Courtesy of the artist and Fegus McCaffery,  
New York

*Erica Perez Escobedo, 2012*  
Acrylic on linen, 31 ¾ x 28 ¾ inches  
Courtesy of Christian Groenke and Gulia  
Bruckmann

*Rubi Marisol Fraire Escobedo, 2012*  
Acrylic on linen, 16 x 12 inches  
Courtesy of Christian Groenke and Gulia  
Bruckmann

*Brenda Bernice Castillo Garcia, 2011*  
Acrylic on canvas  
28 x 21.7 inches  
Courtesy of Christian Groenke and Gulia  
Bruckmann

## **JAE RHIM LEE**

Jae Rhim Lee poses for a portrait wearing the Infinity Burial Suit she created. The suit is seeded with mushrooms bred to feed on the toxins stored in our bodies.

Photograph on paper  
Image by Edmund D. Fountain for The New York Times and courtesy of the artist.

Installation view, 2012  
Photograph on paper  
Courtesy of Coeio and the artist

*Infinity Burial Suit*  
Photograph on paper  
Courtesy of Coeio and the artist

*Mushroom Death Suit*  
Photograph on paper  
Courtesy of Coeio and the artist

*My mushroom burial suit, 2011*  
7:30 minutes, TEDGlobal .mp4, July 2011  
Courtesy of TEDGlobal and the artist

## **PAOLO PELOSINI**

*If I were Fire, I would Burn the World, 2016*  
Oil and tar on canvas  
110 x 77 inches

*The Dump, 2016*  
Oil and tar on Canvas  
110 x 77 inches

*Nocturne # 12, 2018*  
Oil and tar on canvas  
33 x 39 inches

*Nocturne # 13, 2018*  
Oil and tar on canvas  
33 x 39 inches

## **LEVENT TUNCER**

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