



March 6—April 10, 2021

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *Earthly Coil*, featuring new work by artists Brook Hsu, Liza Lacroix, Heidi Lau, Nikholis Planck, and Nazim Ünal Yilmaz. The multidisciplinary exhibition includes painting, drawing and sculpture and examines the construction of meaning and memory in relation to instinct.

The exhibition title is a cross between Hieronymus Bosch's famously indecipherable painting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, and the existential soliloquy given by Prince Hamlet in William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1 ("*When we have shuffled off this mortal coil...*"). This dual framework serves as a perceptual anchor for the artworks included which are ostensibly defined by humanity's impermanence and the unknowns beyond physical existence. Personal identity, spiritual symbolism, and observations of the tangible world as well as interior psychologies inform the artists' enigmatic visions, relying on intuition as the means of finding truth.

A self-identified naturalist, Brook Hsu's (b. 1987) attentiveness to biology unites seemingly disparate themes and narratives of love, pain, humor and connectedness. Hsu's dense ink paintings depict recognizable figures sourced from films she has sentimental attachment to, layered between scrawling spiral scripts. Their surfaces are finished with shellac, a resin secreted by beetles and used as a preservative to coat fruits and vegetables. Her ink and acrylic painted carpet is part of a series of fiber works with ponds as subject matter, as if ripples in a pool of water could mark a transitional place where myths and stories are born.

Liza Lacroix (b. 1988) embraces the uncertainty of her medium as a vehicle, allowing her to pursue new unknowns by setting an oxidized stage for the possibility of a third presence. Insisting on the physicality of the painting process, a sense of drama and theater emerges and alludes to narratives, landscapes or scenes; places which can be recognized in feeling and not by optics alone. For Lacroix, painting is an extension of the performing body—a mediation between emotion and intellect.

Heidi Lau's (b. 1987) handbuilt ceramic works recall tokens of remembrance and that which has been lost to time through the representation of ritual objects, funerary monuments, burial robes, and fossilized creatures. Clay, one of the oldest and most universal materials associated with productive and artistic labor, naturally lends itself to the expression of the human condition through material culture. Drawing from Taoist mythology, folk superstitions, and colonial architecture in her birthplace of Macau, Lau explores transcendental homelessness, displacement, and nostalgia as the condition of contemporary existence.

Nikholis Planck's (b. 1987) shaped canvases are a result of his self-referential approach in which he repurposes and upcycles previous works to produce paintings anew—his process an ouroboros of sorts, a snake eating its own tail. Often concerned with breaking down boundaries both formally and metaphysically, his wax and oil paintings and observational drawings include a gamut of motifs. Anatomical features, botanical studies, ornamental designs, feathers, bat wings, unfurling and tangled nature, tombstones in Greenwood Cemetery, and spatial plans for performative events make ethereal appearances.

Nazim Ünal Yilmaz's (b. 1981) paintings often result from shifts between consciousness and unconsciousness, spontaneity and consideration, and the psyche and physical world. Yilmaz deals with expansive topics such as identity, abuse, nature, and ennui through recurring motifs such as animals, clocks, the human figure, and objects of domesticity. Consciously inviting the viewer to decode the intricate symbolism in his paintings he breaks down painterly space into emotional expanse. Aiming to question linear theologies and the human centrism of our civilization, Yilmaz's paintings reveal the oppressive regimes of physicality at the crossroads between truth, reality, religion, fiction, and the cycle of life.