

# SARAH CROMARTY WISHFUL THINKIN'

September 8 – October 13, 2018

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 8th, 6-8pm

KLOWDEN MANN

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Sarah Cromarty  
*Here Comes the Fall*  
2018

Cardboard, resin, magic, glitter, matte medium, digital print, oil  
paint, liquin, wood  
36.5 by 48 by 5.25 inches

*For, What with my whole world-wide wandering,  
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope  
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
With that obstreperous joy success would bring, -  
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring  
My heart made, finding in its scope.*

- from "Childe Roman to the Dark Tower Came" by Robert Browning (1812-1889)

KLOWDEN MANN is proud to present Los Angeles-based artist Sarah Cromarty's *WISHFUL THINKIN'*, the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery. The show consists of mixed-media sculptural paintings detailing a fantasy-world of the artist's creation, one in which forest and jungle landscapes are constructed with layers of oil paint over photographic prints on cardboard, glitter accentuates hyper-realized fingernails in front of misted palm trees, stalagmites reach up over water, and a freestanding (dancing) nude female exists caught in a moment of inter-dimensional travel and/or release.

Cromarty's painting takes the conceptual and linguistic framework of science fiction as the starting point for an exploration of the mythology of the artist, as well as the near-ubiquitous human desire for escape from daily reality. The figures and landscapes that populate Cromarty's work are in many ways inspired by Steven King's *Dark Tower* series, in which King expands upon and integrates a variety of storylines from the universe he has created in his books, and also begins to write himself into the narrative for the first time. In Cromarty's past work, her focus was on creating far-off places, and the world of humans who populated them became wizards in imaginary landscapes. In *WISHFUL THINKIN'*, she has brought herself into the picture directly for the first time—not through physical reproduction, but by using her imagery to bring in her own desire for escape, as well as the frequent cultural narrative of artistic production's close relationship to addiction and mental illness.

In the back room of the gallery space, acting as a counterpoint to landscapes that articulate her fantasy world, Cromarty positions an installation of sand with a metal cart at its center, piled with painted cardboard limbs and remnants of past paintings. Along with the lone female figure freestanding in the main space in the center of a circle of sand and glitter, these works behave as portals through which Cromarty consciously brings her personal desire for escape into the exhibition, including her personal struggles with mental illness and recovering from addiction. Accordingly, Cromarty says that all of the following are part of the history that led her to making these works: Fentanyl, Cymbalta, Norco, Lithium, Trazodone, Gabapentin, Lamotrigine, Clonidine, Vraylar, Oxycontin, Soma, vodka and Parliament Full

Flavor cigarettes. Outside these portals, the only figures that populate the landscapes are hands, referencing the artists' hands, and accordingly the idea that the desire for relief addressed in her work is not just cultural, but personal.

Fantasy requires both invention and the impulse for escape, but the tools to create a fantasy world are always grounded in the limitations of the language we already have; we build from what already exists, and even when creating something entirely new, we can only do so through the structures that have already informed our thinking. Cromarty takes that axiom literally within the physical construction of the work, as well as its visual presentation. First sourcing forest and jungle landscapes from internet images, she then enlarges the images, edits them, splices them together, and affixes them to layer upon layer of cardboard. She then works into the imagery with oil paint application so detailed that it is no longer possible to find where the source imagery ends and her enhancements begin.

Many of the materials used are easily accessible and found throughout daily life, reinforcing the idea that the building blocks of a new world can be found where we already are. The interplay between presence and escapism is intensified by the way in which Cromarty layers cardboard, matte board and paint in order to construct three dimensions while playing with two. The combination of highly articulated representation with cardboard construction that revels in its own fallibility allows Cromarty to speak about escapist mythology and its limitations at the same time, while the three dimensionality of the work moves her constructed world out of the confines of painting and into our world, acting as a bridge and invitation for the viewer to enter.

*Sarah Cromarty received her MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2012, and her BFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena in 2006. She has exhibited in Los Angeles at Klowden Mann, Night Gallery, Briggs Meleksetian Gallery, Charlie James Gallery, Sixspace and Circus Gallery, among many others, Bucket Rider Gallery in Chicago, POPA in Buenos Aires, Zic Zerp in Rotterdam and CANADA gallery in New York. Her work has been written about in the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly and White Hot Magazine and many others.*