

SARAH CROMARTY

WIZARDS, HEALERS, PORTALS AND PROPHETS: A TRIBUTE TO SARAH CROMARTY

December 1 – 22, 2018

Opening: Saturday, December 1st, 11am - 5pm

KLOWDEN MANN

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Sarah Cromarty
Untitled
2011

cardboard, glitter, matte medium, magic, resin, digital print, oil
paint, liquin, wood, cinder blocks, acrylic
104 by 63 by 9 inches

Artist Sarah Cromarty passed away last month. She was thirty-seven years old. This was a blow to the heart of the Los Angeles art community. It was a blow to the cosmos and a blow to the searchers looking for a magical vision beyond what we can see. Klowden Mann gallery is hosting *Wizards, Healers, Portals and Prophets: A Tribute to Sarah Cromarty* to celebrate her life, her art and her spectacular vision which is unlike any other.

Sarah Cromarty lived with her fiancé writer and improv actor Tommy Mabson in Echo Park. Visiting her was like walking into one of her paintings. For the past 15 years her studio has been in her house, which is a swinging 70's party pad with smoked mirrored walls and shag carpeting. The main room is a huge party room with a built in bar, built in pig roasting oven, and huge dance floor. She adopted special needs dogs, and a studio visit began with a frenzy of four crazy little dogs in diapers or missing eyes or tongues hanging out of their mouths greeting you at the door. Sarah had a big heart for elderly and damaged dogs who needed love.

Sarah received a BFA from Art Center in 2005 and an MFA from UCLA in 2012. At the age of 25 she had her first solo show in Los Angeles at Six Space. I met her in Chicago when she had a show at Bucket Rider gallery. I was taken aback by her work when I first saw it. The strange landscapes were like nothing I had ever seen before. They looked like they could have been painted in the 1970s or in the 2070s. I quickly fell in love with her vision.

In 2010 I was thrilled to host a solo show of hers at Circus Gallery called *Diamonds and Rust*. In a pre-show to her show we took a group show to Burning Man. We loaded up my hatchback with a hundred grand worth of art including work by Marnie Webber, Jim Shaw, Ry Rocklin, Dawn Kasper and others and drove it to the cultural dust storm. We put the work out on the playa, but our gallery art didn't even get noticed when it was surrounded by dusty naked weekend warriors riding fire breathing dragon cars. But Sarah was a retired raver, and we came back and installed one of the most profound works of art I have ever experienced: *Death of a Raver*. It was her self-portrait riffing on Paul Thek's *Death of a Hippie* complete with wide leg jeans, glowsticks and a pacifier. I fear that like Thek's masterpiece this masterpiece might also be lost forever.

If there ever was an artist's artist she is one. Sarah was very productive and is admired by her peers for her unique vision. You will never mistake her work for another artist's work. Galleries took note. She has had solo shows at Briggs Meleksetian Gallery, Night Gallery, and recently joined the roster at Klowden Mann where she had two solo shows.

Sarah's work has a few motifs that she would continuously circle back to: fantastic nature scenes, wizards, hands, talismans, and magical portals. Her paintings are covered in glitter and jewels. She had a style that was unlike any other artist's I have ever seen. Her work is gaudy and soulful. The brilliance of Sarah's glitter and rhinestones could hold their own against all the diamonds at Tiffany's.

Sarah developed a unique style of painting. She often used cardboard to build up dimension in her work. Cardboard might be an inelegant material, however Sarah never hid it from the viewer. She used it to give depth and distance to her mysterious landscapes. She would build up layer upon layer to push a nude, bearded wizard ten inches off the panel, thrusting him into the foreground of the painting. In the middle ground she painted in lush, tropical palm trees. I never thought of Sarah's palm trees as LA palm trees - they don't have enough exotic adventure. In the background you would find a dream catcher or a metaphysical portal. A dream catcher is meant to give you good dreams and be protective while a porthole leads you to a mysterious, unknown realm. In Sarah's paintings I think that these two things are the same. Sarah was the queen of portals.

In her recent show *Wishful Thinkin'* at Klowden Mann, the subject of Sarah's paintings turned towards hands. Hands holding a crystal ball. Hands holding a talisman. Hands holding paint brushes. Worker hands. Sexy hands with killer nails. They are her hands. They are the hands of the artist and the hands of the sorceress.

Wizards, Healers, Portals and Prophets: A Tribute to Sarah Cromarty is a chance to celebrate an incredible artist and visionary. The subject of the show is just what the title says it is. Sarah and her paintings are all of these things. With Sarah's passing the queen of the portals has moved through hers.

—John Knuth

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 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 had been written about in the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly and White Hot Magazine and many others.