Chaos and Awe
*Painting for the 21st Century*

Exhibition Prospectus

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_Painting for the 21st Century_

Exhibition Fact Sheet

**Organizer**
Mark Scala, chief curator, Frist Center for the Visual Arts
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**Exhibition tour**
FCVA: June 22–September 16, 2018
Venue 2: October 5, 2018–January 13, 2019
Venue 3: February 8–May 19, 2019

**Exhibition contents**
*Chaos and Awe* presents paintings that relate to a contemporary version of the sublime, capturing sensations of disturbance, curiosity, and wonder at the ineffable forces that shape and disrupt society. The exhibition will feature approximately fifty paintings by an international array of established and emerging artists.

**Interpretive materials**
Fully illustrated exhibition catalogue, with an introductory essay by Mark Scala and chapters by artists Simon Morley and Matthew Ritchie and art historian/critic Media Farzin. Wall texts, chat labels, and gallery guide.

**Space requirements**
8,000–10,000 square-foot gallery with wall height of at least 15 feet.

**Participation fee**
$80,000.00

**Additional costs**
Prorated share of packing and crating; insurance; one-way shipping and courier, loan fees and artist installation fees, local costs, including rental fee/special installation costs for selected works to be borne by venue.

**Credit**
Organized by the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, Tennessee
Exhibition description

Chaos and Awe includes approximately fifty paintings produced in the twenty-first century by an international array of established and emerging artists. These works induce feelings of disturbance, curiosity, and wonder through the portrayal of cross-currents that shape and disrupt perceptions of the world on both a personal and a global scale, such as darkly metastasizing ideologies and military conflicts, technological and humanistic advances, and the conceptualization of the future. These forces can make people feel both fearful of instability and enlarged by the promise of accelerated knowledge and connectedness.

Chaos and Awe begins with “No Place,” in which paintings by such artists as Franz Ackermann and Sue Williams meditate on the global mechanisms of control that exist beneath the surface but are so oceanic that they cannot be concretely envisioned. In the following section, “Collisions,” Radcliffe Bailey, Ahmed Alsoudani, and Neo Rauch capture the turbulence of populations in which conflicts arising from racial animus, national identity, or ideology give rise to fear, violence, and oppression. In the next section, “Flow,” works by Ali Banisadr, Wangechi Mutu, and Jiha Moon show dynamic cultural encounters less as sources of fear and more as sources of confusion, reorientation and, occasionally, pleasure at the prospects of a fertile new reality being formed. “Interzone” relates to the Internet’s virtuality, but also to words designating movement between categories, such as intertextual, interstitial, and intermedia. In paintings by Korakrit Arunanondchai, Wayne Gonzales, Charline von Heyl, and Corinne Wasmuht, solidity melts away and space and time exist in the threshold between the unfixed and the concrete. “The Boundless” includes paintings by Matti Braun, Barnaby Furnas, and Barbara Takenaga that depict ephemeral phenomena—atmosphere, liquid, gas, flame, and light—as signs of the uncontainable expansiveness of human perception. The exhibition concludes with “Everything,” where Anoka Faruqee, Dannielle Tegeder, Matthew Ritchie, and Kazuki Umezawa offer cognitive maps to express the widening of consciousness toward an integrated theory of knowledge, welcoming rather than fearing the unimaginable.

Together, the paintings in Chaos and Awe postulate a new understanding of the concept of the sublime. The word sublime has traditionally referred to the sensation of being rendered awestruck by the unfathomable power of God and the cosmos, as in the Romantic masterpieces of J. M. W. Turner. Chaos and Awe shows painting to be an apt medium for conveying a contemporary sublime, providing visual analogies for the mixing and clashing of values, ideologies, and new technologies that characterize global experience in the twenty-first century.
Participating artists (preliminary list)

Franz Ackermann  Ellen Gallagher  James Perrin
Ahmed Alsoudani  Adrian Ghenie  Neo Rauch
Ghada Amer  Wayne Gonzales  Matthew Ritchie
Korakrit Arunanondchai  Wade Guyton  Barbara Takenaga
Radcliffe Bailey  Rokni Haerizadeh  Dannielle Tegeder
Ali Banisadr  Peter Halley  Kazuki Umezawa
Matti Braun  Guillermo Kuitca  Charline von Heyl
Dean Byington  Heather Gwen Martin  Corinne Wasmuht
Anoka Faruqee  Jiha Moon  Sue Williams
Barnaby Furnas  Wangechi Mutu

Catalogue of the exhibition

Curator Mark Scala will write an introductory essay relating the psychic conditions of twenty-first century life to the fluidity and amorphousness of paintings in the exhibition. This will be followed by three essays that explore these ideas from differing vantage points. The first, by writer and artist Simon Morley, will make the case for the aptness of painting for depicting alternative states of consciousness, particularly with regard to the frame as a metaphor for the threshold between perception and imagination. The second, by art historian and critic Media Farzin, will discuss cultural adaptations and conflicts stemming from such forces as mass movements of populations, clashing ideologies, and the consequences of global capitalism and postcolonialism. The final essay, by artist Matthew Ritchie, will explore ways that artists represent connections in the unseen universe, inspired by sources as diverse as mystical traditions and particle physics, which help define our attitudes toward consciousness and the future.

About the curator

Organized by Mark Scala, chief curator, Chaos and Awe follows a series of exhibitions on the subject of the human body in contemporary art: Paint Made Flesh, a consideration of post–World War II paintings in Europe and the United States (including works by Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Jenny Saville, and others); Fairy Tales, Monsters, and the Genetic Imagination, which linked the impulse to create composite bodies in myth and folklore to recent developments in science, such as genetic hybridization and prosthetics (including works by David Altmejd, Patricia Piccinini, Kiki Smith, and others); and Phantom Bodies: The Human Aura in Art, featuring artists who represent longing, loss, and the desire for transcendence through the image of the shadow, mask, and imprint (including works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Christian Boltanski, Ana Mendieta, Shirin Neshat, and others). In Chaos and Awe, the preceding exhibitions’ considerations of biological instability extend outward to invoke the collective mind and body of the culture.
Exhibition Themes

No Place

Chaos and Awe begins with semi-abstract works that evoke the entanglement of global-wide systems of control. From the convolutions of international finance to the secretive spread of virulent ideologies, these veiled mechanisms may lead to feelings of dislocation and confusion.


Sue Williams (b. 1954, Chicago; based in New York). Ministry of Hate, 2013. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 84 in. Courtesy 303 Gallery. © Sue Williams, courtesy 303 Gallery, New York
Collisions
The artists in this section capture the turbulence of populations in which conflicts arising from racial animus, national identity, or ideology give rise to fear, violence, and oppression.


Flow
“Flow” celebrates the beauty that can flower from cultural encounters. This section includes works that show mergers of polarities—East and West, organic and imagined, abstract and pictorial—as gardens of infinite possibility.
**Interzone**

Paintings in “Interzone” conjure the prefix “inter” as it relates not only to the Internet, but also to words designating movement between categories and conditions, such as *intertextual, interstitial*, and *intermedia*. In these works, solidity melts away and images hover in the threshold between the digital and the real.

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The Boundless
This section includes works that convey the fluidity of thought and perception, symbolized through the representation of ephemeral forces of nature, such as clouds, atmosphere, liquid, gas, flame, and light.


Anoka Faruqee (b. 1972, Ann Arbor, MI; based in New Haven, CT). 2013P-85, 2013. Acrylic on linen on panel; 45 x 45 in. Hallmark Art Collection, Kansas City. © Anoka Faruqee
Everything
Paintings in “Everything” suggest cognitive maps for a projected future, collapsing the social imaginary—history and linguistics, mathematics, science and science fiction, and spirituality—into visions for expanding human consciousness toward a unifying theory of everything.
