**GALLERY ART AND ART**

**PAUL FORTUNATO: INSIDE THE BOX**

September 8 to 19, 2018

6 Daeheung-ro 121 buen-gil, Jung-gu, Daejeon, Republic of Korea

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Gallery Art And Art, a private art gallery, is pleased to present ‘Inside The Box’, a solo exhibition of paintings by American expat Paul Fortunato (b. 1962). The exhibition will showcase 19 new works from the series ‘Fork This Side: Inside The Box’ by the artist completed over the last 7 months.

The exhibition title is multi- layered. Paul Fortunato has been living in South Korea since 2015. The works combine fantasy and anecdotal narratives, with references to American and foreign films and music. The ‘box’ refers to having created this set of mostly large scale paintings in a very small room, an implosion of sorts. His former studio in Ossining, New York was an immense space with 23 foot ceilings. Here in Korea he works in a room a mere fraction of that size.

The informed work combines darkness, shock, beauty, humor, sexuality, weirdness, and commentary on the state of the world. Titles are often literal and visual puns.

‘Putto Down’ expresses feelings of disorientation, and of baring witness to the ‘soul clipping’ in Asian society, a kind of glass box. ‘The Next Emperor’, a play on the title and movie poster of the 1987 Bernardo Bertolucci film ‘The Last Emperor’, further addresses the clipping, in addition to ultra consumerism and the male obsession with power.

On a formal level ‘box’ refers to six of the works having been executed on found crate panels, which have built-in, rugged, air-nailed frames, ready for hanging.

The box also refers to the artist’s feelings of isolation and culture shock associated with a new life overseas, and seeing America from a completely different perspective. It is a box turned inside out, myopic, many of its residents only willing to look in, and yet, just another box in the world, quickly losing what it had.

The box refers to his becoming a ‘bubble expat’, who has not-so-quietly retreated to the box between his two ears, focusing his creative powers like never before.

The subject matter flows from his imagination. There are some overt references to American cinema. ‘Wizard of the Apes’, is a mash-up of ‘The Wizard of Oz’ and ‘Planet of the Apes’ and it encapsulates the theme of the show. The artist (Dorothy) is surrounded by mutant ape/Oz characters. A chimp/Picasso ghost, lurking in the cape of the Wicked Witch and holding his cigarette with her green hand, looks down at Dorothy with contempt as s(he) gives him the brush-off.

‘Son of Kong’, the title from the original 1933 film by Willis O’Brien, is a haunting political statement about racism in America. Here the white ape protagonist effortlessly mutilates and hurls KKK rally figures through space with his magic ‘ET’ finger.

‘Beggars’ Banquet’, after the Rolling Stones album title, is a visceral statement about the crisis of democracy now unfolding in the USA.

Paul is deeply passionate and troubled by the environmental degradation facing our planet, and he grapples with those concerns in the best way he can, through painting. His love of nature finds its way into his art, no matter how dark the image. There is no mercy in it for the fools who destroy our world and its wildlife.

Environmental statements can also be read in ‘Revenge of the Game 2’, inspired by the brontosaurus sequence in ‘King Kong’(1933), ‘Revenge of the Game’ and ‘Flipper’.

‘Inside the Box’ pushes back on the encroaching ‘digital desert’ where he finds himself living, a place with the fastest internet speed in the world, but where there is little regard for the hard copy, much less painting.

Paul Fortunato was born in Flushing, New York. He received a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1994. He taught drawing and painting at SVA for 23 years before taking a professorship at Hanbat National University in Korea, teaching drawing. He has exhibited in numerous group shows in the States and abroad, and has had three solo exhibitions. This latest one is his first overseas solo painting exhibition. He is the recipient of several significant awards, including The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, MacDowell Colony, and the National Academy of Design.

For more information, please visit <https://fortunatopaul31.com> to see all the new works in the show, and www.paulfortunato.com to see the best of what he has painted from 1993 to 2014.

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