

Dorian FitzGerald:

Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense

Opening: Friday November 18 from 7 to 9pm

Exhibition: 18 November to 3 January 2012

Clint Roenisch is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new paintings by the Toronto artist Dorian FitzGerald (b. 1975), on view at 944 Queen St West. The exhibition brings together three large paintings of objects along with four small politically-charged landscapes. The title of the exhibition is in Old French and is taken from one of the exhibited works. The phrase, *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense*, has been variously translated as "Shamed Be He Who Thinks Evil Of It" or "Evil Be To Him Who Evil Thinks". Together the works offer a nuanced meditation on power and privilege.

FitzGerald's paintings are constructed with acrylic paint and caulking in a slow, precise method that the artist has refined in his studio over several years. The process involves researching imagery, manipulating it with software, making a large-scale acetate transfer onto canvas and then using clear caulking to delineate areas of pure colour so that the image is built up slowly in a manner that resembles a kind of pointillism filtered into vector graphics. Both colour theory and the physical properties of paint, such as drying times and viscosity, are brought to bear in the setting of the final image. In the front gallery are three large paintings of a Chinese vase, a Tiffany Elephant Tusk Tankard and the Most Noble Order Of The Garter. "Lot No. 5235 - Blue and White Porcelain Meiping, Qianlong Mark, Late Qing/Republic Period" (2011) depicts a Chinese vase that was offered at Bonhams in San Francisco in 2010 with a pre-sale estimate of \$9,400. "The vase had the reign mark of the Qianlong Emperor, but some of these vases are genuine, and some are not," said Colin Sheaf, head of Asia art at Bonhams in London, "after careful assessment, we were happy to catalogue this as Late Qing or the Republic period." Two anonymous telephone bidders from mainland China disagreed - or did not care - and bid as though the potential forgery was possibly original. The hammer came down at \$7.63 million, nearly 800 times its estimate. Thus the vase itself became a centrifuge around which spun ideas about cultural repatriation via new Chinese wealth, art speculation, material desire and the genuine versus the fake. For the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, Tiffany & Co presented a staggering array of luxury goods and jewellery in the American pavilion to

compete with the European firms of Faberge and Lalique. "Tiffany & Co. Elephant Tusk Tankard; Silver and Ivory, 1900" (2011) is a painting of a 28 inch tall tankard created by Paulding Farnham whom some regarded as the world's leading jewellery designer at the time. Its body consists of a single hollowed section of elephant tusk, completely covered in high relief carvings of lions fighting gorillas in a dense jungle. The base, handle, and hinged lid are heavy sterling cast and carved into alligators, snakes, vegetation, and (ironically) topped by a charging elephant. In writing about the Paris exposition, Geneva Anderson included the tankard among "these treasures that the rich and famous have commissioned, bought, bequeathed, auctioned, hawked and sued each other for over the years. Despite heavy American demand, most Europeans thought the flashy American works produced by Tiffany & Co. were vulgar because they were created for business tycoons and not true aristocrats. An elaborately carved elephant tusk tankard on display clearly crosses the line into excess and humor as it mistakenly features painstakingly carved American-style alligators instead of the African crocodiles that big-game hunters would expect to see carved on their African elephant ivory trophies."__ "The Most Noble Order Of The Garter" (2011) depicts a Garter Star, one of the central jewels of an Order that was founded in England in 1348 by King Edward III. It is said that King Edward was dancing at a ball with Joan, Countess of Salisbury, when Joan's garter fell off. The king bent over to pick it up as several of the men around him began to tease the Countess. Although Edward is thought to be the first king after the Norman Conquest to be able to speak English, he snapped at the men in French (which was his everyday language) "Honi soit qui mal y pense," or "Shame on him who thinks ill of it." Thus, the Order of the Garter gained a motto. It is the oldest and highest order of chivalry, or knighthood, existing in England. The order is dedicated to the image and arms of St. George as England's patron saint. After peerages (and after the Victoria Cross and George Cross), it is the pinnacle of the honours system in the United Kingdom. Membership in the Order is strictly limited and includes the monarch, the Prince of Wales, not more than 24 companion members, and various supernumerary members (such as the royal family). The star, which is worn pinned to the left breast, was introduced in the 17th century by King Charles I and contains the heraldic shield of St. George's Cross, encircled by the Garter, which is itself encircled by an eight-point silver star. Each point is depicted as a cluster of rays, with the four points of the cardinal directions longer than the intermediate ones. FitzGerald's painting purposely depicts a specific Garter

Star: one created in 1947 for King George VI by the London firm of Garrard, who set the star entirely with diamonds and cut rubies from South Africa.

In the back gallery are four smaller paintings of various historical scenes from the infamous Bohemian Grove in California. The Grove is a 2,700-acre redwood forest that belongs to a private, all male, arts and letters club known as the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. It was formed in 1872 "by men who sought shelter from the frontier culture (or lack of it)". It has since formed into a tight group of 2,500 of America's richest and most powerful men (although some artists are allowed to join, often at reduced rates, because of their social status and entertainment value). Members include every Republican U.S. president (as well as some Democrats) since 1923, the board members of top military contractors such as Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and the Carlyle Group, along with the Rockefellers, Morgans, various captains of industry and CEO's across the spectrum of American capitalism including oil companies, banks (including the Federal Reserve), utilities and national media. In mid-July each year the Bohemian Grove hosts a two-week encampment. Although the Club motto, "Weaving Spiders Come Not Here," implies that outside business has no place, important policy decisions and business matters have often been made at the Grove. The Grove is particularly famous for a Manhattan Project planning meeting that took place there in September 1942, which subsequently led to the development of the atomic bomb. The Grove gets part of its character from the traditional interests of the club, thus each year two plays are put on, one serious, one musical; both are written, produced and performed by members of the club. FitzGerald here presents two images of a typical camp setting that, when seen together, become stereoscopic 3D paintings. Two other paintings complete the show, one of the Bohemian stage, empty of actors during the day, the other at night during a production of Faust.