

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LLYN FOULKES

The Lost Frontier



Illustrate:
LLYN FOULKES
I Got a Job to Do, 2003
44 x 56 1/2 in.

Kent Gallery is pleased to present The Lost Frontier (1997-2004) and other recent works by the seminal California pop painter Llyn Foulkes, his first exhibition in New York since 1990. Foulkes' tableaux may be read as an emotional response to the political and economic climate of our time. Using found objects laminated into the painting surface, Foulkes expresses a sense of an aborted utopia. His unique manipulations of materials and perspective convey a moral imperative to come to terms with extraordinary states of distress and alienation. His obsessive painterliness enjoins us to estheticize the extremes of depiction, just at the very moment when we might be groping for psychological or political excuses for such distortions. The abruptness or keenness with which images present themselves reflect on the violence and corruption of the late twentieth century.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Concurrent with completing his studies at Chouinard Art Institute (now CalArts), Foulkes began exhibiting with the Ferus Gallery (established in 1957 by Walter Hopps and Edward Kienholz) Los Angeles in 1959, with his first one-man exhibition there in 1961. Emotionally charged expressionism combined with assemblage quickly migrated to a pop response to the American landscape and the vanishing dreams of American opportunity that typified the optimistic growth of Los Angeles. By age 30, Foulkes had been given one person exhibitions at the Pasadena Art Museum (1962), the Oakland Art Museum (1964) and further gallery exhibitions with a new gallery across the street from Ferus (exhibiting Jess, Georgia O'Keefe, Irving Petlin, and others) named the Rolf Nelson Gallery (1963, 64) in a political move away from the finish fetish embraced by Ferus. By 1967, Foulkes had been awarded the Prize for Painting at the Paris Biennale, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris followed by a European exhibition there. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art would be the first museum to acquire his work for the collection in 1964 as the original building was still under construction. Demetron would select Llyn Foulkes to represent the United States in the IX Sao Paulo Bienal, Museu de Arte Moderna, Brazil also in 1967.

"This year, several hundred artists from 54 countries participated in the exhibition . . . therefore, we are pleased that one of the artists, Llyn Foulkes, from the United States section (Llyn Foulkes, Craig Kauffman, John McCracken, and Ed Ruscha) was selected from such a large body of his peers. . ."

-James Demetron, Paris Biennale, Director of the Pasadena Art Museum

Through the late sixties into the seventies, Foulkes would create trademark landscape paintings that utilized the iconography of postcards, vintage landscape photography, and Route 66 inspired hazard signs transformed into sly symbols of the broken promise of freedom once embedded in the American fantasy of the open road. This period resulted in his first retrospective organized by the Newport Harbor Art Museum (1974). Music also became a major catalyst in Foulkes work at this time, playing drums with City Lights (1965-1971), followed by his own band named The Rubber Band (1973-1977). By 1979, Foulkes returned to a childhood interest in one-man bands, and he still performs with The Machine regularly on the West Coast having just released a new CD-rom of original compositions entitled Llyn Foulkes and His Machine: Live at the Church of Art. Beginning also in the early seventies, Foulkes turned up the volume of Baconian horror through an aggressive series of portrait heads best described by Rosetta Brooks in his 1995-97 traveling retrospective catalogue:

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Contemporary life is full of all kinds of monsters which many of us either ignore or conceal. Foulkes does neither. His art is constantly grappling with the social schizophrenia characteristic of America, including its inherent violence and its quiet vulnerability. P. 50

Seen as a pioneer of the L.A. Hot and Cool scene from the sixties (along with John Baldessari, Bruce Nauman, Chris Burden, Kenneth Price, Wallace Berman, George Herms, Edward Kienholz, Robert Irwin and many others), Foulkes continued to dramatically innovate in the field of painting with a breakthrough work entitled POP, (1986-1990), exhibited by Kent in New York (1990) and now in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Utilizing fragments of real clothing, real upholstery all conjoined with the painted surface, the painting was a summation of 30 years of artistic exploration, a summary, a masterpiece, and the new standard for Foulkes. POP, along with a new group of paintings selected by Paul Shimmel for his seminal Helter Skelter exhibition of 1992 propelled Foulkes to new levels of recognition. In his late fifties at the time, his energy, his commitment to continual advancement of painterly possibilities embracing an obsessive compulsive commitment, has led Foulkes into what can easily be read as a Post-Pop period not only for himself, but for what he presents as a challenge to his peers.

This will be Foulkes first exhibition in New York since POP was presented 14 years ago, and we hope the new work will be found to be equally compelling.

Gallery hours are Tuesdays thru Saturdays from Ten to Six.

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