

KEN CURRIE

INTERREGNUM

Flowers Gallery Hong Kong
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Private View: Thursday 18 March, 6 - 8pm

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Flowers Gallery is pleased to present *Interregnum*, Glasgow-based artist Ken Currie's first solo exhibition in Asia. This body of work was completed by the artist in 2020, in what Currie describes as the unprecedented limbo caused by the global pandemic. The title for this exhibition is taken from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, in which he wrote: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

Ken Currie rose to prominence in the 1980s as part of a generation of painters known as the New Glasgow Boys. He received acclaim for his public murals for the People's Palace in Glasgow, as well as his enduringly popular and poignant work, for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery collection in 2002, *Three Oncologists*. Within his rich and luminous paintings Currie observes what he describes as the sickness of contemporary society, the fragility of mortality and the disturbing impact of the corrosive human propensity for cruelty and violence.

Christine's Mask and *Interregnum* were painted at the start of the pandemic when Currie saw the mask as an accessory, intentionally draping it in the manner of an 18th century plague hood to exacerbate the surreal nature of the subject, these

paintings now have a portentous quality. This evolved symbolism is echoed in *Chinese Gloves*, familiar for their practical use, the rubber garments are pierced and displayed, while in *Life Cast* a child's full body cast, intended for healing, is presented as a disturbingly unused ornament, thereby embodied with a darker suggestive subtext.

Throughout this exhibition Currie references his deep interest in the historical ritualistic superstitions held by Scotland's most remote island dwelling communities and their reliance on the sea. The reality of this harsh, unforgiving way of life hinted at by the artist in the red raw feet of *Salt Bath* and imagined in *Sea Creatures* where a wet suit wearing-child carries a jelly fish in their vulnerable bare hands, as if it were an offering, only the child's eyes expressing the pain of its stings. The attire worn in *Liquidator* is also reminiscent of Currie's fisherfolk, dressed in gut covered overalls the apron is pristine as if in dreadful preparation.

To accompany the exhibition, the large-scale triptych *Revenant-Three Sisters-Plague Finger* will be available to view exclusively online. In this work Currie's weird sisters are depicted ominously grouped in the blood-drenched hulk of a boat, and flanked on either side by a shrouded harbinger, one in white and one in black. There is an intentionally unsettling air of mystery and foreboding, Currie choosing to remain ambiguous, as to whether the figures are summoning or warding the plague away.



Sea Creatures, 2020, Oil on canvas, 122 x 107 cm, 48 1/8 x 42 1/8 in



Left: *Chinese Gloves*, 2020, Oil on gesso board, 45.5 x 61 cm, 17 7/8 x 24 1/8 in

Right: *Life Cast*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 214.5 x 122 cm, 84 1/2 x 48 1/8 in

ABOUT KEN CURRIE

Ken Currie was born in 1960; and studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1978 - 1983. He was known as one of the New Glasgow Boys along with Peter Howson, Adrian Wisniewski and the late Steven Campbell who studied together at the Glasgow School of Art.

In 1987, Currie completed a powerful series of large scale of history paintings for the People's Palace in Glasgow, commemorating the massacre of the Calton Weavers. Through the 90's deeply affected by humanitarian events in Eastern Europe, Currie's works evolved, his focus shifting to confront ideas of mortality and corruption, both physical and moral. Over the last 10 years, Currie's work has addressed the horrors of the contemporary world, without shying away from their brutality or grotesque nature. In 2009 Currie was commissioned to paint the theoretical scientist Peter Higgs following his receipt of the Nobel Prize, the painting now hangs at The University of Edinburgh.

Ken Currie has exhibited widely internationally, including a 2013 solo exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, which also commissioned his painting *Three Oncologists*, and as part of the British Council's major touring exhibition *Picturing People: Figurative Painting from Britain since 1945*, shown at the Kuala Lumpur National Gallery in 1989 and the Hong Kong Museum of Art and Empress Place, Singapore, in 1990. Ken's work is in the collections of Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut; Tate, London; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; New York Public Library; Imperial War Museum, London; Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, Australia; British Council, London; Boston Museum of Fine Art; and ARKEN, Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen.

NOTESTO EDITORS

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Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 7pm or by appointment.

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