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For Immediate Release

ANDREW MILLNER: FLOATING WORLD

October 16 – November 25, 2020

William Shearburn Gallery is pleased to announce *Floating World*, a solo exhibition of work by St. Louis artist Andrew Millner.

Floating World - Artist Statement

Since 2004, I have been inputting plants and trees into the computer by drawing their contours as simple outlines with a digital tablet and stylus. I have made hundreds of free hand botanical drawings which I think of as a quasi nature preserve, encompassing an enormous amount of time of looking and drawing. I always feel compelled to find an analog form for my digital drawings... a suitable analog output often imitating traditional art materials like ink, pen or pencil. In my last body of work, the Rose Parade, I painted over the digital lines of flowers in thick licorice like loops of acrylic paint, the colorful, plastic paint freezing the ephemeral flowers that would otherwise fade away a few days into the new year. Watching viewers stand in front of these works and eclipsing the patterns with the silhouette of their bodies gave me the idea of bringing figures back into the work, a way forward to explore the relationship between the figure and landscape.

I saw an exhibition at The Met in 2019, Tale of the Genji, work inspired by one of Japan's most celebrated works of literature from the 11th century. I was struck by the power of the white of the paper depicting infinite space in the sprawling screens. The relationship between the figure and landscape, the use of gradients, mineral pigments and the white of the paper, all provided inspiration for this new body of work.

"Floating World" comes from the Japanese term Ukiyo. Ukiyo has a complex history, the more I explore the more there is to unpack. The original term was used by the Buddhist monks to mean Sorrowful World, a world of pain and attachment from which they sought release. A homonym was co-opted in the 1600s to the 1800s to mean Floating World, an ironic reversal employed to advertise the novel pleasures of the geisha, kabuki actors, and the burgeoning red light district of Edo, modern day Tokyo.

My Floating World is made by digitally collaging together the individual plant drawings from my archive, and adding new silhouettes of figures into larger, artificial landscapes. They are colored with gradients inspired by traditional ukiyo prints, printed onto mulberry paper, and then mounted to linen. The work explores the impermanence of our presence, and our struggle to find a place in a conjured, artificial, and ever more human made world.

-Andrew Millner

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