

Patrick Foran, *Exploded View*

September 25-November 3, 2020



The Hollow Men, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 73" x 100"

Bottomless Scroll

Curatorial essay by Shirley Verrico

Even before the various upheavals of the summer, Foran's work was concerned with the nature of emergencies and the way we experience and respond to them from a distance. His drawings and paintings often isolate, fragment, and reframe events within the context of a particular and contemporary catastrophe. Foran's artwork forces viewers to consider how events are relayed and consumed through social media, broadcast news, and other networks of information transmission.

Exploded View includes a series of small drawings and large, painted canvases. The drawings are light and colorful, even as their subjects are jarring. Foran has edited out any background information and focuses our attention on isolated scenes. The figures are isolated as well, even when multiple people are placed into a single frame. There is no eye contact, no emotional connection. The empty space surrounding the subjects removes them from both place and time while creating a staged quality, as if each object were photographed in a table-top light box.

In contrast to the small drawings, the large canvases recall the tradition of history paintings where the artist seeks to depict a moment in a narrative rather than a specific and static subject. Foran collects his images through a myriad of screens, selecting moments from the contemporary media narrative. Elements that would have seemed dystopian six months ago are now strangely familiar. The shopping cart burns, the monument tumbles, and the asteroid hurls toward us. Foran's exhibition includes space for the chaos yet to come with a blank canvas he will paint during the six-week exhibition. His composition will evolve over time, incorporating images sent via social media, allowing for a form of "user generated content." Foran will then broadcast his progress through a series of videos, compressing both time and labor into the easily consumable bits formatted for the 24 hour news cycle. Although Foran's work conveys the urgency of emergency, it is somehow tempered with the resignation that each scene is just one of many to appear in the bottomless scroll of 2020. Six months into the COVID-19 pandemic, context is no longer necessary to understand overstuffed shopping carts or personal protective equipment. And after months of national and international protests for racial justice, the scenes of brutality and burning are equally familiar.

Artist Statement

The clock that runs is the one that counts deaths.
Ai Weiwei

Circumstance has forced me inward, limited my experience to a few places: home, studio, hammock on the patio. My garage is more important than it used to be. People are developing new relationships with old spaces. A lot of my life happens now in the car. There are drive-by birthdays. Someone loads groceries in my trunk while I wait. I do curbside pickup and get contactless delivery. On the way to a protest I'm delayed by a street blocked off for a different protest. I read that a drive-through strip club has opened in Houston. And yet, despite the involution, the constriction of space, I find myself looking outward more. Windows are a source of entertainment. I have a strong compulsion to read all the time. There are no limits on screen-time.

Life now is defined by these contradictions. Days are written in alternating rhythms of silence and commotion. Everything is more muted and more amplified. I've been watching this spider under the porch light for 15 minutes. I hear thousands of people chanting as they march down the street a few blocks away.

It's ironic, but if what we desire is stability, then there is a kind of freedom in apocalyptic thinking, in considering the void at the end of time. This explains at least part of the draw to religion, conspiracy theories, and alien invasion movies. Eschatology is sexy.

The work I'm doing now is a response to all of this. I'm using the contradictions, the rifts at the heart of experience and the disorder underlying history, as a lens to translate experience into images. The work is an antidote to speed as it requires slowness and reflection. It's also a remedy for boredom because it exposes simple narratives as false idols, and asks the viewer to participate in the construction of new meaning.



Arrest, 2020, ink and watercolor on paper, 12" x 16"



PPE, 2020, ink and watercolor on paper, 12" x 16"

Multiple sources have reported outbreaks of vivid dreaming. This is the nature of the problem. At the moment, we cannot discern whether our experience is an illusion or a reality. It's impossible for the dreamer to know she is dreaming until the dream is over, and even then some doubt may persist.



Riot Act, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 68" x 73"

Artist Biography

Patrick Foran is an artist and educator based in Buffalo, NY. Originally from Michigan, Foran received his BA from the University of Michigan. He went on to study English and Visual Studies at Cornell University, where he received his MA. Most recently he received his MFA from the University at Buffalo in Visual Studies and Art. He currently resides in Buffalo, where he teaches studio art and writing at the University at Buffalo, SUNY Fredonia, Niagara County Community College and Niagara University.

Major support provided by: The Cameron and Jane Baird Foundation, Erie County Cultural Funding, M&T Bank, National Endowment for the Arts, John R. Oishei Foundation, Vogt Family Foundation, Western New York Foundation, and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Additional exhibition support provided by: Ashkers, Current Catering, Marketing Tech, and individual donors.



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