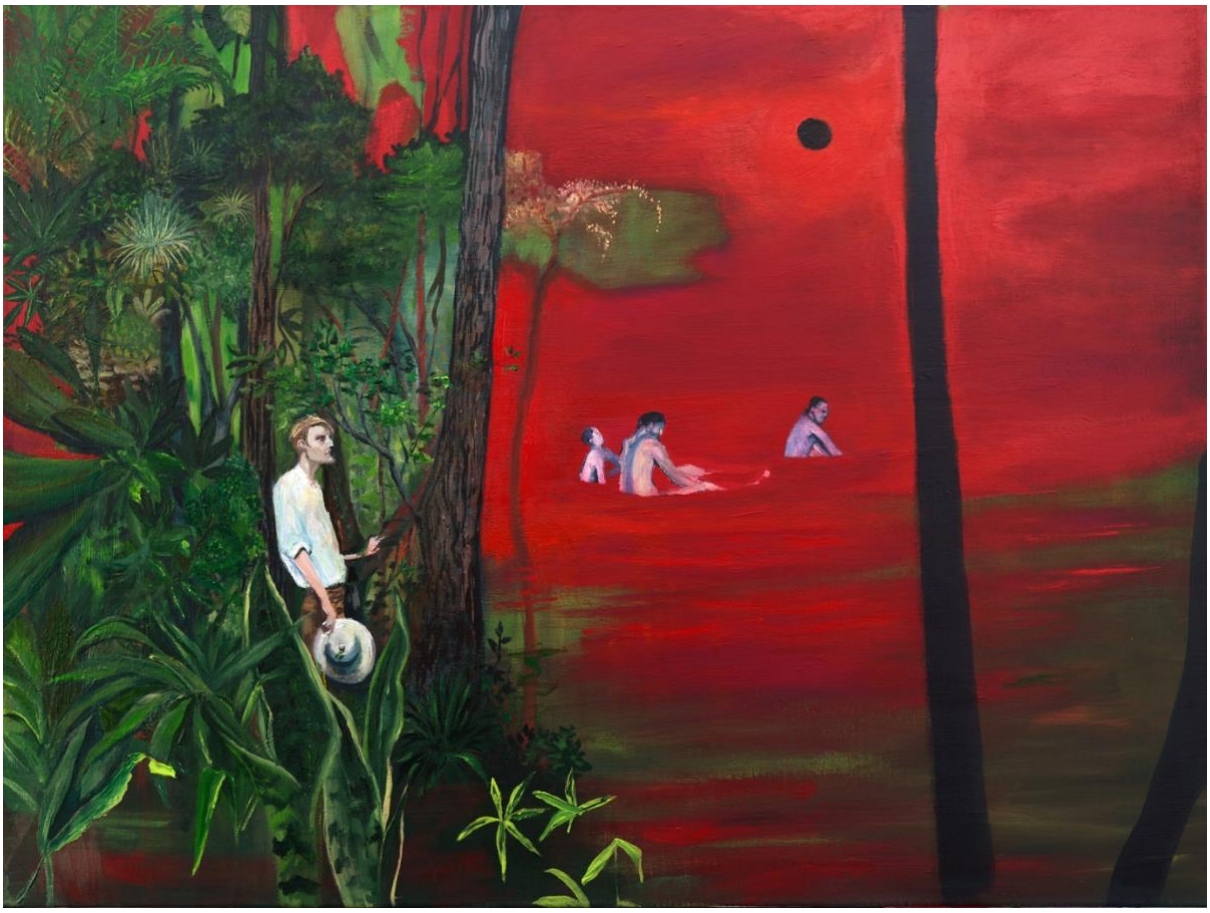
SHARON SINGER



TALES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

Nightmares of a Better Tomorrow

RDS Gallery
2021

SHARON SINGER

TALES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE
Nightmares of a Better Tomorrow

Essays on the Occasion of the Exhibition
Held at RDS Gallery, 6 Castle Street, Dunedin,
21 May – 19 June 2021

Occasional Essay Series
Editors
Alistair Fox and Hilary Radner

RDS GALLERY

Cover Image: Sharon Singer, *Naked Lunch,* 2020, acrylic on canvas, 762 X 1016 mm.

RDS Gallery Occasional Essays Series editors: Alistair Fox and Hilary Radner

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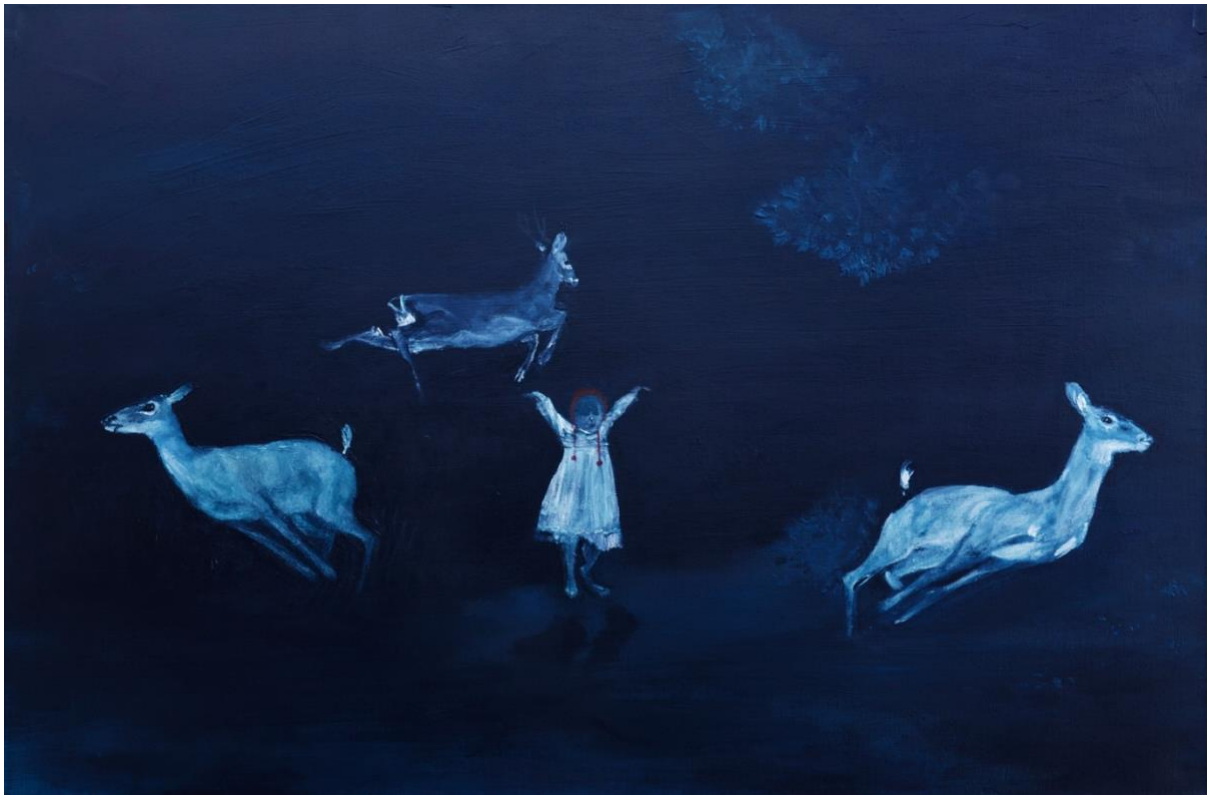

Figure 1: *Startle*, 2021, acrylic and oil on canvas, 609 x 914 mm.

Figure 2: *Bird Song*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 609 x 914 mm.

Despair and Hope in Sharon Singer's Startling Art: A Personal Reaction

By Jack Zipes

It has become fashionable, especially among concerned academics, to use the term Anthropocene to warn us that we are living in a dangerous age, for humans have become totally irresponsible caretakers of the earth. Our time is marked not only by self-destruction but also by the complete destruction of the planet. Our amazing exploitative and technological impact has been disastrous for animals, the environment, water, and other organisms. People like to joke that only cockroaches will survive our wars, epidemics, and so-called 'natural disasters' that will probably cause the earth to explode. If this is truly the case, as many of the world's dependable scientists think it to be, why should we bother to worry about what we can't stop? We are all going to die anyway. So, why should we feel responsible for anything? Why can't we just enjoy ourselves until the bitter end comes? There are no gods who will save us from ourselves. And, certainly, neither art nor science have thus far provided the necessary determents.

Yet, it is only by recognizing the worst aspects of human behaviour that we can start to become humane and struggle against the devastation of humanity. This means we must first admit how irresponsible we have been and then resurrect the decent values we need to turn the gloomy world into a kind of Garden of Eden. Perhaps it can be done. We have already transformed the earth into a disneyfied amusement park and created thousands of false miracles. So, the ultimate question becomes: can we provide the essential groundwork for future generations to form more resilient and just societies? And here is where I want to say something about the role of art, and in particular about the startling Sharon Singer.

Among the contemporary painters in the Anthropocene I have met, Sharon is the most puzzling, startling, and insightful. She feels how decadent the world is and laughs at it with her brush. Indeed, it is with dark humour that Sharon addresses our incapacity to resolve major and minor conflicts and shows that we are at a loss to gain control over ourselves. In fact, we are carried away into absurdity once we view her weird art. We are provoked to contemplate puzzling figures and conditions that seem to make no sense and yet indicate that there may be a trace of humanity somewhere that can save us. Perhaps I should speak more in the first person, for surely, Sharon's art might be too overwhelming or puzzling for many people. I hope not because her paintings are like strange traces of hope that will stun us at first and then make us smile. They may even make us more aware of what is really happening in the world, for they demonstrate what is lacking and

what prevents us from appreciating the earth and everything that inhabits the earth.

When Hilary Radner sent me images of the paintings that she was going to use in the exhibition 'Tales of the Anthropocene', and when I started to study them, I tried to make some rational sense at what appeared to be irrational, or, at the very least, puzzling. Perhaps viewers at the exhibition will feel the same way. In fact, the more I studied them, the more I realized that there cannot be reason in an irrational world and that all the paintings were re-marking on our desperate plight. Consequently, there was a positive side to my reaction each time I gazed at one of Sharon's baffling works: if art has a role to play in today's world, then it is through provocation that may help us come to our senses and assume the role of caretaker, not destroyer.

Like the tiny girl in her painting *Startle* (figure 1), Sharon has burst into the world and scared the hell out of the deer who flee her magical brush. They do not know what has brought this girl to earth. Is she some kind of sorceress? She is wearing a red cap with raised arms, and I see her assuming the role of the starling artist, who is going to display and portray what artists do best – she shows us all what we lack in the world and all the wreckage we have caused. All insightful painters leave traces in the world that we must follow to solve our inadequacies. All relevant painters must reveal what we lack so that we can sustain ourselves in critical times. What is wondrous about Sharon's art is her sense of the absurdity of life in the Anthropocene and all the contradictions.

In *Bird Song* (figure 2), the birds flee the throat of a man floating in a small boat on a sea that looks more like a basket than a boat. Or, is the man singing a song of liberation and sending birds from his heart to carry messages of liberty? Whatever the case may be, these birds burst forth to deliver some kind of message, perhaps to recall to humans that the end may be near, and we must do something to help each other.

Sharon loves scenes with water. In *Holy Rollers* (figure 6), she mocks the baptism of those humans who believe that some help will come from a divinity. The onlookers, an indigenous man in a boat that appears to be a white horse and two young women, gaze at three fully dressed adults standing in muddy water. Their prayers are definitely different from the isolated man's song in *Bird Song*. All this is spectacle. There is no divinity to help these people. Their acts are empty acts, just like the people in the red waters of *Naked Lunch* (cover image) and the three girls in *Society for Charms, Charming and Charmers* (figure 3).

Here, the waters are white, and the girls, dressed in green, appear to be performing some kind of ritual with a skull, a goldfish, and flowers. (Sharon certainly loves skulls!) Taken in order I ask myself, is Sharon displaying how death can be washed away by plain white water that will allow fish, animals, and flowers to bloom? Is it too late for the earth to be saved?

When I look at another painting in which water plays a role *Skeletons Fighting Over a Shark*, I fear that Sharon may be a bit too cynical for viewers of her work.

On the other hand, if she is saying here that our struggles in this dark age come down to this kind of comical fight, two dead people fighting over a shark, the painting assumes a more haunting significance. It is best to contrast it with *We All Shine* (figure 5), which is the most hopeful painting in the exhibition. Three girls, one white and two girls of colour, appear to be having fun with an older person with the head of a bright yellow sun. Two are wearing light blue dresses that suggest flowing blue water. Smiling and rejoicing, they are signalling that a new age has come or will come. We don't know why they are celebrating, but they cannot be any happier.

There is no doubt that Sharon sees hope as fluid and dependent on the younger generation. So, my final remarks concern her painting *Not So Lucky* (figure 4), in which five grotesque figures are portrayed on two flowery blocks of earth on light blue water. One figure with white hair turns her back to us, a white cat waves to us, a tall woman wearing a mask spans the two islands, a child grimaces at us, and a black child with red hair looks like an honoured dignity.

The figures look more like cartoon characters than humans. It is difficult to say why they are not so lucky. Life is not a cartoon, and there is something very grotesque about this painting. The cat with a medal around its neck is waving goodbye to us, and so may the white and black figures also be waving. Might they be seeking another world? Is there not hope for our present world?

Sharon Singer's paintings insist on asking this final question. We do not need the academic term Anthropocene to tell us how broken our world is – the indications range from world-wide fascism to the merciless exploitation of working people. Moreover, it seems that we have forgotten to live lives in truth or with hope that we can overcome the lies that surround us and expose the elite groups of people who profit from the lies and great power they hold.

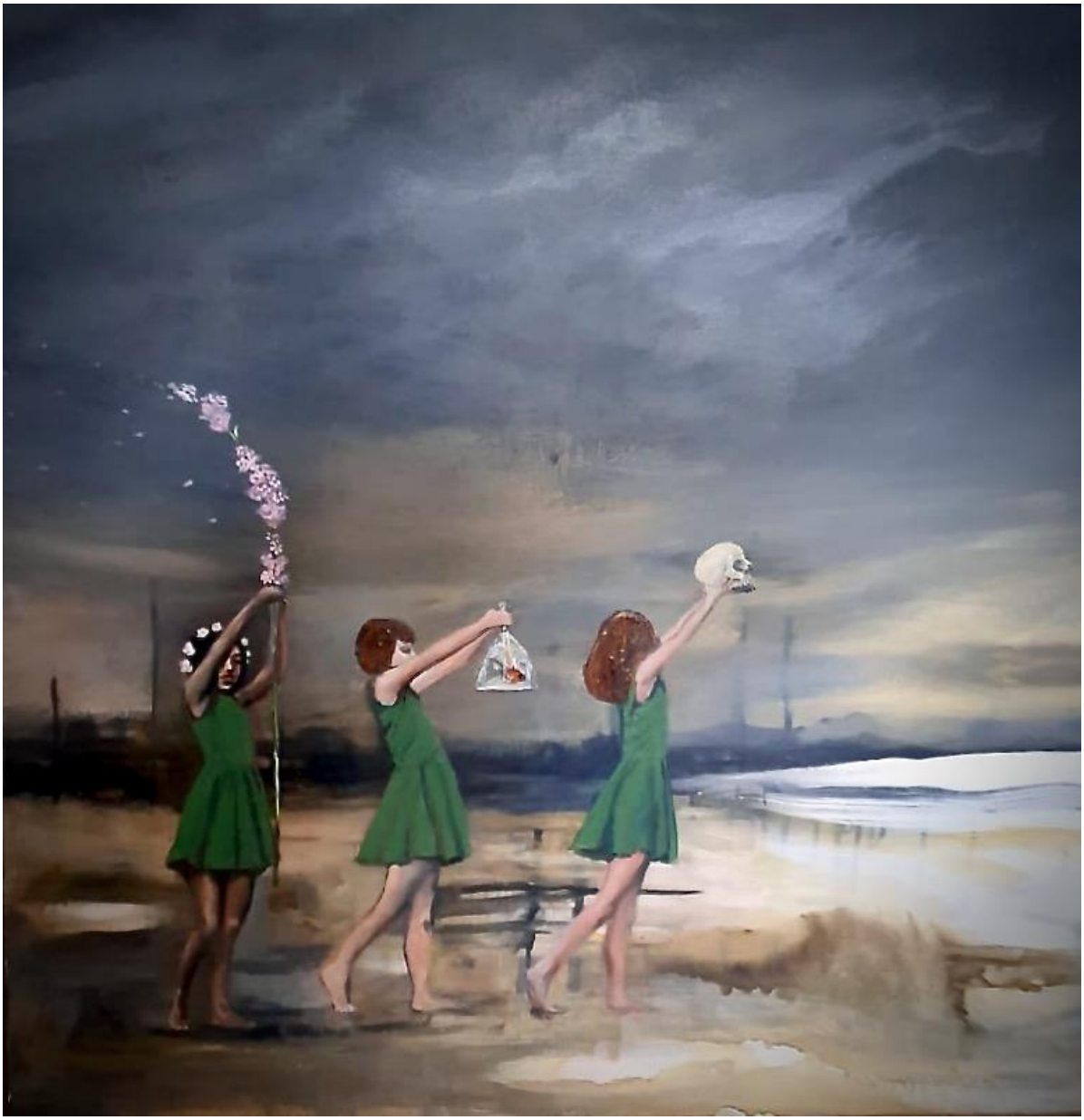

Figure 3: *The Society for Charms, Charming and Charmers*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 762 x 762 mm.

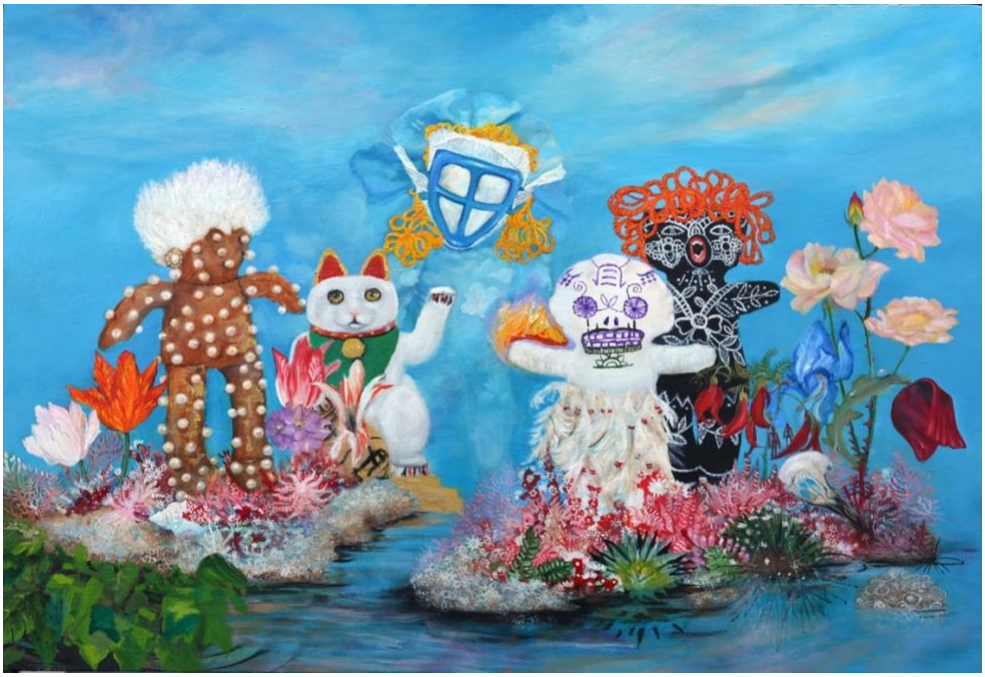

Figure 4: *Not So Lucky*, 2021, acrylic and oil on canvas, 762 x 1016 mm.

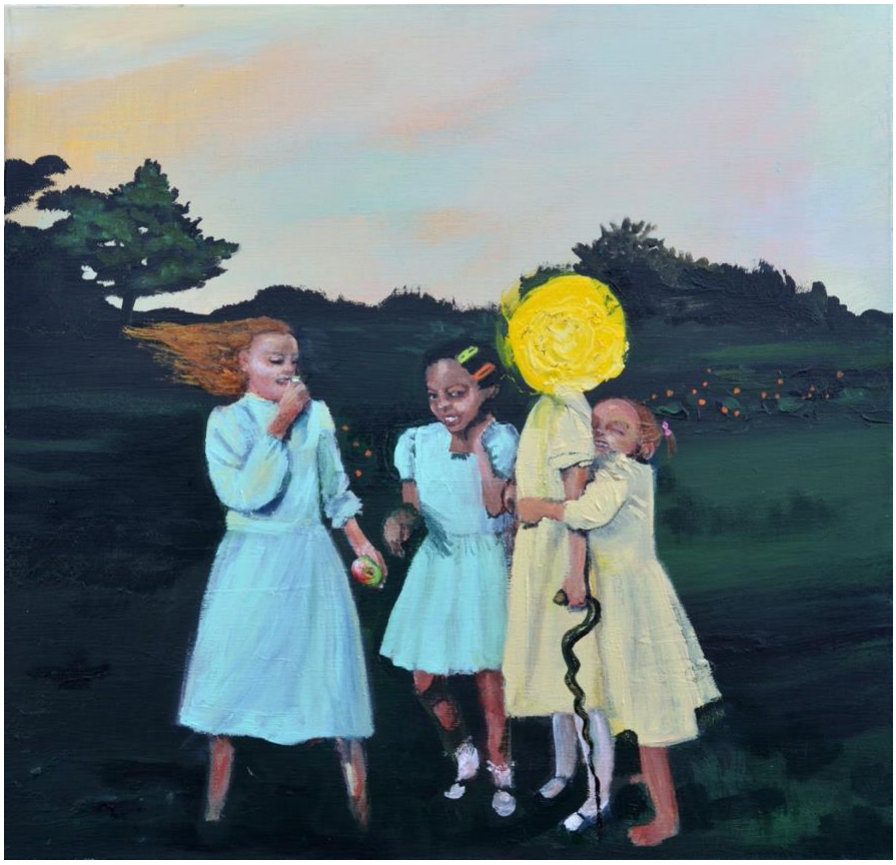

Figure 5: *We All Shine*, 2021, acrylic and oil on canvas, 457 x 457 mm.

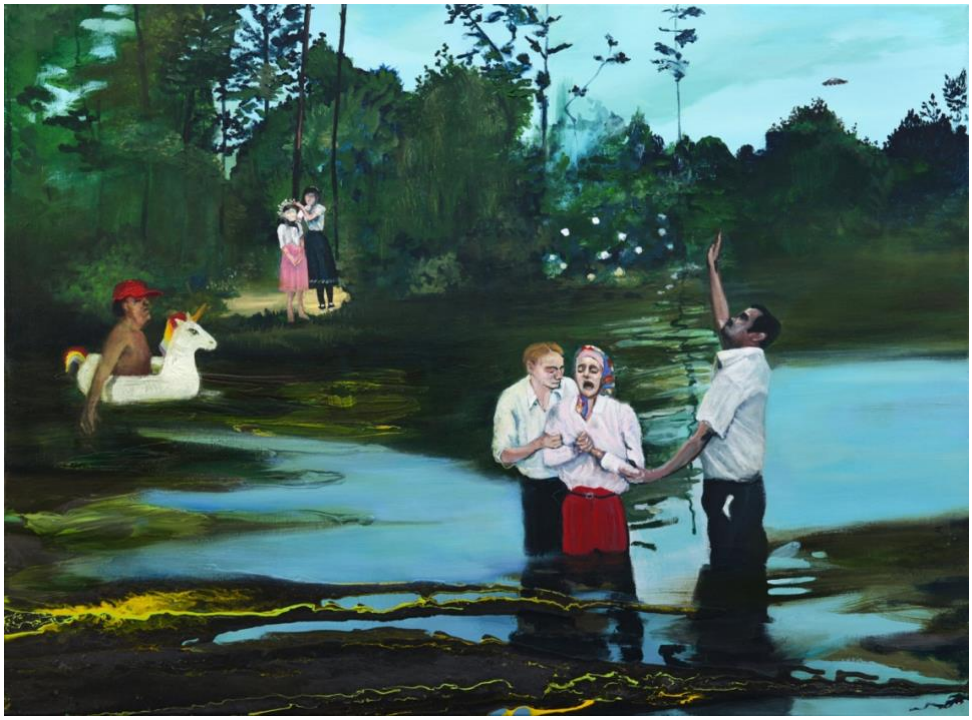

Figure 6: *Holy Rollers – True Believers*, 2020, acrylic and oil on canvas, 762 x 1016 mm.

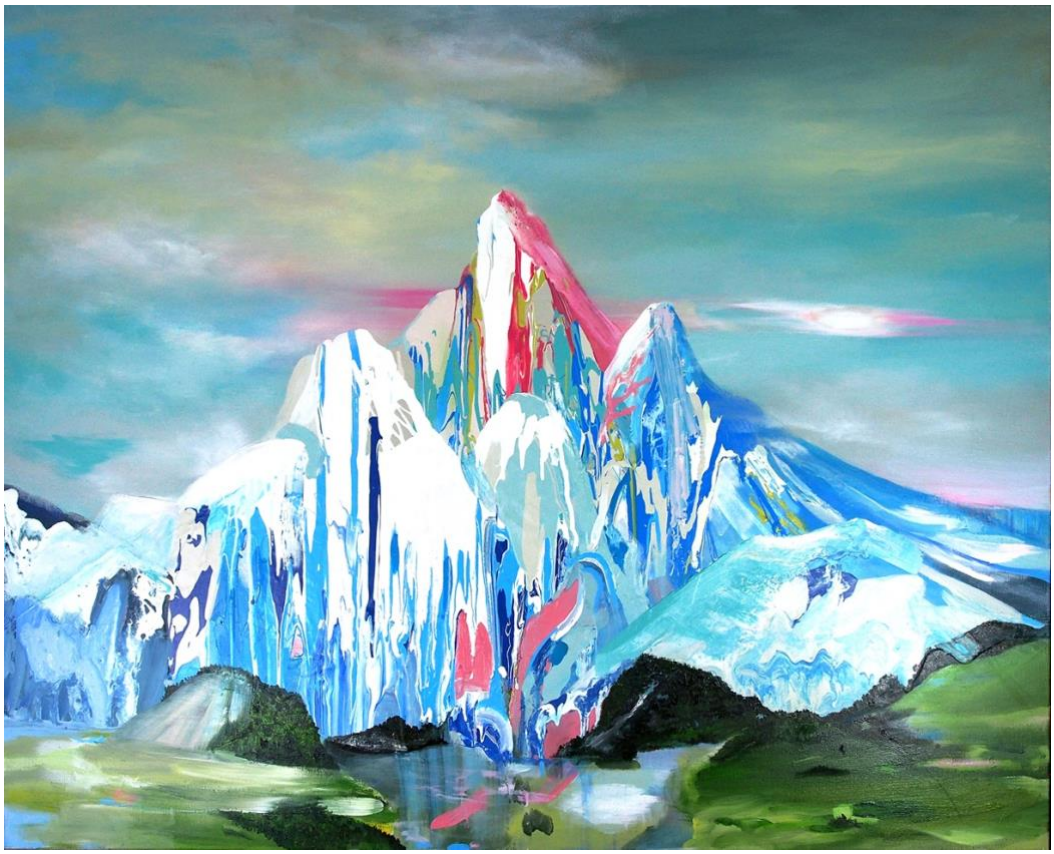

Figure 7: *Sugar Mountain*, 2020, acrylic and oil on canvas, 1016 x 1543 mm.

2

‘Nightmares of a Better Tomorrow’: Sharon Singer’s Uncanny Narratives of Disaster

By Federico Freschi

How do we talk about disaster? Particularly disaster on the apocalyptic scale that seems to be the starkly inevitable consequence of continued human impact on the environment? The analytical philosophical tradition suggests three approaches: a metaphysical or theological one, in which the tensions between good and evil and the existence or otherwise of God are played out; an ethical one, where the ways in which individuals exercise their own moral agency in rationalising and responding to disaster determine the limits of what it means; and a political one, where the role of the apparatuses of the state rather than the individual determines degrees of responsibility and accountability. For Sharon Singer, the answer to this question seems to lie in a complex intersection of all these things, played out in discomfiting pictorial narratives that are as mundane as they are macabre.

Sugar Mountain (figure 7) is a case in point. At first glance it seems to be a pastiche of the grand narrative of conventional landscape painting, the sublime majesty of the peaks and valleys of the Franz Josef Glacier rendered banal by viscous drips and skeins of gaudy paint against a Sunday painter's pastel sky. In effect, the glacier becomes an enormous, cheap ice-cream melting in an orgy of consumption; the cloying sweetness of artificially flavoured syrup and the faintly troubling aftertaste of palm oil milk substitute seems to seep from the canvas, alluring and disgusting in equal measure. Singer tells how the painting was prompted by a reflection on the irrevocable retreat of glaciers in the wake of global warming, and the ongoing effects of this as emblematic of our interactions with the natural world. 'There is a cluster fuck brewing in the Himalayas', she says with uncompromising directness. 'The glaciers that feed Asian rivers are melting at a phenomenal rate. The short-term benefit is that lakes are forming and providing water, but the end game is that the rivers that were fed by the glaciers will eventually dry up'. It is an understatement to suggest that the consequences, both for local populations and geopolitics, will be disastrous. Nonetheless, the consumption of glaciers continues, as much through rising temperatures and through the insatiable tourist trade that is accelerating their retreat. In effect, Singer reminds us that there is no such thing as a 'natural' disaster. As she puts it, 'We can't blame Covid for human deaths in the same way that we can't blame carbon in the atmosphere for global warming. It's about how we're living – we're creating these vectors for transference, living on top of each other, on top of animals.'

Singer points to the degrees of culpability that we all share simply by virtue of our continued existence on the planet, and the nightmarish impact of this on our own psyches. 'There is something predatory, something scary in our nature as human beings', she says. 'We have a totally exploitative relationship with nature; we're not pure or innocent.' This lack of innocence precludes her from explaining or normalising the discomfiting dissonances and slippages in her pictorial narratives. Instead, she allows the glossy surface of normalcy to crack in order to reveal something of the sordid, corrupt darkness at the core of human nature: in *Naked Lunch Seeing Red* (cover image) the author William Burroughs emerges from the lush abundance of a nature walk to find three naked bathers seemingly engaged in some private ritual in a toxic red lake over which a malevolent black sun rises; in *We All Shine* (figure 5) four young girls in prim pinafores giggle playfully, mindless of the fact that one of them has a bright yellow blob where her head should be and that the walking stick she clutches has turned into a writhing snake; on closer inspection we see that the cheerful dolls and flowers of *Not So Lucky* (figure 4) are about to be consumed by a fire being fanned by a *maneki-neko* 'beckoning cat', and that the pool of water on which they are floating is rising up to consume them – death by fire or water seems an inevitable outcome. In Singer's imagination the normal becomes strange and sinister, destabilised by an ominous sense that all is not as it seems. If these were scenes in a movie, this would be the moment when the soundtrack begins to modulate from harmony to dissonance, a reassuring perfect fifth giving way to the tritone of the 'devil's interval' that involuntarily evokes a creeping sense of dread.

Indeed, there is something about Singer's preoccupations and visual strategies that evokes cinematic conventions of the psychological horror genre in the mode of David Lynch, where ordinariness is played off against violent, disturbing images in ways that are as unpredictable as they are confusing. Like Lynch, she constructs pictorial worlds in which things are not what they seem, where conventional pictorial devices insert the viewer into a paradoxical intersection of banality and sublimity, figuration and abstraction, playfulness and deadly seriousness. Charged with the bizarre logic of dreams (or more correctly nightmares), her paintings are a quasi-cinematic excursion into the darkest wells and tortured tributaries of the unconscious, holding the viewer in a space between the dream and wakefulness. On waking from a nightmare, the rational mind can piece together the quotidian reference points that triggered the imagery and claim to understand its origins, yet the deeper archaeology remains obscure, a troubling reminder of the fragile fabric of identity constructs and social conventions that preserves sanity. In their evocation of nightmares, Singer's paintings compelling evoke Freud's notion of the uncanny, 'that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar'.[1]

Also, like Lynch's films, Singer's narratives do not explain themselves or offer easy interpretations. Set against the turbulent backdrop of

[1] Sigmund Freud, 'Das Unheimliche [The Uncanny]' (1919), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Words*, 24 vols, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), vol. 17, 220.

a global pandemic and a troubling upsurge in right-wing nationalist politics they expose the futility of our desire for easy political solutions and salvation from our own worst excesses. 'People are looking to be saved', she argues, 'whether by some external force like a flying saucer, Donald Trump, God, whatever'. In this context, the deliberate ambiguities of her darkly dystopian narratives create imaginative possibilities and potential. They are an invitation for viewers to project their own anxieties, desires and interpretations of the visual clues and familiar-but-strange interactions of the characters in her paintings. Take the three young girls in bright green gymslips in *Society for Charmers, Charms and Charming* (figure 3) walking gracefully along a beach, holding aloft trophies. At first glance this is a pleasing sight, except the beach is dark and dirty as if contaminated by waste from the distant industrial installation visible against a leaden, ominous sky. The trophies – a cherry blossom branch trailing petals, a goldfish in an inflated plastic bag, a human skull – progressively assume a more sinister aspect, *memento mori* betokening what Singer calls 'nightmares of a better tomorrow'.

Although they grapple with the most intractable social and political problems of our time, Singer's paintings are not didactic. Rather, in the tradition of the Romantic sublime they require us to look deep into our own consciousness and confront the limits of our own agency and culpability in relation to the natural world. But instead of being the awestruck viewer beholding nature in its terrifying beauty we are called to account for the nightmarish consequences of this fascination. We become instead the forlorn

sailor with the dead black eyes and gaping mouth in *Bird Song* (figure 2), adrift on a flimsy coracle on a vast, black ocean, his cries for help horrifyingly transmogrified into the crows that will consume him. The image is a stark reminder of the consequences of our actions and the inevitability of death. It is as if Caspar David Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* (1808-1810) has somehow ended up in the ocean that he has been contemplating for the past two centuries; he has seen the future and it has destroyed him. 'Words and actions are like birds', Singer concludes. 'Once you let them go you can't get them back.'

The World in Colour: Sharon Singer's 'Tales of the Anthropocene'

By Bridie Lonie

In 2013, establishing a curriculum for the Anthropocene, 'a long-term initiative that explores frameworks for critical knowledge and education in our ongoing transition into a new human dominated geological epoch', [2] the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin[3] argued for new approaches to complexity, scalar differences and temporalities. While painting did not figure significantly among the cultural forms considered within this initiative, its capacity to present metaphoric conjunctions between categorical differences has much to offer to those interested in investigating how we might come to understand what has been deemed a 'human dominated geological epoch' by scholars and public intellectuals associated with 'think tanks' like HKW.

[2] https://www.anthropocene-curriculum.org/.

[3] The Haus der Kulteren der Welt [The House of World Culture or HKW], located in Berlin and funded by the German government, supports contemporary World Art through exhibitions, performances, films, conferences, etc. In 2013-14, it sponsored 'The Anthropocene Project', which undertook '[b]asic cultural research using the means of art and science' to explore the premise that '[h]umanity forms nature', producing activities such as exhibitions, conferences, etc., that resulted in numerous publications, including a website, The Anthropocene-Curriculum. https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/anthropozaen/anthropozaen_2013_2014.php

The term 'Anthropocene' dates back to the 1980s, but was proposed in 2000 by Paul Crutzen, atmospheric chemist, at a conference, to acknowledge the impact of human-induced climate change on understandings of the earth's systems, in particular its stratigraphic record.[4] Both the academic and the popular press quickly seized upon the term to signal the conceptual changes needed in a time of increasing anthropogenic change to the planet's wider systems. With regard to usage, it very soon replaced earlier nomenclatures.

'Anthropocene' is derived from the Greek 'anthropo' (designating man, or more currently 'the human animal') and 'cene'('new', commonly employed to delineate geological epochs as in Pleistocene or the 'Ice Age') – literally then the Anthropocene means 'the 'Recent Age of Man', 'man' specifically as the human animal. Provoking intense debate within the social sciences, sciences and the humanities as a neologism and a geological concept, in 2011, 'Anthropocene', nonetheless, made the cover of *The Economist*.[5] The Anthropocene had entered the planetary imaginary. Painting's capacity to move between conceptual registers, to indicate indirectly, through a visual representation, different systems of knowledge and to require through its gestalt that the viewer holds these pluralities within a singularity, makes it

[4] Paul J. Crutzen, 'Geology of Mankind', *Nature* 415 (3 January 2002): 23. Accessed 1 May 2021, https://www.nature.com/articles/415023a.pdf .

[5] https://www.economist.com/briefing/2011/05/26/a-man-made-world?story_id=18741749; *The Economist*, 28 May – 3 June 2011.

particularly useful in conveying humanity's current predicament, that of the Anthropocene.

Sharon Singer's paintings coalesce a present, conveyed in social media, and a fascination since childhood with the saturated colours and didactic texts of the periodical *National Geographic*.[6] This American magazine with its kaolin-rich paper and saturated colours popularized social and natural anthropology, and geography, in illustrated articles strongly flavoured with orientalism, exoticism and the sense that, through text and image, the social structures and belief systems of whole societies could be conveyed. Titles typically linked information with emotion. 'You might not have the maths but you could respond to the message.' The *National Geographic* served as a major source of information, often replacing the encyclopaedia, and provided material for many collaged primary school projects. Due to its pervasiveness, it had a formative influence on the imaginaries of English-speaking peoples, their world view, particularly with regard to the natural world and the state of an increasingly globalised humanity.

The term Anthropocene, similarly, is used in different contexts to indicate data and/or a transformed and emotionally pregnant world view, a world view that indicates transformation and uncertainty, often expressed through the projection of its impacts onto someone else's world: flooding islands, paradigm changes

[6] https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine. Since 2019, National Geographic Partners, LLC, is jointly owned by the Walt Disney Company (who acquired 21st Century Fox and with it, its 73% share in National Geographic Partners) and the original non-profit National Geographic Society.

regarding the notion of nature, or immense geographical transformations such as the demise of rainforests in central America. Yet the Anthropocene imaginary also operates within domestic spaces across the globe, conveying the kinds of fear that keep children awake – undifferentiated, large, unpredictable and ever-present.

Such fears are both conveyed and allayed by storytelling. To take one complex image, *Society for Charmers, Charms, and Charming,* (figure 3), Singer writes that the work was provoked by an article published in 1983 titled 'Lyric Wales' and an accompanying photo by Ferrell Grehan.[7] In a long email demonstrating how many ideas move through her mind as she paints, she writes

> In this work I' m depicting a sort of ritual pilgrimage, a pursuit of magic, mystery, the enigma of things … thinking about the timeless and ephemeral. Water as symbol of creation, supreme magic, and medicinal substance – it heals, it restores youth, it ensures, eternal life. I'm put in mind of an excerpt from Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*: 'I feel it yet cannot understand it/ I cannot retain it nor forget it and if I grasp it I cannot measure it.'[8]

[7] Bryan Hodgson, Farrell Grehan, 'Lyric Wales', *National Geographic* 164:1 (July 1983). https://nationalgeographicbackissues.com/national-geographic-july-1983/

[8] Sharon Singer, email to author from notes by artist, February 2021. *Die Meistersinger von Nüremburg* (Richard Wagner, first performed 1868), is an opera noted for its association with Nazi ideology in the twentieth century.

The dilemma of transcendence is described through particularities: water, a preacher baptizing, a range of climates, in all conveying the densely predetermined context from which each person comes, in their individual, but socially striated and identifiable, complexity. Somehow, transcendence has to get through the socio-cultural layers of the class systems and economic conditions of a specific present.

Singer's rich mixed media palette and her deft characterizations bring the simplistic aspirations of the past to its present unstable complexity. Children practice balletic rituals in dirty industrial wastelands, landscapes tumble and slide like Neapolitan chocolate, berry and vanilla ice-cream, in a weird literalization of the lines by American poet Wallace Stevens: 'Let be be the finale of seem/the only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream'.[9] Whatever her human characters desire, the undertow of the world they have created will always hold them back.

[9] Wallace Stevens, 'The Emperor of Ice Cream' (1922). Accessed 1 May 2021, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70138/wallace-stevens-the-emperor-of-ice-cream, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45234/the-emperor-of-ice-cream.

Painting Disclosure: Tales of the Anthropocene That Haunt the Present

By Joanna Osborne

Sharon Singer's studio practice ripples intertextually between worldmaking and matter: between an historicised present and an attention to the planet; between accrued, sometimes cross-cultural, symbologies and an existential wonder at material reality. For Singer, there is often 'a hauntology at play' in her works: both metaphorical and real, spectres haunt the present, not with once held hopeful dreams, but with tales of the Anthropocene that warn (not without hope) of dreaded futures.

Singer's visual language is more evocative that referential, with the illogic of dream symbolism populating constructed landscapes. The material grounds of these figurative scenes sometimes give way to abstraction, hinting at the methodological process of making: painterly and intuitive scaffolds converge to form narrative islands or hooks that generate associations or house observations. Sometimes in her work, Singer acknowledges the impulse of religious practice and belief, wryly, and with a critical eye and exasperated wonder at naming an Other that beams in and out from an unnamed beyond.

The flash of a UFO appears in *Holy Rollers – True believers* (figure 6), which depicts a Bible Belt water baptism scene: specifically, the moment of prayer before the recipient is immersed in water as a declaration of faith. To the left of this scene a bloke bobs about on the water in an inflatable unicorn, wearing a Make America Great Again cap. The water is oil streaked and swampy. Hapless witnesses stand upon the bank. At the time of making this work, US politics was dominating the media. A geopolitical tale in paint ensued – in this case, an observation on the religious demographic support base for Republican politics, which happens to be shot through with climate change denial and an eschatology that affirms an imminent end of the world. Why tend to the needs of the planet when it's predestined for fire and destruction?

In other 'Tales of the Anthropocene', children are ritual-makers, wise seers, or harbingers of revelation. Singer proffers imaginative re-readings in the hope of naming an effort of reorientation away from the problematic cultural overshadowing of belief systems (religious or otherwise) that harm the planet. Tracing a connection to natural healers in English folklore, in *Society for Charmers, Charms and Charming* (figure 3) three children walk in procession; a branch of cherry blossom, a goldfish and a human skull are held aloft as emblems of transience. In *We All Shine* (figure 5), children play in a garden, joyously innocent of the heavy symbolic lineage of Eden in the apple and the snake.

Startle (figure 1) spins a tale on another moment. A girl with the legs of a wolf appears to dance in the midst of three deer. Startled, suddenly caught in headlights, the deer flee upon the realisation of a presence, a movement (as the girl lifts her arms in flight), or the arrival of the viewer (the source of light). It's like stumbling upon a realisation: an underpinning and shared animality, glimpsed in a moment.

Singer works with a 'constellation of ideas' that coalesce or manifest within a prolific practice (she paints an ocean horizon almost daily). Within a broader urgency, she returns again and again to allegorically grapple with the human and planetary condition. Depicted ritualisations weigh in on an understanding that spiritual attentiveness must have an ecological basis – here, in the work *Bird Song* (figure 2), to be sung from a rising sea.

Contributors

Sharon Singer, a Dunedin-based visual artist, holds an MFA (2008) from the Dunedin School of Art. Her work has attracted wide-spread attention, and has been included in solo exhibitions, group exhibitions and award exhibitions across the country, such as NZ Portrait Award (finalist, 2000), Waikato National Art Award (Merit, 2001), Norsewear Art Awards (winner, 2002), and Wallace Art Award (finalist, 2003). Her work is held in private and public collections in New Zealand and internationally. Fairy tales and myth have provided the subjects for her paintings since 2000, and her paintings have been reproduced in an array of outlets, including *Landfall* 237 (Autumn 2019): 48-56, and *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (Jack Zipes, 2006, second edition, cover image).

Jack Zipes is a retired Professor from the University of Minnesota whose focus on fairy tales has transformed the ways which fairy tales are analysed. He is known for his lectures and published works on fairy tales, how they evolved, and the social and political significance of those works. Zipes holds a PhD in comparative literature which he obtained in 1965. His political activism in the late 1960s lead to his interest in critically analysing fairy tales. He continues to translate works, such as the 1812 and 1815 editions of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, which was completed in 2014.

Federico Freschi is Professor and Head of College at Te Maru Pūmanawa | Creative Practice & Enterprise at the Otago Polytechnic. He was formerly the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. A widely published art historian, his research has focused on the political iconography of public buildings, with a secondary line of research into the construction of the canon of modern South African art, and more recently how the art market is implicated in this. In 2016, Professor Freschi was the South African curator of the exhibition 'Henri Matisse: Rhythm and Meaning', at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg. His most recent publication is the edited volume *Troubling Images: Visual Culture & the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Wits University Press, 2020) with co-editors Brenda Schmahmann and Lize van Robbroeck.

Bridie Lonie holds a Master of Arts (Art History and Theory, 1998) and PhD (2018) from the University of Otago titled 'Closer Relations, Art, Climate Change, Interdisciplinarity and the Anthropocene'. She has published widely in such outlets as *Art New Zealand* as well as contributing numerous exhibition essays over a thirty-year career, which she began as an artist. Her book with Marilyn Webb, *Marilyn Webb: Prints and Pastels* (2004) was published by University of Otago Press. Her research interests include climate change and art in the public arena. She is currently preparing a manuscript on art and climate change, while serving as Head of School at the Dunedin School of Art.

Joanna Osborne recently completed a doctoral thesis that considered the nature of interdisciplinarity at the nexus of art history, religion, and theology, titled ''Black light' / 'Whiteness rests my mind': Evocations of the Spiritual in the Art and Practice of Ralph Hotere and Joanna Margaret Paul' (University of Otago, 2019). She has published on Joanna Margaret Paul, Ralph Hotere and Allie Eagle, most recently ''The flowers remember / the sugar bowl remembers', Quotidian Wonder and the Painter/Poet Joanna Margaret Paul', in *Thresholds of Wonder: Poetry, Philosophy and Theology in Conversation,* ed. Jennifer Reek and Francesca Bugliani Knox (Routledge, 2019).