

ronald feldman gallery

Airspace

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“You wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down.”

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

Ronald Feldman Gallery is pleased to announce a group exhibition that brings together works inspired by humankind’s fascination with flight and artists’ persistent drive to unshackle the soul. At this critical moment, with so many anxiety-producing issues facing us, the gallery presents a selection of works that defy gravity – not only in their physical depictions but also through their permeating spirit, as a way toward a bird’s eye perspective.

The exhibition is curated by Marco Nocella and consists primarily of works in the collection of Ronald and Frayda Feldman. The sixteen artists included are Eleanor Antin, Ida Applebroog, Brandon Ballengée, Nancy Chunn, Terry Fox, Rico Gatson, Cameron Hayes, Kelly Heaton, Komar & Melamid, Kim Levin, Pepón Osorio, Panamarenko, Tavares Strachan, Andy Warhol, and Hannah Wilke.

Like a beacon of hope with her arms upraised, Rico Gatson’s brilliant photographic collage of an exultant Toni Morrison is installed as a frontispiece and serves as the exhibition’s muse.

Kim Levin’s 1970’s painting entitled *Gloster Gladiator* starts things off. The WWI biplane, often used in airshows and exhibitions, is seen up close and angled upward as if taking off. *Wingwalker I: Stearman* depicts a daredevil performing a dangerous stunt mid-air on the plane’s wing.

Panamarenko’s human-powered flight experiments and wildly imaginative aerodynamic studies embody a spirit of investigation and possibility. On display are sixteen of his visionary sculptures, drawings and editioned works that use nature, physics, and quantum mechanics as starting points.

Urban Angels by Komar & Melamid and *Self-Portrait as Angel* by Hannah Wilke add an overt spiritual presence, the artists spending decades responding to oppression by creating art that uplifts and empowers. Nearby, a bottle of liquid entitled *Resurrectine* by Terry Fox offers a tantalizing elixir.

Ascending/Descending by Pepón Osorio is a tribute to a tough and irascible man the artist once knew. A pair of plastic sandals are pierced with numerous black and white-tipped hat pins, so numerous that they begin to define a metaphysical aura surrounding the footwear. A mirror underneath creates the appearance of levitation and implies relief from what must have been a painful existence.

Ida Applebroog’s painting entitled *Yes, that is art* shows a figure in the orans position, from behind and repeated four times, who appears to be having a rapturous experience.

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In the *Moonwalk* portfolio, by combining and manipulating three NASA photographs, Andy Warhol commemorates the historic “one step for mankind” lunar mission and reminds us of a truly inspirational moment in our collective consciousness. These editioned prints were to be part of a larger, unrealized project conceived by Ron Feldman and Andy Warhol, to be titled *TV Sets*, based on images referencing watershed moments in the history of television.

Two drawings by Tavares Strachan from the *Orthostatic Tolerance* series refer to the physiological stress that cosmonauts and deep-sea explorers endure while exiting and re-entering our home, the thin surface of planet Earth.

Nancy Chunn’s painting *Spring Cleaning* from 2000 uses *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* and events from the time related to Kosovo and Columbine as a springboard to a new type of history painting – one with a decidedly humanist viewpoint.

Eleanor Antin’s *Banquet in the Clouds*, a drawing from 1974, is part of a visual diary of Antin’s King persona depicting various reveries in his imaginary realm.

A selection of works from *Frameworks of Absence* by Brandon Ballengée, an artist, biologist and environmental activist, is included. The series’ title refers to animals that have succumbed to the Holocene or the Sixth Great Extinction, which continues at an alarming rate. A memorial urn with paper ashes accompanies each silhouette of a different bird species, underscoring the interconnectedness of nature and portending dire consequences for our own species.

As a coda to the exhibition, Cameron Hayes’ *To prove he was the only god, Caligula killed all the pilots and still made the people take their flights* creates chaos and mayhem in the skies, sounding a note of caution about those who arrogantly seek authoritarian control.

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 10am to 6pm

Exhibition viewing hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 1pm to 5pm

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