

# William Ludwig Lutgens, 'My mind is the mind of a fish'

03.09—09.10.2022

PLUS-ONE GALLERY (NEW SOUTH)

My mind is the mind of a fish is a solo exhibition by William Ludwig Lutgens, presenting a selection of the artist's most recent drawings and paintings. The works of Lutgens often emerge as a condensation of the streams of information that flow through his mind, from news programmes to overheard chatter. Snippets of realities, fantasies and fixations are given form on paper, wood, canvas and aluminum. Lutgens uses various painting techniques in an experimental manner, freely altering between watercolor, oil and acrylic paints. In his signature illustrative style, William Ludwig Lutgens creates works that reflect upon our social and political realities, as well as human behaviors, urges and lusts.

“My mind is the mind of a fish” are words Lutgens has borrowed from the American artist Paul Thek, written in a letter to Ann Wilson in 1969. In this letter, incoherent thoughts jump back and forth in a scattered sequence of sentences, hinting at madness or intoxication. The artist's self-diagnosis is made in reference to the mind of a goldfish – only capable of holding on to a thought for five seconds according to a popular but mistaken belief. For Thek, though, there is comfort in the expressions of madness, in the incoherence of thought. There is an urge to transgress the objective reality, and an appreciation of the irrational as an escape or a path towards an insight of a special kind, which Thek considered the essence of art, incidentally.

My mind is the mind of a fish, like the mind of Lutgens, born in March, the Latin *Piscis*, plural *Pisces*, the constellation of two fishes entwined, and the zodiac sign, mutable water. One fish is directed towards the east, and the other towards the west: towards the spiritual, and towards the earthly realms. This constitutes the primal conflict in the *Pisces* who is all too aware of both directions, but slightly more comfortable in the heavenly realm than in the physical one. The ultimate objective is to have both fish healthy, energetic, and in touch with their process, swimming merrily along. But the mutable quality in the *Pisces* means that it has already had enough and it needs change – it is the gloom at the end of winter, dark and cold for too long, bearing the promise of spring, but not quite there yet, waiting frustrated.

My mind is the mind of a fish, and there are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says: “Morning, boys. How's the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes: “What the hell is water?” This was an anecdote that David Foster Wallace began his famous commencement speech with, adding that the point of it is that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about. The platitudes of everyday realities find their way into the work of William Ludwig Lutgens absurdly heightened, soaked under layers of bodily fluids, with a naked butt and eating potatoes. He is the other young fish trying to dodge the question about water with a silly joke, then laughing nervously, and staring off into the distance.

My mind is the mind of a fish, submerged in water, fluid, flowy, wavering, and above all mysterious, hence the most common symbol of the unconscious. For fishy creatures that we are, descending from water in an evolutionary sense, the unease surrounding this visceral matter is somewhat bizarre. There are old tales of Sirens, Nixies, or Rusalkas, singing songs so sweet and seductive one had to lose oneself, and tragically, in the waters upon hearing

them. Thus the sense of danger, but perhaps the tales tell more about the relationship to the unconscious realm than the threats of it in itself. The piscis swims in the waters, and yes, he gets lost and seduced by the streams and the flows, but isn't that the whole point of – I don't know – his life?

Text written by Anna Laganovska, 2022

<https://www.plus-one.be/exhibitions/solo-exhibition-william-ludwig-lutgens>

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