

Bradley Ertaskiran

Roadside Picnic

Stephanie Temma Hier

September 28 to October 28, 2023

A meadow, a picnic, a gathering; apple cores, bottles, cigarette butts, charred remains. This is the scene of the 1971 sci-fi novella *Roadside Picnic* by Soviet-Russian authors Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, chronicling familiar items left behind from visiting extraterrestrials, uncanny matter from another world. This is also the stuff of Stephanie Temma Hier's world: ants, trash, birds of prey, teeth, fish, and bones abound.

Hier's new body of work is an ambitious sculptural feat with its focal point comprised of 39 hand-cast tires rendered in lustrous, jewel-toned stoneware. The pieces were inspired by collected industrial junk from Hier's neighborhood of Brooklyn, and nearby Dead Horse Bay, a littered beach once the site of animal and material processing plants, now a time capsule for bygone trash. Hier's clusters of tires, assemblages of oil paintings and handmade oddities, similarly act as artifacts and surrogates for our cultural moment, good or bad. A seagull trapped in a plastic soda ring, a seahorse hugs a discarded Q-tip, a man devouring chips while a vulture watches.

Throughout the exhibition, unifying blue tones and meticulously handcrafted ceramics draw us in, gradually revealing bizarre and unsettling undertones. In one work, intricate azure tiles, each uniquely etched and illustrated, encase a bisected painting of sterile toilets and smooth, seductive legs. Delicate indigo violets are the backdrop of a broken television set, which upon closer inspection reveals a stained-glass surface, joined with silver. A joyful blue-grid picnic blanket is strewn with chicken bones, nudie playing cards, and dentures. Hier's Blue Period pieces garner a morbid fascination, always straddling a fine line between alluring and grotesque. Beyond the perils of consumption, we find a world where the nostalgia for lost innocence takes on new meanings. And yet, the sheer scope of Hier's pieces does not lessen the care or sentimentality imbued into each object; sweet, comic relief and personal mementos are sprinkled throughout.

Much like late-20th century artists who harnessed trash and readymades, often in grand and horrifying abundance, Hier turns to detritus as cultural relics, showing how discarded goods can act as remnants of human life, from intimate belongings and rare curiosities to decaying leftovers of careless excess. Recently, when The Pentagon publicly confirmed the ongoing existence of UFOs, the Internet erupted in joyful imaginings of what we would show them, what goods could best stand in for humanity, speaking to our obsession with material culture, with junk, what represents us, and ultimately what outlives us. *Roadside Picnic* could be such an offering.

This exhibition is dedicated to the loving memory of the artist's father, Ron Hier, who passed away during the creation of this body of work.

Stephanie Temma Hier (b. 1992, Toronto, Ontario) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She holds a BFA from the Ontario College of Art and Design University (Toronto) and studied at the Academy of Art Canada (Toronto). Notable solo exhibitions include Bradley Ertaskiran (Montreal), Gallery Vacancy (Shanghai), Nino Meier (Los Angeles & Brussels), David Dale (Glasgow), Downs and Ross (New York), and Neochrome Gallery (Turin). Recent group shows include Kotaro Nukaga (Tokyo), Rodolphe Janssen (Brussels), The Kitchen (New York), Galerie Hussenot (Paris), Kasmin Gallery (New York), Friends Indeed Gallery (San Francisco) The Power Plant (Toronto), and the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), among others. Stephanie Temma Hier's work is found in the permanent collections of the X Museum (Beijing), The Contemporary Art Foundation (Tokyo), the Longlati Foundation (Shanghai), ICA Miami (Miami) and the Mint Museum (Charlotte).

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