

“...the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise.”

- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, 1936

Failure is a funny thing. Drained of the optimism, vigor and excesses of his youth, Fitzgerald wrote this passage in 1936 for Esquire Magazine. His last great novel *Tender is the Night*, 1934 was already behind him and the mental health of his wife Zelda was still fragile. The three essays that he wrote for Esquire, “The Crack-Up”, “Pasting it Together,” and “Handle with Care”, are his field guide to fame and failure in which he describes himself as a cracked plate. His move to Hollywood in 1937 was an attempt to revive his fortunes, in the hope of turning his literary fame into a profitable career as a screenwriter. It is in these essays that he starts his descent. By 1940 he was dead of a heart attack, suffered at his lover’s house in Hollywood.

The artists on view have each used playfulness and humor as a go-between, a foil for self-deprecating irony, for our insecurities and our ineptitudes, our insufficiencies and our inchoate ambitions. If life is a series of failures, pieced back together by our optimism, then failure is as essential as the hard-beaten path to success. According to the Japanese philosophy of imperfection, pottery that is broken is more beautiful when it is repaired. This method, known as kintsugi, is the practice of fixing broken pottery with gold, or other powdered metals, high-lighting the very evidence of its fracture. To toast Fitzgerald, this summer group show reveals a mille-feuille of design, painting, sculpture, and is a celebration of failure in its gauziest forms.

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