

CYNTHIA · REEVES

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CYNTHIA-REEVES Opens *Incitements of Folly*, Dawn Black's Latest Conversation on the Dynamics of Power

(New England, New York, San Francisco) -- CYNTHIA-REEVES opens *Incitements of Folly*, a new exhibition of socially poignant paintings by Baton Rouge artist, Dawn Black. The exhibition takes a candid look at the personifications of "folly" within the broader context of Black's primary themes: dynamics and imbalances of power; the constructs of identity and self awareness; and, depictions of the socially absurd. This exhibition marks the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery, and features four newly completed paintings paired with a selection of earlier, seminal works, including examples of her powerful *Conceal Project* series. The artist's reception is on Saturday, April 4 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. at 1315 MASS MoCA Way, North Adams, MA.

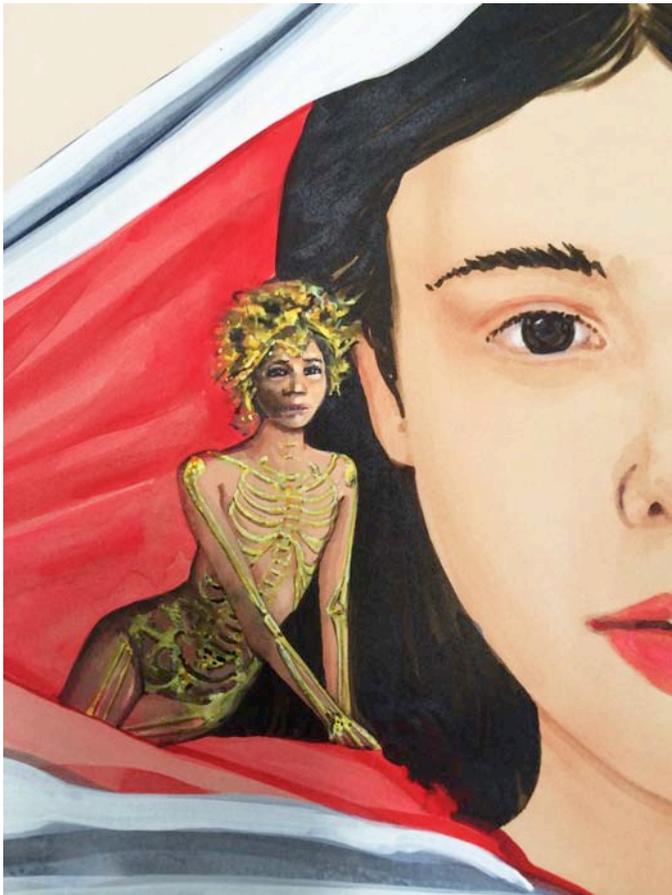
Unlike Black's iconic portraits, *Folly's Burden* departs from her deft use of negative space; here, she covers the entire surface in an array of celestial jewel tones and, in the center of this nighttime tableau, she places a stark and singular figure. Folly, perched tenuously in the cradle of a crescent moon, carries the symbol of justice on her slight shoulders. Her cultural identity, while masked, is suggested by the headscarf – Lady Justice re-imagined as a messenger from a tumultuous cloudscape that has no solid ground, no footing. The image is inspired by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute*, specifically, the Queen of the Night – a Queen who is magically cast out into the eternal night.





The watercolor, *Truth's Weight*, reflects on three very separate and disparate personalities. Black's central figure, a peasant in traditional South American garb, is walking away from the viewer. Faceless and nameless, the peasant struggles to carry the manifestations of a dissolute culture far removed from his own reality. The two women perched on the scales illustrate cultural perceptions of accepted female beauty. On the left, idealized youth, with fetishized accessories, parted lips and eyes that engage her viewer head on. The figure on the right is gender ambiguous, wearing an inflatable female "dancer fat suit" costume, yet with a masculine unshaven face. Above this mute drama

floats a feather, an ancient Egyptian symbol of the afterlife. It was understood that before one's soul may reach true paradise, The Field of Reeds, one's heart was weighed against Ma'at, the feather of truth. Only souls weighing less than the feather were permitted entry to the sacred Field of Reeds, the Ancient World's symbol of judgment.



In *Muse and Mistress*, one of the more ambitiously sized paintings on view, Black continues her exploration of opposing influences. Here, the central figure is a young, gaped tooth woman with wide, dark eyes. Cloaked in a puritanical white cape are two smaller, clandestine figures clinging to her neck. Angel and devil, the figures are by no means stereotypical. On the left, typically the position held by the personification of good, the angel is a haggard and visibly distraught skeleton outlined in yellow. The figure on the right, typically the devil, is masked entirely in a black bodysuit, with its implied sexual connotations. Black draws inspiration from the traditional floats of Mardi Gras in Mobile, Alabama, where the clandestine dark figure, Death, is ultimately defeated by Folly, adorned in shimmering and flashy colors, as they chase one another around a "broken column of life".

The inspiration for the *Wonder Wheel* comes from a Life Magazine image of water toys designed in the 1980's. The inflatable, human-scale hamster wheel requires quick eye-hand coordination. The blindfolded figure, a female hostage, is a

commentary on the absurdity of it all — a “human” hamster wheel, improbably floating in midair, defying gravity. Black pairs this with the ironic image of a young child defiantly holding a sign with Gloria Steinem’s feminist mantra, “We Shall Overcome”.



Dawn Black’s award winning thesis, *Conceal Project*, was recently on view at The Columbus Museum in Georgia, (2012), followed by subsequent traveling exhibitions with the Museum of Paper and Watermark in Fabriano, Italy (2013); Fundacion Pedro Cano, Blanca, Spain (2012); Weatherspoon Museum, Greenboro, North Carolina (2013); and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, LA (2013). Black received an MFA in Painting and Sculpture in 2001 from the University of Iowa, and has been awarded several prestigious residencies around the country; Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, McColl Center for the Arts, Lawndale Arts Center, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Her work has been profiled in *Art Papers*, *Art in America*, *New American Paintings*, *The Washington*, and *The Advocate*.

For further information on Dawn Black, please visit the online gallery at cynthia-reeves.com or contact us at 212 714 0044. Please note that the gallery at 1315 Mass MoCA Way is open on Saturdays from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. and by appointment only.



DAWN BLACK

CYNTHIA-REEVES @ 1315 MASS MoCA Way, North Adams, MA

April 4 - May 3