



Shawn Thornton, *Witch Doctor At The Eye of The Solar Epoch*, 2008-2010, 12" x 29", Oil on panel.

Shawn Thornton: *Pareidolia*

Curated by Tom Burckhardt

April 13 - May 24, 2017

Opening Reception, Thursday, April 13, 6-8PM

CUE Art Foundation is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Shawn Thornton, curated by Tom Burckhardt. Titled *Pareidolia*, the exhibition includes small-scale oil paintings, videos, and altar-like sculptures produced between 1995 and 2017. "Pareidolia" is a psychological term that refers to the human brain's tendency to see patterns where none exist—perceiving faces, images, or messages in nature or in everyday objects. Thornton's intricate work references his own hallucinatory visions, the result of an undiagnosed brain tumor in his pineal gland, which he experienced for over a decade. He also employs a range of images and symbols that reference 16th-century Dutch painting, mandalas, hieroglyphics, and indigenous and mystical traditions, layering them into interwoven compositions that invite the viewer to approximate his otherworldly medical experience, and serve as a mode of research into that experience.

In his painting *Witch Doctors at the Eye of the Solar Epoch* (2008-2010), Thornton presents a map—a god's-eye view of a watery city or an entire cosmos—where water and roadways emerge from curving sections of pale blue, white, and brown. The same blocks of color form a sailboat, viewed from the side. The dual composition is overlain with a complex network of symbols: tiny rainbows, Coptic crosses, directional arrows, and skulls connected to spinal columns, whose geometric vertebrae look like railway tracks, rendered in brown and orange.

Thornton's process is painstaking. He often takes over a year to finish a single piece, working with meditative deliberation to transform it into an object of shamanic power. Curator Tom Burckhardt notes, "Thornton creates a Gesamtkunstwerk around his life and studio, making paintings, music, ritual-like pop objects, and clothes. All of this is in service of rebuilding his mental pathways after a serious illness—a kind of tantric idea of how to hold an image in one's mind as a tool of consciousness."

Shawn Thornton lives and works in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and East Madison, Maine. He earned his BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2000, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2002. Thornton was the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, and has completed residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and the Ox-Bow School of Art. His work has been included in exhibitions at Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Stephen Romano Gallery, and the Philadelphia Institute for Advanced Study, among others.

Curator **Tom Burckhardt** was born in New York City in 1964 and has spent his entire life living there. He graduated with a BFA in painting from SUNY Purchase in 1986 and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture that same year. He has been exhibiting since 1992 at various galleries such as Tibor De Nagy Gallery and Caren Golden Fine Art in New York, and the Gregory Lind Gallery, in San Francisco.

Burckhardt's most recent show of paintings was exhibited at Tibor De Nagy in Spring 2015, and his 2005 cardboard installation *FULL STOP* has just completed touring the US for the last two years. He participated in the 2016 Kocher-Meyer Gallery, New York, in September 2017. Burckhardt has been a resident faculty at Skowhegan in 2007 and currently teaches part time at SUNY Purchase.



Shawn Thornton, *Green Flame Hypnosis*, 2017, 8" x 8", Oil on panel.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 32-page color catalogue, with texts by Shawn Thornton, Tom Burckhardt, and Becky Huff Hunter. The catalogue is available online, and free of charge to gallery visitors. For more information please contact Programs Director Shona Masarin-Hurst at shona@cueartfoundation.org.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION PROGRAM

CUE's exhibition program aims to present new and exceptionally strong work by under-recognized and emerging artists based in the United States, and is committed to exhibiting work of all disciplines from living artists. Exhibiting artists are selected via a hybrid process, featuring solo exhibitions curated by established artists, alongside a series of solo and group exhibitions selected by an annual Open Call. In line with CUE's commitment to providing substantive professional development opportunities, curators and Open Call panelists also serve as mentors to the exhibiting artists, providing support throughout the process of developing the exhibition. We are honored to work with artist Tom Burckhardt as the curator of this exhibition.

ABOUT CUE

CUE Art Foundation is a visual arts center dedicated to creating essential career and educational opportunities for artists of all ages. Through exhibitions, arts education, and public programs, CUE provides artists, writers, and audiences with sustaining, meaningful experiences and resources.

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