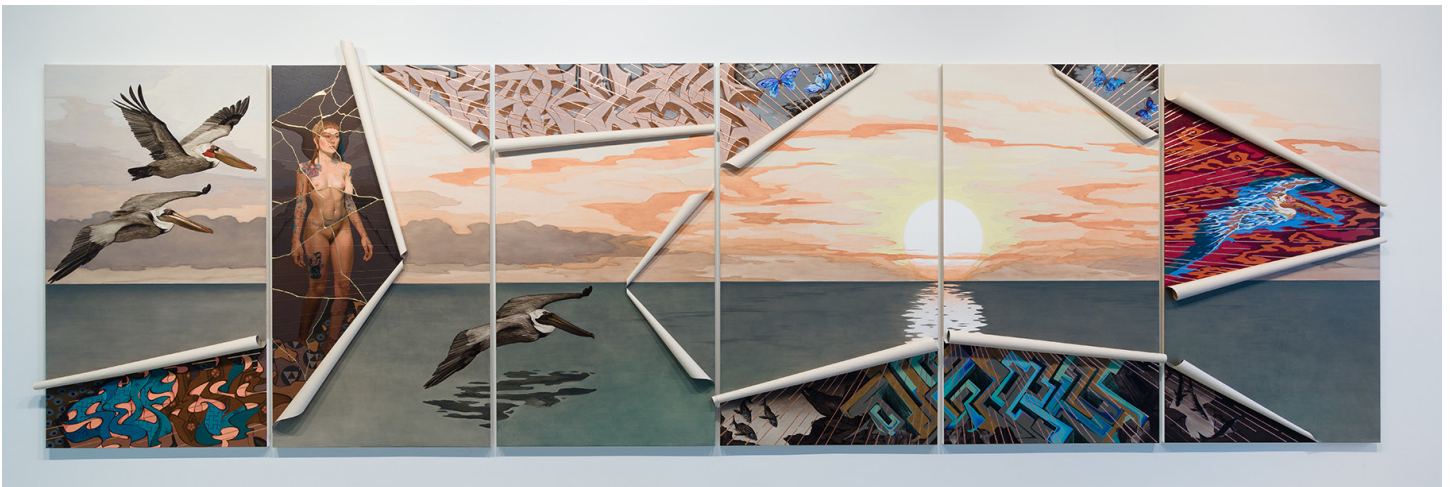


ARTFORUM

Greg Parma Smith Critics Picks

by Nicholas Chittenden Morgan
March 24, 2016



Greg Parma Smith, *Last Judgment (Selfless, Deathless, No World)*, 2015–16, oil, gesso, metallic leaf on canvas, 7' x 25' x 5 1/2".

The word apocalypse means revelation: a kind of unveiling to expose some higher power's purpose (through mass destruction, of course). In Greg Parma Smith's epically scaled six-panel painting titled *Last Judgment (Selfless, Deathless, No World)*, 2015–16, the end of days is visualized through layers of canvas that literally peel off the picture plane, revealing a number of stylistically disjunctive images beneath. In the center is a deceptively kitschy, postcard-perfect sunset. Split in half across two panels, this dark star suggests that it increasingly takes away more than it gives—a vital source of life that simultaneously destroys it, as we have witnessed in all the havoc wrought by climate change.

On the leftmost panel of this giant work, two pelicans swoop across a seascape, their eyes rendered like marble. On the opposite end, another pelican—belonging to a different visual system—is psychedelically melting away in a triangular field of blues and browns. A composite of a woman, who seems like a holy deity, emerges from a portal of unfurled canvas, her body seemingly made up of other women from different worlds or dimensions. The fissures in her being are painted gold, like the tenderly mended cracks in Kintsugi pottery.

In an adjacent gallery there are a few small ink drawings (each titled *At the mouth of a cave* and respectively subtitled *selfless*; *deathless*; and *no world*, all 2016), which relate directly to the larger work. They call to mind the Victorian passion for collecting and drawing butterflies. One can locate Charles Burchfield's hallucinatory formal influence in these works as well—another artist with a taste for the menacing and ecstatic.