

# David Lewis

Greg Parma Smith

*Love's Dimension*

September 8 - October 27, 2019

David Lewis is pleased to present Greg Parma Smith, *Love's Dimension*. This marks the artist's third exhibition with the gallery and his first exhibition in New York since his survey exhibition at MAMCO, Genève, in 2017.

From the start of his career, Smith has been hailed as a unique talent, a virtuous draftsman, and painterly technician with an inimitable and mysterious voice and vision. Like the painters of the figurative revival in the 1990s, Smith insisted, at a time when it was certainly not fashionable to do so, on the importance of traditional tools and techniques of paintings – looking towards the meticulous painterly realism of the early Renaissance and the Dutch and Flemish masters of the 16th and 17th centuries. Smith put forth a dazzling series of works, which complicated the audience's assumptions about what renewed and galvanized refinement and expansion of painterly methods were capable of expressing and achieving in a digital age, in an age obsessed and dominated with digital transmission and reproduction.

The significance of this decade long exploration of the means and possibilities and devices of the history of painting now makes itself manifest in the haunting allegories, mysteries, and fables of *Love's Dimension*. Drawing upon the means and methods of medieval art, and using trompe l'oeil techniques of his own meticulous invention, Smith opens a portal to another world which serves as a contrast to today's world: "Love's Dimension." The viewer will notice that in each of the paintings there is a purposefully disjunctive combination of two languages: the formal, almost video-game like device of the trompe l'oeil beveled edges and faceted relief planes and the more liquid, painterly surfaces. This disjunction is purposeful: it is meant, like a riddle, a koan, to open the viewer's mind to an alternative realm—"Love's Dimension"—which, in contrast to the current climate, is spiritual, nurturing, cosmically enlightened and environmentally whole.

The central work in the exhibition is *Heart of Life (The Peaceable Kingdom)* (2019), a large-scale rendering of a mystical fountain from which an incredible bestiary of fabulous creatures drink. The inspirations for this painting are Edward Hick's *Peaceable Kingdom* (1846), which likewise presents a vision of apocalyptic harmony, as well as *The Unicorn is Found* (from the *Unicorn Tapestries*) (1495-1505) at the Cloisters, from which the image of the fountain is drawn. Like Smith's previous exhibition at David Lewis, the monumental 6-panel painting, *Last Judgment (Selfless, Deathless, No World)* (2015-16), *Heart of Life (The Peaceable Kingdom)* (2019) reclaims painted allegory as a mode of expression best suited to our current digital age, reclaiming symbols, icons, and emojis in their original, spiritual sense, returning us to a realm before the printed press. In doing so, Smith gives to each of his symbols (which weave throughout each work) a numerological and coloristic resonance and a potential that exceeds the written word, and quivers with supernumerary presence and mystical abundance. This is the world of Tibetan sand mandalas—pounds of pure color and form combined into one—of Hieronymus Bosch, and especially that of illuminated medieval manuscript illumination. The faceted spaces, reminiscent of early video-game landscapes—the clouds like primitive digital clouds; and where is that strange light coming from?—take us deeper into our moment of collective technological and communicative transformation (e.g. McLuhan and Leary) by transforming our awareness and assumptions about it. The alchemy of Smith's techniques transports us to "Love's Dimension."

Greg Parma Smith (b. 1983, Massachusetts) lives and works in New York. Smith was the subject of a mid-career survey, curated by Fabrice Stroun, at Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO) Genève in 2017. Solo and group exhibitions include: 2018 Swiss Art Awards, Basel; Greater New York 2015, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Swiss Institute, New York; Everest/ Foundation Gutzwiller, Zurich; Kiev Biennial, The School of Kyiv, Ukraine; White Columns, New York; David Lewis, New York; Galerie Francesca Pia, Zürich; Metro Pictures, New York; Blum and Poe, Los Angeles; Greene Naftali, New York; Federico Vavassori, Milan; and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York among others. Smith's work is in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH; Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (MAMCO), Genève; Aishtu Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon; among others. Smith's first monograph, "My Ideas," was recently published by JRP-Rignier on the occasion of his retrospective at MAMCO.