

ANIMA MUNDI



Luke Hannam, 'studio, 2023

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PRESS RELEASE

Luke Hannam *God's Body & The Devil's Chains*

EXHIBITION DATES: 1 April - 20 May 2023

WHERE: Anima Mundi, Street-an-Pol, St Ives, Cornwall, TR26 2DS

WEBSITE: www.animamundigallery.com

Luke Hannam's 'God's Body & The Devil's Chains' offers an emphatic exploration as to how the artist (and perhaps we), find a way through the often blinding complexity and inherent contradiction of the human experience - are we to be guided by logic and reason or emotion and faith?

'God's Body & The Devil's Chains' is Luke Hannam's (b. 1966) second solo exhibition at Anima Mundi, featuring epic scale paintings alongside smaller works. The show represents a significant period of development in the artist's practice.

*"Chaos is God's body.
Order is the Devil's chains"*

John Updike

Hannam states : "I could say that painting is a conversation with oneself - a constantly evolving pathway to a seemingly obvious, but strangely unknowable destination. What it can allow you to say clearly, it often takes away again in a cloud of mystery. As I write, I am not so foolish as not to be able to appreciate a potential

discomfort with the flamboyance of such statements - such truths may appear grandiose or over the top, but that's just the way it is, painting is like that. The exhibition title 'God's Body & the Devil's Chains' is, perhaps, another example of this kind of grandiosity, but it fits and it works and accepts the scale of the journey.

I was messaged recently by a social media 'friend' that this title sounded like a Nick Cave song - his latest book, after all, is called 'Hope, Faith and Carnage'. I like this comparison; I like Nick Cave. I like his courage to wrestle with the big themes of God, loss, love, religion, spirituality, no embarrassment shown, all pretensions embraced. In conversation with Sean O'Hagen stated: "The word 'spirituality' is a little amorphous for my taste. It can mean almost anything. Whereas the word 'religious' is just more specific, perhaps even conservative, has a little more to do with tradition." I respond to the courage of this statement. I may not understand it fully, but I believe it. I like to grapple with ideas greater than my understanding. To lay my hands on that nagging sense of doubt, and embrace that clear feeling of being 'damned if you do and damned if you don't'. The eternal dysfunction of life itself, the hostility, the confusion, the demonic dynamism and the eternal quest for meaning all offer an impetus.

For me the exhibition title refers to what Leonard Cohen spoke of as "a bittersweet", a need he felt to maintain a belief that everything springs from the tension of opposites. Fantasy occurrences dreams and visions, images of what I would like to be yet fear to become. Painting over the last two years has been a series of encounters with what Carl Jung called "a very real truth." A facing up to the shadow self, a synesthesia of mind body and soul, an encounter with the subconscious. The characters in my paintings are all me, male and female, good and bad, moral and amoral, earthly and unearthly. These characters are intuitively drawn from a theatrical world of fantasy, myth, religious iconography and more recently from Jung's list of the universal archetypes, which he termed the collective unconscious.

There has been an exhilarating, terrifying yet somewhat affirming realisation that my visual senses are perhaps helmed, not by the outside world, but somewhere deep within my own Psyche. The paintings are in a very real sense manifestations, a call to being, an attempt to give form to an internal theatre, a script written by the Psyche to be followed through in everyday life. Jung spoke of a demonic dynamism, the shadows made visible with the purpose being to integrate the darker side of 'Self' with the so-called civilised consciousness. My paintings depict hostility, stasis, desire, cognitive dissonance, longing, yearning, fulfilment and emptiness. Titles such as 'The Hypnotist', 'The Contortionist', 'The Sleeping Yo-Yo', 'The Puer Aeternus' and 'The Death of the Child' are deliberate references to Jung's research into the structure of the archetype and have helped me to recognise and give life to these psychological and mythological states of mind. The drawings included in the show, a selected glimpse of my prolific outpouring, reveal the process by which these images emerge. Complex, frenetic, interwoven, entanglements or contradiction, tension, everything all at once coexisting. Images on the cusp of mania or an overwhelmed and overcrowded inner world at times claustrophobic and beyond my control, spill out. I must not fear overstatement, so I don't - I embrace it. Scale, complexity, ideas beyond my own knowledge, all, in the end, rely on my deep faith in humanity and firm belief that love will find a way."

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Luke Hannam was born in 1966 and currently lives in East Sussex, UK. He studied Fine Art in the 1980s and whilst others of his generation faithfully chanted the conceptual mantra of the time, Hannam focussed on perfecting his expressive drawing skills seeking inspiration from the earlier masters. Works have been exhibited and collected internationally, including the collections of Stefan Simchowicz and David Kowitz. 'God's Body & The Devil's Chains' is Hannam's second solo exhibition at Anima Mundi.

ABOUT ANIMA MUNDI

Anima Mundi was founded by Joseph Clarke, who has curated in excess of 100 exhibitions over a twenty year period, working with international artists in all media. The gallery is based in a former Christian Science reading rooms in St Ives, Cornwall which was converted in to a significant gallery space. The space is one of the largest outside of London which has helped to secure Anima Mundi's international reputation for representing the very best in Contemporary art. Since its creation, Anima Mundi has strived to offer its international collectors unique access to a diverse offering of contemporary art whilst supporting its artists through collaborations with museums and art centres around the world.

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IMAGE LIST



The Hypnotism
oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm



If Truth Be Told
oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm



God's Body & The Devil's Chains
oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm



The Death Of The Child
oil on canvas, 180 x 210 cm



For Those Who Play With the Devil's Toys
oil on canvas, 230 x 345 cm



Artemisia's Voyage
oil on canvas, 180 x 210 cm



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