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Moyna Flannigan

Space Shuffle

28 June – 15 September 2024

Space Shuffle brings together a body of new work by internationally acclaimed, Edinburgh based artist Moyna Flannigan, created in response to the architecture and context of our City Dome.

Flannigan first came to critical attention in the early 2000s for a series of fictional portraits of women. Since then, in painting and more recently collage, she has made the female figure the central focus of her work, in a continual exploration and critique of the representation of women in art and society.

Flannigan draws on an extremely diverse range of references to inform her distinctive visual language and approach — from Classical and Egyptian art and mythology, to the Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca, and icons of film and contemporary popular culture. In recent years, Flannigan has moved from painting to making collages, noting how ‘collaging allows me to draw things in different languages and bring them together as a new whole.’ Her new works significantly expand on this approach, interweaving myth, memory and personal experience

to reflect on the complexity of the female experience.

The large-scale frieze *Looking for Pluto* presents a procession of female figures moving through different zones of time and space — taking inspiration in part from Minkowski’s theory of spacetime, the idea that everything is connected in space and time. At its centre floats a colossal female figure, followed closely by an entourage of women clutching mobile phones, their collaged features mixing references to Roman goddesses with historic figures from the twentieth century: Billie Holiday, and the civil rights campaigner Bernadette Devlin culled from the artist’s archive of digital and newspaper images. The landscape around them carries suggestions of unrest — skulls nestle around a bare, solitary tree, a plane falls from the sky, the remnants of a horse-drawn chariot and pram lie scattered on the ground.

The final figure to appear in the procession is a horse — a symbol which recurs throughout the works in this exhibition, and is inspired, in part, by Edwin Muir’s poem *The Horses*. Written at the height of

the Cold War in 1956, Muir’s poem describes a community living in the wake of an unnamed catastrophe. Everything is silent until one day they hear the distant drumming of horses’ hooves. Initially frightened by these strange new arrivals, the people slowly realise they signal hope, ‘their coming our beginning’.

In *Space Shuffle*, Flannigan expands collage into three dimensions, to create a constellation of delicate paper sculptures. Suspended from found wire structures, the paper elements in the work are made entirely from discarded fragments and cut-outs from Flannigan’s other collages. The artist has spoken about the importance of chance and spontaneity in the making of this work — allowing her not just to make forms but to find them. Flannigan’s customarily rich visual vocabulary of references and materials now appear as isolated forms in a fractured and fragmented galaxy — an invitation to focus on looking, and to find new connections amidst the constantly moving elements.

The exhibition extends into the library, with *Cosmic Traces*, a new series of collages rendering ‘stars’ — female icons of pop culture who have been variously idolised and vilified.

COLLECTIVE

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Flannigan has spoken of her interest in reclaiming forms that have become overlooked or neglected. Two new works in cross-stitch playfully subvert a nineteenth century craft intended to keep women gainfully occupied.

The smallest embroidery remakes an original work from 1756: a thistle is surrounded by the text 'I have power to defend myself and others'. A second alphabet sampler undermines the usually didactic or instructional messaging of the sampler to end with the question: 'Must I?'

A catalogue featuring an essay by art historian Dr Pia Gottschaller, and a conversation between the artist and Sorcha Carey, Collective's Director, will be launched in August during Edinburgh Art Festival.

Alongside the exhibition, a collection of archive material from Collective's 40 year history is available to view in the Library.

Exhibition supported by Creative Scotland, with additional support for the catalogue from the University of Edinburgh.

About the artist

Born in Scotland in 1963, Moyna Flannigan studied at Edinburgh College of Art before receiving her Masters at Yale University School of Art in 1987. She went on to lecture in painting at Glasgow School of Art for ten years, before pursuing her artistic career with a series of international exhibitions with galleries across Europe and the United States. She now lectures in Painting at Edinburgh College of Art. She was a committee member at Collective from 1993 - 1998. Her earlier work includes a highly acclaimed collection of portrait miniatures, that were first exhibited at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2004. Recent exhibitions include presentations at Museum Arnhem, Netherlands (2024), Ingleby (2021), the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (2018) and *GENERATION: 25 years of Contemporary Art in Scotland* (2014). In 2023 Flannigan was included in *Vitamin C+: Collage in Contemporary Art*, from the seminal Vitamin series by Phaidon.

With thanks to Moyna Flannigan, and everyone who has supported the realisation of the exhibition, including:

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