



In Search of the Miraculous

October 16, 2021-January 15, 2022

The FLAG Art Foundation, 545 West 25th Street, NY

Sarah Cain, Vija Celmins, Susan Collis, Jason Dodge, Jimmie Durham, Ceal Floyer, Harry Gould Harvey IV, Hugh Hayden, Jeppe Hein, Jim Hodges, Yves Klein, Wolfgang Laib, Richard Long, Chris Oh, Paul Pfeiffer, Naudline Pierre, Dario Robleto, Betye Saar, Jeffrey Vallance, and Melvin Way.

The FLAG Art Foundation presents *In Search of the Miraculous* on view from **October 16, 2021-January 15, 2022**, on the 9th floor. Curated by FLAG's Artistic Director **Jonathan Rider**, this group exhibition explores belief, believability, and the suspension of disbelief in the form of art objects, talismans, multiples, doppelgängers, spiritual(ish) artifacts, and tales of impossibility. The show's title and concept nods to Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader's three-part final performance *In Search of the Miraculous* (titled after P. D. Ouspensky's 1949 treatise on eastern philosophy of the same name) during which Ader is presumed to have disappeared while attempting a trans-Atlantic crossing in a tiny sailboat—a leap of faith for both the artist and those who believe his story.

Encompassing a range of visual media, conceptual practices, and approaches to artmaking, *In Search of the Miraculous* assembles a group of artworks that ask viewers to question how we instill objects with meaning. Works that recast recognizable items through extraordinary means and materials include **Susan Collis's** trompe l'oeil wall anchors, screws, and broom. Traditionally made from plastic, stainless steel, and other mass-produced materials, Collis makes exact replicas with white gold, diamonds, mother of pearl, and other precious and semi-precious stones. In *The Good News (Yediot Aharonot, Tel Aviv)* and *The Good News (Asahi Shimbun) 9/25/2005 (Tokyo, Japan)* (both 2005), **Jim Hodges** conceals newsprint between fragile sheets of gold leaf to transform an ephemeral record of time and the day's events into a luminous monument. Rendering sound into physical form, **Dario Robleto** creates a geode from the dissolved magnetic audiotape recording of Jimi Hendrix's *Purple Haze* in *Jimmie, Your Cheeks Will Never Lose Their Luster* (1999), handset with amethyst crystals. *Blackboard Tableaux #10* (2007-15) by **Viji Celmins**, includes a pair of seemingly identical writing slates; one is a found, antique object, while the other is a handmade replica that took several years to complete.

With little more than a simple graphic printed on a sheet of white paper, **Ceal Floyer's** rodent-sized *Mousehole* (1994) creates a cartoonish escape hatch into a world just beyond the gallery walls. **Jimmie Durham's** *THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THESE CAME FROM* (2008), and a trio of reliquaries by **Jeffrey Vallance**, elevate the everyday and familiar—marbles, sparkplugs, concert pins, Paul Mitchell Extra-Body Sculpting Mousse—to gift unlikely and humorous new contexts for otherwise unremarkable objects. Addressing ideas of perception through material transformation, **Hugh Hayden's** *Zelig 3* (2014) comprises a canvas log camouflaged in hundreds of handset adolescent peacock feathers that replicate the texture and coloration of bark. **Wolfgang Laib** seamlessly dovetails the ephemeral and the eternal in *Milkstone* (1998-2001), wherein each day milk is poured into a slight, hand-carved indentation in the top of a polished block of white Carrera marble.

While some artworks in *In Search of the Miraculous* contain narratives that are immediately apparent, others lie beneath the surface. **Richard Long's** *A Line of 33 Stones, A Walk of 33 Days* (1998) describes a deliberate and poetic quest for marking time, space, and a line from the “southernmost point to the northernmost point in mainland Britain.” In a selection of prints from *24 Landscapes* (2000/2008), **Paul Pfeiffer** digitally removes Marilyn Monroe from a series of glossy photoshoots, including the final portrait series shot by George Barris on Santa Monica beach in 1962; without Monroe, some of the most iconic images of the twentieth century are transformed into cliché views of the sea. **Harry Gould Harvey IV's** mystical, devotional, and diagrammatic drawings meld the history, architecture, and ecology of the south coast region of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, each presented in ornate, handmade frames cobbled from materials sourced from local textile factories, churches, and demolished Gilded Age mansions.

Jeppe Hein's quartet of glass fiber reinforced plastic and chrome-lacquered balloons (*Mirror Balloon #4 (light green, yellow, fern, and turquoise)* (2015) effortlessly grace the ceiling, while **Jason Dodge's** fallen owlet—displayed beak down on a low plinth—is out of time and place and may never reveal its secrets. **Yves Klein's** *The Painter of Space Casts Himself Into the Void* (1960, printed 1990) illustrates Klein's credo that, "Today the painter of space must, in fact, go into space to paint, but he must go there without trickery or deception, and not in an airplane, nor by parachute or in a rocket: he must go there on his own strength, using an autonomous individual force; in short, he must be capable of levitation."

In Search of the Miraculous includes objects considered magical and imbued with power, protection, and belief. Since the economic recession of 2008, **Sarah Cain** has created psychedelic talisman drawings on dollar bills, intended to bring prosperity to their owners. Twenty mysterious, patchworked ballpoint pen and marker drawings—only decipherable to **Melvin "Milky" Way**—span approximately twenty years of the artist's life and career. Composed and altered over days, weeks, or years, Way treats many of the drawings as protective talismans, carried and concealed in the pocket over his heart. Ninety ancient Egyptian steatite scarab amulets (1938-30 B.C.) encompass a range of magical inscriptions, including symbols for life (Ankh), stability (Djed-pillar), and divine protection (the goddess Hathor). The collection was assembled by Natacha Rambova (1897-1966), née Winifred Kimball Shaughnessy, an American-born ballerina, silent film-era costume designer and art director, actress, couturier, spiritualist, and Egyptology scholar.

Inspired by ancestral rituals with reference to Africa and the African Diaspora, **Betye Saar's** *Dr. Damballa's Ju Ju* (1989), brings together visual and symbolic ideas ranging from personal history and cultural heritage to mysticism and the occult. Drawing on references from Renaissance-era religious painting, **Naudine Pierre's** jewel-toned triptych *Lead Me Gently Home* (2019) includes an assortment of otherworldly beings; central to the composition is semi-transparent figure lovingly embraced and uplifted by a group of fantastical characters. In *Figment* (2021), **Chris Oh** painstakingly recreates a detail from Jan van Eyck's *The Annunciation* (c.1434-36)—a depiction of the very instant that, for Christian believers, the word is made flesh, Jesus is given earthly life, and God's plan for salvation is set in motion—all on the jagged but shimmering interior of an amethyst geode.

About:

The FLAG Art Foundation, founded in 2008 by art patron Glenn Fuhrman, is a non-profit exhibition space that encourages the appreciation of contemporary art among a diverse audience. FLAG presents four to six exhibitions a year that include artworks by international, established and emerging artists, borrowed from a variety of institutions, galleries, and private lenders. FLAG invites a broad range of creative individuals to curate exhibitions and works in-depth with artists to provide curatorial support and a platform to realize their own solo exhibitions. Based in Manhattan's Chelsea art district, FLAG and its related programs are free and open to the public.

In Search of the Miraculous was curated by The FLAG Art Foundation's Artistic Director Jonathan Rider, an artist, curator, and writer based in New York City. The exhibition was organized with the generous support of the participating artists, galleries, and private lenders, including The Dean Collection, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Iris Z. Marden, and others.

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