

FIGURE

18 November 2015 – 20 February 2016

ART FIRST is pleased to present a winter exhibition, *Figure*, featuring new work from Christopher Cook, Machiko Edmondson, Jack Milroy and David Price with related work by Guler Ates and Bridget Macdonald, alongside important historical pieces by Eileen Cooper and Partou Zia.

“The Figure Is Back, Baby! At MoMA PS1's Greater New York, Artists Vanquish Zombie Formalism With People Art” - so reads the headline of a recent www.Artspace notice (11 October), which nicely bolsters Art First's understanding that art incorporating the figure has never 'gone away'.

The idea to make a show with a range of artworks formally using the body / parts of the body came about from our brief summer show *Visage*, which included **Edmondson's** hypnotic treatment of the face in her recently completed canvas *Pirouette*, now being given a deserved longer outing.

It is apparent that a part of Art First's history and personality can be traced through this collection; our long relationship with **Eileen Cooper** is marked with her *Play Dead* 1991, with its iconic universalism – the woman realising the boy's transition to manhood and its bold emotional charge. Meanwhile **Jack Milroy** contributes new pieces: one a 21st century re-make of Arthurian myth and the other, a self-referencing double-take on the show's theme.

Partou Zia's extraordinary *Green Breath*, where figure and landscape combine implying ethereal presences, is a tribute to the unique magical narrative of her art and life. Art First has been privileged to present her exhibitions and advise her estate. **David Price** makes unashamedly figurative work in which detail, colour values, scale and space are variously distorted from reality. This sometimes makes reference to fifteenth to seventeenth century north European painting and printmaking but also questions our constant cultural hindsighting.

Art First has supported Bridget **Macdonald's** practice since its inception, with a particular format of meticulous drawing, literary sourcing and gathering from the past. This is brilliantly embodied in *Pitcher Bearers*, an edit of the Parthenon frieze. Another draughtsman who moves between current and at historical sources is **Christopher Cook** who first gained recognition with vivid colour application and occasional complicated use of the body. He shows new work from the now signature monochrome graphite 'drawings' with dramatic borrowings from the figures of Caravaggio.

Women and their cultural surroundings appear in the gorgeous palace settings of **Guler Ates's** *Indian Series* photographs which emerged from a residency in Rajasthan. Fully veiled in saris, the figures enact particular dances to unheard music.

Proceeding to the AFP space, *Figure* continues as a theme in recent photographic series by **Liane Lang**, **Graeme Williams** and, for the first time, South African photographer **Gideon Mendel**. In the second AFP space, intimate paintings by **Joni Brenner**, **Kate McCrickard** and **Margaret Hunter** complete the collection.