



Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Earring-Object*, ca. 1918, steel watch spring, celluloid, ebony bead, brass ear screws, plastic screw guards, pearl earrings, metal wire, wood and glass display, 4¼ × 4¼ × 4¼".

scores their remarkable similarity: a nod to the spirited debate that has emerged in recent years about the true authorship of the most famous art object of the twentieth century. Did Marcel Duchamp steal the credit for a woman's work? We know that he certainly admired her. "She is not a Futurist," he once proclaimed. "She is the future."

"The Baroness" is the latest in a burst of projects attempting to revive the reputation of the underknown artist who was born Else Hildegard Plötz in the Pomeranian city of Swinemünde (now the Polish Świnoujście) in 1874. She acquired her title through her third—bigamous, short-lived—marriage to an impoverished German aristocrat in New York in 1913. After her husband deserted her, the Baroness scraped by as an artist's model while forging her

own name in Dadaist circles. She attracted particular attention and was more than once arrested for her unapologetically eccentric outfits: a coal-scuttle lid worn as a hat, teaspoons dangling from her ears, a pair of tin cans strung together to form a bra. Her equally provocative poems found a regular audience in *The Little Review*, the influential literary magazine in which James Joyce's *Ulysses* was first serialized. Its editor, Jane Heap, described the Baroness as "the only one living anywhere who dresses Dada, loves Dada, lives Dada." Yet by the time of her death in Paris in 1927, the Baroness's star had waned. She was isolated, depressed, and utterly destitute. (She died from asphyxiation after leaving the gas on overnight; whether this was an accident is unclear.) In the following decades, her name fell into almost total obscurity.

Today, the Baroness has a dedicated coterie of admirers who view her as a neglected visionary—a progenitor especially of the feminist tradition of performance and body art. To properly establish her artistic legacy, however, is difficult. Besides her poetry, which was published in a long-awaited collected edition in 2011, little of the Baroness's oeuvre is documented and even fewer securely attributed works have survived. So it is understandable, though frustrating, that only three of her sculptures—small found objects and assemblages mostly made from scraps of wood and metal, including a wearable "earring-object" from around 1918—are on view in this exhibition. (A fourth from the same private collection is currently in the Venice Biennale.) The rest of the display comprises photographs of the Baroness striking an array of outlandish poses; written and audio extracts of her poems; and contemporary works by a dozen artists and collectives including Zuzanna Janin, Reba Maybury, Taqralik Partridge, and Liv Schulman, presented "in dialogue" with Freytag-Loringhoven's output.

Offering the most direct and illuminating commentary is Sadie Murdoch, whose photomontages reflect on the lost stories of modernist women. To create the digital prints on view, the artist cut out images of the Baroness, who is transformed into a ghostly silhouette, and spliced them together with landscape photographs by her friend Berenice Abbott. Although the Baroness painted a portrait of Abbott, it seems that the successful photographer never reciprocated. On a drawing, ca. 1923–24, the Baroness scrawled: FORGOTTEN—LIKE THIS

PARAPLUICE / AM I BY YOU — / FAITHLESS / BERNICE! But what exactly happened between the two women—and what on earth is a parapluice? Judging by the drawing, perhaps an umbrella that keeps water off and also a sluice that lets it gush down? We are left only to guess.

—Gabrielle Schwarz

## Kutluğ Ataman

NIRU RATNAM

The works of Kutluğ Ataman blur the line between fact and fiction as the Turkish artist-filmmaker examines his subjects' self-presentation. Ataman's own experience flickers at the edges, always present but never the main subject. In the pair of exhibitions "Mesopotamian Dramaturgies" and "fiction"—Ataman's first gallery shows since stepping away from the art scene in 2013—biography once again held an understatedly central place. In the early aughts, Ataman was a rising star in the art world, with a Turner Prize nomination and a Venice Biennale commission to his name. Then he suddenly withdrew from public life, retreating to a farm in eastern Turkey, where he tended to his livestock. Spread across both of Niru Ratnam's locations, "Mesopotamian Dramaturgies" and "fiction" read as both a documentation of Ataman's pastoral activities over the past seven years and a return to his perennial fascination with identity construction.

Ratnam's main space featured recent works from the ongoing series "Mesopotamian Dramaturgies," begun in 2009. In the center of the room stood *The Stream*, 2022, a ramshackle assembly of flat-screen televisions mounted on wooden planks playing clips of Ataman digging in the dirt on his farm, the overlapping audio of his labor creating a cacophony of scratching sounds. Ataman's sculptural use of television screens recalls the work of Nam June Paik, particularly the latter's *Fire Piece*, 1992, in which a mound of char-black television screens play overlapping footage of fire. But where Paik used flames to undermine the television's status as an icon of domesticity and of the mastery of nature, Ataman constructed an altar to humankind's cultivation of the earth. The allusions to biblical imagery are palpable, heightened by a stream of water that appears to miraculously flow upward. While the work references Ataman's move away from the city, his purpose here is not to present himself as a prophet, but to gently juxtapose a narrative of prodigal return with an account of his own artistic evolution.

On a nearby wall, Ataman displayed a selection of stills from *Journey to the Moon*, 2009. In this sequence of images, the artist imagines a



Kutluğ Ataman, *Journey to the Moon 8*, 2009, ink-jet print, 11¼ × 15¼".

group of Anatolian villagers who, in response to a local politician's unfulfilled promises, decide to escape their city in a flying minaret. Once again, Ataman's own history lies at the margins: His family is from Erzincan, the town where the film was shot. Some of the photographs from *Journey to the Moon* resemble journalistic portraits of the villagers, while others are whimsical fictions: In one photograph, the escape minaret is suspended from two balloons. By merging the aesthetics of seemingly objective documentary photography with a fantastical narrative, Ataman reveals how feckless leaders prompt their subjects to make seemingly irrational decisions in order to survive.

The shadow of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's right-wing populism loomed over the other exhibition, "fictions," which mined Ataman's longstanding interest in performances of gender and sexuality. These themes animated early films such as *Women Who Wear Wigs*, 1999. The photographs in the recent series "fiction [other planets]," 2022, show transgender people walking down a dark forest road—recalling the Istanbul police's practice, in the 1990s, of arresting trans people and then leaving them naked in a nearby forest in winter. For a forthcoming film that is also part of the series, Ataman asked a group of older Turkish trans subjects to act out oppressions they had faced in the past, specifically prior to a brief period of liberalization that ended with the attempted coup in 2016, from which Turkey has since relapsed. From within this new authoritarian regime, Ataman crafts a narrative that prompts comparisons between past and present subjugation, reminding the viewer of what has been lost in between. As one of the villagers remarks in *Journey to the Moon*, "Did it really happen, you ask? It happened. I mean there is no lie involved."

—Jonah Goldman Kay

## DUBLIN

### Patrick Graham

HUGH LANE GALLERY

"Patrick Graham: Transfiguration" was the most extensive solo presentation the Hugh Lane has mounted for quite a while. Apart, that is, from its permanent housing of the studio of Francis Bacon, whose tortured sensibility and renditions of the body in extremis have parallels in Graham's work. The show encompassed almost two dozen substantial paintings—the six-by-eleven-foot-plus diptych was a format the artist favored during his heyday in the 1980s—as well as sixteen drawings, none of them small and all among his signal achievements. Though most of these mixed-media works on paper were from the past decade, the paintings spanned forty-five years. All but one postdated 1982, when Graham, who was approaching the age of forty, created the works that quickly made him one of the most influential artists in Ireland, certainly the most emulated by younger painters, some of whom were his students in Dublin's College of Marketing and Design, now TU Dublin (Technological University Dublin), where he taught for many years. The largest work here, an eighteen-foot-wide blasted ruin of a tetrptych titled *The Life and Death of Hopalong Cassidy*, 1988, is an extreme but not atypical example of his work at the time: a Grand Guignol of hacked stretchers, ripped canvas, and slashing brushstrokes, executed in a palette redolent of mud and gore, garnished with a sprinkling of tawdry flowers, and weighted down with two life-size mangled torsos fashioned from chicken wire.

A recent self-portrait, *Figure in Landscape*, 2021, greeted visitors at the exhibition's entrance, its heavily worked surface belying the delicate depiction of the darkened features, intense gaze, naked torso, and thin arms of an artist pushing eighty, clutching a single wildflower in each fist. This image is emblematic of the oddly affecting mix of swagger and

vulnerability that has long been characteristic of Graham's self-presentation, which has more than a touch of Beuysian mythmaking about it. It has sometimes been hard to see past an oft-rehearsed heroic biography: parental loss, a lonely Midlands childhood in the dismal 1950s, early acclaim for prodigious academic drawing skills, then a Pauline conversion to expressionist imagemaking sparked by a confidence-shattering encounter with the work of Emil Nolde, which precipitated a self-destructive fallow period of some eighteen years before Graham rejoined the fray. The decision to paint the walls of the various gallery spaces pink or red amplified, though unnecessarily, the flesh, blood, and viscera so often depicted or intimated in the works they were temporarily hosting. The transfiguration conjured by the exhibition's title is that of the Christian Gospels: a glimpse of the divine body briefly irradiating the wastelands of fallen humanity.



The exposed mortal body, all meat and sinew, and the expostulations of the tortured soul (AH SWEET JESUS THIS IS ANOTHER WAY TO LOVE . . . AND I UNDERSTAND was emblazoned on one canvas from 1982) are recurring tropes. So, too, are the landscapes that are the locus of the protagonists' travails. Bleakly expansive despite a shallow pictorial depth, these vistas are identified by the (rural Irish) place names inscribed on the surface of certain paintings. Words function as both bearers of meaning and compositional devices, tremulously distended across the picture plane à la Cy Twombly. These notations often comprise the painting's titles (*Lark in the Morning*, 2020; *The Song of the Yellow Bittern*, 1988), some borrowed from traditional folk songs whose charms often mask a darker import.

Graham lost his mother to tuberculosis at an early age, at a time when the iconic figure of Mother Ireland retained some mythic heft—an era, too, during which a sexually repressive church shamefully opposed legislation aimed at reforming health care, which it saw as a threat to the integrity of the Catholic family. This surely continues to inform, to a degree, the drawing series "Sile na Gig," 2016–22, based on the figure of the Sheela-na-gig, those enigmatic stone carvings of female genital display that grace many churches in medieval Ireland and elsewhere. While this fearsome motif was powerfully repurposed half a century ago by American artists such as Mary Beth Edelson and Nancy Spero, it signifies very differently in the work of a septuagenarian Irishman as a disquieting emblem of uneasy fascination with carnal origins and ends.

—Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith

Patrick Graham, *The Life and Death of Hopalong Cassidy*, 1988, tetrptych, mixed media on canvas, overall 6' x 18' 1/8".