

Chris Collins: Heap of Broken Images

February 4 – March 18, 2023

Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present a selection of sculpture and paper collage works by Chris Collins (b. 1980). In the language of cast metal and discarded magazines, these works contemplate the “heap of broken images” described in “The Waste Land,” T.S. Eliot’s 1922 poem lamenting the fragmentation and decay of post-World War I society. Collins locates a similar malaise in the contemporary media landscape, in which consumers are inundated with an overwhelming sea of images and information stripped of context. The works on view refer to this deluge of scattered parts while envisioning new possibilities in their amalgamations.

Inspired by the cut-up technique popularized by postmodern author William S. Burroughs, these works tear apart and reassemble found images and objects to unearth novel perspectives in the familiar trappings of material culture. In his recent body of collage works, Collins rips, scatters, and reconstructs images from magazines, art catalogs, street posters, and old photographs. Fragments of landscapes and figures with no immediately obvious connection are seamed together in a process of free association that transcends conscious intention. A reinvented order arises from the chaotic eddy of scraps, forming improbable tableaux that align and misalign in unexpected directions.

In Collins’ sculptural works, recognizable items are dissected, molded, and cast together in metal to form singular fusions of organic and industrial detritus. Obsolete electronics, discarded KN95 masks, and chunks of shattered glass are melded with palm fronds and delicate trumpet flowers, creating entities that forge their own relationships while retaining the memories of their original forms. The violent echoes of a bullet-riddled windshield and the accrued traumas of pandemic-era life, fossilized in bronze and steel, assume the solemn weight of a religious idol or a war memorial. Stitched together with parts scavenged from the streets and alleys of Los Angeles, these sculptures are inspired by the chaos and entropy of a city that collects and discards its fascinations with unsettling speed.

Work by Chris Collins has been exhibited across the American South and Southwest. Born and raised in Alabama, he received a BFA in painting from the University of Montevallo and an MFA in sculpture from Memphis College of Art. He has over a decade of experience making sculpture as a foundry artisan for various artists and designers, as well as utilizing foundry processes in his own works. From 2014 – 2017 he co-operated the art gallery and exhibition space Santa Fe Collective in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Previously a contributing faculty member at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design, Collins currently teaches metal casting at Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, CA.