

## Peter G. Pereira

Peter G. Pereira's work is at turns mythic, archetypal, and absurdist; the artist's frame of reference reaches beyond logic and reason towards dream. Combining surrealism with expressionism, Pereira presents human experience with emotional acuity and technical precision.

Bold, sinewy black and white lines shape the bodies in his mythically allusive paintings, limbs curving into tree bark, until the human and nature are indistinguishable. "Before the Fall" presents the biblical character, Eve, in the dramatic moment of prelapsarian temptation, reaching with a hoof-like limb at the Tree of Knowledge. What makes this composition a uniquely surrealist interpretation of the biblical story is that one of Eve's legs extends as an outgrowth from, presumably, the Tree of Life, emphasizing the human connection to eternal life and nature that preceded the Fall. The curling shapes representing the trees' branches and fruit are a nod to Gustav Klimt and to Symbolism. This visual theme reappears in "Cheerleaders in the Garden of Eden," a more abstract reaction to the biblical story, in which symbolic arm-branches worship the sun, gesturing towards an idealized pre-Judeo-Christian religion that befits Pereira's Primitivist style.

The same muscular, black and white lines that give shape to human form in the biblical paintings recur in Pereira's archetypal characters. In "Father and Son," a father (oddly reminiscent of Antoine de Saint Exupéry's illustrated characters) cradles an infant who, in turn, holds the father's chin in his hand—simple gestures that exude a surprising tenderness coming from such a cartoonish image. Interestingly, the infant is drawn with the artist's characteristic black and white lines, but the father is rendered in color—symbolizing the infant's embeddedness in the eternal world referenced in the Garden of Eden paintings and the father's place in the real world. All of Pereira's paintings seem to grasp at this Edenic state, and the visual, stylistic repetitions serve as an argument for his aesthetic stance.

Pereira's heavily referential work, while often steeped in symbolism, also manages to extend into the absurd. His 3-D paintings and sculptures, in particular, have a tendency to poke fun. The titles alone read like surrealist jokes: "Lucretius Re-reading Finnegan's Wake" (a white plaster bust sporting an odd, askew hat and accompanied by an open book) features the ancient Roman philosopher examining the modern, stream-of-consciousness novel—an intentionally anachronistic pairing that suits the work to which it alludes. "Einstein's Brain" has a similarly blithe feel—it showcases what looks like a reddish, photographic image of a brain hanging by two clothespins, as in a dark room. These relatively lighthearted pieces are an antidote to the more weighty emblematic ones. "Nijinski's Last Leap" (an abstract diorama showing a pair of scissors jutting into an empty black frame) references the celebrated dancer's fall from grace—Nijinski's nervous breakdown and diagnosis of schizophrenia that ended his career.

Serious, yet playful; abstract, yet deeply contextual; Pereira's ambitious work guides the viewer into a dreamlike realm, where the real and the mythic meet, and illogic is both a means and an end. With its vivid and unique reading of human experience, a Peter G. Pereira painting will punctuate any collection of contemporary art with sinuous vitality.

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