



KANG CONTEMPORARY

**RUPTURED MYTHS OF PRESENT**

FRANK JIMIN HOPP • SARA UMAR

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**EN** Peculiar Fruit, ceramic pigs, levitating women, and a muscleman. The artworks in *Ruptured Myths of Present* seem wonderous in their eclectic assemblage of symbols and characters. What at first seems like an almost overwhelming influx of messages constitutes an unexpectedly appropriate collection of stories and experiences of modern-day life. The artists Sara Umar and Frank Jimin Hopp pull the veil on the everpresent archetypes of society, some of which have existed for centuries while others are new actors who enter the stage. This first step of understanding the underlying and often invisible structure leads us to question whether and how we can negotiate our collective past. Is it possible to rupture the ancient forces that linger in contemporary life and, like shapeshifters, adopt new forms? The artworks explore patriarchal and capitalist structures in poetic rhythms; instead of impersonal pathos, they exude understanding and solidarity. Exploring these themes through experience creates an authentic tone in which the viewer can find resonance and the relief of commonality and togetherness. Though we are forced to confront today's dystopia and address trauma, the visitor is not left to grapple with these encounters on their own. On the contrary, through these reconfigured observations of society and acknowledging the solidarity of experience within these artworks, we can imagine a healing world that abandons any neutralizing code of silence.

**FRANK JIMIN HOPP** presents his artwork like an unexpected and yet resonating mirror. The viewer is confronted with oddly familiar consumer goods and images from pop culture that are transformed and distorted. They are vessels of forces that slowly threaten to destroy our world. The thematic distortion is underlined by the artist's unique interrogation of the material of ceramics - soft clay is shaped into organic and yet forceful forms. It is defenseless underneath the hand of the artist, echoing the feeling of inevitability and powerlessness in the face of historical consequences such as changing climates and exploitative consumption. Nevertheless, like a coral reef, there is the uncertainty if maybe, instead of reducing, the clay is growing and building, expanding into space. The ceramics enter a reciprocal dialogue with the artist's paintings. Like the clay, Hopp interrogates the medium of painting and develops his own methods and styles. In his current series, his paintings cite the animation of the early 2000s in which two-dimensional panels were combined to create digital shapes. Thereby, the paintings emulate not only early video games but also another crucial progression in creating images; it resembles the aesthetics of Cubism and Futurism. Like this formal art historical cluster, Hopp's artworks often recombine contemporary issues with ancient Korean myths, folklore, or global archetypes. The absurdity of a world in which consumer goods are valued above the planet they are created from is confronted through the artist's satirical humor, which initially misleads and deceives the viewer. A distant view of the artworks leaves us unable to gauge what Hopp reveals in the details of the distorted clay.



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Only upon closer inspection does the story behind these characters disclose itself — the opulent cakes collapse under the weight of their lavish decoration. The whimsical pig is bursting with the wasteful abundance of the food industry. While colorfully humorous at first, the details reveal that these modern Gods of consumption are, too, unable to bear their weight of their hoarded resources and powerless in the face of decay.

**SARA UMAR**, too, plays with illusions of perception. Her compositions are painted with deceptive precision and clarity; however, only upon closer inspection can the observer understand that many things are not as they seem. Through extensive research and meticulous compositions, the artist explores the vocabulary of the past and subverts it. Contrary to first assumptions, in her world, women who hang from trees are not suffering but exploring the ecstasy of shibari, the art of using rope for pleasure. Her paintings derive from a society defined by patriarchy, in which women are often dehumanized to symbolize distorted visions of religion and politics. Sara Umar's paintings revolt against these isolating modes of oppression; they deny continuing the cultivated silence which protects these systems. No symbol, no myth or act of oppression exists isolated in these paintings as they deny Western hegemony of thought and demand us to view the globalised world holistically. Paintings such as *Smoke in her Mirror* empower the viewer to understand the interconnectedness of cultures. The crocodiles, which allude to a myth surrounding a Sufi shrine in Pakistan, linger peacefully among Western objects of patriarchal oppression like the chastity belt. Through the accumulation of artifacts, transnational histories of the silencing of women can be explored and comprehended. In the end, however, by pulling the veil on these tragedies, Sara Umar revokes their power. Rather than simply remaining paralyzed within these destructive traditions, she up-roots the imagery and questions how one can move past this trauma and preserve the Self. Umar's paintings are a space in which people can find solidarity and kinship through experiences. The consequence of the acknowledgment of these wounds, is the possibility of healing. Her artworks are an invitation to explore and confront the ancestral mythology that still lingers within our minds and reconcile. Her paintings are forceful and, in their refusal of shame and silence, life-affirming.

Paula Böke