

SAM
CREASEY
THE
BEST OF
BEEES



In order to execute, it is first necessary to conceive. Our earliest ancestors built their huts only when they had a picture of them in their minds. It is this product of the mind, this process of creation, that constitutes architecture and which can consequently be defined as the art of designing and bringing to perfection any building whatsoever.

Thus reads a fragment of the introduction to a treatise on architectural design written by the neoclassical architect Étienne-Louis Boullée at the end of the 18th century. While the text was never officially published during its author's lifetime, it is in no way lacking in ambition. Throughout his writing, Boullée rejects the Vitruvian idea that the prerequisite of all architecture is to be found in the trifecta of firmitas, utilitas, and venustas — variously translated as strength, durability, or solidity; utility, usefulness, or convenience; and beauty, delight, or charm. While all of these attributes were of importance to Boullée, he found it contentious that they should be constituted as the very origin of architectural design itself. For Boullée, a building does not begin in the material properties of stone and timber, nor does it come into existence via an appraisal by the rhetoric of aesthetic taste. A building for Boullée is first and foremost an idea formed in the imagination. Only after its conception in the mind can a building become an object with qualia pertaining to the trinity described by Vitruvius in *De architectura*.

Boullée's placement of imagination as the origin of design is reflective of that period's dedication to what is now known as visionary architecture, a practice in which buildings are conceptualized and rendered on paper but not constructed. During this period of French history, land ownership and wealth were still largely distributed according to the remnants of a feudal system that made architectural patronage something of a rarity. Members of the aristocracy could afford to commission elaborate projects in the form of palaces and private gardens, but since this social class was minuscule in comparison to the size of the general population, appointments to design the lavish estates favored by the nobility were limited. In lieu of practicing their art in construction, many architects developed their approach to design by entering competitions held by universities and scholarly societies. Entrants would submit drawings or engravings depicting fantastic buildings that matched the competition's theme. As a member of the Académie Royale d'Architecture, Boullée himself frequently coordinated and judged entries to one such competition, the esteemed Prix de Rome. In his capacity as a programme coordinator for the prize, Boullée would set competition themes with a particularly civic character, challenging participants to design buildings such as lighthouses, hospitals, museums, and schools.

Visionary architecture in France at the end of the 18th century is, as alluded to above, inextricable from the social, political, and economic conditions present in the country during that historical moment. The inequity of wealth distribution that prompted many architects to execute their art as propositions with intaglio plates and washes of ink was the very same condition that distilled revolutionary discontent amongst the citizens of France. And just as the vainqueurs de la Bastille imagined the effects of a future that had no causal basis in the fabric of the lived present, so did the visionary architects dream of a city uninhibited by the conditions of restricted patronage.

While we are over two centuries beyond the events of the French Revolution, the contemporary moment doesn't feel all that estranged from the circumstances that led to the collapse of the Ancien Régime. This young century has already been marked by worldwide economic recession, deadly pandemics, decentralized armed conflict, and the exponential rise of both extremist political factions and violent non-state actors. What then might it look like if contemporary art were to adopt the speculative temperament of visionary architecture? What if the subject matter, materiality, and content of an artwork were more than just ennobled recapitulations of the status quo? An anthropomorphic plane tree might lift its limbs towards the heavens to make a vow of either vengeance or fealty to a sky mottled in bursts of dead pixels. A ceremonial mace then reclines into a digital posture across the impression of a bucolic landscape that may or may not exist solely in the lacuna of collective memory. And the eyes of a juvenile sentry might betray the anxiety of all those that have crossed the event horizon that separates too much from not enough and all at once from little by little, their thoughts now stretched like the bodies of the sentry's brothers-in-arms reflected in the bell of a brass instrument. I don't know what the future will feel like, but an art like Sam Creasey's in *The Best of Bees* looks to me like a beacon for all who seek egress from the tired present.

Text by Elliott Mickleburgh







The Best of Bees, 2023, oil on linen, 65 x 55 cm £2,200





Auscant, 2023 – oil on jute, 152 x 116 cm £6,500



Snooper, 2022, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm £1,400



Tail Lift, 2023, oil on linen, 65 x 55 cm £2,200





Second Thoughts, 2023, oil on linen, 45 x 55 cm £1,900



One Horse Town, 2023, oil on linen, 35 x 30 cm £1,250







Two Steps Back, 2023, oil on linen, 55 x 45 cm £1,900





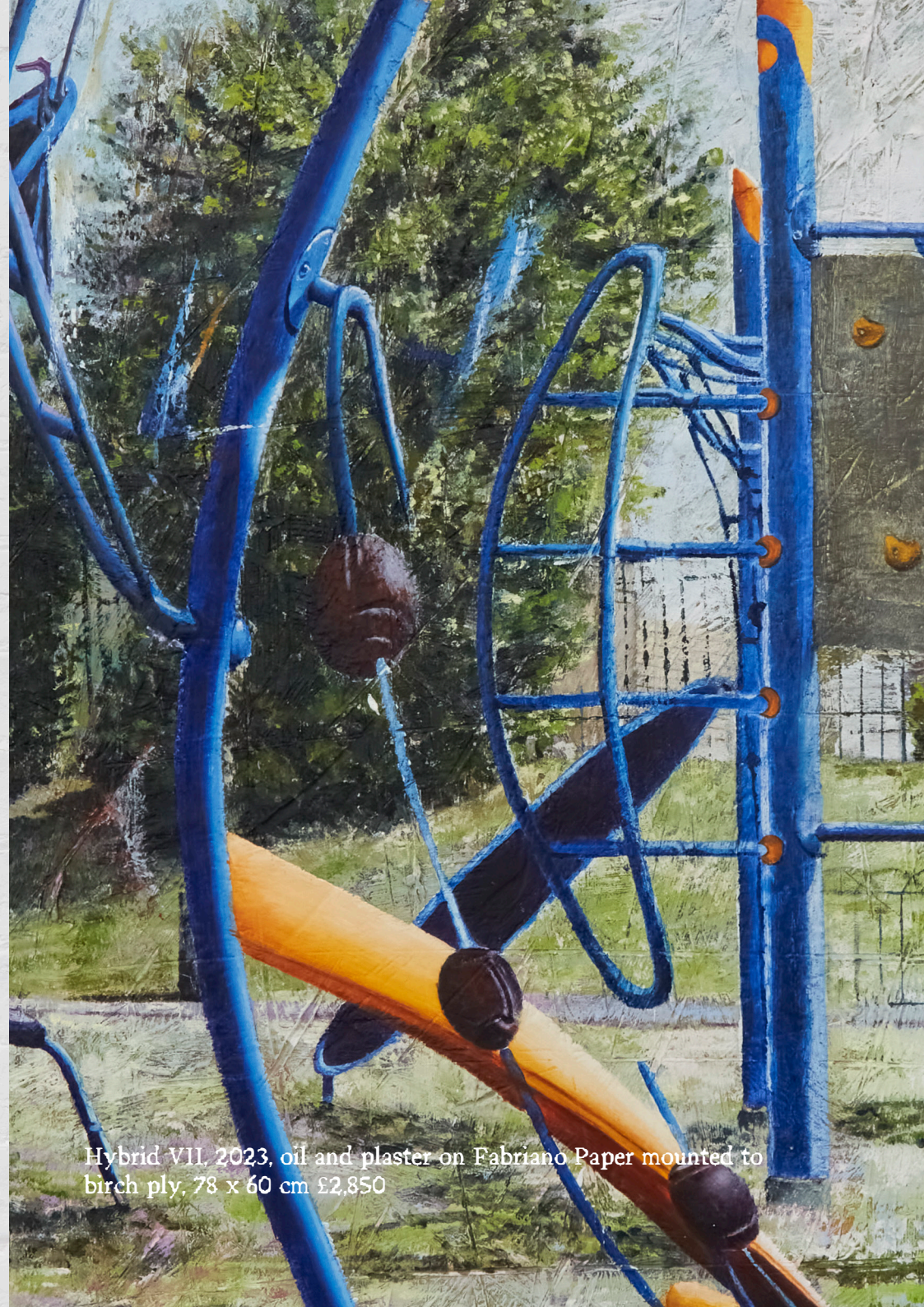
Anthropower, 2023, oil on linen, 90 x 75 cm £3,750



Mace Removed, 2022, oil on plaster, 90 x 75 cm £3,750



Arc-Vis Experiment, 2021, oil and plaster on Fabriano paper on board, 55 x 38 cm £1,300



Hybrid VII. 2023, oil and plaster on Fabriano Paper mounted to birch ply, 78 x 60 cm £2,850



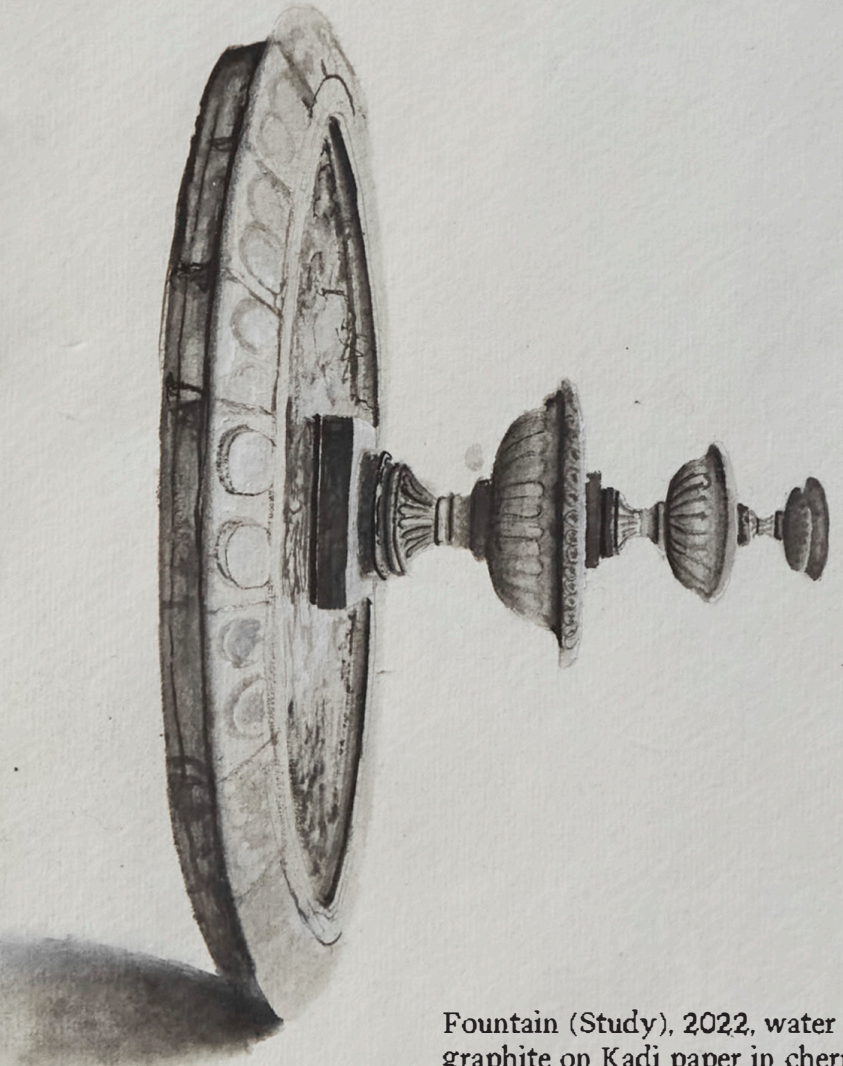
Mace (Study), 2022, water soluble graphite on Kadi paper
in cherrywood frame, 36 x 27 cm £950



SC22







Fountain (Study), 2022, water soluble graphite on Kadi paper in cherrywood frame, 36 x 27 cm £950



Second Thoughts (Study), 2022, water soluble graphite on Kadi paper in cherrywood frame, 36 x 27 cm £950





Plain Sight, 2023, watercolour and soft pastel on linen, 40 x 30 cm
£1,400

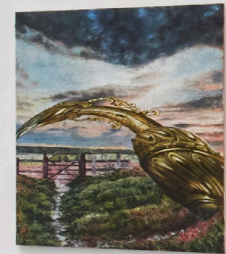


Auscam (Red), 2023, oil on jute, 152 x 116 cm £6,500



Sash, 2023, oil and plaster on canvas, 30 x 20 cm £1100





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COMMUNITY

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Q&C

Sam Creasey
The Best of Bees

Curated by Kristian Day

March 24th - May 6th 2023
Quip & Curiosity
71 Tenison Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EF

Contact kris@kristianday.co.uk for enquiries

Kristian Day