

[Slideshow] A Deep Desire for Freedom: New York-based Petah Coyne's Latest Solo Show

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

New York-based artist Petah Coyne is known for her innovative uses of unconventional mediums, and continues her explorations of wax sculpture, her latest works pointing to the life of the innermost, innate desires for freedom, as well as silver print photography that primarily focuses on fabric texture and mobility, Or close to the ground close to the local.

Petah was named the "queen of mixed media" by *Artforum*. Petah Coyne is keen on using books from multiple cultures to inform her work, from Japanese literature and Dante's "Divine Comedy", to Greek and Roman myths. The theme of her most recent solo exhibition, "A Free Life," was inspired by the novel "A Free Life" by American-born author Ha Jin, who immigrated to the United States in the mid-1980s. Given his troubled past, Ha Jin's novel depicts his struggle to keep alive his sense of integrity and clarity. Like Ha Jin's simple writing style, Petah's work requires reading between the lines to grasp the entirety of its beauty and meaning, unfolding like petals under snow.



The latest wax sculpture captures the innate, natural desire for freedom, while Petah's silver print photography emphasizes fabric textures and motion, with perspectives kept close to the ground or close up to the figure. Most importantly, her photography captures the subtle emotions and nuances that exist between objects, photographers and viewers. This exhibition also showcases Petah's photography.

"Untitled # 1421 (Ha Jin)" is one of Coyne's latest works. At the center of the work is a steel frame clad with wax, from which blossoms a blue and white waxy flower. Three parts of the steel structure are delicately coated with layers of white wax, conjuring a mental image of three frozen but steadfast snowy white trees. This sculpture captures the motion and symbolism of plants mid-bloom, and the inevitability of strength and vitality through hardships that are symbolized by snow or fire.





"Untitled # 1424 (Zhang Yimou)", 2016,
Specially formulated wax, silk flower, vintage Italian towel, glass cabinet,
feather, silk ribbon, 30.5 x 30.5 x 22.9 cm.





Untitled # 1017 (Feier's School Dance, Debs Series), 2001, Silver gelatin print, 47 x 96.5 cm.

Petah asked a bride or dancer to wear a wedding dress and, with bare feet, to freely express themselves in any way they chose. In the end, the mostly chose to dance. Coyne, as a photographer and a middle-aged woman, used this moment to look back at her own experiences as a young bride.



"Untitled # 833 (Hornet, Carnival Series)", 1995, Silver gelatin print, 91.4 x 61 cm.



"Untitled # 884P-97 (Mobile Monks)", 1997.
Silver gelatin print, 63.65 x 96.04 cm.



"Untitled # 1010 (Lotus Pond, Wedding Series)", 2001,
Silver gelatin print, 137.16 x 90.17 cm.

All of the photographs on display are silver gelatin prints. Coyne primarily used a pinhole camera she made herself or a Zeiss camera. She often applied various focal lengths of the Zeiss lens to the homemade pinhole camera. Pinhole cameras do not have viewing windows, so the artist did not know what the results would be until the prints were developed.



Petah Coyne, a celebrated sculptor and photographer in New York's contemporary art scene, is known as a "queen of mixed media" because she specializes in working from unconventional mediums. This exhibition, "Petah Coyne: A Free Life", was titled after Ha Jin's novel published in 2007. Whether it is the photography of the speeding monks, dancers twirling in wedding dresses, or her continuation of her signature wax sculptures, her works point to our most innate desires for freedom.