

Joe Coleman: 100 Seconds to Midnight

February 4 – March 18, 2023

Andrew Edlin Gallery is excited to present *Joe Coleman: 100 Seconds to Midnight*, an exhibition of four works related to the artist's ongoing practice of self-portraiture and centered around his newest piece, *The Sorcerer's Mirror at 100 Seconds to Midnight*, which took five years to complete and makes its debut here.

Executed with a single-hair paintbrush and jeweler's goggles, the paintings of Joe Coleman (b. 1955) are epics in miniature, so packed with a dizzying array of symbolic, textual, and visual information that they are often compared with illuminated manuscripts for their exacting detail. This exhibition highlights a systematic return to his own visage, through which he investigates his physical, mental, and spiritual unease. Coleman examines the self as a pathology, transforming the autobiographical into a kind of mythology or allegory while reflecting on the ills of the world.

The Sorcerer's Mirror, with its setting at one hundred seconds to midnight, sits firmly within the tradition of visionary apocalyptic art and literature that we might associate with William Blake, whose poetry is cited prominently near the top of the work; or Hieronymus Bosch, with whom the artist has felt an affinity since childhood after receiving a book on the artist from his mother. Profoundly concerned with a contemporary eschatology, or the theological science of last things, Coleman itemizes the numerous signs and symptoms of our social and spiritual collapse—post-COVID syndrome, nuclear annihilation, pollution, the Ukraine war, genocide, wildfires, apathy, corporate greed, invasive species, cyber-attacks, racism, infrastructure collapse, space debris, pandemics, apostasy, familism (selfishness), and the Matthew Principle (inequity)—while in a lower panel depicts demons clawing at a doomsday clock.

The box-like three-dimensional structure of *The Sorcerer's Mirror* is both explanatory and enigmatic. The curious shape, which the artist concedes is a bit like two overlaid pills, expands upon Coleman's ongoing fascination with reliquary forms. Funereal in tone, it is also a seductively sleek vessel. Less immediately evident but central to the artwork's compositional and conceptual architecture is the mirror itself, which appears in the center of Coleman's picture. Radiating its effects, this thematic trope plays out in the mirror-reversed images of Coleman's great muse, his wife, Whitney Ward, on the left and right flanking panels, and metaphorically in a number of other couplings, including Trump with a terrorist, the dichotomy of male and female, and portraits of his mother and father fashioned in miniature sculptures out of toy figures he played with as a child. The mirror, like Coleman's renderings of himself in effigy, signifies his dual postures of engagement and alienation with the world, while reflecting back on us and our mutual complicity in the impending cataclysm of near-inevitable extinction.

The Sorcerer's Mirror at 100 Seconds to Midnight will be accompanied by three other Coleman works: *Mon Déjeuner sur l'herbe avec la Dieu Fée Mère de l'Avant-garde* (*Luncheon on Grass with the Fairy Godmother of the Avant-garde*) (2020), *The Book of Revelations, Take Two* (*Vision of the Archangel Whitney*) (2019) and *In Contemplation of a Diagnosis of T-cell Lymphoma* (2015).

Joe Coleman's art has been exhibited worldwide including in solo exhibitions at Begovich Gallery, California State University, Fullerton (2016), the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2010), the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007), Jack Tilton Gallery, New York (2006) and the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, CT (1999). His appearances in film and television include the "Lower East Side" episode of Anthony Bourdain's CNN series *Parts Unknown* (2018), Julian P. Hobbs's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (2006), and Asia Argento's *Scarlet Diva* (2001).

Coleman's life and art have been the subject of five monographs: *Joe Coleman: Internal Digging* by Joe Coleman, Susanne Pfeffer, David Woodard, and Markus Müller (Walther König, 2008), *The Book of Joe* by Joe Coleman, Anthony Haden-Guest, Katharine Gates, Asia Argento, Rebecca Lieb, and Jack Sargeant (Last Gasp/La Luz de Jesus Press, 2003), *Original Sin: The Visionary Art of Joe Coleman* by Joe Coleman, John Yau, Jim Jarmusch, Harold Schechter, and Katharine Gates (Heck Editions, 1997), *The Man of Sorrows* by Joe Coleman (Gates of Heck, 1993) and *Cosmic Retribution: The Infernal Art of Joe Coleman* by Joe Coleman (Fantagraphics, 1992).