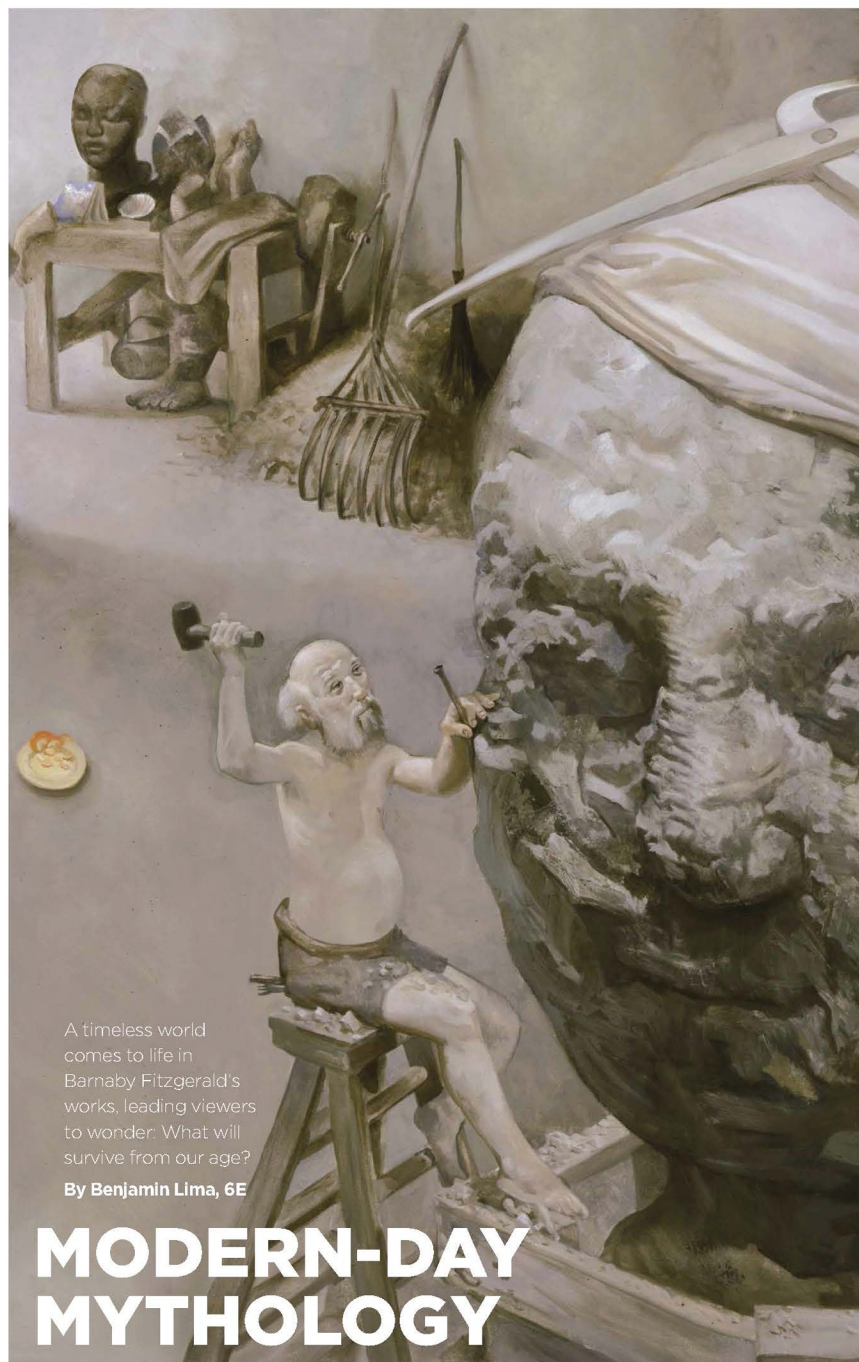


The Dallas Morning News

# ARTS & LIFE

SECTION E SUNDAY MAY 26, 2024



A timeless world comes to life in Barnaby Fitzgerald's works, leading viewers to wonder: What will survive from our age?

By Benjamin Lima, 6E

## MODERN-DAY MYTHOLOGY

### THEATER

Testro Dallas' *Cloud*  
*Tectonica* blends gritty realism, magical surrealism.  
By Manuel Mendoza, 3E



### DISTRACTIONS

Dallas singer-guitarist Slow Joy turns the spotlight on himself in *Mi Amigo Slow Joy*.  
By Thor Christensen, 2E



### DANCE

TTTAS closes season with L.A. choreographer's unique *BlueNao*.  
By Manuel Mendoza, 12E



Private collection  
**Ozymandias** (2000) shows a thoughtful artist in his studio, surrounded by unfinished sculptures.



Courtesy of the artist and Valley House Gallery  
**Bocca** (2013) is a conch shell that memorializes a godchild killed in the 2010 Haiti earthquake



Private collection  
**Caesura** (2017) allegorizes the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, an event that Fitzgerald lived through as a fifth-grader in Italy.



A 2019 oil-on-linen work, *Morte d'Uo* is Barnaby Fitzgerald's most direct depiction of mortality in his "An Eye For Ballast" exhibition.

Courtesy of the artist and Valley House Gallery



**Clouds of Unknowing** (2000) depicts a joyful nude banquet set in front of a gorgeous sunset.

Diane and Gregory Warden

**Details**

Continues through Sept. 22, Meadows Museum, 5900 Bishop Blvd., Dallas. Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (open until 9 p.m. on Thursdays), and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. \$12 for adults; \$10 for seniors; and free for members, youths age 18 and under, and SMU faculty, staff and students. Free admission Thursdays after 5 p.m. 214-768-2576, meadowsmuseumdallas.org

**VISUAL ARTS**

# TAPPING INTO ANTIQUITY

Ex-SMU professor's paintings make the timeless world of mythology seem present, alive

**B**arnaby Fitzgerald's exhibition "An Eye For Ballast," comprising two dozen paintings made over the course of the last three decades, offers an unusually direct connection between the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity and the world of contemporary art.

Not only do viewers meet figures such as Io, Terpsichore and Trimalchio, who have stepped from their ancient myths onto Fitzgerald's canvases, but also the sunlight and skies suggest those of Umbria, in central Italy, where the artist lived as a child and still maintains a studio.

Like visiting Italy itself, spending time with Fitzgerald's paintings makes the timeless world of mythology seem suddenly present and alive, an otherwise all-too-rare experience in modern culture. It lifts one's mind out of the day-to-day bustle and prompts one to reflect on what, if anything, of present reality might survive through future centuries.

Fitzgerald's depictions of artists' studios, such as *Ubi Sunt* and *Ozymandias*, allude directly to this question, since many works of art are created as monuments to secure the memory of their creators or their patrons. But, as with the fate of King Ozymandias in Shelley's poem, even the greatest monument is no guarantee against having one's reputation obliterated by the passage of time.

The most direct depiction of mortality is in *Morte d'Uo*, in which the skeleton of the unfortunate princess, prey to the predatory Zeus, reclines among the clouds, with no signs of life anywhere nearby. The subject is addressed more indirectly in other works, such as *Bocca*, a conch shell that memorializes a godchild killed in the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and *Caesura*, which allegorizes the assassina-

tion of John F. Kennedy, an event that Fitzgerald lived through as a fifth-grader in Italy.

Not that the paintings are uniformly melancholic — far from it. Rather, they are also full of scenes of eating, drinking, dancing and other life-giving activities.

For example, in *Clouds of Unknowing*, a joyful nude banquet takes place in the foreground, adjacent to a hefty wild boar being spit-roasted over a fire pit. While some of the revelers threaten to topple over their chairs during an enthusiasm fit, others have already hit their limit and are sprawled out on the ground under the table. The whole tableau is set in front of a gorgeous sunset that turns the background landscape into a contrast of bright colors and lengthening shadows.

In *Ubi Sunt*, even as a seated model casts an impassive glance at the boding, paunchy sculptor covering himself with stone chips as he works, two colorful plates of pasta on the floor draw the viewer's eye toward their simple, mouth-watering pleasures.

To be sure, Italian antiquity is not the only frame of reference. Other landscapes, including the occasional baobab tree, belong to the country of Togo, in West Africa, where Fitzgerald has visited for many years and also maintains a studio. Dallas' influence is less explicit, though Fitzgerald has been here since 1994, and taught for 39 years at Southern Methodist University.

In the metaphor that gives the exhibition its title, the eye is what steadies, or stabilizes, an artist throughout the odyssey of his or her life, much like the ballast or keel of a ship. The steadiness and consistency of Fitzgerald's work proves the aptness of the title, and the solidity and strength of the paintings mean that they stay with a viewer long after leaving the show, like truly classical monuments.

Benjamin Lima is a Dallas-based art historian and the editor of *Athenaeum Review*, the *University of Texas* and *Dallas* journal of arts and ideas.



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