

1.

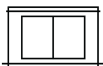
Fool's Paradise, 2021.

Enamel on SoyStrong maple ply board,

Pendelton blanket, sleeping pad, slippers, and white carpet.

Dimensions variable.

John Knight is a conceptual artist based in Missoula, MT. Knight holds a MFA in Visual Studies from Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, OR. His work is concerned with class identity and its intersection with design and architecture. Knight has presented solo projects at the Holland Project, Reno, NV; Final Hot Desert, Salt Lake City, UT; Private Places and Muscle Beach, Portland; the American Institute of Thoughts and Feelings, Tucson, AZ; and Julius Caesar, Chicago, IL. Upcoming solo efforts include an exhibition at BSMNT Gallery in Leipzig, DK. Recent Curatorial projects include: Williamson | Knight and Cherry and Lucic, Portland; and THE PINK HOUSE (Jan. 19 1995) at Bad Reputation, Los Angeles, CA. Currently, he works at the Missoula Art Museum as a Registrar, and serves on the board of directors for KALICO Art Center in Kalispell, MT.



Fool's Paradise is a singular work which can be viewed as a body. In this body are various primary, secondary, and tertiary elements. These elements are points of entry to engage the work. A few months back, I was considering the relationship of Donald Judd's douglas fir plywood works to industry. Having worked in factories in my early 20s, I developed a relationship between Judd's materials, experiences of industrial work, and concepts of detainment.

While studying websites dedicated to the sale of items of detention to government contractors and federal agencies, I came to better understand a nuanced association between minimalist practices and prison design aesthetics. There is a linear history linking indentured servitude, chattel slavery, debt, the United States prison system and industry together. Architecture and art influences design.

In *Window Mine*, three partitions exist within the earlier mentioned body, one of which contains a bench which can also be viewed as a pew. These are existential architectures that act to punctuate the body. This body is contained, adjacent, and placed; where a Pendelton blanket, a cardboard sleeping pad and used jail slippers sit as parts to the whole. Relating a laconic phrase of my youth that pointed towards the lack of socio-economic imagination and conditions of being; when asked about plans for adulthood, a simple response was to: "join the military, work at the factory, or go to prison".

The body in the gallery is a framework that asks: what potential lies in the tension of looking back at one's confinement--physically, psychically, and emotionally--while dreaming of the horizon?

When working, I often utilize the colors red, black, yellow, and white. These relate to aesthetic symbols found within politically far left and far right, and youth cultures that develop under extremist flags. They are stark, bold and used as a warning. Not unlike punk strategies, I work through appropriation and imitation. Works and writings by artists Arnold J. Kemp, Claire Fontaine, and Tom Burr are important; and the texts *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist* by Dario Fo, *Longer Ago* by Spoon Jackson, and *The Ship of Fools* by Cristina Peri Rossi, linguistically articulate *Fool's Paradise*.

The Ship of Fools, is a fictional travel novel that tells the story of Equis who tours to vague and unlocatable territories. Equis is poor but not without support. Over time he experiences a concentration camp and is a guest on a ship of fools for lunatics and criminals. Equis denounces both patriarchal and phallogocentric societies, and renounces his own sexuality in response to his experiences. He further vies for personal freedom while questioning morality in the face of State terror.

I often return to Peri Rossi's exile from Uruguay. Her flight to Spain occurred during the mass disappearances of workers, leftists, and intellectuals by American backed dictatorships in the global South during the 1970s and 80s. To me there is an adjacent relationship that I feel is in association to a national ambivalence of white Americans who are concerned only with personal liberty, and its ties to the concept of consumption through capital gains with the belief of freedom for all.

A fool's paradise.

The state of bliss that occurs physiologically when one does not know of, or actively denies the existence of trouble is a fool's paradise. The pop single "Fool's Paradise" by Meli'sa Morgan also appears eagerly on a google search. Morgan's hit was released in 1986, the year I was born. Thinking of the 1980s, I understand it historically as a decade of middle class wealth accumulation. Yet, it is also the decade of the crack cocaine epidemic, the war on drugs, the AIDS epidemic, and the breaking of unions by the Reagan Administration.

I often imagine a generation who achieved their dreams by pulling up their bootstraps--what a blissfully simple banner to work under! *Fool's Paradise* functions as a site of rest within the trap of socio-economic confinement in 2021.