



*The Days
Run Away*

Ian Friend

19 January - 6 February, 2022



Images Embie Tan Aren. As featured in Ian Friend's *From the Studio* interview conducted by Jan Manton Gallery.

Soap and other objects

The afternoon is white and hot. Underneath the gabled roof of Ian Friend's Californian Bungalow home, a soft breeze passes through. His studio, which takes residence in the front room of the house, is cool, shadowed and full of things. Works on paper can be found at every turn: lying half-painted on his low set working desk, stacked up in piles, or framed and leaning against the walls. Books of every variety – architecture, poetry and artist biographies – sit on side tables or lie open on his window lounge, as if he had just been reading. Brushes, pots of ink and small ceramic pieces are strewn about. Classical music plays faintly from the corner of the room, bathing the scene in a dappled shower of sound.

Friend is an eager conversationalist, and a natural storyteller. The discussion during our visit, initially focused on the works currently in his studio, quickly sways towards topics such as early modern science, religion and art theory. It's clear just how intelligent and well-read a man Friend is. His desire for knowledge forms a vital part of his art practice; while spending his mornings making art, afternoons are often dedicated to books and music.

Such influences find themselves reflected in the works he creates – in their subtle tonal variations, elemental forms and abstracted compositions – as well as in their titles. Several works in this exhibition are named after musical compositions: *Blue Silence*, a neoclassical instrumental piece by Soviet-born Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin, is slow and yearningly melancholic; the ambient jazz work *Angel Song* (1997) is sharp-noted and forlorn; and Dutch classical composer Simeon ten Holt's (1923-2012) magnum opus *Canto Ostinato* (1979) adopts a high-pitched canter, oscillating across endless tonal peaks and troughs.

One can clearly imagine Friend painting these works while their namesakes played on in the corner of his studio. Gazing at his *Blue Silence* works, it's almost possible to hear that yearning cadence of the music – to feel the sensation of sinking deep into ocean waters as bubbles scurry to the surface; and that jittering persistence of *Canto Ostinato* echoed in the hurried dotting of his amorphous, cloudy forms.

Friend's inspirations are not limited to music. History, art theory and poetry also intermingle here. *Pier and Ocean*, for instance, refers to the ruined West Pier in

Brighton, England, that gradually fell into disrepair in the late twentieth century and burned down in 2003 to its spindly, metal skeleton. Much like the 2010 night-time laser show that illuminated this ruined pier, *Pier and Ocean* pulls light washes down the paper, reuniting pier and shore.

The songs, poems and stories informing Friend's works emerge as abstract, rounded forms, sometimes large and elongated, fine and peppery, or translucent and amorphous. They are repeated endlessly, compulsively: in white clumps, like snow; or in groups of fine dots, like small perforations in paper, clustered galaxies or sheets of falling rain. Looking at Friend's works, the viewer is given the impression of looking both in and out, at atoms and at galaxies. Friend blurs the boundaries between micro- and macrocosms, removing human scale.

Also present in this exhibition are several patinated bronze sculptures which sit atop soaring, pyramidal ironbark plinths, the first sculptures created by Friend since the 1980s. Two works from this group depict a curious, cinched-like shape cast into patinated bronze and gold. They are named *Soap*, after the seminal prose poem by French poet Francis Ponge (1899-1988). Written during the German occupation of France in WWII, Ponge speaks of soap with child-like wonder, describing it as, "A sort of stone, but which does not let itself be rolled around in nature: it slips between your fingers, and melts before your eyes rather than be rolled about by water"¹. The shape of the rounded soap-stone, and those white, foaming bubbles that form perfect spheres just before they pop, repeats endlessly across this exhibition: one sees them in the heavy ovoid form in *Tears/Sleep (after Ivor Gurney)*, and in several white, cloudy masses.

Curiously, Friend's Soap sculptures take on another shape. Resembling the torso of a woman, an hourglass or a bone, this shape is in fact moulded from a well-used soap bar. This is a shape formed with time and love; eroded not by natural elements, but by the steady friction of human hands. There is a quiet, fragile dignity to the well-worn soap bar, with its various hairline cracks. Cast in bronze and gold, Friend pays homage to Ponge's loving prose, elevating this ordinary object towards something greater than itself. Past and present stretch and collide; personal acts become universal; and the days keep on running away.

— Zali Matthews, 2022

¹Francis Ponge, *Soap*, trans. Lane Dunlop (London: Stanford University Press, 1969), 14.



Blue Silence 5

2018

Gouache, pigment, casein, ink and crayon on Arches paper,
168 x 118cm (framed)

\$9,900

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld

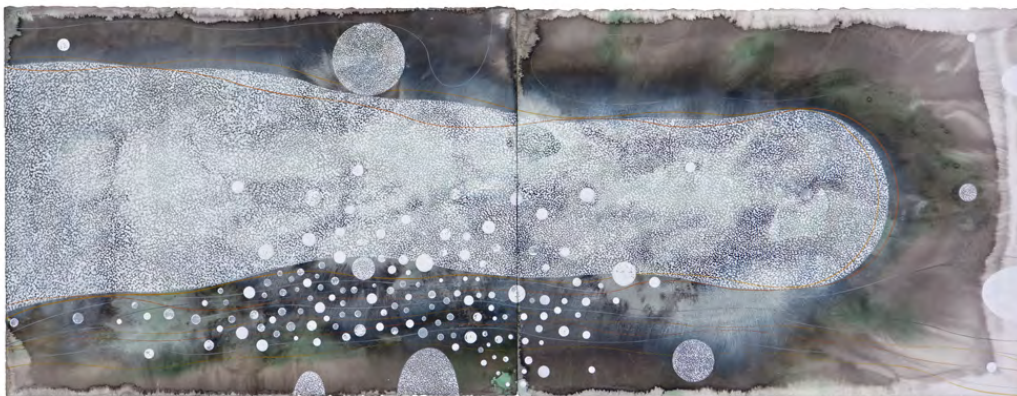


Blue Silence 4
2018

Gouache, pigment, casein, ink and crayon on Arches paper,
168 x 118cm (framed)

\$9,900

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



Angel Song
2016

Indian ink, gouache, watercolour and crayon on Arches,
74 x 167cm (framed)

\$6,600

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



Listening to reason IV
2018-20

Monotype, Indian ink, gouache, graphite and crayon on,
90 x 70cm (framed)

\$3,800

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



Canto Ostinato III (after Simeon ten Holt)
2018-20
Indian ink, gouache and crayon on Arches paper,
115 x 80cm (framed)

\$4,400

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



Persephone II

2020-21

Indian ink, watercolour, gouache and crayon on Arches paper,
117 x 81cm (framed)

\$4,400

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld

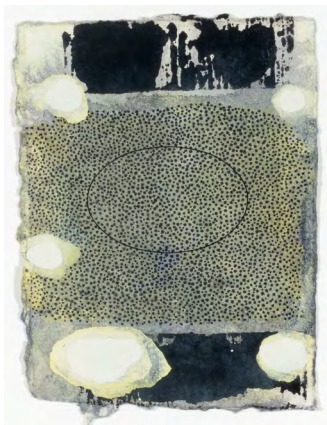


November I
2021

Japanese ink, watercolour, gouache and pen on Khadi paper, 14 x 11cm (image),
55 x 46cm (framed)

\$1,750

Photographer: Carl Warner



November II
2021

Japanese ink, watercolour, gouache and pen on Khadi paper, 14 x 11cm (image),
55 x 46cm (framed)

\$1,750

Photographer: Carl Warner



November III
2021

Japanese ink, watercolour, gouache and pen on Khadi paper, 14 x 11cm (image),
55 x 46cm (framed)

\$1,750

Photographer: Carl Warner



Unanswering Rational Shore (after J.H. Prynne) I

2020

Indian ink, gouache, casein, pigment and crayon on Khadi paper,
93 x 72cm (framed)

\$3,800

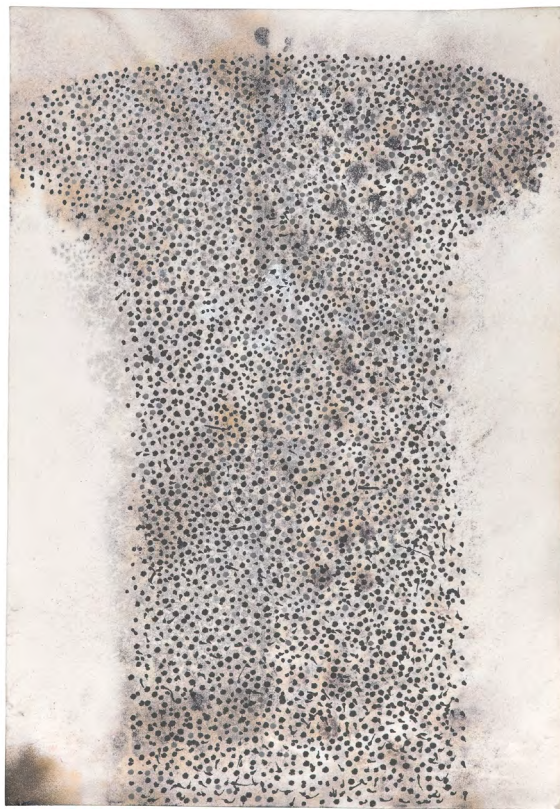
Photographer: Joachim Froese



Canto Ostinato IV (after Simeon ten Holt)
2018-20
Gouache, graphite and Japanese ink on Hosho paper,
63 x 51cm (framed)

\$2,200

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



City Ghosts I (after Sam Wagan Watson)
2019-20
Watercolour and Japanese ink on bamboo paper,
55 x 47cm (framed)

\$1,750

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



City Ghosts III (after Sam Wagan Watson)

2019-20

Gouache, watercolour, Japanese ink and graphite on Hosho
paper, 63 x 51cm (framed)

\$2,200

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



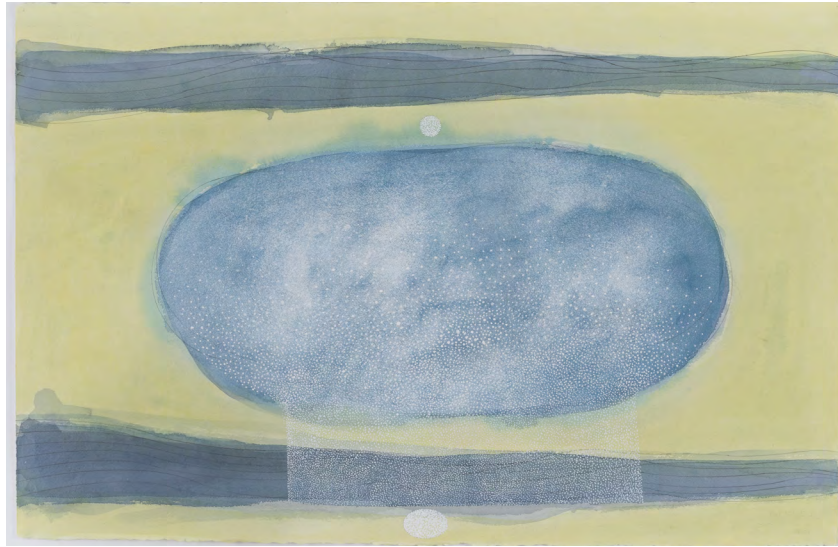
The Shape of Time (after George Kubler)

2016

Graphite and gouache on T.H. Saunders paper,
81 x 115.5cm (framed)

\$4,400

Photographer: Joachim Froese



Tears / Sleep (after Ivor Gurney)
2020-21

Indian ink, watercolour, gouache and graphite on Arches paper,
81 x 116cm (framed)

\$4,400

Photographer: Joachim Froese



Pier and Ocean
2016

Indian ink, gouache and crayon on BFK Rives paper,
89 x 106cm (framed)

\$3,800

Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



Spirit of the Beehive (after Victor Erice)
2021
Patinated bronze and ironbark, 18 x 18 x 148cm.
Edition 1/1

\$7,700

Photographer: Carl Warner



Soap (after Francis Ponge)

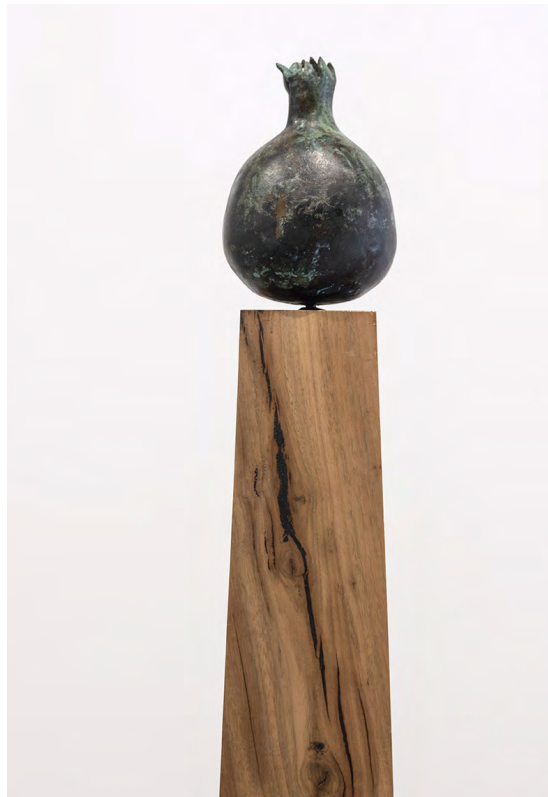
2021

Gold-plated bronze, brass and ironbark, 17 x 17 x 145cm

Edition 1/3

\$7,700

Photographer: Carl Warner



Persephone

2021

Patinated bronze and ironbark, 18 x 18 x 144cm.

Edition 1/1

\$7,700

Photographer: Carl Warner



Soap (after Francis Ponge)

2021

Patinated bronze, brass and ironbark, 19 x 19 x 145cm

Edition 1/5

\$7,700

Photographer: Carl Warner



Canto Ostinato IV (after Simeon ten Holt)
2018-20, Gouache, graphite and Japanese ink on Hosho
paper, 63 x 51cm (framed), Photographer: Garry Sommerfeld



*In loving memory of Robyn Daw
1958 - 2022*



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Front Cover Image: *Persephone*, 2021, Patinated bronze and
ironbark, 18 x 18 x 144cm Edition 1/1.
Photographer: Carl Warner.

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