

THE  
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**Suzanne McClelland**, *Mute M*, 2019 Dry pigment, archival glitter, polymer on canvas 40 x 30 in 101.6 x 76.2 cm

### **New Ralph Steadman and more in Aspen galleries**

By: Andrew Travers  
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In the quiet days of late January and the tail end of Aspen's level-Red public health restriction period, three art galleries opened significant new exhibitions that relatively few people have seen yet.

The Gonzo Gallery on Hyman Avenue last weekend opened a new series of pieces by the legendary "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" artist Ralph Steadman, who has illustrated a fresh body of work using large-format photographs of his longtime creative partner Hunter S. Thompson by Aspen's own Alan Becker. Steadman, 84, has said they will be his last Thompson-related pieces, according to gallerist Daniel Joseph Watkins.

The massive photos come from series of 1990 photographs Becker took of Thompson at Owl Farm in Woody Creek.

Watkins gave the color photo prints to Steadman nearly five years ago, as the pair was at the beginning of their artist-gallerist relationship. But Steadman didn't do anything with them until a productive stretch of the COVID-19 lockdown, when he made all nine in his studio in the English countryside.

Steadman uses his signature splashes of ink and paint in red, white and blue on them, scribbling a few choice words here and there: “Draw!! Punk!!!” on a portrait of Thompson in a Pitkin County Sheriff’s deputy ballcap and holding a weapon; “Damn! I Musta Fallen Asleep!?” on one of Thomson swinging a golf club atop a busted Jeep in his yard.

“It’s hilarious how Ralph can do something so simple and add this new life to it,” Watkins said. “Ralph is a real hero.”

The show also includes Steadman-illustrated photos from Thompson’s 1970 “Freak Power” campaign in Aspen, taken by David Hiser and used for Watkins’ book and documentary film on the subject. Some of those works are expected to be included at the next stop of the Gonzo’s traveling “Freak Power” museum exhibition, which is set to open at the Poster House in New York on March 4 with more than 60 pieces of campaign-related artwork, posters and ephemera.

Harvey Preston Gallery on Hopkins Avenue is hosting a cleverly curated two-artist show titled “I’ll Be Your Mirror,” featuring multimedia work by Jeanne Quinn and Jeffrey Mitchell.

Quinn’s mind-bending installation “True and Reasoned and Impure and Inexplicable,” first shown at the Milwaukee Museum of Art, fills a wall with pin-mounted porcelain and wire pieces backed by an interplay of fake and real shadows.

Near it hangs Mitchell’s “Narcissus at the Pool,” an intricately detailed 7-foot-tall ink work on muslin fabric showing a mirror image and creating optical illusions that change depending on your vantage point.

The show, which opened Jan. 22, also includes a menagerie of porcelain sculpture by Mitchell and pencil drawings and cut paper by Quinn.

Curator Sam Harvey said he’d been hoping to show Mitchell’s adventuresome work for years. This dual presentation came together when he booked Quinn and asked her who she’d ideally like to pair with (she said Mitchell and this dual presentation was born).

“We settled on ‘I’ll Be Your Mirror,’ taken from the Velvet Underground song,” Mitchell wrote of the show’s title. “Sweet and simple, it matches the formal and conceptual concerns in our work, but I think the title of our show is really about our friendship.”

Marianne Boesky on Spring Street is exhibiting the New York-based artist Suzanne McClelland’s “Mute” series, made up of 26 distinct paintings – each inspired by a letter of the alphabet. The abstract and minimalist pieces depart from the artist’s best-known work, which often prominently incorporates actual letters and numbers. Artforum called the “Mute” series “a major sea change.”

“These paintings were asking me to make simple structures in empty space with the most minimal of moves,” McClelland says in an online video walk-through of the exhibition.

As the Aspen area’s number of novel coronavirus case levels drop, and more people venture out to gallery-hop and perhaps more visitors arrive in coming days, this trio of shows may yet find their in-person audience.

Foot traffic to downtown galleries has been sparse in recent weeks, with gallerists reporting as few as one visitor in an entire day. Boesky, the Gonzo and Harvey Preston, like most all galleries, have enhanced their online presence and found sales there. But, of course, there’s nothing like being there in-person.

“You can take a picture of this all day long,” said Harvey, marveling at the Quinn installation. “But it’s not going to give you its presence. Art has a presence.”