

AISLING HAMROGUE
INTERVIEWED BY LAURA BROWN

Let's begin with the exhibition title, *Hell Hole*. Where did this come from? While you were still working on this show, we talked about how a loose theme of "hell" was emerging through the works...

While I was working on this show, the loose theme of "Hell" emerged in several of the works. I'm interested in cultural representations of Hell. Hell as a container for pain and punishment. The title *Hell Hole* seemed to be the perfect play on words to summarize the common intersection of cruelty and the erotic in the work. The work titled *Hell Hole* shows a star descending into the ground with hellfire emerging from the pit. To me, it functions as a very alluring yet deeply unwelcoming hole.

I'm also curious about how the titles of the works function. There's a way that stylistically they're doing something similar to the work itself.

The titles are an important part of the work. To me, the paintings function somewhat as imaginary film posters. The titles often involve some level of word play, mimicking the trivializing and fetishizing dynamic seen in our culture's representation of violence.

Many of these images seem to be located outside of time or space—or suspended, to put it another way. How would you "situate" your works/imagery?

The empty space surrounding the rendered subject is a way to explore the known and unknown elements within the work. This neutral space functions like a stage across which various narratives can emerge. I'm also interested in the tension that arises between the more minimalist parts of the painting and the rendered details.

I wanted to ask you about the extremely specific color palette at play in this group of works.

I have always worked with this palette. I am drawn to these highly saturated colors because they relate more closely to design and illustration than they do to classical oil painting. The colors are a nod to film posters and airbrushed hot rods. I am purposefully painting these images with the colors most often used in the lighting in horror films—more specifically Giallo films.

Throughout the works there's a series of references and echoes, some more obscured than others. For example, *Cold Print* or *Canto XX*—which also leads to the horror genre as an overarching aesthetic reference.

Cold Print is a reference to a collection of stories written by Ramsey Campbell in the 1980s. I felt that the tacky lettering was an obvious signifier for a specific type of horror book cover that I wanted to allude to. I'm drawn to these glossy, tacky book covers because their content is often serious and violent yet the aesthetic is quite gaudy.

In Dante's *inferno*, *Canto XX* is the location in Hell for sinners who tried to foretell the future, such as augurs, sorcerers, and astrologers. One might interpret it as the place for witches. I wanted to make historical references in the works that corralled themes of violence outside of a contemporary culture.

How does your own relationship to the horror genre play into or inform the works, if at all?

I've always been drawn to horror films. I understood from a young age that my body was the body of the victim. Horror is an identifiable location within our culture wherein the total annihilation of women is not only condoned but celebrated. By referencing this type of imagery, I am able to reconstruct my own experience of violence within an established genre. I want to understand the complex charge—always violent and often erotic—that these images hold.

Aisling Hamrogue, *Hell Hole* is on view October 15 – November 15, 2021 at James Fuentes Online: <https://jamesfuentes.online/aisling-hamrogue>.

Aisling Hamrogue was born New York, where she lives and works. Hamrogue received an MFA Hunter College (2017) and BFA from The School of Visual Arts (2004). Her works have been exhibited at Fredericks & Frieder, New Release Gallery, 601 Artspace, and Onderdonk Gallery in New York; The Company Gallery, Los Angeles; and most recently in House Parte, curated by Carly Packer in Palm Springs.