

List of works

1. *COASTAL BLUES*, 2008
Acrylic on Canvas, unframed, 30" x 40"
2. *DEAFENING*, 2008
Acrylic on Canvas, w/image transfer, framed, 18" x 48"
3. *RED BUDDHA*, 2007
Acrylic on canvas, unframed, 30" x 30"
4. *BECOMING ONE*, 2007
Acrylic on canvas, unframed, 30" x 30"
5. *OUR DAILY BREAD*, 2007
Acrylic on canvas, unframed, 24" x 36"
6. *BLESSING OF THE BREAD*, 2006
Acrylic on canvas w/ image transfer, framed, 42" x 28"
7. *CATCH*, 2006 Acrylic on canvas, framed, 36" x 24"
8. *COMER*, 2006
Mixed Media painting on canvas, framed, 36" x 24"
9. *FEED ME, FREE ME*, 2005/06
Acrylic on canvas, unframed, 23" x 32"
10. *OFFERING*, 2005
Acrylic on canvas, unframed, 36" x 36"
11. *CATCH STUDY*, 2006, Acrylic on canvas, framed, 16" x 16"
12. *LOAVES & (EXTINCT) FISHES*, 2006
Acrylic on canvas w/ image transfer, framed, 36" x 36"

Exhibitions

SOLO

- 2008 Jacana Gallery, Vancouver, BRITISH COLUMBIA "FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
- 2008 ARTSPace, Annapolis Royal, NOVA SCOTIA "FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
- 2004 Buffalo Arts Studio, Buffalo, NEW YORK (U.S.A) "EMBODIED IDEALS"
- 2003 Gladstone Hotel Ballroom, Toronto, ONTARIO "EMBODIED IDEALS PREVIEW"
- 2003 Kelowna Art Gallery, Kelowna, BRITISH COLUMBIA "ADRIFT"
- 2001 MacDonnell Gallery, Toronto, ONTARIO "ADRIFT"
- 2000 Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ONTARIO "ADRIFT"
- 2000 Ka'ikea Gallery, Kapi'olani College, Honolulu, HI. (U.S.A) "PALM BREEZE"
- 1997 Gallery 13, Rocky Neck Art Colony, Gloucester, MASS. (U.S.A.)
- 1991 Kenneith Gallery, Sarnia, ONTARIO
- 1990 Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ONTARIO "FRANCES FERDINANDS 1983-1989"
- 1988 Albert White Gallery, Toronto, ONTARIO "URBAN/ NATURE"
- 1987 Galerie Arpege, Collingwood, ONTARIO "MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLERS"
- 1986 Albert White Gallery, Toronto, ONTARIO "MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLERS"
- 1986 La Centrale (formerly Powerhouse) Montreal, QUEBEC "WAR"
- 1985 Kozak Gallery, Toronto, ONTARIO "WAR"
- 1981 Merton Gallery, Toronto, ONTARIO "SOLITARY WOMEN"

TWO OR THREE PERSON

- 2008 Diamond-Newman Fine Arts, Boston, MASS. (U.S.A.)
"ECHOES OF SURREALISM"
- 2007 Propeller Art Centre, Toronto, ONTARIO "FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
- 2006 University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo, ONTARIO
"BY APPEARANCES"
- 1985 Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, ONTARIO
"OLD WARS BY YOUNG ARTISTS"
- 1982 Merton Gallery, Toronto, ONTARIO

SELECTED GROUP

- 2007 Lennox Contemporary, Toronto, ONTARIO "DOUBLE DATE"
(Tableau Vivant Performance)
- 2006 WomanMade Gallery, Chicago, ILLINOIS (U.S.A.) "ANTHROPOMORPHISM"
- 2006 A.,K.A. Gallery, Saskatoon, SASKATCHEWAN "DOUBLE DATE"
(Tableau Vivant Performance)
- 2005 Galeria Carrion Vivar, Bogota, COLUMBIA "NORD - SUD"
- 2005 Latcham Gallery, Stouffville, ONTARIO "GO FIGURE"
- 2004 WomanMade Gallery, Chicago, ILLINOIS (U.S.A.) "FABRICATIONS"
- 2001 Lieutenant Governor's Suite, Queen's Park, Toronto, ONTARIO
"THE NEW SPIRIT OF ONTARIO"
- 1997 Granite Shore Gallery, Rockport, MASS (U.S.A.)
- 1996 Gallery Lambton, Sarnia, ONTARIO "HERITAGE PARK COLLECTION "
- 1993 Passions Gallery, Provincetown, MASS (U.S.A.)
- 1992 Galerie Ader Tajan, Paris, FRANCE "ART CONTEMPORAIN DU CANADA"
- 1992 Lynnwood Arts Centre, Simcoe, ONTARIO
"BEYOND TIME & CIRCUMSTANCE"
- 1990 Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, ONTARIO
"CONTEMPORARY REALISM"
- 1987 Lynnwood Arts Centre, Simcoe, ONTARIO "FIGURATIVE IMPACT"
- 1986 Byward Market Gallery, Ottawa, ONTARIO "MP'S CHOICE"

to view the complete works of
Frances Ferdinands, visit online:
www.francesferdinands.com



RED BUDDHA

Frances Ferdinands: Food for Thought

September 14 - October 19, 2008

ARTsPLACE 
Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia

 ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

Frances Ferdinands Food for Thought

By Haema Sivanesan

Food for Thought brings together a series of recent paintings by Toronto-based artist Frances Ferdinands. A Sri Lankan Burgher of mixed Dutch-Portuguese and Sinhala background, Ferdinands migrated to Toronto with her family at the age of six. She studied painting at York University in the 1970's, and has proven herself as an accomplished painter, having exhibited her work across Canada and the USA. In this new body of work, Ferdinands references her Sri Lankan heritage, alongside her Canadian upbringing, in order to bring a more complex global perspective to addressing a range of social, spiritual and environmental concerns. Ferdinands draws on a range of art-historical as well as pop-culture visual sources, including film, news media and advertising, to produce paintings replete with symbolism and narrative allusion.



CATCH

Frances Ferdinands: Food for Thought

An early painting in the *Food for Thought* series, *Feed Me, Free Me* (2005) depicts an empty rice bowl placed on a floral table-runner. The floral patterning of the table-runner echoes the floral design of the porcelain rice bowl. A pair of red chopsticks rests in the empty rice bowl. A narrow panel on the right hand side of the picture depicts a parakeet perched on a woman's hand. Beneath, is an image of the Buddha's hand and foot indicating the seated posture of meditation. The painting brings together various images related to the idea of the body, without depicting the body itself. The rice bowl suggests the idea of a vessel, the bowl and the body both being a vessel for food. The Buddhist imagery suggests the idea of the soul, or the body as the vessel of the spirit. The bird perched ready for flight suggests freedom - an emotional as much as psychological freedom, a release from the domestic grind of the mundane world.

Feed Me, Free Me preempts the concerns of *Red Buddha* (2007), depicting a seated meditating Buddha in the style of the ancient sandstone sculptures of Polonnaruwa, the 11th century capital of Sri Lanka. In the Buddha's upwardly-turned palms is a loaf of Wonderbread in brightly-coloured packaging, placed as though an offering. Above the



FEED ME-FREE ME

Buddha's head is a fish - the tik kossah (gerranus tankervilleae) an extinct fish of Sri Lanka. In this one painting Ferdinands brings together a range of concerns: the Buddha being an immediate reference to Ferdinands' birth-place of Sri Lanka, and also an image evoking asceticism, abstinence or restraint. The sparkling packaging of the Wonderbread contrasts with the weathered patina of the ancient stone Buddha and appears as a symbol of contemporary global consumption. Ferdinands comments on our consumerist economy, considering its impact on the ecology and contrasting it with the resilience of ancient wisdom and practice. Simultaneously, the juxtaposition of the image of the Wonderbread with that of the fish suggests the Biblical parable of Christ feeding a gathering of 5000 with five loaves and two fishes. The imagery evokes the need for miracles in the contemporary world where food and basic resources are becoming ever scarce.

Another painting, *Comer* (2006) depicts the exotic-looking Sri Lankan lionfish (scorpaena volitans), with a red hibiscus issuing from its mouth. Below, is an inviting plate of lush salad vegetables: red radicchio, ripe tomatoes, olives and rings of purple onion. The sexual allusion is obvious, but the painting also suggests the tropical idyll and languor of island life in Sri Lanka.

A related painting, *Catch* (2006) depicts the same fish, with its colourful, spiky fins, painted against a textured ochre background. Immediately beneath the fish, and to the right side of the painting, is an empty rice bowl with a pair of chopsticks flying towards the viewer. On the left side of the painting a child's doll tumbles upside-down. Paired with *Comer* this painting suggests the unexpected turmoil of the 2005 tsunami, which ravaged the eastern



DEAFENING

and southern coasts of Sri Lanka. The shocking impact of the tsunami appears as a recurring theme in Ferdinands' recent body of work.

Deafening (2008) is a diptych juxtaposing a copy of Caravaggio's *Still Life with a Basket of Fruit* (c1599) alongside a newspaper image of a wailing man holding the body of a young child in his arms in the aftermath of the tsunami. Art historians regard Caravaggio's still life, depicting a wicker basket filled with apples, figs, grapes, apricot, quince, as a possible reference to an Old Testament passage from the Book of Amos 8:1-2:

"This is what the Lord God showed me - a basket of summer fruit. He said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the Lord God said to me, "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass them by."

The basket of summer fruit is a symbol for the annihilation of a people. Ferdinands' referencing of Caravaggio's still life alongside the image of the man carrying the body of a child emphasizes the annihilating chaos of the tsunami. Further, the image of the man and child, taken from a newspaper image, has the compositional form and psychological intensity of an image of the *Pieta*, with its associated emotions of anguish and pathos. The uncanny juxtaposition of images defines tensions and resemblances between contemporary and historical events.

Food for Thought is a body of work that combines Ferdinands' interest in narrative painting, art historical symbolism and mythological allusion, to address a range of social, spiritual and environmental concerns. Ferdinands evokes meaning through the juxtaposition of images, reflecting on the complex interrelationship of personal, political and societal events. Her work contends with a range of human experiences through a series of discontinuous images, finding resonances across cultures and across epochs of time.

Haema Sivanesan is Executive Director of SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre), Toronto.



COMER