

Innovative Artist Duo-Collective Ghost Of A Dream Shift Our Gaze To The Earth's Problems Shrouded In An 'Opulent' Veil

Natasha Gural : 6-8 minutes : 10/4/2022



Ghost of a Dream 'As They've Done to You' (2022) Burning police car images arranged and layered at ... [+] 12% opacity, printed and mounted on Dibond. 48 x 64.5 inches.

Courtesy of the artists and Geary Contemporary

Carefully scrutinizing the imagery – a Crocs storefront in the upper left corner and what appears to be a “STATE” theater marquee below it – we imagine ourselves in a quaint town or small city where everyday existence should be slow-paced, perhaps even serene. But those details are overtaken by the action, an array of burning police cars, which draw us into a dark narrative.

As They've Done to You (2022) is among five composite archival images sourced by artist duo-collective Ghost of a Dream from online news stories that have rattled our world in recent years. *If this is Paradise* was on view through October 10 at [Geary Contemporary](#) in Millerton, New York, a bustling village where the gallery sits prominently alongside [Oblong Books](#) boasting pithy staff picks tucked into the shelves, the bespoke [Moviehouse](#), and carefully curated [Millerton Wine and Spirits](#), and across the street from the quaint [Millerton Inn](#). The main drag transforms a bucolic enclave into a burgeoning arts community that beckons folks from Manhattan and Brooklyn. A 20-minute ride away, I met Lauren Was and Adam Eckstrom, the wife and husband

who form *Ghost of a Dream*. They were celebrated guests at an elegant pescatarian Mediterranean feast catered by private chef [Zachary Poulin](#) and hosted by gallery owners Dolly Bross Geary and Jack Geary at [Tenmile Distillery](#), a converted century-old dairy barn on 70 acres in the Oblong Valley where visitors ogle the imposing, shiny copper stills, mash tun, and vodka column.



Front window of Geary Contemporary in Millerton, New York

Geary Contemporary

Enjoying the evening seated across long tables in a cedar paneled room, where members store handmade, small-batch whiskey in lockers renovated by previous owner and architect Allan Shope, made me grateful for the peace and plenitude we're sometimes afforded and underscored the need to thoughtfully and fully gaze into the intricate work of *Ghost of a Dream*. Our own safety forces our attention back to the precarity of burning police cars, oil rig fires, melting glaciers, flooded homes, red tide that can trigger asthma attacks and provoke chronic pulmonary symptoms even after leaving the area, and blue-green algae that can sicken humans and animals.

By depicting this array of various fire- and water-based tragedies, *Ghost of a Dream* amplifies the complexities that intertwine to magnify how systems of power and control erode humanity. Burning police cars figuratively evoke police brutality and social injustice, which is intrinsically linked to the systems of power that perpetuate wide-scale ecological destruction and government neglect of low-income areas where poorly maintained buildings are especially vulnerable in severe weather.

If this is Paradise makes us pause, step away from our comfort zone, and confront the reality that puts us at collective risk, harming Others first and leaving us all accountable for turning away from horrific situations as if they're not happening to *us*. We have one earth, one overarching system of power. The title *And if the ground's*

not cold, everything is gonna burn, We'll all take turns, I'll get mine too, to describe iceberg images arranged and layered to create a haunting portrait of the melting polar ice, reinforces that truth.



Ghost of a Dream 'And if the ground's not cold, everything is gonna burn, We'll all take turns, I'll ...
[+] get mine too' (2022) Iceberg images arranged and layered to create a portrait of the melting polar ice, printed and mounted on Dibond. 53.5 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artists and Geary Contemporary

It's essential to recognize how there's hope in acknowledging these true stories. The works convey a calm veneer that washes over the various storms (driven by humans and by nature) and they appear luminescent, their visual multitudes suggesting opportunity and potential to reverse these damages.

In *As They've Done to You*, burning police car images are arranged and layered at 12 percent opacity, emanating an eeriness that's both ominous and enchanting, and then printed and mounted on Dibond, which is composed of two pre-painted sheets of .012-inch aluminum bonded to a solid polyethylene core in a continuous extrusion process. The intricate technique lends to the theme.

Paradise is derived from an Iranian word modified by the Greeks into *paradeisos*, which means enclosed park. *Paradeisos* was used by Hellenistic Greeks to mean Garden of Eden in the Septuagint, an early Greek translation of Jewish scriptures. *If this is Paradise* is open to vast interpretation.

Fire and water can be deadly, but they also symbolize life, fertility, creativity, and inspiration in myriad cultures around the world. Water and fire are mutually destructive: water extinguishes flames and fire breaks water down into hydrogen and oxygen by imbuing it with energy in the form of an electric current.

Juxtaposition is core to the oeuvre. In their own words, Ghost of a Dream's "work embodies the essence of opulence while being constructed of materials that typically end up in the trash."



Ghost of a Dream 'Mercy Mercy me' (2022) red tide and green algae images arranged and layered, ... [+] printed and mounted on Dibond. 48 x 48 inches.

Courtesy of the artists and Geary Contemporary

The Monet-esque effect of *Mercy Mercy me* (2022) obscures the red tide and green algae images that illustrate how climate change causes rising temperatures of nearshore ocean water to stimulate growth of harmful

microorganisms.

Make no mistake, *If this is Paradise* is a call to action.



Installation view of Ghost of a Dream 'If this is Paradise' exhibition

Courtesy of the artists and Geary Contemporary

It's a daunting task, so for now make your way to New York Penn Station in midtown Manhattan and stand in awe of *Aligned by the Sun (Connections)*, a large-scale site-specific installation. Ghost of a Dream asked artists around the world to shoot and share short videos of the sun. Stills from 223 videos are connected by the horizon line to form a continuous landscape that surrounds the Amtrak departure hall and metaphorically positions viewers in the center of the earth. It was revealed September 30 as part of the Art at Amtrak year-round public art initiative.



Still image from Ghost of a Dream 'Aligned by the Sun (Connections)', a large-scale site-specific ...
[+] installation at New York Penn Station.

Courtesy of the artists and Geary Contemporary