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For immediate release:

Hwi Hahm: *Bushman's Poetry, Starman's Prank*

August 7–September 12, 2021

Opening Saturday August 7, 6–9pm

A definitive Hwi Hahm style does not exist — at least not yet. That is because his paintings are not invested in a continuum, they are all about the feel, the excitement, the going-for-it-ness of putting brush to canvas. These are paintings he simply *has* to paint, interested as he is first and foremost in an image's mystique, the power and pull they have over him. When a picture shows up in his life and demands to be painted, when it tugs at his brain and at his dexterous brush-holding fingers, who is he to turn it away, to deny its wishes? There are simply too many compelling images, too many seductive elements and objects in the world, and too short an artistic life to be too fastidious about it. The images in his mind are fickle and exacting, once he has set them down, realized in his visual world, most of them will leave him alone, which is why you won't find a preparatory sketch or an essay for any of his paintings. Once an image has insisted its way into a gouache on paper or an oil on canvas, its job is done and the elation of its creation promptly wears off. The bits and forms that do return, that find a way of haunting Hahm and sticking around, become intriguing clues: Forsythia in *Forte! Celebrate, Celebrate, Celebrate! (Forthysia Girl and the Hunter)* (2021) has a white and pointy face that comes back as a part swordfish, part octopus creature in the delightfully disorienting *Catch Me* (2021); so does the hunter that accompanies her to the fire, he is around again in *Seven Hunters by the Fire* (2021); and so are the creeping, glowing vines that climb on Forsythia's leg in the forest, and which later populate the psychedelic landscape in *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* (2021). But it is not these motifs that ultimately institute Hahm's practice, his impetus is seeking the feels and thrills of the very action of painting an image. Everything else is in service of those moments and they become themselves permission for drastic stylistic adventurousness: Lines go from thick and cartoony to smooth and ethereal, tridimensional perspective melts into flatness, as does the binaries of inside and outside, the near and the far, the figurative and the abstract. Hahm is equally compelled by the pictorial possibilities of mythological storytelling, as he is by the random beauty of urban splatter on his neighborhood's asphalt, or by the metaphysical depth of the color blue. The world concocted by Hahm's paintings is one of pleasurable jolts, puzzling dislocations and representational bewilderment. A brewing, gripping mystery.

—Gaby Cepeda, July 2021

Hwi Hahm (b. 1993, Busan, South Korea) lives and works in New York, NY. His work has been presented in exhibitions in Leipzig, Germany; Florence, Italy; Busan, South Korea; and New York, NY. He received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2016. *Bushman's Poetry, Starman's Prank* is his first solo exhibition in New York City.

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