

THE HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH WHEN THERE IS NO TOMORROW

'Boredom is essentially a thwarted desire for events, not necessarily pleasant ones, but just occurrences such as will enable the victim of ennui to know one day from another. The opposite of boredom, in a word, is not pleasure, but excitement.'

— Bertrand Russell

The Happiest Place On Earth – the official slogan for Disneyland
When There Is No Tomorrow – former advertising slogan for FedEx

This series of paintings takes its title from the marriage of two slogans; one for a theme park that aspires to dispense the ultimate in excitement and the other for a business that strives for the ultimate in immediacy. This super-slogan seems to me to perfectly encapsulate the existential predicament facing humans living in developed nations. We run full tilt from an absence of distraction, rushing to embrace the brands and experiences that promise to amuse and tranquilise our anxieties.

Solutions to life's problems are parcelled out for convenience and expediency. Self-help books, podcasts and even a scented candle can hold the promise of redemption, satisfaction and above all, peace of mind. In the pursuit of daily self-blessings, existential answers can be added to cart. We are told we can follow our passion, architect a life and design away our angst.

If in our quest for ultimate satisfaction we're not finding immediate fulfilment, then the very least we can expect is an endless procession of excitements to beguile us. We can spend our way out of ennui. We're all Augustus Gloop now, drowning not in chocolate but in birthday-flavoured swirls of sugar and cream. Who knows what birthdays taste like but it's an enticing idea that this essence could be captured and spooned down our gullets.

The painting *The English* quotes William of Malmesbury, the foremost English historian of the 12th century. A 900 year-old exhortation of his fellow countrymen and women that reads like it was written yesterday. This clairvoyance reminds us that, in terms of human perception, nothing much changes. Human evolution tends always to be viewed misanthropically as it's always end times for the present humans. We're always on fire. Perhaps that centuries-old fear of being damned to everlasting agony in Hell was as keenly felt and therefore as real to them as the climate emergency is to us. We struggle, as they must have done, to see beyond the day, to exercise philosophical and physical self-restraint and preserve a future paradise.

Tim Fishlock, October 2021

