

VANGUARD CULTURE

THE BUZZ: TIM SHAW EXAMINES HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN HIS NEWEST EXHIBITION



Defending Integrity from the Powers that Be: Tim Shaw Examines Human Behavior in His Newest Exhibition

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As you turn the corner to enter Tim Shaw's new exhibit, *Beyond Reason*, the room's lighting becomes dim. A reminder that Democracy does indeed die in darkness. A realization that power is hard to gain and very *very* easy to lose.

For almost his entire life, Shaw, who was born and raised in Northern Ireland, has been accruing inspiration for his largest exhibit to date. His first

exhibit in the United States ever. And it happens to be right here at the San Diego Museum of Art.

Tim Shaw is well-known for his storytelling-focused work. This six-piece, immersive exhibit conveys a post-apocalyptic world, inspired by both current and historical events that seem too horrific and vile to possibly be true. Here, the mask of civility has been removed and people are left to follow their uninhibited instincts. Morality all but ceases to exist.

With the installation *Mother, the Air is Blue, the Air is Dangerous*, Shaw draws on an early childhood memory; visitors are transported into the aftermath of the Bloody Friday bombings in Belfast in 1972. Dinner trays are suspended above, tables and chairs are strewn everywhere and silhouettes of civilians frantically run about in the background. You long to be with them, yet, where you are, time is frozen.

Atrocious occurrences are nothing new; bad things continue to happen all around us. They are beyond the spectrum of reason, normality and decorum. However, we've almost adapted our narratives to include these tragedies as a typical part of life.

With *Soul Snatcher Possession*, visitors are placed among eight life-size figures. These indistinguishable characters have been distorted by corruption and condemned to eternal darkness. Tip-toeing around the soulless forms, in order to analyze the scene, you have no choice but to walk among them. Maintaining honor and keeping your soul takes a lot of work.

Unfortunately, the reality we are living in is not too far removed from this world that Shaw paints. Democracy, as we know it, is rapidly declining. Civilians' lives are halted by terrorist attacks, free speech is squelched, lawmakers are bought off by corruption, vigilante justice replaces real authority and artificial intelligence has dumbed people down—all topics addressed in each of the pieces.

With Shaw's work here you can see that more often than not, reason is a facade. This area *beyond reason* has become our new normal.

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