

JUAN FORD

Born: 1973



For those lucky enough to have attended the installation of **Juan Ford**'s work at the Hong Kong Art Fair in 2010, it was more than obvious that this was the genesis of a major international career. Not content to simply hang paintings on the walls, Ford converted the Dianne Tanzer Gallery booth into a strange Antipodean outpost, the walls coated with a photographic backdrop of Aussie bush. The space was abuzz, the works sold out and an international career was born.

Ford's latest showing, in which **Dianne Tanzer** has teamed up with **THIS IS NO FANTASY**, sees Ford striding, quite literally, further into the heroic explorer stance that he has been exploring for some years. A white-shrouded desert warrior, replete with white flag, marches through a climate change-ravaged landscape to confront the future. "The flag is a surrender, a declaration, a symbol," Ford says. "It is ambiguous, deliberately. I hope it makes people think."

The artist continues: "These figures are essentially another reincarnation of my combined use of figuration, landscape and botanical illustration traditions within the Australian art canon."





JUAN FORD

4. // Juan Ford, *The Intermediary*, 2014. Oil on linen, 137 x 152cm.

5. // Juan Ford, *The Understudy*, 2015. Oil on linen, 56 x 46cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND THIS IS NO FANTASY + DIANNE TANZER GALLERY

JUAN FORD (CONTINUED)

Individually they are conservative, but when radically recombined and smashed together they yield new and interesting results.

“Right now I’ve brought figuration into the fore. They are figures combining botany, landscape and industrial waste. Naturally there is an ecological concern to these images. However, it is a concern for us, as much as for nature at large – we are poisoning our own well. If we make ourselves extinct by trashing the environment that sustains us, nature will survive, but we will cease to be. It’s that simple.”

For Ford, the future is decidedly global. In September he has been curated into an exhibition at the Daejeon Museum of Art in South Korea alongside such luminaries as **Sam Jinks** and **Sam Leach**. That will be followed by inclusion in the Fifth Nakanojo Biennale in Japan in the **Tomasz Wendland**-curated project *Empty Garden*, which investigates notions of migration and identity in a changing world. Ford has also been nominated for the upcoming Sovereign Art Prize in Hong Kong to be launched during the next iteration of Art Basel staged in the city. Ford’s heroic figure clearly has a rich future traversing alien lands.

Ashley Crawford

