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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fools Privilege

Amanda Ba, Sarah Ball, Anastasia Bay, Ilke Cop, Nicole Eisenman, Genieve Figgis, Akira Ikezoe, Marc Librizzi, Rafa Macarrón, Rebecca Morgan, Curtis Talwst Santiago, Peter Saul, Dana Schutz, Jean-Pierre Villafañe, Clement Jacques Vossen, and Shafei Xia

July 10 – August 28, 2026

Opening Reception: Friday, July 10, 6–8pm

Uffner & Liu is pleased to present *Fool's Privilege*, an exhibition bringing together sixteen artists whose works channel the subversive logic of the fool figure. The exhibition considers humor not as relief from seriousness but as a vehicle for it – a mode of address that has long allowed artists of all disciplines to say what others could not.

In Medieval and Renaissance courts, the licensed fool occupied a singular position: socially marginal yet physically proximate to power, permitted through exaggeration, performance, and comedy to voice truths that conventional speech could not sustain. The fool's privilege was paradoxical, a dispensation granted precisely because the fool was not taken seriously. Under the guise of folly, critique found cover. *Fool's Privilege* extends this lineage into the present, expanding its cast to include clowns, tricksters, harlequins, and masqueraders – figures who, across cultures and mythologies, have always acted as agents of inversion. By staging failure, excess, and absurdity, they expose the mechanics of the hierarchies they inhabit. The exhibition asks what it means to inherit this tradition, what forms the fool's license takes today, and what it makes possible to say.

The artists approach this prerogative through a range of embodied and strategic practices, drawing from traditions of physical comedy, masquerade, caricature, and theatrical performance. Curtis Talwst Santiago's *Tears of a Clown* (2024) – a meticulously constructed diorama housed in a reclaimed jewelry box – compresses grief and spectacle into an intimate, almost unbearably tender space. A single spotlighted clown, dressed all in white, peeks onto the stage before an empty audience, asking the meta question of what it means to be an artist and to partake in the spectacle of art, especially during difficult times. Rebecca Morgan's paintings and sculpture cast female figures in knowing confrontation with their own caricatures, at once inhabiting and undercutting the roles assigned to them. Works like *Old Ass Pussy Bow* (2017) and *Be a Good Girl for Me* (2021) carry their provocations in their titles as much as in their compositions.

Ilke Cop's *Dare to Laugh* (2024) and Jean-Pierre Villafañe's *House Rules* (2026) each stage scenes in which humor functions as a kind of pressure – comedic in surface, structural in implication. Genieve Figgis's *Court Painting* (2026) invokes the genre most associated with sanctioned authority (court painting), only to

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dissolve it in her characteristic wash of acrylic, liquefying figures and their cartoonish features at the edges of their own decorum. Rigorous in its internal logic yet absurd in its premises, Akira Ikezoe's paintings treat visual resemblance itself as a kind of argument – a tail looks like a cyclone looks like a conch looks like a sperm – and builds a cosmology out of those accidents of form.

Dana Schutz, Nicole Eisenman, and Peter Saul bring a longer arc of art-historical irreverence to the exhibition – painters for whom distortion, grotesquerie, and excess have never been stylistic accidents but deliberate rhetorical tools. Their inclusion situates the younger artists in a tradition of American figurative painting that has consistently used the unruly body as a site of social commentary. Alongside them, works by Amanda Ba, Sarah Ball, Anastasia Bay, Marc Librizzi, Rafa Macarrón, Clement Jacques Vossen, and Shafei Xia extend the exhibition's inquiry across drawing, painting, and mixed media. In particular, Sarah Ball's luminous pencil portraits on paper, rendered with an almost classical patience, introduce a note of stillness that complicates the exhibition's more overtly comedic registers, suggesting that the fool's gaze can be tender as well as barbed.

Fool's Privilege reinforces the idea that comedy, deployed with enough precision, is its own form of authority. The artists gathered here don't perform folly so much as wield it – and in doing so, they remind us that the line between jester and critic has always been thinner than the court liked to admit.

Image: Peter Saul, *Pulling it Off*, 1987, lithograph on paper, 24 x 34 in (61 x 86.4 cm), Edition of 7 UNN

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