

heidi woodhead —

tulip fever



Brace yourselves because Tulip Fever is about to descend! But first a quick history lesson:

In the Dutch Republic around 1630 the world was opening up via trade routes that brought all manner of exotic delights to the people: spices, seeds, flowers and bulbs. Of all the tulip varieties being traded it was the variegated blooms that most bewitched the Dutch.

The Semper Augustus was the most rare and valuable, being a visually stunning white flower with red streaks. A bulb yielding a variegated flower was known as a “breaker” and there was no way to determine if or when a bulb would break. It was an unpredictable phenomenon that only added to the tulip’s allure. Ironically, and not realised at the time, the variegation was caused by a virus that infects and ultimately kills the bulb, supressing the primary colour of the flower to allow the underlying white or yellow to show through.

This era in history fascinates me. The hunger for the exotic, the beautiful and the rare, reached a fever-pitch and the resulting frenzy to own a piece of something others coveted led people to take extreme risks but also inspired extreme creativity.

With this collection of paintings, I am attempting to tap into that burning desire for beauty. At the peak of tulip fever, the Dutch Republic couldn’t get enough of all that was wonderful and exotic without considering the other side of the equation: darkness and decline. I have aimed to paint that fever-pitch of beauty, of exploding colour and light with just a hint of the underlying darkness, a peripheral vulnerability not entirely apparent, that gives a haunting quality to the work.

new
paintings

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