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Martha Schwendener
Jill Mulleady: *Fight-or-Flight*
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Jill Mulleady

Through Dec. 29. Swiss Institute, 38 St. Marks Place, Manhattan; swissinstitute.net.



Jill Mulleady's "A Fantasy of Transcendence and a Preoccupation With Downfall and Ruin" (2019) at the Swiss Institute. via Swiss Institute

When Chase Bank closed its branch on the corner of St. Marks Place and Second Avenue in 2016, someone scrawled "Good riddance!" on a sign in the window announcing their move. Now the same building, occupied by the Swiss Institute, is hosting [Jill Mulleady's exhibition in "Fight-or-Flight."](#) which explores the far-reaching effects of the financial industry.

The best work here, “A Fantasy of Transcendence and a Preoccupation With Downfall and Ruin” (2019), is a large Neo-Surrealist painting of a giant humanoid figure reclining on a barren landscape. The sky above the blank-eyed creature is reminiscent of Edvard Munch’s “The Scream” (1893), but the painting also refers to works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the satires of François Rabelais, in which bucolic landscapes are occupied or marred by destructive humans.

A series of acrid-hued woodcuts of a colossal, anthropomorphized rat riding two horses over a cityscape, and a rat hand-painted inside a huge pipe lying near the painting underscore the vermin-like nature of human civilization. Finally, an installation consisting of a darkened bank vault with a cash machine vandalized by the artist, more directly connects the banking industry with the “downfall” suggested in the painting’s title. The message is artfully delivered — but not dissimilar in theme or tone to the missive written on that bank window back in 2016. *MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

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