

## CRITICS' PICKS

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Kira Freije, *permanence of a sacred tongue*, 2022, stainless steel, cast aluminium, cotton, 48 x 25 1/2 x 38 1/2".

LONDON  
**Kira Freije**

THE APPROACH  
 1st Floor, 47 Approach  
 Road  
 May 27–July 2, 2022

The end is nigh for Kira Freije's metal sculptures. The pair of figures in *fireworks* (all works cited, 2022) seems to have taken the news well: One drapes a comforting hand on the other's back as they stare out the window,

complacent in each other's company. Or maybe, as the work's title suggests, they're just enjoying the pyrotechnics together. In *permanence of a sacred tongue*, a stainless steel and cast aluminum figure of a woman bends down on one knee, her mouth agape and her hands clasped in prayer. Is she hoping for salvation in her final moments or simply lost in venerative ecstasy? Oscillating between elation and trepidation, Freije's humanoid forms revel in the kind of emotional ambiguity often found in medieval apocalypticism.

Freije's aesthetic fascination with the Middle Ages extends beyond the poses of her subjects to the rudimentary candelabrum and censer-like lamp sculptures hanging around the room. For works like *infallible Mariner*, *river by night*, and *Autumn dusk*, Freije has manually blown glass inside of a steel frame so that the material bulges from the gaps in its enclosure. The motif of the cage continues in the anthropomorphic figures, whose barrel-like torsos bear a strong formal relationship to Caroline Mesquita's hedonistic metal robots. Whereas Mesquita reduces her forms to mechanical shells, Freije's intricate aluminum limbs and faces add a degree of tactility (and thus humanity) to an otherwise inanimate armature. Her figures portend shades of our current flirtation with the end times, a reminder that such a juncture can elicit agony and solace, often at the same time.

— *Jonah Goldman Kay*