

John Brendan Guinan

Salvation Machine: A Mass of Abwoon Dominus

16 Aug - 22 Sep 2025

Opening Reception 16 Aug 2025, 8pm

Press Release

Queensway Television is pleased to present *Salvation Machine: A Mass of Abwoon Dominus* by John Brendan Guinan. Centered around a surreal procession through pastoral fields into a shadowed forest, the video raises questions on the notion of free will within pre-existing structures of power and ideology.

Figures clad in white robes emerge across the field, following a masked individual into the woods. Donning a white tuxedo and gold mask, the individual known as the Salvation Machine embodies the symbolic father, presenting himself as the symbol authority and power for which the figures surrender to thoroughly. A mysterious ritual takes place, as the Salvation Machine leads the congregation in an enigmatic rite. At the end of it, they move in unison back into the plains, and seemingly towards another part of the forest.

Situated in an undetermined site, it is almost as if the figures are spawned in the plains, adhering to a fixed routine. This parallels existing systems and hierarchy in which individuals are thrown into, prompting us to reflect upon how much power these structures have over the entities within. Much like organisms that follow a fixed pattern of movements, the anonymous figures possess seemingly no control and influence to the environments or their own actions, existing merely as part of the larger system, under the lead of the Salvation Machine.

The film's speculative cosmology, *Abwoon Dominus* (drawing from Aramaic for "source/father" and Latin for "lord/authority"), further underscores the ambiguity of the relationship between the figures, the Salvation Machine, and the environment, suggesting an entity that is both intimately foundational and remotely authoritative, a structuring force that is assumed rather than imposed.

Drawing from his explorations with world building, theology, and ritual, the artist brings together motifs that hint of symbolism and meaning, specially designed costumes, vast imagery and sound, to craft an immaculate, mystifying, and strangely familiar world. As we wander across the plains, we find ourselves surrounded by forests, led by a masked individual who repeats routines that keep us going in circles.

Artist Biography

John Brendan Guinan is an interdisciplinary artist based in Brooklyn, NY. He employs a diverse range of mediums, including textiles, painting, collage, assemblage, readymades, installation, sculpture, performance, and film. His conceptually driven practice explores ideas related to world building, theology, and ritual. Central to his oeuvre is the reconfiguration of materials and objects - integrating religious, quotidian, military, high, and low-brow elements such as bungee cords, church pews, tarps, ratchet straps, firearms, machetes, ecclesiastical vestments, and designer textiles among others. The artist draws from a wide range of influences, including Catholic ritual, religious iconography, mythology, the occult, horror, fashion, cinema, and literature.

Guinan was born at home in the Logan Circle neighborhood of Washington, DC, above the homeless shelter and soup kitchen founded and run by his parents. Guinan's upbringing was deeply rooted in the Catholic Worker tradition, emphasizing non-violence, hospitality, and anarchism. His father, J. Edward Guinan (dec. 2014), a former Catholic priest, prominent activist, and author, founded one of the largest homeless shelters in America, the Community for Creative Non-Violence. This heritage, particularly the convergence of theology and guerrilla activism profoundly shaped the artist's worldview and practice.

The artist has exhibited at Sotheby's, LatchKey Gallery, O'Flaherty's, Wassaic Project, Field Projects, Hyphen Gallery, Galerie Biesenbach, Bristol Art Museum, Katzen Arts Center at American University, among others. Guinan is the 2024 recipient of the Emily Mason & Wolf Kahn Fellowship Award, in support of his residency at The Vermont Studio Center. In 2018, he was the subject of "Why I Paint," a documentary produced by the Academy Award-winning Fine Films.

For more information please DM us on Instagram @queenswaytelevision, or e-mail dd@dddd.pictures