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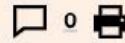
## If you go down to the gallery today... you'll find lots of fairytale pictures

Meet the modern artists channelling the gorgeous, sometimes gruesome, power of folklore



© Claire Parlington | The Bachelorette, 2021, by Claire Parlington

Victoria Woodcock FEBRUARY 6 2022



### Unlock the Editor's Digest for free

Roula Khalaf, Editor of the FT, selects her favourite stories in this weekly newsletter.

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Filled with ethereal fairies and magical animals, evil stepmothers and beastly creatures – not to mention the odd wicked woman living in a gingerbread house – fantastical and frightening fairytales continue to enchant. Children like stories about cannibalism, as Margaret Atwood once noted. Constantly retold and reimagined, they've morphed from centuries-old spoken folk tales to the written works of the Brothers Grimm; from Disney to Angela Carter to a new Kengo Kuma-designed [museum in Denmark](#), based around the stories of Hans Christian Andersen.

Artists, too, have long felt the lure of fairytales. While the Victorians went in for dreamlike, slightly erotic portrayals of stories such as *Sleeping Beauty*, more recent reinterpretations come with a feminist twist – such as Little Red Riding Hood seen through the eyes of Kiki Smith. This spring, fairytales are woven into a series of exhibitions: solo shows by contemporary artists who are building their own intricate and evocative narratives.



“I’ve made work based on Korean fairytales as well as European ones, and they are all similar. There’s nearly always a beautiful young maiden who transforms into an old hag,” says London-based ceramic artist [Claire Partington](#). “It’s nice to have a bit of escapism. They’re also easy to relate to; it’s really a common language across cultures.”



Little Brother and Little Sister, 2021, by Claire Partington, from £10,000, at Winston Wächter © Claire Partington



The Footman, 2021, by Claire Partington © Claire Partington

Partington’s current show (on until 19 March) at [Winston Wächter](#) gallery in Seattle chimes with the release of a new monograph of her work, *Historical Fiction* (published by Amsterdam gallery [KochxBos](#)), which shows how her sculptural practice began as literal translations of fairytales and grew into modern mythologies. Her classical porcelain figurines (from £10,000 to £16,000) feature folkloric elements but also popular-culture references; a golden-haired, golden-winged fairy becomes *The Bachelorette* (2021), sprawled on the floor next to beer bottles, wearing a body-con minidress and flip-flops.

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**I'm inspired by Goya. But also the reviews for scary movies**

In her latest body of work, a pair of figures reference the Grimm tale *Brother and Sister* (which was adapted from a Russian folk story); they combine blue-and-white Delft-like patterns with elaborate Georgian dress, as well as interchangeable

animal and human heads. “It’s a story about transformation and metamorphosis, like, ‘Don’t drink the water, you’ll turn into a salmon.’ Or, ‘Don’t touch that, you’ll turn into a fox,’” says Partington. “The children have bear heads, but cutesy Care Bear ones.”