

# Weekend Arts II

The New York Times

## Art in Review

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### Despina Stokou

‘Shout’

Derek Eller Gallery  
300 Broome Street  
Lower East Side  
Through Nov. 13

Despina Stokou leans heavily on dissonance. This Athens-born, Los Angeles-based painter’s work often includes monochrome slashes and drips scuffling with waves of smeared or overlapping text. But in her fourth solo show for Derek Eller, she’s adjusted these constituent elements into a stable (and less aggressive) balance, letting broad Abstract Expressionist gestures work in concert with painted and collaged words drawn from various sources.

On a series of smaller canvases that lead into the gallery’s back room, this concert can be a little too smooth, offering pleasure without substance, like sugarless candy. But on four larger canvases that deal with art-world sexism, racism in entertainment and the dispiriting gabble of the presidential campaign, the artist hits with just the right force from just the right distance. Without overestimating the relevance or importance of her particular pulpit, Ms. Stokou simply depicts the noise as it is and lets us draw our own conclusions.



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
AND DEREK ELLER GALLERY

Despina Stokou’s “Jesse Williams BET Award Speech” at Derek Eller Gallery.

The 6-foot-by-7-foot “Jesse Williams BET Award Speech” — a white painter’s take on an intensely pointed speech about the exploitation of black artists — is an especially neat trick. “Eric Garner,” written in tall white letters that lean back as if flinching, catches the eye first, followed by “Sandra Bland” in yellow to the right, a URL for a Time magazine item about the speech at bottom and “Black Lives Matter” up above. After that, the viewer experiences a strangely familiar tension between the pull of one more or less visible individual term and the desire, whether it’s idealistic or cowardly, to find something clear and coherent in the whole.

WILL HEINRICH