

# The New York Times

## What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Ellen Lesperance

Through Oct. 7. Derek Eller Gallery, 300 Broome Street, Manhattan; 212-206-6411, [derekeller.com](http://derekeller.com).

September 20, 2018



*I Looked Towards Her, She Looked Towards Me, Both Could See the Common Free*, 2018, gouache and graphite on tea stained paper, 42 x 29.5 inches

In 1981, a group of women marched from Cardiff, Wales, to Berkshire, England, to protest the stockpiling of cruise missiles at the air force base there. After arriving, they decided to set up camps from which they carried out direct actions on the base, like encircling it and holding hands or dressing up as witches and cutting the fence. The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp lasted for 19 years. Thousands of women took part.

Greenham Common is the inspiration for the work in "Lily of the Arc Lights," Ellen Lesperance's first solo show in New York City. Drawing on historical materials, Ms. Lesperance makes gouache-on-paper paintings of the sweaters and other items of clothing worn by the protesters. She focuses on the patterns, translating them into Symbolcraft, a form of knitting instruction, and then painting them as handmade grids. The final works look something like flattened, truncated torsos and feature Greenham-related symbols including witches, tents and a missile. They're blocky and colorful, like 8-bit video-game images.

The project exudes a feeling of care, along with one of celebration. But it's equally strong for the way it comments on a larger context. By turning hand-knit sweaters into gouache paintings, the artist mixes up craft, which has stereotypically been disparaged as "feminine," and art, long lauded as "masculine." Her works function as readable instructions for making sweaters, even as they suggest that knitting patterns aren't actually that far-off from pointillism or the modernist grid.

Speaking about Greenham, a former protester once said, "We weaponized traditional notions of femininity." Ms. Lesperance continues the crusade in the realm of art.

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