

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

DESPINA STOKOU

White Lies

October 11 - November 11, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 11, 2018, 6-8pm



Sometimes You Walk Away With Nothing (Women over 50 on Sex), 2018, markers, pastel, oil and paper collage on raw linen, 79 x 59 in

On the eve of my last show *Shout!* at Derek Eller gallery in October 2016, Hillary Clinton was about to become the first female president in what turned out a Before and After proportions debacle. I was busy trying to express anger without appearing angry. That was Before.

Then the last two years happened. “Grab Them By the Pussy” happened. Women’s March. The Muslim Ban. Transgender ban from the military. #Metoo. #Notsurprised. Zero tolerance policy. ICE sweeps and mass deportations. Amidst the shitstorm I became a mom. I was asked if my son is my biggest masterpiece. Funny the word “masterpiece” should finally come up, only in connection to DNA and biological reproduction. Picasso Baby? I was asked if my art has changed now. I was asked How Do I Possibly Manage now. I was asked that often; offered help—never. I was invited to participate in a show titled “Motherhood has not changed my identity.” Not for the better it hasn’t... The words “sentimental” and “emotional” started appearing in my press releases like white hair. I pluck them out with the same relentlessness. The Handmaid’s Tale came out. OJ got out of jail.

Judge Swingdick has been confirmed to the Supreme Court despite having called birth control pills abortion medication.

America’s is a violent culture. American (White) culture IS violence. Violence against the black and brown body, violence against the female body, violence against children. While this has been true since Colonization, we are used to white lying about it. We have come a long way, Slavery was such a long time ago and/or I cant believe this is still going on. But this is After. Racial violence and the inflicted trauma have entered the mainstream and thus the entertainment business. Take Jessie Williams, whose inspirational BET speech two years ago was the starting point for *Shout!*; he just announced his directorial debut with a Nike meme and the hashtag #Tillthemovie. I find it hard to orchestrate the relentlessly self referential nature of the information we face these days into something apt. Two things can be true at the same time is an argument we hear often lately. A paradigm women are all too familiar with. I started blocking parts of the canvas, pre-arranging sections to be left blank. Stress relief pathways for the viewer? Maybe. Adding a negative layer helps me pull a firmer grip on the painting. Creating something balanced has become more important to me.

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I made the paintings I am showing over the past summer. #Americain3words was a hashtag trending around Independence Day 2018, when the news about the family separation policy at the border had just broken into public consciousness. In its succinct nature, the exercise allows for a quite accurate pulse meter of the US at this moment in its full political spectrum. From “America Still Racist” to “Children in Cages” to “Can't Afford Gas” to “Guns over Government.” This was not a planned work, I blinked and it was in the studio. Yet it is the centerpiece of the show.

Before the news of the family separation policy broke, I was monitoring the avalanche of patriarchal bullshit and the few meager attempts to course-correct the institutional and market bias against female art value have to face. For example the Baltimore Museum's decision to sell some Warhol and buy works by local female and POC artists. In the painting *White Lies*, I'm working from interview abstracts with Helen Molesworth (who was then recently fired from MoCA) to try to pinpoint how museums can challenge the inherent falsehood in the art market that men's work is universal while women's is personal. In *Sadly Until Very Very Recently* is sourcing reactions to a tweet from Jerry Saltz suggesting male artists should lay fallow for the next five years and give women the right of creative way so to say. *A Glorious Legacy* mines social media comments from people in the art scene on the administration's immigrant children crisis, based on the generality that the US cannot care for both the poor here and the immigrants seeking asylum. These last paintings are made on raw linen expanding on the idea of the added negative layer. Amongst all this lies I wanted to include a truth too. *Sometimes you walk away with Nothing (Women over 50 on Sex)*, please see: <https://www.manrepeller.com/2018/06/over-50-women-on-sex.html> It is true. Sometimes you do walk away with nothing...

- Despina Stokou

White Lies will be Stokou's fourth solo exhibition at Derek Eller Gallery. In 2018, she mounted solo exhibitions at Praz-Delavallade, Los Angeles and Dio Horia Gallery, Mykonos, Greece. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at Kunstverein Gera, Gera; Five Car Garage, Los Angeles; The KW Art Institute, Berlin; The Pit, Los Angeles; Gagosian Gallery, Athens; Ibid, Los Angeles; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York; Eigen + Art, Berlin; and Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna.

Please join us for an exhibition walkthrough on Sunday, October 21 at 2pm as part of the LES Art Week.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Hours are Wednesday-Sunday from 11am to 6pm and Tuesday by appointment. For further information, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.