

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

Despina Stokou

Only Tomatoes & Horses

September 5 - October 4, 2014

Opening Reception: Friday, September 5, 6-8pm

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a new installation of paintings by Despina Stokou entitled *Only Tomatoes & Horses*.

"There has been a lot of talk lately about money in the arts, maybe it was about time, it is more democratic in a way. On the other hand, it is boring as it recycles the silly and obscures the fun questions. What is the real value of art? What is a relevant art practice today? We seem to be stuck in a kind of limbo - no classics, no Duchamp- but I think there is a new, hybrid form of art practice developing, one which incorporates curatorial elements. There is no other way.

I create large-scale paintings using layers of color (oil, pastels, and spray paint) and text (collaged letters cut out of paper). I paint text. There is no better way to phrase it. I paint text as you would paint a landscape. Or better said, I paint text as you would create an online database of landscapes in the history of art. On a surface level, the series of paintings are curated in loose, sometimes seemingly random, thematic compositions. "People need a story," says Judy.

In this show, the narrative platform is tomatoes and horses. The series of black and white paintings originate from the source code of the Google image search for the word "tomatoes", effectively a database of all the existing images of tomatoes on the World Wide Web. I like the idea of the visual, real space the paintings occupy (black and white, minimal in structure, bigger than the human form in size) coexisting or clashing with the virtual space the information occupies and defines online. This series is my first attempt at a monumental scale. I think a lot of about what the ruins of this civilization will look like. A museum? A painting? A website? At the time I did it, the search gave out 162 pages of information. I chose 7 of them to transcribe on to canvas based on their form or content. One page includes the words "Dump Exception" over and over again, another the blog "biteme". The last page is also included. I wanted you to see that the information only reaches that far. Go home and sing in the shower.

The Horses series is inspired by a visit to the horse races in an area called (not surprisingly) Happy Valley, while I was in Honk Kong for Art Basel this year. The pursuit of luck is a very big part of China's culture, betting may be the most profane of the forms this takes. Each painting focusses on the betting tips for a horse as found online: its origin, skills, pedigree and chances of success. This series is "unplugged"; I chose not to incorporate the usual layering, the process is left open for the viewer to follow back to the bare canvas. The words architecture of abstraction come to my mind, every line made or not made is both an accident and planned. This is of course a very absurd notion, trying to create a structure out of abstract elements is impossible - as impossible as trying to map the future. It takes a special kind of crazy to try it out anyway.

There is also a large-scale diptych entitled *How to Fuck Things Up 1 & 2* which might or might not come in the show. It is named after two blog posts (<http://bpigs.com/diaries/de-diary>) I wrote earlier in the year. The posts are a series of suggested schemes to subvert the art world as we know it: the "Less than David Ostrowski", the "Post Stefan Simchowitz", the "Anselm Reyle", etc. You could say these texts pose the questions to which the paintings in the show are the answers.

I was born in Greece and have lived in Berlin since 2002. My work has been included in exhibitions at EIGEN + Art, Berlin; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Ibid Projects, Los Angeles; Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna; Galerie Krobath, Vienna; The Breeder, Athens; Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis; Center for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, and several others. My work was also included in ReMap4, Athens. I am represented by Derek Eller Gallery, New York and EIGEN + Art, Berlin/Leipzig. This will be my second solo exhibition with the gallery."

-Despina Stokou, August 2014

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 615 West 27th Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday from 11am - 6pm. For further information or visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com

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