



Kevin Durant (Idol Monster), 2022, oil, acrylic, and paper on canvas, 47 x 41 inches

**Project Room: Joseph Olisaemeka Wilson**

*After me, the flood*

April 28–May 28, 2022

**Opening reception: April 28, 6–8pm**

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present *After me, the flood*, a solo exhibition of new works by Brooklyn-based artist Joseph Olisaemeka Wilson. Choreographing a team of ritualistic shrines, idols, icons, and anthropomorphic figures, Wilson's allegorical works emerge from an ancient unknown, an alternative timeline suspending his figures in a transitional space.

Wilson employs earth-tones, fastidious brush strokes, and a palimpsest of reference materials submerged in controlled chaos. Smoky cauldrons, golden apples, an all-star basketball player, and extinct animals flood from the surface; the canvas becomes the theatrical soil from which Wilson plucks his iconography. Working hypnotically and

rapidly, Wilson forms a direct and symbiotic relationship with his compositions, the world around him, and the world within the works. Combining false edifices from a Precambrian journal of Earth's past with contemporary field recordings, Wilson's alternate reality materializes from these superimposed layers.

This duality can be seen in Wilson's portrait of Brooklyn Nets star player Kevin Durant. The player's uniform is half-Nets jersey and half-embroidered patchwork with relics, patterns, and beads. His face is ornately framed in a glass vitrine, his left arm an allen wrench, and glued to his armpit is the "walking bucket." Engaging with a Cubist formal language, Wilson conjures a super-machine from everyday fragments that steps out from an animalistic covering. The shell in which Durant emerges finds its origins in the West African tradition of Igbo coverings representing ancestral worship and guardianship. No longer a basketball star but a fallacy, a false god, an object of veneration, Durant becomes a symbolic idol of prescient histories, and most of all, ethereal superpowers. As an artist, Wilson has also lived this duality, navigating and facilitating a dialogue in his works between his all-American roots and Nigerian background.

The exhibition's title offers a theoretical map for Wilson's creations. *Après moi, le déluge* (After me, the flood) was originally uttered by Louis XV in 1757 after a tough military year for the French and shortly after the sighting of Halley's comet. Comically dark, nihilistic, and eerily prophetic, the phrase would later be used by Marx to describe capitalism, Dostoevsky to describe the void of existence, and Vonnegut (in his first novel *Player Piano*) to describe a dystopian fall into automation. Lucretius similarly wrote of his hedonistic policies: "Once he is dead, the earth may be mixed with fires." The refurbished quote appearing again and again throughout history mirrors Wilson's free-flowing practice of mixing, cutting, and fusing together multiple histories, philosophies, and eras. Likewise, Wilson paints from an Epicurean and automated perspective, allowing artifacts to erupt and combust in a volcanic prediction of an alternate history.

Joseph Olisaemeka Wilson (b.1999, Los Angeles, CA) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. This will be his first exhibition with the gallery. He has had recent solo exhibitions at Fergus McCaffrey in St. Barth and at Tiwani Contemporary in London, UK. He has been included in group exhibitions at Fergus McCaffrey, Tokyo, Japan; Spazio Amanita Gallery, New York, NY; and Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, MA. Wilson has an upcoming group exhibition in Brussels, Belgium curated by Laurence Dreyfus.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Hours are Tuesday – Saturday 11am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit [www.derekeller.com](http://www.derekeller.com).