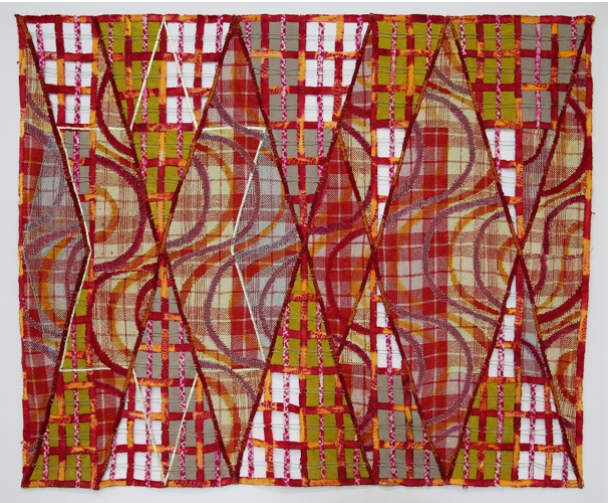

Shadow Star, 2025, linen and cotton threads, linen and cotton cloth, fabric dye, gold leaf, 61.5 x 75.5 inches

JULIA BLAND
If Blue is a Holy Color
September 9 – October 10, 2026
Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 9, 6–8 pm

Does blue have an inherent meaning? Does its meaning come from our lived experience of the sky and ocean as infinite? Or from the historic trade of lapis lazuli and indigo which shaped global economies and culture? Vishnu is blue, Mary is depicted in blue, the fringes of the Tallit are blue. Does blue have inherent meaning or is it relative? Did the meaning accumulate or was it first assigned, and then proliferated?
— Julia Bland, 2026

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a solo show of new work by Julia Bland entitled *If Blue is a Holy Color*. This exhibition will feature textile-painting hybrids and hanging sculptures, which Bland creates through a process of hand-weaving, dying, braiding, embroidering, painting, and embedding with personal fabrics. A video shot in 8mm film depicts process as both ritual and narrative.

The architecture of Bland's composition emerges through an intuitive process of assembly, de-assembly, gathering, and sorting. Structure, composition, geometry and pattern accumulate into recognizable form. Woven patterns in pastel colors evoke the cheery gingham of a picnic blanket and the hard-edged grid, a trope of abstract painting. The iconic stripes of a Medline baby blanket are braided together, dyed, and sewn alongside graphic strips of canvas invoking candy stripes or a flag. From this ordered chaos, ancient Jewish symbols emerge (ladder, star, boat) within the context of broader social and historic meaning. Symbolism and abstraction oscillate in a familiar pattern. Bland uses this framework to explore parallel conundrums: the particular and the universal, beauty and the sublime, seduction and redemption. Bland's hanging sculptures approach structure and symbolism in the form of a ladder. Referencing Jacob's dream or the harrowing escape scenes depicted in childhood cartoons, they evoke the possibility of transcendence and the desire for escape. The ladder exemplifies the literalness of meaning in textile. The object performs its meaning materially in the interconnectedness of its woven form and metaphorically in its role in human life as both carrier and protector.

A video in the exhibition explores the relationship between weaving and time. Traditional methods of tracking time employ two components, one eternal and one temporal. Eternal measures of time rely on observing the stars or the phases of the moon, while temporal earthly means rely on measuring the change in shadows, dripping water, or burning candles. The hands of a clock go around in a circle, while the ticking of the seconds marks the passing moment. Weaving is also a powerful representation of time, through the continuous warp and the crossing of the weft, back and forth. Throughout the video various processes unfold, resonating with these embodied measures of time. Finally, the film explores the closeness of creation and destruction, depicting threads being pulled apart or twisted together. In one culminating scene, the canvas is being burned and sewn together simultaneously.

Julia Bland (b. 1986, Palo Alto, CA; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) received her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design and her MFA from The Yale School of Art. She has been an artist in residence at The MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Lighthouse Works, The Sharpe-Walentas Space Program, and The Shandaken Project: Storm King. She has received awards including The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, The Milton and Sally Avery Fellowship from Yaddo, The Carol Schlosberg Memorial Prize, NYFA/NYSCA fellowship in Craft/Sculpture, The Florence Leif Award for Excellence in Painting, and the Natasha And Jacques Gelman Travel Fellowship. Recent solo exhibitions include the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield (2025); Tayloe Piggott Gallery, Jackson Hole (2023-2024); and Andrew Rafacz Gallery (2019). She has also been included in numerous group exhibitions including at the Concord Center for the Visual Arts, Concord (2025); Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse (2022); The Swedish Institute, Paris, France (2022); and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan (2019). This will be her third solo exhibition at the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 38 Walker Street between Broadway and Church Street. Hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 10am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.