

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Jill Mulleady

Bend Towards the Sun

530 West 21st Street

September 15 – October 22, 2022

Opening September 15, 6–8pm

Your exhibition began as a sort of mathematical experiment with the space of painting. Your operation was to take the precise number of canvases, the exact sizes and shapes provided by Goya's Black Paintings, and then fill these in with your own imagery. So you started by blanking out Goya, taking up only the spatial schema of his Quinta del Sordo, and this prescribed structure became your empty canvas.

The Black Paintings were done directly on the walls of Goya's home and, after his death, were hacked out of their original site and transferred to canvas, essentially reconfigured into a different medium. The house was then demolished, the paintings were eventually relocated to the Prado. So not only did the works suffer extensive damage, but they experienced a period of homelessness. Still, despite such losses and displacement, the emotional force that produced those paintings persists untouched. I see in this work the power to resist time and carry life in the same way that a black hole or stardust does. And from the start, you were also okay with losing the Black Paintings, letting this work slip away again and become something new in New York.

A few of your canvases depict scenes with young women in erotically tense entanglements, sometimes with off-screen predators, or else lovingly preying upon each other. It's in this vampiric attraction of predator and prey, and in the combination of psychically charged interiors with ravaged Cinemascope landscapes, that you suggest another sort of architecture: a dangerously complex space of collapsing or shifting walls, where the boundary separating inside and outside is always on the point of dissolving. Private interiors are punctured by blaring, almost bloody views of the city below. Nature is invaded by robotic human hunters. There's a wild, territorial battle of swans against swans. A peeled corpse with its organs exposed. Meanwhile, girls dare each other with new extremes of physical and emotional vulnerability, sometimes locking eyes with the viewer. Throughout, the border between inner psychic space and the exterior world – Earth's body – remains charged and fragile, open to the possibility of violation. Just as the earth cracks open, and the sky, living things experience crises of bodily and psychic integrity. We sense a secret joy in this boundary violence, which is also a turned-on point of contact with the other. And then your title suggests an almost erotic submission to the sun, which is either a life-giving or a deadly, overwhelming force – actually both at once.

I don't think it's a coincidence that Goya was deaf when he moved into a house that was already called The House of the Deaf Man, as it seems that silence was already a crucial dimension of the space of this work. Silence unfolds its own kind of space. It's also a way of communicating – darkly and directly – when the social contract fails. There's a feeling that the bodies in your works are experiencing the beyond of words, situations that only bodies and paintings can truly know.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com

New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm