



Truth (detail), 2021 - 2022. Embroidery thread, fabric, aluminum, acrylic. 81.3 x 56.5 cm. Photographer: Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

SOPHIA NARRETT *CARRIED BY WONDER*

March 3 - April 15, 2023

Perrotin is pleased to present *Carried by Wonder*, Sophia Narrett's first exhibition with the gallery, opening on March 3 at Perrotin New York. Narrett employs the slow and meticulous process of embroidery in response to the increasingly fast pace of contemporary media, most often crafting narratives that interrogate the experiences of womanhood. At Perrotin, the artist will debut a body of work that explores the intricacies of modern romance.

The following text was composed by Grant Klarich Johnson on the occasion of the exhibition.

At the heart of the exhibition that carries its name, *Carried By Wonder*¹ features two figures presented as gifts, wrapped and proffered by trios that buttress them. Women and wolves in alternating order ring around them, traveling a track in the shape of an infinity symbol. The track recalls the design and logic of toy trains, from small models to the blow-molded plastic sets which might similarly be circled apparently without end. A ring of 'bottle dancers' (inspired by those made famous in the 1971 film adaptation of *Fiddler on the Roof*) stretch into the distance.

A Victorian house in a perfect palette appears at upper left above a violin and bow. Perhaps a happy end with a soaring crescendo, or at least a familiar tune and a good enough place to rest for a time? But what if it's a haunted house, with strings screeching? True to gothic traditions or an expanded, literary definition of romance, this scene allows one to read

for both sweet and sinister plots. In its ambiguity, it encourages us to see and experience the indeterminacy that intertwines them. In Narrett's work, threads pile up and narratives twist and turn. What we see depends very much upon the reader, whoever dare cross the threshold to linger and look closer.

In most if not all of the works on view, uncertain romances of one kind or another play out, inviting questions. What ties these figures together or what might tear them apart? Are their bonds stronger, or just as tender as the spectrum of embroidery floss hues that help us see them? Narrett's works take time. They assemble slowly, stitch by stitch and this exhibition, consisting of six works, represents over a year of labor occasioned by the artist working alone and solely by hand. Perhaps slow making deserves slow looking too, and more will be revealed, slowly, over time. In *Truth* several rollerskating referees wear jerseys that spell it out. Meanwhile, cosmic carpet and dissolving sky suggest an inversion of up and down, an all-encompassing emotional vertigo that echoes the destabilizing kiss at the composition's center. Whether in a moment of heightened emotions or framed by real political uncertainty, *Truth* ponders the moment we lose a clear sense of which way might be up or how we might decide.

Guided by a spiraling field of tulips or inspiring them to spring in her wake, a woman circles a figure wearing a tallit in *Seven Circles*. The title references a Jewish wedding ceremony known as "hakafot" in Hebrew, symbolic of completeness and protection. An illustration of everlasting



Charms, 2022. Embroidery thread, fabric, aluminum, acrylic. 63.5 x 80 cm. Photographer: Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Truth, 2021 - 2022. Embroidery thread, fabric, aluminum, acrylic. 81.3 x 56.5 cm. Photographer: Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

love familiar to Dutch tourists and floral still lives alike, the tulips echo themes of a perpetual union between the two figures despite their otherwise ambiguous or ominous postures. Continuing with this close botanical study, *Charms* may or may not be a lucky one. In its foreground, several brides disappear into one another, consumed by their union. Above, a woman looks back at them and a man beckons her on from even farther off. Meanwhile, clovers drift across the scene. A woman in an orange dress raises a butterfly net as if to catch one and a foreshortened carousel rabbit floats between the uncertain pair.

As *One* brings another bride and groom together, to embrace and dip toward us, echoing the poses of several other couples pictured within the image, framed and encircling them like guests to this otherwise intimate moment. Troubling a sense of logical gravity at play within this scene and other's across Narrett's work, nude women splay across these meta-pictures, presented perhaps as the painters rendering this scene stroke by stroke, translating it from imagination to image. Largely freed from the rectangular framing conventions of Western painting, Narrett's works depart from the attendant conventions of linear perspective and dimensional rendering typical of these illusions. Embroidered images dissolve into sudden gaps, uneven edges, and

jagged contours. The works flirt with the real space of the wall and dangle across it like shawls. Embroidered passages blend into gossamer webs or behave like real vegetal tendrils. Inside their illusions, figures and forms stretch into an apparent distance but at a variety of levels, like actors skating across transparent or dissolving stages. In their distinct approach to rendering space, Narrett's compositions harken back to the crowded, allegorical fields of Hieronymus Bosch or the Yamato-e compositions of Japan, where decisively floating clouds and architectural cutaways frame figures and guide where the eye is encouraged to enter.

Narrett's imagined spaces are peopled with elements of what we know well and what we've only fleetingly dreamed of—in secret, or shame. It is a romanticism we recognize, and to which we are seduced to enter.

Curious about the intersection of textiles and contemporary art in a global context, Grant Klarich Johnson is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at the Philadelphia Museum of Art

[More information about the artist >>>](#)

1 The title for the work, and the exhibition as a whole is inspired by *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* by rabbi, theologian, and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel.