

BOESKY GALLERY

DANIELLE MCKINNEY

Forest for the Trees

MAY 7 – JUNE 13, 2026
OPENING RECEPTION: MAY 7, 6–8 PM

“What is required of us is not certainty, but the willingness to remain present to what we do not yet understand.”

- psychoanalyst James Hollis

“Her prayer was scarcely done when a heavy numbness seized her limbs, thin bark closed over her breast, her hair turned into leaves, her arms into branches, her feet so swift a moment ago stuck fast in slow-growing roots, her face was lost in the canopy.”

- Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*

Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Forest for the Trees*, an exhibition of new paintings and watercolors by Danielle Mckinney (b. 1981; Montgomery, AL). *Forest for the Trees* coincides with *Danielle Mckinney: Shelter*, a survey of the past five years of the artist's practice, on view at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, FL through October 4, 2026.

In pensive, cinematic portraits, Mckinney captures solitary female protagonists in moments of leisure and respite. Set in dream-like domestic interiors, the figures in *Forest for the Trees* sprawl across unmade beds, recline atop sleek, modernist furniture, and bask in afternoon sunlight. Unaware of—or perhaps unconcerned with—the viewer, Mckinney's women smoke, read, and nap, lost completely in the curated comfort of their sacred private spaces.

Figures have always been the focal point of Mckinney's work—expressions, posture, and gestures always carrying more meaning than the particulars of their domestic spaces. With *Forest for the Trees*, the artist loosens

her brushwork, rendering her figures with less definition—allowing bodies to melt into surroundings, limbs to dissolve into abstraction. Yet, the environments these figures occupy are more realized than ever before. The brushwork, like that of the figures, is loose and painterly—evoking the intimate, impressionistic domesticity of Édouard Vuillard, the specificity of the imagery only taking form with distance. But the rooms assert themselves: ornate chandeliers and bulbous lamps cast warm light across sinuous, mid-century furniture decorated with floral throw pillows and vases of bright, springy blooms.

This subtle shift in the figure-ground relationship throughout the works of *Forest for the Trees* reflects, perhaps, the environment of their creation. Mckinney made these paintings during a period of particular turmoil, both personally and collectively. The weight of generational change permeates each of the works, the dreamlike domestic realms less polished sets for the performance of rest and more refuge amidst a world on fire. The figures themselves embody uncertainty; the

spaces ground them, inviting these women to turn inward, gently holding them as they bear witness to ceaseless change.

Alongside these ten new paintings, Mckinney presents—for the first time in New York—a suite of watercolors. On paper, Mckinney adopts a particular economy of gesture, conjuring graceful figures in just a few marks, allowing the swell of water-bound pigment to define the contours of the body. Suspended against stark white backgrounds—more exposed than their oil-painted counterparts—the watercolor figures are nevertheless embraced by the artist’s hand, permitted a moment to breathe freely.

Forest for the Trees takes its title from an adage first documented in a 16th-century book of proverbs by English playwright John Heywood. “I see,” Heywood recounted, “ye can not see the wood for trees.” For Mckinney, the maxim reflects the particular conditions of this moment in time—of

being on the precipice, it seems, of a larger shift. Without the perspective supplied by distance and time, it remains unclear how each small element of change contributes to a whole. This feeling—of being too close to the trees to see the forest, too close to the brushstrokes to see the painting—is articulated rather eloquently throughout the work of psychoanalyst James Hollis. And for Hollis, there is wisdom to be found in living with this not knowing, in being present with uncertainty, in inviting it into our lives.

With *Forest for the Trees*, Mckinney turns inward, searching not for resolve—but for a place where it is safe to sit with this palpable sense of uncertainty. Nothing here is sure—but nothing needs to be sure. In this place—amidst these conditions—Mckinney’s women become trees, free to lay down roots, their growing wisdom pushing deeper and deeper into the earth. And—like the mythic Daphne, transformed into a tree—from these roots, they will grow and blossom. ■

ABOUT DANIELLE MCKINNEY

Danielle Mckinney: Shelter, a survey of the artist’s work from 2020 to the present is currently on view at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, FL. Solo exhibitions of Mckinney’s work have also been presented at the Rose Art Museum, Waltham, MA; the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy; and Kunsthall N, Copenhagen, Denmark. Her work is included in museum collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; the Dallas Museum of Art, TX; the Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Stedelijk Museum,

Amsterdam, among others. Her work has been featured in a number of group exhibitions, including *The Time Is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure* curated by Ekow Eshun at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; *Tending and Dreaming: Stories from the Collection* at the San José Museum of Art, CA; *Woman in a Rowboat* at the Olivia Foundation, Mexico City; *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting* curated by Koyo Kouoh at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town, South Africa; and *IN A DREAM YOU SAW A WAY TO SURVIVE AND YOU WERE FULL OF JOY* curated by Robin K. Williams at The Contemporary Austin, TX. Mckinney earned a BFA at Atlanta College of Art in 2005 and an MFA at Parsons School of Design in 2013. The artist lives and works in Jersey City, NJ. ■