

BORTOLAMI

ANNA OSTOYA

Slaying

25 February – 23 April 2016

*Art making is like the act of slaying – an archaic activity, quite brutal when taken seriously.
Facing reality can feel as brutal as a beheading.*

Bortolami is pleased to announce *Slaying*, Anna Ostoya's third exhibition at the gallery. In her new paintings and photomontages, the artist deploys Artemisia Gentileschi's iconic work, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, as an image of violence inherent in art and in life.

The original painting depicts the story of Judith, a Jewish widow who saves her people besieged by the Assyrian army. With the help of her maidservant, she plies Holofernes, the army general, with alcohol and then beheads him in his drunken state.

In these new paintings, Ostoya inspects the crime scene, analyzing it through geometrical abstraction. She substitutes Judith for Holofernes, in *Judith Slaying Judith*, and Holofernes for Judith, in *Holofernes Slaying Holofernes*. Each figure attacks itself. These large canvases are accompanied by smaller ones where the artist further analyzes the scene.

In *Slain Trances*, a series of black and white photomontages, Ostoya's investigation becomes more associative than analytical. She transforms the original painting through surrealist juxtapositions. Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* collides with other examples of her work as well as with a painting by Georgia O'Keeffe, a sculpture by Pablo Picasso, a still from *Possession*, a snapshot of Ostoya as a teenager, a propaganda leaflet, a war photo, and images of a robot, an African mask and the gallery. Some photomontages are scraped and painted over, then re-photographed to generate yet other photomontages.

Though *Judith Slaying Holofernes* is known for its feminist interpretations as a revenge of a rape, Gentileschi being raped by her mentor, Ostoya takes on the work to consider violence through and beyond the traditional male – female division. To her, the slaying is of the unknown "other" that endangers the vulnerable "I". It stands for a visceral striving to define self-identify and integrity against the world with its taboos and its wars. Beheadings are no longer the stuff of myth and legend. Ostoya's paintings return to Gentileschi's subject matter now when it most seems like an ominous reflection of life.

[quote by A. Ostoya, from a conversation with the artist]

Anna Ostoya (b. 1978, Krakow) lives and works in New York. Her paintings have been recently exhibited in the 2015 Lyon Biennial, *La Vie Moderne*. Previously, her work was included in the exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art (*New Photography 2013*), the Power Plant Toronto, the CCS Bard College, Manifesta 7 Rovereto, and the Second Athens Biennial. She has had solo exhibitions at La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Foksal Gallery Warsaw and CCA Kronika. Ostoya attended the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York and she studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt/M and at the Parsons School of Art and Design in Paris. Her paintings will be featured in *Vitamin P3: New Perspectives in Painting*, Phaidon Press, 2016.

For more information and images, please contact claire@bortolamigallery.com.