

Despina Stokou
Oh, Honey
March 3 – April 21, 2018

Praz-Delavallade is pleased to present *Oh, Honey*, a solo exhibition of new works by Despina Stokou.

Oh, Honey continues Stokou's exploration of popular culture and political debates as mediated by contemporary public forums. She calls this show "a letter from a (better) future" and pulls together text sources from news articles and Twitter comments to drug prescriptions and hospital bills, creating collaged text and color layers in large format painting structures. Stokou critically examines the conflation of history with trending topics highlighting the fact that while online visibility dictates the public narrative, the needs and rights of large swathes of the population are continuously being overlooked in plain sight.

"You have police killing (black) people left and right, the Muslim ban, Transphobia, backpedaling on gay and women's rights; you have people raging against the abuse of power and then you have others going wait what? But All Lives Matter. They just don't see it. Ignorance, at this point of technology, is a choice. The inherent blind spot of privilege. Can painting make people see? Can art still be relevant in the dumpster fire that is America right now?"

In a central work of the show titled 'I want a dyke for President', Stokou takes Zoe Leonard's 1992 poem 'I want a President' as its core; a text about the desire to see disenfranchised parts of the population come to power knowing that "they: the queer, the immigrants, the harassment survivors" would have a voice in politics to actually achieve change. Leonard's heartbreaking words are extracted and layered throughout the triptych in contrast to words made popular by politicians and the media; words used to marginalize and vilify parts of the population such as "Super Predators, War on Drugs, Illegal Immigrants, Identity Politics Extremists, Chain Migration" etc... Stokou also hits more playful notes in her work, for example in 'Dealbreakers' where she transcribes the last chat lines from online dating conversations as submitted to her by social media followers; or in '364 Days Before You' in which she unfolds the notes she kept during the year she tried to conceive and bear her first child.

Stokou's direct application of paint, oil stick, marker and collage to canvas is playful while lending an emotional and visual intensity to the work. Much like the Dadaists of the 20's or in the vein of Brion Gysin and Burroughs 'Cut-Up Technique' popularized in the 50's and 60's, Stokou's unorthodox use of art media and deconstruction of text squarely aligns her work in the art historical lineage of artists using text; yet what makes her work so effervescent is that the words she takes from public dialog are a direct reaction to an increasingly disillusioned social context. Her bold idealism and earnestness is underpinned by her use of contemporary political references and celebration of the female experience, all grounded within a painterly tradition.

Despina Stokou, born 1978 in Athens, lives and works in Los Angeles. After studying painting at the Athens School of Fine Arts, she completed her masters in "Art in Context" at the University of Arts in Berlin. She has been exhibited numerous both nationally and internationally at Kunstverein Gera, Gera DE; KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin DE; Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis US; and the Center for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow UK. Her work is held in numerous private and public collections such as the Deutsche Bank Collection; Schwartz Collection, Harvard; and Zabudowicz Collection.