

LAUREL GITLEN

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Emily Mae Smith *Medusa*

SEPTEMBER 9–OCTOBER 25, 2015

OPENING RECEPTION WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 6–8PM

Laurel Gitlen is thrilled to present *Medusa*, Emily Mae Smith's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

In Smith's meticulously rendered oil paintings, references merge and collide, forming a precise visual vocabulary of scopophilic desire and consumption. A broom—perhaps a reference to the faceless domestic laborer from Disney's *Fantasia*, whose sole role was to clean and reproduce—serves as a protagonist; a surrogate for the artist glamorously made-up with lipstick, disguised as a mustachioed man, or monstrously rendered as Medusa herself.

Other tropes slip in and out of the work, providing a framework (or even literal frame) in which to view her narratives of screwball humor, sex, and violence, which become inextricably linked. Sunglasses, binoculars, and mirrors serve as reflective lenses into the paintings, suggesting both the insatiable desire to look and the horror of looking. Flatness gives way to deep astral planes, as space folds and divides within the canvases.

Implicit throughout Smith's work is a feminist critique grounded in the histories she so deftly cites—from the Pop legacies of the Chicago Imagists and Lichtenstein to Magritte; from Art Nouveau to 1980s Cyberpunk sci-fi. Her paintings are clearly not just about the act of looking, but rather painting looking self-reflexively over its shoulder, drawing on both art history as well as her own work, enticing the viewer with its lurid sexuality—only to be made stiff as you catch its gaze.

Emily Mae Smith lives and works in New York and received her MFA at Columbia University. In the past year, her work has been included in group exhibitions in New York, Brussels, Cologne, Zurich, and Berlin, and a recent solo show at Junior Projects was reviewed in *The New York Times* and *Artforum Critics' Picks*. In 2016, she will have a solo show at Mary Mary in Glasgow.