

April 18 – June 3, 2018

Opening Reception: Wednesday, April 18, 6-8pm



Deborah Brown, *Daphne and Apollo I*, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Brooklyn, New York—April, 2017—Spoonbill Studio is pleased to present *Chimeras*, a solo exhibition with new works by Deborah Brown, curated by Madeleine Mermall.

In Greek mythology, the Chimera is a monstrous, fire-breathing, hybrid female creature associated with natural disasters and satanic forces that roamed Lycia and Asia Minor, causing devastation and destruction. Painter Deborah Brown's latest work both embraces and critiques the concept of the Chimera as she reimagines narratives taken from mythology, religion, and literature by placing a powerful female figure at the center of these stories in which women are typically symbols of moral virtue or seductive evil, often held hostage by male desire to possess.

Infusing her work with themes and motifs from Classical Greek art and literature that have been explored throughout the canon of Western art history, mainly by male artists, Brown situates her female protagonists as the main lead and erases men's presence altogether. Throughout the paintings, the women are found in various Classical poses and settings that are abstracted versions of Arcadian landscapes and mythological environments. With a female subject as the main character in roles usually dominated by men—placed in positions of power rather than weakness—Brown redefines the stories of antiquity and women's roles within such stories.

In Brown's painting *Pandora*, the artist takes on a subject that has been visited over the course of centuries by intellectuals and artists alike, taking ownership over the normally anti-feminist narrative—Pandora opening the box of Evils, releasing them into the world and shutting the box

before Hope could escape. In Brown's painting, she looks over her shoulder at the viewer, gaze penetrating and confident, a slight smirk playing on her lips: it's as if she knows she has a bad rep, and is not afraid to live up to it.

In a large painting titled *Daphne and Apollo*, already a subversion of the usual title in which Apollo's name is listed first, Daphne is an all-powerful force, dominating the scene. Though she is twisting around in a pose similar to Bernini's sculptural take on the story, arm outstretched, feet consumed in green paint, there is no Apollo, just the trusty terrier that appears as a side-kick-like companion in the paintings, already lost in the laurel leaves. Frenetic movement overwhelms the scene as Daphne conducts the world around her into a swirling blur, pulling the sun from its sleep and launching it into the world. She is no longer at the command of nature, and no longer bears the consequences of Apollo's lust.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Deborah Brown (b. 1955) lives in New York and works in Bushwick, Brooklyn, a neighborhood she helped pioneer as an artist and where she started Storefront, one of the first artist-run galleries in the neighborhood. She has an MFA from Indiana University and a BA from Yale University. Her recent exhibitions include a solo exhibition with Geary Contemporary, NY; ICA Maine College of Art; Lesley Heller Workspace, NY; Mike Weiss Gallery, NY; Life on Mars, Brooklyn, NY; BravinLee programs, Brooklyn, NY; and Ober Gallery, Kent, CT. Her work has been reviewed in Artforum, The New York Times, Art in America, The Wall Street Journal, ARTNews, Artnet, Mdme Figaro, Hyperallergic, ArtFCity, and ART-Das Kunstmagazin.