

CHELSEA CULPRIT

DMing Purgatory

Queer Thoughts, New York

September 7 – October 28, 2018

Queer Thoughts is honored to present *DMing Purgatory*, the second New York solo exhibition by Chelsea Culprit. For this show, the artist's second with the gallery, Culprit expands upon her exploration of the classed, gendered body—which previously focused on the setting of a strip club and its subjects (*Blessed With A Job*, 2016)—to an elemental understanding of bodies mediated, colonized, disfigured and transformed by the flows of global capital, and in particular, its signs. In these new works Culprit elides narrative, emphasizing a formal deconstruction of the linguistic and visual codes that lend intelligibility and meaning to form, color, and the body (the body itself a sign to be performed and transmitted).

Culprit will present two new significantly scaled mixed-media paintings on canvas, as well as a new series of shaped canvas and fabric works in forms derived from the abstraction of the body in positions of bondage, freedom, labor and rest: the bent knee as a pose of submission, defiance, or of potential, like a butterfly's wing before flight; an arched back to position the pelvis or the shovel; hands that brace, clasp, and grasp ones own body.

Culprit's works study the colors that code contemporary life, along with the material histories, industrial processes and mechanical apparatuses that proliferate them. Colors organize allegiance and behavior, and stand as metonyms for a vast web of designations and meanings for humans and their institutions: Red, Yellow, Black, White, Green and Blue among them. In relation to the Modernist view of the body and its labor as mechanically reproducible, the digitally transmittable body exists as an endless surface from which to accumulate code, and conversely, as an aggregation of codes to be understood socially.

In a stacked pair of muralist canvases, *High Spirited Chimeras With Hypnotic Digital Masks (I & II)*, the artist dislocates and reconfigures blocks of connotative color throughout the fragmented and repeated form of a dancer in a show-stopping pose: head on the floor, hands gripping ankles, supine body in an arc towards sky. Contorted (and physiologically altered) by the repeated postures of its labor, the body becomes a living word-image, a cryptic hieroglyph. In Culprit's compositions, the fractal patterning of limbs and body parts activate the harmonic potential of the painting's surface, against which the static textuality of digital communications appear ineffectual.

In contrast to the fugue-like linearity of these paintings, two new shaped-canvas works, *Butterfly Moth in Transcendental State*, and *Black Widow Anarchist Hourglass*, operate as logograms (i.e. a single character that designates an entire phrase or idea; a symbol enacting its own power). The upholstered legs and pelvises of these forms coalesce in imperfect tessellations, evoking blocks of a geometrically patterned quilt—an American aesthetic tradition that predates geometric abstract painting and is significant within the artist's familial history. Like a handmade quilt, which as a tactile social artifact allows itself to be consumed by life's processes, the hybrid bodies of these well-heeled femmes are composed of found and repurposed textiles and strung with the chains of bodily necessity. If they appear surrendered, it is only to the absolute exposure of being a thing itself, a self-engendered sigil of ones inherent freedom, and the liberating potential of a judgment day that can never come.

Chelsea Culprit lives and works in Mexico City. Recent solo exhibitions include *Right to Remain Elegant* with Galería La Esperanza at Barba Azul, Mexico City and *Fishnets* at Uma Certa Falta de Coerencia in Porto, Portugal. Select group exhibitions include *Dwelling Poetically: Mexico City, A Case Study* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; *Pintura Reactiva* at Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City; Roman Road, London; Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; Foxy Production, New York; and Galerie Ophdal, Stavanger.