

NATHALIE KARG

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Jesse Mockrin, *The marks of a stranger*
September 13 - October 27, 2019
Opening Reception: Friday, September 13, 6–8 pm

Nathalie Karg Gallery is pleased to present *The marks of a stranger*, a show of new work by Jesse Mockrin. In her second exhibition with the gallery, she continues her deep dive into the mythos enveloping culture and consciousness. The ideas and impulses that play out in her work seem to unfold in that fraught space where culture meets cosmos—the fragile, all too permeable membrane we negotiate between order and chaos. In her most recent series of works, Mockrin turns her gaze to the ‘membrane’ in an almost explicitly carnal sense, taking the historical legend of Lucretia (the ‘honor’ self-sacrifice that instigated the founding of republican Rome) to mark this extended transit. It’s no accident that Mockrin references poetic treatments of such legends in her paintings and their titles. Versification, even musicality, is built into their structure; the diptych’s divide or the space between images in series effectively functioning as *caesurae*. Time is the unspoken but crucial element in her paintings. A moment – whether such a *caesura*, a detail or focal point – can hold an eternity.

Plucked clean from time, distanced by space, perspective, style, sensibility, interpretive detail—moments of variable continuity and contiguity meet, as if from across a universe. Unlike some of her previous bodies of work, the moments here are more closely joined, almost unified (or at least sequential), or (in one instance, *Weep into my eyes* (2019)) mirrored—echoing the act of image-making and viewing itself. But there is no true continuity here. Even where the images flow across the diptych’s ‘chasm’, they do so in an almost prismatic, affective dissolve. In *Between desire and dread* (2019) Lucretia’s dagger points in the direction of her heart, while in the adjoining panel her other hand still clutches bedclothes to her cleavage and the expression on her upturned face is almost placid. The title merely underscores the conflict—another way of describing the way we play out destiny. Anticipation more than aftermath characterizes the pre- or post-consummation here. Blade may penetrate flesh, but there is no blood to stain pale flesh or drapery.

But then there is scarcely matter of any configuration to stain the black velvet of the cosmos against which Mockrin’s subjects are brightly lit moons. We tend to think of mythological subjects as lit by a kind of Jovian empyrean light; but like everything else we’re made of, they emerge from a black void. Mockrin’s work dwells in the dark space where time and mythology collide. It is a perfect eclipse.

- Eyrha Jean Black

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