

REBECCA FARR

Out of Nothing

October 22 – December 3, 2016

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 22nd, 6-8pm

Artist Talk: Saturday, November 5th, 4pm

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Rebecca Farr
Pairing
2016
Oil on canvas
60 by 48 inches

Klowden Mann is proud to present Los Angeles-based artist Rebecca Farr's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, *Out of Nothing*. The exhibition includes large-scale figurative oil paintings on canvas and an installation of abstracted sculptures formed from plaster, cotton and burlap, and will be on view from October 22nd through December 3rd, 2016. There will be a reception for the artist on October 22nd from 6-8pm, and an artist talk on Saturday, November 5th at 4pm.

Farr's work has been focused for some time around questions of migration and its ideological inheritance, and most recently, the problematic interaction between spirituality and embodiment in a culture that dehumanizes bodies based on race. With works in oil and mixed-media on canvas, paper and wood, she has explored the cultural mythology of white/Western privilege that informs the hegemonic Western relationship to immense, 'unoccupied' space (space often occupied by an 'other') and that space's ideological and physical colonization, often utilizing the lens of Westward Expansion/Manifest Destiny in the 19th century.

Now, in *Out of Nothing*, Farr has shifted from using the language of shared historical lineage to the language of a highly personal one. In 2015, Farr's father was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer, and he passed away in March of 2016. During the time of her father's struggle with cancer and treatment, Farr began a body of work that focused on the history of war; for months, creating smaller oil paintings that referenced the photography of the American Civil War and the Disaster War Drawings of Goya. However, after her father's passing, Farr's paintings transformed into a study of personal mythology—transmitted from her father to her during her childhood—that rests within a culturally inherited Christian ideology and the adopted practice of Buddhism. The work in the exhibition follows Farr's grief in the face of her father's death, and her struggle to reconcile her father's legacy of enlightenment with our cultural polarization of body and spirit, and move into a place of acceptance and of letting go.

Farr invites us into this process through distinct spaces within the gallery, that are thematically broken up into the themes 'pre-form', 'form' and 'letting go of form'. When entering the gallery, we move into a space that is all white—long hanging casted sculpture constructed of cloth and representing what Farr describes as "pre-form", extend from ceiling to floor. The pieces hang open and reaching, stretched as if waiting for a form to be given them. The sculptures feel like animal skins or ceremonial dress, objects that though inert have a history, as well as a future that has yet to be determined. As Farr says, "They are waiting, holding a sense of imprint and markings of life, but not in action."

Entering the next room—the main space of the gallery—we see to our left a long row of paintings on a white wall. The paintings are vertical, scaled in a way that references a close relationship with the viewer’s body, and painted with a generous and deeply physical execution. Farr’s open stroke and thick use of layered paint imparts the urgency of flesh and movement, while her abstracted bodies formed in muted grays and flesh tones break away from narrative painting as linear document and move into an emotive and symbolic space. In most paintings we see two figures, navigating and moving through a dark body of water. The figures might be twins, lovers, siblings, or a parent and child; their specific relationship to each other matters less than their unity in the act of being together in this space. The water unites the paintings on the wall into one space, as if multiple pairs are navigating the same body of water; we recall a cultural memory of baptism and the ritualized act of surrender and rebirth, as well as the exposure of bodies that want to own and love their own messiness; bodies that want to release any attendant belief that spirit is pure, while the body carries the weight of shame.

The two other walls of the main space are painted a deep black, creating a feeling of warmth, a cave, an area that is distinct from daily life. This space is filled with only sculpture. On one wall, pieces cast from burlap and cheesecloth hang from hooks and spill onto the floor. These pieces are heavy, with harder and coarser texture, and a sense of messiness, carnality even. Against the backdrop of the second wall, neater bundled casts sit on low wooden platforms as if in meditation.

The sculptures in the exhibition are also physical, abstract meditations on the body; sourcing the body in its vulnerability, strength, struggle, and eventual stillness; the cloth and plaster referencing the medical (and military) battlefield, as well as all of the elements of physicality that resist classification or quantification. The sculptures act as open sentences, literally and symbolically functioning without closure. They are the body as it moves and continues to keep trying; they occur conceptually at the point where construction and destruction—growth and decline—become interchangeable and impossible to identify. Here we find ourselves back in the themes that Farr has worked through for so long: despite the stories we tell ourselves about progress, the cycles continue and the messiness of existing in a body remains. In the world Farr has created in *Out of Nothing*, both the space we hold and its erasure originate from the same lineage.

In the final and smallest room of the gallery, two walls are painted in dark gray while the others remain white. Charcoal drawings cling to the base of these painted walls—an urgent mural of last memories and efforts, the holding on to that which is physical. The drawings tumble down into an installation of ash, plaster, and casted cloth. These remnants echo the hanging sculptures that greeted us when we entered the gallery, yet these objects rest as shells cast off and no longer needed; the necessary byproducts that occur when form has been released, and let go. Opposing the sculpture, Farr places one painting unlike the others: a landscape, free of figures, a textured consideration of the horizon where dark meets light.

Rebecca Farr (b. 1973, Glendale, CA) had her most recent solo exhibition at Klowden Mann in 2014, which was accompanied by a special catalogue and artist book featuring an essay by Ed Schad, and was reviewed on New American Paintings. In 2015, Farr was awarded a residency at Kaus Australis in Rotterdam, and was featured in a group exhibition at Kaus in the Fall of 2015. Farr has exhibited in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Houston, Istanbul, Rotterdam, and throughout the Pacific Northwest. Her work is held in private collections both nationally and internationally, and she recently completed two years as faculty artist in the education department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.