

# GAVLAK

DEBORAH BROWN

*Return to Forever*

September 22–October 17, 2021

GAVLAK, Palm Beach, FL



Palm Beach – GAVLAK is pleased to present *Return to Forever*, a selection of recent paintings by New York-based artist Deborah Brown. On view from September 22–October 17, 2021, this show marks the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery, following the inclusion of her work in the group show, *Nasty Women*, at GAVLAK Los Angeles in 2020. An opening reception will be held on Friday, September 24 from 6-8pm.

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Deborah Brown has exhibited widely in the United States and Europe. A recent body of work, *The Shadow Paintings*, is currently the subject of a solo show at Hall Art Foundation | Schloss Derneburg Museum in Holle, Germany through March 2022. Brown's work will also be featured in *Domesticity*, an upcoming group exhibition at the Nassima Landau Foundation in Tel Aviv in 2022.

In *Return to Forever*, Brown constructs a narrative around a female protagonist frequently in the company of her canine companion, situated in both domestic and landscape environments. Complementing the figurative paintings are still lifes of her treasured objects—possibly gathered on her travels—real and imaginary. The work conjures a dreamlike world which alternates between imagined and unimagined to construct a story of female empowerment and agency. Using a multifaceted painterly language, the artist weaves settings and objects into a mysterious fabric that brings the viewer in intimate proximity with the protagonist without quite divulging the woman's identity or her agenda.

The viewer begins their journey by observing objects in the subject's domestic environment—a shell on a shelf, a group of keychains hanging from a peg, a vase with a painted face, jewelry arranged like creatures in a forest. The cycle continues in the bathtub where the protagonist appears with her dog on a rug beside her. The room is richly ornamented with domestic objects and plants which soon morph into lush landscapes in the wilderness scenes. Subsequent paintings depict the nude female figure as she walks on the beach, travels through the forest or paddles a canoe; the presence of an observant dog implies a departure from a domestic setting and hints at a possible threat. The artist places the audience in an ambiguous relationship to the subject, blurring the viewer's position between intruder and friend.

Brown draws on literature, mythology and the depiction of female nudes throughout Western art history to construct her paintings and their indeterminate narratives. In appropriating the canoe as a symbol, the artist reimagines the psychopomp Charon, transforming the ferryman from Greek mythology into a woman who conducts the souls of the dead across the River Styx. Presiding over the landscape as a solitary wanderer, Brown's protagonist appears equal parts vulnerable and powerful, as if she has returned to archaic origins to write her own story.

## ABOUT DEBORAH BROWN

Deborah Brown lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received a BA *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa, in Studio Art from Yale University and an MFA in Painting from Indiana University. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include:

Hall Art Foundation, Schloss Derneburg Museum, Germany; König Galerie, Berlin, Germany; Nassima Landau Foundation, Tel Aviv, Israel; GAVLAK, Los Angeles and Palm Beach; Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art, Houston, TX; Anna Zorina Gallery, New York; Unit London, UK; Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago, IL; Scott Miller Projects, Birmingham, AL; Volery Gallery, Dubai, U.A.E.; and The Lodge, Los Angeles. Her work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Forbes*, *Juxtapoz*, *Artillery Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *ARTnews*, *Artnet*, *Galerie Magazine*, *Houston Chronicle*, *The Denver Post*, *Madame Figaro*, *Hyperallergic* and *ART-Das Kunstmagazin*. Brown has been a tenured professor at Carleton College and a visiting artist and lecturer at Penn State University, Hunter College, Pace University, Columbia University, Maryland Institute College of Art, Yale University and Art Omi. Her work is included in museum and private collections around the world.