

LAUREL GITLEN

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INÈS DI FOLCO *the last dream before birth*

March 2 – April 8, 2023
Opening Reception March 2, 6–8pm

Laurel Gitlen is pleased to announce *the last dream before birth*, Inès di Folco's first solo exhibition in New York on view March 2, 2023 through April 8th, 2023

Volcanic reds and acid lacquers bubble up from the surface of Di Folco's paintings with a fiery energy that is otherworldly, divinely maternal, and alternatively winsome and subversive. Dragons, sea goddesses and the volatile landscape of Venus meet in these canvases, where Di Folco's transcontinental background and her interrelation between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic reshape classical mythologies, historical painting and folkloric themes. Di Folco imposes a composite, matrilineal narrative on classical allegories in painting, producing works that are contradictory in both form and content, abetted by Di Folco's unorthodox use of hand-mixed pigments, waxes and reflective gloss and glitter. Challenging the definition of legitimate violence – its true victims and its perpetrators – her paintings reimagine cultural and religious symbolism through the lens of personal experience, memory and dreams.

In *The Tale*, set against a hillside of diaphanous greens, Di Folco depicts Saint George and the dragon. In this painting, the dragon cum devil is caressed by the hand of a stately woman clothed in a transparent robe, who shields the docile creature from a languid and fruitless swordsman. Instead of a classic retelling of virtuous victory over evil, the moral of this story is ambiguous and confounding. The traditional villain is softly painted as a companion to be protected, while the assailant lays down his weapon in remorse. Other paintings depicting devils, angels and witches similarly disrupt historical narratives and traditional symbolism. In Di Folco's hands, the wisdom of plants, the resilience of nature and the secrets of women and healers solicit a new lineage of creatures that exist between two worlds.

Coupled with paintings like *Prénom Carmen* and *Olokun Vallis*, where images of a parent and child seated in a movie theater and a framed photograph of a loved one float across vivid red backgrounds, the works presuppose a state of intermediation, reconciling historical painting and Di Folco's personal, alternative storytelling. For Di Folco, this plasmic fascination with the past plays out as an ineradicable memory, manifesting in charged, pulsing reds – the color of the womb, of lava and volcanic, cyclic destruction – a hue that Di Folco assigns to yearning itself. It is Di Folco's distinct regard for a history that is robust, irrepressible and sacredly beautiful that permeates her preternatural works.

Inès Di Folco (b.1993 in Paris) graduated from the Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2018. Her work has been exhibited at the FRAC Lorraine, Metz; the MOCO. Montpellier; the Salon de Normandy, Paris; the Biennale Carbone, Saint- Etienne; the agnes b gallery Hors les Murs, and Anne de Villepoix (Paris); and the SISSI club (Marseille).

Please contact the gallery for further information or images, office@laurelgitlen.com.

*The entrance to the gallery is on East Broadway at the rear door of the Apple Bank Building. Gallery hours are Wednesday – Saturday, 12–6, and other times by appointment.