

# DEREK ELLER GALLERY

**JOSEPH OLISAEMEKA WILSON**

*Wali's Farm*

July 6 – August 25, 2023

**Opening Reception: Thursday, July 6,  
6–8 pm**

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present *Wali's Farm*, a solo exhibition of new works by Joseph Olisaemeka Wilson. Wilson has been conceiving and dreaming of the farm and its extended systems, storylines, characters, and history for several years, thoroughly steeping its mythical and dreamy state in reality (despite having little to no knowledge of farming ecosystems).

Central to the ethos of *Wali's Farm* is the suspension of disbelief—both on the part of the viewer and the artist—whereby one

can submit oneself to the poetic faith of fiction and metafictional painting. Interpretations and revelations become infinite as one is immersed in the visual folktales; repetition and multiple perspectives diversify the viewpoints of the farm. Wilson invites the viewer to take an active role in mending the fields, herding the animals, collecting herbs, and rejoicing in the humble yet historic patch of land that constitutes *Wali's* mind.

## ***Wali's Prophetic Dream***

*Out past the sunny clearing in the Maine woods where Thoreau stuck his shovel in the ground, across the sea from where Steve mined his first diamond, we are down at the end of the line. The old farmer-labor train's gone and whistling 'round the bend—That mighty train rolls with dutiful intention, with something called true grit, ever heard of it? She's come all the way from the Texacana plains to the blue ridge mountain, and she's wearing down the track. bringing in the Georgia Mail.*

*Wali sits by the well, whispering to himself a sad song which I don't remember the title of but I know it is by Rihanna, she's so convincing in the way she sings her popular songs. Love and death have told their story into his ear before, and they will again. Memories of Susanna May, from that Side of the Bay, a love with no past; her thick black braided hair and brown eyes which saw all of Wali. He recalled Memories of his early youth, wherein he witnessed the race between the tortoise and the hare, as well*

*as testimonies from the stump orator (oh, how persuasive he was in his way of speaking to a group of people from his elevated platform).*

*These days at present are filled with quiet, thankless, dignified work. Trials of thought. Repetition, cycles of the moon, water and the seasons. Months turn and turn again to years which weave themselves into the quilted tapestry of Wali's memory.*

*Wali took three absolutely massive hits from his pipe of psychoactive dried herbs, and instantly recalled an image by Millet of a shepherd and his flock which he had seen before and had always bewildered him. The soft dusty light, and the shadowy figure hunched over with his crook, the farm in the distance, were all very curious to Wali. Even the dry field in which the shepherd stood seemed notably familiar. Everything about this painting by Millet was, in a way, quite mundane and unremarkable. But Wali had decided that it was not just a vague familiarity which made his mind tingle, but an acute sense of identity. It was impossible for Millet to have painted this picture without knowing of Wali's existence, as every aspect of the image was exactly as it appeared in Wali's life. And the central figure was, obviously, Wali. This frightened Wali immensely because Jean Françoise Millet lived and died some time before he was born, and lived very far away.*

– Joseph Olisaemeka Wilson, 2023

Joseph Olisaemeka Wilson (b. 1999, Los Angeles, CA) has lived and worked in New York since 2017. Recent solo exhibitions include Tiwani Contemporary in London and Fergus McCaffrey in St. Barth. His work has been included in group shows at Palo Gallery, New York, Fergus McCaffrey, Tokyo, and Spazio Amanita Gallery, New York. Wilson's work is currently on view at the Asia Art Center in Taipei for his solo exhibition *A Witness to the Rub*. Wilson has an upcoming residency with Tiwani Contemporary and Guest Artists Space in Lagos, Nigeria during Fall 2023 and an upcoming solo exhibition with Vielmetter Los Angeles in January 2023. This will be his second exhibition with the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Summer hours are Monday - Friday, 11am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit [www.derekeller.com](http://www.derekeller.com).