

MORGAN LEHMAN

A Tale of Five Rings

Jennifer Odell and Elisa Johns



November 29 – December 22, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 29, 6 – 8

Morgan Lehman Gallery is pleased to present a pop-up exhibition at the High Line Nine, a modern arcade-style group of gallery spaces between West 27th and 28th Streets, underneath the High Line and adjacent to the Zaha Hadid building at 520 West 28th. *A Tale of Five Rings* is a multidisciplinary project by jeweler **Jennifer Odell** and painter **Elisa Johns**. Weaving together poetic writing with sensuous imagery and objects, this collaboration brings to life an archetypal tale about character.

Odell's jewelry unites precious colored stones and gleaming hand-hammered metals in a style that is unmistakably contemporary, yet honors a more mystical time in human history. In each unique piece, there is a distinct sense of the symbolic made visible through the beautiful. These ideas play out equally in the delicate and mysterious paintings of Elisa Johns, where archetypal female figures inhabit evocative, dreamlike landscapes, inviting us to enter into their narratives. The end result for both artists' works is an immutability of story rendered afresh.

In the paintings, the play of luscious brushstrokes on wide swaths of white canvas lays bare a convincing spontaneity of process. This yielding to the power one's chosen materials is a crucial part of the jeweler's working method as well, whereby the process of melting raw gold into alloy and then sculpting a wearable work of art is unpredictable, and quite literally alchemical.

While the integrity of Odell's fairy tale is timeless, these painted and sculpted images are decidedly of the present, reminding the viewer of the power and potential of the female spirit in the 21st century. Through their respective languages, the work of Odell and Johns conveys the message that femininity can, and should, be as commanding and strong as it is lovely. To quote the fifth ring's instructions to its bearer: "Be fearless. Be Brave. Be courageous."

Elisa Johns is a Los Angeles based painter who received her MFA from the Claremont Graduate University and her BA from the University of California, San Diego. Solo shows include Palisades at Kasia Kay Gallery in Chicago and Huntress at Mike Weiss Gallery in New York. Her work has been written about in *Art in America*, *White Hot Magazine* and *Beautiful/ Decay* magazine.

Jennifer Odell is the founding director, head artist, and goldsmith for Paris & Lily, a jewelry design firm based in Montclair, New Jersey. Jennifer is inspired by a lifelong intrigue with ancient cultures, mythology and world religions. She began designing jewelry with collected antiquities from her travels and soon after began taking formal goldsmithing classes.