

GLADSTONE

Frances Stark

Serve the Dominant Ideology or Stop Being a Pussy

June 22 – July 28, 2023

Opening Reception: June 22, 6–8pm

515 West 24th Street

New York, NY 10011

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present *Serve the Dominant Ideology or Stop Being a Pussy*, the gallery's first exhibition with artist and writer, Frances Stark. A key figure in the Los Angeles art community for more than three decades, Stark's interdisciplinary practice incorporates painting, video, collage, performance, drawing and text to explore how, like literature, personal interactions can become surrogate spaces for broader cultural experiences. At the center of Stark's often confessional practice are a series of propositions regarding reflection, repetition, and emotional reconstitution; merging the visual with the textual and fantasy with biography, the artist highlights the neglected sites of overlap that connect art with life.

Comprised of twelve new paintings that each assume the format of an open book, the works in *Serve the Dominant Ideology or Stop Being a Pussy* slyly conflate institutional critique and autobiography under the universally understood structure of the narrative arc. The show's titular painting—which features text collaged from both Daniel Buren's seminal 1971 essay *The Function of the Studio* and a sticker made by the streetwear brand RIPNDIP—serves as the exhibition's prologue and poses its central question: what happens when the private becomes public, what happens when the artwork exits the safety of the studio and encounters the appraisal, valuation, and desire that sit at the center of all commodified systems?

The pages of a splayed book subtitled with the words *The Deployment of Private Huerta* are blank, mostly because it hasn't been written yet, because its text remains a proposition quarantined in the caliginous space of possibility. The painting, like most of the others in the exhibition, charts Stark's relationship with a young artist she encountered on Instagram who enlisted as an Army reservist and was deployed to the Middle East shortly after the pair met. A first generation Mexican American whose family often suffered run-ins with ICE, Huerta's personal history reveals a number of questions regarding class, labor, and the function of the artist that Stark's work has repeatedly taken up. Part document and part fantasy, the story of Huerta's transformation from professional art worker to soldier is spread across the two pages that appear in *Scuff Patrol*, a painting that engages the model of before and after by showing Huerta first as an art worker cleaning the scuffs from a Kusama installation, and then as an active-duty soldier participating in a military training exercise. Without the support of narrative, these two images seem incongruous, nearly unrelated. It is only when we accept Stark's propensity for storytelling that we understand this diptych of images contains within it both a complex interrogation of commodity fetishism and an index of personal desire.

The concept that contemporary intimacy is largely mediated by texts, direct messages, and digitally dispatched imagery is one Stark has taken up before, most notably in her 2011 video, *My Best Thing*. In her current exhibition, the artist paints recreations of digital, physical, and emotional ephemera to give material form to things that are often only felt. A hand holding a manually transcribed book of poetic verses; an unused box of matches; a nude selfie; a night out, each image a chapter aiming to transform the experiential into something haptic and permanent. Stark's impulse is often to monumentalize the fleeting, to trap banality so that we can look at it closely enough to locate the remarkable. As Goethe wrote, "*kein genuss ist vorübergehend*." No pleasure is transitory, the encounter always leaves its trace.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com