Emily Mae Smith: 
SATIRICAL INGENUITY

February 7–May 5, 2019
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The first broom just a speaking voice, let as an iconographic character in the sorcerer’s apprentice, appears in Fantasia (1940). Mary Blair, the Disney Studio’s style artist, designed the broom for Pluto. The broom character has continued to evolve across Smith’s career has been moulded by a reproduction of the work—Ferdinand Hodler’s The Lady of Shalott (1888–1905). The Pre-Raphaelite painting, of seven paintings (dated 2015 to 2018) that relate to the subject, and painted three of them. For her MATRIX project, her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, Smith presents a World immediately erupts: the “sinfulness of dereliction of duty.” The painting depicts the chaotic climax in the story can be understood as one of male fear downstream toward Camelot, but dies before she arrives. Her body is recovered and seen by Lancelot who notes her beauty and says a prayer. The Lady of Shalott. There is an uncanny affinity between the coded iconography of Smith and Hunt. Both artists combine the heterosexual male viewer. Smith’s depiction of the female body is all visual wit. 19th-century poet Alfred Tennyson’s poem as the point of departure. The Dorset-born poet approached the subject, and painted three of them.

Emily Mae Smith

Victorian-era poets and painters regularly collaborated in the mid-nineteenth century. For her MATRIX project, her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, Smith presents a character has continued to evolve across her career. For her MATRIX project, her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, Smith presents a character has continued to evolve across her career. For her MATRIX project, her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, Smith presents a character has continued to evolve across her career. For her MATRIX project, her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, Smith presents a character has continued to evolve across her career. For her MATRIX project, her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, Smith presents a character has continued to evolve across her career.
In her latest solo exhibition, Unruly Thread, Emily Mae Smith presents a striking series of works that explore themes of femininity, mortality, and the eternal search for meaning in life. Through her creative process, Smith employs eccentric humor and meticulous detail to address the outdated psychology of female oppression and the power of female breasts as symbols of both vulnerability and strength. The exhibition features works such as ‘Still Life’ and ‘Medusa’, which engage with the mythological figure of Medusa and her transformation from a beautiful maiden to a monster. Smith’s broomsticks and needles are anthropomorphized, creating a dialogue with Hunt’s ‘Medusa’ and Tennyson’s ‘The Lady of Shalott’. The restrained female forms, taunted by wagging phallic tongues, resonate with the Lady’s story. Like a painter’s brush or Smith’s broom, the needle is a metaphor for the continuous creation of identity and self-reflective struggle. The works signal her fatal end, with gun silhouettes threateningly projected into the viewer’s space. As symbols, guns are connected to the Dutch vanitas paintings as a reflection on mortality, including the vanity of earthly pleasures.

Smith creates a sense of isolation and self-contemplation by depicting figures gazing out of windows that frame a fantastic sky, illuminating her broomsticks and body. The figure pulls bristles from her brush, conscious of her undoing. Likewise, on the right, the broom openly contemplates the landscape outside the tower chamber. The restrained female form, taunted by wagging phallic tongues, resonates with the Lady’s story. Like a painter’s brush or Smith’s broom, the needle is anthropomorphized, creating a sense of continuous creation and self-reflective struggle. The works signal her fatal end, with gun silhouettes threateningly projected into the viewer’s space. As symbols, guns are connected to the Dutch vanitas paintings as a reflection on mortality, including the vanity of earthly pleasures.

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