

# ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Sara VanDerBeek

*Chorus*

November 6 – December 18, 2021

Altman Siegel is pleased to present *Chorus*, an exhibition of new work by Sara VanDerBeek, her fourth solo exhibition with the gallery. Using unique applications of color, cropping and combinatory actions, VanDerBeek adds to her ongoing investigation into the representation of the female form.

With this new work, VanDerBeek addresses complicated contemporary relationships to the body while exploring her ambivalence toward a gendered understanding of adornment and the ideals of female beauty proposed by these classical forms. Photographing within encyclopedic and historic museums over the last decade, VanDerBeek has collected a significant archive of images. Previous interventions into this archive focused on digital manipulation; including compositing and adding layers of saturated color. Now the artist returns to her earliest methods of image interpretation, applying hand coloration as she paints directly on the surface of her own photographs.

Enlivening her subjects with brightly colored and refractive paints that evoke the jewel-toned palate of the make-up aisle, her various gestures function more to obscure than to reveal. VanDerBeek's decision to paint her works alludes to the fact that many of these sculptures would originally have been polychromatic, gilded or bejeweled. Allowing for traces of movement, the application and removal of paint from her photographic surfaces creates a record of the artist's own gesture. Her inquiry into ancient images once again reflects the continued mediation of the female form from antiquity to the present moment.

Large images in greyscale tones depict detail views of Roman copies of earlier Greek sculptures, each cropped and isolated from their original context. Slicing through the traditional rectangular plane of the photograph VanDerBeek disrupts the viewers' sense of perspective, injecting dynamism into the still images. Three photographs hang directly from the ceiling activating the exhibition space and creating new juxtapositions as they shift in response to the viewers movement through the gallery. Different images of the same Roman sculpture appear on either side of the suspended forms, animating the monumental figures.

An installation of smaller works entitled *Chorus* provides an asynchronous glimpse into several thousand years of depictions of women. VanDerBeek's cropping and sequencing relay a filmic working process proposing a non-linear timeline and study of form that revels in the unique human acts of representation across time and place.

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Inspired by previous female practitioners of still and moving image, the works in this exhibition recall the closely framed portraits of Ruth Bernhard and Imogen Cunningham, as well as the use of color and filmic transitions employed to great effect by Doris Chase, Shigeko Kubota and Carolee Schneemann. Taken as a whole, this chorus of women both ancient and contemporary, speaks to our collective history, and to the constantly evolving relationship of self and society.

Sara VanDerBeek (born 1976) lives and works in New York. VanDerBeek's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Minneapolis Institute of Art; Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center, Asheville, North Carolina (with Stan VanDerBeek); the Baltimore Museum of Art; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Fondazione Memmo, Rome; Metro Pictures, New York; and the Approach, London. Her work was included in the inaugural New Visions Triennial for Photography and New Media at the Henie Onstad Art Center, Høvikodden, Norway (2020). Recent group exhibitions include the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; Zabludowicz Collection, London; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Pier 24 Photography, San Francisco; Sprüth Magers, Berlin; Gagosian Gallery, Rome; Kunsthalle Berlin; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

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