

Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to announce the solo presentation of Nikki Maloof's paintings and works on paper for the Marfa Invitational 2021.

The paintings are a continuation of the artist's series presented in her 2020 exhibition "Nervous Appetite" where *memento mori* paintings of the sourcing, preparation, cooking and enjoying of a grotesque, yet compelling feast were shown with gaudy and garish patterns that create a palpable anxiety for the viewer.

The kitchen for Massachusetts-based Maloof is a psychological space, one where the quiet frustrations and joys of being a wife and a mother are realized on a daily basis. Like so many of us during quarantine, the constraints of the pandemic relegated Maloof to the kitchen and unable to escape domesticity, Maloof began to embrace the tracings of entrapment by painting her warden. Walking back and forth from the kitchen in her house to the paintings of kitchens in her studio created a never ending loop which is echoed in her paintings, where surreal compositions of meats, fish and of severed vegetables arrange themselves against undulating wallpaper patterns. We, like the poultry and bovine that adorn her canvases, are trapped in a domestic nightmare; one that is cleaved into us by the dark hues of red in *The Red Kitchen*. Red the color of blood undulates through the patterned wallpaper and diamond tile - and if the message isn't clear enough, of the severed head sitting in parchment paper, chopped hoofs, and thick slices of meat ready to be seared in the pan, only bring us closer to the inherent violence of kitchen life.

For Maloof, this violence is to be ridiculed and using the parody of color Maloof transforms the violent act of cooking into a humorous endeavor. In *The Meat Stall With Squashed Pigeon* Maloof uses a vibrant blue for the traditional checkered wallpaper juxtaposed against the pinkish reds of the hanging meats, rolled sausages, choice cuts and pickled vegetables. Borrowing the aesthetic of Francis Bacon anguished visions of humanity in his post-war meat paintings while echoing market scenes of the Dutch masters Pieter Aertsen and Rembrandt Van Rijn, Maloof endeavors through her color relationships to subvert the stereotype of meat as brutal and haunting into lighthearted parody. When we look at Maloof's high intensity colors, we are transported more closely to Wayne Thiebaud's pastry counters where pastels reign supreme rather than the bleakness of the aforementioned masters. This brightness can be seen as an anecdote to the gore and one in which Maloof is lampooning the traditional role of a 1950's housewife rather than a commentary on a nihilistic existence.

Reference to women and their roles can similarly be seen in *Weeping Women with Cooked Goose* where Delft blue ceramics of Picasso's cubist portraits lay bare ahead of a feast of olive speared duck and hallah bread. Here again, tragedy is personified in a mimicry of Picasso's legacy of the weeping woman and then made of by Maloof's garish tablecloths patterns. Where in today's world the traditional roles of the household have been muddied and cooking is not necessarily seen as women's work, Maloof's paintings take aim at these engendered roles and the residue of the division of labor that still seems to exist.