

SITUATIONS

Fateman, Johanna. "Goings On About Town - Sue Williams", The New Yorker, online, December 2020.

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ART

Sue Williams

Nov. 21-Jan. 30

Situations
127 Henry St.
Downtown

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A selection of this American painter's early works, on view at the Chinatown gallery Situations, offers a taste of the bluntly obscene feminist figuration that announced her as a force, in the nineteen-nineties. Across monochrome canvases, she scattered gestural fragments of X-rated vignettes (distorted body parts, peephole-like views of explicit acts) in a serious sendup of art-historical sexism and patriarchal violence. Fast-forward several decades: Williams's big, new paintings, at Chelsea's 303 Gallery, are colorful, more elaborate, and less lewd—in a way. Compositionally, the artist still favors loose constellations of wreckage, but her imagery now plumbs the psychosexual depths of the nation. "Go West, Creep" is a half-abstract fever dream featuring Pilgrims, breasts, horses, and a bloated plucked turkey. In the equally dystopian "Betsy Ross Composite," the Stars and Stripes seamstress is merged with a dinosaur. The small, monstrous figure is adrift yet at home in the canny melee of Williams's America.

—*Johanna Fateman*