

5-50



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# Pillow Princess

**Exhibition Reception:**

**April 4, 5 - 8 pm**

Exhibition:  
April 4 – May 17, 2026

**5-50 Gallery** is pleased to present, *Pillow Princess*, a group exhibition featuring the work of Debra Pearlman, Alexandria Deters, and Kristin O'Connor. Working across multimedia practices, these three artists approach their materials and intentions distinctly, each offering an independent and nuanced exploration of womanhood. Within a patriarchal culture that often centers male pleasure, women who prioritize their own desire are frequently mischaracterized and labeled as 'lazy' or, conversely, judged harshly for their autonomy. *Pillow Princess* challenges these reductive narratives, instead reclaiming and reframing self-prioritization as a form of agency. This presentation seeks to celebrate and affirm those who place themselves first, encouraging a broader reimagining of pleasure, power, and self-definition on one's own terms.

**Debra Pearlman's** work offers an innovative approach to tactile exploration. Working across both two and three-dimensional printed forms, her imagery originates in a candid photography practice, capturing girls in moments of joy, transformation, and performance. These images are subsequently translated into larger-scale paintings and works on paper, where they undergo a material and conceptual shift. Pearlman disrupts traditional notions of form by emphasizing surface as an active, sensory field. Drawing on the way children experience the world through touch and texture, she articulates her canvases with crushed glass and magma, rendering them intentionally rough and sharp. These materials refract and reflect light, creating a dynamic visual tension while simultaneously acting as a kind of caul - a protective membrane between the image and the viewer. This gesture resonates conceptually: just as the surface shields the depicted subjects, the work underscores the importance of preserving young girls' autonomy - their right to inhabit their bodies freely, without the pressure to perform or conform to external expectations.

**Alexandria Deters** features work from her *R.R.R.* (2023–present) series. The acronym stands for Rebirth, Revivification, Revival, and is a self-portrait and video series that explores sexuality, vulnerability, and self-definition through performance and repetition. The project includes short slow-motion videos and staged self-portraits; the videos function as drafts or sketches that capture emotional states later translated into still images. The final works are photographs printed and embroidered, transforming each print into a unique object. Each set of images is also tied to a specific song that shaped the work. The song choice is integral to understanding the emotional tone, attitude, and intensity surrounding each grouping, informing both the performance in the images and the atmosphere of the series.

**Kristin O'Connor's** work is rooted in the symbolism of biblical narratives and purity culture metaphors; her work serves as a commentary on the societal constructs that have historically demonized expressions of desire and the pursuit of pleasure. Placing the figures within the confines of a two-dimensional world meant to illustrate Sunday school stories, she created psychological space where the inherited parables of her youth unravel. Protagonists are haunted by demonic figures and familiar icons become suffocating props blurring the boundary between memory and myth to examine how shame is taught and internalized. Exposing the tensions between doctrine and embodiments, O'Connor's work calls into question the effects of these teachings on girls and women. In centering the experience of women under patriarchal religion, she reclaims the visual language once used to oppress and instead allows desire to emerge as a powerful, clarifying force insisting on the right to inhabit the body without shame.

**Debra Pearlman** (b. 1953, Boston, MA) is an artist based in Brooklyn. Her work is included in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, The Brooklyn Museum, The Walker Art Center, New York Public Library, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Museum Sztuki and Smith College Museum among others. She is the recipient of The Meredith S. Moody Residency at Yaddo, a grant from The Peter S. Reed Foundation, a Special Editions and an Individual Artist Grant from the Lower East Side Print Shop, and from The Foundation for Contemporary Art. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally. One person shows include Super Girls VOTE at Powerhouse Arts, Brooklyn, Roundabout at Five Myles, and First Language, A Kind Of Language with ODETTA Gallery and Project Artspace, and Unaccompanied at SLAG Gallery, and exhibitions in Krakow and Leipzig. Recent shows include Currents New Media, Santa Fe, NM, Icebox 4 Salon, Brooklyn, NY, The Catskill Art Space, Zurcher Gallery, Thomas Van Dyke, La Mama Galleria and others. Reviews include The New York Times, Art in America, Print Collector's Newsletter, Time Out, critic's choice and others. Pearlman received an M.F.A. from the Art Institute of Chicago and a B.F.A. from the University of Massachusetts.

**Alexandria Deters** (b. 1992, San Jose, CA) is a Bronx, New York based artist, writer, archivist, and fine art appraiser. In 2016 she graduated with a MA in American Fine and Decorative Art from Sotheby's Institute of Art, NY. She first began her embroidery practice in 2010 at San Francisco State University, where she received her BA in Art History and Women and Gender Studies(2015). In 2021 she completed the Comprehensive Appraisal Studies Program (CASP) at the Appraisal Institute of America (AAA), NY; and is a recognized Associate Candidate of the AAA. Deters uses the medium of embroidery as a form of meditation. Deter's practice focuses on collective memory, archival storytelling, and the preservation of histories of resistance through textile based art. Her work frequently addresses human rights, identity, and the role artists play in protecting cultural freedom during times of conflict. Recent Solo exhibitions: A Common Thread, The Yard, Brooklyn, NY (2025); Historical Fever Dreams, BravinLee, NY, NY (2024); Prophet of the Month, The Locker Room, Brooklyn, NY (2022); Gonzalez: 'Yes dear I'm here.' (A Primary Document, 9/11), La MaMa Galleria Window, NY, NY. Recent Group exhibitions include: NADA Miami, Miami, FL (2025), Stay Frosty, BravinLee Programs, NY, NY (2025), Outsider Art Fair, NY, NY (2025, 2024, 2023), Every Woman Biennial (2024, 2021, 2019), Spring/Break Art Show, NY, NY (2023, 2022, 2021); and A Golden Thread: A Fiber Art Exhibition, BravinLee Programs, NY, NY (2024).

**Kristin O'Connor** (b. 1991, Ocala, Florida) is an American painter whose work has been presented in exhibitions throughout the United States. She received a BFA in Painting from the University of Tampa in 2013 and an MFA from the New York Academy of Art in 2015. Following her graduate studies, O'Connor quickly gained recognition within contemporary figurative painting circles, exhibiting in a range of gallery and institutional contexts. O'Connor's paintings have been featured in numerous private collections, and her work has been presented alongside a generation of painters contributing to the renewed prominence of figurative practice in the contemporary art world. She currently lives and works in the United States.