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To Paint a Love Poem: In the Studio with Ambera Wellmann

By Anna Kovler

Historically, the Minotaur is always the pinnacle of violence and brute strength. In ancient Greek statues, for instance, the figure is depicted as an ominous bull's head emerging from a muscular human torso, tense and ready for battle. In Picasso's suite of etchings, the mythological creature is often bursting out of the frame, swollen and crazed as it devours helpless women.

Pinned to the wall of Ambera Wellmann's studio, a small drawing of a Minotaur alternatively shows the mythic beast in a soft embrace with a voluptuous woman. The pose of the Minotaur here is not in keeping with its character. The lovers' limbs wrap softly around each other's bodies as her legs rest over his mighty back. Their bodies merge like two halves of a yinyang symbol, his dark furry texture contrasting her pale skin as he cradles half-moons of her flesh. His soft and vaguely rendered eyes gaze into his lover's face as his hoof gently holds the back of her head. Bull-headed, dangerous beast transformed into careful partner.

"Picasso's Minotaur drawings are very aggressive and hetero-masculine," explains Wellmann, "The narrative is about the sacrificial use of women, offering them to the Minotaur to maintain peace. I wanted to explore the story from the female's perspective, and have been working on this mutual, shared experience between both of them that is much more tender and visceral."

All of the paintings of lovemaking in Wellmann's studio depict the sexual act at its most caring and sweet. Some small works depict interracial bodies in erotic positions, the simplified paint marks distilling intense emotions of love into large gestures that mirror the way detail tends to disappear in sexual moments. The state is trance-like and blurry. Wellmann's portrayals of the violent Minotaur enact a reversal of his character, with typically masculine, aggressive traits becoming soft and responsive. Where one might have been normally repelled by the threat of certain bodies, the sight of these embraces produces a strange desire to be held by them. Like a series of love poems, the feminist perspective of Wellmann's paintings represent people, emotions, and bodies as brave, tender, and full of appreciation.

Upcoming exhibitions for Ambera Wellmann include group shows in July at Kraupa Tuskany Zeidler in Berlin and at CRAC in Sete, France; group exhibitions at Office Baroque in Brussels in September,

2018, and at T293 in Rome in October, 2018; and solo exhibitions at Projet Pangée in Montreal in October, 2018, and at Lulu in Mexico City in February, 2018.



Ambera Wellmann, *Minotaur I*, Charcoal on paper, 2018.



Ambera Wellmann, *On Green*, Oil Acrylic and Soft Pastel on Paper, 2018.



View of *Minotaur I* in Ambera Wellmann's Berlin studio, 2018.



View of *On Green* in Ambera Wellmann's Berlin studio, 2018.



View of Ambera Wellmann's Berlin studio, 2018.



View of Ambera Wellmann's Berlin studio, 2018.

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