

**Sophia NARRETT**

*L'Officiel St Barth,  
Carried by Wonder, a bride's story*

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ART

# Carried by Wonder, a bride's story

In her first solo exhibition at Perrotin, titled *Carried by Wonder*, Sophia Narrett is debuting a series of embroidered narratives that explore modern relationships, or the idea of romantic love

17.03.2023 by Jenny Mannerheim



Sophia Narrett, *Real Moment*, 2023. Embroidery thread, fabric, acrylic, 7 x 10 3/4 inch. Photograph : Stan Narten.  
Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Photographer: Guillaume Zicarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

The central theme and character of *Carried by Wonder* by American artist Sophia Narrett is the bride, as a symbol of optimism, power, beauty and joy. Narrett's 'bride' characters, their clothing and veils, were key in communicating her narratives that are blending imagination and reality, but most importantly expressing the overwhelming beauty of love.

**Jenny Mannerhiem / L'Officiel:** Your first exhibition with Perrotin gallery is opening today. Can you tell us a little bit about the themes for this show?

**Sophia Narrett:** In this work I was thinking about the way that romantic love, as it binds two people together, simultaneously connects them to past and future generations, to communities, and to a universal human spirit. I was also thinking about Jewish traditions, and how rituals can help us understand and cherish the experiences of intimacy and love. There is a bride in each piece, ranging from a nude figure wearing only a white corset and roller skates to an orgy of brides to a lone bride hugging or circling her partner. These brides are stand-ins for optimism, power, beauty and joy, in a way that at times overflows into the absurd. The 1980s wedding dresses embody this, a sweetness that to me is hypnotic but also cloying and restrictive. There is some humor but this is more an effort to express the overwhelming beauty of love than to joke outright.

**L'O:** The exhibition is titled "*Carried by Wonder*". What does this title evoke?

**SN:** The title was based on Abraham Joshua Heschel's ideas about singing being a way to express universality, the divine, and connection. In his book, *Man Is Not Alone*, he described how when we think in words we are bound to the world of reason and objects, and we remain isolated. But when we sing we are "carried away" by the wonder of that experience, and we express the ineffable. He said, "the universe is a score of eternal music, and we are the cry, we are the voice." These ideas spoke to me very deeply, both in terms of the experience of love and how it

can envelope a person, and also the experience of art making. I often feel I am not in the driver's seat while constructing images. In the best moments of my practice I feel caught up in a flow that is leading me towards answers and truths that are revealed to me, rather than of my own design.

***L'O: What was it like making this new body of work for your first show at Perrotin? How did it push forward your embroidery art practice visually and conceptually?***

**SN:** Making this show was an adventure for me. I didn't know where the narrative would lead me when I began Truth, which was the first piece. Transparency and fading, both of characters, clothing, and veils were key in communicating the narratives. The warping of space, with the paintings on the walls bending in As One or the tulips swelling forward in Seven Circles, or the impossible skating rink in Truth, also became an important way for the settings to contribute to the stories. Conceptually I was surprised to find that each piece had one central couple, in a way that my work has not usually in the past, and yet that for me, the work had also become about love as a way to connect to a greater sense of humanity, tradition and spirit, more so than about the specific relationship of each couple.

***L'O: Womanhood is at the center of your work. Can you tell us a bit about this central theme in your work?***

**SN:** My work is diaristic, both in an effort to process my own desires and experiences and to also access something outside of myself. By going within we gain awareness of the human experience and hopefully connect with others in the process. I have always been captivated by expressions of femininity, how societal expectations around it change and evolve, and the potential for empowerment and self expression that may exist even within or in spite of restrictive gender roles or expectations.

***L'O: You work in textile, a slow and meticulous process of embroidery. This media is also more widely labeled as feminine. Do you love embroidery as a craft or is this media a choice as a statement or manifesto? Or both?***

**SN:** My feelings about this have evolved over the years. When I first started using embroidery in 2009 I felt it was purely a material choice. Embroidery solved a lot of the problems I had in painting. It freed me from the idea of what a "good" painting was and it let me just make. The pace embroidery dictated both forced and allowed me to slow down and make every mark count. And yet I couldn't ignore the fact that from my very first embroideries something had clicked. Beyond just a new joy for the making, the completed pieces were telling the stories in a way that felt right. Over time I realized that the history of embroidery, and all of the implications of the medium, were a crucial part to forming the right voice to tell my stories. I look forward to continuing to understand this further. I love the way that the thread sublimates some of the emotion of the image into the piece as an object, and hopefully acts as an invitation to the viewer.

***L'O: Your works are a mix of pop culture and incorporate hedonistic scenes. How do you create the narratives for your artworks?***

**SN:** Each piece begins with a story, sometimes something I write, other times a more visual idea. They are translations of my own experiences, mixed with desires, dreams, and fantasies. I sometimes also incorporate twists or riffs on fictional narratives that have spoken to me. I take inspiration from pop culture and the internet as I translate these stories into visual images. This language brings in elements of humor, absurdity, desire, and at times images that I am ambivalent towards or find problematic. I like to work with images I have a complicated relationship with, and use them for my own purposes while still retaining elements of their original meaning.

**L'O: What is your relationship to your characters? Do the people in your work exist in real life or are they fictional?**

**SN:** These characters are archetypes. They are fictional stand-ins, meant to symbolize certain elements of relationships, feelings or moments that could be universal. Each of the works in the show has a central couple engaged in a moment of physical, emotional or spiritual interaction.

**L'O: You practiced art studies at Brown and RISD, two of the best schools in America, and you have an MFA in Painting. Tell us about the importance of studying art.**

**SN:** I think the goal of studying art is to learn how to critique your own work, and also to gain a deeper understanding of what is already naturally going on in your work in a subconscious or even vague way, in order to gain deeper control of it, and to be able to calibrate it to the message you want it to communicate or to the exact idea you want to explore. I was already working in embroidery when I applied to the Painting MFA program at RISD. Even while working in thread it was important to me to understand my work within a context of images and the history of painting, and to be in a painting department that had a very mixed media and conceptual definition of painting.

**L'O: What's your 'motto'?**

**SN:** I will borrow the words of my great uncle Bob Garber, a musician, who while visiting the show this week told me that the key to making art was to put all of your energy into it and to never stop.

**L'O: What is next for Sophia Narrett?**

**SN:** I can't wait to get back in the studio. Installing a solo show always brings a sense of clarity. As I create a body of work I'm following an impulse from one piece to the next. Seeing the work outside of the studio context, sharing it, talking about it, this all gives me a new perspective on the pieces, and I'm eager to use these reflections to move forward.

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SOPHIA NARRETT

CARRIED BY WONDER

March 3 - April 15, 2023

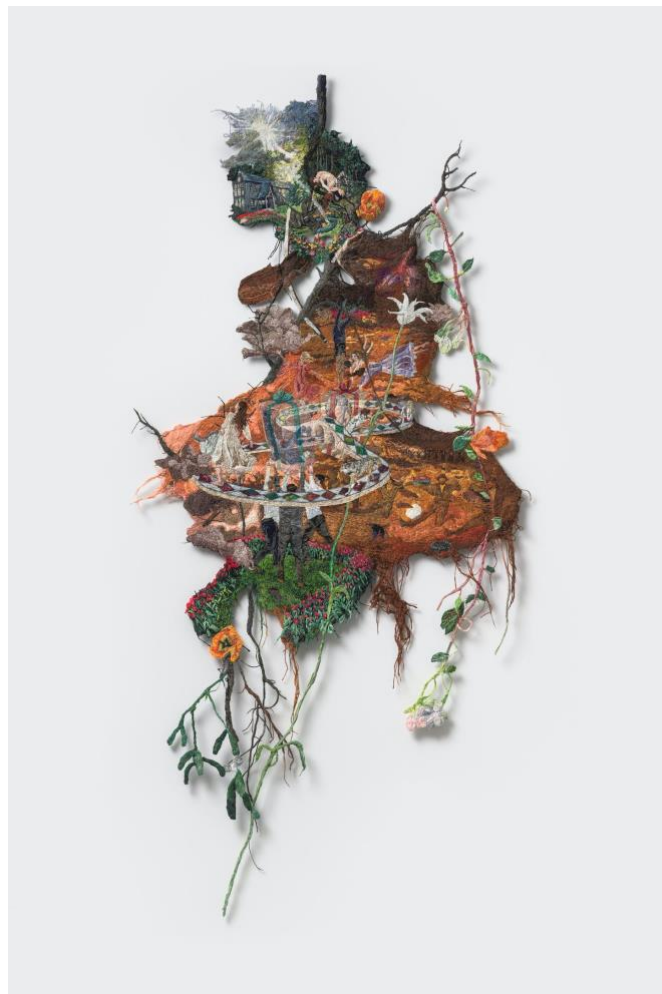
Perrotin New York

130 Orchard Street New York, NY 10002

For more information about the artist visit [Perrotin.com](http://Perrotin.com)



Installation views of *Carried by Wonder* by Sophia Narrett at Perrotin New York, 2023. Photograph: Guillaume Zicarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

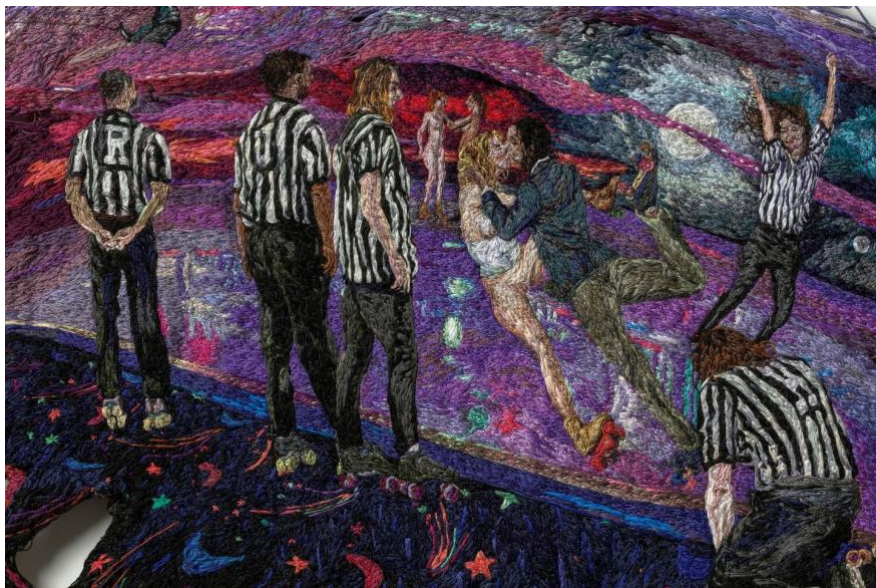


Sophia Narrett, *Carried by Wonder*, 2022 - 2023. Embroidery thread, fabric, acrylic and aluminum, 56 x 28 inch. Photograph : Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.





Sophia Narrett, *Carried by Wonder* (detail), 2022 - 2023. Embroidery thread, fabric, acrylic and aluminum, 56 x 28 inch. Photograph : Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Sophia Narrett, Truth (detail), 2021 – 2022. Embroidery thread, fabric, aluminum, acrylic, 32x22 1/2 inch  
Photograph: Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Sophia Narrett, As One, 2023. Embroidery thread, fabric, acrylic and aluminum, 22 x 22 inch. Photograph : Stan Narten. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Installation views of Carried by Wonder by Sophia Narrett at Perrotin New York, 2023. Photograph: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.





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