



BURNING  
IN WATER

Press Release

Valerie Hegarty: *American Berserk*

24 April - 18 July, 2018

Opening Reception: 26 April (6 - 8 pm)



*Watermelon Head with Strawberry Eyes, 2016.*

**Burning in Water - San Francisco** is pleased to present *American Berserk*, a solo exhibition of new work by the Brooklyn-based artist Valerie Hegarty. The show features a suite of watercolor paintings and four series of ceramic sculptures. *American Berserk* is the inaugural exhibition of Burning in Water's new gallery space in San Francisco.

Throughout her career, Valerie Hegarty has explored fundamental themes of American history and particularly the legacy of 19th-century American art, addressing topics such as colonization, slavery, Manifest Destiny, historical revisionism, nationalism and environmental degradation in her work. Elaborating upon visual references to the art-historical canon of North America, Hegarty repurposes the ideological tenets of such works into a critical examination of the American legacy—artistic and otherwise.

Cloaked within allusions to American classicism and evocations of the decorative and ornamental traditions, Hegarty's work consistently interrogates the darker ramifications of the American Experiment, ranging from the environmental impact of expansionism to the conflicted and repressed dimensions of collective memory.

The title of the current exhibition is borrowed from Philip Roth's Pulitzer-prize-winning novel *American Pastoral*, in which Roth defines the inverse of the American pastoral ideal—epitomized by the violence, cultural dissolution and societal upheaval of the late 1960s and 1970s—as the “indigenous American Berserk.” In her essay “The Plot Against America” (2004)