



Honora Shea, "Cara Benedetto", *Artforum* Critic's Pick, October 27, 2016.

Cara Benedetto

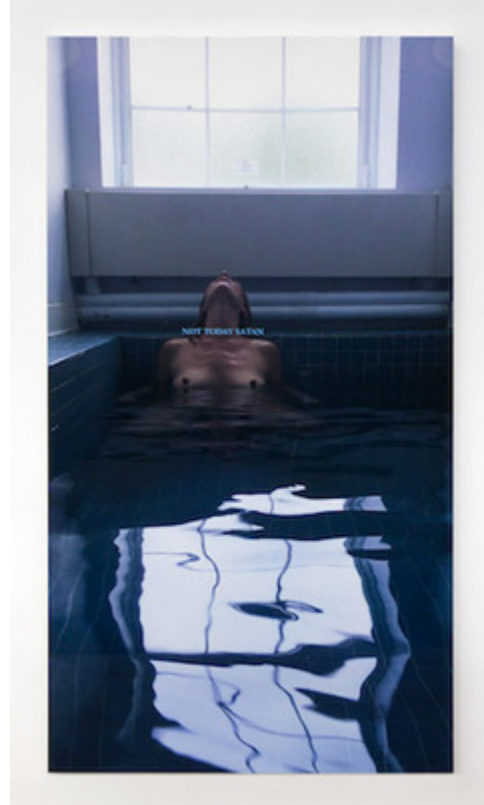
NIGHT GALLERY
2276 East 16th Street
October 15–November 12

"Medea is heard moving inside the house," reads the sentence in booming enamel sans-serif letters on the wall outside the gallery. Indeed, that mythic figure's ghost rustles inside this darkly lit exhibition, among apparitions of other female protagonists, including the artist Cara Benedetto herself and Elaine Morgan—the late author of the feminist evolutionary tome, and this exhibition's namesake, *The Descent of Woman* (1972). Though there is a confounding array of mediums on display, the women of this exhibition are ultimately conjured by language.

The press release is in the form of a poetic letter, written by the artist's close collaborator Suzanne Herrera, which begins: "writing as agonizing." "AngryPorn," a series of photographs on aluminum of the artist, nude, in a pool-like bathtub (all works 2016), feature phrases that commit to fortitude and attitude, as in *AngryPornB*, which reads "NOT TODAY, SATAN." Wit, rather than anguish, shines in *Donut Holes Against Lack*, a plate of the titular pastries that was placed during the show's opening on the other side of a wall from *A perfect mouthful*, a donut-shaped rug with a hole in the middle. These holes—like the word itself—are funny, seductive, and confusing.

A palpable climax is reached in the video titled *The Descent of Woman*, described by the artist as "horror porn." Benedetto narrates with words that are pressed, punctuated, and pulled, creating intimacy not from storytelling but from repetition, broken syntax, and crisp or languid utterance. It is not the images of flesh or familiarity that powers the eroticism and endurance within; it is the poetry.

— Honora Shea



Cara Benedetto, *AngryPornB*, 2016.
Ink-jet print on aluminum, 72 x 40 inches.