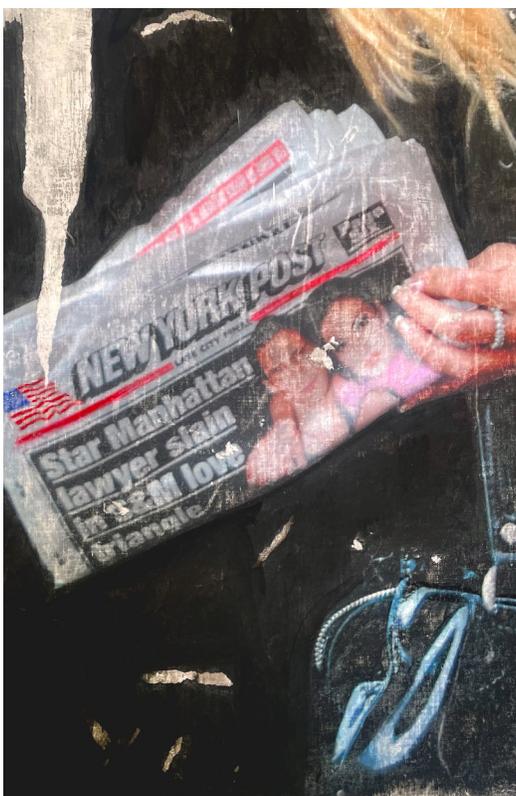


Valentina Vaccarella
Bless This Life

March 24th – April 28th, 2022



For the billions of dollars wasted policing it, hot air spent condemning it, and violence unleashed containing it, no authoritarian government, religious order, or lone Travis Bickle throughout history has ever succeeded at putting a halt to the world's oldest profession. Because approaching prostitution from the angle of its "demand" would mean launching an investigation into the sewer of male sexuality, the brunt of law enforcement has concerned itself with "supply" instead, often with devastating results for the women involved. Even though the law remains virtually untouched, social media has granted sex workers their largest public ever, both humanizing them on a never-before-seen scale and rebranding their services as another kind of freelancer; the more ambitious and flashy among them might even be called "girlbosses".

Because they operate deeper in the shadows and outsource their dirtiest work to others, madams have not seen the slightest bump to their reputations. Many who hold ostensibly pro-sex work beliefs would balk at the idea of even giving them the time of day, usually opting for another less lady-like term to describe their dealings: pimps. If the jobs are similar in description, for the women that Valentina Vaccarella surveys in her show, Bless This Life at No Gallery, it's completely opposite in spirit. To quote the legendary LA brothel keeper, Madam Alex, "This is a woman's business. When a woman does it, it's fun, there's a giggle in it; when a man's involved, he's sleazy, he's a pimp. He may know how to keep girls in line, and he may make money, but he doesn't know what I do."

What Vaccarella's women did with and for their escorts was more complex than simply selling them off. Madame Claude gave them makeovers and etiquette lessons, Deborah Jeane Palfrey insisted they be gainfully employed, Heidi Fleiss threw them a never-ending party. Business was business, but escorting at its highest-end could be a waystation and finishing school, an opportunity for girls to not only make money but to hone the skills which would finally land them the ultimate security: a stable marriage to a wealthy man. Beneath the glamour of extravagant gifts, destination gigs, and celebrity clientele,

many of Vaccarella's subjects shared a steely, unforgiving realism about intimacy and money that was stepped in their own experiences of economic desperation and bad romance. Men had money and women had their bodies, which were valuable but depreciating assets. Marriage was the ultimate prize, which in its manipulations of intimacy was akin to whoring anyway. For others who didn't share in this belief, the thrill of pulling in money and exercising their business acumen was just as addictive. Whether in dire straits (Anna Gristina, Madame Claude) or flush with new money (Kristin Davis, Heidi Fleiss), the enterprise of being a madam became an all-consuming occupation.

Painted with matte on heirloom French linens embroidered with the initials of husbands and wives, Valentina Vaccarella's works capture the lives they carved out for themselves over the lives expected of them. The distortions from the artist's process resemble rips pulled straight from the gossip magazines, a formal echo of their much-documented downfalls in tabloids. Vaccarella's eye for detail, the steely glam of Madame Claude and the full-body vulnerability of the doomed Deborah Jeane Palfrey make for a series of icons that might be reconsidered yet.

Valentina Vaccarella (American b.1993) — a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Manhattan, NY.

The exhibition text was provided by **Harry Tafoya** — an art and music writer who lives and works in New York City.

Founded in 2019 and located in the lowest of the Lower East Side, Manhattan — **No Gallery** is an exhibition space focused on emerging and mid-career artists. Gallery hours: Thursday – Sunday, 12 – 6 pm. Address: 105 Henry Street #4 NYC, NY 10002

For questions or inquiries please email info@nononogallery.com or call (323) 209-5557.



***Sanctity*, 2022**
Ink, Acrylic and gouache on antique French dowry linen (stretched)
14 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
36 x 42 x 1.5 cm.
VV0005



***Little Ragazze*, 2022**
Ink, Acrylic and gouache on antique French dowry linen (stretched)
44 x 56 x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
111.8 x 142.2 x 3.8 cm.
VV0004



***Stones Girl 'Kristin Davis*, 2022**
Ink, Acrylic and gouache on antique French dowry linen (stretched)
80 x 40 x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
203.2 x 101.6 x 3.8 cm.
VV0003



***No Way to Treat a Lady*, 2022**
Ink, Acrylic and gouache on antique French metis linen (stretched)
33 x 24 x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
83.8 x 61 x 3.8 cm.
VV0006



***Risk Management*, 2022**
Ink, Acrylic and gouache on antique French dowry linen (stretched)
44 x 56 x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
111.8 x 142.2 x 3.8 cm.
VV0007



***Loyalty*, 2022**
Ink, Acrylic and gouache on antique French dowry linen (stretched)
22 x 22 x 1 in.
55.9 x 55.9 x 2.5 cm.
VV0008