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ARTnews

The Golden Door: Dorothy Iannone Brings Three Statues of Liberty to the High Line in New York

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Dorothy Iannone, *I Lift My Lamp Beside the Golden Door*, 2018, New York. Image courtesy of Tim Schenck and Friends of the High Line.

It has been nearly a decade since the artist Dorothy Iannone last had a major show in New York of her funny, intricate, and typically sexually and politically potent work, but now she is returning to the city in grand style with her first public artwork—a soaring mural, set to be unveiled on the High Line at the start of March.

The piece, which will be on view along the elevated park near West 22nd Street, features three Statues of Liberty wearing dresses adorned with large stars and painted in a kaleidoscopic array of colors, accompanied by the final line of “The New Colossus,” the poem that Emma Lazarus penned to raise money for the monument’s pedestal: “I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR.” (The piece takes its name from that line.)

Cecilia Alemani, the director and chief curator of the High Line’s art program, said that the statue has a particular resonance for Iannone, an American who emigrated to Germany (she is now based in Berlin), and that the image first appeared in her work early in her career, in the late 1960s. “She has been interested in the symbolism and iconology of feminism and femininity for such a long time,” Alemani said, adding, “The most beautiful part of her work is that it really emanates—and is a celebration of—love, but it also comments on the current time.”

Indeed, some may recall that Stephen Miller, a far-right adviser to President Trump, generated a fair amount of consternation last summer when he contested the meaning of the Statue of Liberty at a press conference, noting that Lazarus’s pro-immigration poem was not part of the original design of the statue. But the High Line commissioned Iannone’s piece in 2014, about three years before Miller’s comments.

That said, Alemani acknowledged that recent events will certainly color perception of the work. “It’s such a powerful symbol, and it’s actually quite sad that it needs to be used and re-appropriated right now,” she said. (Intriguingly, each statue in the Iannone work is shedding a single tear.)