

July 16, 2026 | Editorial Team

Melora Kuhn: *The Legacy of Disembodiment*

Private Public Gallery | 530 Columbia Street, Hudson

July 11 – August 9

REVIEW



Installation view of Melora Kuhn, *The Legacy of Disembodiment*, 2026; image courtesy of Private Public Gallery and the artist.

For **Melora Kuhn**, mythology is far from being a fixed narrative. It is a flexible structure that can be dissected, rearranged, and reexamined. While her work has consistently engaged with deconstructing the subjects of mythology, history, and overarching belief systems, *The Legacy of Disembodiment* shifts its emphasis from narrative to experience, presenting a powerful meditation on violence and its extensive aftermath. Instead of

revisiting myth as historical allegory, Kuhn uses it as a framework for examining how we continue to bear the effects of events long after they have passed from view.

The exhibition centers on a life-sized sculpture of Persephone, modeled after Gian Lorenzo Bernini's painting *The Rape of Proserpina* (1622). Kuhn's intervention is straightforward and powerful. Hades (Pluto) has been removed, and Persephone (Proserpina) remains, her body still conveying the tension of a horrific encounter. Without the violent aggressor, the work resists the logic of mythological representation where violence is contained within a recognizable and critically unexamined story. Here, attention shifts to the body's condition through its isolated posture, expression, and unresolved relationship to an event that is no longer fully visualized.

This absence is both a formal and a conceptual device, with the sculpture neither illustrating trauma nor seeking to disregard it. By removing the figure that traditionally organizes the narrative, Kuhn transforms Persephone from a subject without agency into one whose experience is now unconstrained by that representation. This act of erasure leaves us to study what is left, inviting us to consider how the effects of violence continue to shape the body after both the image and accompanying story have disappeared. Still, Persephone's gesture is ambiguous throughout, enabling us to read it as defiance, exhaustion, or perhaps teetering on self-possession. Kuhn wisely allows these possibilities to stay active without preference.

Beyond its crucial reworking of Persephone, *The Legacy of Disembodiment* demonstrates Kuhn's ability to work at an architectural scale through paintings that establish the conditions of our encounter with the central piece while contributing their own dramatic maneuvers of provocation, almost as vignettes. Bold color, layered brushwork, and carefully constructed compositions turn the gallery into a continuous pictorial plane and, one could say, a figurative battlefield. The paintings shift between kinetically charged and fractured, inviting viewers to consider how place, history, shifting perspectives, anger, and silence can be held and contemplated. Their monumentality draws attention to the interplay between colors and tone that shift from one canvas to the next. Taken together, their immensity and restless compositions find their fullest expression through the atmosphere created by the accumulation of these visual relationships. The dialogue between paintings and the anchoring sculpture unexpectedly becomes one of the exhibition's most gripping effects.

— Natasha Chuk