

## Farm to Studio: Deborah Oropallo

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Bay Area painter [Deborah Oropallo](#) moved to a farm in Novato several years ago with the aim of making it self-sustaining.

The transition has made her intimate with cycles of birth, death and sustenance among livestock, fowl and crops and has visibly influenced her work, as new pictures at Catharine [Clark's](#) reflect.



Oropallo "MilkMen" 62"X62" 2014

Going rural involved no loss of the interest in imaging technology that surfaced in Oropallo's work a decade ago or more.

As in previous series, recent acrylic on canvas pictures such as "Milk Men" (2013) and "Swine" (2013) clearly have doctored photographic information embedded in them.

And here, as before, Oropallo has interwoven references to art history into images she has generated.

A cow stands at the center of "Milk Men," its mottled hide partly abstracted, its rear flank flayed like an anatomy illustration or butchery diagram. Tatters of partly cloudy late-day sky and distant figures in silhouette hint at allusion to the 17th century Dutch painter [Aelbert Cuyp](#), in whose work farm animals frequently appear.

Oropallo's images suggest overlays of preoccupation with the life of the farm and with artworks as survivors and precursors in cycles of creative cultivation far less obvious than in farming to those not engaged in them.

I think of William Carlos Williams' lines, "It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there."

Many of us, perhaps Oropallo also, believe something similar to be true of well-made artworks in any medium. They have a sustaining power ignored, if not actually blotted out, by the art market and misconstrued by the promotional machinery of high culture.

**Deborah Oropallo: Milk Made:** Paintings and works on paper. Through May 31. Catharine Clark Gallery, 248 Utah St., S.F. (415) 399-1439. [www.cclarkgallery.com](http://www.cclarkgallery.com).

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