

CRITICS' PICKS | *Owen Duffy*



Melancholy, gold leaf, Federico Fellini, and yarn: Dave McDermott's new paintings abound with nods to cinematic history and a sensuous approach to materials. The exhibition's title, "The Long Goodbye," salutes Robert Altman's 1973 film (and Raymond Chandler's 1952 book, upon which the movie is based) that follows a private investigator through worlds of murder, manipulation, and addiction. Yet it's Fellini's *8 1/2* (1963) that supposedly fuels the imagery of the artist's paintings. McDermott drops us into a K-hole of cultural references, replete with anomie, tragedy, and loss.

Dave McDermott, *The Talker*, 2017, oil, yarn, twenty-three karat gold, wax, panel, 75 x 63".

The paintings are generous and, on occasion, opulent. *The Talker*, 2017, and *The Humanist*, 2018, are the show's standouts. In the latter, a Trinacria, the gorgon symbol of Sicily, commands the work's surface—she is surrounded by meticulously braided florets of rust and blue yarn. The planar unity McDermott achieves with his materials and processes in this piece are magisterial. *The Talker* depicts a *Cyrano de Bergerac*-like figure gabbling blobs of pastel paint into a speech bubble as he rests against a backdrop that looks like a funereal Gary Hume. The artist's *Cyrano* is different from Edmond Rostand's—McDermott's is graphic, chilly, stripped of romance. He resembles a mask, available for anyone to wear. He's also rendered in twenty-three-karat gold leaf and more than six feet high—a gilded yet pathetic icon of heartache, elevated into something almost godlike, and a tragic figure that we can all understand.