

eric firestone gallery

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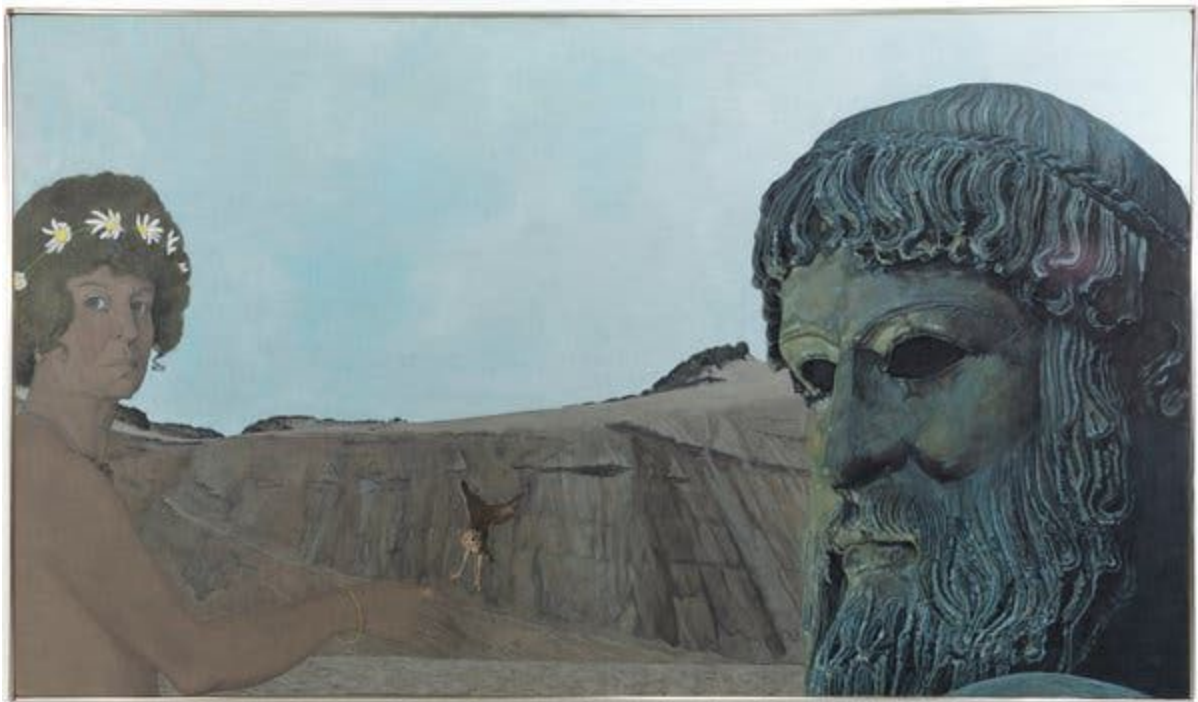
New York Galleries: What to See Right Now

Work by two women who made figurative paintings in the '50s; short films and videos about black culture; and a painter's intermingling of contemporary and historical art.

Mimi Gross and Marcia Marcus

By Jillian Steinhauer

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Marcia Marcus's "Self-Portrait With Poseidon," in the show "Double Portrait" at the Shirley Fiterman Art Center. Credit Credit Marcia Marcus; via Eric Firestone Gallery

Through July 27. Shirley Fiterman Art Center, 81 Barclay Street, Manhattan; 212-776-6237, bmcc.cuny.edu/sfac.

Titled “Double Portrait,” this electrifying exhibition unites Mimi Gross and Marcia Marcus, who began making figurative paintings in the 1950s. Born 12 years apart, Ms. Marcus and Ms. Gross crossed paths in downtown New York, as well as on sojourns to Italy and Provincetown. Both were putting paint to canvas at a time when Minimalism and Conceptualism reigned supreme, and both were interested in representations of their gender.



The art of Mimi Gross, the other focus of this exhibition, includes two works based on Delacroix’s painting “Women of Algiers.” This one, “Dark Air” (1980-81), uses mixed materials to update Delacroix’s tableau. Credit Mimi Gross/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; via Eric Firestone Gallery; Jason Mandella

For Ms. Marcus, this interest manifests itself in cryptic, almost surreal self-portraits, done with a muted palette, in which the artist dresses up and poses with classical ruins, as if she were a

goddess or guardian. Ms. Gross sometimes reinterprets famous art historical works, as in two massive takes on Delacroix’s “Women of Algiers” (1834). “Dark Air,” her roughly 9-by-9-foot construction that reimagines it with fashionable friends and riotous patterns, is a showstopper and the first piece you see upon entering the gallery.

Ms. Gross and Ms. Marcus frequently portrayed friends, family and acquaintances, including each other. They cultivated an intimacy that pushes against the cold monumentality of the canon. Today, when figurative painting has become a powerful province for artists who are not white, straight and male, this work feels as current as anything you would see in Chelsea. That is what makes it a revelation. *JILLIAN STEINHAUER*