

# eric firestone gallery

**Mimi Gross** (b. New York, NY, 1940) is a painter, as well as a set-and-costume designer, and maker of interior and exterior installations. She has lived and worked in TriBeCa for the last 40 years, and is known especially for her portraiture, and for working with oil crayon and chalk pastel in addition to oil paint. Gross considers portraiture a form of mutual collaboration. Her paintings have a poignant expressiveness and connection to the subject. Hers is a world of bold, unapologetic color. The directness of Gross's portraiture and her propensity to paint all aspects of her community can be linked in particular to the work of Alice Neel, who was a close friend.

Gross attended high school at the High School of Music and Art (now LaGuardia High School) and entered Bard College in 1957, where she studied for two years. Her early paintings of the 1950s and '60s explored her growing community of friends and acquaintances. In the summer of 1958, Gross lived in Provincetown and became friends with Bob Thompson. Another friend was artist Jay Milder, who would introduce Gross to Red Grooms (who became her husband and artistic collaborator from 1960–76). In 1958, Milder and Grooms founded the City Gallery, an artist cooperative where Gross exhibited her work for the first time.

In 1959, Gross traveled to Europe, becoming a student of Oscar Kokoschka's in Salzburg. In the summer of 1961, she traveled with Grooms and three other artists from Florence to Venice in a horse-drawn carriage, painted and decorated by Gross, stopping at villages to stage a shadow puppet show. The project, titled *Il Piccolo Circo d'Ombre di Firenze*, became raw material for dozens of paintings and works on paper made during the journey.

From 1960–1976, Gross collaborated with Grooms on large, multidimensional installations, including the fabled *Ruckus Manhattan* and several films. Gross continues to work in what she terms 2 ½ D, referring to painted and cut forms, in metal, cardboard, and paper that are overlapped and positioned in space. She has also collaborated with the dancer Douglas Dunn on more than 25 dances, designing sets and costumes—her most recent collaboration with Dunn was in the Spring of 2023.

Gross's work can be found in the collections of the Jewish Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the New York Public Library, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all in New York; the Hirshhorn Museum of Painting and Sculpture, Washington, D.C., the Minneapolis Museum of Art, MN, the Art Institute of Chicago, IL, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, France, and Nagoya Museum of Art, Nagoya, Japan, among others. She is the recipient of awards and grants including from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for Visual Arts, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and a "Bessie" for sets and costumes.

Gross grew up in South Harlem in Manhattan. Her father was Chaim Gross, the sculptor known for woodcarving, and her parents were consummate art collectors. Now, her family's collection is housed in the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation on LaGuardia Place, where Gross serves as President of the Board.

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