

eric firestone gallery

For Immediate Release:

Eric Firestone Gallery at The Armory Show

Booth 320

Javits Center | 429 11th Avenue, New York, NY 10001

September 8–10, 2023

Eric Firestone Gallery is delighted to participate in the 2023 edition of The Armory Show. The presentation will focus on figurative painting by women, mixing work from the 1970s with contemporary painting. The presentation includes artists who the gallery has recently begun to exhibit, such as Lauren dela Roche, Judy Bowman, and Helen Oji, and will also introduce the work of feminist painter Jane Kogan and the Japanese American artist Rumiko Tsuda. Works explore the body in environments of confinement and freedom, between reality and fantasy. The presentation will additionally include work by Sally Cook, Charles DuBack, Martha Edelheit, Shirley Gorelick, Mimi Gross, Paul Housley, Daphne Mumford, Sana Musasama, Michael Rosch, and Peter Williams.



Lauren dela Roche | *Butterfly Egg* | 2023
acrylic on cotton feedsack with acrylic varnish
76h x 106w in.

Jane Kogan's "Amazon" series of the 1970s–80s was influenced by the feminist movement. The 8 foot tall canvases depict women in powerful stances. They draw inspiration from art historical sources, the feminine divine, and the artist's imagination. Their collective effect is that of a phalanx of warriors wielding weapons both material and spiritual. Kogan's series is evidence of her search for aesthetic symmetry, which creates a palpable tension within her paintings but also endows them with intense presence. Many of the figures are framed in natural settings by plants and creatures, and often by water. Kogan further complicates her portrayal of feminine power by queering her figures using clothing and other signifiers; in one self-portrait, she wears a doctor's head mirror and a military jacket, in another a bowler hat. Kogan associates creation with both the masculine and the feminine and blurs the binary between essence and performance.

Also exploring the female body is self-taught artist Lauren dela Roche (b. 1983). For the Armory presentation, dela Roche completed a monumental 8 ½ foot wide painting on found and repurposed cotton feedsacks. Nude bodies are elongated and duplicated across her surfaces and

eric firestone gallery

set in decorative interiors that reference classical Greek mythology, domesticity, and dreamworlds. The textiles she employs as her painting surface were previously used for farming and agriculture; dela Roche handmends them as she works, allowing their histories to form another dimension to her work.

Another centerpiece of the presentation is Mimi Gross's 13-foot-wide painting, "So Long Times Square," 1983. Gross (b. 1940) is known for her group portraits and installations, including the famed "Ruckus Manhattan." Her monumental "So Long Times Square" was originally designed as a stage backdrop for the new O'Neal's Cabaret at Times Square. She researched the composition by taking photographs and making drawings from the 4th floor balcony of the Spectacolor Studio in the Times building. The cabaret was short-lived and ill-timed to the commercial changes in the neighborhood. The painting was returned to Gross, who added the portraits at this time, depicting dancers Joseph Lennon and Manuel Diaz, dancer and choreographer Marianne Capehart, and artist Jodey Elbaum Cook.

Sana Musasama (b. 1957, Queens, New York) is an activist artist whose ceramic sculptures have a materiality which also implicates the body. Her sculptures are informed by her global travels, her connection to issues facing women and girls around the world, and indigenous artistic practices. Musasama began traveling as a way to recover identity and cultural place. Clay was the geographical catalyst that first brought her to West Africa where she studied pottery with the Mende people in Sierra Leone (1974–75). Later venturing to Japan, China, Cambodia, and South America, she continued her quest, expanding her interests to tribal adornment practices. The works in this presentation are part of Musasama's House Series, structures whose human scale suggest comfort and protection.

Detroit-based Judy Bowman (b. 1952) is interested in portraiture that both speaks to a larger reality and comes from personal experience. Considering herself a visual griot, Bowman tells stories through her mixed-media works on canvas that reflect her coming-of-age experiences in Detroit's East Side and Black Bottom neighborhoods. Scenes in her lively collages depict love, community, and fellowship—the type that resides in jazzy nights, the sway of young Black women, the swag of young Black men, church on Sundays followed by family dinner, family outings, cultural dignity, and richness. Peter Williams (b. 1952, Nyack, New York; d. 2021,



Jane Kogan | *Black Woman in Cosmos* | 1976
oil on canvas
86h x 40 1/2w in.

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Mimi Gross | *So Long, Times Square* | 1982–83
oil on canvas
96h x 167 1/4w in

Wilmington, DE) made paintings that exist in the space between seductive beauty and abject horror—evoking the complex experiences of Black Americans in the contemporary age. Often humorous and disturbing at once, the artist’s canvases reflect Black history in the context of his own life.

Shirley Gorelick (1924–2000) is known for her humanist paintings of subjects who have not traditionally been heroized in large-scale portraiture. She re-examined art historical works

through a contemporary female gaze. In her 1974–76 painting “Three Sisters (Westchester Gauguin),” each figure is depicted twice, clothed and nude, and the ability of the subjects to shift between both states lends them a sense of agency. Repetitions of the body can be found in the work of other artists such as Sally Cook (b. 1932, Buffalo, NY) and Martha Edelheit (b. 1931), whose 1970–71 painting “Seals” replicates the same two models across its surface until they converge in the center.

Rumiko Tsuda (b. 1947 Wakayama City, Japan) also takes inspiration from bodies in the urban landscape. Her epic 6-foot tondo painting, “Mandala of New Yorkers,” 2004, is an aggregate of hundreds of figures she originally sketched on the New York City subway. Helen Oji’s (b. 1950) Kimono series of the late 1970s and early 1980s only implies the presence of the body, building “garments” out of thickly applied acrylic paint and glitter. Rather than locate the figure in nature, natural elements are imprinted onto the Kimonos and absorbed into them.

Paul Housley (b.1964, Stalybridge, UK) is a London-based artist who makes small scale figurative works often inspired by art historical sources. Despite this, they have a humility and conversational tone which undermines the machismo often associated with the old masters. Housley’s love of the materiality of paint comes through in his thick surfaces, built up through a process of painting over old canvases and re-working images. The final images are raw, direct and formally reduced. As Housley says, “I like that challenge, to seek out interesting paintings with limited resources and small objects.”

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For further information and images, contact press@ericfirestonegallery.com