

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Review: Trendspotting at NADA New York 2023

On the search for the future of contemporary art at one of New York's spring art fairs.

By Brian P. Kelly

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At the same time, others are heading in the opposite direction, pushing realism to the forefront of their work. While I'll be sad to see the faux-naïf style that's been ubiquitous in recent years on the wane, there's plenty to enjoy in the detailed works of **Cait Porter**. Exhibited by Marinaro, she tightly frames her subjects, lending something as simple as "Bathwater With Bubbles" (2023) an abstract air. We peer at the reflection of a room in "Window at 9pm," its slightly distorted chair and table adding to the sense of voyeurism that many of her pieces embody.

HYPERALLERGIC

Art

An Exhibition of Cat Art Worthy of a Meowseum

A new show at the Queens gallery Mrs. proves that dogs may be man's best friends, but cats are humans' idols.



Elaine Velie December 12, 2022



Luke O'Halloran, "Eeeeeeeeeee" (2022) (all images courtesy Mrs. unless otherwise noted)

Cats have descended upon Maspeth, Queens, where Mrs. gallery is featuring the work of 39 artists focused on a single theme: furry felines. Cats have been an art historical focus for thousands of years, and the gallery's latest exhibition, titled *Even a Cat Can Look at the Queen*, suggests they are here to stay.

From Cait Porter's loving rendering of a fuzzy tabby's paw to a Philip Hinge chair sculpture made out of scratching posts, the exhibition includes works by longtime artists of Mrs.'s program as well as some who have never before shown with the gallery.



Cait Porter, "Wheezie with Blue Sheets" (2022)

NOAH BECKER'S

**WHITEHOT
MAGAZINE**
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

*"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"
JULY 2022*

"The Tenth Muse" at Case Gallery



BARBARA KRUGER, UNTITLED (YOUR MISERY LOVES, COMPANY/FEEL IS SOMETHING YOU DO WITH YOUR HANDS), 1985, Lenticular photograph, in artist's frame, 20 by 20 in. Ed. of 6, images courtesy of Case Gallery, Los Angeles

By VITTORIA BENZINE March, 2022

LA-based Case Gallery (<https://www.casegallery.art/>) got an early start on girl power with the Feb. 18th opening of “The Tenth Muse,” a group show celebrating feminine enigma, allure, and power. Curated by NYC-based art advisor Ludovica Capobianco (<https://www.ludovicacapobianco.com/>), this intergenerational all-women exhibition

MENU
explores multiplicitous takes on beauty through works grounded in text, texture, and history. Where the show shines in technical variety, it remains relatively focused in its artists' backgrounds, a potent look into the idealized femininity subliminally sold by our society over centuries.

The show's title is an homage to Sappho, who Plato famously called "The Tenth Muse." Ancient Greeks regarded Sappho as Homer's female counterpart, and she's sometimes considered the first recorded female artist. Case Gallery's press release calls Sappho "an epitome of how intellectual women have striven to have a voice of their own over the centuries."

Daniel Mendelsohn's 2015 article in the New Yorker (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/03/16/girl-interrupted>) lends nuance—a looming figure, Sappho most certainly has a voice in current culture. However, this voice is hardly her own. As he writes, "Sappho is no ordinary poet. For the better part of three millennia, she has been the subject of furious controversies—about her work, her family life, and, above all, her sexuality. In antiquity, literary critics praised her 'sublime' style, even as comic playwrights ridiculed her allegedly loose morals. Legend has it that the early Church burned her works."

MENU



FAWN ROGERS, Your perfect plastic heart, 2021, Oil on canvas on wood backing, 85 x 65 inches

In the absence of substantial surviving work from Sappho she's stepped into a time-tested role, acting as a blank screen for projections of the collective desire. Passivity is a hallmark of feminine energy in the milieu we're growing through. A muse, after all, creates simply by being looked upon.

The women depicted throughout these this show mostly appear like Ms. Bellum from the Powerpuff Girls—present, but also not. Valentina von Klencke's 2013 photo "Lindsey" allows only a snippet of the woman's body—a vice for others—but here the subject carries her own vices. *War and Peace* (2022) by Samantha Rosenwald echoes Ms. Bellum's character design. This composition could be perceived as a slight or a power move— withholding is a traditional feminine route to winning. Rosenwald has depicted talismans of war and peace in her subject's fists, perhaps a subtle nod to picking a side.

Fawn Roger's 2021 series "The World is Your Oyster" invites viewers to "consider life, sex, and death," as the press release explains. Her subjects are also seen from the neck down, but in action—slurping oysters, known aphrodisiacs whose physical appearance evokes the vulva. "Whether perverse, innocent or anything in-between, everyone has a deep sexuality," Rogers says of the series. "My work is about the love I want to give to the world."



Installation view, "The Tenth Muse", Case Gallery, Los Angeles

In his piece about Sappho, Mendelsohn points out her very limited remaining work only “[stokes] our appetite for a body of work that we’re unable to read, much less assess critically.” What’s lasted, he says, lives up to its hype. A set of four sapphic stanzas Classicists call “Fragment 31” inspire linguistic admiration as the poet shares her jealousy of men who can achieve closeness with the young women she admired. “Slyly, the speaker avoids physical description of the girl, instead evoking her beauty by detailing the effect it has on the beholder,” Mendelsohn remarks. “The whole poem is a kind of reaction shot.” Passivity on its own is not a bad thing. In the right environment, it’s a strong suit.

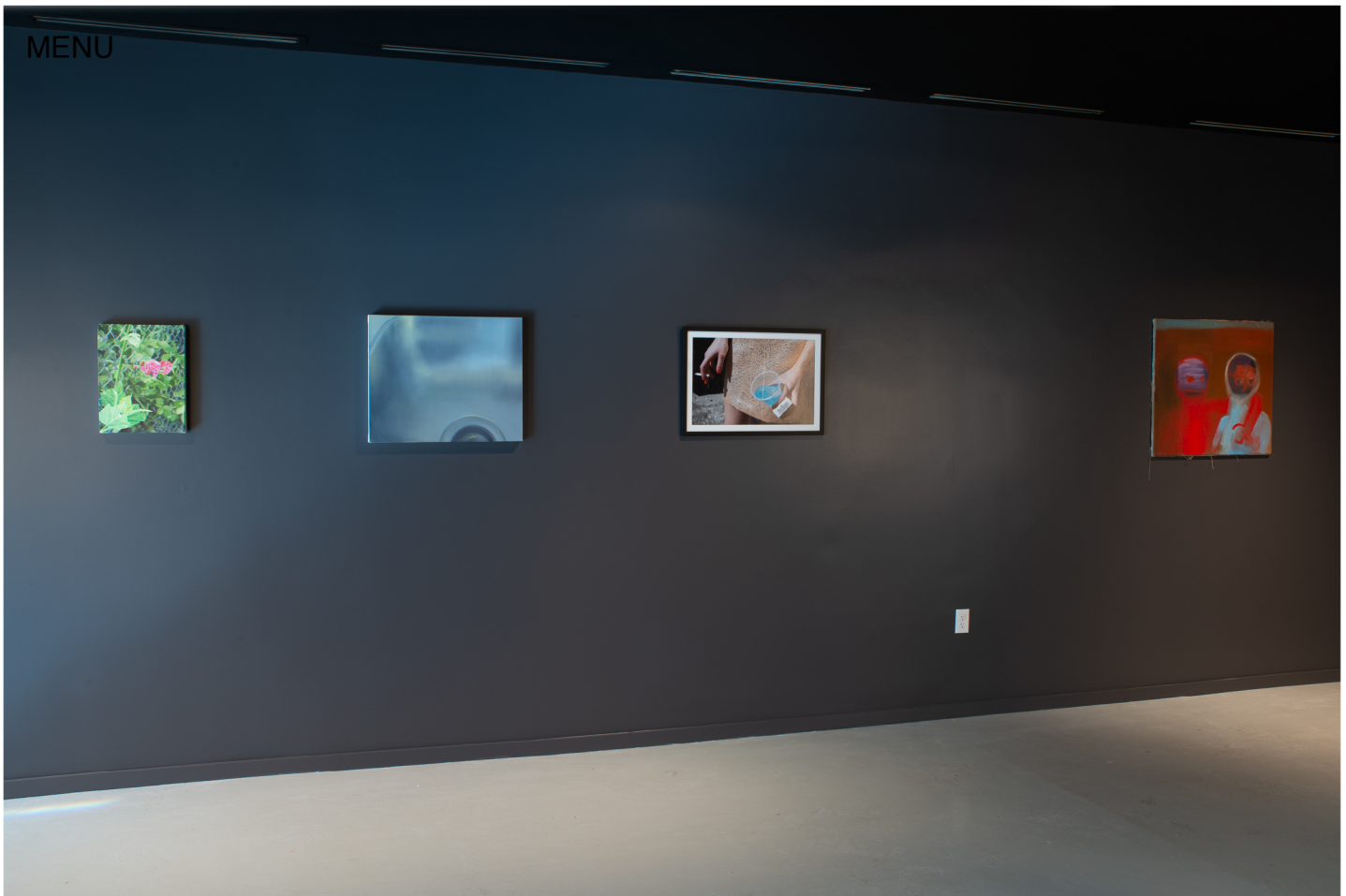
A balance of feminine and masculine energies exists in everything. Alexis Myre’s sculptures for “The Tenth Muse” illustrate this reality with uncanny aplomb, phallic in some spots (sorry if that reveals something about me) but still still soft and fluffy, pairing porcelain with thread and felt. Stale binary thinking has suppressed the

opposite influences in people according to their biology. Men and women suffer similarly, forced into one energy and denied expression of the other—rather than thriving in the balance Myre’s work strikes.

Nicolette Mishkan’s *Electric Sun* (2021) marks one of the few artworks in “The Tenth Muse” to feature an unabashed female form—a parched mermaid on cracked earth. “The mermaid’s suspension between human and inhuman echoes women’s position in patriarchy,” Case explains. “The mermaid is innately sexual, and in history and mythology she has come to represent the dark side of female wantonness—the mermaids represent nature and the ‘yin’ or feminine life force which can be dark and destructive when repressed or receptive and creative when respected.”

Evolving beyond outdated binary frameworks won’t just benefit female-identifying individuals. Evolution should liberate everyone of the expectations we tacitly hold each other to. Masculine energy is one of exertion—a healthy animus allows feminine psyches to snatch ideas from the unknown into undeniable material reality—a liminal space bridged by Cait Porter’s four ghostly interiors across “The Tenth Muse.” Equal regard for masculine and feminine energies opens a world of possibilities.

“Feel is something you do with your hands,” declares *Untitled* (1985) by Barbara Kruger, whose work grounds the show in historical precedent and raw clout. Olga Ozerskaya’s 2020 C-Print on canvas reads “You are in my thoughts,” in a striking style that both mimics and responds to Kruger. More yin and yang.



Installation view

The exhibition collects further legends from earlier eras in art history to remind viewers of the ongoing and uphill battle women have fought to exercise their own abilities. The press release quotes Swiss painter Miriam Cahn, “one of the pioneers of feminist art,” as she states “female artists have a lot to do because art history is mostly done by men, and they have their vision on females.” In *Nicht* (2012) two androgynous, foggy figures express physical closeness bordering ownership. Conceptual artist Louise Lawler adds abstract works that blend humor and contempt to levy critiques “at established myths and motives of prestige in art” and “tap energies of truth, however partial, and beauty, however fugitive.”



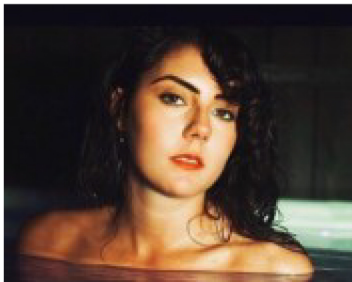
SYDNEY VERNON, *Diva painting 1*, 2022, Acrylic on panel, 48 x 66 inches

Sydney Vernon's *Diva painting 1* (2022) comes closest to a comprehensive picture, part and parcel to her practice spanning painting, drawing, video, and performance. Here viewers find a complete face, a strong insinuation of hands, and abstraction embodying the chaotic, competing projections that women shoulder. "I want people to understand how everything I do is connected to living as a Black woman, living in the Internet age, living in the wake of slavery and living in culture while simultaneously trying to create it," Vernon states.

In highlighting "the beautiful and unique complexity of the female being," this show omits direct intersectionality—there is no overt reference to the trans experience, to the ways race and class and neurodivergence lend critical sheens to the full patchwork quilt of female experience. Case Gallery, based in LA, unpacks the tragedy of idealization in the home of Hollywood glamor. Contradictory, concurrent truths

prevail. At the same time, the show's press release remains correct in its claim: "Each artist in the show expresses herself through a unique and powerful artistic language. To strive for equality while maintaining our own voices and distinctiveness is the main struggle women have faced over the centuries."

Mendelsohn's dive into Sappho makes one passing, critical point about our current obsession with individual psychology as opposed to the hyper-communal Greek culture the poet hailed from. While "The Tenth Muse" fights for womanhood's right to a voice, its artworks show there are threads shared by large proportions of female-presenting individuals. Maybe relinquishing our vice grip on the self could counterintuitively open further freedom for all. Stop by the gallery and exercise your own ability to find a conclusion on the topic. "The Tenth Muse" remains on view through March 27th. **WM**



VITTORIA BENZINE

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Cait Porter, *Window at 11pm*, 2021, oil on canvas, 24 × 20".

Cait Porter

MARINARO

Observing Cait Porter's New York solo debut "Within These Walls," one might have found it easy (and one wouldn't have been exactly wrong) to peg the artist as an old-fashioned realist putting time-tested techniques in the service of contemporary quotidian. In the paintings on view here her attention was fixed on what we could assume was her own domestic environment and its distinctly banal, insignificant details: a drain with some suds bubbling around it,

Schwabsky, Barry. "Cait Porter." *Artforum*, October 2021.

jumbled clothing inside an open chest of drawers with a stray power cord on top of it, a robe draped over a wooden door. These were not exactly still lifes, because they didn't necessarily depict the more familiar arrangement of freestanding objects typical of that mode. Neither did they belong to that rather less common class of the architectural interior, since they gave little if any sense of a room as a whole. And, of course, they hardly counted as genre painting, since the human protagonists were missing (with the possible exception of the blur visible behind the condensation in *Mirror with Steam*, 2021—but who can say for sure). Yet all these types of work are evoked, some more than others; so we sensed the artist was at once flirting with and swerving away from tradition, with its distinct categories (and hierarchies) of subject.

Finally, it seems that Porter is a painter not so much of places or things as of surfaces. And that's where realism falls away: Those surfaces always feel fluid or even gaseous, not quite solid. We are always aware of them as being mirage-like, fictitious. Porter is particularly drawn to curious light effects—shadows and reflections that might confuse the eye, such as the weirdly shaped, tenebrous, roughly figurative form surrounded by a mottle of bright spots in *Lid with Reflection*, 2021, or the distorted, almost illegible features of the room imaged in the bulging glass sides of the nearly empty *Coffee Pot*, 2021. In that painting, the kitchen appliance practically disappears as a thing in itself, becoming merely the bearer of distorted mirrorings. The effect is as if the very stuff one relies on day to day, the objects that are always ready to hand and familiar, might be little more than phantasms. Hers is an alienated perception. The items in these paintings are mostly seen close-up, tightly cropped, and yet without minute detail, as if everything is too near to the eye for us to focus on. The effect is claustrophobic, and the rare promise of deep space is abrogated: The corridor shown in *Hallway*, 2021, is narrow, without side entrances or windows, and leads only to a door that appears to float at some unattainable distance; the walls seem to close in on you like an Edgar Allan Poe nightmare. And you can't actually see outside in *Bouquet on Windowsill*, though if you can in *Window at 11pm*, both 2021, you are able to only exiguously.

In these paintings, we see so much, but never quite the thing itself. One was tempted to consider *Drain*, 2020, a sort of portrait of the eye—a receptacle into which everything flows indifferently, leaving only some traces of foam. And yet what resists the eye yields to the hand: The painter's brush seems to meet all objects as familiar. It's not her gaze—contrary to what artist and writer Meredith Sellers says in the exhibition's press release—but rather her touch that is, to borrow Sellers's words, “gently caressing [the depicted objects] with soft light and shadow.” Porter's

painterly facture always reminds us that, even if her images are only contingent apparitions whose apparent companionability is deceptive, the act of painting offers us the possibility and pleasure of knowing them, stroke by stroke.

— Barry Schwabsky