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MUSE

by **Shona McAndrew**

Curated by Maria Brito

September 6-November 2, 2019

Opening September 6, 6-8PM



Shona McAndrew, Daniela (2019),
acrylic on canvas, 52 x 84 x 1 1/4 in, 132.1 x 213.4 x 3.2 cm

CHART is pleased to present, *MUSE*, Shona McAndrew's first solo show in New York City, curated by Maria Brito. The artist has created 9 new paintings and 5 new sculptures based on the idea of women as muses and owning their surroundings physically, mentally and emotionally. McAndrew uses the canvas to convey freedom for women to own their private spaces and extend them beyond conventional norms of what they are supposed to or not supposed to do in domestic realms. When are women able to be honest with themselves, and what do they do when they are?

In this body of work, McAndrew investigates art history references rooted in paintings from Neoclassicist, Romanticist and Orientalist French male artists from the mid-1800s. Physically recreating the postures the women in those paintings hold, she then photographs herself naked and creates a digital collage, thus reappropriating a sexist and male-gaze driven period in art history. The "nudes" of herself are then sent to

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her muses, whom the artist asks to send back their own versions. Through this, McAndrew is exercising her own feminist approach to the “send me your nude” stereotype most women encounter today.

Each painting re-enacts well-known stances or incorporates scenes taken from historical paintings. For example, in Daniela, the model is portrayed in the same pose as Ingres’s “La Grande Odalisque” (1814). However, instead of an elongated body reclined on a sumptuous velvet chaise, a curvaceous woman is resting on a bed on top of a pile of colorful pattern-on-pattern laundry, sporting a couple of tattoos including one of “Ghost World,” Daniel Clowes’s cult classic graphic novel.

Tied to the idea of women’s personal spaces, harems are a constant explored by the artist in this body of work. The etymology of the word “harem” derives from the Arabic root ḥaram, ḥarīm, which literally means “prohibited place” “sanctuary” and “women’s quarters”. Under the Byzantine Empire, Ancient Greece and Persia, harems served as private spaces for women of the upper classes with the purpose of keeping them protected and secluded so they could tend to the needs of one another without having to resort to men. However, a very different image of the harem emerged in the 17th century when Europeans found out that Muslim cultures housed women in private quarters. Through hearsay and imagination, male artists depicted opulent interiors with voluptuous odalisques, mistresses and female slaves. Hence the pose adopted by McAndrew, which is reinterpreted by artist Cheyenne Julien in Cheyenne and the reproduction of a detail of the painting on the background, both of which replicate the scene in French Orientalist artist Jean-Léon Gérôme’s “The Stork in the Harem Bathhouse” (1889). McAndrew adds “I like the idea of these women not realizing that they are just as beautiful or worthy of art history as the women painted in the reference pictures. Casually enacting these historical poses in a domestic space.”

The papier-mâché sculptures, for which the artist is known, comprise a group of 5 women in different poses, all of them of different body shapes and ethnicities with their flesh partially exposed, granting the works a quality of both vulnerability and strength. They force viewers into a physical confrontation that painting cannot accomplish. Rather than seeing women from a more voyeuristic vantage point, the viewer must deal with them in real space, even when they are doll-size. Though the sculptures are created from the artist’s imagination, they are inspired by and named for real women who have

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greatly influenced McAndrew. As with the paintings, McAndrew is offering the viewer a glimpse into the spaces and moments where women are truly engaged with themselves on their own terms, not societal ones. Additionally, the poses are drawn anywhere from art history, like Cecilia who is represented in the same form as Bernini's twisting figures, or from the artist's own experience of trying to cool off on a particularly hot and sweaty day. McAndrew is inviting the audience to move around and discover the sculptures from multiple perspectives, some flattering and some not. The goal is to represent women from not just from their best angle, but in their entire complexity.

About Shona McAndrew

Shona McAndrew was born in Paris, France in 1990. She lives in Philadelphia, PA and holds an M.F.A. in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; a Post Baccalaureate in Fine Arts from Brandeis University, Waltham, MA and a B.A. in Psychology and Painting (High Honors) from Brandeis University, Waltham, MA. She has had solo exhibitions at the Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, PA (forthcoming 2020); Pilot Projects, Philadelphia, PA and Extra Credit, Providence RI. She has also exhibited in group shows at Latchkey Gallery New York, NY; Abigail Ogilvy, Boston, MA; 621 Gallery, Tallahassee, FL; Every Woman Biennial, La MaMa Galleria, New York, NY; Juxprojects, Jersey City, NJ; Gallerie Manque, Brooklyn, NY; Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY; Gallery Gomez, Los Angeles, CA; Leroy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York, NY; NSFW: Female Gaze, Museum of Sex, New York, NY; Little Berlin Gallery, Philadelphia, PA; Field Projects, New York, NY; Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY; Granoff Center of the Art, Brown University, RI; 808 Gallery, Boston, MA; Brandeis University, Waltham, MA.

About Maria Brito

Maria Brito is an award-winning New York-based contemporary art advisor, author and curator. A Harvard graduate, originally from Venezuela, her first monograph "Out There" published by Pointed Leaf Press in 2013, was the recipient of the USA Best Book Awards in both the Art and Design Categories and in 2015 Brito was selected by Complex Magazine as one of the 20 Power Players in the Art World. She has worked on product collaborations with artists such as Kenny Scharf, Erik Parker, Katherine Bernhardt, Assume Vivid Astro Focus, Nir Hod and many more. In 2016, Maria curated "Greek Gotham" presented at Dio Horia, Mykonos with the participation of sixteen New York-based artists including Austin Lee, Nina Chanel Abney and Raul de Nieves. A full-color catalogue with an introduction by Jeffrey Deitch was written and

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designed by Maria to commemorate this exhibition. In 2019 she curated “The Thousand and One Nights,” the inaugural show of Artual Gallery in Beirut, Lebanon with seven American artists including Holly Coulis, Allison Zuckerman and Rosson Crow.

About CHART

Founded and owned by Clara Ha, CHART presents exhibitions of emerging, and established artists engaged in interdisciplinary practices. A collaborative platform, CHART’s objective is to highlight diverse perspectives in contemporary art. Projects will include site specific installations and special exhibitions organized with guest curators. Ha is a gallerist with more than twenty years of experience in the art world. A former partner at Paul Kasmin Gallery, Ha has worked with artists such as Walton Ford, Robert Indiana, Deborah Kass, Claude and Francois- Xavier Lalanne, Kenny Scharf, Frank Stella and numerous estates such as The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Estate of Morris Louis and The Estate of Robert Motherwell amongst others. Ha has worked on various public projects including Will Ryman “The Roses” on Park Avenue and most recently Hangang Art Park, Seoul, S. Korea.

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