

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery Los Angeles is pleased to present Wall Works, an exhibition of new works by Ruby Neri, on view from September 17 through October 22, 2022. An opening reception will take place on Saturday, September 17 from 6 to 8 PM.

Ruby Neri is a Los Angeles-based artist who draws upon twentieth-century West Coast traditions as well as a global catalogue of art historical and anthropological modes. In recent years, Neri has become increasingly recognized for floor-based vessels and sculptures featuring figurative female forms. Here, she pushes the limits of the ceramic medium that has been at the center of her practice for much of the last decade, engaging in new experiments. For this exhibition, her fifth solo presentation with David Kordansky Gallery, these include new wall-based ceramic sculptures and a major bronze sculpture—an eight-foot-tall form that represents the artist's first time working with the medium.

Related to Neri's ongoing interest in the form of the female figure, the narrative thread uniting these works is the full expression of human emotion: pleasure, terror, ambivalence, and joy. The wall sculptures range widely in their renderings of a bawdy feminist life force and exude frenetic energy. In one composition, a woman riding a white horse suspiciously glances backward toward a small, nude figure fiercely gripping at her hair. Here, the dramatic line work is a literal translation of Neri's previous experience spray painting graffiti onto buildings—now transferred onto textured clay surfaces that swirl in bursts of color and tone. In another setting, a trio of women in white and yellow heels kick outward in repetitive motions, extending their hands to the viewer in an invitation that feels both generous and sinister.

Several of the new sculptures are composed of various bodies that vary in size, emerging from a singular form at the center of the composition. The relationships between the figures provide crucial insights into Neri's world, both literally and metaphorically, and can alternately be read as evocations of dynamic inner forces or symbolic manifestations of archetypal entities. Expressed consistently throughout this new group of works are a

timeless, gritty, feminist energy and a series of conflicting human expressions that feels specifically relevant to the out-of-control nature of contemporary existence. Structurally, the embraces between the figures hold the works together and account for much of their formal and technical bravura.

The new bronze sculpture, on the other hand, brings Neri's technical strengths of building larger-than-life objects to the foreground. Here, Neri's sculpture features a maximalist, celebratory depiction of the human body as seen in many of her previous works, in which a colossal woman with crescent-shaped eyes and muscular arms cradles—on the crown of her head—a smaller figure that reaches upwards. A gaggle of women climbs up the figure's torso as she gleefully tosses them back toward the ground.

Neri arrived at her signature typology of voluptuous, full-figured women by synthesizing a wide range of influences gleaned from her experiences in various art communities in northern California, including the Bay Area Figurative movement and street art. She applies mark-making techniques often associated with graffiti tagging, transposing them via spray-based glazes into the vocabulary of ceramics. Air-brushed black accents define the curves of the women's bodies, the strands of their hair, and the varied shapes of their breasts. Sprays of red and pink define their lips, cheeks, and nipples. The vigor of Neri's lines gives these works a fully lifelike presence and echoes the ecstatic quality that appears to animate the characters from which they are constructed.

Throughout the exhibition, Neri refers to traditional clay vessels, nodding to the long history of her medium and creatively reorganizing its tenets to achieve new effects and generate new possibilities. Unlike previous works by the artist that utilize vases as surfaces on which Neri paints, the vessels that constitute parts of these objects function as background elements in the larger compositions. The pictures that occupy their three-dimensional foregrounds are thereby contained, both physically and conceptually. They also function as symbols of fertility: in one work, a baby emerges from a woman's uterus, zipping upward

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toward an orange-glazed container at the top center of the work. The bulbous base and curved lip of the object can be read as a metaphor for the female body itself, and as a vessel for the fertile life force of all beings.

As Neri pushes into new material feats and expanded scales, her vision continues to grasp an intimate, celebratory approach to various states of existence and anxieties felt by the crushing demands of our contemporary world. Neri's entourage of clay and bronze figures possesses a collective energy of survival—a utopian future where joining hands calls for a powerful embrace of the haunting unknown, together in form and spirit. Across this new body of work, these spirited figures march, kick, flail, and tug toward and against a future that is at once frustratingly difficult, yet triumphantly hopeful.

In 2018, Ruby Neri (b. 1970, San Francisco) was the subject of a two-person exhibition, Alicia McCarthy and Ruby Neri / MATRIX 270, at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), California. Recent group shows include The Flames: The Age of Ceramics, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2022); New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century, BAMPFA, California (2021); The Domestic Plane: New Perspectives on Tabletop Art Objects, Objects Like Us, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut (2018); From Funk to Punk, Left Coast Ceramics, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York (2017); Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California, Oakland Museum of California and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2014); Energy That is All Around: Mission School, Grey Art Gallery, New York University (2014); Busted, High Line, New York (2013); and Made in L.A. 2012, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2012). Her work is in the permanent collections of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; BAMPFA, California; Brooklyn Museum, New York; and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Neri lives and works in Los Angeles.