

Helfand, Glen, "Alicia McCarthy and Ruby Neri," *Artforum.com*, Critics' Picks, June 30, 2018

## ARTFORUM



Ruby Neri, *Two Women*, 2018, ceramic with glaze, 34 x 32 x 22 1/2".

BERKELEY

**Alicia McCarthy and Ruby Neri**

BERKELEY ART MUSEUM AND PACIFIC  
FILM ARCHIVE (BAMPFA)

2155 Center Street

May 23 - August 26

You feel an aesthetic electricity when you enter this modestly scaled gallery that has brought together work by Alicia McCarthy and Ruby Neri, artists who studied together at the San Francisco Art Institute in the early 1990s—art and life pals ever since. Back in the day, they were both focused on making art in the street and often had cans of spray-paint in their hands. The thrill of hissing aerosol is still visible in their work, albeit in discrete objects of their own making—McCarthy's kaleidoscopic, interwoven abstract matrices in spray-paint and house paint, and Neri's voluptuous ceramics, which she glazes with an airbrush or paint gun to articulate the sensuous curves of female figures that merge ancient and contemporary amphorae with randy, oversize novelty mugs.

McCarthy's lines suggest connectivity. Her painted threads converge only to part company, generating chromatic reverberations in the process. Neri's forms exude autonomous eroticism. Her nearly human-scaled vessels are frolicking nudes with pronounced nipples and perky butts, women who are fleshy, powerful, and California blonde. Both artists embrace a sense of freedom and energy which emanates from works that are mostly, democratically, Untitled. This includes a 2018 monochromatic piece the pair collaborated on, a drawing that depicts, on the left, a seated female figure, clothed in a short strapped dress, with her fingers crossed—clearly Neri's half. On the right, McCarthy's chain-like forms seem to connect to this seated woman. These bonds look pretty solid.

— Glen Helfand