

# **FORT GANSEVOORT**

**VICE**

**'You Can't Deny Us': The Artists  
Showcasing the Power of Female Athletes**



ART

## 'You Can't Deny Us': The Artists Showcasing the Power of Female Athletes

RK

Rebecca Kamm

MAR 28 2017, 3:50PM

These works ask us to consider sport not just as evidence of physical prowess, but as a conduit for issues around race, gender, culture, and more.

All images courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort, New York

**W**omen have historically been painted as good sports, not good at sport. As for female opinion on sport, no one's ever really asked—or listened.

In the face of this oversight is "March Madness," an exhibition by Manhattan's [Fort Gansevoort](#) gallery showcasing the sport-themed work of 31 female artists. Here female athleticism is, for a change, front and center, as we are invited to herald women's contributions to America's favourite past-time—and to consider sport not



# Broadly.

## **This image is about women saying, 'You can try, but you can't deny us.'**

"The public is used to receiving sport through the mass media; it's this really larger-than-life kind of version that's highly glamorized," says exhibition advisor Kalia Brooks. "And at some point in your life you have to contend with who you are and what your identity is in relation to athletics—whether you are or are not an athletic individual—and how that shapes the rest of your life. These works also challenge the pre-conceptions of what we're taught to think the body should be. Whether that's the masculine archetype or the feminine archetype."

We asked six artists involved in the collection to nominate a piece of their work, and explain its message.



# Broadly.



All images courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort, New York.

## **Holly Bass, "NWBA #7 (CROWN)"**

My original inspiration was old school team photos—you know, where the back row



# Broadly.

I made this series in 2012 but when people look at "Crown" now they think of Colin Kaepernick and Megan Rapinoe, which absolutely fits. This image is about women saying, "You can try, but you can't deny us." It's a combination of joyful liberation and fierce resistance.



## Gina Adams, "O\$ OSAGE 6"

These girls played for their school team, and even traveled to away games to play



## Broadly.

these "whites only" signs were on the opposing team's locker rooms, public restrooms and water fountains, the nearby hotels where the girls would have stayed overnight as a team, and local restaurants where they would have shared meals after the games.

The Osage Indians were originally from Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas and were forced to move to Oklahoma in the late 1800s. This was a removal similar to the [Trail of Tears](#). The [Indian Boarding School Act](#) was in place from 1880-2013. Young girls as young as five were removed from their families and sent to Indian Assimilation Boarding Schools in the United states. Most of these schools kept the children until they graduated and were the age of eighteen. The schools' purpose was to remove all "Indian-ness" from the children. This image shows the Osage Indian Boarding School girls basket ball team and their coach [in archival photography].

Today, in most if not all Native American Indian communities and on reservations athletics is seen as a form of survival. If a woman is a good athlete, they are healthy and have a chance at a good scholarship for college. After earning a college degree the American Indian student and athlete usually always returns to the family



# Broadly.





# **Broadly.**

image and controlling how that image is being circulated in the world. It's about having the courage to fight against assumptions and perceptions that others may have, and the power those societal assumptions still hold. It's also about celebrating differences, while embracing your own.





# Broadly.



## Ashley Teamer, "Would You Like Some Ball" (2016)

This work was inspired by a Basketball Card featuring Tracy Reid. This image of Reid in the top center of the collage stood out because of her reach, concentration, and



# Broadly.



## **Sadie Barnette, "Untitled"**

This child's bike gleams a metallic pink against a gritty sidewalk. Sitting on wide but small tires and sporting a heart emblem in the front, it's both "girly" and tough. These things are not opposites: Every girl I know is tough as nails. This image is about childhood and making space for play and innocence in a landscape that is not gentle.

***For More Stories Like This, Sign Up for Our Newsletter***

Recently there has been some long overdue outrage about the alarming number of missing black and brown children across the United States and the lack of media



# Broadly.



## **Renee Cox, "Raje for President" (1998)**

This is about a woman who is self-assured, empowered... or rather has chosen to empower herself, in the great power that women have always had since the beginning of time before we were subjugated by man. Now it's time for all women to reclaim and to celebrate that power.