

FORT GANSEVOOR

ARTFORUM

New York

“March Madness”

FORT GANSEVOORT GALLERY

5 Ninth Avenue

March 16, 2017–May 13, 2017

The culture of the mind (art) and the culture of the body (sports) have stereotypically been pitted against each other. But might female-identifying artists, whose own bodies and gender performance are under constant scrutiny, have a more nuanced perspective on the pursuit of athletic prowess? This is the premise behind “March Madness,” a survey of works by thirty-one female artists. The exhibition title references the NCAA basketball tournaments and calls to mind the political ramifications of the recent Women’s Marches.



View of “March Madness,” 2017.

The main thrust of the show addresses the clash between the aesthetic ideals of femininity and those of athleticism.

Portraiture is a common thread: Cindy Sherman appears in the guise of an ice dancer, Jamaican-born Renée Cox depicts herself as her superwoman alter-ego Raje, and Collier Schorr’s and Catherine Opie’s photographs portray androgynous young sports players. Collage and assemblage also feature prominently, from Martha Rosler’s compositions of female athletes juxtaposed against nature (from the “Body Beautiful, or Beauty Knows No Pain” series, 1966–72) to Deborah Roberts’s collages of young black female pugilists. A highlight is Pamela Council’s *Flo Jo World Record Nails*, 2012, an abstract sculpture made from two thousand long acrylic nails and based on patriotic designs favored by the African American track-and-field star Florence Griffith Joyner.

A quieter strain examines the intersection between nationalism and athletics. A still from Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia*, 1936, is tucked next to a set of Jean Shin’s revamped trophies from the series “Everyday Monuments,” 2009, which show trophy figurines engaged in activities such as gardening and baking. Gina Adams, of indigenous Ojibwa, Lakota, and European heritage, gives us two bodies of work related to sports and land dispossession. In *O\$ Osage 6*, 2015, a midcentury archival image of an Osage girls’ boarding-school basketball team, whose sweaters—creepily and incongruously—bear dollar signs.

— Wendy Vogel