

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week



"Pisador" (2017-18), a painting by the Brazilian artist Marina Rheingantz at Bortolami in Manhattan.
Credit John Berens/Bortolami, New York

Al Freeman and Marina Rheingantz

Through June 2. Bortolami, 39 Walker Street, Manhattan; 212-727-2050, bortolamigallery.com.

These two very different solos — one featuring appropriated photographs, the other oil paintings — have an unexpected synergy, especially regarding visual memory and associations.

The New York sculptor Al Freeman fills the gallery's smaller space with the first solo show of her uncanny Comparisons: each a collage of a famous work of art (Matisse, Bruegel and Bacon) and a photograph — usually culled from the internet's underbelly — to which it bears a striking, often hilarious resemblance. A well-known photograph of Eva Hesse's black sculptures seems nearly identical to the gear of a dominatrix, laid out like an eBay photograph. The nested squares of a Josef Albers painting are partnered with the locked arms of two wrestlers. Many collages feature drunken adolescents joking around (frequently unclothed) or pranking their passed-out buddies. One such young man, hanging from a clothes hanger inserted in his T-shirt, eerily echoes the flayed skin from Michelangelo's "Last Judgment."

Ms. Freeman's comparisons are more than funny; they're full of feminist barbs and insights into the mind's reflexive leaps — their pleasures, tells and revelations.

These reflexes may be activated by the promising New York debut of the Brazilian artist Marina Rheingantz, whose paintings recalibrate the work of Cy Twombly and Anselm Kiefer into large, semiabstract landscapes full of ambiguous forms and details that are deeply dystopian in mood. They're beautiful wastelands writ small, delicately dotted with suggestions of trash; ruined structures and abandoned encampments; occasional tiny flags or palm trees; and enticing little pileups of paint. The nocturnal "Jojola" could be grounds once used for military maneuvers, horse jumping or a dilapidated carnival. "Jorro" evokes fountains run slightly amok. The most convincing works — "Jojola," as well as "Varzea" and the snowy "Pisador" — are expansive fields that Ms. Rheingantz paints with unusual delicacy and small brush strokes. These three paintings confirm that while all is not well with the world, the artist's deliberate avoidance of bravura implies that there is always another way to do things.