

THE NEW YORKER

Marcia Schwartz

The first U.S. retrospective of this Argentine artist, on view at 55 Walker—a joint venture of the Bortolami, Kaufmann Repetto, and Andrew Kreps galleries—is cause for excitement. Between 1976 and 2018, Schwartz applied a range of styles, both figurative and abstract, to subjects as diverse as flower stalks and supernatural visitations. But portraiture seems to be her true north. Argentina's seven-year rule by military dictatorship, which began in 1976, was a formative rupture for the artist. Targeted by the junta for her politics and associations—Schvartz's family owned a progressive bookstore—and increasingly frightened as her contemporaries disappeared, the painter fled to Spain, and then to Brazil, before finally returning home, in 1983. Antiauthoritarianism is implicit in her sensitive depictions of working-class and countercultural figures in the San Telmo neighborhood of Buenos Aires—the attenuated forms of Egon Schiele and the acerbic social realism of Jack Levine both echo in these pictures. Schwartz casts an especially radical eye on the female form, as seen here in the frankly unfeminine, open-legged pose featured in "Desnuda y con Zoquetes" ("Nude with Socks"), from 2012, and a pair of fantastic self-portraits, which suggest a subversive inner life—wryly penetrating and unapologetically morose. — Johanna Fateman