

Andrew Berardini, "Critics' Pick: Mira Dancy," *Artforum*, January 17, 2015.

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Critics' Pick: Mira Dancy

by Andrew Berardini



Under shadowy neon and nighthawk noir, the lithe limbs and strong bodies of Mira Dancy's numerous psychic ladies, perfume models, and mixed deities invitingly odalisque. This normally coy pose carries here a decidedly intense authority, more Marlene Dietrich than Marilyn Monroe (or perhaps more Siouxsie Sioux than Debbie Gibson). Dancy's loose lines never goop into impasto in her paintings, but possess the super flatness of advertisements, which are clearly mimicked in her composition of elements and bold headlines for rhymable aromas ("Herfumes Perfumes") and pawnshop clairvoyants. With allusive titles (*Aries Red Moon Calendar* and *Isis*, both 2014) and a retelling of the Isis/Osiris story on a sheet of Plexiglas hung with gold chains in the middle of the gallery, Dancy invokes ancient deities with incantatory utterance and witchy power.

Dancy's deployment of mythology and expressive lines puts her wholly in the wet, messy lineage of neo-expressionism—a movement riddled with a history of macho market darlings. By the 1990s, the name, for some, turned an intellectual smear, it's mention bordering on the room-clearing weirdness of "tristero" in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. But under Dancy's brush, this fluid style gets a necessary jolt of feminism and a dark, gothy charm (closer to OG expressionists James Ensor and George Grosz) that was too often lost in those '80s pastel swirls and sploogy paint. Dancy's nudes—which includes at least one hermaphrodite—are dominant players, staring us down with wry smiles and forceful beauty. Mythic figuration an antidote to anonymous abstraction, perhaps, but these neon deities strut with their own lurid force and elegant autonomy.