

ARTS

Marjorie Strider Subverts Male Gaze, Reclaims Her Rightful Role In Pop Art History

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Marjorie Strider 'Triptych II (Beach Girl)' (1963) on Masonite and wood panel Panels: 1/3 69 x 51.5 5 x 2 in 2/3 69 x 51.5 x 2 in 3/3 69 x 62 x 2" in

A young woman with a shag bob haircut wearing a yellow string bikini with white piping sits in seiza, posing playfully for the viewer. Elbows raised to accentuate her feminine form, her ample breasts protrude from the three canvases, as sculpture erupts from the painting.

Marjorie Strider's *Triptych II (Beach Girl)* (1963) greets us with a contemporary spirit that could be found on Instagram. The liberated femininity that strips away and subverts the male gaze is underscored by the rugged industrial feel of the metallic canvases. Strider built all the elements herself, exposing the nails beneath her painterly silver brushstrokes.

The rare triptych from Strider's 1960s heyday is a highlight of *Marjorie Strider: Girls, girls, girls!*, a solo retrospective of some 20 works created between 1963 and 2014 celebrating the artist's inimitable depictions of the female form and her groundbreaking shaped canvases, a hybrid of painting and sculpture.

The exhibition, on view at [Galerie Gmurzynska](#) in New York through January, reinvigorates Strider's oeuvre and re-imagines her role in art history as a leading Pop Artist who was omitted from the male-dominated canon.

Strider (1931-2014) defied convention, manipulating flatness and volume to counter "specific objects," as defined by Donald Judd in a 1965 essay, where he first argued that the singularity of an object and the physical actuality of its presence in real space established its formal identity as well as its power and efficacy as a work of art.

“She was most famous in the mid-1960s. In the 1970s, she was already very recognized by a lot of people as a role model, but I don't think she was mainstream anymore. And in the 1980s and 1990s, she was, again, an important reference for people and she had great shows. She was included in a lot of group shows up until around 2000, and then she pretty much disappeared after that,” said Mathias Rastorfer, CEO and co-owner of Galerie Gmurzynska, during a walkthrough of the exhibition. “The problem has also been on a larger scale. When you think about how the art world changed in the 1960s, you had three or four galleries that could show your work. And then in the 1980s, you had 100 galleries that were potentially good for you, and you needed a gallery to represent you. It was not enough to do it on your own.”

Triptych II was featured in a 1964 group exhibition, *First International Girlie Exhibition*, at then-nascent Pace Gallery, where her work was highly regarded and her flippantly pseudo-pornographic *Woman with Radish* became the show's racy banner image. (It's been duplicated for the Galerie Gmurzynska retrospective and hangs above the main entrance.) A Pace exhibition of Strider's work on view between December 4, 1965, and January 2, 1966, sold out with a waiting list for her *Girlie* series. Whether the Guthrie, Oklahoma-born artist was acting out of Midwestern naiveté or rebellious ambition, Strider eschewed Pace founder Arne Glimcher's request for similar works.



Installation. view of Marjorie Strider 'Marjorie Strider: Girls, girls, girls!,' On left wall: 'Welcome' (1963) Signed and dated 1964 Acrylic on masonite with wood build out 48 x 54 x 9 in 121.9 x 137.2 x 22.9 cm

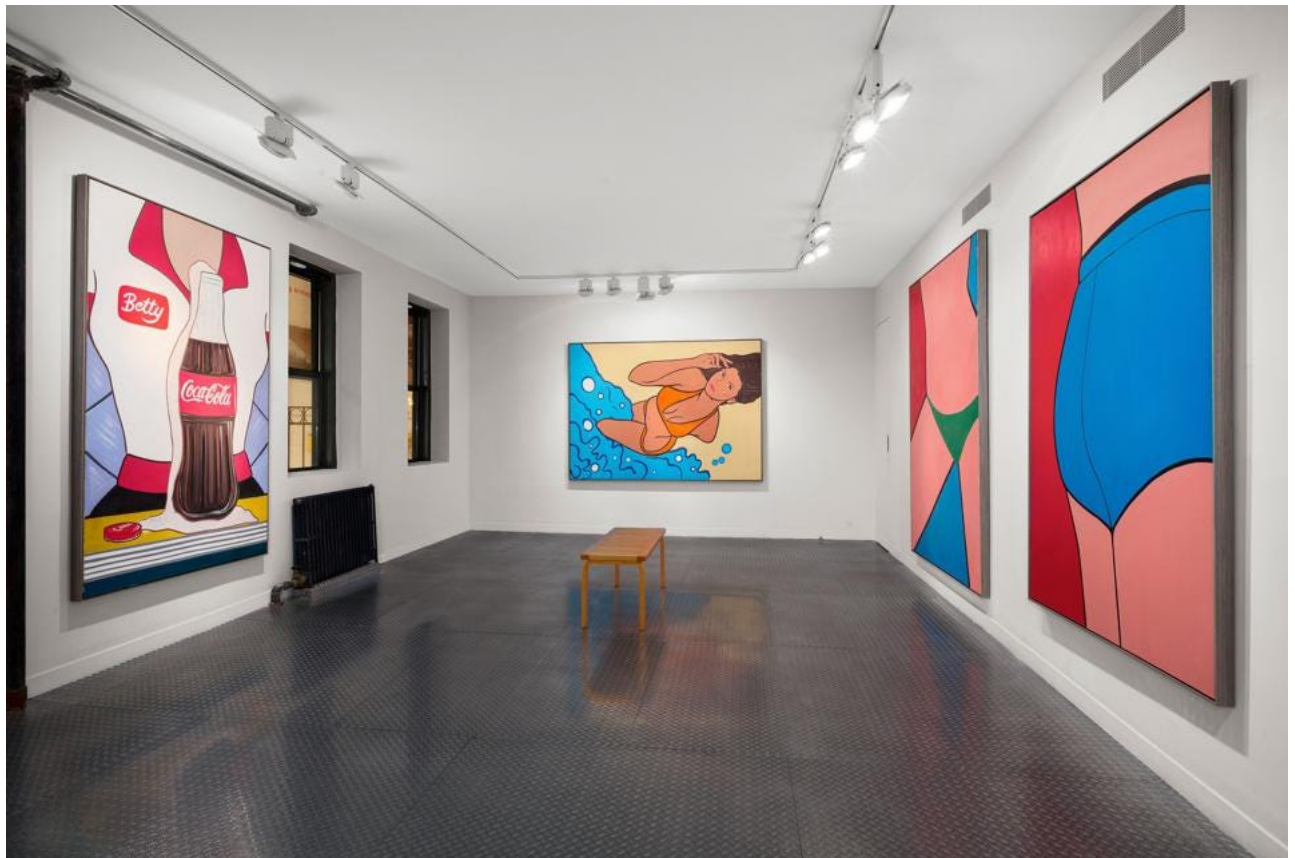
Welcome, another work from 1963, further bends the boundary between painting and sculpture, as we're drawn into the mouth, agape and protruding from the canvas. Meticulous details, from the white glints of her blue eyes to the starlet shine of her cherry lipstick and the wispy waves in her hair, compete for our attention and amplify the waggish title, which forces us to confront a woman's reversal of the male gaze.

Looking back at her slip into relative obscurity, it's clear that Strider was ahead of her time and that her work remains relevant today. Even as she remained prolific in her last years, creating work in Saugerties, New York, Strider died uncompensated and unrecognized for her contributions to Pop Art history and beyond. Her experimental journey never ended, as she incorporated elements of her soft sculptures and abstraction into later works.



Marjorie Strider 'Overflowing Box'

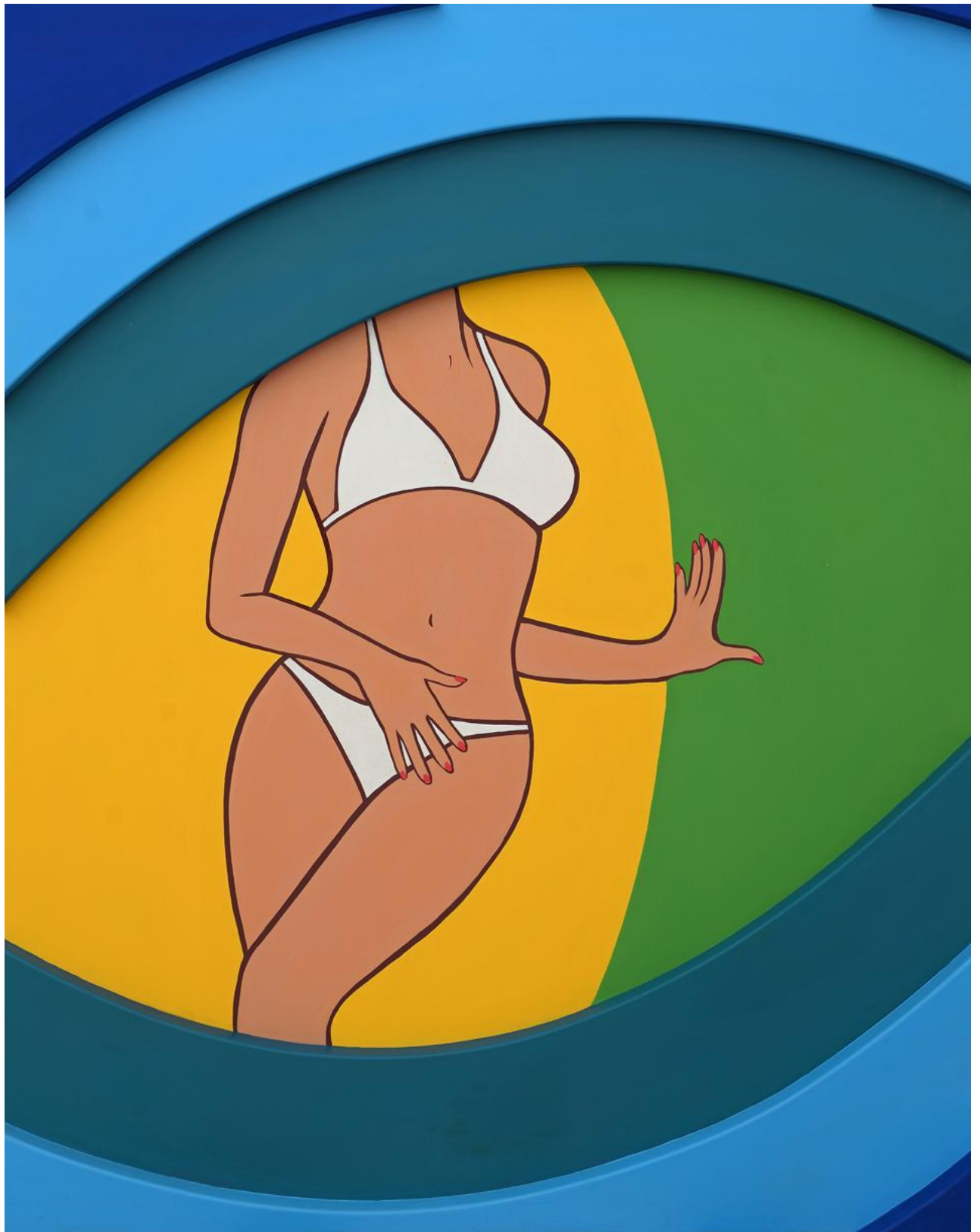
“She comes up with the idea that goes even further beyond the third dimension. It actually overflows, so it's unstoppable. Like female power, it overflows without limit,” Rastorfer said of Strider’s often self-referential work which included performance art. Her performative narratives, which spill over across her fluid interplay of genres, continue to convey enduring themes of femininity, feminism, and feminine power.



Installation. view of Marjorie Strider 'Marjorie Strider: Girls, girls, girls!,' On left wall: 'Untitled' (2014) Signed verso "STRIDER" Acrylic on Canvas 78 x 48 x 1 1/4 in 198.1 x 121.9 x 3 cm. On back wall: 'In The Swim' (2010) Signed verso "STRIDER" Acrylic on Canvas 60 x 84 x 1 1/4 in 152.4 x 213.4 x 3 cm. On right wall: 'Red Towel' (2010) Signed and dated verso: "STRIDER '10" Acrylic on canvas 48 x 72 in 121.9 x 182.9 cm and 'Blue Hot Pants' (2010) Signed verso "STRIDER" Signed verso on stretcher "STRIDER 2010" Acrylic on Canvas 72 x 48 x 1 1/4 in 182.9 x 121.9 x 3 cm

Her later works exude youthful exuberance and vibrancy while demonstrating maturation of her masterful skill. Her earlier works borrowed directly from Hollywood vixens and glossy print ads, while her later paintings revisit the same conversations with anonymous figures.

In *Bond Girl* (2010), Strider toys with the signature gun barrel opening sequence, shifting the shape to more of an eye and replacing James Bond, who walks, turns, and then shoots directly at the viewer, causing blood to trickle down the screen, with a shapely torso in a white bikini. Named for the love interest or woman companion of the titular character, the Bond Girl becomes the focal point, the unarmed heroine, of Strider's thriller. The first Bond movie, *Dr. No*, premiered in 1962, and the franchise continues to poke fun at stylized gender norms.



Marjorie Strider 'Bond Girl' (2010) Signed verso "STRIDER" Acrylic of MDF 66 x 54 x 10 in 167.6 x 137.2 x 25.4 cm

In The Swim (2010), painted just ahead of the Instagram craze, foreshadows the rise of the selfie, as the orange bikini-clad woman wading in the beach strikes a calculated influencer pose. The tilted angle hints at photography and plays with perspective.

The quotidian and the quintessential collide in *Untitled* (2014), when a glass bottle of Coca-Cola serves to accentuate the hourglass figure of a diner waitress “Betty”. As my [playwright-writer husband](#) observed, the trademark soda pours over on the flat surface mimicking Strider’s soft sculptures.

Blue Hot Pants (2010) and *Red Towel* (2010) begin to blur the figure through abstraction.

“I think of [the *Girlie* and the *Vegetable* series] abstractly. When the forms get this big they become abstract. But I wouldn’t want to think of them as only abstract. I want them to still be ‘vegetables.’ The formal part is very important: the color, the shape, the composition. I wouldn’t do a painting unless those things were involved – which is where the abstract comes in,” Strider said in an unpublished interview with James Meyer which is referenced in Galerie Gmurzynska’s comprehensive illustrated catalog, which includes unpublished materials from Strider’s personal archive.

The exhibition traces Strider’s pioneering path alongside Post-War American masters through her correspondence with Carl Andre, Eva Hesse, Sol Le Witt, and Marisol. These works demand an in-person view, to witness the nuance and intricacy of Strider’s techniques, the brilliance of her colors, the sophistication of her compositions, and to see her early works in fierce dialogue with each other over a half century.



Installation. view of Marjorie Strider 'Marjorie Strider: Girls, girls, girls!'