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These 20 Female Artists Are Pushing Figurative Painting Forward

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Mira Dancy

b. 1979, Kent, U.K. Lives and works in New York, New York



Mira Dancy *Blue Exile*, 2016 Night Gallery



“Strange mothers, icons, ghosts, dear friends, and altered reflections of myself have greeted me on the canvas since I started painting,” says Dancy. “The characters in the paintings are fictional. I debate even calling them characters actually because their flatness is about an ubiquity of the body itself in our landscape and psychic consciousness.” Her beguiling female nudes, traversing canvases, murals, and neons, have charmed the art world over the past year, as highlights at MoMA PS1’s “Greater New York” exhibition, and the buzz of major international art fairs like Frieze London and Art Basel in Hong Kong. “I came to painting from writing poems, and it always was a feeling that these women appeared in the paintings kind of mid-sentence that compelled me to push them further,” she explains. Dancy intended to pursue writing in college, but the esteemed artists she had as professors, Amy Sillman and Elizabeth Murray, led her to chart a path into art. Her female figures draw on advertising and branding, as much as history and mythological tropes. “I like the idea that paintings can be haunted by the past, that they have the means to resurrect, to conjure, and to alter a sense of time or reality. Mom, Beyoncé, and Isis (the goddess) are all themes that I’m working through these days.”