



Alina Cohen, “Mira Dancy,” *Art in America*, Aug 22, 2017.

Art in America

REVIEWS

Mira Dancy

NEW YORK

at Chapter NY

by Alina Cohen

Countless styles of NASTY WOMAN T-shirts, a Secret deodorant campaign focusing on women’s work-related stress, over four thousand results when you search for “feminist buttons” on Etsy—the evidence



abounds that consumerism and feminism are more deeply entwined than ever. Brooklyn-based artist Mira Dancy’s recent exhibition of paintings, neon signs, and works on paper—which spanned Chapter NY’s two Lower East Side spaces—fit squarely into this entanglement. In the show, whose title, “Call NOW,” evoked the urgency with which we’re advised both to respond to infomercials and to telephone our senators, Dancy offered images of female empowerment alongside text components that highlight echoes between advertising and protest language.

The large-scale painting *Her Sex // Her Say* (2017) reads as a billboard advocating sexual autonomy. Three women are shown reclining, each resting on an elbow. In different shades, on different planes, they inhabit their own worlds. The top woman, the largest, is nude. Beyond her, horizontal lines and planes convey land and sky, while vertical lines suggest trees and other flora—she’s a natural woman in a natural setting. A white shape that demarcates her forehead and nose resembles a lightning bolt. Indeed, power and energy seem to course through her wavy hair and radiate from her long, curving fingers. With her soft stare and closed mouth, she confronts us with a contented, assertive expression, as if to say she doesn’t really care what we think of her. The women below her are clothed; both wear dresses and one, with her leg bent and foot in front of her, displays a high heel. In block letters, the phrase HER SEX sprawls down the left side of the image and HER SAY across the bottom right.



Dancy has stated that she's interested in the advertising culture that markets products to make women feel more feminine. Her images call on viewers to reexamine ideas about femininity, power, and strength, particularly as language conflating activism and consumerism guides women toward becoming a single, unified group of purchasers. But while a certain digestibility might very much be the point at hand, Dancy's text components can nonetheless seem a little obvious or silly. In front of *Her Sex // Her Say*—unnecessarily driving the point further home—hung a purple triangular neon work reading, ASK ME. In the bottom right corner of *Herfume // Her Truth* (2017), Dancy has scrawled HERFUME. If this phrase is meant to inject some humor, it also cheapens the powerful image, which shows a nude woman raising her right hand in the air and holding what looks like discarded shackles in her left, as multicolored flamelike shapes rise within and around her.

Two particularly compelling works were the text-less paintings *Hollow Body* (2017) and *Blue Mirror* (2017). In both, the landscapes and the women's bodies are rendered in a shared palette (intense reds, pinks, purples, and blues) that evidences a strong Fauvist leaning and seems to assert a connection between women and the natural world. In the former work, three women gaze upon a crouching fourth, who looks to be mid-fall. Despite the women's divergent expressions and gestures—one appears aloof, one tilts her head, one covers her mouth with her hand—they're all poised to watch the woman go down, on her own. In *Blue Mirror*, a woman reaches toward a mirror that seems out of place in the otherwise natural setting. Both paintings ask us to consider how women view themselves and their peers, offering not advice or condemnation but open-ended questions of a sort that stands in contrast to the simplistic messages often found in ad campaigns or on protest signage.