

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Roberta Smith, "What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week: Marisa Merz at Gladstone Gallery," *New York Times*, February 18, 2016

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week Marisa Merz at Gladstone Gallery



An untitled mixed-media work on paper by Marisa Merz.
Credit: Marisa Merz and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Marisa Merz's show at the Gladstone Gallery, presenting drawings, collages and installations, is the most beautiful this Italian artist has had in New York. The effect is enhanced by the setting, the quirky but elegant white box that forms the parlor floor of a townhouse once owned and refurbished by the architect Edward Durell Stone.

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The vaguely Moorish concrete screen on the building's street facade and the nicely aged, implicitly Venetian marble floor underfoot perfectly complement Ms. Merz's central subject: semiabstract images of veiled or cloaked women that fluctuate between East and West.

In the late 1960s, Ms. Merz, who is now 90, was among the founders of Arte Povera, Italy's form of Post-Minimalism. Her figures evoke early Modernism in their resemblance to those of Redon and Modigliani, and Byzantine art in their stylization and use of gold and silver leaf.

Arte Povera obtrudes in the rough-hewn mixes of materials in the figures' collaged faces, which include cut sheets of copper and metallic cardboard or bits of copper mesh serving as a veils.

But Arte Povera is most present in two collage like installation works in which pieces of copper, wood, paper or bamboo are arranged into altars, which turns the drawings displayed on them into icons. It would be too simple to assign strictly positive qualities to Ms. Merz's dreamy women. They could as easily be witches or malevolent idols. Like Huma Bhabha's dark chopped-cork sculptures, they combine mystery with menace.

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130 East 64th Street, Manhattan

Through Feb. 20