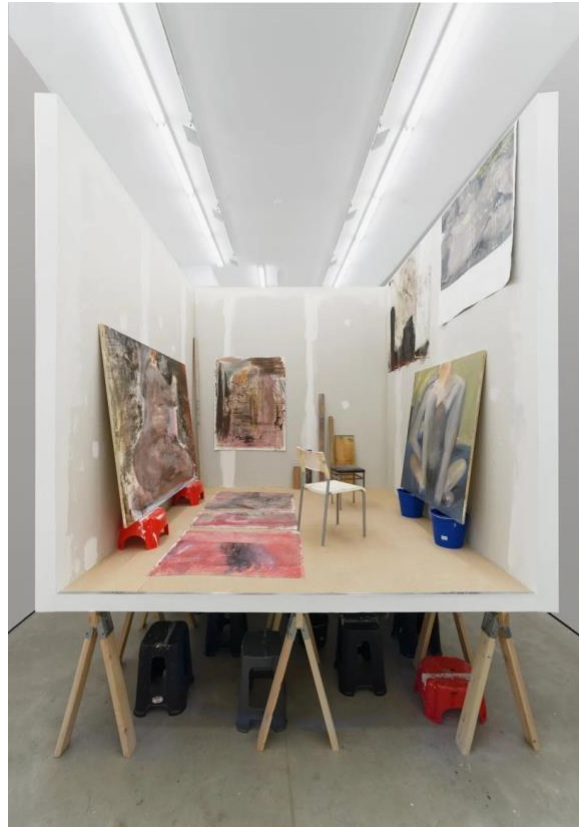


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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in November
By John Vincler



Installation view of “Tool,” Ser Serpas’s exhibition at Maxwell Graham Gallery.

Ser Serpas is never boring. In what is advertised as an exhibition of paintings, she has created an installation environment that works primarily as sculpture. The paintings wobble between abstraction and figuration. With earth tones and red predominating, they’re flat and primitive, fleshly and evocative — like ancient cave paintings but of femme seated nudes.

Serpas has installed 16 of 17 of the show’s paintings (all untitled, all 2023) on or within a large white cube, which rests atop an array of saw horses and stools in the rear of the gallery. The cube’s top and back wall are missing, a fact that the viewer realizes when walking around the structure.

While you pass through the narrow corridor formed by the side of the cube and the gallery wall, the large pictures hung on the cube’s exterior wall are viewable only from up close. Once behind the cube, the missing back wall reveals a sort of diorama of an artist’s studio. With attentive looking, relationships between the various depicted bodies become apparent. A figure on a wood panel was seemingly used to imprint a mirrored impression on another painting’s canvas. One painting appears to have been painted through a lace curtain onto a surface below, thus creating two nonidentical twinned surfaces. All this suggests a rubbing of bodies against bodies — painterly procreation on display — within Serpas’s casually ingenious spatial configuration.

A museum should snatch up the entire assemblage, which manages to mine new possibilities for painting.