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Edited by David Ebony

Top 10 New York Gallery Exhibitions of 2024
David Ebony | December 29, 2024

9.) Elena Sisto at Bookstein Projects.

Elena Sisto: Trickster Makes This World (For Lewis Hyde) featured some two dozen recent works by the New York-based artist that are of intimate scale but epic content. They suggest complex myths or origin stories told with an economy of detail, gesture, and a bit of humor. The highly stylized figures and exaggerated contours of the landscapes and architectural details would seem to have their basis in cartooning and certain forms of post-Pop art. Sisto's New York Studio School background (emphasizing traditional painting and sculpture techniques), is evident, however, in the refined brushwork, layering and palimpsest-like surfaces. The images generally center on mythological themes, especially the elusive Hermes, one of the principal subjects of Lewis Hyde's 2010 book, whose title the exhibition pays homage to. Often the protagonists are female, although most of the figures are androgynous, as was the ideal in antiquity.

Elena Sisto, Hyppolyta II, 2019-23, mixed media, 12 x 12 inches. Photo courtesy Bookstein Projects.

Mostly grisaille, with touches of silver or red-orange, Sisto's compositions are sometimes nearly abstract, as in *Athena* (2019–24), in which the goddess of wisdom is impossibly—and comically—stretched to a stick figure. Her limbs reach to the corners of the ornate background made of irregular squares of gray, black, and orange. A foot-square composition, *Hyppolyta II* (2019–23) could work just as well at mural scale. Here, Sisto delivers a sense of awe and majesty of a mythic saga with the intimate reserve of a whispered tale.

Elena Sisto: Trickster Makes This World (For Lewis Hyde) was on view at Bookstein Projects, September 12–October 25, 2024.

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