

An oil painting of a man's face and upper torso. He has voluminous, dark brown curly hair. His eyes are a striking, light purple or lavender color. He has a small mole on his left cheek. His chest is covered in thick, dark brown hair. The background is a soft, muted greenish-grey.

MAMCO  
GENÈVE

MAMCO x MAH  
SYLVIA SLEIGH  
REFAIRE COLLECTION

MUSÉE RATH  
GENÈVE

05.06-  
25.10.2026

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Sylvia Sleigh (1916- 2010), *Double Image: Paul Rosano*, 1974, detail

Oil on canvas, 142.2 x 108 cm

Estate of Sylvia Sleigh. Courtesy of the Estate of Sylvia Sleigh and Ortuzar, New York

Photo: Steven Probert

# SYLVIA SLEIGH

British painter Sylvia Sleigh (1916–2010) produced the vast majority of her work in New York, where she settled in 1962 with her husband, the art critic Lawrence Alloway. This exhibition focuses on the individual and group portraits she painted in the 1960s and 1970s, works in which she probed questions of representation, using pose as a way of challenging the gendered conventions of Western art history. Sleigh's compositions also captured the artistic and intellectual circles in which she moved—a community of artists, writers, and friends, often depicted in indoor settings—and reflected her active involvement in New York feminist collectives such as A.I.R. and SOHO20. In her nudes, male and female alike, she eschewed objectification and chose instead to portray her subjects as individuals. Her work thus touches on themes of representation, the domestic, and the intimate.

This exhibition, organized by MAMCO—Geneva's museum of modern and contemporary art—is not the first time Sleigh's art has been shown in an institutional setting in Europe. It comes, however, amid a renewed wave of critical interest in her work, and in particular in her treatment of the nude and the alignment of her oeuvre with the feminist concerns of her day.

The show features some three dozen paintings divided into five sections. The first examines motifs drawn from art history—such as the odalisque, the muse, Orientalist imagery, and Renaissance paintings—and how Sleigh reworked them by reversing traditional gender roles. This shift in perspective carries over into the second section, which explores self-portraiture and the artist's involvement in the feminist installation *The Sister Chapel*.

The third section presents portraits of figures from the New York art scene of the 1970s. These works depict friends and intellectuals, including artists Marjorie Strider and Sylvia Pauloo-Taylor, gallerists Betty Parsons and Arnold Glimcher, as well as the A.I.R. group—all members of a community bound by friendships and shared interests, and all portrayed in domestic settings.

The final two sections of the exhibition focus on Sleigh's nudes, revealing her practice of emphasizing each sitter's subjectivity and individuality. They also highlight her interest in ornament, pattern, and texture, in the imagery of the hippie counter-culture she was part of at the time, and in matters of perspective.

Exhibition curated by Lionel Bovier and Elisabeth Jobin, with expert input and guidance from Andrew D. Hottle, Professor of Art History at Rowan University (New Jersey). It received support from the Sandoz Family Philanthropic Foundation, the Pictet Group Foundation, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, and the Fondation suisse pour l'édition d'art (FSEA).

# REFAIRE COLLECTION

Eleanor Antin, Alice Bailly, Louise Bourgeois, Louise Breslau, Aïse Corbaz, Nicole Eisenman, Leonor Fini, Jenna Gribbon, Guerrilla Girls, Silvia Kolbowski, Marie Laurencin, Jacqueline Marval, Alice Neel, Meret Oppenheim, Pipilotti Rist, Suzanne Santoro, Joan Semmel, Kiki Smith, Suzanne Valadon, Hannah Wilke, Irène Zurkinden

Women account for just 21% of the artists in the holdings of MAMCO—Geneva’s museum of modern and contemporary art—which is presenting this exhibition. Like many other institutional and private collections, it bears the marks of structural bias, shaped by a canon and a market that have long privileged men. Yet women have always made art, whether by painting, sculpting, or writing. Only recently have historians such as Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock brought into focus the extent to which women have been written out of art history.

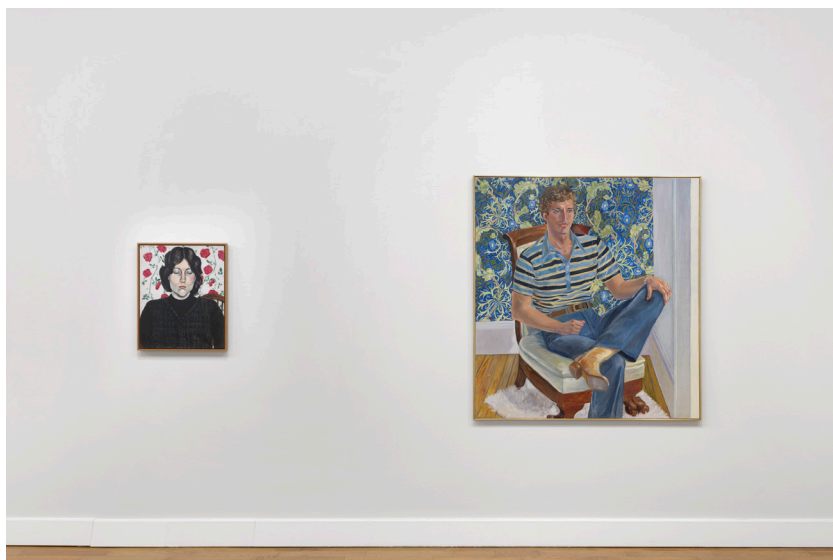
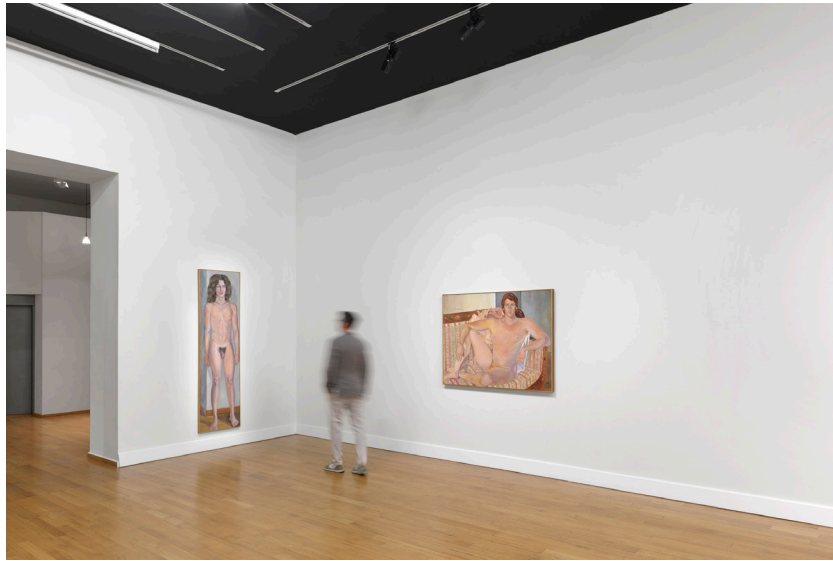
The exhibition *Refaire Collection* features works, all sourced from Swiss collections, by 21 prominent women artists working in the 20th century. It sketches an outline of what an ideal collection might look like: one in which the work of Western women artists was fully recognized from the outset.

The show also picks up on the themes explored in Sylvia Sleigh’s work, situating her oeuvre within a broader historical context. Jacqueline Marval and Eleanor Antin, for instance, revisit classical compositions and motifs, while paintings by Leonor Fini, Alice Neel, and Suzanne Valadon focus on how the body—their own, their model’s, the nude—is perceived. Marie Laurencin, Louise Breslau, and Irène Zurkinden, meanwhile, push back against the eroticizing filter through which female friendship has largely been depicted throughout art history, instead presenting images of genuine sisterhood. The exhibition opens with a Guerrilla Girls installation that foregrounds questions of self-assertion, pride, and empowerment—concerns also taken up by artists such as Joan Semmel and Kiki Smith.

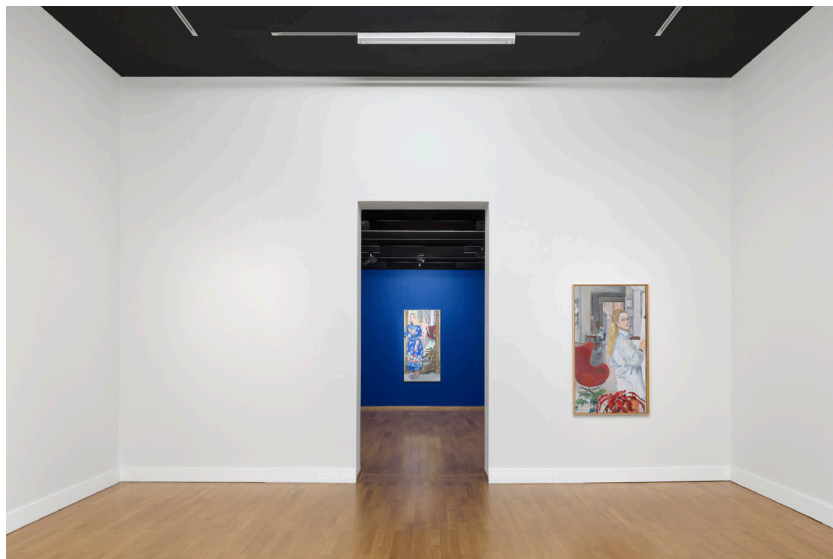
*Refaire Collection* is not about “rediscovering” works by forgotten artists: the women artists shown here have always been there—the art establishment has merely failed to see them. Rather, it is about prompting museums to reflect on how they might think differently about their collections in the future.

Exhibition curated by Lionel Bovier and Elisabeth Jobin, with accompanying critical texts and timeline developed as part of Giovanna Zapperi’s contemporary art history seminar at the University of Geneva.

# EXHIBITION VIEWS SYLVIA SLEIGH



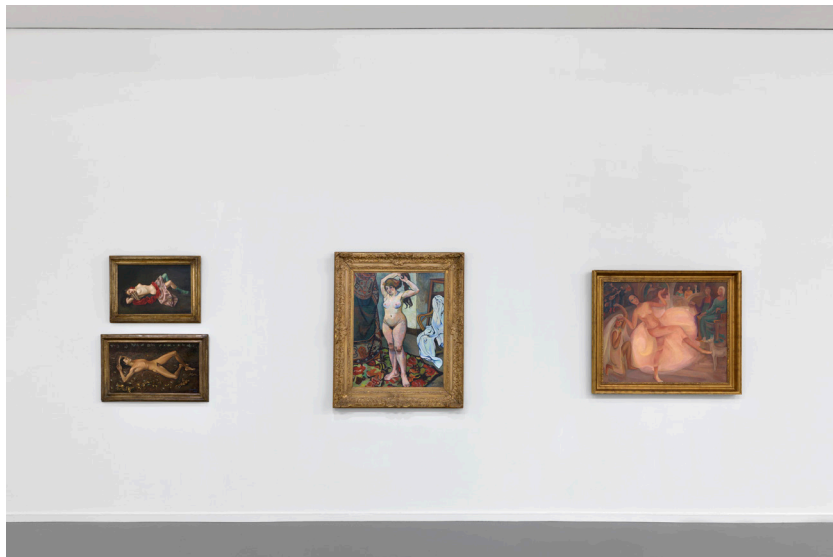
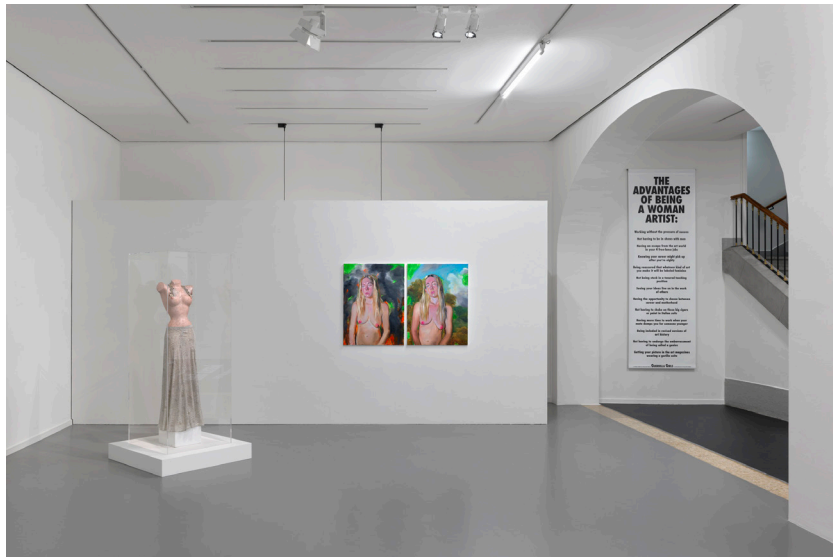
# EXHIBITION VIEWS SYLVIA SLEIGH



# EXHIBITION VIEWS REFAIRE COLLECTION



# EXHIBITION VIEWS REFAIRE COLLECTION



# ICONOGRAPHY SYLVIA SLEIGH



Sylvia Sleigh (1916-2010)  
*Marjorie Strider*, 1977  
Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 61 cm  
Coll. Ellen + Michael Ringier  
Photo © DR



Sylvia Sleigh (1916-2010)  
*Paul Rosano Seated Nude*, 1973  
Oil on canvas, 142,20 × 106,70 cm  
National Museum of Women in the  
Arts. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Russell  
Bowman © Sylvia Sleigh  
Photo Lee Stalsworth



Sylvia Sleigh (1916-2010)  
*Court of Pan (after Luca Signorelli)*,  
1973  
Oil on canvas, 198,10 × 292,10 cm  
Coll. Beth Rudin DeWoody  
Photo Steven Probert



Sylvia Sleigh (1916-2010)  
*Imperial Nude: Paul Rosano*, 1975  
Watercolour and pencil on paper,  
106.7 × 167.6 cm. Estate of Sylvia  
Sleigh. Courtesy of the Estate of  
Sylvia Sleigh and Ortuzar, New  
York  
Photo Steven Probert

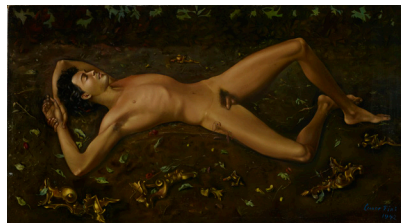
# ICONOGRAPHY REFAIRE COLLECTION



Alice Neel (1900-1984)  
*Joe Gould, 1933*  
Oil on canvas, 99,1 × 79,1 cm  
Photo © DR



Nicole Eisenman (1965–)  
*Golum, 2004*  
Watercolour and pencil on paper,  
70.7 × 109 cm  
Photo © DR



Leonor Fini (1908-1996)  
*Portrait de Nico, Monte Carlo*  
1942, 1942  
Oil on canvas, 85.5 × 53 cm  
MAH Musée d'art et d'histoire,  
Ville de Genève. Gift of Brigitte  
Mavromichalis, 1983  
Photo Flora Bevilacqua



Guerrilla Girls (fondé en 1985)  
*Guerrilla Girls' Portfolio Compleat: 1985-2012 with Upgrade 2012-2016, 1985-2016, 1985-2016*  
Set of four videos, 110 posters and stickers, five books, two newsletters, offset prints and digital prints on acid-free paper and photographic paper  
Variable dimensions for each item  
edition 50/50  
Coll. MAMCO  
Photo Annik Wetter – MAMCO Genève

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