

CAROLE GIBBONS

Will Heinrich, What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in April, The New York Times, 4 April 2024



Carole Gibbons, *Self-Portrait With Muse*, 1990-94. Photo by Matthew Barnes

Carole Gibbons

Through May 4. White Columns, 91 Horatio Street, Manhattan; 212-924-4212, whitecolumns.org.

As other writers have noted, the Scottish painter Carole Gibbons has an extraordinary gift for color. The dozen still lifes and one self-portrait in her imposing, and belated, American debut (she is 88) at White Columns favor complex earth tones offset by searing hot pink and turquoise. These unlikely combinations are bolstered by an awkward way with form, tables that tilt and vases whose upper lips float away.

What photographs don't capture so well is the imposing internal scale of Gibbons's compositions, which makes most of the paintings here larger-than-life still lifes. Everything about them projects forward and gives the show a startling jolt in person. Gibbons's influences include Gauguin, Bonnard and Picasso. (Note the pink Picassoid gaping compote in "Still Life, Pink Bowl and Fruit" (from around 1996-98). But it's also possible to see these works as filtering the domesticity of the School of Paris painting through Abstract Expressionism's often raw boldness.

While Gibbons applies her heated pastels in relatively

flat and thick layers, elsewhere she often varies color and brushwork, creating forms that feel light, even hollow. We see through the artist's right shoulder in "Self-Portrait With Muse" while her face is another kind of hollow: an empty-eyed mask not unlike the visage in Matisse's "Portrait of Yvonne Landsberg" (1914, Philadelphia Museum of Art).

Another jolt is simply Gibbons's obscurity. Her work has not been shown much outside of Scotland. It could have easily been included in the Royal Academy's "The New Spirit in Painting" show in 1981, which signaled the return of various sorts of figurative painting to the mainstream. But worry not, Gibbons's art will find its place in history.