

# ARTFORUM

REVIEWS PARIS

## Mira Schor

Bourse de Commerce

By Ida Panicelli



View of "Mira Schor: Moon Room," 2023–24. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

How many faces make up our personality? How many facets compose our identity? Behind how many masks do we hide our essence? Mira Schor shared all these questions with us in her soulful exhibition "Moon Room," with "Masks" and "Dresses" from 1977 to 1978 and one painting, *Time/Spirit (New Red Moon Room)*, 2022—all acquired by the Pinault Collection last year and, with one exception, never before exhibited. They are poetic works in profoundly touching dialogue with each other, not only thanks to their formal purity, but because they evoke individual and and at the same time collective dilemmas about identity, our relationship with family, and our role and responsibility in the world.



Ellen Gallagher, *Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish (detail)*, 2023, oil, pigment, palladium, and paper on canvas, 116 1/2 × 79 1/2".

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Twenty-one masks made of rice paper, installed under glass so they hang perpendicular to the gallery's walls, feature sketches of elongated oval faces. Consisting of two or more superimposed sheets, they are painted on both sides, with words written in hand on the outer or inner surface, traces of Schor's dreams, and personal reflections about the Holocaust. Almost all have openings for the eyes, and some for the mouth. They are fragile membranes, like the loose pages of a book of memories, containers of thoughts and history, metaphors for that dissimulation that each of us carries out in society in an attempt to avoid pain, violence, disillusion. But they also represent provisional identities we can wear to reinvent ourselves.

Schor's "Dresses" are delicate sheets of rice paper at a human scale. In *Dress Book: Angel*, 1977, made of semitransparent yellow paper, illegible fragmented words synthesize with the body, appearing carved into skin—memories of a past or hints of a desire, promises for a future to come, alluding to what migrants carry with them on their journey toward a new life. It made me think of our impermanence and vulnerability, of how just a few words summing up our existence can be a last line of defense against oblivion.

Both series evoke the experience of Schor's Polish-born parents, Ilya and Resia Schor, who fled Europe with the rise of Nazism while the rest of their families perished in the Holocaust and who found refuge in the United States in 1941, bringing with them what was essential: their Jewish tradition. These works bear witness to Schor's profound ties to the creative and intellectual roots of her parents, both of them artists, whose cultural legacy lives on in the richness of her multidisciplinary work as an artist, writer, feminist, and political activist.

With the large painting *Time/Spirit (New Red Moon Room)*, Schor revisits her 1972 work *Red Moon Room*. In the earlier piece, a young woman stands on a checkered floor greeting a bloodred moon with her right hand while her left hand rests on her belly. Now, fifty years later, allusions to the menstrual cycle and procreation are absent. The artist's representation of herself is stylized to the greatest degree, little more than a stick figure who lies in bed beneath the same vivid red moon. She holds between her hands an open book whose pages bear the words TIME and SPIRIT, playing with the German word *Zeitgeist*. In this oneiric atmosphere, Schor refers to the span of her creative and spiritual life and seems to make a gift to the moon of what she has received and achieved over the course of her existence. In this painting, the artist evokes her past, and she ferries us into the present in a spiral course through time, always remembering the fragility of the body and memory but bearing witness to her own inner strength.