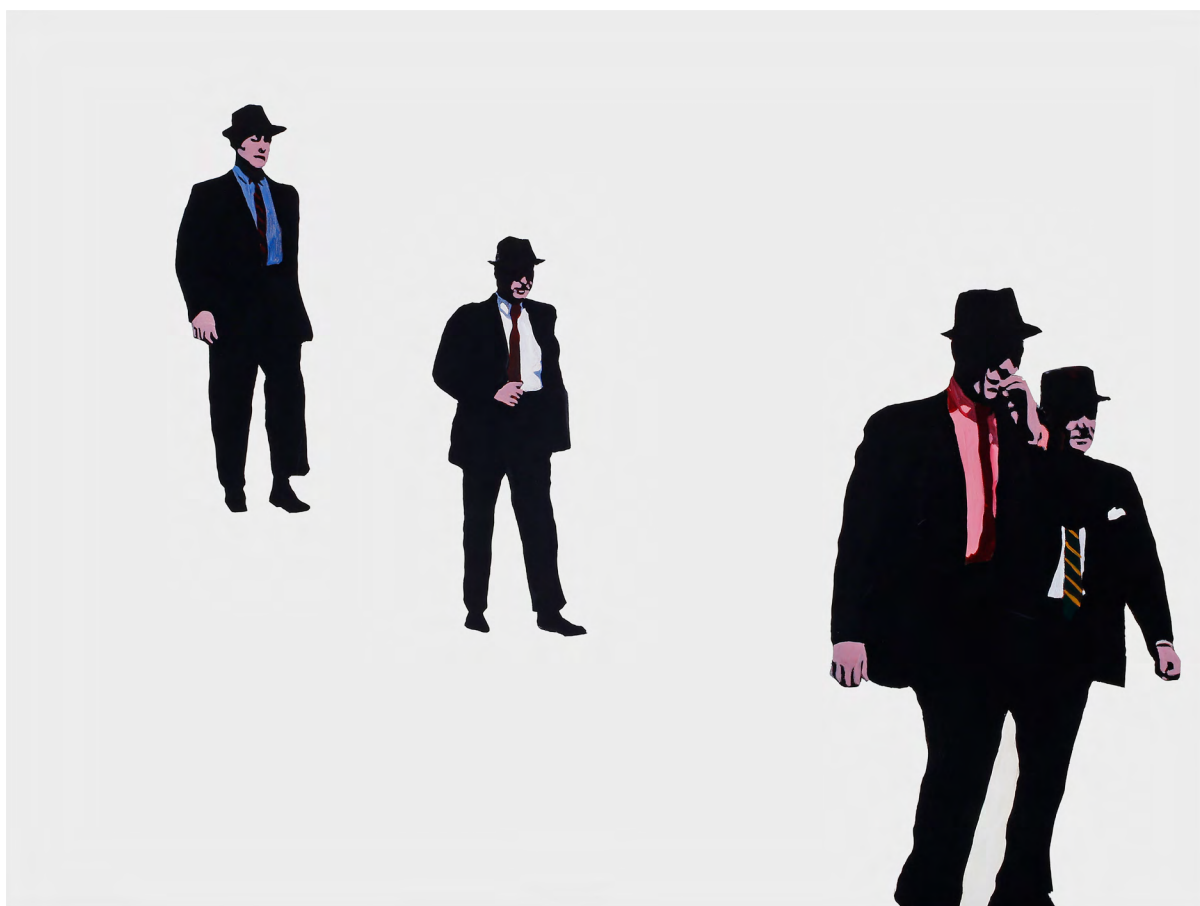


Around Boston



Rosalyn Drexler, *FBI*, 1964, acrylic and paper collage on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

In 2017 Mark Bradford will represent the United States at the Venice Biennale, with Brandeis University’s Rose Art Museum acting as the show’s commissioning institution. Bradford’s exhibition will be the second consecutive show for Venice’s U.S. pavilion presented by a university art gallery in the Boston area. (It follows Joan Jonas’s 2015 project for Venice, for which the MIT List Visual Arts Center was the presenting organization.)

Boston’s small but storied campus galleries have long served as stepping-stones for museum curators and directors on their way up, including Contemporary Arts Museum Houston director Bill Arning; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, chief curator Helen Molesworth; and Baltimore Museum of Art director Christopher Bedford. Although their target audience is nominally students and scholars, these institutions fill a vital need for noncanonical programming in a city with a scarcity of both commercial and not-for-profit exhibition spaces. Their importance in this regard for the broader gallery-going public was on display this past spring and summer, with a number of exhibition firsts at university art museums around Boston.

Organized by the Rose Art Museum, “Rosalyn Drexler: Who Does She Think She Is?” was the first full-career retrospective of the painter, playwright, novelist, and — briefly, in the 1950s — wrestler, who is now in her eighties. For the past 50-plus years, Drexler has been enlarging, collaging onto canvas, and overpainting film posters, pinups, and tabloid photos. Her earliest such pieces resonated with the Pop art of their time while anticipating, in their canny deconstruction of media imagery, the work of such Pictures Generation artists as Sarah Charlesworth.

The Rose’s exhibition included large-scale canvases like *Love and Violence* (1965) — in which a man grabs a woman by the throat, while frames from a horror film unfold below against a blood-red background — as well as photo and video documentation from the 1960s through the 1980s of Drexler’s theater pieces, which premiered at such avant-garde New York venues as the Judson Poets’ Theater and Theater for the New City. Brandeis students staged *Room 17C* (1983), the artist’s feminist fusion of Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*.

Drexler’s latest revival, along with such exhibitions as the Brooklyn Museum’s 2010 show “Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958–1968” and last year’s “International Pop” at the Walker Art Center (both of which included her work), is part of a recent reevaluation of Pop art that goes beyond the largely Anglo-American, white male artists with whom it has historically been associated.

—Samuel Adams