

The New York Times

Rose B. Simpson: "What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in March"

By Will Heinrich

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Works by Rose B. Simpson, all from 2022, from left, "Vital Organ: Stomach," "Reclamation IV," and "Vital Organ: Heart." Credit... via Rose B. Simpson and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco

CHELSEA

Rose B. Simpson

Through April 8. Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th Street, Manhattan; 212-645-1701, jackshainman.com.

Rose B. Simpson makes bold, otherworldly clay figures in New Mexico's Santa Clara Pueblo, adapting and updating ceramic techniques passed down from her mother, her grandmother and a long line of potters before them.

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Some of the pieces in "Road Less Traveled," her first solo exhibition in New York, comprise only heads and torsos, like Egyptian funerary jars; in "Conjure II," a head alone looks up through a cloud of rings. But several of Simpson's people are fully formed, with precise legs and torsos, impossibly long necks, and narrow, empty eye sockets. Instead of arms, "Release" has a long necklace of clay beads hanging down from loops on its shoulders. Lengths of twine are wrapped around its breast, and it's speckled with fingerprint-shaped white and gray daubs, as if it had climbed out of some ancient riverbed and sculpted itself. In all of them, Simpson achieves a surprising depth and sense of range with her agile use of a small number of visual elements — Xs that become crosses, pairs of short dashes that look like quotation marks or equals signs, three or four natural shades of red and yellow.

Wandering around the show looking at Simpson's handsome, solemn faces, you may wonder what they're doing here. Are they spirits? Gods? Self-portraits? The dead? But when you notice that most of the pieces, though they evoke water jars, have no openings but their eyes, you'll understand — they're witnesses. *WILL HEINRICH*

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