

The New Yorker

## Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro

<https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/art/surfacdepth-the-decorative-after-miriam-schapiro>



Schapiro, who died in 2015, at the age of ninety-one, was a second-generation Abstract Expressionist turned first-generation feminist artist. She also became a leading figure in the Pattern and Decoration movement—a more-is-more retort to Minimalism, in the nineteen-seventies—and coined the portmanteau “femmege” to describe her ebullient, intricate, textile-and-paint compositions. By maintaining that domestic craft techniques and materials could also be used in fine art, Schapiro lit the path for countless artists who followed; this exhibition pairs examples from her *œuvre* with an inspired selection of paintings, assemblages, and sculptures by others, which echo not only Schapiro’s formal strategies but also her politics, with tongue-in-cheek deployments of decorative elements. Ruth Root’s colorful homage to her feminist-art forebears, made specifically for this occasion, is a shaped canvas with a scalloped edge, very much in the spirit of Schapiro’s own fan- and heart-shaped femmeages. Sanford Biggers repurposes

antique quilts, embellishing their found geometry with sequins and paint to reflect on African-American traditions of abstraction. Sara Rahbar mines her Iranian-American heritage in customized Union Jacks, in which the white-on-blue stars are attended by densely sewn stripes made of decorative trim found in Kurdistan, camouflage-print military waist packs, name patches, and ammo.

Location:

Museum of Arts and Design

2 Columbus Circle

Midtown