

Big Figures

CENTRAL TO America Martin's work is the human figure. In fact, the Los Angeles-based artist refers to herself as a painting anthropologist—a title that underscores her use of the body as a signifier of culture and weaver of narrative rather than a purely decorative element. Reminiscent of Fernand Léger's unique, proto-Pop form of Cubism, Martin's work across mediums pictures female figures with



bold, block-like limbs and faces, outlined in thick, decisive black lines. These figures fill space and strike a commanding presence. “I’m doing what art has been doing forever,” Martin said in 2019 about her use of the female nude, “though I’m able to have more real estate—when I say ‘real estate,’ I mean, scope of joy and confidence in the way that I portray women—because I am a woman.”

TEW Galleries of Atlanta opens “America Martin, New Works, Solo Exhibition” on July 24. The exhibition, which runs through August 26, finds Martin again working with the female figure in a style remi-



niscent of early 20th century modernism.

In *Woman in Violet & Red* (oil, acrylic, spray paint on canvas) and *Woman in Pink* (oil and acrylic, spray paint on canvas), Mar-

tin's women are crouched forward in a squatting position. A contemporary take on the nude, the figures are seen in a confident, Instagram-worthy pose, revealing their bodies in a way that feels assertive and in control. *Woman in Blues and Browns* (oil, acrylic on canvas), a brilliant study in color, is similarly confident and body-for-

ward. The figure, which holds a flower, is muse-like, in a manner equally applicable to the antique and the online.

The male form finds his way into the show, too. *Man, Towel*



and *Rock by the Sea* (oil, acrylic & spray paint on canvas) brings to mind Marsden Hartley's big beach hunks. Taking a knee on the sand, the figure towels off, modestly crossing his body with his arms.