

eric firestone gallery



Shirley Gorelick (b. Brooklyn, NY, 1924; d. Washington, D.C., 2000) is known for her humanist paintings of subjects who have not traditionally been heroized in large-scale portraiture. She painted middle-aged couples, including a bi-racial couple, two psychoanalysts, and a wheelchair-user with her husband. She also re-examined art historical works through a contemporary female gaze, casting the Three Graces as three African-American men, for example.

A native of Brooklyn, NY, Shirley Gorelick was a student of Brooklyn College and Teachers College at Columbia University. Studying under Hans Hofmann, Gorelick experimented with several media including oil and acrylic painting, etching, silverpoint, terra cotta, marble, and wood. Although her early works largely explored Abstract Expressionism, Gorelick soon decided to go back to realism. Early on, she created a series of paintings that reinterpreted abstract and cubist masterpieces such as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, to which she added physical volume to Picasso's subjects.

Gorelick remains best known for her portraits, painted in jarring colors and heavy brushstrokes that she developed during the 1960s. They feature individuals or groups and explore the relationships between family members, friends, strangers, and the artist herself. In the 1970s, Gorelick painted another series, depicting interracial families and celebrating black women in compositions that were brutally honest and filled with psychological tension. The ambivalent expressions and solemn demeanors of the sitters force the viewer to analyze both the figures' body language and their surroundings, which frequently included objects drawn from the models' own environments.

In the context of the feminist movement, Gorelick became involved with artist-run, women's cooperative galleries. In 1973, she became a founding member of Central Hall Artists Gallery, an all-women artist-run gallery in Port Washington, New York. Between 1975 and 1986, she had six solo exhibitions at SOHO20 and participated in numerous group shows. In 1976, Gorelick painted a nine-foot portrait of Frida Kahlo for "The Sister Chapel," a feminist collaboration by thirteen artists which celebrated female role models and premiered its installation at P.S. 1 in Long Island City.

Gorelick's work is found in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY, the Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport, CT, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., and the

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Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA, among others. She is represented by Eric Firestone Gallery where she was the subject of a three-person show, *What About the Human Figure* (2019), and a major solo presentation of work, *Shirley Gorelick: Family* (2022). She was recently the subject of solo exhibitions at the Provincetown Art Association in 2025, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts in 2026.