

Eleanor Antin, "Helen's Odyssey"

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Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, through Mar 15 (see Soho)

Although the roster of artists represented in most galleries tips heavily toward men, Ronald Feldman has four artists, including Eleanor Antin, in P.S. 1's "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution." One of Antin's works in that show, 1972's *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (a series of photographic nude self-portraits documenting a 36-day diet), was described once by critic Cindy Nesmer as the body "refining itself down... to an aesthetic Greek sculpture." This classical idea resonates in the artist's current show, "Helen's Odyssey," which extends her interests in history or "herstory" and allegory, themes she's mined over 30 years.

The show opens with a quote from the oracle at Delphi: "In Sparta will be



born a queen so beautiful she will be stolen away by a Trojan prince." So goes the Greek myth of Helen of Troy,

retold here in nine large theatrical photographs. Antin presents an anachronistic crew of warriors and

goddesses posing in front of painted backdrops that reference art history, as if to insert a feminist narrative into the past or create a new mythology for the future. Most emblematic of this is *Judgment of Paris (after Rubens)*—*Dark Helen*, where Paris examines a gun-toting militant (Athena), a beautiful sexpot (Aphrodite) and a '50s-era housewife (Hera), while a brunette version of Helen sits on the sidelines.

Antin's recent work captured an elegiac, post-9/11 mood. This new work shows a lighter heart and a biting wit as the artist returns to her investigation of the enduring (mis)representation of women as sex objects, using a light heart and biting wit. The show leaves you wondering what Antin will cook up next—and whether she'll return to autobiographical themes.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler