WOMEN BY WOMEN

Miranda Forrester by Stephanie E. Goodalle

Painting the fluidities of queer Black women's lives.

JULY 15, 2026

Miranda Forrester, *Bathers*, 2026, oil and gloss on polycarbonate, 24 × 15.75 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

Tender moments are carefully rendered in Miranda Forrester's paintings. The British painter depicts queer Black women lounging, congregating, and simply being within domestic spaces. Each stroke is applied with certainty, and her use of elements such as transparent materials adds visual complexity, while her incorporation of negative space opens the work to a brightness that emboldens her choice of colors and textures, and makes her created environments feel very alive. In her current exhibition, Forrester returns to themes and motifs, such as interior spaces and water, explored in earlier bodies of work.

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Stephanie E. Goodalle
Describe your ideal day in the studio.

Miranda Forrester
My ideal studio day begins with a walk and some gentle Pilates and stretching so that I arrive in my body before I arrive at the work. On the best days, I'm able to focus entirely on painting without admin or meetings pulling me away. I'm already excited by whatever I'm working on, so there's a sense of momentum as soon as I step into the space. The light is good; the temperature is warm; there's a great soundtrack playing; and I know exactly what I want to explore in the work. It's that combination of clarity, energy, and uninterrupted time that makes the day feel expansive.

Miranda Forrester, *Evening rituals II*, 2026, oil and gloss on polycarbonate, 24 × 15.75 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

SEG

Who are you painting, and why is their presence significant for you?

MF

I paint many of the people in my life: friends, acquaintances, and sometimes people I barely know. What draws me to them is our shared community and lived experiences as queer Black women. This is who I make the work for, and it matters to me that their presence and stories are reflected with honesty and care. I also paint myself and my family often. Documenting our life as a queer, mixed-race family has become an important part of my practice, especially the joy and transformation that becoming a mother has brought. Through these portraits, I'm creating the kinds of narratives I rarely saw represented in art growing up. I'm interested in placing contemporary figures within historical settings and themes, while allowing these stories—our stories—to take up space in visual histories that have often excluded us.

"I've always been drawn to cinematic, literary, and musical worlds that capture the tension and tenderness of queer intimacy."

— Miranda Forrester

SEG

Themes and motifs that are common in your practice are those of water, robes, bathing rituals, plant life, and more. In this new show, what worlds are you creating and/or extending?

MF

This series continues my exploration of interior spaces and private exteriors as sites of queer freedom and sensual clarity. I wanted the figures to inhabit environments that feel abundant, peaceful, and open—places that could hold a sense of queer utopia. These are moments of stillness and rest, where Black women can exist as their most expansive selves. The spaces around them function as part of the emotional landscape, offering a quiet form of liberation. I've always been drawn to cinematic, literary, and musical worlds that capture the tension and tenderness of queer intimacy. Across many of these influences, water appears again and again. For me, water is a threshold; it is a liminal space where bodies loosen, identities shift, and desire moves without constraint. It's a site of transformation and rebirth, which aligns closely with the themes I've been exploring in my practice.

Bathing rituals, mirrors, and reflections are central motifs in this show. Some figures are solitary and caught in intimate moments of self-observation. In a world where women are conditioned to constantly monitor, adjust, and scrutinize our bodies, I want these paintings to imagine something different: a world where we can be at peace with our bodies and generous with the ways they change throughout our lives.

SEG

Your paintings often start off as drawings. What is the deciding factor that a drawing will become a painting?

MF

It's largely instinctual. I can usually visualize immediately whether a drawing will translate into a painting, and on which material. Some compositions naturally lend themselves to canvas, while others feel right for the polycarbonate sheeting I use. I try not to overthink that first instinct. Most of my drawings are made from life, and I produce them quickly so that I don't hesitate or over-edit. I make a large volume knowing that many will be discarded or set aside in a folder until something clicks later. At the end of a drawing session, one or two will stand out because they hold an energy or clarity that makes me want to take them further. Those are the ones that become paintings.

Miranda Forrester, *Poolside (study)*, 2026, pencil on paper, 16 × 10 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

SEG

Your scenes often leave an ample amount of negative space in the figures and their environment. Why?

MF

The use of negative space and unfilled areas creates a sense of openness and fluidity, which is something that to me feels very much like water: shifting, reflective, and difficult to contain. I've become increasingly interested in the relationship between water and queerness. Water resists fixed boundaries; it flows, seeps, evaporates, transforms. In many ways, it mirrors the fluidity of queer identity, which often defies rigid categorization and embraces multiplicity. There's a kind of liberation in that lack of containment, and I try to echo it through ambiguity, softness, and the dissolution of form. Negative space also allows the viewer to enter the work differently. I believe you can say as much through what you leave out as through what you choose to render. Finding that balance—between presence and absence, solidity and openness—is a constant negotiation in my painting process.

SEG

What caused you to begin using translucent surfaces such as polycarbonate sheets in your practice?

MF

I started using transparent surfaces because I've always been visually drawn to transparency and translucent textures within painting. Initially it was an instinct, and I didn't fully understand why I was so compelled by these materials, only that they held a particular kind of beauty. There's something about the way light passes through them that reminds me of stained glass: luminous, shifting, alive. Working on polycarbonate also changes the behaviour of the oil paint completely. The paint sits on the surface rather than being absorbed, which creates a much more fluid, responsive way of working. It's possible to remove marks, but it's messy and unpredictable, so I rarely do. Instead, the material forces me to be decisive and confident in my mark-making, which is a quality I deeply admire in other artists' work and one that has shaped my own practice. I'm also drawn to the layering these surfaces allow. When the work is framed, the shadows cast onto the wall create a second image behind the painting, so the piece shifts depending on its environment. I love that sense of transformation and how the work can be altered by the light, the space, or what surrounds it. The figures themselves feel different on this surface too—somehow more alive—as if the light moving through them adds another layer of depth and presence.

Installation view of *Miranda Forrester*, 2026. Kristin Hjellegjerde, West Palm Beach, Florida. Photo byJacek Gancarz. Courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

SEG

What do you hope viewers take away from this show?

MF

In a time marked by uncertainty, division, and injustice, I want these works to offer something peaceful, hopeful, and beautiful. So much of my practice is about healing, respite, and recovery; it's about reconnecting with your inner self, your interiorities, and finding moments of stillness in a world that constantly demands productivity and achievement. I hope viewers experience a brief pause from the pressures of everyday life—a moment of softness and grounding. I hope viewers leave with a sense of pause and possibility as a brief moment where they feel lighter, more grounded, and more connected to themselves.

Miranda Forrester *is on view at Kristin Hjellegjerde in West Palm Beach, Florida, until September 12.*

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Stephanie E. Goodalle is a multihyphenate arts producer oscillating between Maryland, District of Columbia, and New York City. Her writing and interviews have appeared in BOMB, *Art Papers*, *Burnaway*, and several artists monographs. She's the founder and principal of Goodalle Art Advisory. Goodalle was previously BOMB's Oral History Fellow and is currently a contributing editor.

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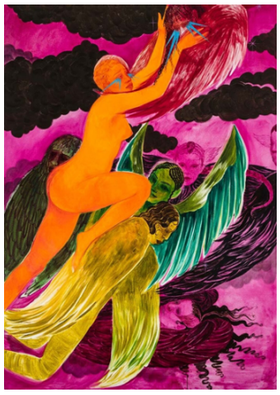

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