

## CRITICS' PICKS

## New York

**Maryam Hoseini**

RACHEL UFFNER GALLERY

170 Suffolk Street

November 5–December 23

Maryam Hoseini wields abstraction as a tool for flattening and blending social space. In “Of Strangers and Parrots,” her first solo show with this gallery, stripes become serpents, limbs become lakes, and penciled-in leg hairs become hieroglyphs. Whole figures are discernable, but they are piled on top of one another or stacked. This collapse of body and background into airless, stylized planes creates unease.

The people in Hoseini’s paintings live on thin margins. The artist hints at their identities with declarative titles such as *Don’t Talk about Women If You Are a Liar*, *Women Liars Are Losers*, and *Liars Make Women Promise* (all works 2017). It is, of course, impossible to separate the women from the liars—Hoseini seems to simultaneously revel in and reject this state of discomfiture.

By laying bare feelings of confinement and confusion with art-historical imagery, Hoseini sets a stage for looking at homosocial spaces and the paradoxical ways they are preserved in contemporary life. Whether it’s a bathroom in New York City or a hammam in her native Iran, these spaces have continually provided the architecture for the oppression of the other. But rather than shy away from her involvement in this terrain, the artist implicates herself in its construction and maintenance through her own false dichotomies: liars versus women, abstraction versus figuration. By creating a heightened sense of self-awareness, Hoseini asks viewers to give themselves over to intersectional thinking.



Maryam Hoseini, *Don't Talk about Women If You Are a Liar* (detail), 2017, acrylic, ink, pencil, latex, dimensions variable.

—[Kat Herriman](#)