

# The New York Times

## What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now

By **Will Heinrich**, **Martha Schwendener** and **John Vincler**

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*Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Tom Fairs has two shows, one on the Upper East Side, the other in TriBeCa. And don't miss the group show "Drawings by Sculptors" at Helena Anrather on the Bowery, and Shala Miller's photographs and sculptures at Lyles & King in Chinatown.*

CHINATOWN

### Shala Miller

Through Feb. 18. Lyles & King, 19 Henry Street, Manhattan; 646-484-5478, [lylesandking.com](http://lylesandking.com).



Installation view of Shala Miller's "Obsidian" at Lyles & King. via Shala Miller and Lyles & King, New York; Photo by Charles Benton

Shala Miller has created a room full of deep affect: Anger and melancholy are coupled with an insistence on beauty that reads as determination and cleareyed hope. The feelings in this Brooklyn-based artist's show "Obsidian" may be raw, but each artwork — across photographs, sculptures and video — is refined, recalling the lustrous black volcanic glass created by a destructive force that gives the exhibition its name.

The lush soundtrack of the lone video work, "Obsidian Theme" (2023), floods the space and sets the mood. Beginning a cappella in a mode of spirituals, blues and children's double Dutch or clap-game rhyming songs, the soundtrack shifts into a mash-up of styles from Nina Simone, Radiohead and Meredith Monk via a looping sung refrain. Two paired photographs, "The Making of a Superhero" and "The Making of a Supervillain" (both 2022), feature text, roughly hand-engraved onto the plexiglass face of their frames, like diamond-cut graffiti on a subway train window. The phrases — including "powers still unclear," "under constant threat but also threatening" — reveal

the artist herself, as the title character or alter ego, in the role of Obsidian. Despite the titles' phrasing, the persona that emerges seems closer to ancient myth than to comic books. In the photographs, we see the artist multiplied in various states of undress emerging from a dark background. Also included are two sculptures, or "inaction figures," with accompanying poster advertisements. As I took in the museum-ready show, I wondered: Is power a feeling? *JOHN VINCLER*

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