

THE NEW YORKER

Mary Beth Edelson

by Andrea K. Scott
April 8, 2019

Every person who owns a T-shirt that reads “The Future Is Female” should be required by law to see this show of works from the feminist past. The main event is the “Great Goddess Cut-Outs,” a totemic series of painted silhouettes from the mid-nineteen-seventies, which Edelson made in her SoHo loft, where art and life, private ritual and public protest, all bled together. Eighteen of these abstracted figures—titles include “Shell Venus,” “Bird Isis,” and “Louise”—line the walls of one room, surrounding visitors like an orderly coven. An intimate series of black-and-white photographs from the same era hangs nearby, self-portraits of the artist performing outdoors in far-flung locales (Iceland, Yugoslavia). Edelson appears as a blur in most of these pictures. The artist isn’t present so much as she’s evanescent—a shape-shifting pioneer.