

Mary Frank

As If for the First Time

December 4, 2025 –
January 10, 2026

Opening Reception:
Saturday, December 6

**Terry Tempest Williams in
conversation with Mary Frank**

**Conversation at 4:30 pm,
reception until 6:30 pm**



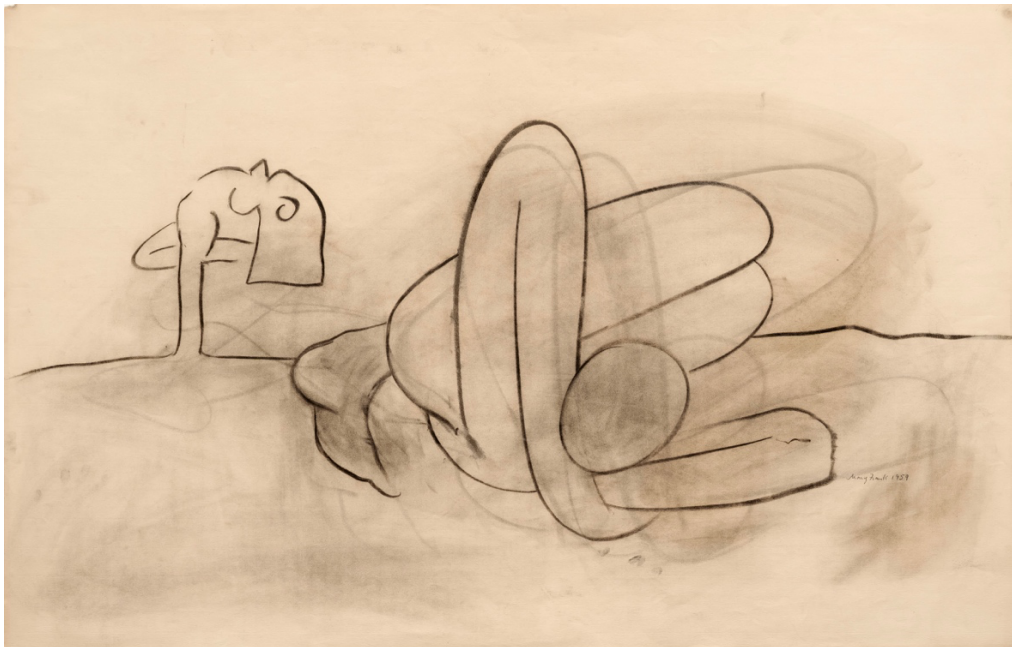
As If for the First Time, 2025. Oil, acrylic, and collage on board, 27 x 19 in.

And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

(Seamus Heaney, "Postscript," from *The Spirit Level*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996.)

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to present *Mary Frank: As If for the First Time*. Featuring new paintings, collages, and sculpture, and previously unseen drawings, this exhibition focuses on recurrence, discovery, and Frank's regenerative mining of her own archive. This selection of work explores the evolution and throughlines of Mary Frank's distinctive visual language. In her latest works, Frank recombines fragments of previous pieces, both materially and conceptually, remixing time and mediums to present a world familiar yet ever mysterious.

Charcoal drawings from 1959, the earliest works included in the exhibition, depict monumental women reclined in serpentine positions on vast horizon lines. These figure drawings were inspired by memories of sketches done on the beach over many summers in Cape Cod. Frank would dig herself a place in the sand so that she was at eye level to the water, creating a forced perspective where figures close to her would appear immense. Exploring the transformation of the figure in space, these drawings shed new light on Frank's acclaimed wood and clay sculptures of abstracted female forms from the 1960s and 70s.



At The Horizon, 1959. Charcoal on paper, 25 ¾ x 40 in.

Frank's approach to the human body is also deeply informed by her time as a dancer. In the late 1940s, she took classes with Martha Graham, an influence that can be seen in Frank's sense of rhythm and movement. Frank attributes to Graham her interest in the architecture of the body, its ability to create lines, columns, and walls, as well as the power of gesture. Across the collages and paintings, hands reach outwards in gestures of offering or questioning.

Her new collages suggest a relationship to performance, with brightly colored silhouettes posed on black velvet paper. Using electric, complimentary color combinations, Frank creates dynamic contrasts and harmonies. She describes these pairings as "colors that fight but are also forgiving of each other." The silhouetted figures in the collages are in fact stencils which Frank used repeatedly to make monoprints over many years, reassembled into new forms. The paper shows the traces of these past lives, with layers of paint and ink creating unique patinas.

Frank's new collages and sculptures recall ancient Greek vase paintings in their mythical imagery and compositional contrast between power and delicacy. The ceramic sculpture groups are composed of individual figures that Frank created in the 1980s, used in her photography practice, and now have been given a third life. Human, plant, and animal forms are metamorphosed into new beings that appear timeless yet everchanging.

Artist and activist **Mary Frank** was born in England in 1933 and came to New York in 1940, fleeing the bombings of London during World War II. During her formative years she made semi-abstract figures carved from wood and plaster. A shift to clay in the late sixties was a revelation as she discovered an improvisatory process. In the early '70s she broke into public view with distinctive clay sculptures of the female form. Since then, she has made work in a broad range of media including sculptures in clay, cast bronze, and plaster along with paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs.

The artist has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including the 2022 retrospective exhibition, *Mary Frank: The Observing Heart*, at the Samuel Dorsky Museum in New Paltz, NY, accompanied by a

catalogue with essay by curator David Hornung, and *Mary Frank: Finding My Way Home*, which originated at the Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, NC, in 2014 and traveled to the Butler Institute in Youngstown, OH, in 2015.

Eakins Press Foundation has published three collaborations between Mary Frank and the environmental activist and author Terry Tempest Williams, the 2020 chapbook *A Burning Testament, What My Body Knows* in 2022 and final chapbook in the trilogy, *We are Not Alone* in 2024. In 2017, a solo exhibition at DC Moore Gallery coincided with the publication of the monograph, *Pilgrimage: Photographs by Mary Frank*, by the Eakins Press Foundation with texts by the poet and critic John Yau and Terry Tempest Williams. In 2014, the documentary film, *Visions of Mary Frank*, was produced and released by filmmaker John Cohen. Masks made by Mary Frank will be featured in the upcoming performance of “Searching for Goya” by Noche Flamenca at the Joyce Theater in New York City, which will run from January 27 – February 8, 2026.

Mary Frank’s work is in many public collections, including The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; The Brooklyn Museum, NY; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; The Fogg Art Museum, MA; The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; The Jewish Museum, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; The Morgan Library and Museum, NY; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Museum of Modern Art, NY; The National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; Storm King Art Center, NY; The Whitney Museum, NY; and The Yale University Art Gallery, CT.

Since the early 90s Mary Frank has worked closely with Solar Cookers International, an organization that distributes solar cookers to the world. Using only heat from the sun, Frank writes, “We cooked on the sidewalk outside the United Nations... meat, rice, fish, bread, beans and purified water... everything can be cooked under the sun.”

Mary Frank is married to musicologist Leo Treitler. They live and work in New York City and Bearsville, NY.



Indivisible, 2025. Adobolite, acrylic, mixed media, 30 x 25 x 20 in.

DC Moore Gallery specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am-6pm. For more information, photographs, or to arrange a viewing please call 212-247-2111 or email Caroline Magavern at cmagavern@dcmooregallery.com.