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The logo for the Museum of Art at the University of New Hampshire, featuring the text "Museum of Art" in white on a blue rectangular background.

DURHAM, NH - The Museum of Art at the University of New Hampshire is pleased to present *Myths Retold: Paintings by Rosemarie Beck*, on view at the Museum of Art at the University of New Hampshire January 26 – April 1, 2023. The public is invited to a free opening reception on Thursday, January 26, 4:00-6:00pm. All programs are open to the public and free of charge. The Museum will be closed March 13-18 for Spring Break.

Myths Retold: Paintings by Rosemarie Beck presents a collection of paintings and embroideries spanning more than 40 years of the artist's career from the mid-1970s through the early 2000s, exploring gendered relationships and universal themes of love, sacrifice, and power, through scenes from classical Greek mythology and English literature.

Rosemarie Beck (1923-2003) was active for nearly fifty years as a painter and teacher. She was an intellectual and passionate force, soaking up contemporary art movements in 1940s New York as a student studying with the Surrealist painter Kurt Seligmann, abstract expressionist painter Robert Motherwell and later befriending Philip Guston, her neighbor, in Woodstock, New York. Though considered by art historians to be a student of second wave Abstract Expressionism, Beck abandoned abstraction in the late 1950s focusing on narrative paintings inspired by Greek mythology and English literature for the remainder of her career. This exhibition includes seventeen paintings and two dazzling embroideries (she turned to needlework when she tired of standing at her easel) depicting pivotal moments in the lives of female characters at the heart of classical mythology.

Beck hews closely to historical texts, but contemporizes the scenes: instead of a lyre, Orpheus strums a guitar; Diana wears a chic white maillot bathing suit; dogs and cats make appearances, too. She explores female characters like Phaedra and Antigone, often revisiting the characters decades apart, reworking the compositions, and reframing the scenes. Beck examines female characters in moments of crisis: Atalanta, arms and legs pumping, trying to outrun her suitor, Phaedra in bed humiliated, ruined, and in despair, and a terrified Miranda pursued by Caliban. The scenes depicted are often about the agency of female characters and the societal mores that constrained their actions. In this way, Beck questioned the roles of women and the dynamics of relationships. It should be noted that Beck also explores tragic myths featuring male characters: Orpheus, and Dedalus and Icarus, among others. These ancient stories reveal as much as they explain human experiences; serving as timeless explorations of how people interact with one another and the world around them.

Myths Retold: Paintings by Rosemarie Beck is enriched by the scholarly insights of UNH students in the course, *CLAS 601: The Power of Myth*; Paul Robertson, Senior Lecturer in Classics, Humanities, and Italian Studies; and R. Scott Smith, Department Chair, Classics, Humanities, and Italian Studies. The students' exhibition labels, and catalog entries help viewers understand the nuances in Beck's interpretation and the relevance of studying ancient myths and their literary sources today.

This exhibition was made possible by a gift of paintings from the Rosemarie Beck Foundation (RBF) which wished to see Beck's legacy as an artist and teacher continue. The RBF recognized the educational mission of the Museum of Art, donating 12 paintings and studies to the collection, four of which are on view. Beck inspired generations of students at Queens College of New York, Vassar College, Middlebury

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College, the Vermont Studio Center, Parsons School of Design, and the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, where she was on the faculty until shortly before she died.

Works by Rosemarie Beck lent by the Rosemarie Beck Foundation. All exhibitions are supported by the Friends of the Museum of Art.

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Programs:

Opening Reception: *Myths Retold: Paintings by Rosemarie Beck* and *Grant Drumheller: In the Garden*. January 26, 2023, 4:00-6:00pm at the Museum of Art.

Doria Hughes: A Storytelling Event Exploring the Work of Rosemarie Beck. February 8, 2023, 12:10-1:30pm / Zoom / Register at <https://cola.unh.edu/museum-art>

Gallery Talk with Museum of Art Fellows: *Myths Retold: Paintings by Rosemarie Beck*. Feb 22, 2023, 12:10-1:00pm, Museum of Art

Interpreting Paintings by Rosemarie Beck: A Conversation with Museum of Art Fellows, UNH students in the course, CLAS 601: The Power of Myth, and Paul Robertson, Senior Lecturer in Classics, Humanities, and Italian Studies. March 29, 2023, 12:10-1:00, Museum of Art

Learning From a Great Teacher: Professor Brian Chu and Artist Shiao-Ping Wang discuss lessons learned from Rosemarie Beck. February 15, 2023, 12:10- 1:00, Museum of Art

Parking information for UNH may found at <https://www.unh.edu/transportation/>
Museum hours may be found at <https://cola.unh.edu/museum-art>

Image below

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Rosemarie Beck, *Phaedra* 1999, oil on linen, 52" x 64," 1999. Courtesy of the Rosemarie Beck Foundation.

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