Don't be put off by the yawn-inducing title of the Jewish Museum's "Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism." The show is a punchy, punchy look at the women's art movement, one that takes as much inspiration from Marcia Tucker's "Bad Girls" survey of 1984 as it does from more comprehensive, conventional shows of feminist art. Drawn mostly from the museum's collection, the show parallels recent and related efforts by the Museum of Modern Art, among other museums, to highlight art made by women.

But it has a different feel, perhaps because the artists (almost all Jewish) invoke religious identity as often as gender. "Shifting the Gaze" you could say, invokes not only the stereotype of the "bad girl" but also the "nice Jewish girl." It also includes some "nice Jewish boys" with feminist sympathies.

The exhibition begins with a studio portrait of a bust by young Lee Krasner from 1930 and ends with Nicole Eisenman's brand-new painting "Seder," a distinctly untraditional depiction of the Passover meal. In between are plenty of other smart, nervy works that grapple with feminism and Judaism, often simultaneously.

Organized by the associate curator Daniel Belasco, who is also working on a book about feminist consciousness in New York School art, the 32-painting show is concise yet deep. It's smartly installed, too: Six themed sections play fast and loose with chronology, creating novel, intergenerational clubs instead of falling back on first wave/second wave distinctions.

The first gallery zeroes in on Abstract Expressionist works by women on the verge of something else, be it Pop or Minimalism or Pattern and Decoration. Most riveting is Miriam Schapiro's "Fantric," a vividly vivid gestural abstraction from 1969; it reminds you that Ms. Schapiro was an accomplished member of the Cedar Tavern gang before she rejected abstraction in favor of fabric "femmages.

Another surprise comes from Judy Chicago, who with Ms. Schapiro spearheaded the Feminist Art Program at CalArts in the early 1960s. The work here, "Skin Flesh" (1977), reveals glimpses of her prior artistic life as a minimalist painter and sculptor. Its spray-lacquered panels arrange soft pastels in the form of a grid, and are right in line with the surf and boe-bloobirdyly spaced works by other West Coast artists of that era.

And also here is one of the last paintings made by Eva Hesse before she turned to sculpture, a concentration of arcane symbols in a muted blue-gray palette.

"Seder," a new painting by Nicole Eisenman.

Shifting the Gaze
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with two Jewish stars where breasts should be and a nipple-shaped neck pendant.

The section of the show devoted to "Pattern and Decoration" is small, and deliberately so — rare for a show of feminist art. And it acknowledges the men who were part of the movement: Ms. Schapiro's "Blue Burst Fan," a collage of kimono-esque fabrics on a shaped canvas, range opposite Robert Kushner's wildly exuberant "Blue Flowers.

A more tongue-in-cheek use of the decorative arts can be seen in Elaine Reichek's embroidered samplers from 1984, which are as much about assimilation as they are about stereotypical femininity. One of them reads, in neat cross-stitches: "Don't be loud. Don't be pushy. Don't talk with your hands.

In the next room works by Nancy Spero and her husband, Leon Golub, explode with righteous anger: over the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and the treatment of women generally. Mr. Golub's paint-encrusted "Napalm Man" goes right for the jugular, while Ms. Spero's multipanelled "Masslashna," uses a smoother, Pop-inflected delivery to tell the story of a teenage girl executed by the Nazis in 1941.

Shifting the Gaze ends squarely in the present, though, with recent works by Ms. Eisenman as well as by Amy Silliman and Dani Schutz. Ms. Eisenman's "Seder," which was made specifically for the show, depicts grotesque-faced family members sharing matzo and Manischewitz. Her vision of the springtime ritual seems informed by sacred and secular gatherings, from James Ensor's "Christ's Entry into Brussels" to George Gross's "Eclipse of the Sun" to Norman Rockwell's "Saying Grace." It's both smart alecky and searching, as is this unfortunately titled exhibition. Really, the only "gaze" that matters here is the artist's gimlet eye.

Texts and symbols are the focus of the next grouping, in which the emergent Dina Frankfort's blazing-orange Star of David rises up older and more cerebral canvases by Louise Fishman, Joan Snyder and others. And with a hit of color, not to mention chutzpah, Deborah Kass's "Double Red Veil, Split" from her "My Elvis" series kicks off a grand finale of satiric and otherwise humorous paintings.

Warhol is again parodied in Audrey Flack's 1962 "Mapo Meal," a rendition of Jewish supermarket staples on a white background. And a work by one of the original "Bad Girls," Cary Leibowitz (who is male), that reads "I Am A Woman, Up To," ganely sends up 1990s identity politics.

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