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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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**ARTIST RECEPTION and POETRY READING:** 4 October, 2025, 3:00 - 5:00 PM  
4 pages with images

(Saugerties, N.Y.) **Nancy Azara + Darla Bjork** is an exhibition featuring the sculptures, paintings, and prints of the late feminist artist Nancy Azara (1930-2024), and encaustic paintings by her widow, Darla Bjork. Although their artworks were inspired by different sources (Azara explored matriarchal archetypes while Björk mined the psyche), both artists are neo-expressionists and emphasize the power of the gesture in their mark-making.

Together for over 40 years, Nancy Azara and Darla Bjork were a couple during a transitional time in American history, from a barely tolerated union in the 80s through an official recognition of their relationship in 2011, when gay marriage finally became legal in New York State. The artists were both part of the New York Feminist Art Institute, an organization that grew out of the feminist movement of the 1970s and provided art and writing classes taught by women for women.

**About Nancy Azara:** Nancy Azara was an artist and feminist educator best known for her large-scale wood sculptures and mixed media collages. Nancy developed a distinct style of sculpture - found wood, carved, ornamented and mounted. Instinctive chip carving peels off an outer layer of wood, reaching for an essentialized raw experience of the body, of the limbs, exposing flesh and blood. This work explored life cycles, utilizing the metaphor of a tree for personhood. Egg tempera, often in reds and pinks, and aluminum, palladium, gold gilding recover these exposed layers, exploring folkloric stories of women's roles, goddess imagery, ancient symbols, mystic spiritual traditions, and affirmation of female self.

**About Darla Bjork:** Darla Bjork is an artist who, early on, channeled her creative energy into her career as a psychiatrist in NYC. After some early explorations in stone sculpture, she turned her attention to painting in 1977. Culled from years of working as a psychiatrist, Bjork's imagery is formed from the driving forces of the human psyche: passion and pain. Her most recent paintings are created with oil stick on wood panels of varying sizes, often layering and scraping to achieve qualities of richness and vitality while digging beyond the surface to reveal what is hidden. This layered technique invites the observer to explore the depths of shifting perspectives and consider the personal experience of identity. Uniting her career as a psychiatrist with her art practice, Darla Bjork seeks to reveal the hidden layers of living a human life.

This exhibition at The Richards Gallery at Opus 40 will travel to Venice, Italy, for an affiliated show at Castello 925 during the 61st Venice Biennale.

### **The Richards Gallery at Opus 40**

356 George Sickle Road · Saugerties, NY · 12477

Gallery hours: Friday - Sunday, 12 - 5 PM.

Exhibition website: <https://bit.ly/Opus40azarabjork>

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### **About Opus 40:**

Created over the course of four decades by visionary artist and Bard professor Harvey Fite, [Opus 40](#) is a 6.5-acre earthwork made of finely fitted bluestone, rising out of an abandoned quarry at the foot of Overlook Mountain in Saugerties, NY. In 1978, Fite's widow, Barbara, established the nonprofit Opus 40 Inc, opening the sculpture, along with 63 acres of meadows, walking trails, bluestone quarries, as well as the Quarryman's Museum to visitors from all over the world. Today, Opus 40 offers a diverse selection of events in a wholly unique setting that Architectural Digest has called "one of the most beguiling works of art on the entire continent."

*Please click on image or title for larger resolution*



[Darla Bjork, Untitled, 2022](#)



[Nancy Azara, Red Twins, 2016](#)

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