Betty Tompkins
Frolic

The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

Revivified

April 3 - April 29, 2008

Betty Tompkins

Commentary by Julie Oakes

Artist Catalog, Betty Tompkins
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Commentary by Julie Oakes
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Betty Tompkins

Revivified

Did the frolic come first or the spring in which to frolic? In Tompkins' impressionist paintings on photographic images, women from the 30's and 40's saucily act out in a frothy, leafy, grassy, effulgent playground, like nymphs in a naturalist boudoir.

In contrasting colors, where the red next to green or fuchsia beside puce is as vibrant as a gift wrapped with the freshness of nature; Betty Tompkins' pin-ups from the past cavort in the outdoors. Like a flurry of covert caresses between viridian landscapes and scantily clad figures, tantalizing fleshy hues are discretely muted by the photographic gradations from white to black as they lay in the arms of pastel bushiness. That the underwear is dated, and the poses comparatively innocent, almost 'delicate'; creates an allure that is missing from the inundation of graphic pornographic imagery that the twenty-first century is a party to. This subtle historical distancing of skin upon skin is further separated from immediate grasp by the cushioning grass, flowers or reflective water that frames in a context that lends a new narrative to the pose. The partially clothed, semi-nude and naked are flimsily focused and mesmerized in self absorption, either in mutual frolic or nymphatically alone.

There's a surrealistic movie-scene reminiscent of Bonny and Clyde in the aspect of a vintage car supporting the roadside assignations of a kissing couple, exposed to a kneeling brazen goddess perched slightly atop of the grass. The fully clothed figure in gloves (an aunt, a mother?) about to burst in on the fondling of the two women carries a story line past the immediate sensual encounter and into the past or future tense. The lounging young man on the tiger throne who contemplates the buttocks of the unknown bather is relaxed in his perusal of the possibilities before him. Throughout the series, there is an innocent yet ominous aura, like the pleasant anticipation of a treat yet to be delivered. Seduction is in play. The end is assured and the pace slows down to a natural rhythm.

Part of the sensual enjoyment is in the appraisal of Tompkins' facile rendering of the environment. Similar to the effect of the impressionist's paintings, her light strokes indicate a soft rustling movement like air as it flows through grasses and leaves, rippling the water and sending the sweet smells of spring forth to the awakening nostrils of reclining lovers. These are lush, satisfying paintings that quench unrealized thirsts and drench the senses in loveliness. The tableaux of flirtatious foreplay are reminiscent of Greek Goddesses cavorting before the Gods came to couple with them or Monet's garden when pretty cheekiness was left alone to explore delightful delecatto.

Julie Oakes

Introspection - 1997
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Montana Dreams - 1996
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Hide and Go Seek - 1997
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

The Tree Graces - 1995
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Peep Show - 1998
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Abreast - 1999
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Cheek to Cheek - 1998
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Hindsight - 1998
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Shoreline - 1997
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Field With A View - 1996
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Backstretch - 1997
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Moonshine - 1998
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Upright - 1999
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Good Looking - 1999
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Lost & Found - 1998
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Wet Dreams - 1997
oil crayon on half-tone (8.5x14 inches)

Betty Tompkins

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

2007 MITCHELL ALGUS GALLERY, NYC
2006 GALERIE ANDREA CARATSCH, Zurich
2005 MITCHELL ALGUS GALLERY, NYC
2002 MITCHELL ALGUS GALLERY, NYC
2000 EGIZIO'S PROJECT,NYC
1998 JUNIATA MUSEUM OF ART, Huntingdon PA
1997 MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY, GALLERY 800, West Long Branch NJ
(catalog with essay by Bill Arning)
1994 FRIDHOLM FINE ARTS, Asheville, NC
1991 WHITE COLUMNS, White Room, New York City
MARGULIES TAPLIN GALLERY, Miami, FL
ALAN BROWN GALLERY, Hartsdale, NY
1987 P.S.1, Special Projects Room, Long Island City, NY
1986 RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, Dana Women Artists Series , New Brunswick, NJ
STAMFORD MUSEUM & NATURE CENTER, Stamford, CT
1985 SENSORY EVOLUTION GALLERY, New York City
1983 BERNICE STEINBAUM GALLERY, New York City
1977 HARRIMAN COLLEGE, Harriman, NY
1975 HOUSTON MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Houston, TX (curated by Paul Schimmel)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2006 MITCHELL ALGUS GALLERY, “Exquisite Corpse-Cadavre Exquis”, NYC
(curated by Mitchell Algus & Bpb Nickas)
SERPENTINE GALLERY, “Uncertain States of America”, collaborative piece between Betty Tompkins and Trisha Donnelly with Adam Putman and Shannon Ebner, London and traveling
GALERIE SHO, “3 Contemporary Indie Artists”, Tokyo
PRINTED MATTER, “30 years, Printed Matter Editions 1976-2006”, NYC
2005 GALERIE RODOLPHE JANSSEN, “la beaut de l'enfer” Brussels
GALERIE SHO, “Sex…in Art”, Tokyo
2004 CENTRE POMPIDOU, MUS E NATIONAL D'ART MODERNE “Nouvelles acquisitions, oeuvres contemporaines”,
PRINTED MATTER, “[Untitled/Nudes]” , NYC (curated by Larry Clark)
MITCHELL ALGUS GALLERY, “The F Word: Sex and Feminism”, NYC
2003 BIENNALE DE LYON, “It Happened Tomorrow”, Lyon France (Curated by Bob Rickas, Anne Pontegnie & the Consortium)
2002 MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, “Manhattan Skylines”, NYC
2001 SALVADOR DALI MUSEUM, “Disarming Beauty: Venus DeMilo in Contemporary Art”,
St. Petersburg FL (catalog)
2000 ISLIP ART MUSEUM, “From Lake Erie to Now”, East Islip NY (catalog)
ISLIP ART MUSEUM, “Collection Insights- Recent Acquisitions”, East Islip NY

Group Exhibitions Continued

1999 GALE GATES ET AL., “Size Matters”, Brooklyn NY (curated by Mike Weiss)
1997 NATIONAL JEWISH MUSEUM, “Lions”. Washington D.C.
MONMOUTH MUSEUM, “Creature Comforts”. Lincroft NJ
1996 CENTER FOR BOOK ARTS, “Grimm & Grimmer”, NYC (catalog)
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, “25 Years of Feminism”. New Brunswick NJ (catalog)
1995 YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, “The Art of The Emblem”.New Haven CT (catalog)
1993 THOMAS CENTER GALLERY “Sacred Spaces: Women and the Land”, Gainesville FL (catalog)
1992 ALLEN MEMORIAL ART MUSEUM "The Living Object: The Art Collection of Ellen H. Johnson", Oberlin OH (catalog)
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY "20th Anniversary Exhibition of the Dana Women Artists Series" , Rutgers, NJ (catalog)
1990 WHITE COLUMNS "Brut 90", New York City
1989-90 USIA traveling, Europe, Pan America CW POST, Hillwood Gallery , "Lines of Vision: Drawings by Contemporary Women" (catalog), Long Island, NY
1989 HUDSON RIVER MUSEUM, "Nature of the Beast", Yonkers, NY
1988 RICHARD GREEN GALLERY, "An Awareness of Place" curated by Robert Lemmerman, New York City
LYMAN ALLYN MUSEUM, "Drawings", New London, CT
ALDRICH MUSEUM, "Selections from the Collection", Ridgefield, CT
1987 HALLWALLS, "Floating Values", Buffalo, NY
1986 CLOCKTOWER, "Letters", New York City
1985 STAMFORD MUSEUM, "American Art American Women" (catalog), Stamford, CT
1983 CASTELLI GRAPHICS, "New Talent in Printmaking", New York City
PIER 34, Installation, New York City
TERMINAL NY, Installation, Brooklyn, NY
1982 GRACIE MANSION GALLERY, "The Famous Show", New York City
1981 ALTERNATIVE MUSEUM, "Ikon/Logos" (catalog), New York City
1977 ALDRICH MUSEUM, "Contemporary Reflections 1977", Ridgefield, CT (catalog)
SOHO CENTER OF VISUAL ARTS, New York City
THE WHITNEY COUNTERWEIGHT, New York City
1976 QUEENS MUSEUM, "Cows" (catalog), Flushing Meadows, NY
1973 WARREN BENEDEK GALLERY, New York City
LOGUIDICE GALLERY, New York City

GRANTS

1998 WEIR FARM TRUST/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Wilton CT
1996 DIRECTOR'S AWARD, WARREN TANNER MEMORIAL FUND
1994 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT GRANT , New School , NYC
1990 YADDO, Saratoga Springs, NY
MACDOWELL COLONY, Peterborough, NH (also 82, 83, 88)
1988 NEW YORK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS
1983 CAPS GRANT
1979 OSSABAW ISLAND PROJECT, Savannah, GA

PUBLIC INSTALLATIONS

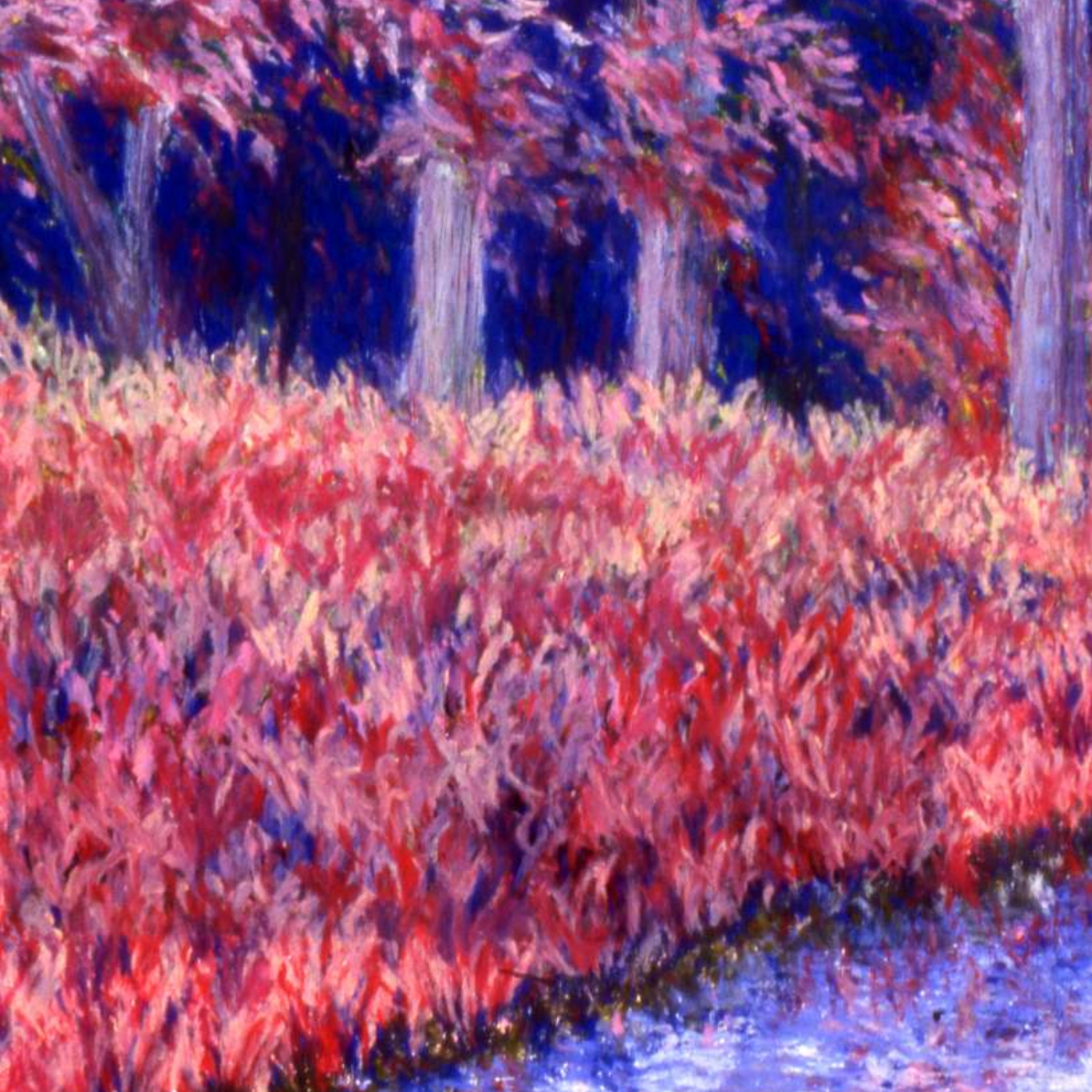
- WEIR FARM NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE , Wilton CT (Temporary)
- COWPARADE NEW YORK (piece now in the permanent collection of the Museum of the City of New York) (Temporary)
- ISLIP ART MUSEUM, East Islip NY (Permanent Installation)

COMMISSIONS

ABSOLUT TOMPKINS
ABSOLUT COLLABORATION

ART FAIRS

2006 PHOTO NY (Vara Global Fine Arts)
D.U.M.BO. ART FAIR (Vara-Kuelbs Projects)
2005 ART BRUSSELS (Galerie Rodolphe Janssen)
ART BASEL 36 (Galerie Rodolphe Janssen and Printed Matter)
SCOPE NEW YORK (Lyonsweir Gallery)

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

CENTRE POMPIDOU, Paris, France
GALERIE RODOLPHE JANSSEN, Brussels, Belgium
GALERIE ANDREA CARATSCH, Zurich, Switzerland
GALERIE SHO, Tokyo, Japan
ABSOLUT VODKA, NYC
ALLEN ART MUSEUM, OH
AMOCO PRODUCTIONS, Denver, CO
ASHLAND UNIVERSITY, Ashland, OH
BEST PRODUCTS, VA
CANADIAN IMPERIAL BANK OF COMMERCE, NY
CARILLON IMPORTERS, Teaneck NJ
CHAMPION INTERNATIONAL PAPER PRODUCTS, CT
CHASE MANHATTAN BANK, NYC
CITY FEDERAL SAVINGS AND LOAN, Franklin Township, NJ
FACT, Philadelphia, PA
FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF MINNESOTA
G. B. RESIDENCES OF KEY BISCAYNE LTD.
ISLIP ART MUSEUM, East Islip NY
JENA HALL ASSOCIATES, Woodbury, NY
JOHNSON & JOHNSON, New Brunswick, NJ
MARVIN SACKNER ARCHIVES, Miami Beach, FL
MILBANK TWEED HADLEY & McCOY, NYC
MORGAN GUARANTEE BANK
MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OBERLIN COLLEGE, OH
PATERSON MUSEUM, NJ
PRUDENTIAL INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA
QUEENS CITY BANK
RENAISSANCE HOTEL, NJ
SIMPSON THACHER & BARTLETT, NYC
SMITH BARNEY HARRIS UPHAM & CO., NYC
SONESTA CORPORATION, Boston, MA
SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES MUSEUM OF ART, PA
SOUTHEAST BANK, Miami FL
STAMFORD MUSEUM, Stamford, CT
TECHNIMETRICS, NYC
TWIN STAR SEMI-CONDUCTOR COLLECTION, Dallas TX
ZIMMERLI ART MUSEUM, New Brunswick, NJ