Judith Bernstein

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New York Times

Judith Bernstein at 82 Comes Back Swinging

Unrelenting, unrepenting, the artist who made a name for herself with huge drawings of hairy phallic screws presents a world of work with exuberant energy over 60 years.

The artist Judith Bernstein in the Kasmin Gallery, which is showing a survey of her work from the '60s to the present. Here, a large charcoal-on-paper triplet of screws. via Kasmin Gallery; Photo by Charlie Rubin

Phoebe Hoban
January 30, 2025

Judith Bernstein and her work share a striking trait: a potent brew of provocative humor edged with anger. An indelible cackle with a crackle, as powerfully expressed in vividly hued paintings strewed with tart, topical text.

"I never toned down anything," Bernstein said in an obvious understatement. The artist found early inspiration in the graffiti she saw scrawled in the men's room at Yale, where she was a graduate student in the 1960s. She quickly understood that scatology could be used in the service of satire, making it her trademark trope and putting her own spin on political caricature.

She made her mark in the early 1970s with large-scale charcoal-drawn screws — hairy phalluses as lethal projectiles — that were offshoots of the smaller penile images she incorporated into the anti-Vietnam War drawings and paintings she did at Yale.

But after her first few shows at A.I.R., the feminist gallery she founded with fellow artists Susan Williams, Nancy Spero, Agnes Denes and Howardena Pindell, among others, Bernstein found herself alienated from not only the male art world, but also from her feminist cohorts, who objected to the use of male genital imagery, even to fight the patriarchy.

Judith Bernstein's "Death Head" paintings at Kasmin Gallery, which she started during the pandemic. "It is the psyche and the zeitgeist of this time frame," she says. "It's about all the things we hear about happening around the world, famine and war." via Kasmin Gallery

When her work "Horizontal" (1973), an image of a huge screw, was censored from a 1974 show of women's art at the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum — the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired it in 2023 — she was rarely exhibited for 30 years or so. She resurfaced at the New Museum in 2012 in a show aptly titled "Judith Bernstein: HARD," with her signature boldly painted on the lobby windows.

On Jan. 9, the opening night of her new show, "Public Fears," a mini-retrospective at the Kasmin Gallery that traces her trajectory from the '60s to the present, Bernstein wore a flaming red coat and struck a characteristic pose, her arms outstretched, as if not only to embrace her audience, but the world at large, whose foibles she continues to fearlessly and gleefully transform into art.

Unlike the rest of her work, much of which features text, the Death Head paintings are wordless, and speak for themselves, both as reflections of the dark days she feels we now live in and as this 82-year-old artist's own memento mori. They are, as Bernstein herself describes them, impressively "impactful." And despite their somber subject matter, they burst with exuberant energy, much like the artist herself.

“Death Heads (Purple on Black),” 2024. “Her ‘Death Head’ paintings are wordless, and speak for themselves,” our critic says. via Kasmin Gallery

“I started the Death Heads during Covid time,” Bernstein said in an interview in her studio loft in the Chinatown section of Manhattan. “I like the Death Heads because they speak about this time frame. It is the psyche and the zeitgeist of this time frame. It’s about all the things we hear about happening around the world, famine and war. And with Donald Trump, we might actually go to World War III.”

Bernstein made the most of the shock of Donald Trump’s first term, when she was commissioned by the Drawing Center to create a body of work. The resulting 2017 exhibition, “Cabinet of Horrors,” featured drawings, murals and a collection of vintage piggy banks. One reviewer compared Bernstein’s in-your-face artful attack to a “nuclear assault.” She took another sharp shot at Trump in her 2018 Kasmin show, “Money Shot,” a series of eight wall-size black-lit pieces that didn’t stint on biting humor — with repeated images of fanged vagina dentata.

Visitors to her latest show expecting further savage skewering of Trump may be surprised to see just a few paintings from his earlier time in office. “Money Shot, Yellow” (2016) sends up capitalism run amok, and features the Capitol building (spelled Capital) as a slot machine with a vaginal slot and a penile handle. Several swastikas abut dollar signs, and two swastikas bracket Trump’s name. And then there is “Seal of Disbelief,” (2017), the presidential seal with the altered words, “In Evil We Trust.”

"Seal of Disbelief," 2017 acrylic on paper, depicts the presidential seal with the altered words. via Kasmin Gallery

Bernstein swears she is now totally finished with Trump. "I worked on my Donald Trump series for a long time, and I have just had it with Donald Trump," she said.

The retrospective, with archival work facing recent work on the opposite wall, deftly encapsulates Bernstein's off-again, very much on-again career. Her mixed-media piece, "First National Dick," (1969), is a sardonic salute to President Richard Nixon. The pièce de résistance, a large charcoal-on-paper triplet of screws, "Three Panel Vertical" (1977), anchors the back wall, and her framed 1995 charcoal-drawn signature is also emblazoned in huge letters on the gallery's glass front. "I love signing my name," she said. "In a way it's a graffiti. And I've left my mark: I was here."

"Signature," 1995, charcoal on paper. "I love signing my name," Bernstein says. "In a way it's a graffiti. And I've left my mark." via Kasmin Gallery

Bernstein was born in Newark, N.J., and raised in a middle-class family — her father taught teaching methods at Fort Monmouth, and her mother worked as a bookkeeper. Her home life was "a lot of screaming and yelling, especially at the dinner table," the result of an unhappy marriage. "It's lucky that I got any food down when I was younger. In order to be heard, we had to scream and yell."

Her need to vociferously express herself is clearly communicated in her work. Its visual messages pull no punches while delivering pungent punchlines, giving her art a strong cross-generational appeal. "My first impression of Judith was seeing her show, which was those wonderful screws," said the artist Joan Semmel, who has known Bernstein from the late '70s. "Once seen, never forgotten. They just stay in your mind iconically and conceptually." She added that "all of the work, from beginning to the end, has been consistent in its strength and clarity."

Bernstein says of the exhibition: "It's nice to see the trajectory and also the continuity that I have with the political and the sexual. And how long I've been working in that field, and that I've not compromised at all. I've put out everything that I want to do and I don't hold back. You should never self-censor."

Her relentlessly raw humor is a major weapon in her artistic arsenal. "I always had a raucous sense of humor, and I've always used a lot of humor that nails what I want to say. And you know laughter, in a certain way, is almost like ejaculation. What connects my work is that my energy level is so impactful."

While Bernstein's latest work is equally high-octane, the Death Heads series is something of a departure. Although several earlier pieces included images of skulls, Bernstein has never confronted her own mortality so directly. And yet, despite their

looming, even haunting, presence, their execution, with its loopy, liberating lines and neon palette, communicates hope and even joy.

“Let me tell you something,” Bernstein says, “I’m proud of the fact that I’m 82. This is something. I’ve lived a long time, I’ve had a history. And when people say when they come to the gallery they think a much younger person did it, that is not true. I am the embodiment of 82 years, and I mention my age all the time because this is the best time of my life! Because my work is being valued, and I’m being valued, and that’s an extraordinary thing.”

Artforum

Judith Bernstein

Judith Bernstein, *Money Shot – Yellow*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 100 × 88″.

Max Lakin
March 2025

Being the screaming conscience for a society that would prefer to not be bothered by one is a tough gig. Fortunately, our culture provides enough moral failure to keep things fresh. With a Jersey girl's sailor mouth and an optically assaultive style that approaches (but of course can never match) the reality it critiques, Judith Bernstein, one of feminist art's toughest and funniest instigators, has borne unwavering witness for nearly sixty years to this country's deficiencies of decency, its misogyny and violence, its hypocrisies and compromises. Her work elicits a double-edged feeling: catharsis over the fact that someone else is outraged, and despondence that her anger remains perpetually relevant.

"Public Fears"—a tight career survey that was hung salon-style and featured thirteen new paintings—was timed to open on the fourth anniversary of the January 6 attack on the US Capitol in Washington, DC. The exhibition's themes were a continuation of Bernstein's last major burst of artistic production, in 2018, during Donald Trump's first joyride through this country's sanity, a waking nightmare of American self-delusion.

Bernstein's work has a perennial relevance that in hindsight reads as prophetic. *Money Shot – Yellow*, 2016, depicts an acid-yellow Capitol building being engulfed by Day-Glo flames, more than four years before the lamest insurrection in US history occurred. Ringed in swastikas, dollar signs, and floating limp dicks sporting sandy comb-overs, the piece made

plain what was obvious to anyone paying attention: Fascism was bound to effloresce as long as someone stood to profit from it.

Early works such as *Supercock*, 1966, and *Oh Wow! Fucking on Skates*, 1967—featuring stick figures who possess comically prodigious knobs—torque the crude graffiti of men's room stalls (cartoon porn, rude limericks) into a ribald indictment of the American id. Toilet humor may seem to some gauche or anti-intellectual, but Bernstein identifies it as a surfacing of our truest selves, the things that the darkest recesses of our psyches shit out when we believe no one's around to smell it.

In the 1970s, Bernstein created a symbol of metastatic patriarchy: a biomorphic screw, rendered in sketchy charcoal, that vibrates with nervous energy; a putz from which insecurity and suffering spew forth in equal measure. Once the target of censorship, Bernstein's screws seem classical by today's standards. Depicted as an engorged, tunnel-boring machine, the artist granted it the terrifying power with which most of its owners imagine it, rather than portraying it as the goofy-looking appendage it truly is. A trio of them show up in *Three Panel Vertical*, 1977; they unfurl from scrolls of paper mounted to the wall, recalling hirsute Doric columns. They conjure the unseen vices of bureaucratic power in which our thumbs are lodged, getting squeezed more and more every day. They confirm the suspicion that, in one way or another, we're all getting screwed.

The thirteen square or nearly-square paintings from the artist's ongoing "Death Heads" series, 2022–, present deconstructed faces that seem to be seized by nauseous shock or to be agog at some cruelty taking place outside the picture plane. Their eyes are forced wide open—à la Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)—to absorb every horror. Frenzied slashes of phosphorescent color whorl on a spare ground. The works in the series project a haunted quality, like a primal scream that never lets up.

Maximum visual impact has long been Bernstein's trademark. Like Peter Saul or the Hairy Who artists, Bernstein has dedicated her practice to a furious lampooning of American culture—a culture that often eschews mercy and tenderness for bloodletting and subjugation, while blanching at a little full-frontal. Her so-called vulgarity has always pointed to the fact that there is nothing more vulgar than what goes on in plain sight.

Hyperallergic

Judith Bernstein Warns Us: Never Again!

That Bernstein's political art is still so relevant is chilling, but like the first time around, it remains a source of comfort that we have her to lead us through.

Installation view of *Judith Bernstein: Public Fears* at Kasmin Gallery, New York (all photos Natalie Haddad/*Hyperallergic*)

Natalie Haddad
February 2, 2025

When Judith Bernstein painted "Seal of Disbelief" in 2017, I'd imagine that she envisioned it as a historical painting — a cautionary record of the dangers of would-be oligarchs and their personality cults that reminds us: *never again*! That the work is still so relevant is chilling, but like the first time around, it remains a source of comfort that we have Bernstein to lead us through.

Long before Donald Trump ran for office, Judith Bernstein used her art to condemn those who abuse power, from the museum to the White House, and to reveal them for who they really are: dickheads, cockmen, schlong faces, and, eventually, what she would call "death heads."

Public Fears is a mini retrospective of sorts. Filling one large gallery from floor to ceiling, plus a small space near the entrance, it traces Bernstein's political paintings from the 1960s — when she was taking on Richard Nixon's lies in works like "First National Dick" (1969), featuring a phallus flying an American flag — to her recent day-glo paintings, such as the searing neon "Death Heads (Four Eyes on Hot Pink Ground)" (2024). It also includes "Three Panel Vertical" (1977), a trio of drawings of giant phallic screws whose well-deserved "fuck you" to the aggressive misogyny underlying patriarchal power got her removed from an ostensibly feminist Philadelphia museum exhibition at the time and sidelined her in the art world for decades. This is what makes Bernstein so important: She's talked the talk and walked the walk, and suffered the consequences. She knows both the stakes and the urgency of speaking out against injustices, and she continues to do so.

And for anyone who questions the efficacy of Bernstein's project because it's being presented in a commercial gallery: Given the opportunity, she'll gladly take it to the greater public. So, art institutions, the ball's in your court. For now, though, you can see her work in a space that is open to everyone five days a week, for free.

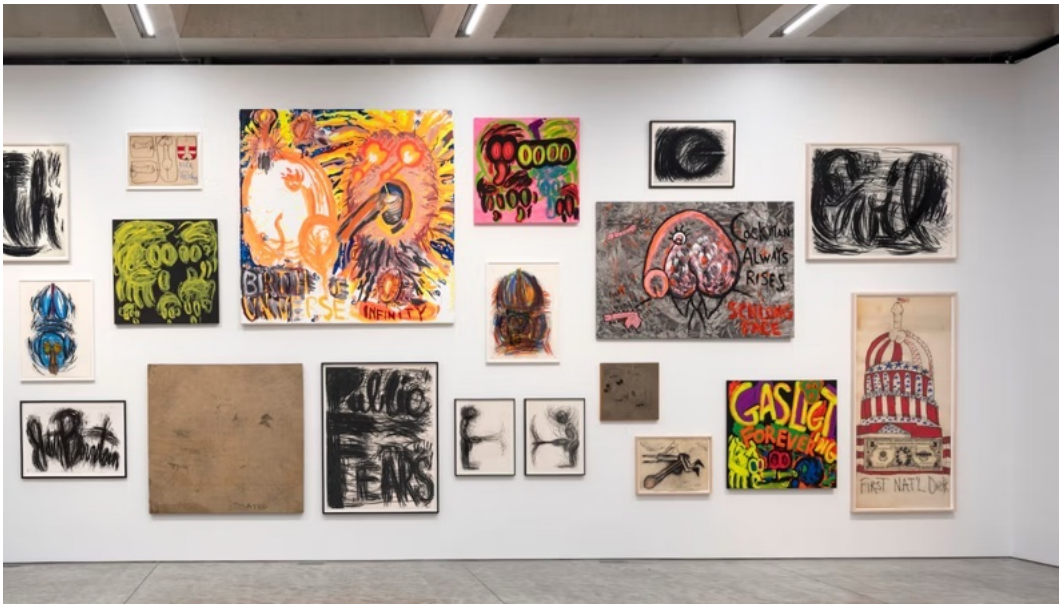
Judith Bernstein, *Money Shot – Yellow* (2016), acrylic and oil on canvas

Installation view of Judith Bernstein, *Three Panel Vertical* (1977), charcoal on paper, in *Public Fears* at Kasmin Gallery, New York

The Art Newspaper

Comment | Censorship in the US is rearing its ugly head again—but the art world isn't taking it lying down

As anxieties grow about a new era of cultural repression, artists and institutions are finding ways to come together and push back.



Installation view of Judith Bernstein's *Public Fears* with *Cockman Always Rises—Schlong Face* at centre-right
Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin

Tim Schneider
January 30, 2025

Journalists have drawn several parallels between the freshly re-inaugurated US president Donald Trump and the late George Wallace, the authoritarian segregationist who won his first term as governor of Alabama in 1963. But it takes an artist—specifically, the 82-year-old firebrand Judith Bernstein—to connect the two men by transforming both into Cockman, a satirical superhero bearing, as Bernstein describes in an email interview, "a literal cock for a head (a dickhead!) with a schlong nose and a dapper tie". Frustratingly, the image is no less a dare to censors today than it was in the 60s, an American decade ruptured by intense and sustained conflicts over civil rights, the Vietnam War and much more.

Judith Bernstein, *Cockman Always Rises – Schlong Face* (2016)

The Trumpian version of the character appears in the 2016 painting *Cockman Always Rises—Schlong Face*, on view in a survey of Bernstein's career at New York's Kasmin gallery (until 15 February). The exhibition, *Public Fears*, reminds viewers that the artist has been making no-holds-barred work about divisive political issues for nearly six decades. It has sparked considerable interest. A by-invitation walkthrough of the show, pointedly held on 6 January—the anniversary of the 2021 Capitol Hill riots—attracted cultural luminaries ranging from David Byrne, the frontman of the Talking Heads, to Matthew Higgs, the director of the non-profit White Columns. Meanwhile Bernstein has a solo show at the Kunsthaus Zurich in 2026.

Yet she has had to fight like mad against censorship to reach this point. She says her career was "essentially halted" in 1974, when the Civic Center Museum in Philadelphia barred *Horizontal* (1973), a large-scale charcoal drawing of a "phallic screw", from an exhibition of 86 female artists. The censors "branded me as a pariah", she adds.

Judith Bernstein says she feels the re-election of Donald Trump “stirs up new anxieties around our freedom of speech”
Photo: Charlie Rubin. Courtesy of Kasmin, New York

Although it took 50-odd years, Bernstein thinks she had the last laugh: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York acquired *Horizontal* in 2023. Yet the ban that threatened her livelihood in the 70s has a renewed resonance lately. “In some ways, that feels like the distant past, but on the other hand, the re-election of Trump stirs up new anxieties around our freedom of speech,” she says.

Past is prologue

Progressive and boundary-pushing voices in the US have felt the heat escalating since Trump’s latest victory at the polls. The House of Representatives approved a bill in late November that would empower the new administration to designate a non-profit as a “terrorist organisation”—and so revoke its tax-exempt status—based on troublingly broad standards, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

In January, Texas police seized photographs by the celebrated artist Sally Mann from a show at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth after a complaint, seemingly provoked by articles by a conservative activist, that they constituted child pornography. A spokesperson for Gagosian, which represents Mann, declined to comment, but the museum pointed out in a statement that “these [works] have been widely published and exhibited for more than 30 years in leading cultural institutions across the country and around the world”.

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas
Photo: Carol M. Highsmith via the Library of Congress

In the same month, a joint survey commissioned by the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), Pen America and the Artists at Risk Connection found that 55% of AAMD respondents felt censorship was “a much bigger problem for museums today” than ten years ago.

The present has disturbing echoes of earlier restrictions on expression. Bernstein calls the 1960s “an obvious parallel”. Shannon Jackson, who chairs the history of art department at the University of California at Berkeley, tells The Art Newspaper that “analogies could certainly be made to the Nazis’ early 20th-century banning of so-called ‘degenerate art’”, as well as “the enforcement of only certain approved art forms and styles” by communist regimes. Equally alarming, she adds, are contemporary mutations enacted by autocrats worldwide, such as the scapegoating of queer, migrant and other minority communities.

Jackson is one of the four scholars heading up a multi-year, multi-institution programme called A Counter-Imaginary in Authoritarian Times, which aims to combat censorship and strongman politics using the arts and literature. Funded by a $2.6m grant from the Mellon Foundation, the initiative will run the gamut from workshops and conferences to performances and publications. Debarati Sanyal, the director of Berkeley’s Center for Interdisciplinary Critical Inquiry and another of the project’s leaders, says one of its goals is “to open alternative visions of what a just and livable collective future looks like” as a counteroffensive to authoritarianism’s “capacity to stoke fear through imagery”.

Although direct bans of works of art grab headlines, “resigned acceptance leads to normalisation,” Jackson warns. “Concern about being censored leads us to censor ourselves.”

Jackson, Sanyal and Bernstein agree that coalition building will be crucial for artists and institutions facing censorship in the years to come, both domestically and abroad. Bernstein learned this lesson first-hand as one of 20 women artists who

founded the non-profit AIR (Artists in Residence) Gallery in Manhattan in 1972, “when [they] had no platform”. One of her mantras—and its focus on plurality—is proving as relevant as ever: “If we don’t voice opposition, we submit.”

Frieze

‘Subtlety Is Not My Forte’: A Conversation with Judith Bernstein

As a survey opens at Kasmin, New York, the artist discusses bathroom graffiti, Donald Trump and her time as a Guerrilla Girl

Juliet Jacques
January 12, 2025

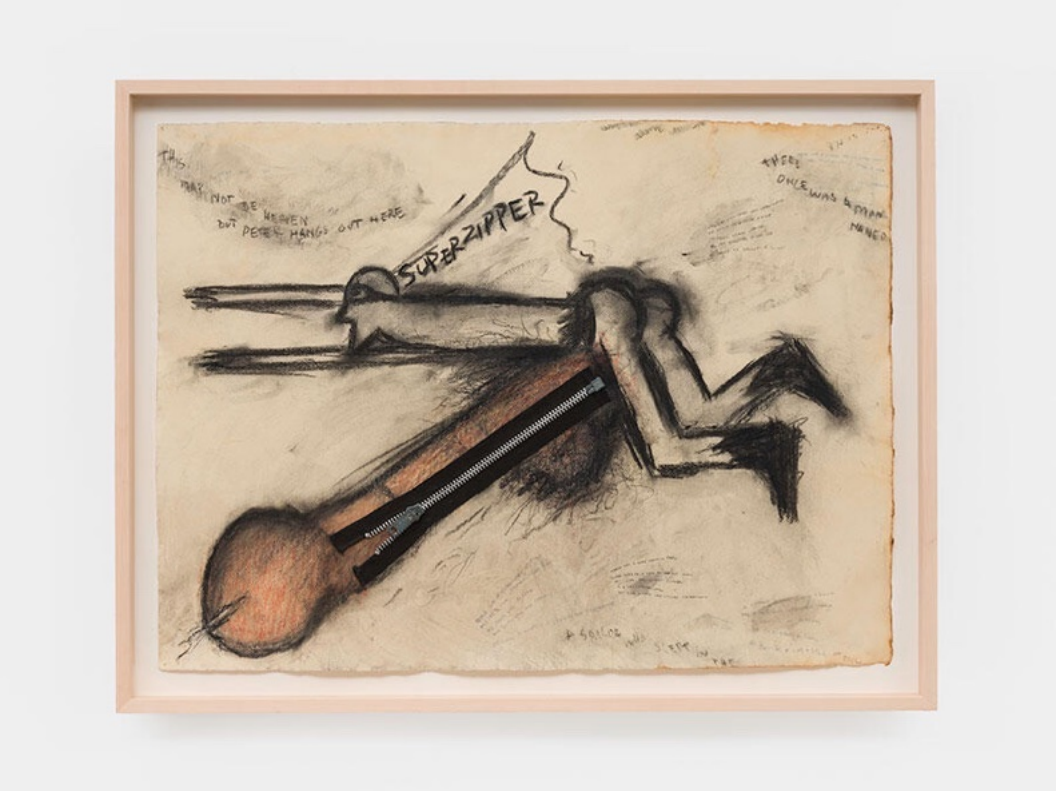
Judith Bernstein’s third solo exhibition at Kasmin, New York, surveys her work from 1966 to the present, showing how she has fearlessly confronted militarism and misogyny in the US, from the Vietnam War to Donald Trump’s impending second presidency. She talks to Juliet Jacques about her use of genitalia and slogans, her involvement with the Guerrilla Girls and how art might be a weapon in a time of intense anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQ+ reaction.

Judith Bernstein by Charlie Rubin, 2025. Courtesy: Kasmin, New York

Juliet Jacques You're interested in things outside the world of art. I'm thinking particularly of public toilet graffiti, with its irreverent humour.

Judith Bernstein Yes. Bathroom scatological graffiti is more deeply psychological than you think because someone is there alone defecating, and they don't have anyone to edit anything. While I was still a student at Yale in 1966, I took inspiration for my work from the bathroom, but almost all of it, I made up. I produced, for example, a drawing of Superman

with his cock three times the size of his body, called Supercock [1966]. I also did Vietcock [1966], which contains a guy with a rope from his rear connecting to the Capitol Building.



Judith Bernstein, ‘Superzipper #6, 1977’, charcoal and mixed media on paper, 57 × 76 cm. Courtesy: © the artist and Kasmin, New York

At that time, it was the Vietnam War, and everyone was horrified that they had to go. Get killed for what? I made the connection between the phallus and masculinity. The Fun Gun [1968] is an anatomical drawing of a phallus that had 45 bullets in the sack and a trigger coming out of the urethra. As crude as you can make it, it’s never as crude as the horror of war. A lot was going on at that time. We went to a lot of rallies and protests and all that kind of thing. And, eventually, it stuck.

JJ Your work is very overt. You’ve talked about confronting issues head-on and prioritising memorable visual imagery. What do you make of criticism of your work for being unsubtle?

JB I want to tell you something. Subtlety is not my forte. My work is about the political and the sexual, the combination. The phallus is a power image. So, I use that a lot. I also use it for women because there’s no reason they can’t use it in their artwork. Men don’t have first dibs on using a phallus.

While I’m working, I just work. I go into my subconscious. Later, I often figure out what I’ve done. I feel that my work is the psyche of the times. It’s gone through former US president Richard Nixon, who appeared in my work First National Dick [1969]. I detest Donald Trump, and I am not alone in that cause. It’s a very sad thing that someone who is the horrible calibre of Trump – a con artist, a crook, so many things – should be president of the United States at this time.

Judith Bernstein, ‘Three Panel Vertical, 1977’, charcoal on paper, 3 × 4 m. Courtesy: © the artist and Kasmin, New York

JJ Were you influenced by, or were you acting against, movements like abstract expressionism, minimalism or pop art?

JB I went to an academic university. They had people who made big forays into wonderful artworks. It was not a conservative school by any means. Abstract expressionism was before my time, but I always did what I wanted to do. There was always the political, the sexual and my rage at injustice. I was going my own way, and I was not following someone else’s path. That was great for me because, if you’re not successful, at least you’ve done what you wanted to do. And that’s the most rewarding thing.

‘Public Fears’, 2025, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Kasmin Gallery; photograph

JJ Yes, absolutely. Notoriously, your drawing of a screw resembling a phallus, Horizontal [1973], was excluded from an exhibition at the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum in 1974. Can we talk about that, its effect on your career, and how you responded to it?

JB The show was called ‘FOCUS: Women’s Work – American Art in 1974’. The organizers wanted to make a statement with the exhibition because the work of women was so ignored. There was a big censorship issue, and they didn’t want to include the piece. Almost all the show’s participants signed a petition because they wanted it reinstalled. They printed up badges that said, ‘Where’s Bernstein?’ Walter De Maria was a friend of mine. He said, ‘You can’t go to the opening. They’re going to say, “Where’s Bernstein?” “She’s right over there!”’ Nevertheless, the show went on and got a lot of coverage, which was wonderful. I didn’t want to close the exhibition down because it was so important at that point in time to show that women had a voice. They referred to my work as porn. It was hardly porn. But it was a much more conservative time.

Judith Bernstein, ‘Death Heads / Hollow Head (on Blue), 2024’, acrylic on canvas, 2.1 × 2 m.Courtesy: © the artist and Kasmin, New York

JJ How and why was it difficult to be a bad-boy feminist in the 1970s? Was there a framework for feminist art at the time? And what’s changed?

JB I’ll tell you something. Bad girls don’t get as much as bad boys. Bad boys get a hell of a lot. But bad girls are still getting some things. It was not my intent to actually be a bad girl. It was what I wanted to say, and I wanted my voice to be heard. From the time I was a kid in a very rambunctious house, I was always screaming about what I wanted and what I needed, which is something that women did not do then.

JJ I wanted to ask how you became involved with the Guerrilla Girls and what the anonymity within the group allowed you to do.

JB The Guerrilla Girls were great. It was wonderful to have a group that called attention to the fact that so many galleries showed no women or that certain critics had only written about one woman artist but 20 or 30 men. Galleries wanted to be politically correct, so they were embarrassed by it, which helped enormously. We wanted to do it anonymously because we thought that, since we’re already stigmatized by being women, we didn’t want to be double stigmatized by calling attention to critics and galleries that may want to get back at us. We postered at night. We used humour, which I love. It relieved a lot of our anger and strain from our work not being shown in the 1990s. It was a wonderful time to do that.

Judith Bernstein,'*Horizontal*, 1973', charcoal on paper, 2.7 × 3.8 m. Courtesy: © the artist and Kasmin, New York

JJ How do you feel about nostalgia for that period of radical feminist art and protest that lasted from the 1960s through to the 1990s? Does it box off the politics as something that belongs to the past but not the present?

JB I'll tell you frankly: I'm not really into nostalgia. It must be current. It has to say what it has to say now. I think that my work is not sentimental. It's hard-hitting.

JJ More recently, you've used the vulva a lot in your work.

Judith Bernstein, Seal of Disbelief, 2017, acrylic on paper, 2.4 × 2.4 m. Courtesy: © the artist and Kasmin, New York

JB I, for a long time, couldn't figure out where to go from the 'Screws' series [1969–78]. They were so impactful, no matter what size they were reduced to. But I wanted to also go into the vagina. I wanted some self-reflection. The 'Birth of the Universe' [2010–13] series was about the explosiveness of the universe and what women contribute, which is extraordinary. Women are the centre.

JJ Do you have any initial thoughts about how you might respond to the second Trump presidency?

Judith Bernstein, ‘Public Fears, 1993’, charcoal on paper, 1.6 x 1.2 m. Courtesy: © the artist and Kasmin, New York

JB I already did so many pieces criticising Trump. I just kind of had it. It blew my mind. I can’t sleep. I use a lot of phallic imagery with him. He’s a fool. Nevertheless, we’ll see what happens now. I suspect it will be much worse than what happened in the first term.

Now, I’m doing something more overreaching, reflecting the psyche of our times. It deals with the primal scream. The series is called ‘Death Heads’ [2022–ongoing]. I made many of these paintings with fluorescent paint so that they look completely different under black light, which gives them an enormous amount of power. I’m very interested in visual impact. This survey goes through my trajectory from 1966 to 2024, and you can see continuity in my interests. I have never stopped.

AUTRE

Power Images

Judith Bernstein and Paul McCarthy in Conversation

FALL 2023

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KASMIN

Judith Bernstein and Paul McCarthy in Conversation

The word graffiti comes from the Italian word graffio, which means to scratch. The Ancient Romans would scratch their names and protest poems on buildings. Since the 1960s, artists Judith Bernstein and Paul McCarthy have been brutally scratching the surface of the American nightmare with inspiration from the psychological graffiti of its violent and totalitarian collective subconscious. Bernstein had her revelation by absorbing the rude hieroglyphics scrawled on the bathroom stalls in the men's room of her alma mater, Yale—McCarthy's landscape was California; its dark optimism and congenitally blind ambition. Together they meet at the intersection of a disillusioned dream.

Paul McCarthy, Performance still from *Bossy Burger*, 1991
© Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.
Photo: Vaughn Rachel

Paul McCarthy I'm not sure when I discovered your work. I think I knew of the screw paintings from magazines. When did you start making those?

Judith Bernstein I started in about '69 and I continued them through the '70s. I got a lot of brouhaha with those. I was censored in Philadelphia. There was a show called *Focus: Women's Work—American Art in 1974* at the Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center. It was curated by Cindy Nemser, Marcia Tucker, Lila Katzen, Adele Breeskin, and Anne d'Hanoncourt. They chose eighty-six up-and-coming and well-known female artists. When they saw my work, they said, "Oh no, we can't have that. It's pornography. All the kids will be damaged forever." It went all the way up to Mayor Frank Rizzo. But there was a petition in protest that was signed by a lot of very well-known people, like Louise Bourgeois, Clement Greenberg, Linda Nochlin, Howardena Pindell, and Alice Neel. So, that's how I got more on the map.

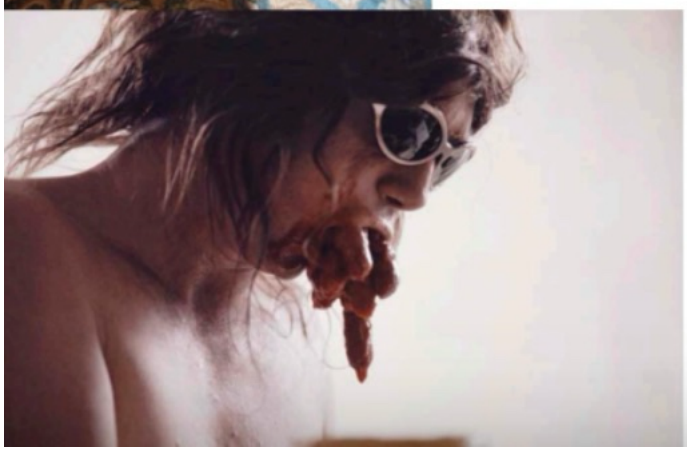
PMC My interest in your work is probably related to how I viewed art and society at that time. I made these pieces in the mid-60s that I called the "Black Paintings," which were eight or nine feet tall. They were based on a dragster car—like if you take a drag car and look down on it from above. The image was abstracted and flattened out. At the top was always this masked head, a gas mask. It was man, as machine—like a screw, but like a machine. So then, with the masked head of the man at the top, it was a totem stack, it was like a standing dick. Those paintings were all done between '65 and '67. They were always painted flat on the ground and I would be on top of them. They weren't painted with a brush but with a rag. And there was a frame about two inches off the plane where I would pour gasoline. Then, I would throw a match in and burn them. I was thinking about this today: with the trajectory of all my work, there has always been a similarity in a certain kind of critique of power structures and the patriarchy.

JB With the work that I was doing— the screw is a power image. It is a combination of masculinity and anti-war. They were also about feminism, like *mine's bigger than yours*. And actually, that screw drawing, the horizontal one shown at The Box, I recently sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which I'm thrilled beyond belief about. Nevertheless, it was once something that was censored. I always think that women, although we don't literally have a penis, we can certainly have access to the imagery. So, as I said, *mine's bigger than yours*, because the size was nine feet by twelve and a half feet. But, you know, it's funny, a lot of people think that I do some of these drawings when they're flat on the floor, but I don't. I always make them on the wall, so I can get farther back and be able to see the whole image.

PMC Mine is the opposite. I'm not often standing back to look at it—to judge it. It's always a shock when I look at it, and that's still the case. I didn't paint paintings on the wall until 2013. I viewed the paintings and drawings as an arena, like a room: it's on the floor or a large table and I'm moving around on it. It's a different experience, but the trajectory of painting and drawing is something that you stayed with. I was never attached to one medium—it could go in all directions simultaneously. But the connection between us is to that period of time in the '60s, the institutions, and the war in Vietnam as a grounding point for suspicion and mistrust in the government. And

Judith Bernstein, *Gasligting (Blue Ground)*, 2021
acrylic on canvas, 90.5 × 87 inches
Courtesy the artist and The Box, Los Angeles

Judith Bernstein, *We Don't Owe You a Tomorrow*, 2023
installation view at The Box, Los Angeles



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Paul McCarthy with Lilith Stangenberg, Performance still from *A&E, Adolf and Eva, Cooking Show*, 2022. Directed by Damon McCarthy © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Alex Stevens.

Paul McCarthy, Performance still from *NV, Night Vater*, 2019. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Alex Stevens.

Paul McCarthy, Performance still from *Hot Dog*, 1974 © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photos: Spandau Parks/Karen McCarthy

Opposite page

Paul McCarthy with Lilith Stangenberg, Performance still from *Picnic in the Garden of Eden*, 2021. Directed by Damon McCarthy © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Alex Stevens.


Campbells

of course, the subject of the male patriarch and the female. Even very early on, the words "Adam" and "Eve" came up in my work as a kind of joke or something. But always, there's this thing of portraying myself, the male, as the buffoon.

JB It's very psychological. And it's much deeper than the buffoon because it speaks about a lot of things in your subconscious. And I do the same thing. When I make an image, I don't think about it. I get the general idea, and then I do it. And then, later on, I think about what I've actually done.

PMC I think back to the '70s, but it became more pronounced in the '90s—I would only describe it as painting or drawing in character. It's not so much about inhabiting an accurate interpretation of Walt Disney or Hitler, that's not the point, but I talk all the time. And I realized at one point, I talk as if I'm drunk. And the drunk character, the brave character, likes to destroy the good paintings. In performances, I do get drunk. By the end of a performance, I can be pretty drunk.

JB I think you have access to the subconscious with that. I know my work is autobiographical, and I think that your work is also autobiographical. There's a lot of self-portraiture in spite of the fact that you're using characters that are outside yourself. And it's also very much a performance, Paul. The work is very performative. I consider my work somewhat of a performance, but yours is even more so because you're literally in the painting itself, or in the drawing, or in the piece of sculpture, or whatever you're doing.

"With the trajectory of all my work, there has always been a similarity in a certain kind of critique of power structures and the patriarchy." —Paul McCarthy

PMC I've done a number of them where the action on the painting or on the drawing, there's someone else there, like the ones with Lilith Stangenberg. It's like creating this distraction. I would draw for three or four hours in these sessions. Somebody said, "Your paintings, your performances are like trances," or, "Are you in a trance?" And I go, "Well, no, but there is something about focus and a form of involvement in a character that affects what I do."

JB There is something about being in a trance. I know that when I'm painting, I have to finish it up because I'm in a zone and I don't want to wait until the next day. You're in a zone and there's something that is beyond you. It's interesting because when you have another person there, it's a happenstance that they are actually part of. And I do think, in essence, it's like you're drunk. And there's something quite marvelous about it because, in a way, it feels like an out-of-body experience, like someone else did it. I've heard Bob Dylan talk about this.

PMC There's this schizophrenic experience going on. Like I said, now I'm painting with the canvases leaning against the wall. It's like a whole new thing in a certain way. But I actually still try to get very close. I mean, literally two or three inches from them. I lean on them. I put my face on them.

JB Just in your face.

PMC I get very, very close and sometimes I stand back, but it'll go back and forth. And then you look at it and you go, *I really like that one*. And then, later, you go, *I've hated it ever since I started it*. Yet, it's almost on the edge of being

something. But I know that the only way I can really get to it is to destroy it and start over. And then, I will talk constantly. And I'm saying these things to myself. The character always goes, "You don't trust it, Paul, do you, you don't trust. Paul doesn't trust me. Paul doesn't trust." And then he goes to this crazy one: "Paul doesn't trust God." You could say the drunk pretend character is crazy.

JB Well, we are the god of our work. Many times you'll have some extraordinary drawing, and then you'll just smear the whole thing over. Maybe it's too perfect. How can you actually be even more creative than you did the first time around and bring something else to it that you didn't the first time around?

PMC Do you paint over the top much?

JB It depends. I made a painting recently where I didn't get the color I wanted. So, I blacked out most of it. Then, I went in and did something entirely different, and I liked it better. Most of the time I do paint on top, but not much. I know when I get it, and then I move to another painting. It's almost like the game of telephone: you do one thing and then it moves to something else, and then it transforms into something else.

PMC I paint over the top more now than ever before. Sometimes I think, *oh, there's like six paintings underneath there*.

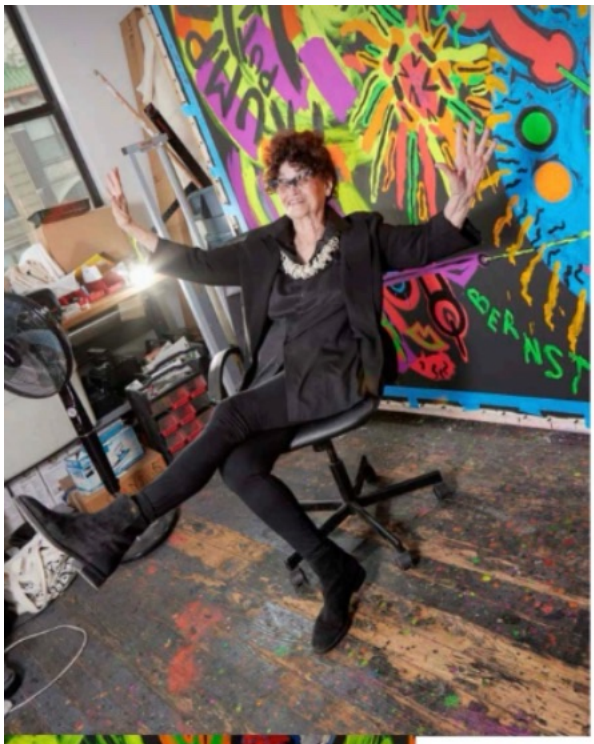
JB I bet they're all as good.

PMC Maybe. I'm interested in painting over the top of paintings and keeping it going in a certain way—to keep the mental state going.

JB It's a great mystery. And also that mystery is a great gift because there's something so hallucinogenic about that. I use *We Don't Owe You A Tomorrow* because you don't know what tomorrow is. I think there's something very childlike about the world. They go into a room and they mess everything up, and then they leave and go into another room. And that's basically what we've been doing with our planet. We're so primitive in some ways, yet so technologically advanced. But it's still that motivation for power. As an artist, it is power over your own work. We think that it's only now that we don't want to pay the price of the future. But unfortunately, the future is now, and it's moving exponentially faster.

PMC Since the '60s, I've been fascinated by the subject of fascism. Also, psychology, the subject of repression, and all the Freudian stuff. The discoveries of Wilhelm Reich's book *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Norman Brown's *Love's Body* (1966), Herbert Marcuse, Sartre, and R. D. Laing, and, of course, then you discover Duchamp, or John Cage, and then *art* and *life* become a thing. And then, there's the subject of film and the moving image. It was critical for me. It's in California, but also you have the Europeans: [Jean-Luc] Godard and [Ingmar] Bergman. But there was also experimental film: Warhol was interesting for me, and Jack Smith. I was interested because they were dealing with the weird subject of the pretend. And on top of that, you have the political critique; the attempt to understand the absurdity of what humans have created. This thing of fascism and repression, as well as the subject of the phallic and the vagina, appears in both our work very early on. Is it a penis? Is it a vagina? What is it? This thing of desire and the pleasure principle

"The screw is a power image. It is a combination of masculinity and anti-war. They were also about feminism, like *mine's bigger than yours.*"
—Judith Bernstein



Judith Bernstein in her studio in New York City.
Photography..... David Brandon Geeting

versus the reality principle. But in the past twenty years, the subject of fascism continues to come up. In the last five years, I've been doing performances in the character form of Adolf Hitler. And the character that Lilith plays is Eva Braun, but she's also referred to as Marilyn Monroe. At some point I asked, *what male stands out in Western culture? Is it Adolf Hitler? Is it Jesus Christ? And what's the female? Is it Marilyn Monroe?* And of course, the two together are crazy, right? We're not trying to be in the '40s or anything. It's some sort of version, some sort of pretend play in a very ultra-serious, ultra-dumb, and ultra-buffoonish way. I'm pretending to be an American Adolf Hitler and Lilith is a German Marilyn Monroe.

JB It's goddamn serious, but it's actually so surreal. Trump brought back McCarthyism, Roy Cohn, and all this stuff that's out there now. And also Putin. I use the swastika. It's only a Nazi symbol at this point, not a Buddhist symbol. There's permission now to have a lot of this horrible fascism. It's much more accepted. It's very terrifying for those of us who know how horrible fascism can be—the extremes of fascism: death and concentration camps.

PMC But the goons or those who follow these characters, do they understand how the propaganda is being constructed? Do they recognize it? Their notion of what fascism is gets to be pretty small and pretty limited. And so they reject that. And then, you wonder about Trump—who is he and what is he? A few years ago, when we were remaking Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974), the Max character I was playing in my version, *Night Vater*, was not actually the Nazi officer that Dirk Bogarde plays. I become like a character living in California that produces films. The image I made was very mafioso in a clichéd way. The connection between government, fascism, and mafia or organized crime is real.

JB All these characters, they're two sides of the same coin. They're terrifying and very seductive at the same time.

"My work has a lot of energy and a lot of balls. There's something so primal and so primitive about painting and just putting your whole self in it, your whole life in it—it's been an extraordinary trip."
—Judith Bernstein

PMC The one thing that has happened in these pieces that we've done is that the Eva Braun character, or Marilyn Monroe, becomes a mother, and a daughter. And Adolf Hitler is a father, and a son. And they switch these roles. It's built into the script that if the female kills the male, it's in response to the actions of the male. It's in response to who he is. And when the male kills the female, it's mean. It's the berserker. There's a difference in how violence towards the other happens. With the male, there's an insanity in there that comes out in these plays that we do. He's a very ugly buffoon goon and a lush drunk character.

JB The male can be very ugly because he's killing his mother. The father is someone who has had physical power for so long. It's complex because it goes all the way back to the primal family, and it's very primal.

PMC There's also the crazy part of how all this is understood, like how somebody reads this kind of imagery. How do they deal with the subject of irony, sarcasm, metaphor,

"There's a difference in how violence towards the other happens. With the male, there's an insanity in there that comes out in these plays that we do. He's a very ugly buffoon goon and a lush drunk character."
— Paul McCarthy

or caricature? How do they understand the language of art? It's a forum, an arena. The idea that as an artist you have to know your intentions before you begin. How art is talked about, I've sat in on crits in colleges, and there is an emphasis on having a correct idea before you make the work. Then, the question is about how well you've carried out your initial intentions, so how good the work is would be determined by how well you've completed your intentions. What is frowned upon is working from an idea through a process to get to an understanding, allowing yourself to change, and resolving issues in the process, letting the process move the work. But also, in this way, art can expose something. What scares me right now is the type of criticism that's going on. I was censored in the '60s, but I've been censored more now than ever before. In one way, as the world gets more extreme, you would think it's natural that art would inevitably become more extreme in response.

JB I hope that's the case, but I don't know. It may become more simplistic.

PMC But a lot of that is the market and the art world. The art world as a market controls so much of what we know of art. You know, like what the gallery shows, but really what the museums show. And then, you know, who's on the board, and who the curators and directors are, and how the money flows. I went to a gala a few years ago and a film director got up and said, as part of his speech for the award, "Remember, if it's not popular, it's not art." Nobody said a thing. In fact, people clapped. And I thought, *oh, god.* It becomes propaganda. Imagine that statement moving through an audience of 500 or 600 people. Then, you have museums creating shows that are popular and counting people that are coming and going.

JB It's all intertwined, Paul.

PMC Yeah. It's all entwined. It also has layers to it. In some ways, the art world has opened up and in other ways, it's closed down. It's a strange combination. It may indicate that we're in a transition. But the seduction of money is huge. You and I, in some ways, have experienced the same art world, but in different locations. You've been primarily in New York, and I've been primarily in California. There's an interesting difference. But there are a lot of levels where our work connects. I think it was Mara's [McCarthy] idea that I would curate your latest show, *We Don't Owe You A Tomorrow*, at The Box. Maybe there's less to say about the curating, and more about the paintings. There was a question about the black light paintings. I think if we could have afforded it, I would've turned the whole gallery into a black light situation so that you really had a chance to see these paintings in the two situations.

JB I put a black light on stuff so that you have a parallel universe. There's something very mysterious about the way I handle it because I make a painting and then I see it under black light after it's finished. In a way, it's like a surprise. I thought

Judith Bernstein, *President* (2017),
acrylic and oil on canvas, 90 × 89 1/2 inches
Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery, NY

Paul McCarthy, *Dopwhite, WS*, 2009, oil stick charcoal and collage on paper, 96 × 80 inches. Framed Dimensions: 105 1/8 × 87 3/8 × 3 1/8 inches © Paul McCarthy.
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Ron Amstutz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SNEEZES NOW


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about the work being mostly about this nightmarish zeitgeist. Also, I'm very much into humor, just as you are. But mine has a different kind of black humor. I think that humor makes the work more accessible and more memorable, but also that it makes it easier to accept. Laughing—it's almost like an ejaculation.

When I was a graduate student at Yale, I had the idea to go into the men's room. I read an article in the *New York Times*, and it said the title of *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf* (1962) was taken from bathroom graffiti. Right away, I was off and running. Graffiti is actually much deeper than you expect. And the same with your work—you have stuff that is so psychologically charged. I also use these great limericks: *There once was a man from Nantucket who had a dick so long he could suck it*. All those graffiti pieces led to the *Fuck Vietnam* pieces and the large projectile phalluses. I was always so interested in doing things that express my rage at injustice. My rage at the Vietnam War was extraordinary. My work has a lot of energy and a lot of balls. There's something so primal and so primitive about painting and just putting your whole self in it, your whole life in it—it's been an extraordinary trip.

PMC I think the paintings you've made in the last few years kind of indicate a sense of speed and quantity. You know, quantity is a subject or part of what I'm doing. The idea of the studio being a B-movie sound stage. But the thing that's happening now is digital quantity. There are hundreds of thousands of images, but it's also video—there's more video than we can possibly ever edit. For me, the accumulation of imagery becomes a piece in and of itself. The hard drive that holds all the images is the object. At one point, all my videotapes in the '70s were in cardboard boxes, and the cardboard boxes were stacked like a totem. The subject of stacking has gone on in my work since the '60s. So, I stacked the videotape boxes and it was sold as a sculpture. The object is the boxes that hold the videotapes. I think there's something about the unseen, and the skin of the box is like the skin of the person, and inside it holds the information. For me, they become kind of metaphors for the body. Now what I'm doing, intentionally and unintentionally, meaning it's just happening, is the stacking up of hard drives. I would say that a good portion of what I've made in the last ten years doesn't even get shown. It has no place.

JB Yes, but you got a chance to do what you wanted to do. And you know something, you don't know what will happen tomorrow. △

Opposite page

Paul McCarthy, *CSSC MARYY JESSUSS*, 2023
acrylic and collaged magazine on canvas panel
120 × 84 × 2 inches © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth, and Xavier Hufkens.
Photo: Allard Bovenberg

This page

Judith Bernstein, *Supercock*, 1966
mixed media 22 × 30 inches
collection Paul & Karen McCarthy
Courtesy the artist and The Box, Los Angeles

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Acquisitions round-up: London museums jointly purchase pre-Raphaelite painting that depicts Jamaican woman

Our pick of the latest gifts and purchases to enter institutional collections worldwide

HANNAH MCGIVERN
AUGUST 11, 2023

[EXCERPT]

Judith Bernstein, *Horizontal* (1973)
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Judith Bernstein's 9ft by 12ft charcoal drawing of a phallic screw was censored from a 1974 exhibition in Philadelphia because it was deemed to lack "redeeming social value", a term commonly applied to obscenity cases in the courts. Louise Bourgeois, Alice Neel, Clement Greenberg and Linda Nochlin were among the illustrious names who signed a petition in protest (to no avail). No stranger to controversy, Bernstein began making sexually explicit feminist art in the late 1960s and joined the group Fight Censorship together with peers including Bourgeois. She has called *Horizontal* (1973) "one of my absolute favourite drawings ever". Fifty years after the work was made, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has purchased it from Kasmin Gallery. "We look forward to displaying *Horizontal* in a future collection rotation in the Met's Modern and Contemporary galleries," a museum spokesperson says.

[...]

HYPERALLERGIC

The Dark and Moody Humor of Judith Bernstein's Paintings

Bernstein's latest works are beset with a deathlike quality rarely seen in her earlier pieces, even ones that directly addressed death in war or genocide.

NATALIE HADDAD

AUGUST 8, 2023

Judith Bernstein, "Gasligting (Green Ground)" (2021), acrylic on canvas, 99 1/2 x 98 1/2 inches (photos via The Box)

LOS ANGELES — With her latest exhibition, *We Don't Owe You a Tomorrow*, Judith Bernstein creates an expanding universe of pain and disaster. The artist continues to build on the cosmology she began with her *Birth of the Universe* paintings, combining the Big Bang with the social, political, environmental, and biological viruses that infect our lives. But where works from the past few years focused with laser-sharp fury on Trump and the history of political corruption and violence that aided his ascendance, her latest paintings are both less explicit in their messaging and more

agitated in their energy. Trump, and the neo-Nazism he emboldened, loom in the background but in the years since her last show at The Box disasters of planetary proportions have exploded into a daily cycle of doom.

The gallery's large front room establishes the show's general atmosphere, while a small gallery contains her caustic early antiwar and feminist drawings and prints. Fluorescent black-light paint coheres into frenzied cyclones of gesture and form in a two-row, eight-painting grid on one wall. Bernstein's recurring iconography shows up — vicious vagina dentatas, personified phalluses — along with swastikas and text, including the show's title and the name "Trumpenschlong," but they take a backseat to the compositions' overall chaos.

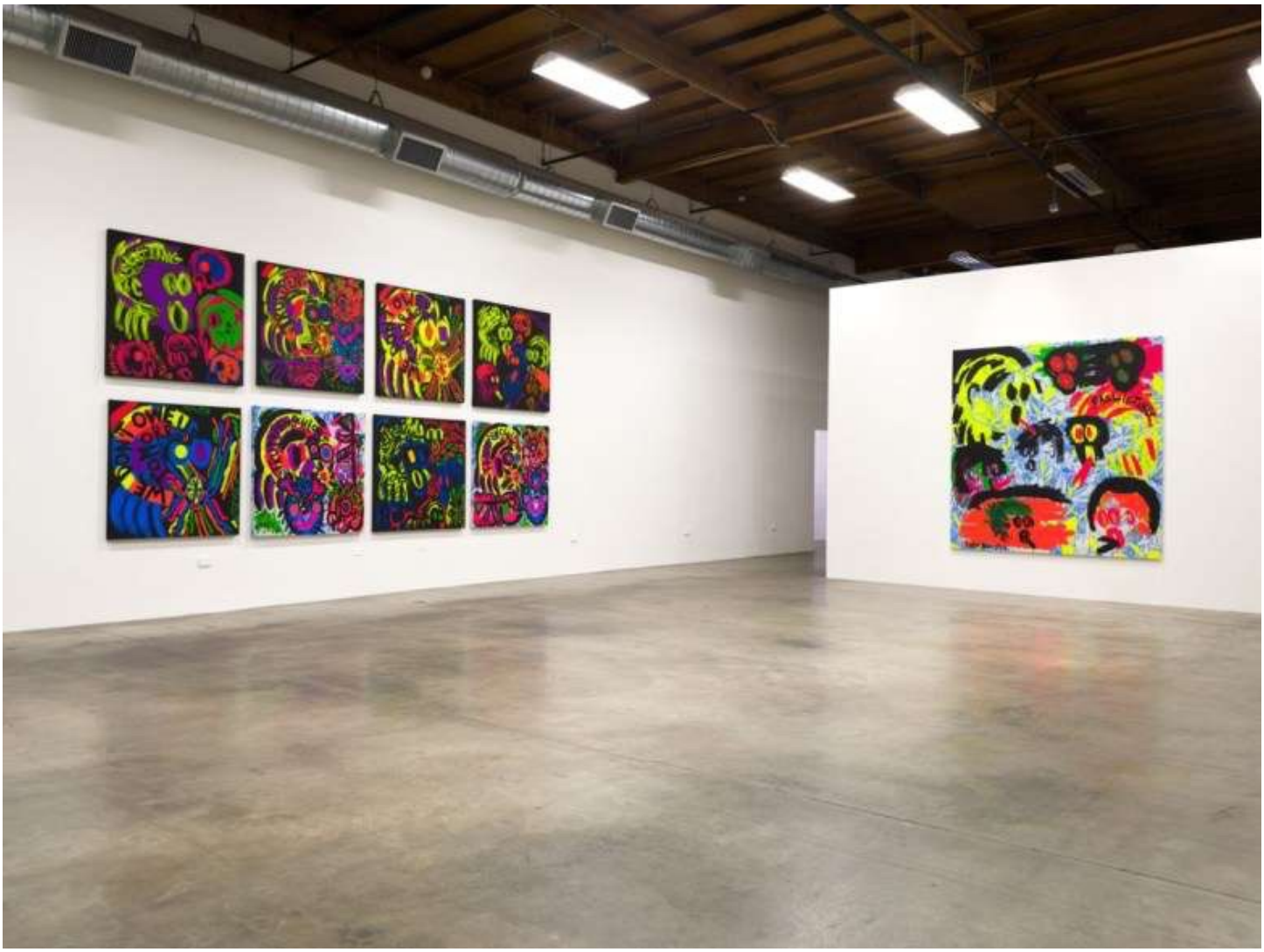
In "We Don't Owe U A Tomorrow (Small #2)" (2022), a whirlwind of lurid color, overlaid with the show's title in black block letters, edges a squid-like vagina dentata into a corner. Rendered in thick, forceful brushstrokes and meandering lines, the forms evoke monstrosity without sharp definition, as if an unchecked force is coming into being.

Installation view of *Judith Bernstein: We Don't Owe You a Tomorrow* at The Box, Los Angeles. Left: "Gasligting (We Don't Owe U A Tomorrow)" (2023), acrylic on canvas, 82 x 80 inches; right: "We Don't Owe U A Tomorrow #3" (2022), acrylic on canvas, 78 x 78 inches

The show's centerpieces are three paintings in a black-lit backroom. Reflecting the other works on a much larger scale, they consume the small space. Loose, broad brushstrokes swirl into giant nebulas to create a vertiginous abyss — the sense of motion in works like the 78 by 78-inch "We Don't Owe U A Tomorrow #3" (2022), whose sweeping strokes record the artist's reach across the canvas, is disorienting.

The black grounds of most of the paintings intensify the sense of cosmic chaos, but they are beset with a deathlike quality rarely seen in the artist's earlier works, even ones that directly addressed death in war or genocide. Heads that resembled Mickey Mouse in previous pieces mutate into cartoonish skulls that haunt the canvas like death masks from the past or future, most prominently in the intentionally misspelled "Gasligting" and "Gasligting (Blue Ground)" (both 2021); and in "Gasligting (We Don't Owe U A Tomorrow)" (2023), a pink face evolved from her longstanding "Cockman" characters (heads composed of male genitalia) is frozen into a stunned corpse.

It's a dark turn for an artist whose acerbic wit has often accompanied her weighty subjects, but maybe an appropriate one for the times.



Installation view of *Judith Bernstein: We Don't Owe You a Tomorrow* at The Box, Los Angeles

COUNTERPUNCH

Judith Bernstein, an Artist for Our Times

DAVID CARRIER

JULY 28, 2023

Judith Bernstein, Birth of the Universe #33, 2014, oil and acrylic on canvas, 15′ 6“ × 10′ 2”.

The fabulous success of Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible* films certainly speaks to the fantasy life of the larger public. That so many people pay to view them is revealing. And so it's worthwhile asking how to interpret that response. Compared with that mass art, painting attracts relatively small audiences. But now and then, although this is relatively rare, one finds a gallery artist whose work also speaks to the larger political and social issues of the time. Judith Bernstein is such a painter, for her art reveals a great deal about the state of our present public life.

In the 1960s, when she was a graduate art student at Yale University, Bernstein was inspired less by works in museums than by the graffiti in the men's rooms. Other artists were interested also in such sources outside the traditional art world. She learned how to make gallery art from that experience; she wanted to turn these male fantasies into visual art. Early on in her career, her aggressive erotic work proved a hard sell. Just now, however, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has acquired her *Horizontal* (1973), a 9 x 12 ½ feet charcoal drawing of a phallic screw rendered in her signature style. About time! I wonder when they'll hang it in the galleries devoted to the permanent collection. I can remember vividly the first time some years ago I saw Bernstein's work in a group show. I was astonished. No need for coffee that day! She makes large cartoonish images in black-light lit colors of close up images of genitals, *Death of the Universe #1*, 2018, is one, and *Gaslighting (Red)* (2019) is another. When she writes in large capitals "Cunt face universe" on *Birth of the Universe #11, The Source* (2013), then you can see that she isn't, so to speak, beating around the bush.

Bernstein's recent *Gasligting (Blue Ground)* (2022), the typo in the word 'gaslighting' is intentional!, shows her distinctive images of genitals. She is concerned, she has said, with "the origin of space, time, and infinity, using the rage of the active cunt as the primal source in the expanding universe." Feminist rage is her theme. To understand how original she is, try this experiment- look through any survey history of Western art that includes some female nudes. How many images of women show genitals? The exception which provides the rule, comes of course from outside the art world. I mean pornography. But how many Western art nudes that you can find are by female artists? Until now, very few. Bernstein changed the rules of that game. She turns cliched misogynistic subjects into aggressive angry images supporting women, dealing with what the English art writer Julian Bell calls the "female otherness that excites yet endangers males." This radical development of the traditions of erotic art is a great achievement.

Kenneth Clark's magisterial *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (1956) takes this history up to Brancusi, Henry Moore and Picasso. He concludes by saying that "the nude does not simply represent the body, but relates it, by analogy, to all structures that have become part of our imaginative experience." Bernstein, finally!, has really has shaken herself free from this entire tradition, and entered singular new artistic territory. Such otherwise diverse late modernists as Francis Bacon, Bernard Buffet and Peter Saul distort the body wildly in pursuit of their erotic visual preoccupations. Bernstein does something completely different. It's the sexual parts themselves, detached from the body, that engage her attention.

The present public embrace of Bernstein's art marks a real change in sensibility, a total breakdown of the traditional standards of what's publicly acceptable. The age of Trump, who is one of her favorite targets, is just one marker of this break, which runs across the entire culture and through the complete political spectrum. Consider a brief list of some changes. Now it's become possible (and important) to talk about gay rights and sexual harassment. There is general accessibility of erotic imagery that was previously available only under-the counter; fascination of biographers with the previously unmentionable aspects of subjects' lives; whistleblowers' breakdowns of political secrecy; extremely rapid international circulation of information on the internet; and the ability of absolutely anyone to make and circulate video recordings on their smart phone. Films, literature and video deal with sexuality in frank ways that were unimaginable a generation ago.

Here I link together very diverse aspects of what I view as essentially variations on a single theme, the breakdown or rejection of traditional repressions. Some of these changes are marvelous, while others, in my judgment, are potentially highly problematic. But it doesn't really matter what I, or anyone thinks, for they are happening. And Bernstein's art is part and parcel this broader change. Why has our culture become unbuttoned in this way? Part of the cause certainly is the new technologies, which in some ways are harder to censor than books. But I suspect that larger cultural changes are also at

stake. Clark, noting in passing that Japanese print makers include “certain intimate scenes usually allowed to pass unrecorded,” remarks that they had no concept of the nude. This certainly is an interesting cultural difference.

Needless to say, I am not contending that Bernstein considered (or even was aware of) all of these broader considerations. She is an artist whose goal is to make the best work possible, not a public intellectual. But I do believe that only a painter with a singular social intelligence would have had the skill to create works which have the extraordinary impact of her art. Some commentators say that Bernstein is not subtle. I agree that her art is singularly forceful. But when you give it some time, you will discover that her paintings are oddly beautiful. Why? Unable to answer that question, I close with a short story which may be relevant. According to an ancient Greek myth, when Demeter, who was a dinner guest is depressed Baubo, an old woman who was the goddess of mirth, flashes him, and thereby causes him to laugh. Freud loved that fable. Viewing people’s private parts can cause surprising reactions.

NOAH BECKER'S
WHITEHOT MAGAZINE
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Cultural Rebels: Feminist Art appreciation at Independent Fair

COCO DOLLE
MAY 2023

Judith Bernstein, *Female*, 1995-2019, courtesy of Kasmin Gallery

[EXTRACT]

Judith Bernstein's large charcoal drawings Angry Bitches took over Kasmin's booth. A direct application of text-based conceptual art, this series brings meaning and power to the words *Justice*, *Liberty*, *Evil*, *Equality* and *Female*. Created during the period 1995-2009, Judith's word drawings are a direct expression of her raw essence and a political style she nurtured since her graduate years at Yale.

[...]

CULTURED

Artist Judith Bernstein's Favorite Luxury Product Is a $2 Chinatown T-Shirt

In this inaugural edition of the Art of Living Well, Judith Bernstein gives her recommendations for affordable luxuries, and explains how she got the last laugh in at her critics.

CULTURED MAGAZINE
MAY 12, 2023

Portrait of Judith Bernstein by Max Montgomery.

Judith Bernstein has seen it all. The 80-year-old artist and veteran New Yorker made her name in the 1970s with controversial drawings of phallic screws. Now, she is having the last laugh: the Metropolitan Museum of Art just acquired a monumental charcoal work that was censored from a group show in Philadelphia in 1974. This week, Kasmin will present a solo presentation of Bernstein's "Word Drawing" series (1989–2009) at the Independent Art Fair in New York.

To kick off our Art of Living Well column, *CULTURED* spoke with the artist about how she thrives in the Big Apple.

CULTURED: What product do you use every day that instantly improves your mood?

Judith Bernstein: Turner Classic Movies.

CULTURED: What is a splurge you reserve for special occasions?

Bernstein: Chinese Sichuan at Hwa Yuan across the street.

CULTURED: What's your favorite small luxury to give to someone else?

Bernstein: Books and magazines.

Judith Bernstein, *HORIZONTAL*, 1973. Photography by Christopher Stach and courtesy of the artist and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

CULTURED: What do you do when you need to feel grounded?

Bernstein: I think about my fabulous, most iconic nine-by-12-and-a-half-foot drawing *HORIZONTAL* from 1973 being newly purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And if that doesn't ground me, I don't know what will!

CULTURED: What is something you'd love for someone to buy for you, but would never buy for yourself?

Bernstein: An XXXL Manhattan loft. With very high ceilings to make giant paintings.

CULTURED: What's a generic that's just as good as the original?

Bernstein: Drugs.

Portrait of Bernstein with screw drawing by Frederick Canter, 1973.

CULTURED: What's your favorite smell?

Bernstein: My Siberian cat, Starry.

CULTURED: What is the best thing you've put on your face recently?

Bernstein: My vintage Alain Mikli glasses by Claude Montana.

CULTURED: What is your favorite luxury that costs less than $20?

Bernstein: $2.50 Chinatown T-shirts.

CULTURED: What's a wellness ritual you think is overrated?

Bernstein: Exercise!

CULTURED: What is the most luxurious thing in your life that's free?

Bernstein: Great conversations and visiting New York galleries.

BAZAAR

Big Bang

Judith Bernstein portrays war, fascism, and racism, nature preservation and feminism. Almost 80 years old, her work unites sexuality, abortion rights and politics, making her an unparalleled artist.

DANNIEL RANGEL
AUGUST 4, 2022

JUDITH BERNSTEIN, 79, has always used brushes to reveal her avant-garde ideas through her art. Feminist by nature, the artist was never afraid to show what she stood for at a time when a lot of courage was needed to take a stand. Even when the wave of new artists emerged and became fashionable, Judy was decades ahead, because not for a single minute did she stop working and exposing her vision - more than a feminist, we could describe her as a humanist. Her tireless perseverance paved the way for so many other artists.

Celebrated by many museums today, Judy was censored at the beginning of her career not for the political message conveyed by her creations, but for the chromatic content of her works. In exhibitions such as Woman's Work: American Art (1974), her colleagues signed a petition so that her work would not be excluded, Alice Neel, Louise Bourgeois, among others. But there was no way to deal with the moralism of the time. For her, every woman has a phallus (from the Latin phallus, symbology given to representations of the image of an erect penis) in her head. "It's a matter of finding out." And she found that out very early on. Her series on the Vietnam War features rare pieces and is part of major museum and private collections around the world. The works were exhibited at the Smithsonian Museum and MIA, in 2019 and 2020, in the exhibition *Artist Respond: American Art and Vietnam War*, 1965-1975. Not to mention in 2012, when she invaded the walls of the New Museum with her *Trademark Signature* and works from *Vietnam war*, in the show *Once Banished, Never Silenced*.

The beginning of it all, after graduating from Yale, was not easy. She went from door to door looking for galleries. And rejection was part of its strength and direction. "I consider myself optimistic." Today the path for women is much easier than it was years ago, and the #metoo movement was one of the factors that contributed to this evolution. "We still have a lot to accomplish," she comments. From her own signature, quoted above, influenced by New York graffiti, she narrates that charcoal is "very sensual" when working with this material. Her iconic screw-shaped penises show the patriarchal control over women in our society. Judy went through several phases, but always being faithful to her beginnings, in the 1960s. "My work is an evolution, and I deal with the problems of my country and the world through it, in our daily life and the barriers we have to go through to evolve," she describes.

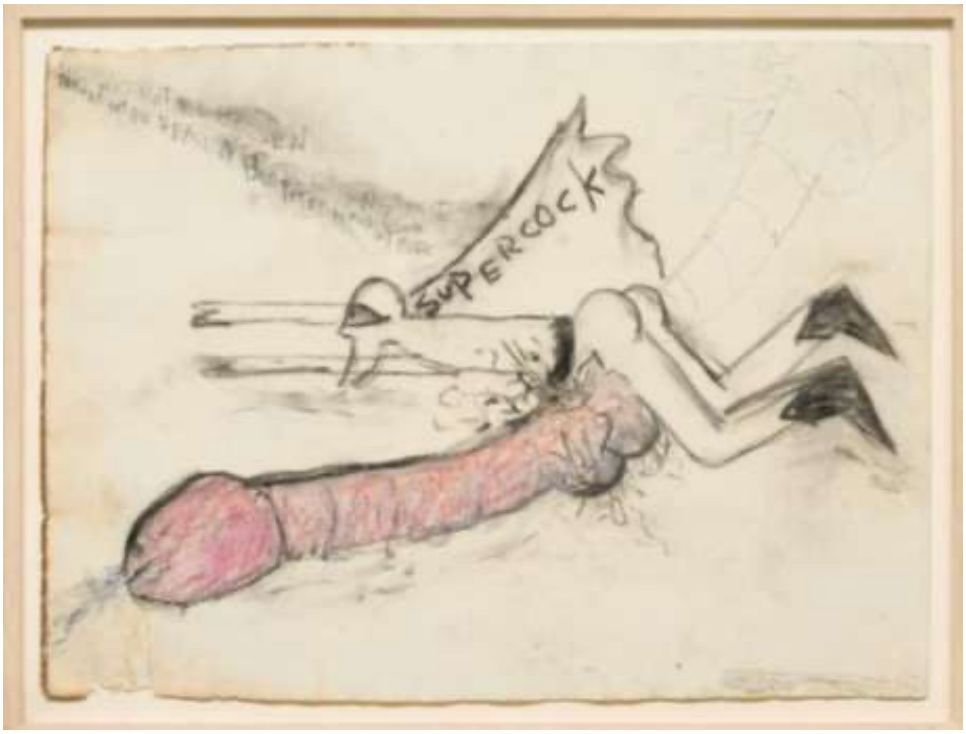
Fun Gun, one of her favorite works, shows a revolver-shaped penis, firing like a rotary machine gun, calling attention to gun control, not only in her home country, but also to prevent wars. Her works in any of the decades, so current these days, portray, in addition to war, fascism, racism, the struggle for equality, the preservation of nature and feminism. All are frequent and very strong themes in her works. Judith questions everything: where sexuality, politics and good humor meet in a unique way, making her a unique and current artist. And she makes a point of making that very clear. "Everything is very serious, with strokes of color, art and humor."

Before the pandemic, the exhibition *Hot Hands*, at The Box LA gallery, spoke about all the anger that plagued the United States, its terror policy and questioned the end of democracy. Years earlier, after the inauguration of President Donald Trump, Judy went even further in a solo show entitled *Cabinet of Horrors*, revealing the facets of Aryan, sexist and fascist supremacy of the then-elected candidate for the presidency of the United States, which took place at *The Drawing Center*, New York. "The rise of populist world leaders is because there are so many problems that people get angry when their needs aren't being met," she explains. "Populist leaders are seasoned activists, who use charisma and bravery to woo voters, but have no real agenda or moral code. Instead, they are morally corrupt and operate only to serve themselves," she continues.

A show of fluorescent colors, the *BIG BANG*, American symbols such as the flag itself, the American Eagle, as warning signs for the path that American society had chosen, always calling attention to how fragile democracy is. When asked about the use of fluorescent colors, she said: "they are fantastic, it was a great discovery just like the universe. They are strong, they draw attention to the work during the day and, like stars, they glow in the dark." Shocked by the decision of the US Supreme Court that suspended the right to abortion, guaranteed by the constitution for almost 50 years in the United States, she doesn't leave it for less. "Despite the cybernetic progress, we still continue to walk backwards on this issue," she argues.

She is currently working on a new series called *GasLight*, after watching the 1940s film NOIR, in which the character Charles Boyer, played by Gary Anton, tries to drive his wife, Paula, Ingrid Bergman, crazy because of some rubies left by her late aunt - an opera singer. Once again, she questions the patriarchal power in society, drawing attention

to the psychological abuse between couples and, also, to mental health. After many hours of conversation and different topics, she sums up as an optimist, in the certainty that humanity has come a long way. "The only problem is this unbridled fear of the future. The only way for governments to continue to control humanity is through fear, because the future seems uncertain, but we have no alternative but to leave the old values and embrace the 21st century."



For her, the internet is an extraordinary invention that only makes our lives easier. "If we are educated and smart enough to use it, we can develop millions of wonders - from finding life on other planets to new solutions to many problems." Humanist, feminist and many more adjectives fit this force of nature. Steady and strong on her pedestal, a near-octogenarian pioneer who still believes that life is a gift. And we must make a difference in our brief passage on this fantastic planet. Those who think far, she has a message. "I've come to realize that it's a long-term commitment, very complete, that there's no quick fix," she concludes.

FRIEZE

A Milestone Year for Pioneering Feminist Art Space A.I.R. and its Artists

The gallery enters its sixth decade as one of its founding member, Judith Bernstein, turns 80

VALERIA NAPOLEONE
MAY 19, 2022

Photo by Allyson Huntsman

I first encountered Judith Bernstein's work when she had her solo show at London's Studio Voltaire in 2014. Bernstein spent one month in production residency there, and made a massive installation across the site's former chapel building and a second exhibition space, including the largest wall painting she had ever done at the time. The wall painting was so intense, and so labor intensive — I was impressed with her energy. Her energy is really contagious.

What I appreciate about Bernstein is her courage. In the 1960s, she made work speaking out against war in Vietnam and, in 2017–18, her exhibition at the Drawing Center in New York was a statement against Donald Trump. She's an artist for whom recognition has come later in life, but she doesn't have an inch of regret or anger at being "overlooked." She's always excited about her current work and next project. I find that inspirational.

From the Studio Voltaire show, I bought the large painting *Birth of the Universe* (2014). I was drawn at first to the color palette — there's a beautiful blue in there, which is fluorescent under black light. I love the imagery of the painting, which is very bold, depicting a "cock" and a "cunt" (to use Bernstein's words), but I also find myself getting lost in the paint. The composition and brushstrokes make me look at the work in an abstract way.

The piece takes up almost an entire wall and people do sometimes find it overwhelming for its size, colors and content. I have not had to explain it to my children — I think most people get what it is about when they see it. Though, when it was installed, I remember referring to the face with the cock and the art handler said: "Really? I thought it was an elephant!" I have it installed across from a Lisa Yuskavage nude (*True Blonde*, 1999) and a Nicole

Eisenman foam piece called *Saggy Titties* (2007), where the subject's breasts hang down past the borders of the canvas. There is a great conversation between these pieces about the woman's body—and deep-pink colors.

Judith Bernstein, *Birth of the Universe #33*, 2014. Courtesy: the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York

Bernstein was one of a group of 20 women artists who first founded A.I.R. Gallery in New York in 1972. It was ground-breaking, since at that time there was very little opportunity for women artists to show their work. I've been visiting A.I.R. since the beginning of my art journey, when it was still on Wooster Street in SoHo. As a young woman and a new collector, I felt like a child going to school, ready to be taught and to grow. I would try to learn everything I could. I had already decided I was going to focus on collecting work by women artists, but it was places like A.I.R. that really helped me understand just how necessary this was. The archive they have there are amazing and what impressed me especially was the camaraderie. In the same way, what stood out to me, more than individual shows, was the energy of the space with its community-building and networking values. This sense of community and mutual support remains key to A.I.R.'s mission. That's what is really inspiring.

As we look forward to the next 50 years, it's clear to me that the work of A.I.R. is not done — that the art world has not changed as much as it sometimes appears. The gallery's mission to highlight work by women artists continues undeterred with its commitment to younger generations and to community-building, including the complex landscape of gender fluidity and nonbinary identities.

While there is a growing diversity in the arts, the journey is still a long one. It will take the effort and courage of many people and institutions. If you're interested in this journey, I don't think you can find a more powerfully authentic institution to follow than A.I.R.

– As told to Matthew McLean

THE CANVAS
MONTHLY

Sublimation and its Discontents

The Art of Judith Bernstein

DAVID CARRIER
FEBRUARY, 2022

Photo by Max Montgomery Courtesy of Kasmin, New York.

In his classic, now very dated, The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form (1956), Kenneth Clark remarks that "the nude does not simply represent the body, but relates it, by analogy, to all structures that have become part of our imaginative experience." It is impossible to imagine what he would make of Judith Bernstein's transgressive paintings featuring female and male genitals that were inspired by the graffiti in the men's room at Yale from when she was a graduate student in the '70s. Bernstein, whose work I first came across seven years ago at Gavin Brown's downtown gallery, astonished me at the time. And yet, I wonder, is it not legitimate to see her as working within and ex-tending the long artistic tradition of the nude? Of course, her wildly original paintings are decidedly aggressive. But, still, when you look at a selection of her work, as I have had the pleasure of doing, you discover how generously delicate her ferocious images can be. At least that's the case once you give them time. We may think that in the present-day artworld any subject is allowed, indeed, even welcomed. But, as Bernstein explains, that hasn't always been the case.

Regardless, her art inarguably speaks to our present moment and zeitgeist. And although she insists that she is full of rage, in person she is generous and friendly. Artists like Bernstein give us a reason to hope for the future of our culture. Sitting in her Chinatown studio on the occasion of her recently closed show, 'GASLIGTING FOREVER,' at Kasmin Gallery, Bernstein and I talk about the past and present reception of her work, politics, and the role that humor plays throughout her art.

David Carrier: After you finished grad school, it took more than 25 years before you really became well known throughout the artworld. Did you always have faith that it eventually would happen?

Judith Bernstein: I knew the work was good, David, but I constantly thought that I might be delusional because when you talk to artists, everyone thinks that their work is terrific, and for the most part, you're never really sure one way or another. But I always knew that the work had value, that I had something to say, and that it was important for me. Take this 'Birth of the Universe' painting, for instance. The energy in this painting is what my work is about and what I aim to convey with all my paintings. It has that explosive energy that, particularly with the 'Birth of the Universe' series, I was trying to communicate while drawing a connection between the birth of the universe and human birth.

David Carrier: Around when would you point to as the moment you first began to achieve proper recognition throughout the artworld?

Judith Bernstein: The first show I had in New York in a long time was at the Michell Algus Gallery in 2008. Paul McCarthy came and loved the work. His daughter then came to New York, offered me a show, and that's when things finally began to take off. And then, the following year I had a show at The Box in LA that mostly featured a combination of 'Screw' and 'Fuck Vietnam' drawings.

David Carrier: I'm puzzled about this long delay between when you first began working and when people started paying more attention to what you were doing with your work. The artworld has seen so much transgressive art of all sorts over the years. Why do you think it took so long for people to accept and acknowledge your work?

Judith Bernstein: For a long time, I think that people didn't take women seriously. Also, the kind of work that I was doing certainly had a sort of edginess to it. It had an edge politically, and it also had a sexual edge. So, I think that the combination of the political and sexual rawness, as well as my rage at injustice really stymied my career. I was fortunate to be able to get into A.I.R, the New York feminist cooperative gallery, when it formed in 1972, because I didn't have other options. And for so long, that was just the reality of the circumstances I found myself in.

David Carrier: Were women also resistant to your art? Judith Bernstein: I think that a lot of women were turned off by my work because my idea of feminism involved observing the guys and making the connection between masculinity and war. But some women thought that if art wasn't about women, then it wasn't feminist art at all.

Judith Bernstein photographed in 1973 standing in front of 'Horizontal.' Photo by Frederick Canter. Courtesy of Kasmin, New York.

David Carrier: Thomas Micchelli said we think of the Surrealists and the Abstract Expressionists as presenting their unconsciousness and their thoughts through their work. However, in your work, you present your record of men's thoughts, not your own…

Judith Bernstein: The art combines my experience of observing the graffiti in the men's room while I was in grad school and my creative response to what I saw there. But I also made up my stuff, too. So, it was a combination of me and them.

David Carrier: When I looked at your images online, I thought about how this idea of transgression plays out in various different fields. Black comedians – Chris Rock for example– know that if you're too far from the edge, you're dull. But of course, if you go too far the other way, then people throw things at you, and you end up getting in trouble…

Judith Bernstein: I've always operated on my instinct. I tended to just act on my gut feelings and then, perhaps later, I was able to figure out a lot of the issues that were underlying and motivating those feelings. But frankly, I've only really ever had my instinct to go on.

David Carrier: I love seeing your very aggressive art here in the studio. But what happens when people live with it? I can imagine that for some people, your work might prove a bit difficult to live with on a daily basis. Is it possible to hang one of the pieces in a living room?

Judith Bernstein: One large piece is owned by Paul McCarthy,and I think he can live with it better than a lot of other people. It's a Super Cock; and I also have a companion piece in my own collection, of a Super Cock with a zipper painted on it. Look, sometimes people would buy the works and put them in their bathroom so that they could exist in a more private area of their homes. To tell you the truth, though, while I have been lucky to be supported by some very passionate private collectors, the museums were the first to come back around.

David Carrier: If I were to curate a show, I would put your work next to a Francis Bacon…

Judith Bernstein: A few years ago, during my first show with Kasmin, someone asked me who I thought would end up buying my works. Truthfully, I've never really given much thought to that. Unfortunately, that didn't always work for me throughout my career. I'm the first to admit that my work doesn't appeal to everyone because it's so laden with sex and politics. But when the right people see it, they tend to love it. In other cases, there are people who may like the work but don't necessarily want to own a piece; especially with the works I did around Donald Trump. I think too many people tend to focus on the surface level content of a given painting without allowing themselves to go deeper and talk about the psychological impact it can have.

Judith Bernstein's 'President' (2017). Acrylic and oil on canvas, 90 x 89 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin, New York.

David Carrier: Maybe the good thing about the repetitive motifs in your work is that they force the viewer to focus on the color, the form, the drawing, and the artistic elements. Otherwise, they might just get lost in the shock value of it all. If I trip on the sidewalk and bang my knees, my initial focus is on the pain not the sidewalk. After the pain subsides, then I can focus more closely on the sidewalk and what caused me to trip. I think your work can affect people that way. At first, they are struck by the graphic nature of the work. Once they process that and take the time to look more closely, they can begin to appreciate the artistic and technical elements on display.

Judith Bernstein: I like to focus on the same themes over and over again but repeat them with slight variations. My work is very compulsive and that is part of the rage I have. But they're all dealing with this idea of masculinity in one way or another.

David Carrier: Do you think that the increase in other forms of artistic violence throughout society – such as the rise in action movies over the years – has given more people the ability to respond more readily to your art?

Judith Bernstein: There's probably some truth to that. I definitely think my work is more valued now because of its 'in-yourface' aggressive quality. In the past, when people were less accustomed to depictions of violence in art, it was not as accepted. So, I think that in a lot of ways, this change in society actually benefitted me. It's very fortunate that now seems to be the right time for my voice to be out there and heard.

David Carrier: Now people are prepared to see it…

Judith Bernstein: That's exactly right. Many times, what's put into galleries is sanitized or taken out of its original context, just like Pop Art was taken out of one context and plugged into another.

David Carrier: The classic theories argue that humor has this aggressive impulse at its core that then gets sugarcoated. If the aggression predominates, then it's just saying, 'screw you'.

Judith Bernstein: Art has to hit on a subconscious level. It has to really resonate with a person. I try to weave humor throughout my paintings, but it's not just about being funny for funny's sake. There has to be another dimension to it. I think humor is almost like an ejaculation. It's a release. It may not be sexual, but it has that same kind of force… For example, when I did 'Death Universe,' I was thinking at the time about how Kim Jong-un egged Donald Trump on and how that could so easily end up leading to a third world war. Then I was thinking of black holes eating each other and asteroids colliding. Now, my art tends to be about climate change as well as my own aging process. I have an enormous amount of rage and I put it in the work.

David Carrier: At the same time, though, there's a sweetness and warmth evident in your works…

Judith Bernstein: That's true too! And you know something, I project myself into it too, because I have a rage, but I can also still find the humor in a lot of these things. When people are uncomfortable, they joke, they laugh, and there's a general kind of teetering that exists when confronting hard-to-face subjects.

Judith Bernstein's 'Money Shot - Green' (2016). Acrylic and oil on canvas, 94 x 95 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin, New York.

David Carrier: These are paintings that scream. They demand attention…

Judith Bernstein: That's exactly right. I come from a background where my parents were always screaming and yelling, and you had to scream to make your voice heard. I've taken that forward throughout my life. Also, when I was a kid, I used to listen to the comedians on television. That was a wonderful and informative aspect of my life when I was young. I try to put all those early experiences into the work.

David Carrier: Landscapes tend to be just landscapes. Unless they're depicting a horrific scene of a battle or something, they don't really work their way into the artist's subconscious. But these subjects of yours, you can't just turn them off, can you?

Judith Bernstein: No, no. They just knock you dead.

David Carrier: What's extraordinary to me is how you've been able to control your rage and sublimate it in a way in which it could act as fuel for your work.

Judith Bernstein: That's right. I've put all my rage into my work and that rage became an energy force in and of itself to the point where it's now become something that I use to grapple with injustice in the world. Even though many of

the topics my work touches on don't necessarily personally affect me, I treat it as if they do. The thought that Donald Trump or some of these injustices could actually exist, or that the idealized idea of America that many people have isn't always true, are really personal topics to me. Maybe it's because My parents were first generation immigrants, and their first language was Yiddish, and that immigrant mentality is still a part of me deep down.

David Carrier: Do you think your rage comes from a sense of disappointment with the country?

Judith Bernstein: Yes. I believe it does. A deep sense of feeling that it hasn't lived up to the expectations that we all had for it.

Installation view of Judith Bernstein: 'GASLIGTING FOREVER,' November 18, 2021 – January 8th, 2022. Photograph by Diego Flores. Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin, New York.

David Carrier: I hope we'll see a big museum show for you in the not-too-distant future.

Judith Bernstein: Every time someone comes from a museum that wants to buy work, I mention that. And I don't know. We'll see. That would be just fabulous. But when a prominent NY museum director came to my studio, I remember him saying that it would have to be a very brave institution to organize a show of my work since it can push a lot of people's buttons. We still live in a relatively puritanical culture. Years ago, when I was doing a show in Colorado, someone asked if was trying to make the cock more effective. As if I were a sex therapist! And I remember Bill Copley saying to me that, "If you can do that, then just quit making art altogether. You'll make a fortune."

Arts Tribune

Judith Bernstein: 'Gasligting' Forever

Bernstein's works criticize conservative gender politics through sexual aggression and humorous paintings.

ANASTASIA JESSICA
JANUARY 2, 2022

Judith Bernstein, *Death of the Universe #1*, 2018. Courtesy of the Artist and Kasmin Gallery.

Judith Bernstein is a New York artist best known for her paintings exploring the connection between the political and the sexual. In the early 1970s, Bernstein surged into the art world with her monumental anti-war and Feminist charcoal drawings of phallic-hybrid.

The title of this exhibition, *'Gasligting' Forever* is not a typo. The removing the 'h' in 'Gasligting' aims to make the viewer "momentarily question their own sanity".

Death of the Universe #1 (2018) catches the viewer's attention by its bright colors of orange and yellow. This painting depicts vulvic-hybrid creatures attacked by something blasting. The maroon color reminds me of blood. On the left side, the artist inscribed 'Death Universe'. This painting suggests the devastating effect of terrible events before the death of the universe. Although it portrays horrific things, this painting still looks cheerful.

Gaslighting (Red) (2019) depicts two vulvic characters fighting against three phallic hybrids. This work was painted in dark and pale red with yellow block letters 'Gasligting' on the top of the painting. This picture symbolizes a fight in

the patriarchal world, where women often experience injustice. Instead of illustrating this battle in the whole body, Bernstein is more interested in portraying it in the representation of genitals.

Judith Bernstein, *Gaslighting (Red),* 2019. Courtesy of the Artist and Kasmin Gallery.

She succeeded in making writing both as an image and as a language to convey messages. *Gaslighting Forever #1* (2021) portrays 'Gasligting Forever' text in fluorescent colors with hollow eyes characters around them. The black background makes the viewer focus on what is painted in the foreground. It is a dark but hilarious representation of the struggle against patriarchy.

Judith Bernstein, *Gaslighting Forever #1,* 2021. Courtesy of the Artist and Kasmin Gallery.

The term 'gaslighting' in this exhibition was inspired by the 1944 thriller "*Gaslight*" featuring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. This film popularized the 'gaslighting' term to describe "a situation wherein an abuser encourages their target to question and examine their judgment and sanity". This term is also used to describe a psychological battle related to the toxic power that ranges from personal to political realms.

The '*Gasligting*' series began in 2019. This exhibition also includes *Death of the Universe #1* (2018). Although it was created before the pandemic, this painting can represent 'the black hole of its devastating global impact'. Bernstein's works are also displayed in black light, which gives an impressive experience to the viewers.

This exhibition proves that Judith Bernstein is truly a prolific artist whose direct expression confronted conservative gender politics with sexual aggression, as Mary Boone Gallery NYC writes on Bernstein's official website. She defies essentialists' distinction of feminine and masculine characters. Bernstein has provoked the audience by her drawings addressing themes of warfare, politics, and gender under the guise of humor.

HYPERALLERGIC

A Philosopher-Painter for Troubled Times

Judith Bernstein is a great artist whose boldly original paintings forcefully respond to the troubled life of our present culture.

DAVID CARRIER
DECEMBER 30, 20021

Judith Bernstein, "Gaslighting (Red)" (2019), acrylic and oil on canvas, 89 1/2 x 88 1/2 inches (courtesy the artist and Kasmin, New York. Photo by Diego Flores)

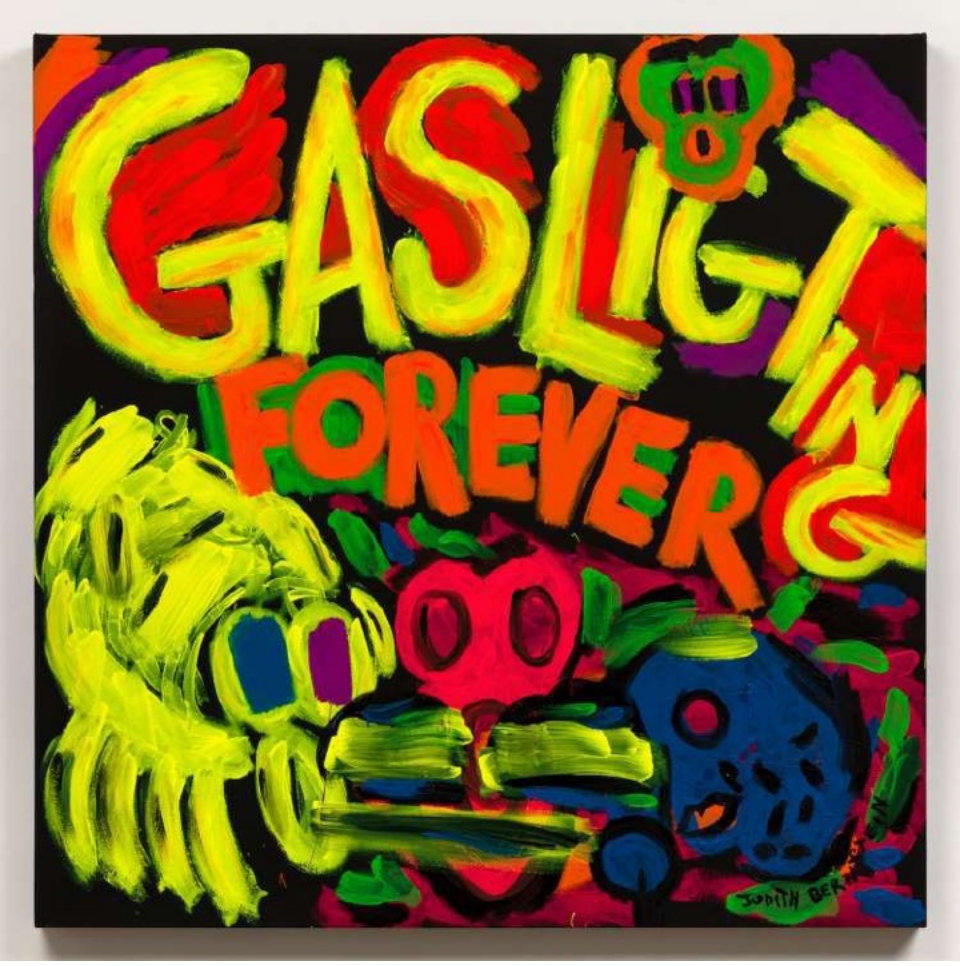
Gasligting Forever. Is there a typo in this transcription of the title for Judith Bernstein's show — should it read, rather, "Gaslighting?" No! Bernstein means "gasligting." For, as the gallery announcement explains, by intentionally misspelling the word, removing the 'h' in the title, the artist wants viewers to "momentarily question their own sanity." I know of no better account of the net expressive effect, a curious combination of feigned terror and real visual pleasure, which is consistently provided by her art. You'd have to be seriously crazy not to momentarily question your sanity when viewing this show.

In interviews Bernstein loves to relate how, as a graduate student in studio art at Yale University in the 1960s, the graffiti in the men's restrooms inspired her to make her aggressive paintings of cocks and cunts, the bravely pioneering feminist works that made her famous. Fair enough — these sources do matter. And visual shock has always been important to her. But what also must be said is how skilled and precise an artist she is. I grant that "Death of the Universe #1" (2018), which is 12 1/2 by 14 feet, catches your eyes even from outside the gallery, when you are still standing on 28th Street. But once you stop to look, you will see that the high-pitched orange-reds, the thrusting, black-edged lines of blue, and the artificial, glowing greens are perfectly poised. As a colorist, Bernstein deserves comparison with André Derain in his Fauve landscapes or Frank Stella in his acrylic Protractorseries (1967–71). Seen under black light, this image of the death of the universe is spectacular. What a cheerful way for everything to go!

Judith Bernstein, "Death of the Universe #1" (2018), acrylic and oil on canvas, 150 x 168 inches (courtesy the artist and Kasmin, New York. Photo by Diego Flores)

"Gaslighting (Red)" (2019), a smaller painting, which also is visible from the street, to the left of "Death of the Universe," portrays what looks like a boxing match between three male and two female grotesquely simplified cartoon figures. In this war scene presented in solid and pale reds the title appears in yellow block letters. Imagine one of Philip Guston's paintings of Nixon, but done in strident neon color, or an image by Peter Saul depicting the battle of the sexes, and you would have some sense of what's going on here. Or recall Francis Bacon's agonized figures. But where those artists show grotesquely distorted bodies, the whole body doesn't interest Bernstein. Rather, here, as in her earlier work, she focuses on representations of the genitals. On the third gallery wall, "Gaslighting #2" (2021), which faces "Gaslighting (Red)," offers a different composition, setting the intense, wide green lines against a black background filled with detached floating body parts that seem almost lost in the void.

In his famous essay "The Metaphysics of Sexual Love" (1844), the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer remarks that sexual love "is the ultimate goal of almost all human life …. Every day it brews and hatches the worst and most perplexing quarrels and disputes, destroys the most valuable relationships, and breaks the strongest bonds." And then, after completing this long, aggressively pessimistic description, he asks: "Why all this noise and fuss?" In fact, he argues, speaking elliptically (Schopenhauer feared censorship), all that's involved in physical love "is merely a question of every Jack finding his Jill." This is to say that instinct rules life and creates illusions, he posits, "since for nature the interest of the species takes precedent over all others." Hence the inescapable human propensity for endless war and sexual strife. The real essence of the world is the will, which means that eternal struggle is inescapable. It's no wonder that both Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud found this account curiously suggestive. Rejecting the traditional philosophical focus on the mind, Schopenhauer urges us to attend to the body. And then, as if in uncanny anticipation of Bernstein's art, he says that "the genitals are the real focus of the will."



Judith Bernstein, "Gaslighting Forever #1" (2021), acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches
(courtesy the artist and Kasmin, New York. Photo by Diego Flores)

Anytime you view art in the New York, you cannot but compare the works you see indoors in the galleries to the aggressive street art that is omnipresent in lower Manhattan. Bernstein turns graffiti into painting, taking what Joachim Pissarro and I have called "wild art," artistic sources from outside the art world, and using them to create an intense visual response in the gallery. Schopenhauer believed that we might escape the will under the spell of beauty by being able to "quietly contemplate, as pure, will-less" subjects while also "knowing those very objects so terrible

to the will." In aesthetic experience, detached from the endless striving of the will, we can — so he thought — enjoy looking at representations of the visual world. Bernstein ups the ante, for not the least of her achievements is to make arresting paintings whose subjects are so intimately linked to the will. And thus, perhaps to her surprise, she is a true philosopher-painter. (I'll bet this is the first time Bernstein has been compared with Nicolas Poussin, who often is called the philosopher-painter!) She is a great artist whose boldly original paintings forcefully respond to the troubled life of our present culture.

artnet news

What Makes an Artist's Artist? We Asked 6 Leading Figures to Name the Most Underrated—and Overrated—Artists of All Time

From overhyped Banksys to Keith Haring lookalikes, artists weigh in on their pet peeves (and what they admire, too).

ARTNET NEWS
DECEMBER 7, 2021

Judith Bernstein in front of Horizontal. Image courtesy of The Box, LA.

[EXCERPT]

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but artists often see things differently from the rest of us. A masterpiece to a layperson's eye might only make an artist roll theirs. On the other hand, we might be too quick to overlook an extraordinary work hiding in plain sight.

We asked six artists what they think are the most underrated and overrated works throughout art history. Here's what they said.

Judith Bernstein, Horizontal (1973). Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin Gallery.

Underrated: Me! Because of the sexual and political content in my work, the depth and range have been ignored. My large-scale *Horizontal* was censored in 1974. But my work has transcended the conservative climate.

Robert Colescott's *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware* is emblematic of his fabulous and provocative work. In this case, re-envisioning Western art—putting black history front and center.

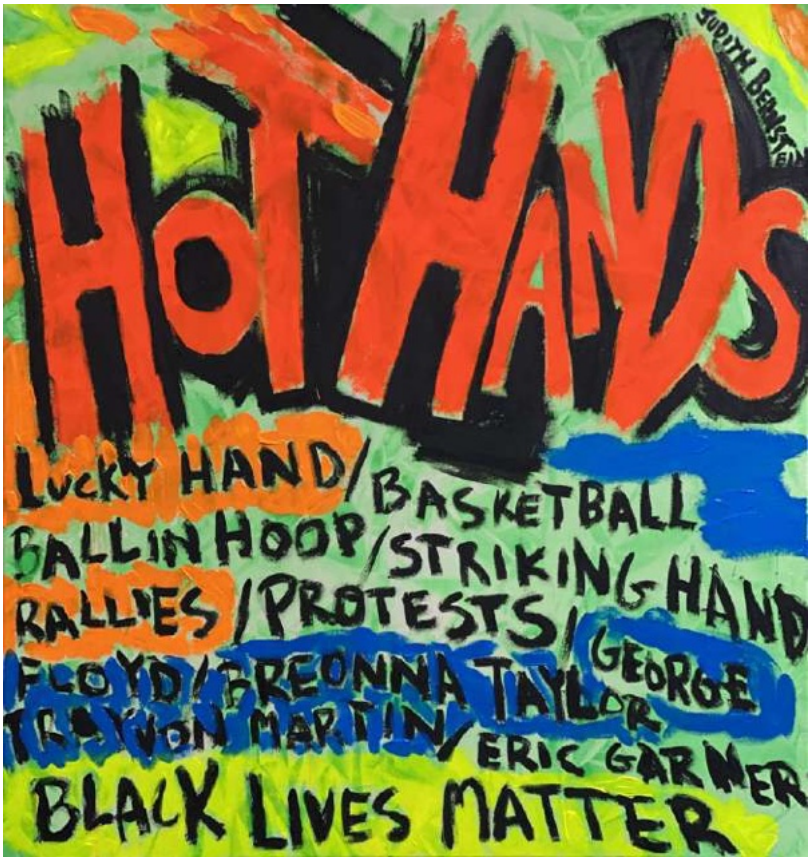
Rose Wylie's *Pink Skater (Will I Win, Will I Win)* is a jubilant painting of a dancer springing through the air. It asks the question "Am I good enough?" This piece gets to the heart of women aiming while and questioning their role. Walter de Maria was an extraordinary artist who pioneered Minimalism, conceptual art, and earth art. We've only scratched the surface of exploring his range and depth.

Dana Schutz's work is impactful, expressive, and poignant. Her skill is masterful and she—like myself—uses a lot of humor in her paintings. *Mountain Group* is very inventive and mines from both contemporary art and her own psyche.

Los Angeles Times

Feeling Election 2020 anxiety? Tap into painter Judith Bernstein's lady rage

CAROLINA A. MIRANDA
NOVEMBER 2, 2020



"Hot Hands (Black Lives Matter)," 2020, by Judith Bernstein, from the artist's solo show at the Box gallery.

Nothing channels the vibe of our political moment quite like large canvases of toxic masculinity. (Just like cable news!) Except in this version, phalluses rendered in bright, comic book colors have met their match: toothy vaginas that appear to devour them. Plus, it's all visible under blacklight, making this viewing experience less Fox News and more vertiginous funhouse of pesky dongs.

Welcome to "Hot Hands," Judith Bernstein's bawdy, funny, righteously exasperated solo exhibition at the Box gallery in downtown Los Angeles. It's all the steroid madness of our political system, captured through a lens of acidic lady rage.

"Death of the Universe #1," 2018, by Judith Bernstein, part of the artist's solo show "Hot Hands" at the Box gallery in Los Angeles.

And in the middle of an election that has left me despondent (seriously, how much cash should I be stockpiling for the downfall of democracy?), it feels like a call to arms — one that involves plenty of angrily scrawled genitals and buckets of bathroom humor. When our looming conflict erupts, I will fight in the Army of Judith Bernstein.

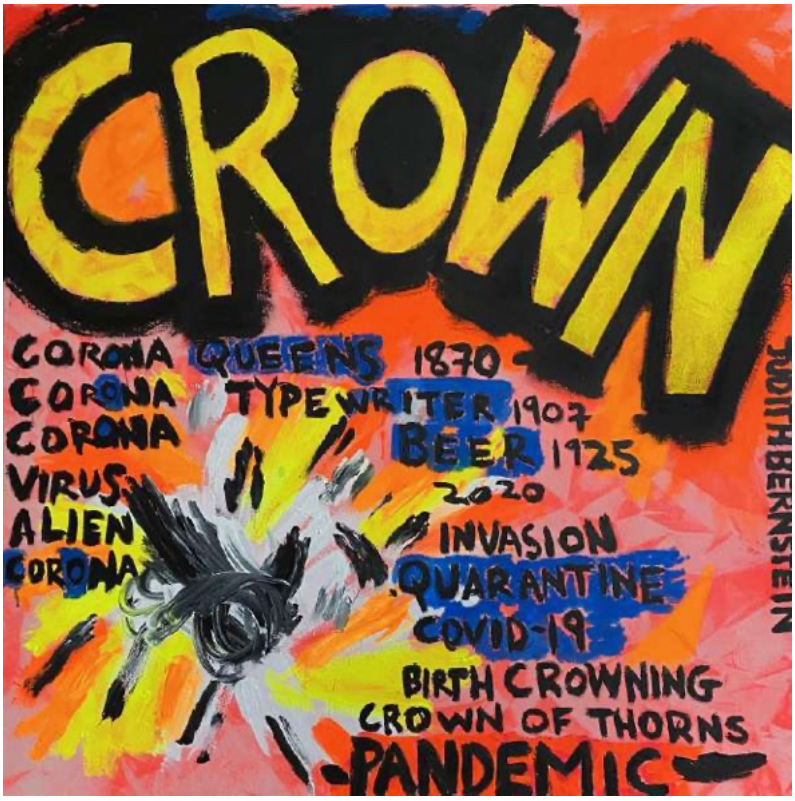
As Bernstein told T: The New York Times Style Magazine during a studio visit in 2017: "My work is sexual. My work is political. And my work is feminist. It has visual impact. It's fun. But it's dead serious."

Dead serious about calling the powerful to the mat for their abuses.

"Hot Hands" brings together recent works from various series by the artist, including her anti-Donald Trump paintings, made in the first few years of the Trump administration, which feature a presidential figure called "Trumpenschlong" made out of male genitalia, at times in penile one-upmanship with Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un.

There is new work too. Such as a painting titled "Gaslighting (Red)" that features a field of battling pudenda in screaming shades of crimson red, blue and orange under fluorescent yellow letters. Another canvas, "Crown," painted this year, features various plays on the word "crown" and the related "corona." It's the visual equivalent of a panicked Cardi B shouting "Coronavirus! S— is real!"

Needless to say, the bulk of Bernstein's work can't be shown in this piece because my employer allows only for coverage of metaphorical johnson.



"Crown," 2020, by Judith Bernstein, dwells on the pandemic

If it all sounds like the sort of scatological graffiti you'd find in a men's bathroom, well, that's exactly the point.

Bernstein, who was born in New Jersey but has lived in New York's Chinatown for more than half a century, became inspired by the possibility of bathroom graffiti as a student at Yale University in the 1960s. In 1967, she read a story in the New York Times that noted that the title of Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" came from a phrase he found on the walls of a pub bathroom.

"Graffiti, you think, by the way, is actually very superficial — it's not," Bernstein once told Artforum. "It comes from a subtext. It comes from the inner subconscious."

Graffiti also serves as an important voice for those who may not have access to official platforms. (For example: How do scholars know what women in ancient Rome may have been thinking about their condition? The answer partly lies in graffiti.)

For Bernstein, the ethos of graffiti, with its immediacy and its crude declarations, often in shouty capital letters and featuring coarse drawings of male members, became fundamental to her work.

A series of anti-Vietnam War paintings from the 1960s feature male members amid inappropriate-to-print graffiti critiquing Uncle Sam and the war. She created a figure of a penis-headed businessman she dubbed "Cockman," who served as a stand-in for corporate and political power. She began signing her name in large, hastily scrawled letters

— in the same unstylized way you might carve your name into a bathroom stall. (Some of these early works were shown at the Box in 2011)

In the 1970s, Bernstein followed up with a series of expressionistic charcoal drawings of screws that sexualized, in aggressive ways, that common piece of household hardware. The now-defunct Boyle Heights gallery Venus featured a massive mural of one of these on the exterior of its building in a 2017 show whose name I can't reprint (unless, perhaps, Trump is caught on tape saying it).

At a time in which our political system has been relentlessly debased by a president who has used his position to sustain his hotel properties, whose children have made millions overseas as he attacks the business ethics of his opponent's son, and who for weeks has been actively working to undermine the democratic process, Bernstein's paintings feel like the needed counter.

They are an artistic middle finger, a deep-throated laugh in the face of authoritarian power grabs and ultimately a rallying cry — that come what may, we ain't going quietly.

FRIEZE

Judith Bernstein Envisions Trump's Political Demise

At The Box, Los Angeles, the artist presents a series of paintings that reflect on the last four years and sees President Trump being devoured by a troupe of vagina-dentata figures

NATALIE HADDAD
NOVEMBER 4, 2020

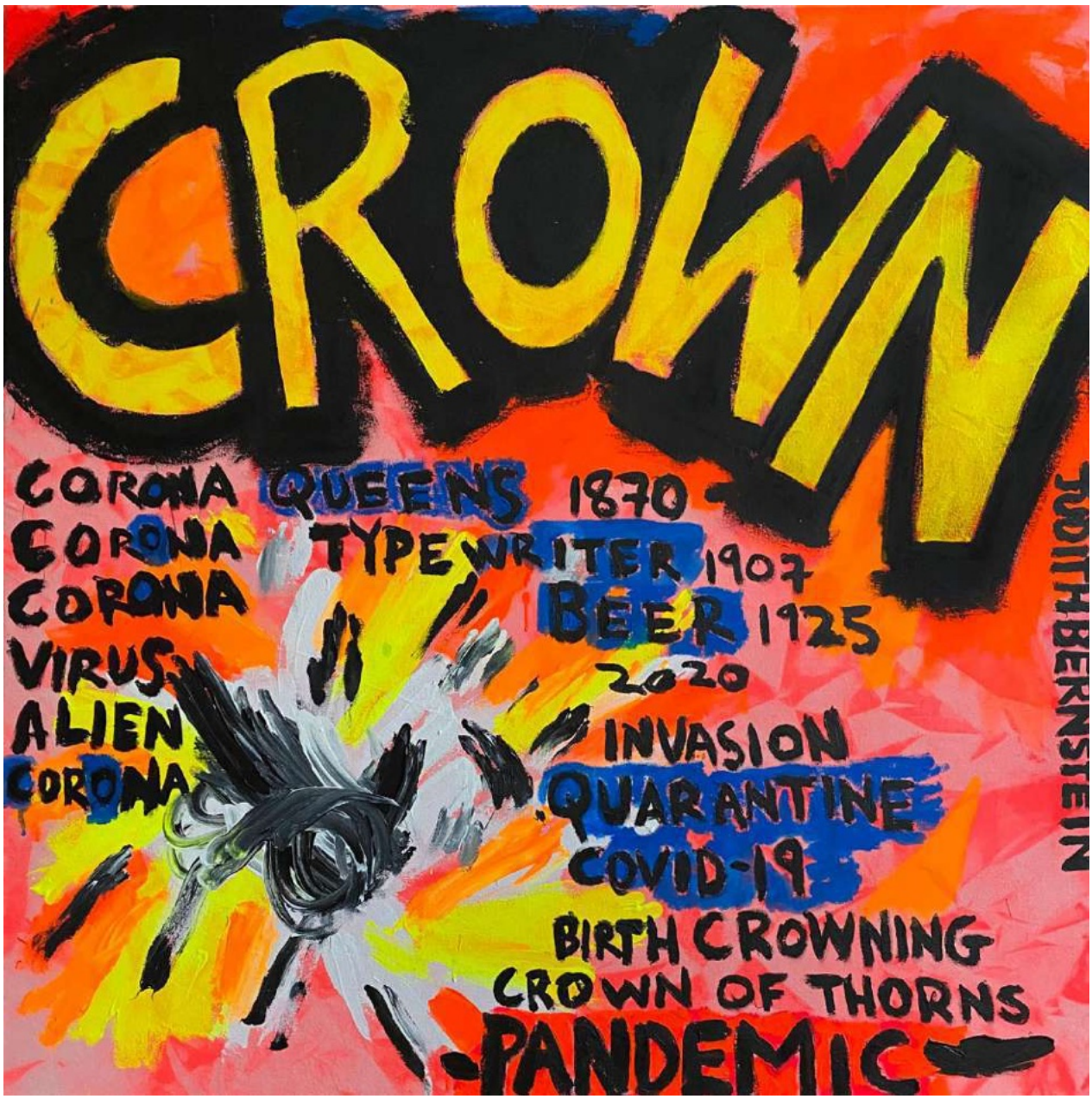
Judith Bernstein, Death of the Universe #1*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 381 × 426.7 cm. Courtesy: the artist and The Box, Los Angeles.*

Judith Bernstein's 'Hot Hands' at The Box, Los Angeles, is an anti-Trump, anti-fascist *tour de force*. Since the 1970s, Bernstein has tackled political issues in her art but, with the 2016 election of President Donald Trump, her message has assumed a greater urgency and her imagery greater bombast befitting her subject matter. The exhibition comprises 15 large-scale paintings, dating from 2016 to 2020. The corruption and depravity of the Trump administration permeates the atmosphere like a noxious gas, reified in an anthropomorphized cartoon phallus that Bernstein calls 'Cockman', which battles with raging vagina-dentata figures. In many works, the character 'Schlong Face' – an amoebic penis and scrotum, flecked with black hairs and peering with one eye – is topped with a Trumpian coif and, as in *Cabinet of Horrors* (2017), surrounded by swastikas and dollar signs: shorthand for the president's egregious brand of racism and capitalist greed.

Judith Bernstein, *Cabinet of Horrors*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 228 × 226.7 cm.
Courtesy: the artist and The Box, Los Angeles.

'Hot Hands' has all of Bernstein's usual vitriol, but several more recent works signal a departure from topical content and, instead, refer to her painting series 'Birth of the Universe' (2010–ongoing), which reimagines the Big Bang through women's rage. The monumental two-panel painting *Death of the Universe #1* (2018) is an army of seething vaginas, the two largest shooting dark-blue rays from their mouths. While the work is not explicitly political, the painting's apocalyptic tenor is resonant. The mythological vagina dentata, with its shark-like teeth, has always summoned unruly feminine energies for Bernstein but, in *Death of the Universe #1*, the raging mothers of the cosmos wage a battle to the death against unseen forces.

Bernstein amplifies the intensity of her paintings with ultraviolet pigment. Acid yellows, greens, pinks and oranges emanate a toxic glow under black light. In *Gaslighting (Red)* (2019), the artist crams the titular text in all-caps and neon yellow into the top third of the canvas, above a fist fight between three 'Cockmen' and two 'Cunt Faces', the former almost subdued next to the killer teeth and fiery red mouths of the latter. While the title refers to one of Trump's favourite political tactics, the battle resembles a comic-book action sequence, a showdown between two rival enemies. What could be crude sexual humour in 'Hot Hands' is focused into a strategic sensory assault through the collision of lurid colours and dynamic compositions. Bernstein skillfully establishes a tension between chaos and control. In *Blue Balls #1* and *#2* (both 2018), peopled by blindly flailing 'Cock Cunt' hybrids, the effect works to evoke random aggression without slipping into visual disorder.



Judith Bernstein, *Crown*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 122 × 122 cm. Courtesy: the artist and The Box, Los Angeles.

Two recent canvases mark another shift from the spectacular debacle of Trump to the devastation wrought by COVID-19 and the racial unrest of 2020. In *Crown* and *Hot Hands (Black Lives Matter)* (both 2020), the artist eschews imagery for dissociative texts (e.g. *Crown*'s 'Birth Crowning/Crown of Thorns/Pandemic') or addresses the systemic police violence against Black bodies in the US, referring to the recent murder of George Floyd and subsequent uprisings. These works are as visceral as the others: a black and white starburst flares into fierce strokes of yellow and orange in *Crown*. Yet, they are more contemplative; the acerbic humour that infiltrates the Trump works is replaced by the social and economic realities of 2020, captured here in stream-of-consciousness texts. At the same time, the Trump administration's gross abuses of power loom large. Though as audacious and cheeky as ever, in 'Hot Hands' Bernstein couples her fury with mourning for a disarming poignancy that only strengthens her defiance.

Judith Bernstein's 'Hot Hands' at The Box, Los Angeles, runs until 19 December 2020.

ARTFORUM

Projects: Art of the Possible

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020

As of this writing, we are waiting to see whether Election Day 2020 will mark an end to the hallucinatory nightmare of Donald Trump's presidency; whether it will constitute a victory or a setback for the white supremacists who enabled him to rise; whether the reactionary violence against Black Lives Matter protesters and other enemies of the regime will effloresce into civil war. We are waiting to see if the unimaginable occurs. But if we are to truly move beyond this presidency and all the forms of violence and injustice that made it possible, we must change in ways that, while positive and necessary, are almost equally far-fetched. For this election issue, *Artforum* asked nine artists—Judith Bernstein, Jennifer Bolande, Sue Coe, Renée Green, Tomashi Jackson, Tala Madani, Kenny Scharf, Taryn Simon, and Adam Pendelton (whose work is on the cover)—to contribute projects reflecting on a moment that requires us to think the unthinkable.

Project: Judith Bernstein

Judith Bernstein, *Gasligting*, 2019, acrylic and oil on canvas, 89 1/2 × 88 1/2".

artnet news

‘How Can We Think of Art at a Time Like This?’: A Star-Studded Online Show Weighs the Triviality—and Importance—of Art in a Crisis

SARAH CASCONE
MARCH 18, 2020

Judith Bernstein, President (2017). Courtesy of the artist.

As galleries and museums across the US shuttered this week in a desperate attempt to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, the writer-curators Barbara Pollack and Anne Verhallen spent the weekend putting together a group show responding to the crisis—one that would be hosted not in a white walled gallery, but online.

On Monday, they unveiled the fruits of their efforts, titled "How Can We Think of Art in a Time Like This," featuring, thus far, work by Lynn Hershman Leeson, Judith Bernstein, Janet Biggs, Miao Ying, Dread Scott and Jenny Polak, Kathe Burkhart, and Zhao Zhao.

The prevailing themes, as you might expect, are dark. "We were looking for artists who had futuristic pessimism, political outrage, or psychic meltdowns," Pollack told Artnet News.

"Art in a Time Like This" is meant to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas at a time when the world is in turmoil and everyday activities are disrupted by social distancing and increasingly strict directives to stay at home.

"The comments page allows for open dialogue," Pollack added. "We want a space where people can vent, can get hysterical, can get outraged, and can have free expression when so much is getting cancelled and shut down."

The curators hope the show might resemble traditional modes of art viewing. "We invite people to treat it as if they are visiting a proper exhibition," Verhallen told Artnet News. "Each artist has submitted about five works, and some of it is video content. We hope people take the time to navigate through the different artists and read their statements."

With all that is going on in the world right now, both curators are quick to acknowledge that art, and the ability to see it, may seem relatively unimportant.

"It's always been an intriguing contradiction between how important art is and how trivial it can be at the same time," said Pollack. "When crises come up, I think it's a question we all ask ourselves… There is always something going on in the world that seems to overshadow creative effort, and yet it's so important for creative effort to continue."

The exhibition is also something of a lifeline for artists who are suddenly seeing their schedules cleared, upcoming and projects and exhibitions on indefinite hold as the world deals with the global threat to public health.

"The feeling of having something canceled can be terrible and very traumatic for an artist," Pollack said. "We wanted a space that gave people a chance to share their work."

The curator and critic was speaking from experience. Back in 2001, when Pollack was a practicing artist, her photography show "Dance Party" was set to open on September 12, the day after the deadly terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

At the time, creating an online exhibition wasn't something Pollack considered. Fast forward nearly 19 years, and galleries, art fairs, and institutions are scrambling to offer digital alternatives to planned events, like the online viewing room for Art Basel Hong Kong, which opened to VIPs today.

“What’s different about our initiative is we’re not selling work; we’re not making it a commercial space at all,” said Pollack. “We’re inviting artists to a curated show.”

The curators will be adding work by new artists every day, with Ai Weiwei and Shinique Smith among those on deck. Most are contributing existing pieces, although at least one artist is working on new project for the occasion.

The project came together remarkably quickly. The duo spent 48 hours recruiting the artists and launching the site with all the associated social media channels (all while working remotely from their respective apartments).

For Pollack, who has been dealing with the fallout from coronavirus longer than most, moving quickly felt essential. An expert on Chinese art, she was forced to suspend her travel plans as early in January, when the initial outbreak of the disease saw exhibitions she had curated in the country canceled.

“I think people are in the first wave of shock in New York City, but for those of us who deal with Asia, the shock hit a little earlier,” Pollack said.

“Immediacy was obviously very important to us,” Verhallen added. “We didn’t want to wait.”

HYPERALLERGIC

Judith Bernstein Shines a Blacklight on Trump's Crimes

We cannot ignore the fact that Americans voted for Trump.

JILLIAN MCMANEMIN
FEBRUARY 17, 2018

Judith Bernstein, "President" (2017), acrylic and oil on canvas, 90 x 89 1/2 inches (all images courtesy the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery)

People pay to watch a real fuck. In the heyday of Times Square porn the “money shot” was developed to prove that the sex-on-film was real and not simulated. The proof? Cum. The (male) ejaculation onto the body of his co-star.

In her debut solo show at Paul Kasmin Gallery, Judith Bernstein unveils *Money Shot*, a series of large-scale paintings starring the Trump administration, its horrific present and terrifying potential future.
The gallery is outfitted with blacklight, which alters the paintings even during daytime hours. The works glow orange, green, violet, and acid yellow against pitch black. The unstable colors signal that nothing will ever look or be the same as it was before.

But, this isn’t the dark of night. This place is tinged with psychedelia. The distortions border on nauseating. The room spins as we stand still. We oscillate between terror and gut-busting laughter, as we witness what we once deemed unimaginable.

Judith Bernstein, “Money Shot – Blue Balls” (2017), acrylic and oil on canvas, 104 x 90 1/2 inches

Our eyes adjust at different speeds to the dark. There are those who are paralyzed and shocked, who expect a glowing exit sign to magically turn on. There are others who shut their eyes and hold tight to the belief that any frightful night can be slept through. For the many who remain comfortable in dim halos, whatever the condition, it's business as usual. But there are also those who profit from concealment and a widespread loss of vision.

In *Money Shot*, Schlongface is an omnipresent demagogue. The character (similar to Cockman, who debuted in Bernstein's works of the 1960s) has a cock and balls for a face. Schlongface is meant to represent Trump, but the figure can be spliced into innumerable moments of history. He is the pathetic villain, the dictator whose rampant destruction betrays both his predilection for rape and impotence.

What hits you on the nose feels like a kick to the crotch. The seriousness of these political and psychosexual implications, told through tongue-in-cheek (or cock-and-nose) wordplay and humor, are important themes in Bernstein's work. In her impactful scale, enraged mark-making, and caricature, there is never an either/or. There are only contradictory couplings. Laugh. But fear.

Judith Bernstein, "In Evil We Trust" (2016), acrylic and oil on canvas, 105 x 230 inches

"In Evil We Trust" (2017) places Schlongface in a jester's cap-and-bells next to a mushroom cloud. The floating cock nearly outsizes the explosion. At the bottom of the painting, written in black block letters is the official United States motto, "IN GOD WE TRUST," in which "GOD" is crossed out and replaced by "EVIL." This punk and feminist move harkens Bernstein's history of using men's bathroom graffiti as a cultural barometer. In America, what traditionally have been opposing sentiments – god and money – are rendered as interchangeable. Economics and even nuclear war are seen as deeply engrained in a god-created order. Bernstein plays with the words and sentiments politicians use to motivate and manipulate.

A vagina dentata is blasted away by the nuclear explosion. Conspiratorial folklore about vaginas with teeth, that cause bloody castration, are also characters with doubled significance in *Money Shot*. This vaginal monstrosity — emblematic of the "pussy grabs back" rallying cry — can stand as a placeholder for the women who voted for and

continue to support Trump (and the other Schlongfaces of the world). The vagina that bites itself ends up a casualty of the ensuing explosion.

In "President" (2017), Schlongface seems to merge with a foreshortened female figure whose legs are spread-eagle in the foreground. The figure's crotch is stamped with the US Presidential Seal – with an asshole like a target beneath it. The political and psychosexual dynamic of Bernstein's work turns on the complexities derived by the receiver.

Judith Bernstein, "Money Shot – Green" (2016), acrylic and oil on canvas, 94 x 94 inches

The question is "*Did we want this?*" It appears that we did. Despite allegations of Russian collusion, we cannot ignore the fact that Americans voted for Trump. Blaming enemies from afar ignores the truly troubling way fascism emerges — from within — which disarms us from doing anything about it. In "Money Shot – Shooters" and "Money Shot – Blue Balls" (both 2017) Trump, Putin and Kim Jong-un launch cock screw forms at each other. Trump is not portrayed as a puppet. He is a participant in the exchange of totalitarian machinations.

"Money Shot – Green" and "Money Shot – Yellow" (both 2016) hybridize the Capitol Building with a slot machine. Three Schlongfaces wearing swastika-adorned fool's caps have hit the jackpot. The hybrid structures recall one of the election's many ironies, that on the campaign trail Trump cited his Atlantic City casino ventures as examples of how he does business — essentially cluing us into his intentions to profit from a failing business and let the loss fall on others. The money in the money shot.

Judith Bernstein, "Money Shot – Yellow" (2016), acrylic and oil on canvas, 104 x 90 1/2 inches

Blacklight illuminates what is concealed from the naked eye: the evidence of a crime. In *Money Shot,* this applies to the paintings, ourselves, and each other. As we look at the work, glowing stains appear on our clothes. We smile and our teeth beam white-hot.

Oh, the shark has pretty teeth, dear
And he shows 'em pearly white…

"Mack the Knife," the song about a knife-wielding murderer, originally written by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill for their collaboration, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), became a pop sensation in the United States by the singer Bobby Darin (1959).

Fancy gloves, oh, wears old MacHeath, babe
So there's never, never a trace of red

Turning a brutal tale of murder into feel-good all American pop engages what the country runs on: a brilliant cover story. We all have blood on our hands. The question of what is real or simulated, in regard to Trump, his campaign, administration, and history as a 'reality star' have all dissonantly merged. He is the "Trump Genie" (2016), out of his bottle. However, we ought to remember that in America, both cowboys and clowns have a history of murder. Violent crime and pop culture are what blacklight reveals in our psyche. Where one ends and the other begins in the Trump administration is what Judith Bernstein's rage and humor thrusts into view.

Judith Bernstein, "Money Shot – Shooters (2017), acrylic and oil on canvas, 97 1/2 x 200 5/8 inches

Money Shot becomes performative as the artist leads by example: her process involves painting in natural light, then revealing the result to herself under blacklight during the gallery installation — relinquishing, to a certain extent, complete control of the final outcome (a difficult task for an artist to do).

She inserts herself into the work with her signature, looming as large as the names of "Putinschlong" and "Kim Jong-Unschlong" in "Money Shot – Shooters" and "Money Shot – Blue Balls." Her signature, which she has turned into mural-sized drawings, has become a form of self-portraiture – taking into account her own ego and equating it with the ego of monsters. In *Money Shot,* Judith Bernstein comes face to face with the collective disbelief we felt on election night and then again on Inauguration Day. The destabilizing, immobilizing shock of the dark that we have to force ourselves to see our way through.

HYPERALLERGIC

Judith Bernstein's Horror Show

There may be no artist in America better equipped to express the perversity of the Trump administration than Bernstein.

December 15, 2017

Natalie Haddad

Installation view of "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors" (2017) (all images courtesy The Drawing Center and by Mark Parsekian, unless otherwise noted)

In *The Illusion of the End* (2004), French philosopher Jean Baudrillard writes, "We shall never experience the original chaos, the Big Bang … we weren't there." But, he adds, "since we have been denied [the Big Bang], we might as well put all our energies into accelerating the end, into hastening things to their definitive doom, which we could at least consume as spectacle."

Cabinet of Horrors, Judith Bernstein's remarkable exhibition at The Drawing Center, is a response of such spectacle, for our era, in which the consequences are real.

The exhibition, which fills The Drawing Center's large front room painted fluorescent orange for the occasion features several new paintings, along with a selection of charcoal *Word* drawings from 1995 monumental inscriptions of single words (equality; evil; fear; justice; liberty) and a 1969 anti-Nixon painting. There is also an installation of vintage piggy banks collected for the show.

Installation view of "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors"

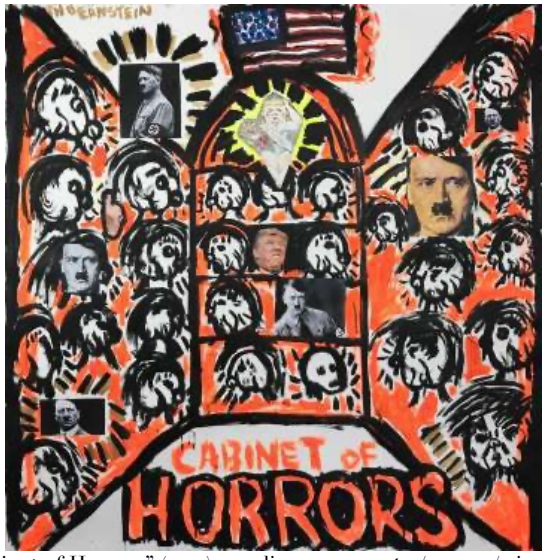
It's clear who the little pigs represent, but their wide eyes and chubby, grinning faces may be the last vestiges of good will genuine or faked before the gravity of the subject matter sets in. *Cabinet of Horrors* takes on the Trump administration like a nuclear assault. The exhibition feels like a culmination of Bernstein's 50-year engagement with politics, encompassing every shred of anger, activism, and impropriety from her career. There may be no artist in America better equipped to express the perversity of the Trump administration than Bernstein as a record of its horrors, her images belong in the next generation's history books.

Bernstein began addressing politics in her art as a graduate student at Yale in the 1960s. Inspired by men's room graffiti, she adopted penises as symbols of military aggression and male ego, the twin forces of American politics. Her 1969 painting included in *Cabinet of Horrors*, "First National Dick," depicts a Nixon "three dollar bill" pasted on the Capitol Building, which is decorated with stars and stripes and topped with a vertical phallus waving an American flag. Three years earlier, she enlisted the penis to take on another politician, Alabama Governor George Wallace and introduced "Cockman." "Cockman #1 (Alabama's Governor George Wallace)" (1966) portrays the notoriously racist governor as a pink, fleshy cock-face, with a scrotum for cheeks, a penile nose, and a cyclopean eye, with "Cockman shall rise again" written in black capital letters in the margin.

Installation view of "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors"

Cockman has recurred in Bernstein's work over the years and it makes a strong showing in *Cabinet of Horrors*, resurrected as "Schlong Face" a name she derived from Trump, who used the term "schlonged" at an early campaign rally to describe Hillary Clinton's 2008 defeat for the Democratic nomination by President Barack Obama. While there is a direct line of racism and bigotry connecting Wallace's Cockman and Trump's Schlong Face, Bernstein calls out Hitler as Trump's essential forebear. The works in *Cabinet of Horrors* go beyond paralleling Trump and Hitler, nearly merging the two into different sides of a single, monstrous being, flanked by dollar signs and swastikas.

In an acrylic-and-collage painting on paper, "Cabinet of Horrors" (2017), a central dome with two flanking walls, like a triptych or expressionistic Capitol Building, is covered in rows of cock-faces some reminiscent of Trump, others of skulls juxtaposed with photographs of Trump and Hitler. A collaged caricature of Trump as a portly beauty contest winner is at the top of the dome, beneath an American flag.



Judith Bernstein, "Cabinet of Horrors" (2017), acrylic on paper, 41 1/2 x 29 1/2 inches (courtesy the artist)

The neon orange of the painting matches the color of the gallery walls. By painting the walls this color, Bernstein transforms the gallery from a space of contemplation to a state of emergency. The color also evokes Trump's yellow hair and orange skin, and everything artificial and lurid about the man, his businesses, and his lifestyle.

Another 2017 "Cabinet of Horrors" painting, imposing at 94 x 94 inches and mostly black, yellow, and red (the colors of the German flag), solidifies the link between Trump and Hitler, money and death: a zombie-like Hitler stares out amid Trump-coiffed cock-faces projecting out from the center, with a skull planted in the lower left corner.

"Money Shot" (2017) transforms the US Treasury into a slot machine with an orange penis for a handle; Trump/Schlong Face hybrids as icons; and, instead of a payout slot, Bernstein has inserted another of her recurring motifs, a "cunt-faces" an enraged vagina dentata doubling as a black hole. Swastikas and US dollar signs float in the top right corner, and on the left, a penis-shaped Capitol Building (or "jackpot," as it is identified here) is captioned with the name Schlong Face.

Concomitant with her politics, the power of Bernstein's work lies in her exquisite balance between rawness and sophistication. Her renderings are deft and confident; her colors pulsate. She expertly distorts and disfigures to conjure monstrosities, while economizing the pictorial space: Her compositions are perfectly balanced, mesmerizing even as the content repulses.

Installation view of "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors"

The acid humor of her earlier works continues to seethe, but the Trump paintings, in keeping with the man himself, are more atrocious and banal. Trump embodies Cockman not only because Cockman is a fitting metaphor for a man who has no moral compass whatsoever, but because Trump-Cockman's sexuality is so bloodless that seduction becomes an act of necrophilia.

The beady, uneven eyes, and vile, bloody mouth of "Count Trump" (2017) exude depravity, while "Frankenschlong" (2017), an imbecilic Frankenstein with a mop of mangy hair, a scrotum-like chin, and a swastika tattooed on his forehead, signifies all of the base stupidity of Trump and his administration, cobbled together from conflicting interests and lies.

The juxtaposition of dollar signs and swastikas drives home Trump's egoistic endgame in the painting "One Fool Dollar Bill" (2017), which again joins Trump and Hitler, money and fascism, and includes the text: "George Washington couldn't tell a lie. Nixon couldn't tell the truth. Trump can't tell the difference." Bernstein doesn't mince words. In an interview with artist Mickalene Thomas in the exhibition catalogue, she explains, "I am showing Trump for what he is: a fool, a monster, a jester, a racist. Donald Trump is a con-artist, using the White House as his own personal cash machine."

The jester emerges in "Porky Pink" (2017), displayed below "One Fool Dollar Bill." Bearing the text "Porky Jester" and "Schlong Face has Risen" in black and hot pink acrylic, the central image is a mutant Schlong Face, with multiple, Medusa-like cocks mimicking a jester's cap.

Installation view of "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors"

And Schlong Face is not alone in his amorality. In "Putin Trump Money Shot" (2017), "Putin Schlong" and "Trumpen Schlong" face off with phallic missiles, which reprises the penis/weapon motif of Bernstein's early work, such as the giant phallic screws of her *Screw* drawings; in "WW3" (2017), a confrontation between "Trumpen Schlong" and "Kim Jong-Un Schlong Face" results in an apocalyptic explosion, set off by men who can't tell the difference between masturbation and penetration.

Cabinet of Horrors is an attack on Trump's attack on America, a point the artist confirms with "Seal of Disbelief," a spectacular, 96 x 96-inch presidential seal in which the word "God" is crossed out of "In God We Trust" and replaced with "Evil." Bernstein's small rewording gives voice to the anger and disappointment of millions of Americans, including those who don't agree with her beliefs.
Ideally, the exhibition would travel around the country. For now, everyone who can see it, should, whatever their personal politics. It assaults vulgarity with vulgarity, but Bernstein's assault is grounded in principles of social betterment. Anyone who wants to see the face of morality in *Cabinet of Horrors* can look on page one of the catalogue, at a photo of Judith Bernstein.

Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors *continues at The Drawing Center (35 Wooster Street, Manhattan) through February 4.*

https://hyperallergic.com/417468/judith-bernstein-cabinet-of-horrors-the-drawing-center-2017/

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

November 12, 2017

Rachel Corbett

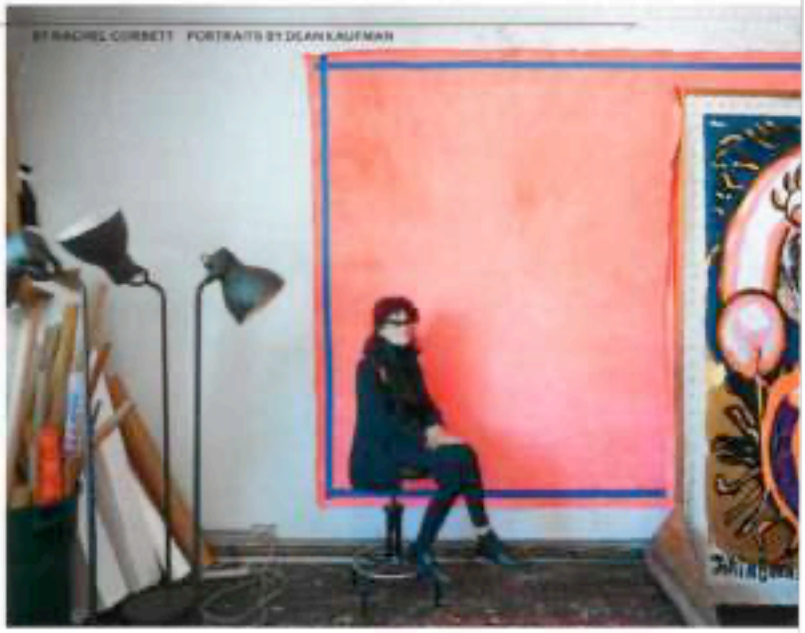
Arena

Rediscoveries

The Feminine Mystique

Some of the most compelling art about sex is being made by a nearly forgotten generation of women artists now in their 70s, 80s and 90s. So what took so long for everyone to notice?

BY RACHEL CORBETT PORTRAITS BY DEAN KAUFMAN



THIS SUMMER IN LOS ANGELES, a hairy, phallic-looking screw painted by Judith Bernstein extended across 180 feet of the exterior of Venus gallery in Boyle Heights. This march at MoMA PS1 in Queens, men and women stripped down to their underwear and rubbed each other with raw fish in a video by Carolee Schneemann. And in London, pink double-headed phalluses bloomed from cacti in Renate Bertlmann's sculptures at the Frieze art fair.

X-rated art is, of course, nothing new. Depictions of sex have been accepted throughout history and across cultures, from Japan's 17th-century Shunga prints to Gustave Courbet's 1866 closeup portrait of a vagina, "The Origin of the World," or Picasso's 1907 "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon." In the 1960s, Tom Wesselmann's flat, affectless paintings of hard-nipplied, open-mouthed women lying on their backs were Pop Art pioneers. Andy Warhol's "Blue Movie," featuring extended sex scenes by the performers Viva and Louis Waldon, received theatrical release in America in 1969, blurring the line between art and erotica.

Above: Judith Bernstein in her New York studio. Below: the artist in the '70s with her "screw" paintings.

But though these works may have been greeted with varying levels of controversy — Courbet's work remains so shocking that a book cover bearing its image was removed from shop windows by the French police in 1994 — what they shared was not only a dedication to redefining what was explicit for their respective ages and cultures, but a perspective as well: This was art about sex, but only as was made by, or erotic to, straight men. (Even "Blue Movie," by the openly gay Warhol, did little more than legitimize pornography — its creation and consumption.) Now, though, some of the most revelatory art on sexual themes is being made by women like Bernstein, Betty Tompkins, Juanita McNeely and Joan Semmel, best known for their paintings, and multidisciplinary artists like Schneemann and Valie Export, among others, all of whom have been producing their work for decades to little notice — if not outright persecution — from critics, curators and audiences.

Like their male counterparts, their subject matter is also the body, but unlike some of their proto-feminist forerunners (Georgia O'Keeffe, Agnes Martin, Lee Krasner), they're concerned not with vaginal flowers or redefining beauty, but with fluids, bulges and secretions. Fellow artists and critics have called them the "blood and guts club" or the "black sheep feminists." Censored, shunned and banished to obscurity for most of their careers, they've been working with remarkable consistency, and it is

only now — when these artists are in their 70s, 80s and 90s — that they, and their work, are being embraced as canonical.

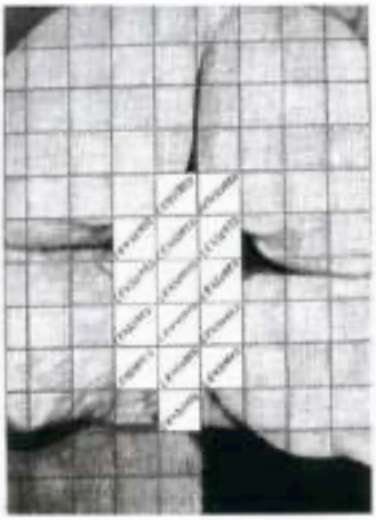
Their latest recognition is both a reflection of the political moment and a response to it. At a time of renewed debates about consent and gender equality in the workplace as well as the rising power of nativist men's rights activists — spurred by a president who has a morbid fascination with the visceral functions of the female body — Bernstein, Schneemann and an entire generation of nearly forgotten women who have fearlessly examined sex and gender in their art, whether anyone was paying attention or not, are suddenly more relevant than they've ever been.

BETTY TOMPKINS, who was born in 1945, tells me, "I became an overnight success at 72." Her New York studio is crowded with paintings in a long-running series that depict sexual penetrations rendered photorealistically and in extreme closeup — which she started making in 1969. For years, they were at best ignored as lurid curiosities, though the reception was occasionally more severe. In 1973, two of the paintings were seized by French customs when Tompkins was shipping them to Paris for a show. It was a career death sentence; even the bravest venues were reluctant — and arguably still are — to exhibit an artist who alienates patrons or the press. "I was a living nightmare for galleries after that: young, female and censored," Tompkins says. Today, the Centre Pompidou in Paris has one of these censored works in its permanent collection, a closely cropped, between-the-thighs view of a woman straddling a penis.

Part of what makes Tompkins's work so enduringly potent today, and what made it too shocking for its time, is not just its frank sexuality: It's that the art of Tompkins, Bernstein and their peers seethes with lust, ego, wisecracks and profanity. While other feminists of their era were embracing "central core" imagery related to the womb or vulva and reclaiming traditionally female crafts like needlepoint, these artists demanded attention the way men did — through shock and awe.

Bernstein's colossal drawings of screws, which unambiguously resemble erect penises, provoked a kind of castration anxiety. "One dealer told me that my work made men of his age feel uncomfortable," she says. One of her works was censored from a show of women's art at the Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center in 1974 after its director, John Pierron, claimed that it "offends me on behalf of the children of this city." In the late 1960s, a male dealer at Knoedler gallery, then the oldest commercial gallery in New York, told Juanita McNeely that the slides of her work she'd shown him — violent paintings of nude women bleeding — couldn't have been made by a woman. At another gallery, she brought the canvases to prove it, but as she unrolled them onto the floor the dealer kicked them out of his path and walked away. These artists' work, at the time and ever since, has been an act of announcement, of provocation by existence. They threatened to take up male territory, which museums and galleries then almost exclusively were.

Above: Betty Tompkins in her New York studio. Below: one of the artist's paintings from the 1970s.



Although most of these women identified (and still do) as feminists, their work was too outré even for the radical feminism of the 1960s and '70s, which found its focus in the politics of sexual oppression, and its voice in people like the lawyer and activist Catharine MacKinnon, who argued that "all pornography is made under conditions of inequality." The artists of this generation didn't quite fit in with anyone — not women (MacKinnon's stance meant a brief, uneasy alliance between feminism and right-wing censors), not critics and not other artists. At the time that these so-called blood-and-guts artists were first appearing, minimalism, a nearly asexual style that championed form over feeling, was the dominant trend — leagues away from these women's lusty, leaky, fleshy aesthetic. Feminists criticized Tompkins for cutting and cropping images from her husband's pornographic magazines and thus perpetuating male sexist fantasies. ("I was not active in the feminist art movement," she says. "I couldn't find it. Nobody told me where the meetings were.") Bernstein, now 75, was a member of the all-woman cooperative gallery A.I.R., which was founded in 1972 and is still active, but she too never felt the movement embraced her. "I observed men and their behavior. A lot of feminists didn't take that as being feminism."

Especially scandalizing was the fact that many of the women — who are almost exclusively heterosexual — made men the objects of desire. When Sylvia Sleigh's 1972 portrait of a young nude man went on view at the Bronx Museum, then housed in a room of a courthouse, a judge complained about the "explicit male nudity in the corridor of a public courthouse." The curator wondered in response why he had never complained before about the "coyly draped,

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bare-breasted females" that adorned the elevators of the same building.

The arrival of queer art in the early '70s forced the discussion of art and sex — who got to depict it, what it should look like — into the culture at large. Conservatives and the Christian right turned their attention toward gay male artists like Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz, both of whom depicted male desire in their work, and both of whom had been censored by museums. There was a philosophical kinship between these phallic feminists and this first major generation of queer artists, who were all representing anatomy in abrasive ways.

But while queer art became a cause for museums and galleries — Mapplethorpe and Wojnarowicz were anointed figureheads in a battle between progressive and conservative values, which ultimately exposed their work to wider audiences — these women artists remained obscure. Mapplethorpe's solo show featuring photographs of male nudes at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., was canceled in 1989 after pressure from members of Congress, but the exhibition was quickly moved to the Washington Project for the Arts. Crowds lined up to see it, and America's near-return to the 1950s seemed to have been at least temporarily thwarted. And yet the female artists received no new recognition, no new regard. The third wave of feminists that emerged in the '90s allied with queer theorists and activists of color — and dismissed the previous generation's feminism as too straight, white and privileged.

NOW, 50 YEARS after these women began making work, the culture has finally caught up to them. These days, pornography streams on phones; many curators determining museum programming came of age reading feminist theory; and there is a diversity, and plurality, of young women artists who have made sex, and the female body, their primary subject, and who have found recognition doing so: 27-year-old Darja Bajagic, who collages hardcore porn with images of murdered women, or 28-year-old Amalia Ulman, whose fictional Instagram persona post selfies in bras and things, or 25-year-old Emma Sulkowicz, whose 2014 performance, in which she marched around the campus of Columbia University lugging the mattress on which she was allegedly raped by a fellow student, quickly became an emblem of the current debate surrounding campus sexual assault.

But the sudden popularity of Tompkins and Bernstein is not just about the abundance and easy accessibility of explicit material to which we have all become desensitized. Young women today face some of the same battles that were fought by their mothers and grandmothers at a time when these artists were just beginning their careers. January's Women's March was a kind of communion of the previous generations of feminism, a present-tense call to action, but it was also an acknowledgment of the past. The signs carried by protesters contained all the iconography that these artists once traded in and still do — all the explicit depictions of male and female

Above: Juanita McNeely in her NYC studio, surrounded by recent work. Below, from left, the artist circa 1967, one of her portraits.

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anatomy and bodily functions that had once alienated them had become, over time, the symbols of an age of resistance.

And while these artists' shamelessness as young women was outrageous, their shamelessness as old women is revolutionary. What's perhaps most astonishing is that they never stopped making their work, despite years of disregard. There is something radical about their very stubbornness, their dogged persistence. "In the 1960s and early '70s, every gallery rejected my work," says the 78-year-old Carolee Schneemann, who won a lifetime achievement award at this year's Venice Biennale and is the subject of a retrospective currently on view at PS1. The show was a long time coming. At a notorious 1975 performance at a women's art festival in East Hampton, Schneemann unrolled a scroll from her vagina and read from it. (The text was about a male "structuralist filmmaker" who criticized the "diaristic indulgence" of her art.) She, like her peers, has bittersweet feelings about their recent recognition. On the one hand, they're enjoying the success — "Oh my god, it's fabulous," Bernstein says. "I take cabs everywhere" — but they're skeptical of the forces that enabled it. There is a perpetual cycle in the art world of women not being taken seriously until they are old or dead: This was the case with Louise Bourgeois, who only had her first retrospective in 1982, after she turned 70, or the painter Carmen Herrera, who recently had her retrospective at the Whitney ... at the age of 101. These women's work might be as uncompromising as it ever was, but age, they know, has also neutralized them in men's eyes, removed some of their sting and danger. Now that they're postmenopausal, their sexual disobedience doesn't matter as much to men, who "don't want to sleep with us anymore," Schneemann says. "We're not as threatening as younger women," says Bernstein.

Other things, though, haven't changed. Bernstein still lives and works in the same Chinatown studio she's had since 1967, cluttered with a collection of stuffed animals and toys for her two Persian cats. It used to be crammed with decades of unsold paintings, but now that she can finally afford storage space, the only work present on a recent visit was her new series of fluorescent black-light paintings of testicle-headed Donald Trumps and vagina-faced Hillary Clintons, which are now on view at the Drawing Center in downtown Manhattan. Her signature, prominently scrawled in black cursive letters, appears throughout these works. "I want to make sure they know who did it," she says. ❧

Above, from left: a still from Carolee Schneemann's 1964 "Meat Joy" video, included in her retrospective at MoMA PS1 in New York; the artist as seen in 1963's "Eye Body." Below: Schneemann in her New Paltz, N.Y., studio.

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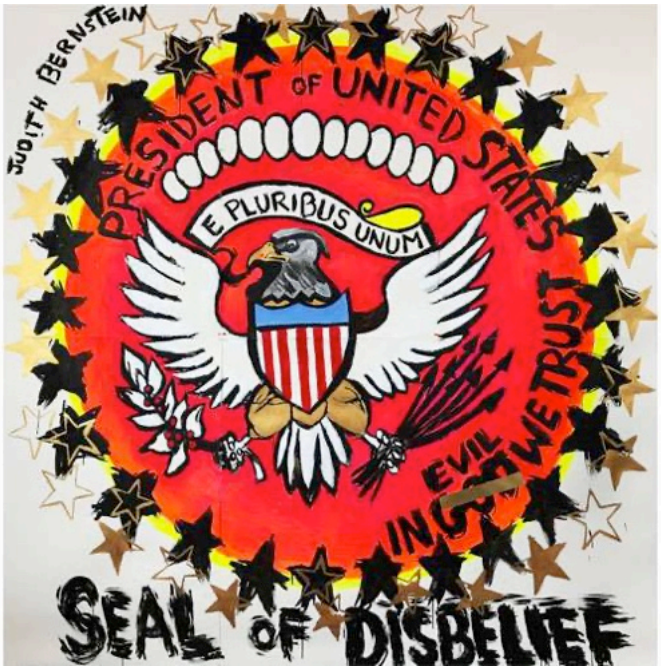
PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE DRAWING CENTER

Judith Bernstein

Cabinet of Horrors

October 2017



PRESS "*It's gratifying to see the art world finally catch up to her [Judith Bernstein]. Read Mickalene Thomas's interview with the artist in the accompanying catalogue and find out why she's been an unsung hero to generations of feminists.* "- via The New Yorker.

Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors presents a new body of work by the artist, specifically commissioned by The Drawing Center. Focusing on work made since Donald J. Trump was elected president in November 2016, the exhibition includes approximately eighteen new drawings, four large-scale paper panel murals, a series of drawn "dollar bills", vintage piggy banks in a vitrine, and a free political campaign pin designed by Bernstein. A series of free political campaign pins designed by Bernstein are available at the museum entrance.

Bernstein began engaging with social issues in her work during the 1960s, creating anti-Vietnam drawings, monumental phalluses, and pieces consisting entirely of her own signature. The present series of drawings use Trump's own insult-driven, childlike syntax and language to distill Bernstein's anger, disgust, and disapproval of the current administration and its policies. Through her new series of drawings, Bernstein transforms her critique into powerful graphic and text-based works. Providing context for Bernstein's recent work, this exhibition opens with one of the artist's earliest political drawings from 1969, as well as, a selection of five "Word Drawings" from 1995, including: *Liberty*, *Justice*, *Equality*, *Evil*, and *Fear*.

Organized by Brett Littman, Executive Director.

Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors is made possible through the support of Valeria Napoleone XX; Corina Larkin and Nigel Dawn; and the Richman Family Foundation with additional contributions from Burger Collection, Hong Kong; Karma International, Zürich/Los Angeles; and an anonymous donor.

Special thanks to Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, for their support of the exhibition catalogue.

Funding of all public programs associated with this exhibition is provided by Valeria Napoleone XX.

Image: Judith Bernstein, *Trump Genie*, 2016. Acrylic on paper, 29 x 41 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

http://www.drawingcenter.org/en/drawingcenter/5/exhibitions/9/upcoming/1656/judith-bernstein/

THE NEW YORKER

Four Drawing Shows to See Now

Works on paper from the Renaissance to the age of Donald Trump, at the Morgan Library and the Drawing Center.

October 25, 2017

Andrea K. Scott

Andrea Mantegna's "Three Standing Saints," made circa 1450.
Courtesy Thaw Collection; The Morgan Library & Museum

The practice of drawing in Europe is as old as the lines in the caves at Lascaux, but there was a major change during the Renaissance: works on paper became valued on their own terms, not just as records of the visible world or illuminations of manuscripts but for offering an intimate glimpse into how artists think. In other words, the history of drawing as we know it runs on a parallel track with the annals of patronage. In the almost unbearably excellent exhibition "Drawn to Greatness: Master Drawings from the Thaw Collection," which opened last week at the Morgan Library & Museum, you can trace the development of the medium, from the mid-fifteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, through the eye of one passionate patron: Eugene Thaw, who is now ninety years old. Make that two patrons: it was Thaw's wife, Clare who died earlier this year, at the age of ninety-three who urged him to start buying art. This was before they were even married and while she was working as an assistant at the gallery he ran

on Madison Avenue. The Thaws donated four hundred and fifty drawings to the museum; a hundred and fifty are here, from a sublime pen-and-ink drawing by Andrea Mantegna, made around 1450, sketching three vantage points of a sculptural saint, to a black-and-white Ellsworth Kelly construction, from 1976, which is as simple and miraculous as an eclipse. Best of all, for every Rembrandt, Goya, Picasso, and Pollock (or Fragonard, Monet, Cezanne, and Matisse), you'll make a discovery, like the 1596-1602 ink-and-watercolor study of a Boschian bird in the company of a hyper-real toad, frog, and dragonfly, by the Netherlandish Jacques de Gheyn II, or the landscape, made circa 1828, by the English visionary Samuel Palmer, whose subtly anthropomorphized oak tree rivals any weirwood in Winterfell and is enough to hold a "Game of Thrones" fan enthralled until Season 8 airs.

Judith Bernstein, "Cabinet of Horrors," 2017.
Courtesy Judith Bernstein / The Drawing Center

Now that you're up to speed on half a millennium's worth of works on paper, head downtown to the Drawing Center for a triple-header on the medium's current state of affairs. The intrepid Judith Bernstein, who has lived and worked in Chinatown for fifty years, most of them in utter obscurity, fills the main gallery here with "Cabinet of Horrors," a screed against Donald Trump in the form of big acrylic paintings on paper, installed against screaming orange walls. Subtle it's not in the five-foot-tall "Capital Trumpenschlong," the U.S. Capitol building flies a flag from a cock-and-balls pole but Bernstein has been protesting abuses of power with such visions of manhood since 1966, when George Wallace was the governor of Alabama. It's gratifying to see the art world *finally* catch up to her. Read Mickalene Thomas's interview with the artist in the accompanying catalogue and find out why she's been an unsung hero to generations of feminists.

Few artists could hold up to the gale force of Bernstein's installation. The good news for Eddie Martinez is that he's one of them. The curator Claire Gilman invited the Brooklyn-based painter to re-create a wall of his studio that has been accruing his abstract drawings since 2011. (It occupies all four walls here.) There

are about two thousand drawings all told, from idle doodles to sketches for paintings, and the cumulative, very happy effect is of being inside the artist's brain. The Surrealist technique of automatic drawing meets the chutzpah of a hand that's been known to tag walls with spray paint. Martinez has been swapping in new works as the show goes along, upping the ante on drawing from life this is drawing as living.

Eddie Martinez, "Sound Bath," 2015.
Courtesy Eddie Martinez / Mitchell-Innes & Nash / Timothy Taylor Gallery / The Drawing Center

Downstairs from the Bernstein and the Martinez exhibitions is a selection of works from the Drawing Center's 2016-17 "Open Sessions" residents. Two high points: Slinko, a Ukrainian artist based in New Jersey, whose ink storyboard drawings suggest a collaboration between Raw Comix and Thomas Piketty, and the exquisitely intricate watercolor-and-pen drawing "Princesses," by Jennifer May Reiland, a fairy tale unafraid to spill its guts.

https://www.newyorker.com/culture/likes/four-drawing-shows-to-see-now

artnet news

Rabble-Rousing Artist Judith Bernstein Joins Paul Kasmin Gallery With Anti-Trump Show

The feminist artist is unveiling Trump-inspired protest paintings across New York.

October 11, 2017

Julia Halperin

Judith Bernstein's *Trump Genie* (2016). Image courtesy of Judith Bernstein and Paul Kasmin Gallery.

The firebrand feminist artist Judith Bernstein has joined Paul Kasmin Gallery's roster and she is planning a rip-roaring debut.

For her first exhibition with the gallery, scheduled to open on January 18, Bernstein will present seven massive, never-before-seen fluorescent paintings that tackle the Trump administration. The works will be illuminated with a black light so they appear to "vibrate from the wall," Bernstein tells artnet News. "You'll get an otherworldly experience, which is also the feeling you get while Donald Trump is president."

Bernstein first began painting Trump-inspired works during last year's presidential campaign. She picked up speed after the election. This week, another group of works inspired by Trump will go on view in a solo exhibition at the Drawing Center in New York.

Judith Bernstein's *Money Shot–Green* (2016) and *Schlongface Has Risen* (2016). Image courtesy of Judith Bernstein and Paul Kasmin Gallery.

Bernstein, whose work was censored from a group show in Philadelphia in 1974 and avoided by the mainstream art establishment for years, has recently been enjoying something of a comeback tour. She had a solo presentation in the lobby gallery of the New Museum in 2013 and shows with Mary Boone in 2015 and 2016. Last week, her Los Angeles gallery The Box presented her drawings in a special section at the Frieze Art Fair titled "Sex Work: Feminist Art & Radical Politics."

Throughout her career, Bernstein has tackled politics with a mixture of humor, provocation, and incisive critique. The Drawing Center show, "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors," will include her earliest political drawing from 1969. Inspired by Richard Nixon, it features a flag bearing a phallus waving over the White House. (The show also presents 18 new drawings, a vitrine filled with vintage piggy banks, free campaign pins, and bright orange walls. "We painted them six times to get the right color," Bernstein says.)

Her political convictions haven't always helped her get ahead. "It's more complicated when you do political work and it's harder to sell," she says. "A lot of galleries don't want to show political work, because they have collectors who are for Trump."

Nevertheless, Bernstein has no plans to hold back for the Kasmin exhibition. "Donald Trump is a fool, a monster, a sexist, a racist, and a con man," she says. She decided to title the show "Money Shot" because, she notes, "Trump is using the government like his own personal cash machine."

"Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors" is on view at the Drawing Center, 35 Wooster Street, New York, October 13, 2017–February 4, 2018. "Money Shot" is on view at Paul Kasmin Gallery, 293 Tenth Avenue, New York, January 18–March 3, 2018.

https://news.artnet.com/art-world/judith-bernstein-paul-kasmin-trump-1111568

Art in America

The Men's Room: Judith Bernstein Talks to Alison Gingeras

October 27, 2017

Brian Droitcour

View of Judith Bernstein's exhibition "Cabinet of Horrors," 2017, showing (left to right) *Porky Banks*, 2017; *First National Dick*, 1969; and *Equality*, 1995; at the Drawing Center.

For about half a century Judith Bernstein has been using vulgar humor to talk about power, politics, and violence. "Cabinet of Horrors," her exhibition on view through February 4, 2018, at the Drawing Center in New York, has works from various periods of her career, but the lion's share of the paintings and drawings, hanging on orange-painted walls, are new ones about Donald Trump's presidency. There's a sense of urgency to the show; the most recent works, finished just a

few weeks ago, depict Trump's nuclear standoff with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. On October 14, Bernstein was interviewed about the show and its background by curator Alison Gingeras. The event was part of the Downtown Culture Talks organized by the Soho Arts Network. Highlights from their conversation are presented below.

ALISON GINGERAS Let's talk about how your work has been in process since 1966, when you made your Cockman piece. You've said you mined the men's bathroom for iconography.

JUDITH BERNSTEIN I was a grad student at Yale when I read in an article in the New York Times that the title "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" came from bathroom graffiti. All of a sudden a lightbulb went off. At the time Yale was an all-male school. There were only women among the graduate students. I went into the bathroom and I got a lot of insight. It was also a lot of fun. I didn't take anything directly, but I got a lot of ideas from the scatological graffiti, where men are writing responses to each other, sort of like tweets are now. Graffiti has more to it than you think. When people are defecating on the toilet, things are going through their mind and they just write down that information. So there's a certain psychological underpinning that the work has. I started using canvases that were distressed, so they'd look like old walls, and then I'd make up things like Supercock, a guy flying through the air with a cape like Superman and a penis three times the size of a guy. Then I made Superzipper, and then I made a Supercock that was attached to the White House, so it had political meanings.

GINGERAS Your work as a grad student was very political. At the same time, second-wave feminism was coming to the fore. Women were coming together to assert agency and get their work seen. That's when you got into some trouble. Your use of phallic iconography got you into hot water, not just with men but with women. Could you talk about your experience with censorship?

BERNSTEIN After Yale I went to New York and wanted to be part of the gallery system. I joined a group of women that founded a gallery. Lucy Lippard had a file, and some women went to Lucy's and found people they were interested in and went to their studios. There were a lot of women who were like me. They went to graduate schools, they wanted access to the system, and they were blocked.

GINGERAS No matter what kind of work they made. It wasn't necessarily because they were making sex-positive work. Women were just stopped.

BERNSTEIN That's exactly right. So we started a gallery, and it was wonderful because we felt part of the system. I wanted the gallery name to be TWAT: Twenty Women Artists Together.

GINGERAS That would have been so much better!

BERNSTEIN It would have. But even at the time when I said this I didn't take it that seriously. I thought it was a joke. Howardena Pindell came up with Jane Eyre, and then we said AIR, an acronym for Artists in Residence. Then there was at the Philadelphia Civic Center, organized by Cindy Nemser, who was part of the Feminist Art Journal, and Marcia Tucker, who was then working at the Whitney Museum, and Anne d'Harnoncourt from the Philadelphia Museum, and others. They included about eighty women, including Louise Bourgeois and others who were just starting out. But when the Civic Center's director and curator saw my drawings of screws, they thought that women and children would be scarred forever if they saw them. The screws were definitely very phallic.

GINGERAS And they were very large.

BERNSTEIN Size is always a factor. Size matters. It makes people feel very diminutive in comparison. So they were horrified. They went all the way up to the mayor, who was very reactionary, and they blocked my piece. So then a whole group got together and made a petition. A lot of critics and museum people signed it: Clement Greenberg. . .

GINGERAS Lawrence Alloway all the major people of the day signed the petition in support of your work.

BERNSTEIN That's right. Barbara Rose many people. And all the women who were in the show. But they still didn't let me in.

GINGERAS At the same time, numerous other women were facing similar things. That's how this group Fight Censorship was born. When I found out about Fight Censorship I thought it was revelatory, for many reasons. It was founded by Anita Steckel, who wrote a fantastic manifesto.

BERNSTEIN Every time we talked, she would say: "If a penis is wholesome enough to go into a woman, it should be wholesome enough to go into a museum." She had worked as a croupier in Las Vegas. She was quite funny. Louise Bourgeois, Hannah Wilke, Joan Semmel, Eunice Golden, Juanita McNeely were all part of the group. We'd meet at Louise's a lot of times. She was a great cook. We also had a performance at the New School.

GINGERAS Yes, that's why I initially came to you. We found these fascinating images from 1973. There were these very pulpy ads for a ten-meeting course that Fight Censorship took part in, organized by a guy who turned out to be a UFO expert. He invited all of you to give a presentation, and it started with Charlotte Moorman doing one of her topless cellist performances.

BERNSTEIN She was taking off more clothes than any human would wear. She had twenty bras on, all these sweaters on. God knows what she had on. But it was really quite charming. Louise brought in *Fillette* [1968], which was a penis piece. She held it like a baby.

GINGERAS What's remarkable was that it wasn't slides. It really broke the format of the academic paradigm. You all brought physical works onto the stage and spoke about them. This group was a bit like a traveling show.

BERNSTEIN It was a short-lived thing, but we were on the radio for a while. It was kind of a crazy group. We got some press coverage, but we weren't taken seriously. At that time women artists were like a joke.

GINGERAS You came together not just because you were censored, but because you were censored for making work that addressed sexuality in a very frank way. You were shunned by a lot of mainstream feminist groups.

BERNSTEIN I was not embraced by the feminists. A lot of feminists felt the only way to discuss feminism was self-referential. They didn't see how my penises could be feminism. My idea of feminism was that I was observing the guys and making a comment on their behavior. These huge phalluses that are nine by thirteen feet are actually the subtext of what you're seeing in a Jackson Pollock painting. But they thought if it wasn't vaginal it wasn't feminist.

GINGERAS You didn't exhibit for decades after this moment with Fight Censorship. People think of you as a new young artist because your career started in earnest in 2008, with your exhibition at Mitchell Algus.

BERNSTEIN Before that I was dead in the water. I was censored and then I didn't show for almost twenty-five years. It was very depressing for me. I was teaching part-time, in an adjunct position and getting paid almost nothing.

GINGERAS But you kept making work the whole time, and you have this treasure trove of work to look back on. So now I'd like to address your show here at the Drawing Center. Your work has spanned ten presidencies and you've spared none of them. And the perfect place to talk about the Trump presidency is the men's room.

BERNSTEIN There's a piece here about Dick Nixon, *First National Dick*, that was done in 1969. Then there are *Equality*, *Liberty*, *Evil*. . . those word pieces are all from 1995. So there's some history that hadn't been seen before. I was aghast when Donald Trump became president. I was like many of us who was sure that Clinton would win. I thought she was a flawed candidate. I voted for her, of course. But I'm not a fan of Hillary Clinton. Though there's no comparison to Trump. We now have a president who is a joker, a jester, a racist, a sexist, a sociopath and perhaps a psychopath. . . He's using the White House as his own personal cash machine. So in this show I have the Trump genie coming out of the bottle. I used the Nazi symbol as well as money, the reason these people run is because they have a lot of money. That's true for Clinton as well as Trump. I have the slot machine, which is of course Trump in Atlantic City, and the penis is the lever, and he has three cocks in a row. The slot machine has the White House on top of it. He's cloaked in the flag, which is so ridiculous because dissent is part of the American way. He uses American symbols in a simplistic, reactionary way. I have the cabinet of horrors, because all the people in the cabinet are clones of him. I have Trump in a jester's hat. . . I have a lot more than what there is here, but I'm glad to have a good representation of how I feel about Donald Trump.

GINGERAS Will you continue this series of work?

BERNSTEIN I'll go into other things I'm interested in. But I'll still be using sexuality as a metaphor: the male, the cock and the female, the cunt. I will be doing this for a while.

www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/the-menrsquos-room-judith-bernstein-talks-to-alison-gingeras/

Time Out New York

October 11-17, 2017

Members only

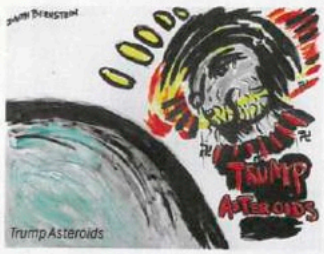
Judith Bernstein has spent the past five decades kicking male privilege in the balls. By *Paul Laster*

A PIONEERING FEMINIST whose work has dealt with gender politics for 50 years, Judith Bernstein cofounded A.I.R. Gallery (the first space devoted to showing female artists) in 1972, and was a charter member of such activist groups as the Guerrilla Girls, the Art Workers' Coalition and the Fight Censorship Group. But she remains renowned for drawings that transform hardware screws into phallic symbols of male aggression. Recently, Bernstein has turned her attention to President Trump, whom she describes as the biggest and dumbest dick of all. With an exhibition at the Drawing Center about to open, the 75-year-old artist spoke to *Time Out New York* about her confrontational style.

You're best known for drawing dicks. When did that start?
When I was a student at Yale in 1966. I began rendering dicks as a statement against the Vietnam War, but then the image evolved into a combination of screw and phallus—a kind of hybrid. I was thinking of screw and being screwed as a play on words. The images took on a life of their own, becoming hairy, fetishistic and biomorphic.

You mentioned the work being anti-war. How so?
With dicks, you have erection and ejaculation—this sort of explosion. So it only seemed natural to use them to comment on war. I made a drawing in 1967 called *Fun-Gun* that's an anatomical drawing of a cock with a trigger. It has real bullets attached to the nut sac.

But you also seem to be making a psychological observation.
Absolutely! When I make drawings that are nine by 30 feet it's like, Mine is bigger than yours. Men may have the organ, but they don't own the image. It infantilizes men when they see it because the scale is so enormous.



Trump Asteroids

Have you ever gotten into trouble with other feminists who may not understand what you're doing?
I've been left out of a lot of exhibitions because people have felt that dick art isn't feminist. They're not sure what to make of my dicks, given the way I aggrandize them. And it's true that I buy into size mattering in that way. But I'm also making a comment by appropriating that image in the first place.

So now you're focusing on Trump. What makes him a good subject for your work?
Oh my god, he couldn't be a better candidate. If there's anything positive to say about him, it's that he's been better than Hitler, which isn't saying much. He's a fool. He's a monster. He's a jester. He's a sexist. He's a racist. He's also a con man. I have a drawing in the show titled *Frankenschlong*, which depicts him as Frankenstein on a three-dollar bill because he's such a fake.

Is that work meant to be satirical or a dead-on affront?
It's a dead-on affront.

→ "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors" is on view at the Drawing Center Fri 13–Feb 4 (212-219-2166, drawingcenter.org).

artnet news

Fall Museum Preview: 30 Outstanding Art Exhibitions to See in New York This Season

From Michelangelo at the Met to Carrie Mae Weems at the Edward Hopper House, here are some major art events to look forward to as summer ends.

August 30, 2017

Sarah Cascone

Judith Bernstein, *Seal of Disbelief* (2017). Courtesy of the artist.

15. "Judith Bernstein: Cabinet of Horrors" at the Drawing Center

October 13, 2017–January 21, 2018

Since the election of Donald Trump, Judith Bernstein has created a new body of work criticizing his administration. Never one to shy away from politics she created anti-Vietnam War drawings in the 1960s the artist turns the President's insult-filled rhetoric back on him, channeling her anger and disgust into new, sometimes comically graphic work, including 15 drawings and four large-scale murals.

The Drawing Center is located at 35 Wooster Street. General admission is $5.

https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/fall-art-preview-museum-new-york-2017-1036661

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

FINANCIAL TIMES

Sex and the art of radical feminism
Once blacklisted for exploring sexual imagery, these artists are making a comeback at the Frieze art fair

September 29, 2017

Julie L. Belcove

Betty Tompkins in her studio in New York © Yael Malka

When Betty Tompkins moved to New York in 1969 after graduate school to paint, she regularly made the rounds of the galleries, then clustered within easy walking distance of each other on 57th Street and the Upper East Side. Very little of the art she saw impressed her. "Most of it, I'd walk in and walk out," she says. "I'd say, 'Jesus, this guy it was always a guy spent two years on this work, and I can't stay two minutes.'" She harboured few illusions that her own paintings would one day find a spot on the gallery walls: dealers dismissed her summarily. "We don't show women," she recalls being told. "We have no market for women, and we're not developing one."

Nevertheless, she persisted in the narrow space between the bed and the wall that served as her painting studio, if not at the commercial end of the art world. If she ever did get a chance to show, she decided, it would be work that was not just eye-catching but impossible to ignore. She turned to her then-husband's illicit collection of pornography. "I thought, this has charge," she says. "This is arresting. People want to look at this."

Cropping the images tightly to create anatomical close-ups, so that at first glance her monumental, resolutely realist depictions of heterosexual intercourse can resemble abstractions, Tompkins made her ground-breaking "Fuck Paintings", an exercise she found "liberating". In 1973, some of the works were included in two group shows in New York, but then, on

their way to an exhibition in Paris, the canvases were seized by French customs officials, who said they violated obscenity law. "That was the end," Tompkins says. "No one would show them. I eventually took them off their stretchers, rolled them up and stuck them under the pool table, where they stayed for 30 years."

Tompkins' story mirrors those of a generation of radical feminist artists, whose defiant use of sexual imagery, both male and female, challenged gender stereotypes and the male hierarchies of the art world. Making such sexually explicit work in the 1960s and 1970s, they frequently found themselves censored and blacklisted. If mainstream feminist artists thought they had it tough, their struggles were nothing compared to women such as Judith Bernstein, an American whose work was so transgressive that Kodak refused to reproduce her slides, or Penny Slinger, whose book of graphic tantric imagery and verse, Mountain Ecstasy, was seized and burned by British customs, or Natalia LL, a Polish artist whose films and photographs of women eating bananas, winkingly hinting at erotic acts, reportedly prompted the legendary New York gallerist Leo Castelli to declare, "America is not ready for this", which became the title of a 2012 documentary about her.

The 21st century, however, has been more embracing. A clutch of these women has been rediscovered, their careers resurrected by intrepid gallerists and curators. Collectors and institutions alike are taking a fresh look at artists who, though now in their seventies and eighties, are being viewed as if they were emerging artists decades younger.

Alison Gingeras, curator of *'Sex Work'* at next month's Frieze London: 'I'm trying to write other art histories'
© Yael Malka

Independent curator Alison Gingeras has assembled a special section for Frieze London, which opens in Regent's Park next week, devoted to the work of nine radical feminist artists. Cheekily titled *Sex Work: Feminist Art & Radical Politics*, the project celebrates the daring provocations of Tompkins, Bernstein, Slinger and Natalia LL, as well as Renate Bertlmann, Mary Beth Edelson, Dorothy Iannone, Birgit Jürgenssen and Marilyn Minter.

"The title is a play on words but it's very literal," says Gingeras, sipping coffee in the quiet garden of an LGBT community centre in New York's Greenwich Village, across the street from a church where she's installing an exhibit paying homage to writer and gay-liberation icon Oscar Wilde. "It's artists who make work that deals with sex. And it's sex in a broad sense, not just erotic art but also sex as a vehicle for political critique, women making work that is explicit and that challenges certain phobias within the women's movement about pornographic representation."

Gingeras, a highly regarded New York-based curator who has held posts at the Guggenheim Museum, the Pompidou Centre and heavyweight collector François Pinault's Palazzo Grassi in Venice, has carefully steered clear of commercial projects throughout her career and admits she was in no hurry to work for Frieze. When the fair approached her, she says she purposely proposed showing work so controversial that its market was extremely limited not the typical strategy for a major fair. "I assumed they would say no," she says, with a small smile. "It's a business, it's not a not-for-profit. But they embraced it."

Jo Stella-Sawicka, artistic director of Frieze, says the decision was actually quite simple. "Her concept felt completely timely and relevant," she says. "The role women play is very much part of the news." And as for the works' content leaving little to the imagination, she notes that much of what was considered shockingly vulgar decades ago is no longer seen as such, thanks in large part to the internet. "We've all been exposed to so much more."

The radical feminists in *Sex Work* stand apart from their female peers because they were marginalised not only by the men in charge but by other women artists, who took a more play-with-the-boys approach. Gingeras acknowledges she herself has had what she calls a "complicated relationship" with feminism. Although she has been involved in progressive political activism since she was in college in the 1990s, "I would never have worn the F on my chest because my generation was like spoiled children: we inherited second-wave feminism's progresses, and we took them for granted," she says. "As I got older,

I started to question my own internalised misogyny. I wanted to do a book of my own writings, and I looked at books and essays I'd written. I found I've written about a lot of bad boys. I was never particularly attracted to what I was intuiting as a sort of canon of feminism."

The 2007 exhibition WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution, mounted by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, also started her thinking as much about "who was left out and why and what was the common denominator" as who was actually in it. Still excluded from receiving an institutional blessing were females who made heavy use of sexual iconography and challenged gender roles. While careful to credit WACK! for being a milestone, Gingeras notes, "My own personal interest was attracted to why is sex so taboo still, and why is desire and sexual agency so taboo." She turned her attention to "women who seized the power of sex" and eventually organised Black Sheep Feminism: The Art of Sexual Politics, a 2016 exhibition at Dallas Contemporary, a museum in Texas. She subsequently began writing a book that delves into radical feminist art, the research for which fed directly into *Sex Work*. "Feminism is not a monolith; it's very plural," she says. "I'm trying to write other art histories."

Meanwhile, the election of President Donald Trump and the misogyny that permeated his campaign reawakened Gingeras's penchant for protest. Moved to take action, she spearheaded the collaborative Instagram account @dear_ivanka in the nascent days of the resistance movement last November. Minter is one of her co-conspirators. The social media feed, taking the form of letters to Ivanka Trump, has mercilessly skewered the first daughter as a hypocritical, out-of-touch opportunist. One posting paired a photo of a smiling, immaculately turned-out Ivanka and her young daughter in front of the Supreme Court with the query, "Do you want your daughter to know an unearned place at THIS table is what you call female empowerment?" Says Gingeras, "The psych-ops aspect of it is very good because we have, like, three psychoanalysts contributing. They are vicious."

Judith Bernstein: 'Women have a great deal of anger and should own it'
© Yael Malka

Her activism and her scholarly interests converged, she says, with *Sex Work*, a project that jettisons the focus-group feminism of Ivanka's "Women Who Work" slogan in favour of authentic expressions about women's place in the world. "We are trying to write a new manifesto in this age of corporatised usurpation of feminism by people like Ivanka," Gingeras says.

Judith Bernstein, who has a show of anti-Trump drawings dubbed Cabinet of Horrors opening at the Drawing Center in Lower Manhattan on October 13, began to employ phalluses in her Vietnam War protest art back in the late 1960s. In "Vietnam Garden", erect penises double as tombstones, American flags sticking out of their tips. "Union Jack-Off Flag" crosses two phalluses over the stars of an American flag. "My idea of feminist was observing men and using sexuality as a vehicle," Bernstein says. "Feminists did not consider me one of the group because they had a very narrow definition of feminism."

In the early 1970s, she began a series of "Screw" charcoal drawings, so named because the enormous phalluses did double-duty as hardware. Bernstein's wordplay considered "screwing" as a synonym for both sex and "getting screwed", as in being on the raw end of a deal, a place she says women often found themselves. "Women have a great deal of anger and should own it," says Bernstein. "Owning makes it more real and more contemporary. [Mainstream feminists] still had an impact, but they didn't have the sledgehammer aggression and humour my work has."

Not everyone was laughing. In 1974, one of her "Screw" drawings was deemed pornographic and removed from a museum show in Philadelphia. After that, Bernstein was virtually blacklisted. She went more than 20 years without a solo show. She lived off her income from teaching but, despite her MFA from Yale, could not get tenure anywhere.

Most mainstream feminists distanced themselves from the more provocative practitioners. Tompkins felt shunned. "Nobody ever invited me to a meeting," she says. "Ever. They seemed to have a problem with my source material, the fact that I subscribed to the pleasure principle."

Pornography was the great divide. To mainstream feminists, pornography was the epitome of the male gaze and the coercion of women into sex work; the objectification of women for men's titillation. To radical feminists, appropriating pornography was an act of empowerment, a loud declaration that women, too, have strong sex drives and sexual fantasies. "You'd get expelled, like being thrown out as a heretic," Gingeras says. There was a clear line between the eroticism practiced by unofficial feminist ringleader Joan Semmel, who painted far tamer pictures of straight, coital couples, and, say, Marilyn Minter's later canvases of women displaying their genitalia and engaged in sexual acts. "[Semmel] did not approve of [radical feminists] because she was categorically against pornography as an industry, and yet her work is very graphic. She was interested in a woman-authored eroticism." The radical camp, on the other hand, equated censorship with other forms of gender oppression and found liberation in reclaiming and celebrating their own sexuality.

The pattern of incendiary female artists being silenced played out on both sides of the Atlantic, though British artist Penny Slinger found early recognition for her uniquely feminist take on surrealism. While at Chelsea College of Art, she created her first photo collage book, 50% The Visible Woman, a sexually charged look at the way women are viewed in the culture. She found a mentor in Sir Roland Penrose, co-founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and immediately upon graduating in 1969 appeared in the Young and Fantastic show at the ICA. Making herself her muse and employing her obvious beauty, Slinger explored the female psyche with photography, film and sculpture. "The feminist movement was more political, trying to get the same power men had," she says, "whereas I was trying to look at the whole package of being a woman. I wanted to be subject as well as object. I wanted to own female sensuality and sexuality."

'Don't Look at Me' (1969) by Penny Slinger

But a series of setbacks left her reeling. First, for a 1973 exhibition featuring photographs in which she appeared as a hybrid of a bride and a wedding cake, her legs splayed to reveal a collaged flower or sky, she had planned a "happening": an erotic wedding banquet in which guests were to come dressed as brides or grooms. The gallerist, fearing neighbours' reactions, cancelled the event. Then, while installing a show of her work in which the rooms of a house served as metaphors for a woman's interior life, another gallerist seemed to lose his nerve over the graphic content. Shortly after the opening, Slinger decided to re-mount the show herself, pulling the works from the gallery and reinstalling them in a space she rented.

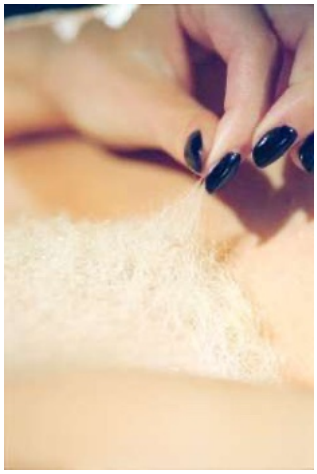
"*Consumer Art, Photography*" (1974) by Natalia LL © Natalia LL

Drained from the experiences, Slinger quit the art world for the Caribbean, where she stayed for 15 years, then California, where she has lived since 1994. "Out of sight, out of mind," she says. The Manchester Art Gallery's 2009 Angels of Anarchy show of female surrealists reminded the art world of her contributions. (Excerpts from a new documentary, Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows, will play at Frieze.)

In New York, one haven during feminism's lean years was A.I.R. Gallery, a non-profit collective Bernstein co-founded in 1972 with 19 other women and which remains in operation today. Mary Beth Edelson, perhaps best known for "Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper" (1972), in which she appropriated the Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece and collaged Georgia O'Keeffe's and other female artists' faces over those of Jesus and the apostles, also showed

at A.I.R. Being able to present their work publicly, Bernstein says, was essential for A.I.R.'s members: it didn't sell art but provided a chance to be part of the conversation. "At the time, there was no other option," she says. "In a way, you could copyright the work you did. It gave you a sense of having a career, even if you were on the fringe."

A.I.R.'s import was such that Gingeras is paying homage to the gallery at Frieze with a 12-metre wall adorned with ephemera from its exhibition history and a timeline giving context to this strain of art. "I wanted to make a nod to the difficult history that women have had with the art market," she explains. "That's really where this whole history is rooted."



'Plush #7' (2014) by Marilyn Minter

Gingeras also gives a nod to the commercial galleries that, she says, are most responsible for resuscitating these women's careers. Mitchell Algus, a high school science teacher-cum-art dealer, revived both Bernstein's and Tompkins' reputations by giving them solo shows in the 2000s. In Tompkins' case, she finally unrolled and re-stretched her "Fuck Paintings" for her 2002 exhibition. Algus's first sale there was to the celebrated artists Robert Gober and Donald Moffett, and the show led to Tompkins' acclaimed turn in the 2003 Lyon Biennale, which led to the Pompidou's acquiring one of the canvases no small feat. Notes Gingeras, "It's incredibly difficult to get material like this through. I used to work at the Pompidou, and I can't believe they bought a Betty Tompkins painting."

London-based dealer Richard Saltoun, whose Frieze stand will spotlight German artist Renate Bertlmann, says there is a solid market for radical feminists, who make up 60 to 70 per cent of his gallery business. Their prices are roughly half those of their male contemporaries, but their artworks are highly sought after by female collectors from the US, Europe and South America. "There are still lots of men who shy away from this kind of tough art," he says. "Women understand it. Some older ones, you can tell, have lived through some of the issues these artists are expressing. They identify with it very quickly and without explanation. It's not for me to explain to a woman what it's like to be a woman."

Though Sex Work is ostensibly a historical show the works are mostly from the 1960s and 1970s Gingeras marvels at how fresh they all look. "This is contemporary," she says. "Arguably all of these women are having their influence now. Every time Betty has an opening, I see nothing but young artists. Same for Judith. Even a late-blooming career is better than things disappearing entirely."

Their thread through the past five decades is undeniable. Whether through teaching the late, fearless British artist Helen Chadwick, for instance, taught the similarly transgressive Tracey Emin or second-hand books, they made their voices heard. "Women artists of younger generations have always searched out women artists of older generations," Saltoun says. "They're part of the whole awakening of gender issues in all walks of life we read about daily." FT Weekend Email Get a shot of weekend inspiration each Saturday with the best in life, arts and culture. WEEKLY One-Click Sign Up

To be sure, the women in Sex Work feel vindicated. Slinger, turning 70 this month, is again using her own naked body for life casts and, following a roughly 30-year absence, is pleased "not to be swept under the carpet of history". Says Bernstein, "There's always residue anger. I'm not saying there's not. But I feel generosity toward the world because I've been validated."

'Sex Work: Feminist Art & Radical Politics', curated by Alison M Gingeras, is at Frieze London, October 5-8; frieze.com

Portraits by Yael Malka

Photographs: Courtesy of Marilyn Minter, Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Salon 94, New York; Penny Slinger courtesy of Blum & Poe gallery

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Contemporary Art Review .la

The Languages of All-Women Exhibitions

October 25, 2017

Lindsay Preston Zappas

Guerrilla Girls, Dear Art Collector, (2007). Image courtesy of guerrillagirls.com. © Guerrilla Girls.

"I am still struck by the psychological displacement of women who are alienated by and in language."1 Lucy R. Lippard

All-women shows have been markedly in vogue in the past few years.2Under various curatorial frameworks, these often-exhaustive gendered shows always have one thing in common: women. As a woman myself, I often feel sheepish about questioning the structures around these exhibitions as it is well documented that women are underrepresented in the art world, and in need of exposure and support. Still, I bend toward suspicion when galleries and institutions tout an all-women roster. Frustratingly, many of these exhibitions can feel revisionist, or worse, imply a capitalization on the trending socio-political resurgence of women's rights, or the threat to them in our current politics. There are certainly broad problematics within the all-women structure worthy of discussion the capitalization on the real struggles of women; the masking of uneven gallery rosters that show predominately men; the trend of showing late-career or deceased women artists; the dual demonization and romanticization of motherhood within the biographies of woman artists; and the

lack of sustained institutional support for women artists working today. But, I'd like to focus here specifically on the languages of all-women exhibitions.

First we must consider how language in the form of show titles, press releases, promotional materials, and general aura spawns prejudice before anyone even walks through the front door. Like the joke about vegans: How do you know if an exhibition will include only women? It will tell you. And it often tells you loudly, and in advance. In a 2016 Atlantic article, Sarah Boxer described visiting Women of Abstract Expressionism at the Denver Art Museum: "I could see banners announcing the women's exhibition from a distance. WOMEN WOMEN WOMEN. It almost looked like they were announcing a strip tease." As Boxer walked closer, a miniscule text that read "women of abstract expressionism" could be seen in small type, low on the banner. Boxer also recalls the cover for the catalogue of WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution the massive all-women exhibition at MOCA in 2007 which features Martha Rosler's clippings of naked women from Playboy, "as if to announce, 'sexy ladies inside!'"3 While the Rosler work was exhibited in WACK!, choosing that particular work for the catalogue image problematically gave primacy to the fetishization of the nude female, if even while being subversive.

The recent exhibition CUNT at Venus Over Los Angeles chose a more subtle promotional tack, its title notwithstanding: a square baby-pink poster with the exhibition title centered, all caps, in white. While understated, the graphic recalls normative baby-girl colors as well as the anatomy of female genitalia. While the exhibition featured fantastic work, that poster (and the brashness of the word cunt) infected any pure experience of the work apart from its association to female genitalia. There are certainly many convincing arguments towards reclaiming and normalizing the word cunt4 even students in early feminist programs were instructed to repeat the word cunt until it was removed of its derogatory associations.5 Still, utilizing it as a moniker for a group show by women shrouds the work included under the complicated social and linguistic baggage that the word carries.

Marilyn Minter, Twenty Sixteen(2017). Dye sublimation print, 40 x 30 inches. Edition 2 of 5 + 2 AP. Image courtesy the artist and VENUS, Los Angeles.

In the WACK! catalogue, Eva Hesse's incomparable work Hang Up (1966) is organized under the heading "Gendered Space" though historically this work has been associated with minimalism, not feminism. This reframing of context recalls the way in which Ana Mendieta's work has been adopted by various feminist groups and causes over the years, while Mendieta herself was "dissatisfied with being reduced to one vision of feminism, or one articulation of identity."6 For instance, white feminist groups looped her work in with the representation of The Goddess, "a trendy subtopic" of the era, although Mendieta's relationship to goddesses was more "complex and volatile."7 Her work was also contextualized within restricting feminist dialogues of the body, victimhood, and violence. This type of singularity was precisely what Mendieta's work was meant to reject, and these misrepresentations ultimately led to her resignation from the feminist group A.I.R. in 1982.8 Charles Merewether explains, "the question of naming has afflicted the scholarship and reception of Ana Medieta's work."9 It is indeed this question of naming that is paramount in the re-historicization of women artists today, as it shapes the future narrative of their historically tenuous careers.

Often all-women exhibitions include the qualifier, woman, almost as a sort of warning of what can be expected of the work. In researching this article, I reached out to Micol Hebron, who has been actively tracking gender inequality on gallery rosters since 2013. "I think the more complicated and perhaps insidious reason that this is a problem is the longstanding inherent bias against women's work," Hebron wrote to me in a recent email. "Women's labor(s) are historically valued less: their wages are lower, their art sells for less, and the aesthetics associated with 'women's work' are considered less cool. So, an all-women show can be seen as a concession of sorts."

When curators and gallerists preface exhibitions with an admission of the artist's gender, it makes the fact impossible to ignore and surely has an effect on the way in which the artist's work is being viewed. A wonderful exhibition at the Landing gallery last summer, which included stunning works by Tanya Aguiñiga, Loie Hollowell, Lenore Tawney, was titled dryly and reductively 3 Women. The title was lifted from a 1977 Robert Altman film, yet, dropped on this context of three intergenerational artists, it became a descriptor, a confession. Under this titling, the indomitable weavings of Tawney, who worked alongside Agnes Martin and Ellsworth Kelly in the '60s, seemed to sink into categories of "women's work," while Loie Hollowell's expansive and intricate paintings read more explicitly like pretty little vaginas.

We never hear an exhibition described as an all-men exhibition, since it is the understood normal. As such, as we constantly denote woman, we are reinforcing men as the engrained default. In her introduction to The Pink Glass Swan, the feminist art critic Lucy Lippard describes working on her own writing and constantly referring to "the critic" as he, "as though my own identity and actions had been subsumed by patriarchal nomenclature."10

As we incessantly insert women back into art history, we in turn agree with the normative patriarchal telling of history that tells us that these women need inserting while, as Griselda Pollock insisted, "feminist history began inside art history."11 As we continue to group women together in exhibitions, and insist on qualifying the exhibition as belonging to women, we keep women on the outside of mainstream art. As my editor Aaron Horst commented in a recent conversation, "it makes the fact of

being a woman and an artist somehow remarkable." Famously, when asked at a party "what women artists think," Joan Mitchell turned to Elaine De Kooning, exclaiming, "Elaine, let's get the hell out of here."12

Ana Mendieta, Silueta Works in Mexico (1973-1977). Color photograph, 19 1/4 x 12 7/8 inches. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles Purchased with a grant provided by The Judith Rothschild Foundation. © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Image courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co.

Perhaps to combat these musty normatives of art-history, curators of all-women exhibitions slap on language that opposes weakness: power, revolution, radical, escape, get the fuck out, wack! This combativeness often feels put on, as if we must insist and argue that women might be able to wield power. Though not specifically an all-women exhibition, in reference to the titling of Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon (a recent group exhibition of mostly LGBTQ-identified artists at the New Museum), Peter Schjeldahl wrote "the four nouns in the title of the [show] go off like improvised explosive devices, boding civil strife." A beat later, Schjeldahl concedes that the works in the exhibition don't live up to its corralling and boosterish nomenclature. "The show's provocative title turns out to function rather like the old vaudeville pistol that emits a little flag imprinted 'BANG.'"13 This sort of blanket, categorical re-contextualization that the exhibition titling imbues is precisely problematic as it limits or makes difficult a reading of the artwork under any other conceptual framework.

In reference to the titling of SOGTFO (Sculpture or Get the Fuck Out), a five-woman sculpture exhibition at Ghebaly Gallery, Jonathan Griffin wrote, "Even subverted, its aggressive tone seems unfitting for the general measured output of these five artists. None are polemical about their gender, and it's hard to imagine any of them coming up with a title as caustic as SOGTFO which, of course, they didn't."14 While it is potentially the case that women artists are consulted and collaborated with in the development of exhibition titles (as in fact was the case with CUNT15), elsewhere the titling is

meant to evoke struggle and combat that isn't inherit in the work itself. In the case of titling WACK!, Connie Butler explains that "the exclamatory title of the exhibition is intended to recall the bold idealism that characterized the feminist movement during [the late '60s and '70s]…The violent and sexual connotations of WACK serve to reinforce feminism's affront to the patriarchal system."16 These abrasive nomenclatures seem to perpetuate the stereotype of the brash and wild feminist, while also reeking of self-congratulatory prose, suggesting that the institution who undoubtedly titled said exhibition has rediscovered and tamed? a wild bunch of feminists.

Yet, to a large extent, many women in these monstrous exhibitions do not consider their work feminist at all (and some decline participation). It is an arduous task to clarify the difference between a feminist framework and actual feminist art,17 and the all-women context "allow[s] for some form of erasure or fitting women into existing parameters."18

The way in which we are speaking, writing, and naming all-women exhibitions seems paramount to the ways in which the next generation will understand the contributions of women artists. As Helen Molesworth has said, "the only way to get diversity is to actually do it."19 It is this doing that can get complicated as institutions constantly point to diversity they are implementing look ma, no hands! with promotional language and curatorial strategies. Language instills pattern; pattern becomes habit. "The habits of mind that our culture has instilled in us from infancy shape our orientation to the world and our emotional responses to the objects we encounter," wrote Guy Deutscher in a Times article about how language shapes reality. "They may also have a marked impact on our beliefs, values and ideologies."20 As such, all-women exhibitions may have the power to accelerate or neuter efforts towards the equalization of gender biases in the arts. And much of this power comes down to the naming; the language that garnishes press releases and show cards may in fact be reinforcing our ingrained biases rather than liberating us from them.

This essay was commissioned by Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles as part of Field Perspectives 2017, a co-publishing initiative organized and supported by Common Field for their Los Angeles 2017 Convening. Field Perspectives 2017 is a collaboration between Common Field and arts publications ARTS.BLACK, Art Practical, The Chart, Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles, contemptorary, DIRT, Pelican Bomb, Temporary Art Review, and X-TRA. Partners each commissioned a piece of writing that aims to catalyze discussion, dialog, and debate before, during, and after the Convening. This essay will also be featured in our forthcoming issue 10 of Carla, which launches November 18th.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Dorothy Iannone, from Lists VI: A Much More Detailed Reconstruction Than Requested (1968). Set of 34 drawings, felt pen on paper, 8.66 x 8.86 inches each. Image courtesy the artist and VENUS, Los Angeles.

Judith Bernstein, Vertical #1 (2014). Charcoal on linen, 180 x 84 inches. Image courtesy the artist and VENUS, Los Angeles.

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Betty Tompkins, Pussy Painting #22 (2012). Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 16 inches. Image courtesy the artist and VENUS, Los Angeles.

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1. Lucy Lippard, "Introduction: Moving Targets/ Concentric Circles: Notes from the Radical Whirlwind," The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Feminist Essays on Art, (New York: The New Press, 1995). ↲
2. Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 2016 at Hauser & Wirth, Escape Attempts at Shulamit Nazrian, SOTGFO at Ghebaly Gallery, Power at Sprüth Magers, Signifying Form at the Landing, CUNT at Venus Over Los Angeles, Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960 1985 at The Hammer, and We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965 85 at The California African American Museum come to mind as notable examples in Los Angeles in the last year. ↲
3. Sarah Boxer, "An Era for Women Artists?," The Atlantic, December 2016. ↲
4. The etymology of the word cunt relates to the celebration of the feminine and the goddess, where its sister-word, vagina, has more violent and aggressive root word connotations, translating to sheath or scabbard in which to thrust a sword. Gillian Schutte, "C is for Cunt," Ms. Magazine (blog), November 27, 2012, http://msmagazine.com/blog/2012/11/27/c-is-for-cunt/. ↲
5. Mira Schor, "The ism That Dare Not Speak its Name," in A Decade of Negative Thinking (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 30. ↲
6. Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Against the Body: Interpretting Ana Mendieta," Ana Medieta: Traces (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 35. ↲
7. Ibid., 31. ↲
8. Ibid., 134-135. ↲
9. Charles Merewether, "From Inception to Dissolution: An Essay on Expenditure in the work of Ana Medieta," Ana Mendieta (Poligrapha, 1998), 148. ↲
10. Lippard, The Pink Glass Swan, 13. ↲
11. Griselda Pollock, "Feminist Interventions in Art's Histories," Kritische Berichte, 16, No. 1 (1998). ↲
12. Boxer. ↲

13. Peter Schjeldahl, "Safe Space: A Show on Gender Soothes More than it Unsettles," The New Yorker, October 9, 2017. ↲
14. Jonathan Griffin, "SOGTFO at Francois Ghebaly," Carla, issue 1, April 2015. ↲
15. Carla Podcast, Episode 1, October 2017. http://contemporaryartreview.la/episode-1/ ↲
16. Cornelia Bulter, "Art and Feminism: An Ideology of Shifting Criteria," WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 15. ↲
17. Cecillia Fajardo-Hill, "The invisibility of Latin American Women Artists: Problematizing Art Historical and Curatorial Practices," Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985 (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2017), 23-24. ↲
18. Ibid., 21. ↲
19. Boxer. ↲
20. Guy Deitsher, "Does Your Language Shape How You Think?", New York Times Magazine, Aug. 26, 2010. ↲

http://contemporaryartreview.la/the-languages-of-all-women-exhibitions/

i-D

sex, feminism and transgression: why the world of art still censors women?

October 31, 2017

Grace Banks

A new London exhibition celebrates the feminine perspective of sex in art. An initiative that moves the lines and highlights radical artists too long shunned - but there is still some way to go.

In 1969, the 24-year-old artist Betty Tompkins begins painting what she will later call her *Fuck Paintings* - black-and-white zooms on women in the act of sex: double penetration, masturbation and sodomy, painted on from pornographic images found at random. But his recourse to explicit sex does not have the ambition to shock: he fills the feminine erotic void of the 1970s.

Betty Tompkins, Fuck Painting # 7, 1973.

In 1974, she finished the series and prepared to exhibit worldwide. Beyond her friends, feminist activists are excited to see pornography take a new perspective, but almost no one sees her work until 2002. For most of her life, Tompkins' paintings are censored it is the object of constant institutional and media attention and ends up being banned from entering France in 1974 because of the "explicit" work with which it travels. But in 2002, after a small exhibition in New York, she suddenly achieved success - the

Center Pompidou acquired one of his paintings in 2004 and made discover to many women, captivated by his frontal approach to sexuality. Today, *New York Times* and many celebrities.

Betty belongs to a group of female artists who worked in the 1970s - such as Cosey Fanni Tutti, Renate Bertlmann, Birgit Jürgenssen, Eleanor Antin, and Penny Slinger - and who have had their careers destroyed for making sex their favorite subject. At that time, Playboy boss Hugh Heflner said that the sexual liberation of women is over. But while female artists are ghettoised because they have chosen to evoke sex in their work, men like Jeff Koons sell erotic images of the female body to the applause of criticism.

There has recently been a change of attitude towards these women. Thanks to the sorority celebrated by different platforms, forgotten artists are rediscovered by a new audience. The younger generations understand the importance of their work and the double standard that women artists face: they are judged when they seize sex as a subject while men can do the same thing by forcing respect and 'admiration. This year, the Frieze Art Fair has sat its already strong reputation with the *Sex Work* series, a showcase of censorship against feminist art, explaining why women who have sex with their mediums have been so often ignored by the artistic world. Yesterday shunned by the establishment, these women make today the playground of their artistic experiments. The status quo is beginning to be jostled, but for most of these second-wave feminist artists, it is too late - and most importantly, illusory to believe that censorship would have ceased to exist.

Renate Bertlmann, Kaktus, 1999. Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery

Alison Gingeras, American writer and curator of the *Sex Work* series explains: " *Most of these artists have been involved in mainstream feminist organizations but have been swept away by artistic history because of the power of phallocentric images. Betty Tompkins did not have the slightest recognition for thirty years.* These artists worked at a time when the sexual pleasure of women was taboo and where erotism was the prerogative of men for the eyes of men. In the debate on alternative feminisms during the Frieze Art Fair, Alison Gingeras spoke candidly of the urgency of recognizing the work of these women, arguing in an interview with Frieze: "*I became aware of the number of women of my generation who internalized a misogyny towards women artists, without taking into account the role they had in feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Pro-sex feminism are still relevant today.* "

The American artist Marilyn Minter was the same invisibilisation as Betty Tompkins. " *In the 1970s, women wanted sexual images created for them and by them* ," she says. *But when I started creating my own erotic imagery, my career was completely destroyed . It was the end for me. I remember Marcia Tucker, curator of Bad Girls at the New Museum in 1994, coming into my studio and telling me that my work was 'too bad' for the exhibition. It devastated me and I'm still trying to understand what happened.* " As Marilyn says of herself:" *The art world cherishes young bad boys and old ladies* "- the exorbitant prices that have reached its works and its recognition as a major figure of feminist art arrive too late.

Birgit Jürgenssen, Untitled (from the series Death Dance with Maiden), 1979–1980.

There are others. Birgit Jürgenssen was one of the most active Surrealists in the 1970s and 1980s and one of the first artists to show ugly, ugly and bizarre women, particularly in 1979 through her work *Untitled (Self with Skull)* , and *Untitled Death Dance With Maiden.* Photographer and director Natalia Lach-Lachovitz, whose Consumer Art series produced from 1971 to 1974 shows women devouring phallic food to resonate with the exploration of young women's sexuality. As for Judith Bernstein, who made *Union Jack-Off* in 1967, she uses penis cartoons to question the sexism of society.

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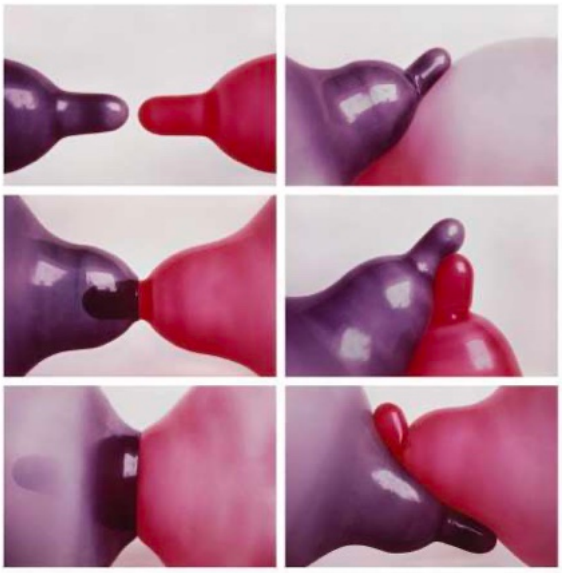
These women are today considered with the same respect as prolific artists of the 1970s like Carole Schneemann and Hannah Wilke, but we must not think that the fight is over. Women who write, produce and produce art from sex are still in great demand, just as they were in the 1970s. Many of them regret not being taken seriously when they seize the subject. like Zoe Buchman using gynecological tools or Josephine Meckseper and Stacy Leigh using models and inflatable dolls for artistic purposes. Women like Maisie Cousins or Petra Collins have been censored on Facebook and Instagram for years. " *It's the slut shaming of the artistic world*says Marilyn, *no one wants a beautiful young woman who produces sex-related imagery. It's for boys* . Working with sexuality remains one of the greatest challenges of a woman artist's career.

" *Frieze has invited the artists to exhibit, but they will not tell you it's an easy show to impose* ," says Alison. *But it shows that their work does not confined feminism to a hashtag.* For Alison, an artist like Cosey Fanni Tutti, snubbed for too long, is still the *headliner of alternative feminism* , *even 40 years later.* " The Autobiography of Cosey Fanni Tutti and its position on sex, resonated with many women when it was published earlier this year. " *At the time, I worked as a model, I was photographed by many men, she* says. *I did not like this structure of domination. So by choosing to work in what people call pornography, I wanted to create erotic images in my own words, my own structure. But I was looked down upon in the art world.* "



Renate Bertlmann, Zärtliche Berührungen [Tender Touches], 1976.

Renate Bertlmann and Kathy Acker, too, have been patronized by the guardians of the good artistic taste of their time; white men, for the most part. Renate's work tackled the sexual violence and misogyny of the 1970s, but in 1979, the Pompidou Center banned her from the *Museum of Sacrifices, Musée de l'Argent* collection exhibition , judging her work too explicit. Acker, now well known to young women through Chris Kraus's book, *After Kathy Acker* , has been sidelined in the art world because of her pornographic film *Blue Tape* . " *The vanguard of the 1970s was incredibly snobbish* ," recalls Chris. *They thought they had all the answers, everything. Kathy was not the first person to mix art and pornography, but she added that heartbreaking story in the first person. Nobody had done that before her.* "

We do not have the right to make the same mistake, and to return, in 40 years, to the artists put on the bench today; to wait until they are old to celebrate their work and pay homage to them. Their work must go beyond small independent groups and pass the doors of mainstream institutions. " *There are still women who are excluded from the art industry because their work is deemed 'too explicit'. It must stop*, says Mrilyn. *We must be vigilant and not repeat the same mistakes.* "

https://i-d.vice.com/fr/article/ne7xdw/sexe-feminisme-et-transgression-pourquoi-le-monde-de-lart-censure-encore-les-femmes