Feminine Persuasion

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Published by Indiana University Press

Stirratt, Betsy and Catherine Johnson.
Feminine Persuasion.
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FEMININE PERSUASION

WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE KINSEY INSTITUTE COLLECTION
Although Mariette Pathy Allen received her MFA in painting (from the University of Pennsylvania), she soon switched to photography. Her earliest series is the amorphous People with Art, an ongoing project featuring scenes of people making art, surrounded by art, or ignoring art. Allen’s epiphany came during Mardi Gras in 1978, when she photographed a group of crossdressers she met at her hotel; since then she has devoted herself to documenting the lives of members of the transgender community. Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them, featuring Allen’s photographs, was published in 1989. In 2002 her photographs were featured in Southern Comfort, a documentary film about a transgender community in rural Georgia.

This image is one of a series of photographs taken by Allen in the 1970s to document the birth process. Although for many women pregnancy and childbirth are closely linked to sexuality, there are few representations of these two subjects in fine art, compared to the countless images of women as sexual beings.
Little is known of the origins of one of the few female erotic artists of the mid-twentieth century. A graphic artist who was active in Paris from the 1930s through the 1950s, Suzanne Ballivet illustrated La Fontaine’s Contes (1953), Pierre Louÿs’s Les aventures du roi Pausole (1945), and composed her own erotic sequences, including Initiation Amoureuse (1943). Though the innocence implied in her figures’ infantile curves has reminded some viewers of Renoir’s bathers, Ballivet’s women have a pronounced and simplified round geometry quite unlike Renoir’s softly voluptuous figures.

This depiction of two young women in a moment of passion is one of sixteen color lithographs that Ballivet created as book illustrations, most likely for Louÿs’s Les chansons de Bilitis, published in Brussels in 1943.
Plate 3

JUDY DATER (1941–), UNITED STATES

Larry and Eloise, 1964
Gelatin silver print
7\(\frac{1}{2}\)" x 9\(\frac{1}{2}\)"
Unnumbered
Donated in 1965
Copyright © 2003 Judy Dater. All rights reserved.

Born in Hollywood, Judy Dater began her art training in Los Angeles before moving to San Francisco to study photography with Jack Welpott. In 1964 she met the renowned photographer Imogen Cunningham; their friendship led to the creation of one of Dater’s best-known images, Imogen and Twinka (1974).

In this photograph taken at the beginning of her career, Dater shows us a woman in her eighth month of pregnancy sharing a moment of intimacy with her husband. Although pregnancy has an obvious connection to sexual behavior, The Kinsey Institute’s art collection contains almost no representations of pregnant women.
Plate 4

Leonor Fini (1908–1996), Argentina

Les chats (Cats), 1968
Etching
6 7/8” x 6 7/8”
845R F4985.3
Donated in 1985

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Born in Buenos Aires to an Argentinian father and an Italian mother, Leonor Fini spent her childhood in Trieste, where she was raised by her mother. Here she acquired cosmopolitan manners and was exposed to the art of Klimt, Beardsley, and the Pre-Raphaelites. At age seventeen she left for Paris, where she met Georges Bataille and Max Ernst. A self-taught painter and printmaker, Fini became a renowned and prolific illustrator, working on editions of Shakespeare, Rabelais, de Sade, Verlaine, Poe, Baudelaire, and Genet. Although she participated in group exhibitions with the Surrealists, she never really joined the predominantly male movement. Eager to explore various media, Fini also designed costumes and sets for the stage. Her works often reveal a preoccupation with androgyny and a mystical fascination with cats.
Laura Hartford received her BFA in 1992 from the University of Louisville and has shown her work in a number of Louisville academic and commercial spaces. Hartford, along with Vivienne Maricevic and Leanne Schmidt, is one of a small number of women photographers whose artwork reflects her interest in the eroticism of the male body under the female gaze. Hartford’s most recent work, represented here by *Eric with Flowers*, explores the ways in which “media, myth, and popular culture assign gender identification to objects, gestures, and the act of looking.”
PLATE 6

VIVIENNE MARICEVIC (20TH CENTURY–), UNITED STATES

Dolores, Male-to-Female Transsexual, 1986
Gelatin silver print
10” x 8”
2000.17.1
Donated in 2000
Copyright © 2003 Vivienne Maricevic. All rights reserved.

Vivienne Maricevic’s primary subjects have been members of the transvestite, transsexual, and sadomasochist communities. Her book Male to Female features portraits of New York City transvestites, drag queens, and transsexuals, and her work depicting the activities at S/M parties has appeared in magazines such as Nerve and Secret. She is also intrigued by the erotic potential of the male body for the female viewer, and is currently the owner of a Web site, sheshootsmen.com, which is an online gallery of her male nudes, provided “for women by a woman.”

Transsexuals are individuals whose gender identities do not agree with their physical sex. A male-to-female transsexual is a person who considers herself to be a woman, although she was born with male genitalia and developed the physical characteristics of a man. Not all transsexuals have surgery to reconstruct their bodies; some of the physical characteristics of a female body may be obtained through hormone therapy.
Born in Osaka in 1971, Kiriko Shirobayashi earned her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York. Shirobayashi’s lyrical abstractions of the human form are meant to inspire the viewer to envision what cannot be seen in the photograph; she believes that “small details expand the imagination to eternity.” Shirobayashi prefers to photograph women’s bodies because she finds little enjoyment in viewing most photographs of women taken by men. By photographing other women, she is able to express her own feelings about female sexuality and beauty.
CLARA TICE (1888–1973), UNITED STATES

Man kissing a woman’s breast, 20th century
Etching
5 7/8" x 4 7/8" (image)
630R T5553.25
Donated in 1950

Clara Tice was born in Elmira, New York, and studied painting with Robert Henri in New York City. A prolific illustrator loosely associated with New York Dada—she wore a steam radiator outfit to several Greenwich Village fancy-dress balls—she showed her work in the 1910 Independents Exhibition. She gained notoriety in 1915 when the Society for the Suppression of Vice tried to confiscate some of her erotic drawings. From 1915 to 1921 she provided numerous illustrations for Vanity Fair. Here her loose and economical style and gift for implying movement allowed her to caricature the foppery and pretense of her own circle. She had at least seven one-woman shows in her lifetime, did erotic work for the Pierre Louÿs Society, and illustrated various children’s books. Known at one time as “The Queen of Greenwich Village,” she died in 1973 at age eighty-four.
New York–based photographer Linda Troeller approaches the image as a therapeutic tool. From her TB-AIDS Diary to her images of women in water, there is an innate faith that—like a spa—pictures have medicinal value. Shortly after the destruction of the World Trade Center, Troeller created Spa Picture Archive, a collection of soothing images intended to help heal the victims’ families. She is also known for her Erotic Lives of Women, a book of photographs and interviews with twenty-two women from various parts of the world, intended to define the essence of female Eros.

*Bridal Rite* is from a portfolio of photographs titled Greenhouse and Beyond, completed by Troeller in 1975. Troeller had begun photographing women in greenhouses two years earlier—she found that the greenhouse became “a special place where inner voices escape from the unconscious and emerge into consciousness.”
Plate 10

ANONYMOUS, FRANCE

Two women engaged in oral sex, 20th century
Etching
$5\frac{1}{4}\times 3\frac{3}{4}$” (image)
397R A006.2
Donated in 1969

The Kinsey Institute has twenty-four original etchings by this anonymous artist, identified as a French woman by the person who donated the pieces in 1969. Possibly produced as illustrations for an erotic text, the majority of the prints feature explicit scenes of either lesbian or heterosexual sex. One cannot make assumptions about the sexual orientation of the artists who created sexually explicit illustrations, as the lesbian images that are common in these erotic publications were provided for the enjoyment of the men who were the primary consumers of these books.