Feminine Persuasion

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GHADA AMER (1963–), EGYPT/UNITED STATES

Waiting for J., 1999–2000
Acrylic, embroidery, and gel medium on canvas
72" x 70"
Private collection

Ghada Amer was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1963; she currently lives and works in New York. She studied in France at the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Art Plastique and received BFA and MFA degrees at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Nice. She utilizes embroidered images and text to address the complex thoughts that contemporary women have about their own sexuality. Her works refer to feminist embroidery from the 1960s and 1970s, but ask more current questions about female pleasure and the roles women have as sexual beings. In these pieces, images of women pleasuring themselves, taken from pornographic sources, are repeated across the abstract canvas. Her works reference both male-oriented abstract expressionistic painting and women’s traditional stitched handwork, positing the idea that today’s women have an altogether different view of the role of sexual pleasure in their lives.
PLATE 29

GHADA AMER (1963–), EGYPT/UNITED STATES

Waiting for J. (detail), 1999–2000
Acrylic, embroidery, and gel medium on canvas
72" x 70"
Private collection
PLATE 30

GHADA AMER (1963–), EGYPT/UNITED STATES

The Sad Painting, 2001
Acrylic, embroidery, and gel medium on canvas
52" x 50"
Collection of the artist, courtesy of Deitch Projects, New York
Patty Chang was born in San Francisco in 1972. She has performed and exhibited her works throughout Europe and the United States. Chang addresses complex issues of body image, sexuality, and pleasure through comedy, poignancy, and quiet violence in her video works and photographs. The ambiguous quality of her video and performance pieces allows the viewer to wonder about the artist’s intention until realization dawns. Control, or lack of it, is evident in Untitled (Eels), 2001, in which the artist displays emotions ranging from abhorrence and disgust to sexual titillation. Chang herself is almost always the sole subject of her video works. While fully in control in the 1998 video Melons (At a Loss), the artist surprises and shocks the viewer with her marginally violent actions. Chang’s works have a positive and lighthearted side to them, but notions of abject deprecation in many of her works, including Fountain, 1999, create a disturbing commentary about contemporary women today. Chang’s works refer to early feminist artists such as Hannah Wilke and Carolee Schneeman, but provide a purely postfeminist perspective on vulnerability and sexual roles.
PLATE 32

PATTY CHANG (1972–), UNITED STATES

Melons (At a Loss), 1998
Video
3:44
Courtesy of the artist and Tilton/Kustera Gallery, New York
PLATE 33

PATTY CHANG (1972–), UNITED STATES

Fountain, 1999
Video
5:28
Courtesy of the artist and Tilton/Kustera Gallery, New York
Renée Cox has emerged as an important photographer since receiving her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York in 1992. She uses images of her own body in her works to address ideas of racial and sexual identity from a very current feminist perspective. Cox adeptly and confrontationally deals with ideas of female pleasure and power, as can be seen in the works *Garter Belt*, 2001, and *Fur*, 2001. While Cox has made a number of works portraying her own body as powerful sexual object, in *Mother*, 2001, the artist is clearly comparing and contrasting her life as woman and sexual being with that of her mother. The two photographs, one contemporary, one vintage, show both women posed in similar ways. Cox refers in her self-portrait to her own sexual freedom and individuality and her right to express herself. The contrasting photograph of her mother is more ambiguous, with the juxtaposition of the two images posing questions about sexual and racial repression of the time.

Cox has considered a number of resources for her sexuality-based works, including John Alexander Scott Coutts’s (a.k.a. John Willie) publication *Bizarre* for inspiration for some of her photographs. Photographs by Coutts exist in large numbers in the Kinsey Institute collection (for one example, see pl. 13).
PLATE 35

RENÉE COX (1960–), JAMAICA/UNITED STATES

Fur, 2001
Archival digital c-print mounted on aluminum, No. 1/3
60" x 48"

Copyright © 2001 Renée Cox. All rights reserved.
Courtesy of Robert Miller Gallery, New York
Plate 36

RENEE COX (1960–), JAMAICA/UNITED STATES

Mother, 2001
Gelatin silver print (left) and archival digital c-print (right)
$6\frac{3}{4}'' \times 4\frac{3}{8}''$ (left) and $6\frac{3}{4}'' \times 5''$ (right)
Copyright © 2001 Renée Cox. All rights reserved.
Courtesy of Robert Miller Gallery, New York
NANCY DAVIDSON (1943–), UNITED STATES

*Crystal Blue Persuasion*, 2001
Latex, fabric
144" x 180" x 180", height variable
Courtesy of the artist

Nancy Davidson was born in Chicago, Illinois, and resides in New York. She has been exhibiting her seductive, humorous sculptures nationally and internationally for a number of years. The pieces utilize bulk and mass to present a completely fresh perspective on the ideas of body image, sensuality, sexuality, and pleasure. The forms allude to desire and sex and power, and are unabashedly feminine. In *Crystal Blue Persuasion*, Davidson piles body parts on top of one another to create a fleshy mound. The graphic embellishments on the bulbous forms allude to body parts and lingerie stretched over taught flesh. In *Neither Bigugly Nor Smallnice*, 1995, Davidson creates a faceless, feminine cliché with her humorous addition of hair. This piece is impossibly silly with its references to youth, cheerleaders, and girlhood. With its netting and frills, *Netella*, 1997, is at once a sexy confection and a dark-humored joke. The vaguely threatening black netting, woven into spiderweb designs, is stretched over two round buttock-like forms. The pieces beg us not to take them too seriously, reflecting a current perspective on feminism and body image that is at once healthy and contemporary.
Plate 38

NANCY DAVIDSON (1943–), UNITED STATES

Neither Bigugly Nor Smallnice, 1995
Latex, cotton, rope, rubber
60" x 96" x 60"

Courtesy of the artist
PLATE 39

NANCY DAVIDSON (1943–), UNITED STATES

Netella, 1997
Latex, fabric
55" x 90" x 60"

Courtesy of Robert Miller Gallery, New York
Nicole Eisenman has produced sexuality-based drawings, paintings, and installations since the early 1990s. Her work is based on solid draftsmanship and skilled painting techniques, which she combines with a loose and street-savvy cartoon-like style in her comprehensive works. She arranges photographs, objects, drawings, and paintings in a variety of styles to address ideas of gender and sex roles, often with a perverse underground view of the world. An ongoing theme is the depiction of the Amazon, the strong man-eating woman, which Eisenman exploits as a typical feminist stereotype. As seen in portions of her installation Behavior, 2002, Eisenman depicts female and male bodies in what may or may not be sexual activity. These views illustrate the ambiguousness of sexuality within her works, in which she allows herself latitude and freedom.
PLATE 41

NICOLE EISENMAN (1965–), FRANCE/UNITED STATES

Behavior (installation view), 2002
Mixed media
11' x 30', depth variable
Courtesy of the artist and Tilton/Kustera Gallery, New York
Plate 42

**Nicole Eisenman (1965-), France/United States**

*Behavior (installation view)*, 2002
Mixed media
11' x 30', depth variable
Courtesy of the artist and Tilton/Kuster Gallery, New York
LAURA LETINSKY (1962–), UNITED STATES

Untitled (Charlotte and Larry and baby), from Venus Inferred series, 1995
Type C-print
20” x 24”
Courtesy of the artist and Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York

Laura Letinsky received her MFA in photography from Yale University in 1991 and is an assistant professor at the University of Chicago. In this series of photographs entitled Venus Inferred, she creates intimate pictures about love and relationships. While these photographs are aesthetically beautiful, they are also images of the reality of contemporary lovers. The images reflect the normal and the average within a loving relationship, as can be seen in Untitled (Charlotte and Larry and baby), 1995. The couple glances toward the toddler with looks of resigned exhaustion in their eyes, a feeling familiar to any parent. Letinsky uses light and color in her photographs to enhance the aesthetic quality of the everyday. In Untitled (Ruth and Robert—string), 1994, Letinsky beautifully depicts a contemporary bedroom with normal clutter and two lovers. The artist depicts the honesty and reality of a normal sexual relationship by including the woman’s tampon string in the image. A sensitive depiction of sex can be seen in Untitled (Dawn and Scott—coitus), 1994. The couple maintains eye contact and is at ease, creating an image that allows the viewer an intimate glimpse of this very personal act. Letinsky’s series of photographs illustrates a heterosexual woman’s view of sexuality, with all of its complications.
PLATE 44

LAURA LETINSKY (1962–), UNITED STATES

Untitled (Ruth and Robert—string), from Venus Inferred series, 1994
Type C-print
30" x 40"

Courtesy of the artist and Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York
PLATE 45

LAURA LETINSKY (1962–), UNITED STATES

Untitled (Dawn and Scott—coitus), from Venus Inferred series, 1994
Type C-print
20" x 24"
Courtesy of the artist and Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York