

femme brut(e)

Moires Blinks Monochromes Starts & Stops Mixes

Ellen Carey

From the Hand of the Composer

The Art of Melissa Manchester

at the

Lyman Allyn Art Museum

September 14, 2006 through February 4, 2007.

Three separate but related exhibitions at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum tell the story of art-world feminism from the 1930's through the present. ***Femme brut(e)***, which means "rough women", is about women artists challenging limits and making history. Don't be alarmed by the French title and parenthesized "e". This exhibition is not just for those who speak Art - or French. ***femme brut(e)*** offers much of interest for all to see, think about and enjoy.

In the context of the sophisticated artists featured in this exhibition, ***femme brut(e)*** more accurately translates into "courageous women" – Women who entered the historically male dominated art world, staked their claims and challenged boundaries. Works by important artists including Louise Nevelson, Nancy Graves, Alice Neel, Barbara Kruger, Alison Saar, Sally Mann and others range in style and subject matter from Renee Sintenis' classic bronze sculpture to the folk art inspired twig and paper weavings of Kazuko Miyamoto and Ellen Carey's medium intensive abstracts. Melissa Manchester's musical notation is also included in this wide-ranging look at these courageous, art-making ***femmes brut(e)***.

Historical underpinnings allow us to visually experience the effect of social and political change on women artists decade by decade, as we experience the exhibition itself. Beatrice Cumming's industrial, regionalist style paintings from the 1940's reflect fundamental economic change in the world around her and Grace Hardigan's "*The Changing Dialectics of our World*" (1952) addresses the shifting sands of mid-century art and gender politics. May Stevens' "*Big Daddy*" (c.1969) reduces patriarchal dominance to paper-doll child's play and a decade later, Miriam Shapiro's precisely executed fabric spiral, "*Golden Pinwheel*" (1979), places "women's work" in the realm of high art. Artist/writer Harmony Hammond reflects the body-conscious feminist climate of the 1980's in her beautifully outspoken prints on Florentine paper, and in the 1990's, June Wayne uses the visual language of scientific exploration in her stunning space-age lithographs. Maureen McCabe re-asserts the personal in "*Sophie's Advice*" (2005), a compelling diorama of vintage objects and handwritten text that reminds women of their individual and collective histories.

In the downstairs gallery, Ellen Carey's painterly plunge into photographic process (2004-2005) yields monumental minimalist images characterized by chemical drips, bright colors and rich

earth tones. A true **femme brut(e)** she has coined the terminology that describes her work and titles her show - "**Moires Blinks Monochromes Starts & Stops Mixes**".

"The Art of Melissa Manchester," on view simultaneously with **femme brut(e)**, presents singer/songwriter Melissa Manchester's hand-written music (1974-2005) as visual art. The manuscripts, called "sketches", are accompanied by video of Manchester's performances showing her artistic evolution over time.

femme brut(e) offers a coordinating lecture program. \$5 – members, \$10 - general public. Reservations recommended - 860.443.2545 ext. 112.