

ARTnews

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Still Life, Updated



Ad Reinhardt's Comic Art
China's Trickster: **Liu Wei**
Photographers Turn Film into Art

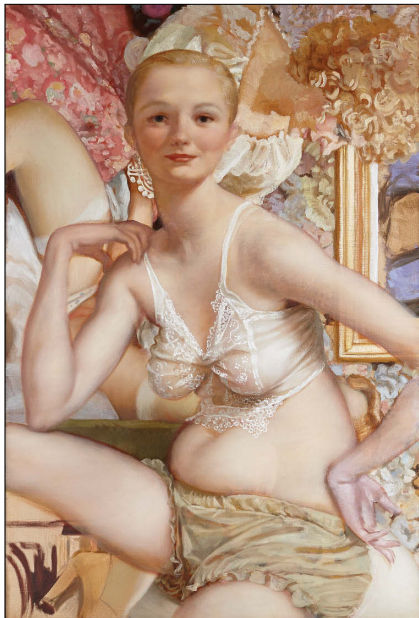
COURTESY NORITE MAAR/VIRGINIA DWAN COLLECTION, NEW YORK

John Currin

**Gagosian
Paris**

For his first exhibition in Paris, John Currin presented nine small-format paintings of women (all from 2013) that are both seductive and grotesque. With their sometimes lewd frontal positions and direct, often sensual gazes, the women exist between coquettish pinup and lascivious porn star. Currin is above all a gifted provocateur, and these recent works skillfully combine motifs drawn from the old and the new, the high and the low: girly magazines by way of Pontormo, Hogarth, Picabia, Fragonard, Cranach, Christian Schad, and, at times, Norman Rockwell.

In several images on view, Currin distinctly contrasts polar sensibilities by juxtaposing foreground and background. Lusty, daintily painted sirens in outfits composed of both historical and contemporary items—ripped jeans or hot pants paired with bonnets and peasant blouses—pose in front of explicit or pornographic scenes. *Tapestry*, for instance, depicts a slender, Pre-Raphaelite beauty with glowing skin sitting demurely in front of a blurry, flesh-toned backdrop of entwined naked figures. In *Chateau Meyney*, a buxom brunette spilling out of her loose, cottony top holds a glass of red wine whose color resonates with the fresco, painted on the



John Currin, *San Remo*, 2013, oil on canvas, 48" x 32". Gagosian.

wall behind her, of an erotic coupling in a burgundy room.

While Currin's handling of paint in these works falls short of virtuosic, he remains a deft, meticulous artist who is clearly comfortable with classical techniques. He uses these with aplomb, shifting within each painting from thin, smooth, opaque brushstrokes to a thick, chalky impasto or translucent layers of luminous color. But what makes these pictures so disturbing, and compelling, is less the artist's technical skill than the intense strangeness of his imagery: his women's oddly proportioned bodies—too-long necks, drooping breasts, and soft, bulging bellies—depicted against idealized and sometimes shocking images of lust, passion, and love.

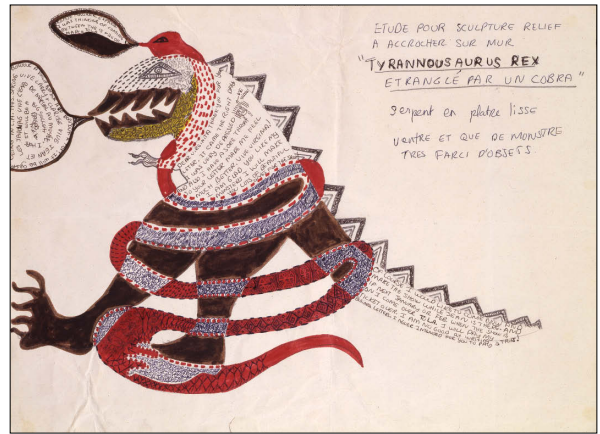
—Laurie Hurwitz

'To Be a Lady'

**Sundaram Tagore
Singapore**

The first thing that must be said about this fascinating exhibition is that its title, "To Be a Lady," was deliberately provocative, as the term "lady," in and of itself, evokes the complex history of feminism and the woman's movement, both in the United States and abroad. Lee Krasner famously said, "I'm an artist, not a woman artist," and Brooklyn-based curator Jason Andrew's global selection of paintings, photographs, films, and painted constructions set out to recast the often limiting idea of what a "lady" should be.

Andrew first curated an all-American version of this all-female show in New York in 2012, but its staging in Singapore also featured works from Icelandic, Chinese, Egyptian, French, South African, British, Iranian, and Singaporean artists, juxtaposing Louise Nevelson, Alice Neel, and Helen Frankenthaler with the likes of Ghada Amer, Zhang Hui, Shirin Neshat, and Yin Xiuzhen. Cool geometries by the oldest artist in the show, Chicago-born Charmion von Wiegand (1896–1983),



Niki de Saint Phalle, *Study for Sculpture Tyrannosaurus Rex*, ca. 1963, marker, ink, and pencil on paper, 14 1/4" x 19 1/4". Sundaram Tagore.

were intelligently placed next to the lyrical abstractions of the late Polish-born painter Janice Biala.

Significantly, this exhibition illuminated parallels among works by female artists from around the world. French-born Niki de Saint Phalle's circa 1963 drawing—part sketchbook correspondence, part reflection on Hollywood horror movies—perfectly complemented Neshat's narrative Cibachrome prints, such as *Film Still: Possessed Series* (2001), which features eloquent reflections on femininity and fundamentalism. Julia K. Gleich's 2012 video *14 Seconds* presents the raw process of rehearsing dance choreography; Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson from Iceland merges painting with weaving; and American artist Miya Ando, descended from sword makers and raised among Buddhist priests in Japan, uses anodized aluminium to create the subtlest of abstractions. The lasting impression this show left was that some of the most dynamic work on the planet is being created by women, and has been for a long time.

—Peter Hill

Richard Meier

**Galerie Gmurzyska
Zurich and Zug, Switzerland**

Presented at two of the gallery's three Swiss locations, "Timepieces: 50 Years of Collage" offered up a 50-work sampling of celebrated architect Richard Meier's pictorial doodling over more than three decades. Featuring familiar faces and female nudes torn from newspapers or magazines, calling cards,

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