

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

HANNAH WILKE

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SCULPTURE AND OTHER WORKS

OCTOBER 16 – NOVEMBER 13

Since 1960 I have been concerned with the creation of a formal imagery that is specifically female, a new language that fuses mind and body into erotic objects that are namable and at the same time quite abstract - Hannah Wilke

The Feldman gallery will exhibit sculpture and photographic works relating to performance by Hannah Wilke, a pioneering Conceptualist whose work remains influential today. The exhibition, with selections from the first twenty years of her career, includes erotic shapes sculpted from clay, latex, erasers, and chewing gum as well as work in which the artist uses her body as statement. Achieving recognition in the 1970s, Wilke has become an icon in feminist art history.

The exhibition traces Wilke's work in clay, beginning in the 1960s, with box-shaped sculptures of female and phallic imagery. *176 One-Fold Gestural Sculptures*, prototypical pink ceramics, exhibited at the Feldman Gallery in 1974, further evolves the depiction of the abstracted vaginal form. Clay sculptures from the 1980s are large-scale, single-fold shapes in a variety of colors, placed on boards, that relate to themes of regeneration.

During the 1970s, Wilke experimented with untraditional sculptural materials for their special properties and metaphoric associations. The exhibition includes latex wall pieces, consisting of malleable layers of flesh-like folds, and sculpture of tiny, labia-shaped forms manipulated from gray art erasers (*Needed-Erase-Her Series*) and colorful pieces of chewed gum (*S.O.S. Starification Object Series*).

Also from the *S.O.S. Starification Object Series* are three large photographs of Wilke assuming stereotypical poses of femininity, her semi-nude body pocked with the small vulva shapes sculpted from chewing gum. Widely reproduced, these images comment on female beauty and the cultural representation of women and their bodies.

The exhibition includes work from a performance-installation, *My Count-ry 'Tis of Thee*. Performed at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery on July 4, 1976, and involving the local community, Wilke turned the patriotic theme into a "matriotic" one, creating three monumental photographic murals of her bare-breasted self as priestess-goddess and a frieze of dozens of gum sculptures.

Laura Cottingham writes that Hannah Wilke's work "encompasses satire and criticism, humor and didacticism, provocation and pathos, love and death, sentimentality and eroticism, beauty and kitsch; indeed there are few twentieth century artists who can match the emotional range Wilke mastered in her art."

The Feldman Gallery has exhibited artwork of Wilke since 1972 including two exhibitions which the International Association of Art Critics awarded best gallery show of the season -- *Intra-Venus*, 1994, referring to illness and exhibited posthumously, and *Performatist Self-Portraits*, 1996. Current exhibitions include a traveling retrospective at the Helsinki City Art Museum and *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900-2000* at the Whitney Museum.

There will be a reception on October 16: 6 – 8. Gallery hours: 10 – 6, Tuesday - Saturday. Monday by appointment. For information, contact Breck Hostetter (212) 226-3232 or breck@feldmangallery.com. www.Feldmangallery.com.