

ronald feldman gallery

HANNAH WILKE

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FORCE OF NATURE

September 19 – November 30, 2019

"One of the ten most subversive women artists in history."

(Hannah Wilke listed second after Artemisia Gentileschi) Jonathan Jones, The Guardian, January 13, 2014

"Perhaps more than her sexual candor, the quality that distinguished Wilke among her peers – and that forms the most illuminating comparison with artists of succeeding generations – was her spirit of affirmation. When she was extravagantly beautiful and when she was not; when her personal life and professional career were flourishing and when they were balked; and whether the cultural and political circumstances called for celebration or gloom, she used her art to broadcast her strengths and vulnerabilities, to insist on their importance, and to model the positions that must be struck for women to have a fair share of the world's manifest bounty." Nancy Princenthal "Hannah Wilke," page 7, Prestel Verlag, 2010

Ronald Feldman Gallery is honored to present a solo exhibition of work by Hannah Wilke (1940-1993). Entitled "Force of Nature," it is the thirteenth solo exhibition of her art mounted by Feldman Gallery since it began representing Wilke in 1972.

With great passion and acuity, Wilke empathetically and provocatively transformed her relationships and personal experiences into her practice. Her work has often been described as incorporating a wide emotional range, which undoubtedly stemmed from her determination to speak for a more complex narrative of sexual freedom and self-representation and against stereotypes and objectification.

Wilke embraced and critiqued the Feminist movement, creatively engaged with word play and linguistics, and was inspired by philosophy, politics, and literature. She consistently and fearlessly confronted the paternalistic artworld. In her studio practice, she pioneered new forms using traditional as well as unconventional materials, and even her own body. A fundamental commitment to the process of art making is evident in her drawing, sculpture, and performance which often emphasizes motion and sensuality.

This exhibition brings together more than fifty "Performatist Self-Portrait" images (the term Wilke used to give credit to the many people who assisted her in works she directed herself and in which she posed), as well as ceramic, kneaded eraser, and chewing gum sculptures created over 33 years.

A rare opportunity to view Wilke's iconic works, the show includes: *Super-T-Art*, 1974; *S.O.S. Starification Object Series*, 1974; *So Help Me Hannah*, 1979-1985 and *Intra-Venus*, 1991-1993. A powerful video sculpture entitled *So Help Me Hannah* summons the artist's presence by combining video footage of Wilke's five live performances from the series. Also on view are works from the *Needed-Erase-Her Series*, 1974-1977 and *I Object: Memoirs of a Sugargiver*, 1977-1978, a color photographic diptych conceived as the front and back cover of Wilke's unrealized autobiography.

Wilke, a seminal artist of the late 20th century with an international reputation, was a native New Yorker who lived and worked in the city and played a significant role in the art community. Sadly, she died of lymphoma in 1993 at the age of 52. Not surprisingly, her confrontation with illness and death extended the complexity and integrity of her oeuvre and is an astonishing accomplishment as seen in *Intra-Venus*, 1991-1993. Despite her interrupted career, Wilke's influence on the following generations of artists cannot be overstated.

There have been two major retrospective exhibitions of her work: Gallery 210, University of Missouri/St. Louis in 1989; Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1998, which travelled to the Bildmuseet in Sweden and to the Helsinki City Art Museum in Finland.

"The message of Hannah's art is relevant to current issues, perhaps today more than ever," says Marco Nocella, a Ronald Feldman Gallery Director and curator of the exhibition. He had a close working relationship with the artist and, in tandem with Ronald and Frayda Feldman, has been actively involved in representing her work for over three decades.

Reception: Thursday, September 19, 6-8pm.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10am – 6pm.

For more information, contact Vince Ruvolo at (212) 226-3232 or vince@feldmangallery.com

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