

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 1984

HANNAH WILKE

Polychrome Sculpture & Photographs

December 1 – 29

Gallery Hours: Tues – Sat 10-6 PM

Hannah Wilke's exhibition at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts combines two separate but related aspects of her art. Polychrome ceramic sculpture, ranging from tabletop and pedestal pieces to major floor pieces, merge painting and sculpture in unprecedented ways. Photographs portraying the artist's mother during the last years of her life are also keys to the moral, teleological and generative principals that have informed Wilke's art for more than 25 years.

The painted sculptural works are three-dimensional forms on two-dimensional grounds, literally sculptures on paintings. They are neither additive nor subtractive in the tradition of modeled or constructed sculpture, but are physical manipulations of a constant in mass and motion. Based on a fundamental but infinitely variable language of geometry, number, size and relationship, they transform mathematical order into organic presence, molecular or cellular structure into aesthetic structure. Two-dimensional circles become gestural bodies; polygonal bases become ostensible spatial limits. Each is enfolded and superceded by the other. They are images and symbols of genesis, extensions of a life force that is the artist's action.

Color, which had always been singular and inherent in Wilke's sculptural materials, is now a property of painting, a gestural property that both contrasts and integrates form and field. The monumental floor pieces are like landscapes, paying homage to the extraordinary integrity and formal beauty, continuity and unpredictability of nature. The portraits of Selma Butter, the artist's mother, are homages to the same qualities in human life. Each picture is part of a sequence and yet totally integrated in itself. In the triptych, IN MEMORIAM, SELMA BUTTER (MOMMY), combining sculpture and painting with language and photographs, Wilke makes an art that is not subordinated but is created in the service of life.

In the past year, Hannah Wilke's work has been shown in several exhibitions in the United States and Europe. A significant group of works, stressing the political aspects of her art was selected by Lowery Sims, Associate Curator of 20th Century Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for the New Museum's exhibition, "Art and Ideology". A one-person exhibition called "Performatist Self-Portraits" was recently presented at the Gross Gallery of the University of Arizona in Tuscon, curated by art historian Joanna Frueh. Wilke's work is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Allen Art Museum of Oberlin University, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and many other public and private art collections. Part of the work in this exhibition was made possible by a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship awarded to Wilke for 1982-83.

The public is invited to the opening on Saturday, December 1st. A reception for the artist will be held from 5 to 7 PM on that evening. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 AM to 6 PM, Mondays by appointment only. Admission is free. For further information concerning the exhibition, contact Babara Goldner at (212) 226-3232.