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Rosalyn Drexler: The Greatest Show on Earth



Woman Sawed in Half, 1989

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to announce *Rosalyn Drexler: The Greatest Show on Earth*, an exhibition of paintings at **545 West 20th Street**. Opening on Thursday, February 21, 2019, the exhibition will be the first in-depth showing of the artist's work from the 1980s and 1990s. Long considered an overlooked era in Drexler's oeuvre, this time period was one of significant maturation, outside of the artist's storied work of the 1960s.

In these paintings, Drexler takes a magnifying glass to the human condition. Touching on some favorite themes—most notably, medleys of love and violence—her narratives appear open-ended and surreal.

Multiple characters enter these compositions, filling out the negative space she once carefully cherished. Moving away from simple pairings of couples scuffling about, Drexler captures increasingly complex scenes. Appropriating imagery from popular journals and other printed matter, Drexler transforms otherwise prosaic images by adding bright pigments and creating new contexts. Cutting reproductions from magazines, Drexler fixes her strategically selected images to canvas and overpaints the resulting collage, thereby eliminating the visual trace of the underlying, mechanically reproduced images.

One of the more significant works, *Woman Sawed in Half* (1989) captures the complexity of the artist's mind and her natural inclination toward storytelling, which is unsurprising given her decorated career as both playwright and novelist. Here, the painting's title and subject matter paint a clear picture of the narrative arc that is about to unfold. Like a movie still, the action is suspended in time—not quite pre-sawing nor post-sawing. Yet, ultimately, the outcome remains a mystery. Drexler leaves it to the viewer to decide.

Born in 1926 in Bronx, New York, Rosalyn Drexler first began exhibiting her work during the late 1950s. Since then, she has had 20 solo exhibitions, including at Reuben Gallery (1960, New York), Kornblee Gallery (1964, 1965, 1966, New York), and Pace Gallery (2007, New York). In 1986, a retrospective of her work—*Rosalyn Drexler: Intimate Emotions*—opened at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University. Another survey exhibition, *Rosalyn Drexler and the Ends of Man*, took place in 2006 at Rutgers University's Paul Robeson Gallery (Newark, New Jersey). Her most recent retrospective exhibition, *Rosalyn Drexler: Who Does She Think She Is?*, took place at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University (2016, Waltham, Massachusetts); it traveled to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in October 2016 and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum in February 2017.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Drexler's paintings were featured in many important museum exhibitions, such as *Pop Art USA* (1963, Oakland Art Museum, California), *The Painter and the Photograph* (1964, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University), *American Pop Art* (1974, Whitney Museum of American Art), and *Another Aspect of Pop Art*, (1978, P.S. 1, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, New York). In 2010, her work figured prominently in Sid Sachs' landmark exhibition *Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958–1968* (2010, University of the Arts, Philadelphia), as well as *Power Up: Female Pop Art* at the Kunsthalle Wien. More recently, Drexler's paintings were included in *Pop to Popism* at Australia's Art Gallery of New South Wales (2014–2015, Sydney); *International Pop* (2015–2016, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis); *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection* (2016–2017, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York); and *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965* (Grey Art Gallery, New York University).

Drexler's paintings are in the collections of many museums, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery; the Allen Memorial Art Gallery, Oberlin College; the Colby College Museum of Art; the Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College; the Grey Art Gallery, New York University; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution; the Museum of Modern Art; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University; the St. Louis Art Museum; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; the Wadsworth Athenaeum; the Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In addition to her work as a visual artist, Drexler is also an accomplished novelist and playwright. She published her first play in 1963 and her first novel in 1965. She is the recipient of three Obie Awards, as well as an Emmy Award for her work on Lily Tomlin's television special *Lily* (co-written with Richard Pryor).

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent **Rosalyn Drexler**.

Rosalyn Drexler: The Greatest Show on Earth will be on view at **Garth Greenan Gallery, 545 West 20th Street** (between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues), through **Saturday, March 30, 2019**. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For more information, **please contact the gallery at (212) 929-1351, or email info@garthgreenan.com**.

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