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The Art Show



Gladys Nilsson, *Dipped Dick: Adam and Eve After Cranach*, 1971, acrylic on canvas with artist's frame, 84 x 98 inches

For the 2022 edition of the ADAA Art Show, Garth Greenan Gallery will present a selection of drawings and one large-scale painting by Gladys Nilsson. The artist first rose to prominence through a series of now iconic group exhibitions by the self-titled “Hairy Who”—recently explored in the Art Institute of Chicago’s *Hairy Who? 1966–1969*. Nilsson formed the Hairy Who with five other School of the Art Institute of Chicago graduates: James Falconer, Art Green, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum. Nilsson’s drawings, compositions of silver ink on black paper, featured centrally in these pivotal exhibitions. Though experimental in nature, these early drawings are packed with hallmarks of the artist’s mature style: her ribald humor, suggestive imagery, pathos, horror vacui, and hierarchical scale.

In *Untitled (Boots)* (1969), Nilsson's pitiable characters and their playfully malformed bodies are further undermined by their scant clothing. Their foreheads sensuously bulge under tension of their headbands, and appendages protrude from their skin-tight underwear. Mark Pascale, Curator of Prints and Drawings at The Art Institute of Chicago, has noted the drawings' visual similarity to the Aboriginal bark paintings that fascinated Nilsson on visits to the Field Museum of Natural History. Nilsson's drawings simultaneously evoke Greco-Roman motifs, though her deprecating humor fatally dismantles the antiquarian notion of physical arete.

Dipped Dick: Adam and Eve After Cranach (1971) is one of only a few large-scale paintings by the artist. Though Nilsson experimented with a variety of media, the painting is notable for its predominantly graphical (rather than painterly) style. Even more than the drawings, the work demonstrates the artist's penchant for dense, winding imagery that covers every inch of the composition.

Since the first Hairy Who exhibitions in 1966, Nilsson's work has been the subject of over fifty solo exhibitions, including sixteen at Phyllis Kind Gallery (1970–1979, 1981–1983, 1987, 1991, and 1994, Chicago and New York), two at The Candy Store (1971 and 1987, Folsom, California), and one at Hales Gallery (2019, London). Her work has also been featured in many important museum exhibitions, such as: *Human Concern/Personal Torment* (1969, Whitney Museum of American Art); *Who Chicago?* (1981, Camden Art Center, London); *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art* (1992, Los Angeles County Museum of Art); *Chicago Imagists* (2011, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin); and *What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art, 1960 to the Present* (2014, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence). Most recently, Nilsson's work appeared in *The Candy Store* (2018, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles), *Hairy Who? 1966–1969* (2018–2019, School of the Art Institute of Chicago), *Chicago Imagists from the Phyllis Kind Collection* (2019, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago), and *How Chicago! Imagists 1960s–1970s* (2019, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, University of London). She was the first member of the Hairy Who group—and one of the first women in history—to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1973.

Nilsson's work is featured in the collections of major museums around the world, including: the Art Institute of Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin; the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Morgan Library, New York; the Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Gladys Nilsson.

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