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Contact: Garth Greenan
(212) 929-1351
info@garthgreenan.com
www.garthgreenan.com

Art Basel



Rosalyn Drexler, *Kiss Me, Stupid*, 1964, Acrylic and paper collage on canvas, 20 x 40 inches

For the 2023 edition of Art Basel, Garth Greenan Gallery will present a selection of works by Rosalyn Drexler. The paintings—all created in the early 1960s—are quintessential examples of the artist's early work that established her as a main fixture of the Pop Art scene. Though Drexler's continuing career spans more than half a century, these early examples remain some of the most recognizable in her oeuvre.

In *Discovered* (1963), a couple, mid-embrace, turns to face an intruder, just out of frame. Like many of Drexler's paintings, the work is narratively suggestive, yet ambiguous. Is it a home invader, an acquaintance, or a jealous lover that has chanced upon the couple? Are the stakes just reputational or are they fatal? Viewers can only speculate.

Drexler frequently copied images from popular magazines and journals, pasted them to canvases, and overpainted the resulting collages, obscuring the reproduction process. Like Warhol and Lichtenstein, she confounded the concept of what made a work original. In addition, Drexler's chosen imagery—sourced from real news clippings as well as Hollywood stills—mingled the real and fictive, highlighting their reflexive influences.

In paintings like *Intimate Emotions* (1963) and *You Know (Anthony Quinn)* (1962), Drexler threads the gangsterism continually celebrated by Hollywood with real life violence, masculinity and American self-image. In one work, Drexler depicts the actor Anthony Quinn—noted by a contemporaneous critic for his “brutal and elemental virility”—in all his movie-poster glory, replete with a half-clothed blonde. In *Intimate Emotions*, a sharply dressed man advances his fist towards a woman who shields herself meekly with an open hand. The saturated palette, pulled straight from the world of advertising, gives the painting a lurid intensity. The titular line cascades across the bottom of the canvas, asserting that violence and intimacy may not be so far apart.

Drexler's works continue to combine romance, violence, humor, and glamour in uneasy ways. Her works of the period depict everyday gender performances and ominous homosocial encounters. They expose not only the underside of the American Dream but also a vision of America as the violent and self-violated world of white men. Behind a tabloid façade, her art dealt with social problems in the vernacular of American film noir and French Nouvelle Vague. The paintings, however, are not didactic morality plays, but investigations of the unconscious psychological complexity nascent in mass culture and American life.

In addition to her work as a visual artist, Drexler is also an accomplished novelist and playwright. 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). She has been the subject of three retrospectives. The most recent of which, *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 *American Pop Art* (1974, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York) and *Another Aspect of Pop Art*, (1978, P.S. 1, 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 (2010–2011, Wien, Austria). 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* (2017–2018, Grey Art Gallery at NYU, New York).

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