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Bonnie Lucas

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Hosted by: Joseph Gallivan

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Jeanine Jablonski on the show "Bonnie Lucas 1978-2023"

On Tuesday, April 11, 2023, at 11.30am Joseph Gallivan interviews curator Jeanine Jablonski about the show "Bonnie Lucas 1978-2023" which is at the ILY2 Gallery through May 29. Jablonski talks about how Lucas's assemblages have changed over the decades, how the founding Guerilla Girl still likes pink and girlie things which she can mutate for deeper meaning, and how the gallery went the extra mile for Lucas to put on a retrospective 3,000 miles away.

This interview was recorded on April 5, 2023, on an iPhone 14 pro and engineered by KBOO volunteer Ray Bodwell.

<https://kboo.fm/blog/55224>

More me in the Portland Tribune:

<https://www.portlandtribune.com/lifestyle/features/bonnie-lucas-is-in-th...>



FROM THE PRESS RELEASE:

Bonnie Lucas 1978-2023

ILY2 is honored to present Bonnie Lucas 1978-2023, the first solo exhibition on the West Coast for this New York-based artist. This survey exhibition features several bodies of work developed over the last four decades. Together, they offer a comprehensive view into Lucas' complicated exploration of the aesthetics and ideologies of traditional femininity in allegorical works that are at once celebration and critique as filtered through the most accessible strata of commodity culture.

The majority of the works on view are meticulously hand-sewn low-relief assemblages on fabric of a cornucopia of inexpensive, feminine-coded 99-cent store commodities—pastel ribbons, beads, buttons—all of which she reveres as “precious objects.” In more recent assemblages Lucas introduces parts of dismembered dolls and plush toys as well as costume jewelry. Complicating the read of the assemblages are her oil paintings—surrealist scenes of flower-headed dolls and headless women in mid-century dress—and a set of diptychs that juxtapose what could pass for nostalgic illustrations for children's books with noisy abstractions.

The earliest works on view are delicate abstract reliefs featuring items of clothing, ribbons, sewing findings stitched to a ground and meticulously traced in undulating lines of yarn that ripple outward and fill the voids between forms. In one, an infant's white smocked dress spills forth from its hem a cascade of a string of mauve seed beads, braided cord, pink ribbon, mint embroidery floss, pearls, and a white scallop shell. In another, a white zipper is unzipped to reveal a composition of tiny pink and white beads, petals, pearls, sequins, buttons, the whole of it outlined in row upon tightly packed row of satin cord and ivory yarn.

One pole of the dialectic of Lucas' aesthetic and method is her commitment to traditional femininity, resolutely riding out various waves of its unpopularity since the '70s. This is reflected in her embrace of a feminine-coded palette and iconography, the traditionally feminine handcraft of sewing, and her unapologetic celebration of dime-store consumer culture that targets and indoctrinates the young girl, seducing her with shiny pastel vacuum formed and molded plastics. “Shopping is a big part of my practice,” Lucas says. “I honor and love the supercharged feminine objects I use; I want to make them potent and powerful.” This potency is achieved at the other pole of the dialectic where Lucas intuitively follows her compulsion to deconstruct these objects, snipping them carefully apart with scissors or pliers and

reconstructing them in compositions that are at once sweet and nostalgic, disturbing and visceral. Objects are cut and splayed open, penetrated, stuffed, threaded through and around one another in precisely arranged tangles. It is in these physical deconstructions that Lucas deconstructs the minor violences of relations among women and their things under patriarchal capitalism.

Lucas' titles such as "Sweetness" or "Happy Together" reflect her ambivalence, an ironic sincerity or sincere irony. They make it impossible to ignore a darker read of even her most benign compositions. In the press release for her first solo show in New York's East Village in 1984, Lucas was quoted as saying, "I create feminine monsters." She stands by this assessment to this day.

Bonnie Lucas 1978-2023 is the inaugural exhibition in ILY2's new home at 925 NW Flanders in Portland's Pearl District. The 1660 square foot gallery, formerly housing the venerable PDX Contemporary, has been redesigned as a multi-use space by Andee Hess and Makrai Crecelius of Osmose alongside Allie Furlotti. Maintaining the unique flexibility produced by the existing rotating walls, the redesign reflects ILY2's refusal of business-as-usual with distinctive wall-to-wall mirrored ceilings reflecting warm wood floors and more importantly, custom state-of-the-art lighting that is tunable for exhibition and performance. The office has been transformed into a welcoming, cocoon-like cove with a resource library for the community. The gallery is dedicated to the memory of Hilary Tisch.

Bonnie Lucas was born in 1950 in Syracuse, New York. She completed a B.A. in Art History from Wellesley College and an MFA from Rutgers University. In the decades that have followed, her work has been exhibited throughout the United States (New York, Cambridge, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Oakland) and abroad (Netherlands, Finland, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia). In the 1980s, she presented a series of solo exhibitions with the Avenue B Gallery in New York. Her work has been included in projects at the Drawing Center, the International Studio Curatorial Program, Sideshow Gallery, the Painting Center, Art in General, the DeCordova Museum, the Dutch Textile Museum, and Bellevue Art Museum among other institutions. In 2011 Lucas was interviewed by MSNBC.com, and her work has been written about in Artforum, ARTnews, The New York Times, The Village Voice, The New Yorker, and USA Today. In 2014 her work was the subject of a survey exhibition at Sylvia Wald and Po Kim Gallery, an artist-run space in New York. Following on this extensive survey, Lucas presented solo exhibitions at JTT in 2017 and 17ESSEX in 2018. Lucas lives and works in New York City.