

# GALERIE MARIAN GOODMAN

## ANNETTE MESSEGER

*À mon seul désir*

9 December 2016 – 14 January 2017

Opening Thursday 8 December, from 6 to 8 pm

Marian Goodman has given Annette Messager *carte blanche* to inaugurate the gallery's new space at 66 rue du Temple. Following this exhibition, the space will be relaunched as Librairie Marian Goodman, combining a street-front bookshop with a small gallery project space.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 64-page fully-illustrated catalogue, *Annette Messager: À mon seul désir*, which will feature a text by Dominique Viéville and a poem by the artist.

*À mon seul désir* is the title chosen by Messager for this show which brings together a body of recent acrylic drawings (applied as watercolor), small sculptures—some made from fabric, others covered in textured black paint—works on canvas (notably from the series *My Relics*, 1984–86), as well as *Collection Albums* from the 1974 series *Annette Messager Truqueuse (Annette Messager Trickster)* containing black and white photographs.

By appropriating the manifesto “À mon seul désir” (“My One Desire”), Messager immerses us again in the textual enigma adorning the sixth tapestry of *The Lady and the Unicorn*.<sup>1</sup> Even after meditating on this phrase for a long time, its precise meaning remains difficult to define. One thing, however, is clear: that women's desire—and especially their ability to openly express it—continues to be met with resistance, and is being held back. It is either kept silent or is inaudible.

Through her drawings of dynamic uteruses and triumphant breasts, as well as with her daring sculptures composed of a variety of darker elements, Messager offers a partial response to this issue. Indeed, isn't this desire—women's desire—precisely the desire to be able to, as females, manifest, affirm, and express themselves? (See: *To My Desire, My Strength, my Freedom, My Desires, my Strength, The Sea of Breasts*, 2016).

The phrase, “*My One Desire*” coupled with text incorporated directly into some of her drawings thus becomes a manifesto of women's pride and the freedom to create and to show art, but also the right to choose and act according to her personal pleasure, desire and will. This is demonstrated in her recent works *344 Bitches*;<sup>2</sup> *I am my own Prophet, Not submit to Me, My Body, my Breasts, No God in my Vagina*, and *My Pleasure* from 2016.

The artist illuminates her freely anatomic and figurative drawings with vibrant, contrasting colors: pale pinks that explode into vivid reds and that stand out against greys hardening into black. Flecks of blue and mauve add a hint of surprise to an otherwise duotone palette, and make uteruses look like bouquets of flowers. The colors swirl about the paper while the lines appear jovial yet confident.

In her sculptures, Messager also associates a *mélange* of unexpected elements: a ballet slipper decorated with a miniature bust of Christ perched atop a segmented pair of Barbie legs; a mask crowned with a varnished high heel shoe; or two gorillas hanging on a butcher's hook that straddle a miniature Rodin. One should keep in mind that the artist has juxtaposed these works with her earlier *Queen of the Night* from the trademark hybrid series *Chimera* (1982–83). This new set of sculpture—which also includes *Standing Life* and *Saint Agatha* (2016)—further demonstrates Messager's continual use of fragmented bodies as well as the creation of works composed of otherwise unrelated objects as previously seen in *My Wishes* (1988–2016); *My Trophies* (1988–2016); *Lines of the Hand* (1987); and *In Balance* (2015), just to name a few.

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Breasts and uteruses become haikus, coats of arms, and odes to celebrate femininity which then collectively put forth an even more powerful message. In this case, however, Messenger intensifies fragmentation and dislocation to an eruption (*My Uterus is Bursting*, 2016) that gushes, outpours, and sputters (*My Pleasure, Prophet Stain, My Ketchup, Bloody Mary, My Moons*, etc.), marking a radical rupture with form in a joyfully liberating and creative act.

Annette Messenger takes an inner journey to the core of femininity, braving the uncanny—or even taboo— aspects of it. As indicated by the title of one of her drawings, the intimacy of the female body remains her own business (See: *My Business*, 2016). At the same time, however, the recurrent possessive adjective in her work designates the nearly limitless number of fictional personalities she could invent since the creation of such works as *Annette Messenger Collector* (1971), *Trickster* (1975), *Artist* (1976–80), *Peddler* (1982–84), etc. In no way does this adjective—open to interpretation for who the “my” belongs to—prevent the latest works from resonating with current social issues, as shown by the omnipresent reference to Femen activism.

This exhibition allows us also to follow the common theme of a body of work that has been steadily unfolding for decades, whether in the simplicity of a colored line drawn on paper or in the opulence of remarkable installations. Ultimately, we recognize the unwavering irony and sense of humor the artist maintains even while the subject matter—women’s bodies—remains a sensitive issue that demands the greatest attention and vigilance. Nevertheless, let us enjoy it, let uteruses flourish and blossom!

Annette Messenger was born in Berk-sur-Mer in 1943. She lives and works in Malakoff, outside of Paris. Messenger is the winner of the 2016 Praemium Imperiale award for sculpture in recognition of her lifetime achievement in art and is also recipient of the Golden Lion for Best National Participation at the 51<sup>st</sup> Venice Biennale in 2005. Her works are found in the permanent collections of such major museums as the MoMA and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; the Musée national d’art moderne–Centre Pompidou and the Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris; the Tate Modern in London; LACMA in Los Angeles; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; K21 in Düsseldorf; and The National Gallery in Canberra.

In 2017, her work will be featured at the Villa Medici and at the Marian Goodman Gallery in London. Messenger’s art was also recently exhibited at the Musée des Beaux-Arts and at the Cité de la Dentelle et de la Mode in Calais. In 2014, she had two major exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Sydney and at K12 in Düsseldorf. In 2011, the artist’s work was also showcased at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (MARCO) in Mexico. Messenger has solo exhibitions at the Hayward Gallery in London; the Espoo Museum of Modern Art (EMMA) in Espoo, Finland; the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul; and at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. In 2007, the Centre Pompidou organized a large retrospective on the artist’s work.

1. The tapestry called *The Lady and the Unicorn* comprises six pieces and dates back to the early sixteenth century. It is housed at the Musée de Cluny in Paris.
2. A direct allusion to the Manifesto of the 343, a French declaration published in issue 334 of the *Le Nouvel Observateur* magazine.

Going on concurrently at 79 rue du Temple:

Gordon Matta-Clark

9 December 2016 – 14 January 2017

Upcoming exhibition at 79 and 66 rue du Temple:

James Welling, *Chronology*

25 January – 2 March 2017. Opening Tuesday 24 January from 6 to 8 pm.

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