



Art Notes: Eleanor Antin and Pamela Jaeger edited by Ingrid Hoffmeister

The San Diego Art Prize is a cash grant which recognizes excellence in the visual arts. The prize is dedicated to the idea that the visual arts are a necessary and rewarding ingredient of any world-class city and a building block of the lifestyle of its residents. Conceived to promote and encourage dialogue, reflection and social interaction about San Diego's artistic and cultural life.

Notes by Ann Berchtold, Director of the San Diego Art Prize

The exhibition, *Dangerous Women* will begin May 17th with an opening reception from 7pm - 9pm at the R3 Gallery and will be on view through June 30th, 2008. Eleanor Antin selected Pamela Jaeger from the "2007 *New Contemporaries*" show, as the emerging artist that she wanted to exhibit with in this exhibition. Antin's photos in this exhibition were not made to be together as a series. One is from the "Last Days of Pompeii", One from "Roman Allegories" and One from "Helen's Odyssey." The more specifically designated title "Dangerous Women" is a narrower concept than the ideas that Eleanor had to make the three series. But they do fit this title very well, as does Pamela's work. "Helen of Troy was the most beautiful and dangerous woman in the history of western culture. Her story comes down to us from European literature's founding epic.... But what do we know of her? After three thousand years of notoriety she remains strangely silent as the most beautiful and disastrous objectification of male anxiety and desire." Eleanor Antin, San Diego, August 2007

Notes on Eleanor Antin by Betti-Sue Hertz, San Diego Museum of Art Contemporary Curator

History plays the leading role in the new photographs by veteran Feminist artist Eleanor Antin where living breathing bodies populate the mise-en-scène. These works based on Greek and Roman history and mythology filtered through eighteenth and nineteenth century French and English academic painting, layer well known visual and literary sources with puns and jokes to intriguing success. Asserting an archeology of historiography, her images supply a complex and problematic space for appropriated identities, fake personages, and the reclamation of characters from the classics, set in complex figural arrangements against lush natural, architectural or painted backgrounds. Filled with recognizable characters—Helen of Troy, Paris, Petronius, Agamemnon and his daughter Iphigenia, among others and goddesses—Athena, Hera Aphrodite and Persephone in the Helen's Odyssey series



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(2007) or generic characters—the beautiful Columbine, the Lover, the Trickster, an ex-gliadiator Strong Man, the Poet, and a magical little girl in the Roman Allegories series (2004), each photograph bears a resemblance to a composition reminiscent of Master works in European painting. Although Antin inhabited various personas in her earlier work, in these elaborately staged tableaux she functions as director/producer, wreaking havoc on masculinist stereotypes of women, who are in her version fully portrayed through a broad range of behaviors and emotions. Vulnerable, angry, sexy, vengeful, obedient and licentious, these stock characters are constructed from images of the past but recast to play their roles anew (along with a host of men) through the stage-y artificial turn of digital photography.



Notes on Eleanor Antin by Kevin Freitas, Art As Authority

Graham W. J. Beal, Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, had this to say during Eleanor Antin's retrospective exhibit in 1999 which succinctly puts into words the daunting task laid out before me of summarizing a long and astonishing career of this exemplary artist who adopted San Diego as her home: "Antin has had dozens of solo exhibitions, performances, and video and film screenings in museums and galleries over the years ... The bibliography of critical response to her art is impressive." *Eleanor Antin, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Fellows of Contemporary Art, 1999, p.7.





The “critical response” to her art is impressive indeed; I won’t compete or even try. Far from being lazy my response is one of respect for the artist, her works and if I’m honest, the intimidation and astonishment I feel standing before them. It embodies everything I continue to love about art – performance, play, theatre, conceptual, resilient, smart and renegade.

Charles Caleb Colton, an English cleric, author, and collector was once famously quoted as saying, “Imitation is the sincerest of flattery.” I remembered the quote after producing a series of photos for a show, which was an “imitation” of one of Antin’s most recognized and talked about conceptual works of Feminist art and theory entitled, “Carving: A Traditional Sculpture” from 1972. Antin had herself photographed for 36 days straight (front, back, left and right sides, nude) which culminated in a series of 144 B & W photos presented in a grid format representing or should I say showed Antin “carving” her ideal (body) form through a strict diet and weight loss. I love this piece for its deadpan humor, its directness, and what Antin might consider an absence of intellectual posturing, in describing an element of mockery within the work by saying, “The early conceptualists were primitives.” *Eleanor Antin, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Fellows of Contemporary Art, 1999, p.44.

This photograph of me standing is perhaps a controlled parody of myself taken out of context, and is in no way a mockery of Antin’s work, but is the only way I know how to get closer in a guise of homage, to the spirit and flesh of an artist that embodies a sacred niche in the history of art.

Notes on Pamela Jaeger by Alice Diamond

At first glance, Pamela Jaeger’s work would be considered very different from that of Eleanor Antin. Ms. Antin often reenacts historically-recognizable scenes and gives them a humorous twist to show their implication for today, such as Pompeii being compared with La Jolla. Jaeger is more likely to draw from her dreams and knowledge of Jungian psychology. Both are strong women with a feminist bent, experiment with excessive nostalgia, and use storytelling as a major component of their work.

Jaeger’s and Antin’s preferred artistic medium provide an opportunity for contrast as well. Antin finds her concepts best captured by film, but mimics the details of nineteenth century salon painting shows before capturing a scene. Unlike most young artists, Jaeger paints more in the “academic” and representational style, no doubt since she was educated as a graphic designer and maintains a thriving business illustrating for a number of local and national magazines. (This fact is in itself ironic since so





many illustrators have had to change careers, often blaming the increased use of photography in commercial art.)

Each time I view either of their work, I catch anew some obvious symbol. But with Jaeger, rather than needing to be an astute historian, it often helps to know something about her own life. For example, "The Game," becomes clear once we know that the ball proffered to the man with the sly fox mask uses the artistic style of her new boyfriend. As we translate these stories into our own lives, the universality of human experience is apparent and symbols hidden away in our "psychic basement" allows each of us to relive our lives through her work, just as Antin's alter egos open our imaginations as to what else we could be.

Notes on Pamela Jaeger by Mark Murphy, Cultural Instigator, Collector, Publisher

Pamela Jaeger is a San Diego fine artist who instinctively paints dreamy, surrealistic female portraits that occupy a world filled with otherworldly delights. Often, and if you know Pamela, the painted portraits personify the artist.

Pamela's characters are drawn from the memories of childhood—happy and painful times that represent the hopes and desires of a young girl searching for love, independence, sweet candies, poca dotted elephants and pillowy shaped clouds made of cotton candy. Pamela describes her worlds as, "...a fantasy or a perfect world. The characters I create are usually women, but the paintings are almost always about men."

At times, Pamela Jaeger's development process begins as written scrawl in personal diaries that trap remnants of private times. If you were to collect Pamela's work you would find this scrawl, along with the development of her paintings and passionate angst on the reverse side of the wood canvases she paints on. There are times when the local library services Pamela an immediate way to get close to times passed by. "I'm interested in costumes from many time periods especially Georgian, Elizabethan, Renaissance and Gothic. I love to research the traditions of beauty throughout history."

All her life Pamela has enjoyed painting and drawing and she continues to journey along with her painted subjects exploring other worldly places. Passionate moments unfold as sultry faces gaze back upon you with a zeal for life

