

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE

Niki de Saint Phalle's Women

08
September
—
22
October
2017

OPENING NIGHT

Thursday
07 September
6pm - 9pm

/

FORTHCOMING

33

ALAIN BUBLEX

Group Show
"Contre allées"

03/11

—

13/12

36

RICHARD JACKSON

The French Kiss

17/11/2017

—

13/01/2018

/

FAIRS

FIAC

ABU DHABI



In the wake of *En joue ! Assemblages & Tirs* (1958-1964) in 2013, this new monographic exhibition focuses on the representation of the female body in 1960s-70s consumer society - a central theme in Niki de Saint Phalle's output. A selection of twenty pieces, amongst the most emblematic of the 1960s and 1970s, from the famous *Nanas* to her singular relief sculptures, will be on show.

Rebellious belles

Lacan said that Woman does not exist. He must have met Niki de Saint Phalle. For in this artist's work womankind is not one but several. Big and muscular, squat and hairy, old and fragile, foul shrews, sylph-like brides, crock-pot-women, woman with bellies ripped open, dancing and eddying light giants, white matrons and black matrons - Niki turned her back on ideal beauty and painted and sculpted every possible and impossible kind of woman, all kinds of freakish female morphologies bound to upset and tell us that beauty is always bizarre. For this artist, dealing with the feminine, exhibiting its anxieties and its revolts, its dreams, its power and its poetry, always meant showing bodies. (...) Everything women may live through is embodied in her figures that break with the ordinary patterns of representation just as they do with the solemn principles sanctioned by social morals. The division of her work into periods, and particularly the periods before and after the *Nanas* burst onto the scene, has made us lose sight of the importance that she places and the meaning she invests in exhibiting multiple women's bodies, whether they suffer and bleed or are parturient or are bursting with health. Their presentation side by side under the same name bespeaks the importance that we should accord to these protean yet singular portraits of womankind if we wish to understand what women according to Niki de Saint Phalle are, and what they think. Remember (...) the words that this artist wrote to the 'beautiful prisoner of appearances' that was her mother: 'I am going to show everything. My heart, my emotions.'

To show. And therefore to see. See everything in this art that, without straying from the aesthetic register, raises high the colours of rebellion by always choosing to totally oppose the prevailing canons, rules and codes. Niki is constantly freeing herself of conventions. Anything goes when it comes to getting away from what she called 'salon art': the gigantism of sculptures that were sometimes transformed into habitable spaces, their sometimes crude, unbalanced appearance, the deforming and even monstrousness of her creatures, the vulgarity of their look and attire, often their obscenity, their comic and childlike dimension - all these are ways of teasing art's traditional claim to respectability. Added to which is the narrative and largely autobiographical dimension of her work which, if it makes Niki de Saint Phalle a singular artist, certainly does not preclude an awareness of the formal ruptures and issues of the day.

(...) The time is ripe to affirm the capital role played by Niki de Saint Phalle's work in the history of art. Fighting against the uniformisation of looking and of taste, she worked in the avant-garde of a movement that, weaving a close connection between art and society, helped change the role of art.

Catherine Francblin

This text is an extract from the catalogue conceived in the form of a «feminine magazine» bringing together almost fifteen contributors and published on the occasion of the exhibition

