

Deborah Remington

The 90s

February 27 – April 14, 2018

Kimmerich Galerie is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by American artist, Deborah Remington, made between 1991 and 2003.

From the 1990s to the early 2000s Deborah Remington's work underwent a profound evolution. This exhibition presents eight paintings from this period that reflect the deeply felt emotions of the artist in response to growing concerns for her own well-being and to her reaction to the aftermath of 9/11. For anyone living in Lower Manhattan at the time, the rhythm of life was shattered and would not return to normal for many years. Remington's spacious loft was located not far from the World Trade Center; fortunately she had not yet returned from her summer home in Chester County near Philadelphia. However, difficult times had been brewing for several years prior to the attacks. Her life began to change following treatments for cancer in the late 80s and again in the early 90s. With her health and career in jeopardy, the powerful paintings in this exhibition bear witness to the inner turmoil she was experiencing. Yet, it was also an extremely productive period and her work reflected an energized assimilation of emotional ups and downs as well as a backward glance towards the Abstract Expressionist spirit that infused her early work of the 40s and 50s.

It took enormous courage to create radically new work while facing an uncertain future. Her inner resilience shows with every bold brushstroke in these paintings. The fact that brushstrokes were visible at all is an extreme departure from the hard-edge minimalist approach of her mature work from the 70s and 80s featured in the artist's last exhibition at the gallery in 2016. Fractured, organic forms embedded in tightly controlled, gestural compositions have replaced the surrealistic, shield-like shapes that were rooted in more idealized geometric abstraction. Her palette has exploded in a burst of radiant color: intense reds, rich fertile greens, deep blue-blacks and the occasional crackle of yellow. The distinctive centralized floating forms are still present, albeit as amorphous, nebulous masses. Looking closely though, one senses a living or bodily presence in all of these works. Lustrous white passages in *Hebsed* and *Hydrus*, both 1993, splinter apart, hinting at brittle bones or bandages—a body in peril. In *Mechelen*, 1991, a pulsating red flower bursts open, scattering its seeds into the void. A serious gardener, Remington carefully tended the lilies, tuberose and dahlias that grew in flowerbeds surrounding her house in Pennsylvania and pulled them up at the end of each summer to be overwintered and replanted the next year. *Hebsed*, in fact, is titled after an ancient Egyptian festival associated with birth, death and renewal.

Perhaps the most radiant body-like work in this series is *Calyd*, 1999-2003. An unearthly red glow marks the impact of a glorious explosion, forcing splintered shapes to disperse. The central silver gray element might be read as a mirror or a luminous opening into the unknown. Obsessed with her own mortality, Remington used these works to confront her fears while simultaneously reaffirming life and renewing her spirit through art.

DEBORAH REMINGTON (b. Haddonfield, NJ, 1930, d. 2010, Moorestown, NJ) received her BFA in 1955 from the San Francisco Art Institute where she studied painting with Clyfford Still and became affiliated with the Bay Area's burgeoning Beat scene. She was one of six painters and poets - and the only woman - who in 1954 founded the now legendary 6 Gallery, where Allen Ginsberg first read his poem, "Howl" in public on October 7, 1955.

After graduation, Remington spent two years in Japan studying calligraphy before returning San Francisco, where she had three solo shows at the Dilexi Gallery and one at the San Francisco Museum of Art. In 1965, Remington moved to New York by which time she had gained renown for an aggressive and emblematic visual language influenced by Abstract

Expressionism. She made her New York debut in 1967 at the Bykert Gallery, the premier New York gallery for new art at the time. She had three more solo shows there before it closed in 1975. Her work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Denver Art Museum, San Antonio Museum of Art and Centre George Pompidou, among others. She taught painting at the Cooper Union School of Art from 1973 to 1997 and at New York University from 1994-1999.

A twenty-year retrospective exhibition (1963-1983) of the artist's work, curated by Paul Schimmel, was held at the Newport Harbor Art Museum, California, in 1983 (now the Orange County Museum of Art), and traveled to the Oakland Museum of Art as well as several other venues. More recently, Remington's work has been featured in several group exhibitions focused on the art of the 1950s and 60s including, *Optical and Visionary Art Since the '60s*, which opened at the San Antonio Museum of Art in 2010 and traveled widely throughout the US. A number of her paintings from the 50s and 60s were included in *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, a traveling exhibition organized by the Denver Art Museum with a catalogue published by Yale University Press in 2016. Her work has also been shown in solo and groups shows at Karma Gallery, New York, Franklin/Parrasch Gallery in Los Angeles, Jack Shainman Gallery in Kinderhook, New York, and 356 South Mission in Los Angeles. Remington was the recipient of numerous grants and awards in her lifetime including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1984), a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1979), and Tamarind Fellowships (1973, 1983), among others. She was elected to the National Academy of Design in 1999 and received a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant that same year.