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Lynda Benglis / Robert Morris : 1973 - 1974

18 June – 31 July 2009

Susan Inglett Gallery is pleased to announce Lynda Benglis / Robert Morris : 1973 – 1974, an exhibition curated by Specific Object / David Platzker. The exhibition will be on view at Susan Inglett Gallery from 18 June to 31 July, 2009.

Here Specific Object presents ephemera, magazine articles, video tapes and other artworks and supporting materials that lead up to, and include, Robert Morris' seminal chains and helmet Castelli-Sonnabend poster and Lynda Benglis' infamous Artforum advertisement, both of which appeared in 1974. Additionally, the exhibition incorporates never before seen, unpublished letters to the editors of Artforum as well as published responses from within Artforum. The exhibition culminates with Lucy Lippard's essay "Transformation Art," published in Ms. Magazine in October 1975 and the inaugural issue of October which was founded following the departure of Artforum's associate editors Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson in spring 1976.

While both artists trace a very specific line in their work to include both nude self-imagery and the human body as sculptural form, this exhibition is dedicated to a narrow reconsideration of the interplay between Benglis, Morris, and their mocking stereotypes of male / female role play executed between 1973 and 1974.

In 1973 Benglis began using images of herself on announcement cards and within advertisements. A card for her show at The Clocktower featured a childhood photograph of the artist in Greece 1952 wearing a traditional boys soldier's uniform; an advertisement placed in the April 1974 issue of Artforum featured a stylized image of Benglis in sunglasses, leaning on a Porsche; and a color invitation card issued in May 1974 showed Benglis posing herself Betty Grable-cheesecake-style, shot by Annie Leibovitz.

Concurrently Morris produced a sensational poster for his April 1974 Castelli-Sonnabend exhibition, photographed by Rosalind Krauss, featuring the artist nude from the waist up clad only in steel chains, wrist restraints, studded collar, sunglasses and a German style military field helmet. Benglis responded with a choreographed double page spread on pages four and five of the November 1974 issue of Artforum that became hyper-emblematic of an era—fully nude Benglis, clad only in sunglasses, holding an oversized rubber dildo extending from her own genitals. The advertisement reverberated in both expected and unexpected ways—at once celebrated and condemned by feminists, feted and reviled by fellow artists, embraced and rebuffed by intellectuals, banned by some art schools but cited as inspiration by many art students, in short resulting in a seismic realignment within the art world.

This exhibition examines, within context, the artworks and the reactions that compose the immediate history following their first appearance in the hopes that visitors will reconsider the exchange separate from the artifice and mythology that has become inseparable from the work over the past 35 years.

As described by Lawrence Alloway, Max Kozloff, Rosalind Krauss, Joseph Masheck, and Annette Michelson in their letter to John Coplans, the then editor of Artforum and published in the December 1974 issue, "The incident is deeply symptomatic of conditions that call for critical analysis..." and, in fact, conditions that continue to exist today.