

**FIRST NEW YORK MUSEUM SURVEY OF KIKI SMITH'S PRINTED ART ON VIEW AT MoMA QNS****Exhibition Features Smith's Prints, Books, and Multiples, Including Several Never Before Exhibited*****Kiki Smith: Prints, Books, and Things***

December 5, 2003—March 8, 2004

MoMA QNS, The Museum of Modern Art, Queens

NEW YORK, December 2003—The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Kiki Smith: Prints, Books, and Things***, the first New York museum survey of the artist's achievement in the field of printed art, from December 5, 2003, to March 8, 2004, at MoMA QNS. Best known as a sculptor, Smith has also achieved recognition as an innovative printmaker whose works have expanded the scope of the medium. Spanning the last two decades of Smith's career, the exhibition features more than 150 prints, books, and multiples. This exhibition is organized by Wendy Weitman, Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, The Museum of Modern Art.

The work included ranges from elaborate wall-sized lithographs, intricate etchings, and deluxe *livres d'artiste* (books with original prints by artists), to screenprinted fabrics, posters, and temporary tattoos. Arranged thematically around recurring motifs in Smith's work, the exhibition begins with a section on her "Early Screenprints" and follows with galleries devoted to the themes of "Anatomy," "Self-Portraits," "Nature," and "Feminine Contexts." Themes of the body, her own identity, and images from nature permeate Smith's career in works that conflate beautiful materials and forms with confrontational subjects. Recently a strong interest in storytelling and a nostalgia for childhood appears in works that reinvent myths and fairy tales from a feminine perspective.

Since the mid-1980s, printmaking has been a vital part of Smith's career, and she has collaborated with numerous print workshops and university facilities. She thrives on the communal nature of the printshop, an environment similar to that of a sculpture foundry, where skilled craftsmen work in tandem with the artist. She has worked with a diverse group of printers from around the New York area, including Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), Harlan & Weaver, Inc., Pace Editions, Inc., and Columbia University, and elsewhere, including The Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia and Carpe Diem Press in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Smith's experience as a sculptor has led her to take a physical, often unconventional approach to printmaking, frequently using her own body to imprint images onto plates and stones. Her use of paper as a sculptural medium has also inspired her inventiveness with prints. Ms. Weitman says: "Kiki Smith is among the most prolific and committed artists to use the printed medium as a creative outlet. She has already achieved a place among the crucial voices of the contemporary period. Her passion for and facility with paper, a material she has explored extensively in sculpture, has fueled her innovative endeavors in prints and books, resulting in intricately folded and layered compositions of delicate handmade sheets."

The exhibition features some newly finished works including *Come Away from Her* (after Lewis Carroll) (2003), one in a series of prints based on Lewis Carroll's drawings for his manuscript *Alice's Adventures under Ground*; and *Hunters and Gatherers* (2003), a book of haikus by Susanna Moore featuring seven etchings by Smith. Several earlier works never before seen in New York include a partial recreation of *Peabody* (*Animal Drawings*) (1996), a floor piece consisting of multiple layers of etchings on handmade Nepalese paper. Wallpaper recently designed by Smith will be installed in the Museum's lobby, the first time it will be installed in a museum. For the exhibition's catalogue, Smith created the eight-page insert *Full*, accompanied by an original poem by John Coletti.

Early Screenprints

Kiki Smith, the daughter of sculptor Tony Smith, was born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1954 and grew up in South Orange, New Jersey. In 1976, Smith moved to New York and supported herself by working a variety of jobs. Shortly thereafter she joined Collaborative Projects, Inc. (Colab), a loosely knit artists' cooperative interested in social concerns and community access to art. One of Colab's many activities was the creation of a series of stores that sold inexpensive artworks and artist-made accessories for which Smith made several multiples. A Colab artist and friend taught Smith how to make screenprints, an experience that led to her first large body of printed work. Some of these early multiples, including several screenprints on fabric, are exhibited for the first time in a museum at MoMA QNS.

One of Smith's seminal early screenprints on paper is *All Souls* (1988). Inspired by a reproduction of a fetus found in a Japanese anatomy book, Smith screenprinted the image in a range of sizes on sheets of Thai paper that she attached together to make up the fifteen-foot work. The piece evokes Smith's awe at the vastness of the earth's population, her passionate belief in women's rights, and concerns over child abuse. A preoccupation with regeneration and birth, which remains in the forefront of her work, is evident in this early image.

Anatomy

The human form, particularly the female, is among the predominant themes in Smith's work. Beginning with depictions of internal organs and systems, ranging from the heart, spleen, and ovaries to the digestive track, Smith later turned to fragments of the external body, including hair, breasts, and orifices. Among her works on the internal systems of the body is *Sueño* (1992), a curled up, fetuslike female figure with spine exposed. To accomplish the outlines for this life-size etching Smith climbed onto the copper plate and had the printers trace her, an example of her unconventional and physical approach to printmaking. Smith then filled in this outline with braidlike lines and murky colors to create the harrowing impression of a skinned body.

Self-Portraits

Smith rarely depicts herself in her sculpture, but she has done so repeatedly in her printmaking. *Banshee Pearls* (1991), a monumental lithograph on 12 sheets, is made up of dozens of self-portraits in a dazzling array of scales, orientations, and processes. In an experimental burst of creativity, Smith played with varying degrees of image distortion—from blurry, skull-like masks to photographic accuracy. In *Free Fall* (1994), another example of printed self-portraits, Smith reveals her fondness for manipulating paper. Stored folded between two boards, the piece has to be unfolded like a road map to view. Smith's photographic rendering of herself seems to depict a figure falling in midair, a sensation the artist felt paralleled her state of mind at the time.

Nature

In the early 1990s, Smith turned her attention to images of nature, primarily animals and the cosmos. Birds feature prominently in Smith's work and allude to subjects ranging from the fragility of the environment to the realm of the Holy Spirit. In the newly finished book *The Blue Feet* (2003), many of Smith's themes and strategies coalesce. An elegy on the forces of nature and the cosmos, the text is excerpted from a poem written by Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, a seventeenth-century Mexican nun who is among the first female poets of the Americas. Smith's love of folding is evident here again in her use of the French fold, a unique format with a central slit that allows a book to be viewed page by page or unfolded and seen as an overall composition. Her current obsession with etching, the predominance of the female voice, and the tension between the startling and the beautiful are embodied in this work.

Feminine Contexts

In many of her works, Smith attempts to express universal concerns from a female perspective. Throughout her career she has depicted numerous female characters from literature, mythology, history, and religion. One of the stories that has preoccupied Smith recently is "Little Red Riding Hood." Since 1999, she has created a range of sculptures, prints, photographs, glass paintings, and drawings inspired by the tale. In her lithograph *Born* (2002), Smith creates a violent interpretation of the scene where the grandmother and little girl emerge from the wolf's belly in a composition reminiscent of the Virgin on the crescent moon, a historical portrayal of the Virgin inspired by a passage in the Bible. Both figures are also self-portraits, which contributes a further feminine reference to issues of rites of passage and aging, and suggests Smith's complex identification with this classic children's story.

Sponsorship:

The exhibition is made possible by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro. Generous support is also provided by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Emily Fisher Landau, and Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley. Additional funding is provided by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The accompanying educational programs are made possible by BNP Paribas.

Exhibition catalogue:

The exhibition is accompanied by a 150-page catalogue written by Ms. Weitman. It comprises 137 color plates plus 16 color and 19 black-and-white illustrations documenting Smith's work in prints, books, and multiples. The book features a comprehensive essay by Ms. Weitman about Smith's printmaking and the themes prevalent in her art as well as a chronology conveying the principal events in Smith's life and her involvement with printmaking, and a bibliography. The catalogue also features *Full*, an eight-page insert created by Smith specifically for this catalogue and exhibition, accompanied by a poem by John Coletti. *Kiki Smith: Prints, Books, and Things* is published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and is distributed in the United States and Canada by D.A.P., New York (Hardcover, \$45.00). Available at the MoMA stores and online at www.momastore.org.

Web site:

The exhibition's Web site (www.moma.org/kikismith), which launches on December 5, includes images organized by the thematic structure of the exhibition and accompanied by explanatory text. A customized zooming feature allows visitors to view Smith's works in greater detail. A special section of the Web site provides a window into Smith's creative process through two sequences of printed proofs—one series for the lithograph *Born* (2002) and one series for the etching *Falcon* (2001). Original music has been composed for the site by Margaret De Wys, a frequent collaborator of Smith's. Video footage of the artist working in print workshops (filmed by Art:21 for the PBS series of the same name) is also integrated into the site. Computer kiosks with access to the site will be installed in the Museum. Curatorial direction for the site is by Ms. Weitman and Judith B. Hecker, Assistant Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, who also served as the project lead. The site is designed and programmed by Second Story, with creative and production management by Allegra Burnette, Creative Manager, and George Hunka, Producer, Digital Media Department, The Museum of Modern Art.

Retail products:

In keeping with the exhibition's themes of prints and multiples, Smith designed a bookmark, temporary tattoo, and t-shirt. The bookmark, titled *Sojourner*, features images of dandelions. It is made of nickel-plated brass with a black ribbon and retails for \$16.00. The tattoo sheet is designed so that customers can cut out different parts of the overall image, allowing them to create their own selection of individual tattoos. Both the tattoo and t-shirt feature motifs prominent in Smith's art, including birds, animals, and fairy tale creatures. The tattoo measures 18 x 12" and retails for \$14.95 and the t-shirt retails for \$25.00. Other retail products available are a poster of Smith's book *The Blue Feet* (2003) and several postcards

Travel:

The exhibition will travel. Venues and dates will be announced shortly.

No. 77

Press Contact: pressoffice@moma.org