

CURRIER MUSEUM *of* ART

Distant Conversations: A New Exhibition Series at the Currier Museum of Art

June 19, 2023 - Manchester, NH - The Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, NH, has announced a new series of exhibitions titled ***Distant Conversations***. The series explores intergenerational dialogues and artistic conversations between practitioners who have not necessarily met in real life but whose work similarly resonates despite their differences. The cycle is curated by the museum's Chief Curator, Lorenzo Fusi.

The first installment of the series, ***Distant Conversations: Ella Walker and Betty Woodman***, will run from July 15 to October 22, 2023. The exhibition combines the work of British artist Ella Walker (b. 1993, lives and works in London, UK) and American artist Betty Woodman (1930-2018), who use art-historical references in their work to revisit a male-dominated history of Western art and subvert its dominant narrative.

Betty Woodman's art is ambiguously positioned between the world of ceramics, sculpture, installation, and painting. Globally recognized for her experimentation and inventiveness, Woodman greatly contributed to the reevaluation of ceramics in contemporary art discourse and to its repositioning in art institutions in the US and overseas. Italian art was an important influence for Woodman, who spent long periods of time in the country. Her knowledge of art history was vast and her curiosity all-encompassing, spanning from the Etruscan and Greco Roman civilizations to Modernism with an eye on countries such as Japan, Turkey, and China, globally known for the excellence of their ceramics and sophistication of their glazing and firing techniques. Woodman's interest in figuration and the history of painting are also evident in her art, making the association with Ella Walker's work particularly stringent and convincing. During her long career, Woodman exhibited globally and created increasingly ambitious projects that were architectural in both complexity and scale.

Similarly, Ella Walker's monumental and yet evanescent canvases revisit the European medieval and Renaissance frescoes tradition, introducing the presence of women who defiantly challenge conventional representations of feminine in the arts and gently refuse to conform to the viewers' expectations. There is something slightly disturbing and uncanny in the posture, appearances, and actions of the women that animate Walker's images. Her paintings instantly evoke the crisp and almost surreal luminosity of Italian master Piero della Francesca and the clarity of the revolutionary proto-Renaissance painter Giotto, whose frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel (Padua, Italy) dating back to 1305 Walker directly references in the series of paintings entitled *Theatre of Virtues and Vices* that will be exhibited at the Currier.

Walker's imagery, very much like Woodman's, collapses conventional readings of time. Both artists blend multiple styles to develop a visual language that becomes uniquely their own. The artistic dialogue between Walker and Woodman is recreated in the galleries by juxtaposing their work in a suggestive and poetic manner without rigid separations. The exhibition features a dozen artworks by each artist, including ceramics, installations, canvases, and works on paper.

On July 14, Ella Walker and Katarina Jerinic, Collections Curator at the Woodman Family Foundation, will lead tours of the exhibition in dialogue with the curator of the exhibition reserved for the Currier Museum of Art Members and accredited press (at 11 am and 2 pm respectively). The public opening of the exhibition is made to coincide with the Currier's Annual Block Party (July 15, 2023: 4 pm to 9 pm).

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Ella Walker was born in Manchester (UK) in 1993 and presently lives and works in London (UK). She studied Painting and Printmaking at the Glasgow School of Art (Glasgow, UK) and The Royal Drawing School in London. She participated in artist residencies at Palazzo Monti (Brescia, Italy); the Moritz/Heyman Residency Program in Volterra (Italy); and Dumfries House (Scotland, UK). The forthcoming exhibition at the Currier Museum of Art is the first presentation of Walker's work in a US institution. A week prior to the opening of the exhibition in Manchester (NH), Walker inaugurates her solo exhibition Chorus at the Kestner Gesellschaft in Hannover, Germany. Walker was the recipient of the RA Richard Ford Award, Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain (2019); and the Jack Goldhill Prize in Drawing, UK (2018). Her work has been exhibited throughout the United Kingdom and is included in several European permanent collections, including the Royal Collection (London, UK). Walker's second solo exhibition with Casey Kaplan, New York is slated for March 2024.

Betty Woodman (1930–2018) was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, raised in Newton, Massachusetts, and studied ceramics at the School for American Craftsmen in Alfred, New York from 1948–1950. Woodman was the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide during her lifetime, including a 2006 retrospective at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York—the first time the museum dedicated a survey to a living female artist. In 2022, David Kordansky Gallery presented the first major exhibition of Woodman's work in New York in six years, *Betty Woodman: Conversations on the Shore, Works from the 1990s*. Other solo exhibitions have been presented at K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (2018); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2016); Museo Marino Marini, Florence, Italy (2015); Gardiner Museum, Toronto (2011); American Academy in Rome (2010); Palazzo Pitti, Giardino di Boboli, Florence, Italy (2009); Denver Art Museum (2006); and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1996). Recent group exhibitions include *The Flames: The Art of Ceramics*, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2021); *Less Is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2019); and *Liverpool Biennial*, England (2016). Woodman's work is in numerous permanent collections worldwide, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon, Portugal; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and World Ceramic Center, Incheon, Korea. Woodman lived and worked in Boulder, Colorado; Antella, Italy; and New York.

About the Currier Museum of Art

Focused on Art. Centered in Community. Committed to Inspire.

The [Currier Museum of Art](#) is an internationally renowned art museum located in Manchester, New Hampshire. The museum features paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, and photographs, including works by Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Georgia O'Keeffe, Edward Hopper, and Andrew Wyeth. It presents exhibitions, tours, art classes, and community programs year-round. Two houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright are part of its permanent collection.

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