

Galerie Francesca Pia

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Betty Woodman

Interior Views

15 March – 10 May, 2014

Opening: 14 March 2014

Inspired by the visual vocabulary of architecture and the ceramics of Greece, Italy and China, as well as by more recent modern painting, the art of Betty Woodman takes on multiple forms such as cushions, bodies, flowers, plants and especially those of vases and pots. Her ceramic works have become painterly. They hang on walls, stand on tables, and even lay as rugs on the floor. They are seemingly baroque assemblages. Betty Woodman (b. 1930 in Norwalk, Connecticut) started her career in production pottery in the 1950s and remains faithful, in a sense, to pottery to this day. However, it must be noted that she does not exclude any references and continuously expands into new forms and materials. In her hands, neither the fine arts nor traditional pottery are spared transformation.

The concept of the vase as a craft object and an artistic motif runs throughout Woodman's work. Because of its long history, the vase, existing since humanity began to create art, has appeared in many different historical and geographical contexts ranging from its representation in Roman mosaics, as Chinese porcelain and serving as the capital of a Greek column. The vase, through its functional uses as storage and transportation, is a universal symbol for the primary needs of civilisation and simultaneously a primeval symbol for femininity. The archetypal vase's shape is modelled on the female form and moreover the act of carrying and producing pottery are traditionally feminine activities in many societies. Woodman reflects upon this legacy and expands its meanings by making use of diverse artistic vocabularies. The triptych *Red, White and Blue Vases* has two differently painted sides and embodies the Cubist notion of interlocking tilted forms. The paintings *The Door at the Beach*, *Summer View* and *Lake View* function as windows onto the world where there appears to be an inversion of the Trompe-l'oeil effect. The saturated colours and the graphic gestures are reminiscent of Matisse's cut-outs and Fauvist landscapes.

Woodman's connection with craftsmanship and art is however more than an accumulation of historical references. Her constant inquiry into and overstepping of boundaries make her art refreshing and contemporary. Painting undergoes a material and a metaphysical expansion when the vase both figures as an object, appears as a motif or even becomes the painting surface. The wall mosaics reminiscent of textile patterns such as *Wallpaper #4* and *Wallpaper #5*, the carpet piece *Aztec Vase and Carpet Nr. 3* and *George's Room* are all very recent works where Woodman's interests converge. An interior, like the vase, traditionally holds female connotations, but here these assignments of role are scrutinized, along with the separation between the fine and applied arts. A connection between art and life is advocated, one that holds the scent of summer.

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The exhibition *Interior Views* is the third exhibition with Betty Woodman at Galerie Francesca Pia and offers an overview of her recent artistic oeuvre.

Over the course of her lengthy career, Betty Woodman has had numerous solo exhibitions at museums and galleries internationally as well as frequent group exhibitions. Since her retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, "The Art of Betty Woodman", in 2006, these include: "BIACI – 1st Bienial Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo Cartagena de Indias, Colombia", Cartagena, 2014; "Alessandro's Rooms", Art Unlimited, Art Basel, Basel, 2013; "Playing House", Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York, 2012; "Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970–1990", Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2011; "Roman Fresco/Pleasures and Places", American Academy in Rome, Rome, 2010; "L'allegria vitalità delle porcellane", Museo Delle Porcellane, Palazzo Pitti, Giardino di Boboli, Florence, 2009; and many more. Woodman recently completed major commissions at the U.S. Courthouse in Jefferson City, Missouri through the General Services Administration, 2012, and the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China for the State Department's Art in Embassies program, 2008. Recent honors include the Gold Medal for Consummate Craftsmanship from the American Craft Council, 2014; the National Artist Award from Anderson Ranch, 2010; the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Brooklyn Museum/Modernism Design Award, 2009; and honorary doctorates from Rhode Island School of Design in 2009, University of Colorado in 2007 and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 2006. Her work is included in more than fifty public collections including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; Musée des Arts Decoratifs Paris, France; Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon, Portugal; Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.