



Illustration: *Nineteen Ninety* (detail),
96 x 96", paper maché, blue Japan paint on aluminum
Courtesy of the Artist

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Designed by Lisa Martin

CAROLEE THEA
IMAGES OF TRANSFORMATION

April 28 - June 9, 1991

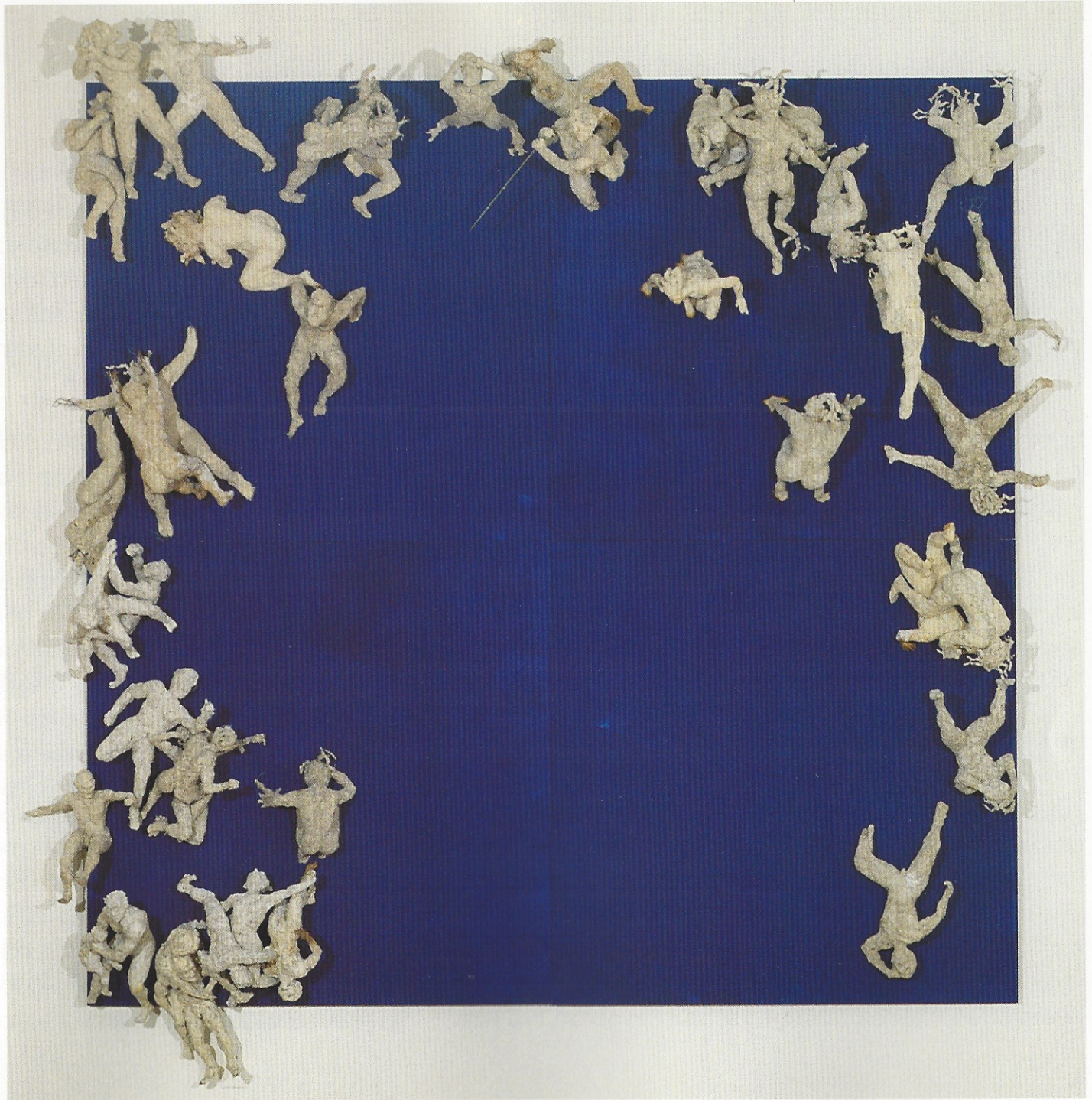


Hofstra Museum
Hofstra University
Lowenfeld Conference and Exhibition Hall
Axinn Library, 10th floor
Hempstead, New York
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Preface

Our Post-Modern world is replete with incongruities; spiritual and psychological atrocities that reveal a need for new-found sensibilities. Carolee Thea's most recent works suggest a time after some great Apocalypse, while in reality they are drawn from the artist's body and the historic romance of the Renaissance. The bridge in time between the Renaissance-anguished figure and the Post-Modern format gives the works a timeless and universal quality. Removed from the specific incidents of daily life, the figures become our inner beings struggling to reveal our own souls. Figures in *Nineteen Ninety* move around a central void, struggling to escape, and yet, become one with the blue field. Figures in *The Artist's Journey* document Carolee Thea's own personal history while the spaces heighten the tension between phases of a life and a larger cosmic order. The sculptures on tracks or wheels are pregnant with the potential for movement; caught on the chakra or wheel of life. Carolee Thea's sources are the spiritual and the mundane, the Renaissance and contemporary crimes. Her works concretize the spiritual dimension of the psyche into an accessible and powerful image. Carolee Thea helps us to see beyond the surface of the faces in the atrocities of Kuwait or the violence in Central Park, to understand the inner life force.

Dr. Gail Gelburd Director, Hofstra Museum



Introduction

Since the Renaissance, the figure has maintained a special place in the history of Western art. A contradictory tradition, it may be employed both to celebrate our common humanity and to give expression to private fantasies and nightmares. In the former mode, figurative art has historically been the favored form for public monuments; in the latter, it shapes the most personal autobiographical statements.

For Carolee Thea these contradictory associations make the figure the ideal vehicle for exploring the tension between the private realm of dread and desire and the public realm of societal expectation. A recurring theme in her work is the struggle to maintain the autonomy of the self in the face of external pressures. In this exhibition this struggle is played out across the human body (often the body is her own) as it interacts in various ways with the world around it.

Perhaps the most personal expression of this theme occurs in *The Artist's Journey*, a long, scroll-like work in which a narrative of sorts is suggested through the juxtaposition of various symbolic elements. This work consists of a pair of horizontal panels marked off and divided by various geometric lines and shapes which make reference to the science of perspective and the notion of measure and structure. These serve as backdrop for a variety of objects which suggest the counter realm of intuition, inspiration and passion. Moving across the two panels, one sees

a female figure holding a paint brush, a bound and somewhat amorphous twig-like object which suggests the irrational processes of art and nature, a female torso, and finally an egg suspended over a Rubens-like reclining female figure. Operating in a poetic fashion, this work suggests an analogy between the artist's creative process and the questing individual's voyage of self-discovery and spiritual rebirth.

The theme of change and metamorphosis reappears in a series of single panel works which retell the story of Daphne, the mythological Greek nymph who was transformed into a tree in order to escape the unwelcome advances of the god, Apollo. This is a motif which Thea has explored in previous work and here again, she employs the myth of Daphne to suggest the reclamation of the self. The story unfolds in a series of panels representing Daphne in various stages of her transformation. With this narrative, Thea reminds us that Daphne's flight from Apollo is also a flight to her own nature, literally suggested by the roots which sprout from her feet to reconnect her to the earth.

Closely related to this series are a group of works combining single or double figures with found objects in poetic assemblages which touch on themes of sacrifice, self discovery, struggle and transformation. Some, like the representation of a headless figure stepping through a wooden frame, are contemplative, while others, for instance the image of a man impaled on

a pipe, like some demonic pull toy, suggest the pain and anguish which accompanies change. This group of works also includes several multi-figure groups who seem locked in embraces which might be either combative or sexual, as well as a number incorporating wheels, symbols of the artist's spiritual journey.

Finally, moving from the intimate to the monumental, Thea has, in *Nineteen Ninety* created a tribute to the grand apocalyptic visions of artists like Michelangelo and Lucas Signorelli. Echoing (and at times freely borrowing specific poses and figures) from their visions of the *Last Judgment*, she has created a compelling image of human struggle and despair. Her roughly modeled figures writhe and grapple against the backdrop of a deep blue field which draws them into the spiritual void. No longer an allegory of divine justice, the struggling creatures in this work suggest the often painful journey to self awareness. There is also an undercurrent here of outrage at the violence visited by the strong upon the weak. This has led Thea to her current work in progress, *Sabine Woman: An Installation*, not included in this exhibition, based on the rape of the Central Park jogger.

For Thea, the focus on the figure in this body of works reflects an embrace of the complexities and contradictions of human existence. The body shelters the self—a fragile vessel embarking on a fearsome journey toward spiritual discovery and transformation.

Eleanor Heartney





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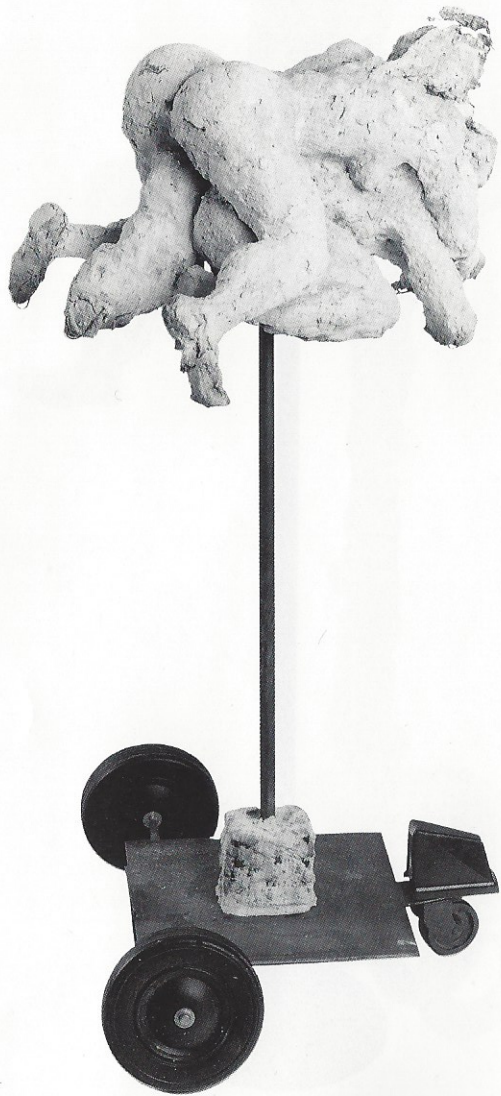
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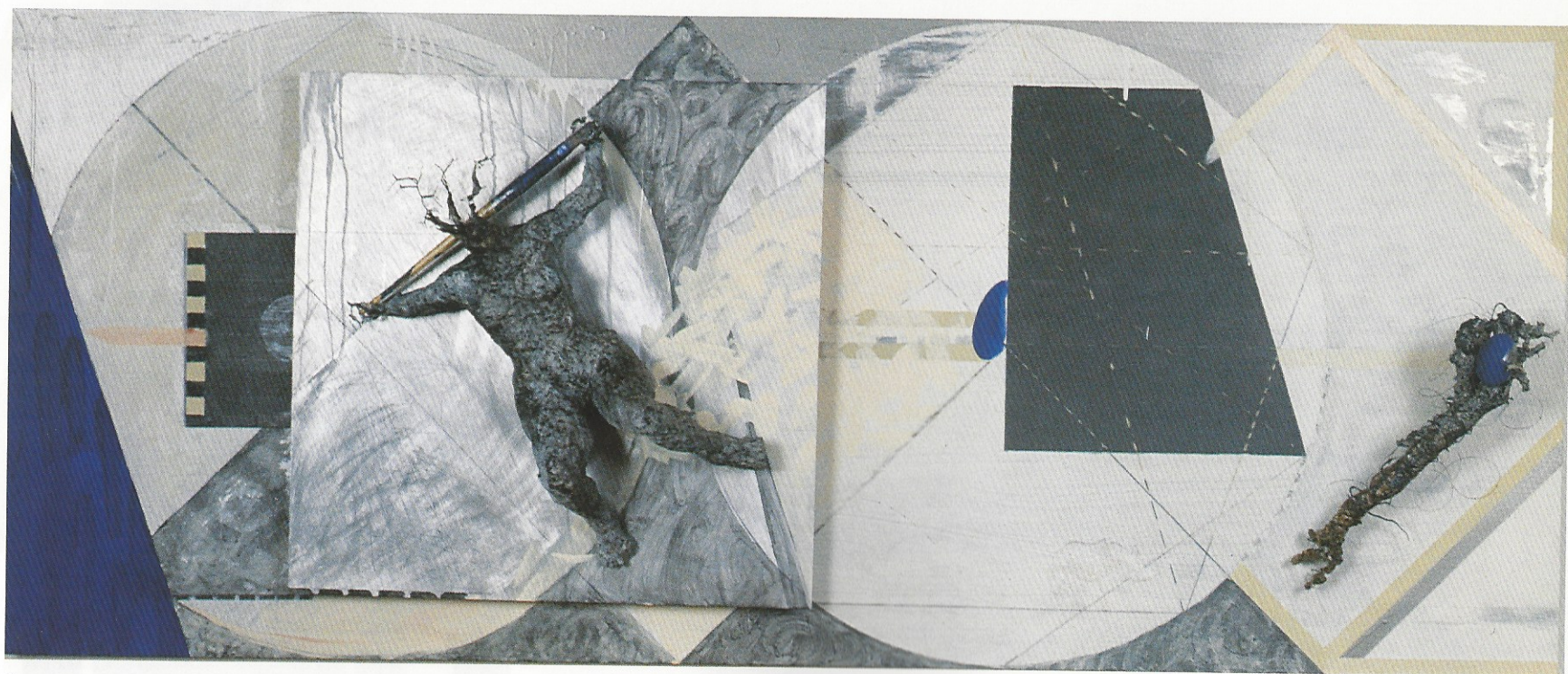
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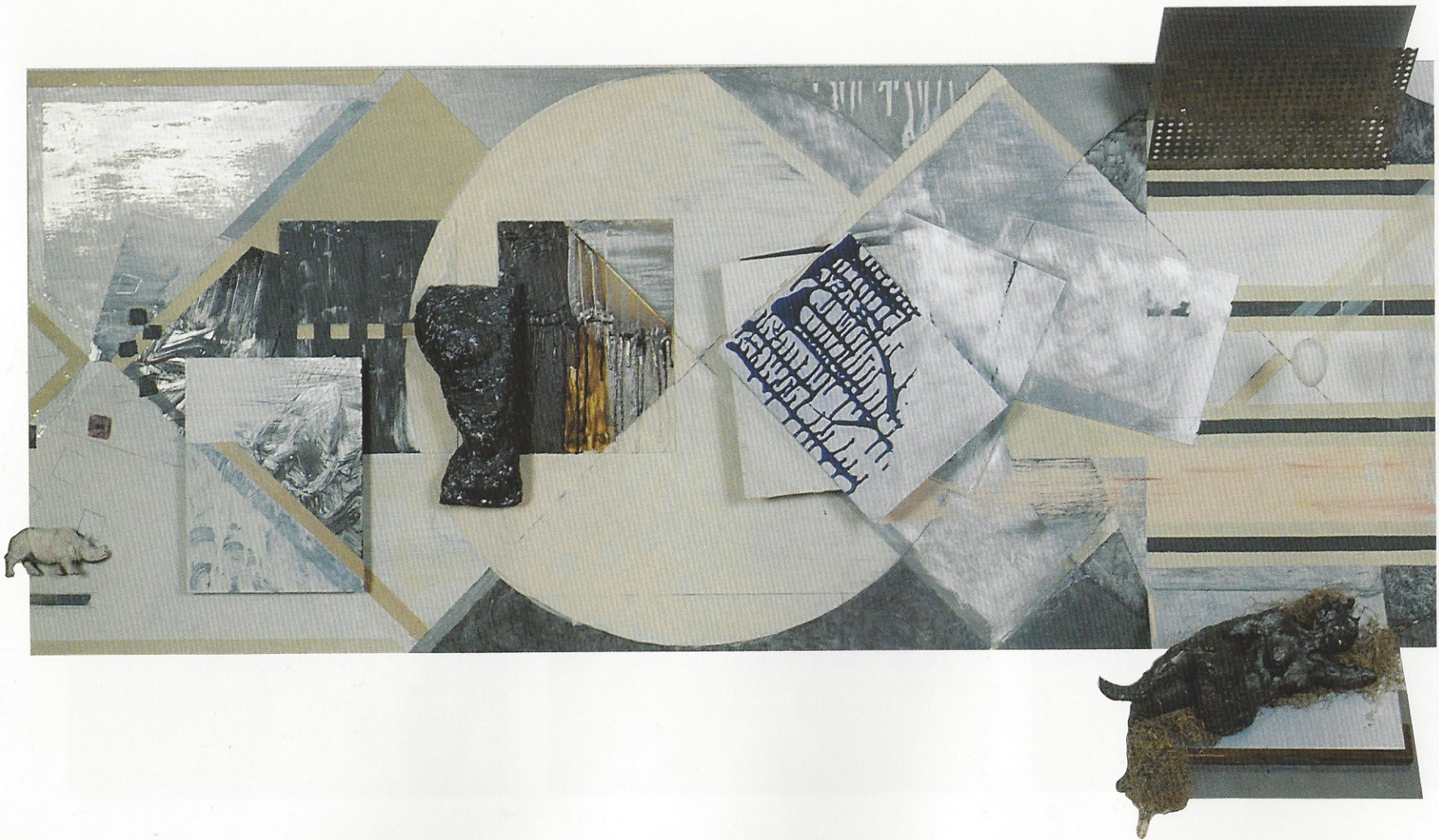


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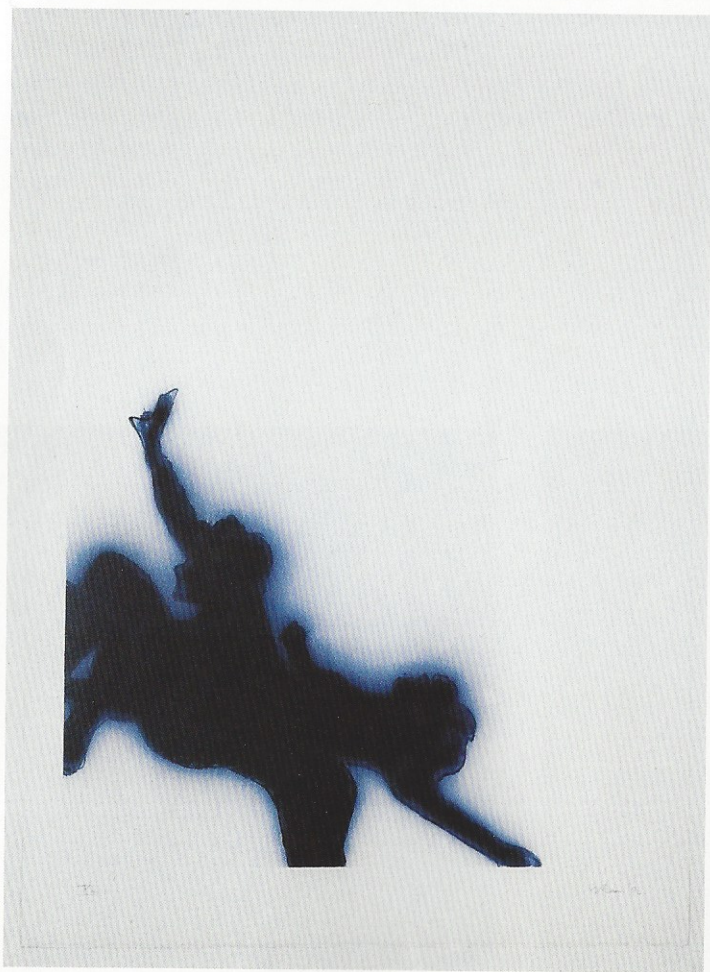
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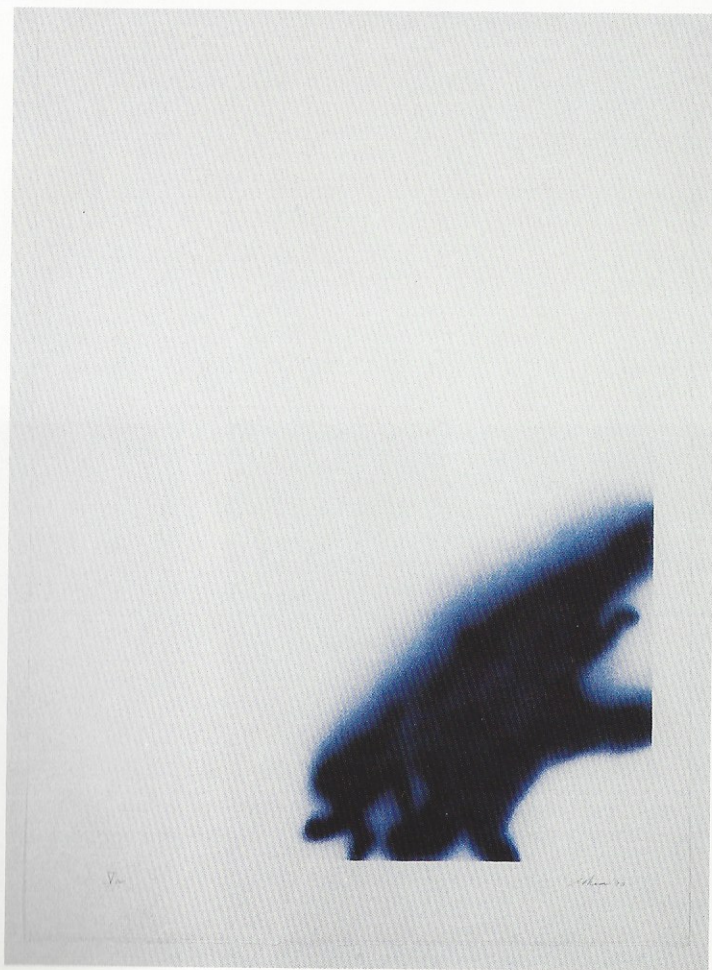
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Carolee Thea

EDUCATION

Hunter College, CUNY, M.A., 1976; Columbia University, NY, B.A.; Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Anne Jaffe Gallery, Miami, FL, 1990 Queens Museum, Flushing, NY, 1989; Gallery Ninety Nine, Miami, FL, 1987; Watson Gallery, Wheaton College, Norton, MA, 1986; Adam L. Gimbel Gallery, NYC, 1984 Douglas College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 1984; Frank Marino Gallery, NYC, 1980-81; Morristown Museum, Morristown, NJ, 1981 (NEA & Interpace)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Still Life, E.H.C.C.A., East Hampton, NY, 1990; *Small is Big*, Parsons Gallery, NYC, 1989; Benton Gallery, Southampton, NY, 1988; *A Sigh of Relief*, Wilson Art Center, Rochester, NY, 1987; *Self-Portraits: The Message, The Material*, Hofstra Museum; Skidmore College, NY, 1987; *Form and Feeling*, Hudson Gallery, NYC, 1986 Cranbrook Academy Museum, Bloomfield, MI, 1986; *Interplay*, Summit Art Center, Summit, NJ, 1985; A.R.E.A. Siteworks, Lever House, NYC, 1985; *Drawings*, Sculpture Center, NYC, 1984 Landmarks, Bard College, Blum Art Center, Annadale-on-Hudson, NY, 1984 Heresies, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, NYC, 1984 Framed, Sue Ellen Haber Gallery, NYC, 1984; *Intermedia*, Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT, 1984; *Out of Square*, Cranbrook Academy Museum, Bloomfield, MI, 1984; *Constructed Paintings*, Alan Frumkin Gallery, NYC, 1983; *Views By Women Artists*, Greenspace Gallery, NYC, 1982; *Invitational*, Skidmore College, Saratoga, NY, 1982; *Two & Three Dimensions*, Frank Marino Gallery, NYC, 1980-81; *Artists Who Make Prints*, O.I.A. Lincoln Center, NYC, 1980-81; *The Women's Decade: the 70's*, Buecker & Harpsichords, NY, 1980-81; *Works On Paper*, Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY, 1980-81; *Outgrowth*, Battery Park, NYC, 1980-81; *Hell Gate Maze*, A.R.E.A., Ward's Island, NYC, 1980-81; *Private Icon*, Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY, 1980-81; *All in Line*, Syracuse University, NY & Terry Dintenfass Gallery, NYC, 1981; *Sculpture 1980*, Maryland Institute of Art, Baltimore, MD, 1980.

ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

Slifka, *East Hampton Star*, May 1990; Ahlander, *Miami News*, April 1987 Zimmer, *The New York Times*, December 1985; Lunde, *Arts Magazine*, March 1985; Russell, *The New York Times*, February 24, 1984; Beals, *Gannet Chain Newspapers*, NY, January 22, 1984; Lippard, *Overlay*, 1983; Ruhe, *Art World*, March 1983; Alloway, *The Nation*, July 1980; Lewis, *Washington Post*, June 1980; Nashumi, *Art Magazine*, May 1980; Scheldahl, *The New York Times*, March 1980.

VISITING ARTIST, LECTURER, PANELIST, CURATOR

Syracuse University, Visiting Artist, 1987-88; Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, 1988; Hofstra Museum, Hempstead, NY, Curator and Catalogue Essay, 1987; Summit Art Center, Summit, NJ, Panelist, 1985; Public Art Fund, "Landmarks: A Symposium on Public Art," Panelist, 1984; Distinguished Visiting Artist, Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, Annandale, NY, 1984; "Artists Talk on Art," Panel Moderator, "Constructed Paintings" 1984.

TEACHING

Faculty Member, Parsons New School, 1981 - present

AWARDS

N.E.A., *Works on Paper*, 1990; Athena Foundation, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY, 1988; C.A.P.S. Finalist, 1977-79.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Hofstra Museum, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY; Florida International University Museum, Miami, FL; Amoco, Denver, CO; Best Products, VA.



CAROLEE THEA: IMAGES OF TRANSFORMATION

Checklist

Courtesy Carolee Thea and Anne Jaffe Gallery

1. *Art Historical Toy 1* 1990
Paper maché, found objects
36 x 16 x 15"
2. *The Artist's Journey* 1990
Mixed media on aluminum
39 x 147 x 10"
3. *Daphne Crosses the River* 1990
Paper maché, wood
19 x 24 x 21"
4. *Daphne #1* 1990
Aluminum, paper maché, acrylic
24 x 24 x 6"
5. *Daphne #2* 1990
Aluminum, paper maché, acrylic
24 x 24 x 6"
6. *Daphne #3* 1990
Aluminum, paper maché, acrylic
24 x 24 x 6"
7. *Daphne #4* 1990
Aluminum, paper maché, acrylic
24 x 24 x 6"
8. *Daphne #5* 1990
Aluminum, paper maché, acrylic
24 x 24 x 6"
9. *Daphne #6* 1990
Aluminum, paper maché, acrylic
24 x 24 x 6"
10. *Daphne Rooted* 1991
Paper maché, found object
33 x 18 x 13"
11. *Art Historical Toy 2* 1990
Paper maché, found objects
16 x 25 x 22"
12. *Exit the Magic* 1990
Paper maché, found objects
30 x 13 x 10"
13. *Ironic Woman* 1990
Paper maché, found object
14 x 21 x 10"
14. *Man on Track* 1990
Paper maché, steel wheels, track
38 x 15 x 11"
15. *Nineteen Ninety* 1990
Paper maché, blue Japan paint on
aluminum
96 x 96"
16. *Struggle to Tame* 1990
Paper maché, steel objects
12 x 59"
17. *Vanquished* 1990
Paper maché, found objects
20 x 22 x 15"
18. *Wax Daphne* 1989
Aluminum, paper maché, wax
and acrylic
24 x 24 x 19"
19. *Wu Wei* 1990
Paper maché, steel washers
29 x 12 x 9"
20. *X a* 1990
Monotype
36 x 26"
21. *V a* 1990
Monotype
36 x 26"





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