

KIKI SMITH *Reflection*

May 18 to July 7, 2018

Under the title *Reflection*, the Barbara Gross Galerie is featuring a cycle of large-format works on paper by Kiki Smith dealing with the human condition and the subject of female artistry and home life. With a focus on drawing, the exhibition represents a supplement to the retrospective *Kiki Smith: Procession* on view concurrently at the Haus der Kunst, Munich.

Reflecting on human existence, life, death, and loss has stood at the center of Kiki Smith's work from the outset. While her early works focused on the human being in its corporeality and in relation to nature and the universe, in 2005 she shifted her subject to the concrete everyday life of woman, which for centuries took place above all in the realm of the home. Inspired by Prudence Punderson's 1783 silk needlework *First, Second and Last Scene of Mortality*, depicting the life of an American woman from the colonial period "from the cradle to the grave," Smith developed a multilayered body of work in subsequent years in which the house became a place associated specifically with female creativity.

The works on Nepal paper shown here cover the walls of the gallery space almost completely, together creating an open narrative about the life of several generations of women. As in a chamber play, all the scenes seem to play out in the same space, although the cast changes and the age of the near life-sized female figures advances. In Smith's pictorial cosmos, motifs such as a package, empty, occupied, and overturned chairs or light bulbs are symbolically charged and stand for arrival and departure, presence and absence, as well as inspiration and artistic creation.

Smith depicts the women in moments of contemplation and draws attention to their dignity and radiance. While their clothing refers to the present, their poses and gestures recall art-historical role models, ranging from Christian iconography and Prudence Punderson to images of women from the Venetian Rococo and Frida Kahlo.

Just as certain gestures, knowledge, and abilities are passed down from generation to generation and continually change in the process, the technique of the collaged works on paper—which are partly lithographed, partly drawn on fine Nepal paper—allows the artist to use individual motifs, faces, and body parts repeatedly, always varying and lending them new shape. The principle of reiteration is essential for Smith: "It's about repetition versus uniqueness. My interest in printmaking is that prints mimic what we are as human: we are all the same and yet everyone is different."

Smith also transposes her drawings into a diversity of other media, collaborating closely with different workshops and specialized manufacturers. Hence, the silver and bronze sculptures of birds displayed in the gallery's skylight space are the outcome of a long process of duplication, transposition, and variation.

KIKI SMITH, b. 1954 in Nuremberg, lives and works in New York. The Haus der Kunst, in Munich, is currently showing the largest retrospective of her work in Europe to date. In 2017 she was represented for the fifth time at the Venice Biennale. This is her sixth solo exhibition at the Barbara Gross Galerie, which represents her since 1994.

Selected solo exhibitions: Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2018; Dallas Contemporary, 2017; Neuberger Museum of Art, New York, 2012; Brooklyn Museum, New York, 2010; Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2009; Kunsthalle Nürnberg / Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld, 2008; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2006–07 / Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2006 / Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2006 / San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005–06; Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, 2005; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003.