



OAKLAND
"Never Done"
at Chandra Cerrito Contemporary

Curated by Renny Pritikin, "Never Done" surveys work done in recent decades by three artists—Carol Bernard, Marlene Bloomberg, and Andrea Brewster—that investigates feminine gender roles in visual arts through issues of craft, fiber and textiles, and scale. Brewster's tatting and felt sculptures are made using techniques passed down from her grandmother, but with the addition of a decidedly contemporary aesthetic. *Untitled* (2013), while palm-sized and unassuming, stretches the patient work of lace-making toward obsessiveness, the looping threads achieving a density that surpasses decoration and resembles living coral or microscopic organisms. Similarly, another *Untitled* work (2013), seamlessly constructed from ovoid loops of unbleached felt, defies expected textile functionality or beauty. Its shape refers instead, poetically, to honeycomb, a natural form that pays homage to nurturing, collective labor, and natural processes. Brewster's use of organic shapes and naturalistic color palette echoes that of Eva Hesse, only softer, and in miniature.

Bloomberg's needlepoint works are also intimately scaled, and refer even more strongly to traditional, domestic craftsmanship. However, within the proscribed space of these works, Bloomberg explores sophisticated, idiosyncratic compositions. *Fractals II* (undated) features a central swirling shape inspired by the Mandelbrot set, an esoteric visualization of mathematics, and also seems to depict a monster with

dozens of eyeballs and a gaping central mouth. This and many other works bring to mind drawings by Klee, Miró, and a host of modern Surrealists. *Tipsy* (1992), an off-kilter geometric design seemingly inspired by Hopi or Navajo rugs, plays with color and the potential for illusionistic space with economy and wit. Bernard's ink drawings share this expansive spirit, merging figuration, landscape, and abstract gesture. Her line work has a overall fiber-like connectivity across the paper—each part of *Untitled* (2012) is literally a part of all other areas. As though R. Crumb's line itself broke free from his comic pictures and filled the visual space completely, her works are striking, powerful fields of intense activity, and aren't traditionally "pretty" depictions.

Together these works offer a version of female or feminist art practices with its own concerns and goals. Brewster's works emphasize the latent strengths, often overlooked, in feminine traditions. Bloomberg's is exquisitely crafted while still being intellectual and adventurous. The emotional intensity in Bernard's gestures demonstrates power and dedication. They all simultaneously embrace and expand definitions of visual art and femininity.

—MARY ANNE KLUTH

"TIPSY," 1992, Marlene Bloomberg
 NEEDLEPOINT, 18" x 18"

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