For Immediate Release

SUSAN BEE
Doomed to Win: Paintings from the Early 1980s

April 3 - 27, 2014

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 3rd from 6-9pm
Conversation with Susan Bee and Kat Griefen: Saturday, April 12th at 4pm

NEW YORK, NY, April 2014 – A.I.R. GALLERY is pleased to announce the exhibition Susan Bee, Doomed to Win: Paintings from the Early 1980s, which will be on view from April 3 through April 27, 2014. The show is curated by Kat Griefen in association with Accola Griefen Gallery.

Doomed to Win presents paintings by Susan Bee from 1982 and 1983, a particularly rich and transformative period in her career, which provides unexpectedly fertile connections to her critically acclaimed painting from the last decade. Speaking of that recent work in 2013, The New Yorker noted that “Bee’s skills as a colorist and her stylistic abandon make the show worth seeking out. Flat figures are outlined in black, as if in the pages of coloring books, offset by bright backgrounds that loosely reference modernist painting (Pollock-like drips, Mondrian-esque geometries)…. It’s horror vacui by way of film noir.”

Now comes the prequel, works that are so fresh that they seem as if Bee could have painted them yesterday. It is all the more remarkable that these early works have never before been exhibited together. Indeed, at the time they were made, their exuberant, painterly feminist expressionism ran afoul both of the cool conceptualism and male hubris that dominated the art scene. Appropriately, Bee’s early 80s paintings examine gender roles through a potent synthesis of competing modes of figurative representation, along with provocative art historical and pop cultural allusions. The exhibition includes three large-scale autobiographical canvases. Woman Artist Painting (1982) has a female figure emerging out of a field of dense painterly abstraction. Portrait of the Artist as a Young Pig (1983) is a nude self-portrait of the artist facing a brush-wielding Petunia Pig. Odalisque (1983) portrays the artist’s nude husband.

The show’s title comes from a 1983 work, Doomed to Win, which, like many of Bee’s recent paintings, is based on a film still, in this case a 1931 film of the same name. While the original still features a boxer hemmed in by a male manager and referee, Bee’s composition re-images the scene with a female protagonist. Addressing the generation of women between the second and third wave of feminism in the United States, Mira Schor writes: “Doomed to Win… is eerily predictive of generation 2.5’s complex role and the endurance that it may need for the fight: the anxious but tough young fighter in a pink dress will need all the strength and help she can get.”

Doomed to Win is an exhilarating look back at a key moment in American painting. By recovering a long unseen body of work, the show opens the way for an ongoing revival of painting and a deeper appreciation for the accomplishments of feminist aesthetics.

Susan Bee has had six solo exhibitions of her paintings at A.I.R. Gallery, as well as solo shows at Accola Griefen Gallery, the University of Pennsylvania, Kenyon College, Columbia University, William Paterson College, and Virginia Lust Gallery, NY. Bee’s work is included in public and private collections including the Getty Museum, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Victoria & Albert Museum, Yale University, Clark Art Institute, New York Public Library, and Harvard University Library. Her work has been reviewed in Art in America, The New York Times, Art Papers, The Brooklyn Rail, The New Yorker, Artcritical, The Forward, and ArtNews. She has had fellowships at MacDowell Colony, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Yaddo. Bee has published 14 artist books including collaborations with poets Susan Howe, Johanna Drucker, Charles Bernstein, Jerome Rothenberg, and Jerome McGann. Bee is the coeditor, with Mira Schor, of M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online. Bee has a BA from Barnard College and a MA in Art from Hunter College. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts, Pratt Institute, and at the University of Pennsylvania, and lives in NYC.

Image: Susan Bee, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Pig, Oil on linen, 50” x 60”, 1983

A.I.R. Gallery is located at 111 Front Street, #228 in the DUMBO neighborhood of Brooklyn. Gallery hours: Wed. - Sun., 11am to 6pm. For directions please visit www.airgallery.org. For more information please contact the Interim Director, JoAnne McFarland at 212-255-6651 or info@airgallery.org

A.I.R. Gallery - Celebrating over 40 years of advocating for women in the visual arts.