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For Immediate Release

A Feminine Contemporary Sublime

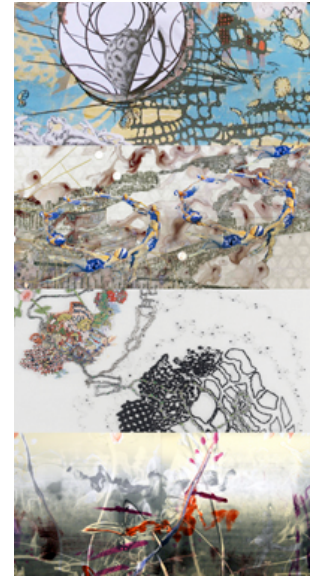
Curated by Melissa Furness

November 30th - December 21st, 2011

Opening Reception: Thursday, December 1st 6pm - 9pm

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce *A Feminine Contemporary Sublime*, a group exhibition featuring works by Liz Surbeck Biddle, Melissa Furness, Jan Johnson, and Nancy Lasar. The exhibition will run November 30 – December 21st, 2011 with an opening reception on Thursday, December 1st from 6:00 – 9:00pm.

In Western society, the 'sublime' was something historically described by men. The sense of what is "beyond words" manifested itself in art as images of grand landscapes and romantic spectacles of the heroic act. *A Feminine Contemporary Sublime* articulates a feminine perspective of the sublime understood in the context of contemporary society, where the grand illusions of male-centric Romanticism have dissipated into a mass of social media and complex communication. In his survey of Documents of Contemporary Art on *the Sublime*, Simon Morley states that in modern society "the sublime is an experience looking for a context."



The works featured in *A Feminine Contemporary Sublime* recognize the awe produced by the "sublime experience" as an illusion of misperceived realities. 19th Century Romanticism stressed that "the transcendental ego must strive to detach itself from nature, from society, from the emotions, from the body, and above all from the feminine" (Philip Shaw in *The Sublime*). With this exhibition, we affirm the failure of the notion of the autonomous self elevated by the imagination's supposed ability to depict the transcendent, and instead rebuild our understanding of the sublime from a "detached" feminine point of view – a view that recognizes the multi-faceted complexity of what we perceive each day in contemporary society as a transcendent force within itself.

This feminine perspective translates the sublime into an "other" reality overwhelmed with information and emotion – that ultimately produces a full and even dark contemporary sublime. The works in this exhibition present the viewer with what is familiar, and then exposes those elements again as a kind of "unknown."

As women artists working today in our own "supersensible vocation" (Kant), we are utter multi-taskers, piling one thing upon another and balancing our layered worlds of work, family, home, in addition to navigating social media and virtual communication. This overlapping series of structures at some point breaks down and suspends thought, producing a sublime experience. In this way, the sublime has transformed into multi-layered meanings and forms that are fragmented and contradictory—a kind of super *anti*-sensible substrate. Here, there is a sense of altered place and unhinged movement, of lines that connect and disconnect, and hints of virtual worlds and information masses, all moving from the internal to the external through a cycle of broken "structures."

Image Credit: Liz Biddle, Melissa Furness, Jan Johnson, Nancy Lasar

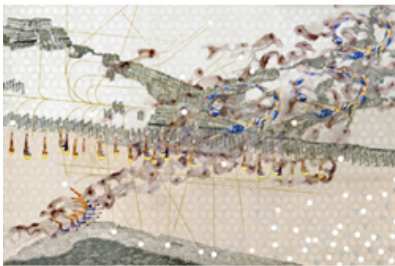
A.I.R. Gallery is located at 111 Front Street, #228 in the DUMBO neighborhood of Brooklyn. Gallery hours: Wed. – Sun., 11am to 6pm. For directions please visit www.airgallery.org. For more information please contact Gallery Director, Julie Lohnes at 212-255-6651 or jlohnes@airgallery.org.

A Feminine Contemporary Sublime – A.I.R. Gallery Nov.30 – Dec. 21, 2011



Liz Surbeck Biddle

As an artist and human being Liz Surbeck Biddle is fascinated with the push and pull of the forces of nature, of life and death, destruction and rebirth. Her drawings often have a density and airiness at the same time. The organizational structure usually has a moving or dynamic gesture as though time was passing and moving off the page. The artist works very directly and intuitively and responds to both the figure and to natural forms. For her drawing and collage work gives meaning and reason in this chaotic world and allows her to place and connect her thoughts.



Melissa Furness

Melissa Furness' work explores our attraction to and struggle with the unknown. The artist utilizes the suggested remains of physical, tangible forms in historical artifacts and ruins, which exist but are incomplete in order to build an alternate world within her work. The ruin is symbolic of a new kind of overpowering external/internal vastness. The space within the work becomes an archeological layering of new and old images and processes. Patterns are printed in an underlying rhythm of color and transparency, a suggestion of the "supersensible substrate" underlying nature as the complex struggle of chaos and fragmentation hover above.



Jan Johnson

Jan Johnson builds forms containing narratives of place, memory and relationships. Paint, pigment, collage and thread laid down as various marks embody a language that conveys and holds these stories just as the brain with one's history. The artist is interested in using maps, architectural and diagrammatic structures and imagery from science to construct her compositions, both formally and narratively. These maps and structures are personal geographies and refer to the body both imaginatively and physically. The density of stitches creates a flesh-like quality on the surface, while often the cloth is left with punctures, pulled and cut threads from the underside and pigment that has bled from the thread.



Nancy Lasar

Whether in drawing, painting or printmaking, the process for Nancy Lasar is about layering and energizing space in such a way that objects are fluid, interrelated and full of energy and movement. The artist tries to utilize a variety of lines, marks and media to suggest both stasis and openness to possibility and transformation as well as the passage of time. She is interested in shapes and objects reconfiguring in new relationships.