

A.I.R.

Investigations: Remembering Barbara Siegel

August 6 - September 5, 2021

Opening Reception: Friday, August 6, 12-6pm

Curated by Kathleen Schneider and Nancy Storrow

Curatorial Assistance by Taylor Bluestine



Barbara Siegel, *No Drips, Front and Back*, 2014, Chalk pastel and charcoal on paper, 30 x 22 inches. Photography by Jeanette May.

GALLERY I

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce *Investigations: Remembering Barbara Siegel*, an exhibition memorializing the life and work of Siegel, a late A.I.R. Member and artist known for her biographical mixed media installations and meticulously executed two-dimensional work. Curated by Kathleen Schneider and Nancy Storrow, the exhibition highlights the broad scope of Siegel's distinctive body of work, focusing on artwork made during her decade-long association with the gallery.

Barbara Siegel's practice was guided by an impulse to reconstruct the essence of being, recognizing the temporal boundaries and limitless expanse of a single life in the continuity of time. Through observation and reproduction of the belongings of others, Siegel created strong memorializing foci in generously interpretable collections of material and form. The layered nature of her work is closely linked to principles of collage—easily absorbing combinations of what might superficially seem incongruous materials, images, and concepts.

Featured in the exhibition are excerpts from three of Siegel's large-scale installations. *Missing* (2002) was made in response to the events of September 11, 2001. For this installation, Siegel transferred images and text sourced from missing posters pasted around her Tribeca neighborhood onto beeswax and cheesecloth sheets. Pinned to the wall, the individual sheets together make up the shape of a bird or airplane. As Siegel recalled in a 2015 interview, "This project, a memorial "biography" of lives cut short, was an emotional catharsis for me, but I promised myself that my next biographical subject would be a vital person who had lived a long and interesting life."

This promise was realized in Siegel's 2003 installation *Sea Queen*, which honored the life of octogenarian Bea Muller, the sole permanent resident of the ocean liner *Queen Elizabeth II*. *Sea Queen* is composed of miniature folded paper boats made from sheets of handwritten and printed materials pertaining to Muller's life and the cruise ship. When first shown, *Sea Queen* consisted of 54 boats, one for each of the 54 years of Muller's marriage. This exhibition presents a selection of individual works from the 2003 installation.

Rock Stars (2009) was inspired by the New York Times obituary for famed mineralogist Clifford Frondel (1907-2002). Through this body of work, Siegel honored Frondel as a kindred spirit. As Siegel remarked, "He [Frondel] not only named forty-eight new [mineral] species but also studied kidney stones, moon rocks, and the mineral patinas on ancient works of art. As an artist working in a free-wheeling and intuitive way, I particularly identified with Cliff's curiosity and creativity." This exhibition includes a selection of Siegel's precisely rendered charcoal and graphite drawings of individual rock specimens, titled *Forty-Eight* after the number of Frondel's mineralogical discoveries.

Exhibited alongside Siegel's installations are works from her final exhibition at the gallery, *Urban Road Kill* (2015). This body of work is a collection of one dozen highly detailed charcoal and pastel drawings made from close observation of detritus flattened by passing trucks and collected by Siegel on the building sites and streets of Lower Manhattan. For Siegel, *Urban Road Kill* represented a "shift of focus" from reconstructing and retelling the story of an individual life to a contemplation of time, metamorphosis, and objecthood more broadly. The 2015 exhibition was created in close collaboration with Ralph Di Donato, a construction superintendent and a friend of Siegel.

Barbara Siegel received her BA from the University of Chicago. She lived in New York City and was represented by A.I.R. Gallery from 2004-2015. She was an adjunct Associate Professor at Parsons, the New School for Design, NY. Her work is in several museum collections, including the National Museum of Art, Washington, DC; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; and the Newark Museum, Newark, NJ. In 2010, she and her husband, Gary Schwartz, spent a sabbatical semester in Seoul, South Korea at Sungshin Women's University. Siegel was admired and loved for her artwork, her teaching, and her fearless dedication to social justice. Barbara Siegel passed away in December 2015.

A.I.R. Gallery is wheelchair accessible via ramp. There are accessible toilets in the venue. There is comfortable seating with backs. Free tap water is available. The venue is nearest to the F train at York St (0.2 miles) and the A train at High St (0.5 miles). The nearest wheelchair accessible trains are the B, Q, R at Dekalb Av (1.1 miles) and the 2, 3 at Borough Hall (0.8 miles). The roads immediately surrounding the gallery are cobblestone. The nearest accessible parking garage (for an hourly fee) is two blocks away at 100 Jay St. No ID necessary for entry. Please contact info@airgallery.org for more information.

