

ARTIST PROFILE

DECLARATION
APRIL 21st –
SEPTEMBER 9th

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#DECLARATION
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Installation view, *WOMEN Words*, Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, Virginia, 2018. Photo: Terry Brown

BETTY TOMPKINS

In 2012, Betty Tompkins sent out an email asking for words that describe women. She received more than 3,000 words and phrases in multiple languages, submitted by both men and women, and incorporated them into small paintings that she combines into larger groupings like the one exhibited in *Declaration*. The backgrounds include lacy patterns and close-cropped views of genitalia, as well as abstract imagery based on 20th-century white male painters (e.g. Jackson Pollock's drip paintings).

WOMEN Words extends Tompkin's commitments as a feminist artist who has been painting since the 1960s. Tompkins continues to collect words about women for future work. If you would like to contribute, please email womenwords1000@gmail.com.



Installation view, *WOMEN Words*, detail, Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, Virginia, 2018. Photo: Terry Brown

ON VIEW

WOMEN Words, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 337 paintings (of
approximately 1000 in full series)

Courtesy of the artist and GAVLAK,
Palm Beach, Florida and Los Angeles,
California.

LOCATION

Gallery 1
Beverly Reynolds Gallery

RELATED PROGRAMS

TOPIC TOUR LOOKING AT ART

June 9, 2018, 1pm

STAFF PICK

Traci Garland
Director of Administration and Finance,
Registrar
August 16th, 12:30pm

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ticketing information.
All events are free and open to the
public.

MOBILE TOUR



icavcu.org/exhibitions/declaration/#mobile-tour

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INTERVIEW

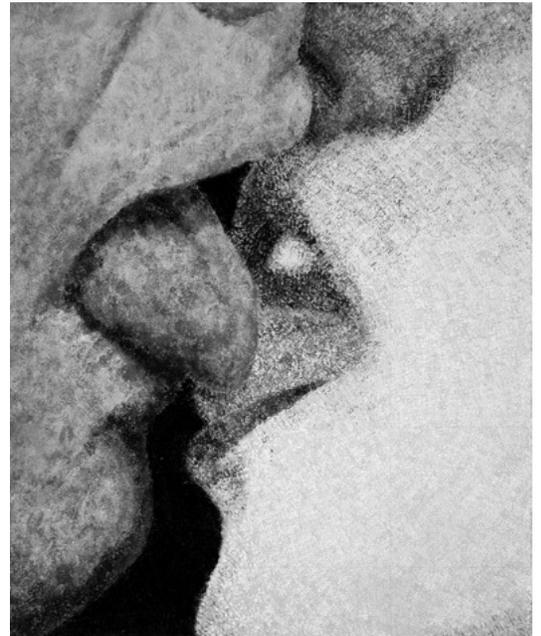
So much of what I got was so hateful. Never had misogyny so smacked in my face before. It unnerved me. It didn't stop me. I'd be sitting there looking at my lists and thinking about what I'd do, and I'd get a little scared. It's a lot to emotionally process. I've been exposed to every variety of misogyny but when it's in this concentrated form and it's your hand doing it, it's creepy. I started to paint backgrounds using the big bad boys of art as a way to protect myself. —Betty Tompkins

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU AS AN ARTIST?

I have been doing this for more than 50 years. I don't think about motivation. I just get up in the morning and do it.

PLEASE SHARE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK YOU'RE SHOWING IN *DECLARATION*.

I am showing a section of *WOMEN Words Phrases and Stories*. In 2002 and 2013, I sent around an email to my entire list asking for words or phrases about women. I asked for translations if not in English. I promised anonymity in the 2012 email which prompted a lot of stories. I received over 3000 unique replies with many repeats in over 7 languages. A lot of them were very nasty. I had no defined idea about how to paint them. To keep myself engaged, at a certain point, I decided to take on the big bad (and mostly dead) boys to see how the addition of language meant to describe women, and the abrupt shift in scale from huge to tiny would affect their original intent. I started with Richter's squeegee paintings (mine was a 6" plastic ruler) and moved on to Fontana, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and De Kooning. I also challenged myself to do a number of airbrush paintings of cunt imagery. The shift in scale down to 4x4" was a real struggle. I decided to do 1000 paintings because it was an absurd goal that when I started in January 2013 I thought would be impossible to reach. I eventually did and 1000 paintings were shown in 2016 at Flag Art Foundation, NYC and was then exhibited in toto at GAVLAK in Los Angeles.



Kiss Painting #2, acrylic on canvas, 2006. Image courtesy of the artist.

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BIOGRAPHY



Installation view: Sonya Clark, *Edifice and Mortar*; Cannupa Hanska Luger, *We Have Agency XI*; Betty Tompkins; and Betty Tompkins, *WOMEN Words*, Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, Virginia, 2018. Photo: Terry Brown

Betty Tompkins is known for her photorealistic, large-scale paintings depicting sexual imagery. Throughout her career, Tompkins has defined herself as a feminist painter. She is most recognized for paintings that appropriate images from heterosexual pornography to create abstracted, closely cropped images of sexual intercourse that function as a feminist statement of authority and power.

Tompkins received her B.Ed from Syracuse University in New York and her MA from Central Washington State College. Select solo exhibition: PPOW in New York, NY (2017); Marlborough Contemporary in New York (2017); Gavlak Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2016); The FLAG Art Foundation in New York, NY (2016); The Bruce High Quality Foundation in New York, NY (2015); and Galerie Rodolphe Janssen in Basel, Switzerland (2014). Selected group exhibitions: Cheim & Read Gallery in New York, NY (2016); Dallas Contemporary, Texas (2016); Matthew Marks Gallery in New York, NY (2014); Zacheta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, Poland (2014); and Centre Pompidou in Paris, France (2011). Collections include: Centre Pompidou and The Brooklyn Museum. Select awards: New York Foundation for the Arts (1988), Director's Award and the Warren Tanner Memorial Fund (1996).

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