

Sarah Schumann: Shock and Beauty
January 14 – February 8, 2025

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Opening reception: Saturday, January 18, from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Diane Rosenstein Gallery announces *Shock and Beauty*, a solo exhibition of photographs, collages, and paintings by Sarah Schumann (GER, 1933-2019), a Surrealist feminist artist who was based in Berlin until her death in 2019. A figurative painter and collagist, Schumann drew on her personal life as a queer artist to create heroic depictions of women in post-war Europe. Our gallery presentation of significant works from 1959-1998, a collaboration with the Van Ham Art Estate in Cologne, is Schumann's debut in Los Angeles.

'Women, in more or less abstract landscapes, are the subject of many of my works,' Schumann noted in 1975. 'There are biographical reasons for this - but I am also of the opinion that under today's production conditions, no female artist can spare herself the discussion about the relationship between her art and her gender, it is a necessary part of her work.'

The exhibition includes film and video: *An Image by Sarah Schumann*, a documentary directed by Harun Farocki (1944-2014), was filmed over a nine week period in 1978 and chronicles Schumann as she makes a single work. Schumann's final interview – *A Conversation between Sarah Schumann and Bettina Böttinger* (2019) – will be screened in tandem with the film.

As a painter and collagist, Sarah Schumann is considered one of the most important exponents of post-war Modernism and engaged themes of "schrecken und schönheit" (horror and beauty) in her figurative works. Historian Vojin Saša Vukadinović wrote, in the obituary (for *Texte zur Kunst*), "Sarah Schumann was - there is no other way to put it - a singular phenomenon." Raised in Berlin, she was 'self-taught' by necessity – neither Schumann nor her artist parents could afford tuition for an art academy. As a child refugee, she often experienced hunger, which contributed to health challenges later in life. Nevertheless, by the age of 20, in the early 1950s, Schumann began exhibiting works which ran completely counter to the ideal world of post-war conservatism in West German society.

Vukadinović observed that 'At a time when no one wanted to be reminded of the recent past, these [shock collages] reminded us in a completely undidactic way that beneath the wafer-thin foundation of civilization lies the incomprehensible.' These early "Schock-Collagen" reflect her childhood in the Second World War and the experiences of her youth in the post war era.

By 1962, Schumann received a solo show at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, with painting, mixed-media collages, and introduced Marilyn Monroe as an early motif. In 1968, Schumann returned to West Berlin and became very actively involved in the early stages of the new Feminist movement. She joined *Bread + Roses (Brot + Rosen)*, a significant feminist artist and activist collective in 1971; then co-curated *Women Artists International 1877-1977*, a landmark feminist survey. In the mid 1970s, she met the writer Silvia Bovenschen, who became her life partner, and Schumann incorporated images of Silvia in significant paintings and gouaches throughout their lives.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Schumann began to paint and create elaborate surrealist mixed-media collages. These 'collages from the 1970s placed women at the center of the image in order to broaden that very meaning,' Vukadinovic notes. 'Flowers, leaves and hair, chiffon, velvet and brocade were integrated into compositions that seemed like a twilight state of reality: Not unlike sensory illusions or incipient dreams, they placed the emphasis on an at times morbidly enraptured femininity, which here remained intangible in the literal sense, almost eliciting its potency in the unconscious.'

Currently, Sarah Schumann is included in *InformELLEs: Women Artists and Art Informel in the 1950s/60s*, a group exhibition in Germany at the Hessen Kassel Heritage. Her work was included in *Action, Gesture, Paint: Women Artists and Global Abstraction 1940-70* (2023), Whitechapel Gallery, London and the Fondation Vincent van Gogh, Arles; and *Lesbian Visions* (2018), Schwules Museum, Berlin. For over 60 years (1953 – 2024), she received numerous solo exhibitions throughout Germany, notably in Berlin at KUNSTstätte Dorothea, Galerie Albrecht, and Galerie am Savignyplatz; in London, at the Institute of Contemporary Art/ICA (1962); and throughout Europe. The artist's paintings and collages are in the permanent collection of the Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; Morsbroich Museum, Leverkusen; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (n.b.k.), Berlin, and others.

Diane Rosenstein Gallery thanks Antje Ehmann and the Farocki Foundation for permission to screen *An Image by Sarah Schumann* (1978); and *A Conversation between Sarah Schumann and Bettina Böttinger* (2019) is courtesy Van Ham Art Estate, Cologne.