

Cindy Workman

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Left: **Cindy Workman, No. 42, 2000**, Lambda print, Plexiglas, mounting hardware, 60 3/4 x 48 1/2".

Right: **Cindy Workman, Large Woman 17, 2006**, digital print, Plexiglas, frame, 56 3/4 x 41 3/4".

For the past two decades, multimedia artist Cindy Workman has created collage-based art, incorporating images from such incongruous sources as children's drawings, vintage pornography, and mathematical diagrams. Her first United States retrospective is on view through August 14 at Lennon, Weinberg in New York.

THE RETROSPECTIVE WAS CURATED to highlight the central theme of my work: women. From early on, I've had a keen interest in "woman as object." Although I wouldn't say that this has disappeared in the newer pieces, my last show included individual portraits of women who weren't seen totally as objects. Narrative has also crept into the work—not storytelling per se, but rather a linear situation in which I interrogate gender, specifically themes such as what it means to be a woman, the emergence of roles, and the act of role-playing.

My parents collected art—mostly American painters, including de Kooning—and from a very young age I was able to visit artists' studios and get a firsthand look at what it meant to be an artist. Because of this exposure, I was aware that it was possible to visually express what it means to be female. I trained as a Minimalist painter, and although structure has remained very important to me, it wasn't satisfying in the end. When I was in art school, it was possible either to be a painter or a sculptor. I wanted both, and I think mixed media serves both these interests. There's no hard-and-fast rule for my choice of images. Sometimes I've bought photographs simply because I'm moved by them, without knowing how I'm going to use them. In other instances, I have a more specific agenda. For example, in a series involving mathematical diagrams, I looked for pictures that were very structured and minimal.

I use vintage pornography in my work not to comment on the act of sex itself, but rather its implications for what it means to be a woman. I've never considered my appropriation of it titillating. I see it more from a point of vulnerability: When you have sex for the first time, boundaries are asserted and you are able to discover who you are. This same self-defining process occurs in relationships such as those with parents and society. The exposed state that results specifically in womanhood is what interests me. I would say that my body of work is analytic but not specifically influenced by feminist theory. Women are challenged daily by virtue of their gender, even when they aren't specifically cognizant of it.

This is also tied to my use of children's drawings. One of the points I hoped to make is that sexuality is not just lascivious but also innocent. I wanted to show the most basic level on which character and roles are created. I also enjoy the visual contrast this provides. Many of the drawings were made by my sister as a child, and the children of my friends have also given some to me. I like to think that, because of the contrast between these images, the work presents itself like a flower—immediately very pretty, but full of many different layers. You come look, pollinate, and then commit to the piece and the fact that it has heavier content than you had initially imagined.

— *As told to Britany Salsbury*