

Barbara Rachko



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Gods and Monsters

29 September - 24 October 2009

HP GARCIA GALLERY



Untitled, 2009, chromogenic print, edition of 5, 24" x 24"

THE ART OF LETTING GO

by Lisa Paul Streitfeld

At the close of the twentieth century, art and high culture were declared at an end. We now know the reason. Western civilization had reached the point where we were filled up with too much stuff; we had to empty ourselves to allow a new paradigm to emerge.

Given this perspective, the artist's current task is to create a vacancy where art can come alive again. Barbara Rachko's recent trajectory has been precisely this: to empty out her crowded picture frame and -- like the whole of western civilization -- reduce her reliance on her proficient technical skill to allow mystery to arise through a gradual unfolding. This process bore fruit a few years ago with a leap into a new medium of photography resulting in the compelling new series, *Gods and Monsters*.

A commercial pilot who subsequently became a naval officer, Rachko made frequent trips to Mexico and Central America, where became entranced by folk figures: "an amalgam of childhood memories, half-forgotten dreams, and images encountered in literature, pre-Columbian art, mythology, and cinema." With these powerful visual elements, the artist's hyper-real portraiture was transplanted by a mysterious "cast of characters" serving as connections to the universal unconscious. She began with pastels of small tableaus and worked into life size sets that would frequently incorporate her self-portrait.

This award-winning artist, who studied psychology in college, describes her pastel paintings as "methodical, labor-intensive, and highly representational." Yet, the thematic subject matter evolved to reveal the infiltration of the unconscious into daily life, a universal millennial theme that became horrifyingly personal and real when her husband died on September 11 on board of the plane hitting the Pentagon.

The subsequent *Gods and Monsters* experiment, which – unlike so much new photography – rejects digital manipulation in favor of the "synchronistic accident," required a conscious embrace of the Uncertainty Principle. The purpose is to release the very mechanism of control. "These images are created inside the camera and in the darkroom. To blur the scene, I pick a focal length and leave it on that setting as I work, moving in and out and around the setup," she writes in her statement. "Sometimes I position the camera flat on the floor or tilt it up at an angle, pressing the shutter release without looking through the rangefinder."

Every image is unique, a surprise that cannot be repeated, which tears away at ego expectation. “Always I am letting go,” she writes, “breaking habits learned as a painter and a photographer, exploring, and seeing what will happen.” The unconscious production is completed with the conscious act of observation, thereby marrying opposites of left and right brain inherent in the meshing of a new process with the emerging archetype of Self.

Rachko has simplified both her process and her vision. Using gels on the lens, she is experimenting with color and ridding herself of excess design elements, as well as abandoning photography techniques such as focusing and composing through the rangefinder, to penetrate into the mysteries that these folk art figures represent in their native culture. Her earlier pastels foreshadowed this gradual unfolding of the mystical in daily life, thereby enabling the mind to spontaneously prioritize what is revealed of figure and symbol. The happy result is the viewer can access the image in a manner that Rachko’s earlier works, for all their excessive detail, could not.

The artist refers to her new technique as “painting with a camera.” The thematic variations resulting from crossing these disciplinary boundaries frees the unconscious material into its own mysterious dance. There is an ironic twist at work here; the artist’s pastel paintings were composed from photographs. This ouroboric interchange between mediums requires a metamorphosis of soul. Such an achievement is approached by dissolving realism (the representational painting) via the darkroom into the dreamscape of the photograph, thereby achieving a post-digital transformation of the medium into the vehicle, once again, for pondering the very nature of reality.

In freeing her subjects to perform as phantasms and faeries of heaven and earth. Barbara Rachko has transformed herself into a human filter for the Paradigm Leap. Subsequently, *Gods and Monsters* reveals the new promise for art: mysterious narratives that enthrall the viewer as participant in a communal rite of passage into global transformation.

Lisa Paul Streitfeld is a critic, curator and novelist publishing a book about her 21st century art theory. Ms. Streitfeld’s credits include The New York Times and Sculpture magazine among other publications.



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BIOGRAPHY

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2009

Barbara Rachko: Gods and Monsters, HP Garcia Gallery, New York, NY
Definition of Moments, Yajnavalka, Houston, TX (two-person show)
NOIR, Grand Rapids, MI

2008

Out of the Black: Pastel Paintings and Photographs, New Art Center, New York, NY, curated by Barbara MacAdam, deputy editor, ARTnews
Art at First, New York, NY

2007

Gods and Monsters, Capital One Art Gallery, McLean, VA

2006

Azarian McCullough Art Gallery, St. Thomas Aquinas College, Sparkill, NY

2005

Blackstone River Gallery, Woonsocket, RI
Artspace, Richmond, VA
Scenes, Crown Center Gallery, Loyola University, Chicago, IL
Domestic Threats, Joy Pratt Markham Gallery, The Walton Arts Center, Fayetteville, AR

2004

Edward William Gallery, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Hackensack, NJ
Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, Cambridge, MA
Domestic Threats, Louise Jones Brown Gallery, Duke University, Durham, NC

2001

Olin Gallery, Roanoke College, Salem, VA

2000

La MaMa La Galleria, New York, NY

1999

There is No Place Like Home, Park Avenue Atrium, NYC, curated by Leah Poller, director, Art Alliance

1998

Broadway Windows, New York, NY
There is No Place Like Home, Mercedes-Benz Manhattan ArtSpace, NYC, curated by Leah Poller
Through the Window, Doll-Anstadt Gallery, Burlington, VT

1996

Monkey Business, Brewster Arts Ltd., New York, NY
Watchung Art Center, Watchung, NJ
School 33 Art Center, Baltimore, MD

1995

Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY
Howard County Community College, Columbia, MD

1993

Cunneen-Hackett Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, NY
Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria, VA

1992

Capitol Hill Art League, Washington, DC

Selected Group Exhibitions

2009

Joyce Dutka Arts Foundation award winners, Hollis Taggart Galleries, New York, NY
Rogue Space, New York, NY
Artepco, Jacob Javits Convention Center, New York, NY; Artisan Direct, Pittsford, NY
Longstreth Goldberg, Naples, FL
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
ArtHaus, San Francisco, CA
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA

2008

Timeless: The Art of Drawing, Morris Museum, Morristown, NJ
CANcer, New Art Center, New York, NY
Modes of Expression, Deloitte and Touche, New York, NY
ReynoldsWolfe, Center 44, New York, NY
Animals in Your Kingdom, Micro Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ; curated by Carter Foster, curator, department of drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Artwell Gallery, Torrington, CT
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
Hefton-Page Fine Art, Blue Ridge, GA
Longstreth Goldberg, Naples, FL
Figurative Works by Gallery and Guest Artists, Outward Appearances, and About Face, ArtHaus, San Francisco, CA
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA

2007

Broome Street Gallery, New York, NY
SCAN, New Art Center, New York, NY
Free Play, Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
Hefton-Page Fine Art, Blue Ridge, GA
Longstreth Goldberg, Naples, FL
Masters' Mystery Art Show, Ritz Carlton, Art Basel Miami Beach, FL
Five x seven, Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin, TX
Five x seven - on the road: Houston, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX
ArtHaus, San Francisco, CA
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA

2006

Between Body and Object, Anthony Giordano Gallery, Dowling College, Oakdale, NY
Postcards From the Edge, Sikkema, Jenkins, New York, NY
Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
Hefton-Page Fine Art, Blue Ridge, GA
Longstreth Goldberg, Naples, FL
Masters' Mystery Art Show, Ritz Carlton, Art Basel Miami Beach, FL
About Face, ArtHaus, San Francisco, CA
Big Fun, ArtHaus, San Francisco, CA
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA

2005

Room With a View Gallery, Shanghai, China
Night of a Thousand Drawings, Artists Space, New York, NY
Multiple Oneness, Park-Art Gallery, New York, NY
Au Courant, A Space Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Gallery Z, Providence, RI
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
Art Struck Gallery, Blue Ridge, GA
Longstreth and Goldberg, Naples, FL
Margeaux Kurtie Modern Art, Madrid, NM
House Party - Celebrating 15 Years of Breast Cancer Action, ArtHaus, San Francisco, CA
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA
Permanent Collection Loan, Main Library, Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, NM

2004

What an Art Gallery Should Actually Look Like (Large Glass), Exit Art, New York, NY
Night of a Thousand Drawings, Artists Space, New York, NY
Play Things, Kirkland Art Center, Clinton, NY; curated by John Rossis
The Drawing Show, Old Church Cultural Center School of Art, Demarest, NJ
National Drawing 2004, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ
Art of Survival, Herspace, West Long Branch, NJ; curated by Nanci Hersh, artist
Looking In/Looking Out, Paul Mellon Arts Center at Choate Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, CT
Embodiment: Myths in Animal Form, PostPicasso.com, Richmond, VA
Critical Mass, 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA
Masters' Mystery Art Show, Ritz Carlton, Art Basel Miami Beach, FL
Padulo Longstreth and Goldberg, Naples, FL
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
Integrate/Disintegrate, Visual Arts Gallery, Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, NM
Margeaux Kurtie Modern Art, Madrid, NM
Permanent Collection Loan, Main Library, Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, NM
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA

2003

Fighting Back: An Exhibition in Support of the Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women, Tokyo, Japan
Phyllis Weil & Company, New York, NY
Monique Goldstrom, New York, NY
Suspended Narratives, Fine Arts Center Galleries, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI
Boston Corporate Art, Boston, MA
Fetish and Ritual, Bruce Gallery of Art, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Edinboro, PA
Hudson Gallery, Sylvania, OH
Little Gems, Padulo Longstreth and Goldberg, Naples, FL
International Works on Paper, William Whipple Art Gallery, Southwest State U., Marshall, MN
Margeaux Kurtie Modern Art, Madrid, NM
Permanent Collection Loan, Main Library, Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, NM
Gallery Bergelli, Larkspur, CA
1212 Gallery, Burlingame, CA

2002

Art Alliance, New York, NY
Continuity, La Mama La Galleria, New York, NY
Chromatic Intrigues, Seton Hall University, Newark, NJ
The Insomnia Show, City Without Walls, Newark, NJ; curated by Lori Field and Elizabeth Seaton, artists
Boston Corporate Art, Boston, MA
All Dolled Up, Suffolk Museum, Suffolk, VA
Ellipse Art Center, Arlington, VA
Extraordinary Things: A Study of Contemporary Art Through Material Culture, University Art Gallery, Terre Haute, IN
Padulo Longstreth and Goldberg, Naples, FL
Margeaux Kurtie Modern Art, Madrid, NM
Gallery Bergelli, Larkspur, CA

2001

Art Alliance, New York, NY
Boston Corporate Art, Boston, MA
KLFine Arts, Highland Park, IL
Doll-Anstadt Gallery, Burlington, VT
Go Figure, Gallery Bergelli, Larkspur, CA
Steve Stein Gallery, Sherman Oaks, CA

2000

Brewster Arts Ltd., New York, NY

Art Alliance, New York, NY
Emerge2000, Aljira, Newark, NJ
City Without Walls, Newark, NJ
Extraordinary Things: A Study of Contemporary Art Through Material Culture, University Gallery, University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT
Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum, Oradell, NJ
Doll-Anstadt Gallery, Burlington, VT
James Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA
Touchstone Gallery, Washington, DC
KL Fine Arts, Highland Park, IL
Latin Influences, Gallery Bergelli, Larkspur, CA
Steve Stein Gallery, Sherman Oaks, CA
Galeria Dos Damas, Palm Springs, CA

1999

Brewster Arts Ltd., New York, NY
Art Alliance, New York, NY
Chamot Gallery, Jersey City, NJ
KL Fine Arts, Highland Park, IL

1998

Brewster Arts Ltd., New York, NY
Art Alliance, New York, NY
Chamot Gallery, Jersey City, NJ
The Biennial at Ben Shahn Galleries: Lines of Direction, Ben Shahn Galleries, William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ
New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, Summit, NJ

1997

Brewster Arts Ltd., New York, NY
Chamot Gallery, Jersey City, NJ
Realities III, Realities IV, Art Alliance, New York, NY; and Fenton Moore Gallery, Buffalo, NY
New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, Summit, NJ

1996

Brewster Arts Ltd., New York, NY
Realities: International Contemporary Realism, and *Realities II*, Art Alliance, New York, NY
New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, Summit, NJ

1995

National Midyear Exhibition, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, Summit, NJ

1994

Gallery Juno, New York, NY
Irene Leach Memorial Exhibition, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA
American Drawing Biennial, Muscarelle Museum of Art, Williamsburg, VA

1993

Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, NY
Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts, New Castle, PA

1992

American Drawing Biennial, Muscarelle Museum of Art, Williamsburg, VA
Harmon-Meek Gallery, Naples, FL

1991

Sumner Museum, Washington, DC
Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts, New Castle, PA

Bibliography

Aptaker, Ann and Miller, Stephen. *Timeless: The Art of Drawing*, (Catalogue), Morris Museum, Morristown, NJ, 2008. (Reproduction)

Awodey, Mark. "Southern Culture," (Exhibition Review), *Seven Days* (Burlington, VT), Oct. 28, 1998. (Reproduction)

Birke, Judy. "Exploring Art-Making's Internal and External Worlds," (Review), *New Haven (CT) Register*, Sept. 26, 2004.

Bischoff, Dan. "Art by Hand: Regional Drawing Throughout the Century," (Review), *Star Ledger*, (Newark, NJ), October 4, 2008.

Bischoff, Dan. "A World of Art." (Review), *The Star Ledger*, (Newark, NJ), February 17, 2006

Bischoff, Dan. "Insomnia Exhibit is a Real Eye-Opener," (Review), *The Star Ledger*, (Newark, NJ), March 24, 2002. (Reproduction)

Bischoff, Dan. "Gallery Celebrates 25 Years in the Vanguard," (Review), *The Star Ledger*, Sept. 17, 2000. (Reproduction)

Bischoff, Dan. "Farewell Heralds New Beginnings," (Review), *The Star Ledger*, March 23, 2000. (Reproduction)

Bischoff, Dan. "Works that Create and Hold Energy," (Review) *The New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1996. (Reproduction)

CALYX, *A Journal of Art and Literature by Women*, Corvallis, OR, Vol. 22:1, Summer 2004. (Rep's.)

Cambridge Blue Book, International Biographical Center, Cambridge, England, 2005.

Coates, Jason. "All Mixed Up: Artspace's New Show includes Artists Whose Work Contrasts Sharply with Each Other," (Exhibition Review), *Style Weekly*, Richmond, VA, Oct 5, 2005. (Reproduction)

Collins, Erica. "Suspended Narratives: Provocative Works on Display in Kingston," (Review), *The North Kingston Standard-Times* (RI), Oct. 23 - 24, 2003.

Collins, Tom. "SFCC's Exhibition Space One of City's Best-Kept Secrets," (Review), *Albuquerque (NM) Journal*, Feb. 24, 2004.

Dellafora, James. "From the Navy to Artist's Life," (Featured Article), *The Villager* (New York), Aug. 28, 1996 (Reproduction)

Dellolio Peter. "Previews: Jose Luis Corella, Francesco DePani, Ellen and Michel Gran, Barbara Rachko, Mitzura Salgian," (Review), *NYArts*. #14. Oct. 1997

Dictionary of International Biography, International Biographical Center, Cambridge, England, 25th Ed.: 1997.

Encyclopedia of Living Artists, Penn Valley, CA, 10th Ed.: 1997. (Reproduction)

Fighting Back: An Exhibition in Support of the Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women, (Exhibition Catalogue), Amnesty International, Tokyo, Japan, March 2004. (Reproduction)

Fortwengler, Erica. "Barbara Rachko: Journey to Finding Success as an Artist," (Feature Article), *Developments*, Alexandria, VA, Spring 2008. (Reproductions)

Grant, Daniel. "Self-Publishing a Catalogue," (Feature Article), *American Artist*, February 2004. (Reproduction)

Harrison, Helen. "With Luck, Iconoclasts Find Their Mediums." (Review), *The New York Times*, Feb. 18, 2006. (Reproduction)

Henry, Gerrit. "Barbara Rachko: Gods and Monsters," *Domestic Threats*, (Catalogue), New York, NY, 2001, reprinted 2004. (Reproductions)

Konau, Britta. "He Urged Her to Abdicate and Film Noir," *Domestic Threats*. (Catalogue), New York, NY, 2001, reprinted 2004. (Reproductions)

Klein, Richard. "Curator's Remarks," *Aljira Emerge 2000* (Exhibition Catalogue), Aljira: A Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ, March 9 - April 21, 2000. (Reproduction)

Liburt, Ellen. "Violence, Sex, Greed, & Domination Pervade Brewster Arts Opening." (Review), *Open Air* (New York), Oct. 23, 1996. (Reproductions)

Maya, Carey. "Art Between Structure and Being" (Review) *The Suffolk County News*, (Oakdale, NY), Feb. 23, 2006. (Reproduction)

Mercado, Ashley and McGurk, John J. "The Erotic Art Show at the Blackstone River Gallery," (Review), *Agenda* (Woonsocket, RI), April 14 - 28, 2005

Marquis Who's Who in America, New Providence, NJ, 57th Ed.: 2003; 58th Ed.: 2004; 60th Diamond Ed.: 2006; 61st Ed.: 2007; 62nd Ed.: 2008.

Marquis Who's Who in Finance and Industry, New Providence, NJ, 34th Ed.: 2004 - 2005.

Marquis Who's Who in the World, New Providence, NJ, 21st Ed.: 2004; 22nd Ed.: 2005; 23rd Ed.: 2006; 24th Ed.: 2007.

Marquis Who's Who in American Women, New Providence, NJ, 19th Ed.: 1995 - 96; 20th Ed.: 1997 - 98; 23rd Ed.: 2002 - 03; 24th Ed.: 2004 - 05; 25th Silver Anniversary Ed.: 2006 - 07; 26th Ed.: 2007.

Maya, Carey. "Art Between Structure and Being" (Review), *The Suffolk County News*, (Oakdale, NY), Feb. 23, 2006. (Reproduction)

McCormack, Jeannie. "Barbara Rachko's Surrogates for Our Inner Demons," *Gallery & Studio*, (New York, NY), Nov. - Dec. 2006/Jan. 2007. (Reproduction)

McCue, Kraz. "Curator's Statement," *Extraordinary Things: A Study of Contemporary Art Through Material Culture*, (Exhibition Brochure), Indiana State University, Terra Haute, IN; Oct. 30 - Nov. 22, 2003. (Reproductions)

Mercado, Ashley and McGurk, John J. "The Erotic Art Show at the Blackstone River Gallery," (Review), *Agenda* (Woonsocket, RI) April 14 - 28, 2005.

New American Paintings, Open Studio Press, Wellesley, MA; April 1998. (Reproductions)

Norris, Doug. "URI Show Ranges From the Surreal to the Sublime," (Review), *South County Independent* (Providence, RI), Oct. 23, 2003

On the Issues Magazine, Winter 2009, Long Island City, NY. (Reproductions)

O'Shaughnessy, Tracey. "Pilskin, Curator and Artist, "Looking In/Looking Out," (Review), *The Sunday Republican*, Chesire, CT, October 3, 2004.

The Pedestal Magazine.com, Charlotte, NC, June/July 2003. (Reproductions)

Phillips, Renee. "Art Entrepreneur: Are Juried Competitions Worth the Gamble," (Feature Article), Art Calendar, Dec. 2008. (Reproduction)

Poet Lore, Volume 91, Number 2, Ann Arbor, MI. (Reproductions Front and Back Cover).

Pritzker, Elisa. "Elisa Pritzker Talks Art: Artists Open Studios," (Feature Article), Delaware & Hudson Canvast, Nov. 2008.

Proskow, Christine. "The Year's Best Art: Experimental," (Feature Article), The Artist's Magazine, Dec. 2007. (Reproduction)

Rachko, Barbara. "Artist's Remarks," Fetish and Ritual, (Exhibition Brochure), Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Edinboro, PA; Sept. 3 - 25, 2003. (Reproductions)

Rodríguez, Bill. "Dream Weavers: Suspended Narratives Explores Extra Dimensions," (Review), The Providence (RI) Phoenix, Oct. 31 - Nov. 6, 2003.

Schaber, Greg. "Paint What's Important," (Feature Article), The Artist's Sketchbook, Jan. 2003. (Reproductions)

Schaber, Greg. "Shifting Your Viewpoint," (Feature Article), The Artist's Magazine, Oct. 1997. (Reproductions)

Tolnick, Judith. "Curator's Remarks," Suspended Narratives, (Exhibition Brochure), University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, Oct. 9 - Dec. 8, 2003. (Reproduction)

Tulane Review, New Orleans, LA, Volume XI, Issue 1, Fall 1999. (Reproduction)

2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century, International Biographical Center, Cambridge, England, 2003, 2004.

2000 Outstanding People, International Biographical Center, Cambridge, England, 2003.

Van Siclen, Bill. "At URL Gallery, Works That Will Give You Pause," (Review), The Providence (RI) Journal, Nov. 6 - 9, 2003. (Reproduction)

Vine, Richard. "Critic's Remarks," (Untitled Brochure), New York, NY, 1996. (Reproductions)

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