

Dorothy Iannone at Berlinische Galerie – an interview with curator Dr. Annelie Lütgens

Dorothy Iannone: *This Sweetness Outside of Time* is an extraordinary retrospective of work by a highly influential artist. I caught up with the curator to find out more.

Written by Amelia Gregory



Statue of Liberty.

When I received an email telling me about the new **Dorothy Iannone** at the **Berlinische Galerie** I decided to delve deeper and find out more about this enigmatic and influential Berlin based artist, whose vast range of artwork is rich in pattern, humour and eroticism. I caught up with curator **Dr. Annelie Lütgens** (pictured below) to find out more.



Why do you think it is important to bring Dorothy Iannone to a wider audience?

Dorothy Iannone is, simply, one of the most fascinating female artists of the 20th and 21st centuries. Her artistic career, which has spanned over fifty years, is entirely unique, and is, as such, quite valuable in terms of art history. Above that, Iannone is one of the most important artistic spirits concerning the struggle against censorship, as well as for women's sexual and intellectual emancipation. As such, it is incredibly important to show her work, which has up until recently been distinctly undervalued, addressing all aspects of her art, in a city which was so important to her career.



Big Baby.

How does she create her artworks and what are the main themes (for someone not acquainted with the artist)?

Ann Hamilton's works are created through any number of mediums. The retrospective starts at the end of the fifties with her Abstract Expressionist work, and continues through to the sixties where her work became more and more figurative, personal and sexual. This process can be followed through the exhibition. You can see not only paintings and drawings with texts and narrative, but also video boxes, for example. Throughout her career, she has experimented with painting, felt pen, collage, has combined drawing with text and letterings, using all manner of

materials and formats. Her work includes painting, visual narrative, autobiographical texts, music, film and more. Her themes, however, are quite singular, always focussing on the idea of ecstatic love, free love, autonomous female sexuality and the sexual union between man and woman as a spiritual one.



Let the light from my lighthouse shine on you.

What aspects of her life inspired the mystical and spiritual dimension that is present in much of her artwork?

The mysticity of Lannone's works is inextricably bound to her exploration of human sexuality. Human figures began to emerge in her works in the mid-60s, beginning to evolve around love and sex following her relationship with Dieter Roth from 1967-1974. During this time, Lannone created pieces that depicted sequences from her relationship and pictorial narratives, in which the figures, often named Dieter and Dorothy, were, whether clothed or naked, always depicted as sexual beings with visible, if not prominent, genitalia. At the same time, in the 1970s, more distinctly mythological and historical figures began to appear in her work, like The White Goddess, Penthesilea and Cleopatra: strong, self-assured women, facing men with a mixture of wit and sensuality. From 1984, Lannone began to practice Tibetan Buddhism, and her following work reflected her interest in religious questions along with the realities of love, depicting the meeting of men and women as a mystical union that transcends individuality.

Why did Dorothy move to Berlin and why was that move so important?

Iannone moved to Berlin in 1976 following her reception of a grant from the DAAD's Artist's program. Her early years in the city could easily be labelled one of the most important periods of her career. During those years in Berlin, Iannone drew a number of multipartite series that are now ranked among her most major works. The Berlin Beauties, for example, which includes 70 drawings, is both a poetic invocation of a fictional lover and a declaration of her love for Berlin. The 48 drawings of An Icelandic Saga, made in 1978/83 and 1986, is an autobiographical exploration of her relationship with Roth. Her relationship with the city was, however, quite complicated, as, despite her love for the city, her works were met with little understanding and aroused hardly any interest. So her following series, for example, An Explosive Interlude (1979), focused more on a criticism of the materialism and patriarchal structures in Germany.



The next great moment.

What kind of art does she make today and what kind of life does she lead?

Today, Dorothy Iannone still lives and works in Berlin. In the first decade of the 21st century, she created, for example, a new series of wooden cutouts: The Movie People, interpreting great couples from films like in Morocco, Les Amants, The Piano, or Brokeback Mountain. Beyond that, she now strives to complete the story that has evolved through her works throughout the years, creating not as many new works but continually searching for the appropriate new form in which to bring together unreleased recordings, videos and texts. In the end, it would appear her time now is dedicated more to developing a retrospective of her life and career, as her works maintain a contemporaneity and freshness still today.