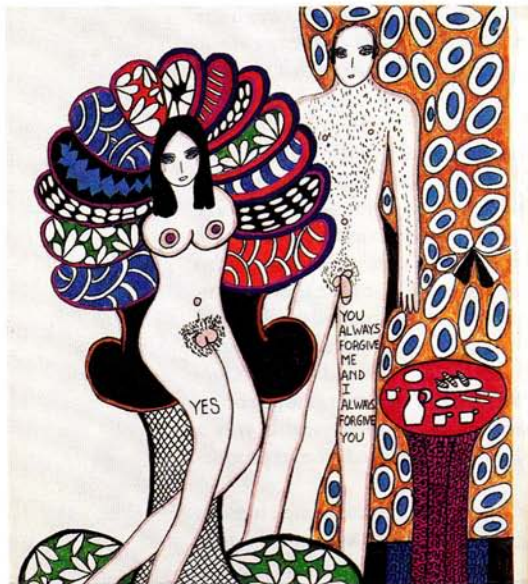


BERLIN

Dorothy Iannone

BERLINISCHE GALERIE

It took a while for Dorothy Iannone to have her first comprehensive institutional solo exhibition in Berlin—considering that she has lived



Dorothy Iannone, *Dialogues X* (detail), 1968–69, one of nine drawings, felt-tip pen and collage on paper, 14 ½ x 14 ½".

This *amour fou*, a deep artistic as well as personal connection, became the main subject of her work—as in “Dialogues,” 1968, a series of storyboards depicting intimate (and at times very funny) dialogues between her and her lover, whom she refers to as her muse. The interplay of text and image continued after her separation from Roth in 1974, for instance in the series “Berlin Beauties,” 1977–78, an illustrated love poem.

Though Iannone was always greatly respected by her artist friends, institutional support was rare. The very striking, joyful, and highly sensual style of her paintings and collages, which cast explicit figuration in densely ornamented compositions whose main subjects are private mythologies and universal ecstasy, didn’t fit the ruling categories of their time, and was often dismissed as folkloristic, naive, or insufficiently feminist. More than once she experienced censorship due to her openly erotic material—famously at Harald Szeemann’s 1969 exhibition “*Freunde - Friends - d’Fründe*” at Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland, where fellow artists demanded that depictions of genitals be covered with tape. Iannone and Roth subsequently withdrew from the show, and she made a comic about the event, the artist’s book *The Story of Bern (or) Showing Colors*, 1970.

Lately, however, Iannone’s work has been rediscovered by younger curators and newer galleries, especially since her inclusion in the Berlin Biennale in 2006. A sharp, self-reflexive sense of humor is one of the great qualities of her work. Another is its sheer beauty, influenced by Matisse and tantric painting, among other things. Even though male and female sexual organs appear in almost every image (even when people are dressed), and many show cunnilingus, fellatio, and intercourse in various positions, the depictions are so highly stylized that they transcend any notion of pornography. Female genitalia are generally represented by an oversize pair of labia majora that actually rather resemble male testicles (as if Iannone wanted, literally, to equip her women—who mostly resembled the artist herself—with “balls”). An exception is *Yes*, 1981, in which a double-headed body features a highly stylized vulva adorned by an erect penis representing a joyful melding of both genders. It is this longing for eternal union, the true equality of gender, even in games of dominance and submission, that lies at the core of her work. This breakthrough retrospective of paintings, collages, objects, books, and films from 1959 to 2014—including her cutout series “People,” 1966–67; videos and Singing Boxes, as she called them, from the 1970s; and many artist’s books and large-scale canvases—highlights Iannone’s intermediality and radical subjectivity in her unconditional intermingling of art and life. She is one of those rare artists who has always fearlessly followed her own path.

—Eva Scharrer