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Nancy Spero

Acts of Rebellion

Main description

Nancy Spero is one of the most intriguing artists of her generation. Her multifaceted oeuvre explores the existential questions of humankind—the relations between the sexes, in particular, and the role of violence. For Spero, it was the human figure—and from 1974 onwards, exclusively depictions of women—that served as her most important means of expression. Resorting to images ranging from ancient Egyptian and pre-Columbian representations of women to modern images taken from fashion advertising, she places them into new semantic contexts. Isolated from their original surroundings, the motifs raise fundamental questions concerning women and the notion of femininity that lie at their heart.

Spero's works are unique in their formal appearance, combining collages, prints and paintings. Many consist of long bands of paper that the artist then covered with collages and scripts or prints with specifically produced printing plates—a redefinition of the concept of ancient murals or scrolls. Based on significant works from the artist's estate and public institutions as well as private collections, this book provides a comprehensive insight into the creative output of one of the most original female artists of the second half of the twentieth century, spanning more than four decades. *Acts of Rebellion* furthermore sheds light on the art scene of the time and on Nancy Spero's role, in particular, by allowing contemporary witnesses to speak.

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Biography

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1926, Nancy Spero was raised in Chicago. She studied at the Art Institute of Chicago (BFA 1949) and in Paris (1949–50). After itinerating with her husband Leon Golub for some years in the US and Europe, they settled in New York City in 1964, where Spero immediately became involved in the Vietnam antiwar movement. In the 1970s, she participated in the women's liberation movement, struggling against the underrepresentation of women artists. During that time, her artistic work mainly addressed the oppression of women in the past and present. In the 1980s and '90s, however, Spero focused on women as protagonists. Spero died in New York City in 2009.

Bibliography

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English

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