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ELEANOR ANTIN: What time is it?

May 14 – June 18, 2016

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Opening: Saturday, May 14th from 4:00 – 6:00 pm

"What time is it?"

On a warm sunny day in June, 1968, transfer a Bronx brat grown up into a Greenwich Village Bohemian in the days before Soho and the East Village, during the early beginnings of Conceptual Art, to a sleepy little village, Solana Beach, on the outskirts of San Diego. 2 1/2 hopeless and exhausted New Yorkers after a 10 day drive, the 1/2 being Blaise, the 1 year old son of the artist Eleanor Antin, and the poet, David Antin. The screaming child suddenly burned with a fever of 104 when they arrived. When the distraught parents discovered blooming orange trees in the garden of the house rented for them by the University of California at San Diego, they started squeezing orange juice and by nightfall, the little brat was sleeping calmly and at peace with the world. So began the life of 3 immigrants from one end of the country to the other, at the time a sparsely populated, marvelously endowed semi desert with chaparral, cactus, birds, coyotes, lagoons, the magnificent skies and the peaceful, blue waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Pretty soon, Eleanor picked up her first store catalogue. No more subways to Macy's on 34th St. and running up and down on escalators. The new catalogues had everything in them that a life could need. The Sears catalogue was especially crowded with objects from lowly brush shavers to corsets, from ladders to wedding gowns. Walking or bicycling through Solana Beach, she saw different kinds of people than she was used to "back home". For one thing they moved slower. And talked slower. And she began to give these people names and lives which she created by purchasing the relevant objects from her well-thumbed Sears catalogue. Not yet knowing the Southern California art scene which looked very different from the one

she knew anyway, she went back to NY to do a show called "California Lives" at Gain Ground, one of the first non commercial gallery spaces, Her friend, the artist, John Baldessari summed up the general take when he said, "The materials are great Ellie, but nobody knows who these people are." Since to me, they looked like average folks, I went back to San Diego after the show, and worked on a new one. "Portraits of Eight New York Women" made up of people, at least some of whom would be known to the New York audience. But most art world people still didn't know how to recognize their next door neighbor. Only one woman wanted her portrait which I gave her gladly. A year later, she called to say the piece was making her nervous and her therapist suggested she give it back. The portrait consisted of a standard black city apartment door with several locks, an eye hole through which she could spy on who was outside the door, a welcome mat, a bottle of skimmed milk and fat free cottage cheese with an envelope (morning delivery) and the apartment keys left "accidentally" in the lock, probably the night before. Surely, a portrait of vulnerability and distress. It was courting danger in then crime-riddled NY. So the model finally got it but didn't want to look at it anymore. I suggested she leave the door at a construction site (from where I had stolen it in the first place), put the welcome mat outside her apartment door, drink the milk, eat the cheese, pay the bill in the envelope and change the keys.

I don't know what she did. I don't think I ever saw her again.

Its now almost a half century later. These are the original sculptures. Have people changed so much? Has the art world? "What time is it?" Is it still 1969 and 1970 or is it 2016? Does it matter?

Eleanor Antin
San Diego, CA.
April, 2016

Diane Rosenstein is pleased to announce *Eleanor Antin: What time is it?*, a solo exhibition of sculpture by the San Diego-based artist. This exhibition will recreate two groundbreaking installations of conceptual portraiture – CALIFORNIA LIVES (1969) and *Portraits Of Eight New York Women* (1970) – originally presented at alternative spaces in New York City.

Eleanor Antin's *CALIFORNIA LIVES* was shown at GAIN GROUND, Robert Newman and Naomi Dash's space on West 80th Street. The artist, who lived in Solana Beach with her husband, poet David Antin, and son Blaise, returned to New York with a series

of portraits of both real and fictitious Californians that she assembled from consumer goods and household artifacts. A narrative text panel accompanied each assemblage.

In her essay for the announcement at Gain Ground, Amy Goldin wrote: "This is a show that takes style out of art and puts it back in the human world where it belongs."

Goldin continues:

"CALIFORNIA LIVES is a personalized selection of consumer goods (but who among us could not say that?), untouched by history – by any past, private or public, uninflected by function or use. A cosmetic exhibition, terrifyingly unsatirical without anger or hatred, it is simply the result of noticing. The artist seeing what is there, remaking the absence of what is not there, and showing us. We recognize them, the platinum blonde who bought the lavender bathroom rug and the pink Lady Schick shaver, or the vacationing waitress whose straw handbag sits on the gallery desk. And we are touched and frightened, good old pity and fear, in a gallery exhibition that calls on us to be human again and to acknowledge the facts of life."

Portraits Of Eight New York Women was staged from November 21 – December 6, 1970 in Room 322 of Hotel Chelsea on West 23rd Street. Here, Antin presented "consumer goods" sculptures as metaphorical portraits of eight women who were "known" players on the New York art and cultural scene at the time. The portraits included Carolee Schneeman, Yvonne Rainer, Naomi Dash, and poet Hannah Weiner.

The lavender announcement for her solo show at Hotel Chelsea included this poem:

If you were a food, what food would you be?
If you were a garment, what garment would you be?
If you were an appliance, what appliance would you be?
If you were a room, what room would you be?
If you were an illness, what illness would you be?
If you were a war, what war would you be?

Eleanor Antin: What time is it? is on view from May 14 – June 18, 2016. There is a reception for the artist on Saturday, May 14th, from 4 – 6 pm.