

LÉVY GORVY 厲為閣

OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS MARKS THE FIRST IN-DEPTH PRESENTATION OF DIANE ARBUS AND CAROL RAMA IN GREATER CHINA

Our Lady of the Flowers Diane Arbus | Carol Rama

26 September—16 November 2019

Lévy Gorvy
Ground Floor, 2 Ice House Street
Central, Hong Kong

Opening Reception: Wednesday 25 September, 6-8PM



Hong Kong— Lévy Gorvy is pleased to announce *Our Lady of the Flowers*, a special presentation pairing two visionary iconoclasts of the twentieth century, Diane Arbus and Carol Rama. Spanning the gallery's entire ground-floor space in the historic St. George's Building, a selection of Arbus's photographs of two of New York City's iconic theaters of public interaction—Central Park and Washington Square—will hang alongside Rama's assemblage paintings, which transform their supports into semi-abstract landscapes of aggression and desire. *Our Lady of the Flowers* will constitute the first in-depth public presentation of Arbus's and Rama's work in Greater China, on view beginning 25 September.

Both Arbus and Rama created art marked by its psychological pull and unexpected imagery. Arbus has often been described as an "urban anthropologist," using her camera as both an observational tool and a means of capturing intangible emotions, states, and themes. She once compared her photographic approach to collecting butterflies, and while she often sought out certain individuals—usually those on the margins—she remained open to chance encounters. Rama was likewise a connoisseur of curiosities who embraced the creative possibilities of accident while structuring her compositions with lucid arrangements of color, texture, and shape. Her most well-known body of work, the *Bricolage* series, conceives the painterly support as a site of bodily compromise, wherein castoff objects—among them, worn rubber tubes, metal shavings, and taxidermy eyes—join gestural emanations of paint. While insistently abstract, her



works hint at representation, suggesting traumatized bodies and compromised psyches.

Both Arbus and Rama were shaped by the cities—New York and Turin, respectively—in which they spent their lives. Each was active in the artistic milieu of her respective home, moving in avant-garde circles while forging her own, highly original path. Arbus began taking photographs in New York City’s parks at the beginning of her career, finding these reprieves from the city’s concrete grid to be fertile grounds for her practice. Depicting subjects from all walks of life, her pictures exude a mythic aura that speaks to both the poetry and the strangeness of the everyday. After a young adulthood beset by personal tragedy and the strictures of fascist Italy, Rama dedicated her art to resisting prevailing notions of identity, propriety, and taste. Unconcerned with the stigma of obscenity, her work frankly explores feminine desire, mental illness, and industrial ruin. Drawn from Turin’s detritus, the items that adhere to Rama’s surfaces are at once insistently eclectic and rife with personal and cultural significance.

The title of the exhibition is inspired by the 1943 novel by the French avant-garde writer Jean Genet. Beloved by the Beats—an American literary movement of the 1940s and ’50s known for their rejection of mainstream social constructs—as well as existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the *roman à clef*’s subjects inhabit the margins of society, ostracized for their inability or refusal to adapt to the dominant mores of their culture. Arbus and Rama take up a similar focus, foregrounding taboo and framing aesthetic aberration as a vision of beauty. By considering Arbus and Rama in parallel, *Our Lady of the Flowers* brings the radical qualities of their art into focus, revealing unanticipated affinities in subject, sensibility, and form. Defiant, enigmatic, and deeply perceptive, the works on view in *Our Lady of the Flowers* speak to our present moment while offering a potent vision of the past century’s prevailing discourses on gender, sexuality, and representation.

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, in Mayfair, London, and in Central, Hong Kong. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists’ estates that it represents and offers a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. The gallery also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications. The Zürich office, Lévy Gorvy with Rumbler, offers bespoke private advisory services to collectors and institutions around the globe.

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IMAGES: DIANE ARBUS. *Seated young couple on a park bench*, N.Y.C. 1962, 1962 / printed by Diane Arbus between 1962 and 1964. Gelatin silver print, Image: 8 3/8 x 8 1/4 (21.3 x 21 cm), Sheet: 14 x 11 inches (35.6 x 27.9 cm). © Estate of Diane Arbus, LLC. CAROL RAMA. *Presagi di Birnam (Omens of Birnam)*, 1994. Rubber tires and iron hook on canvas with sheet metal, 53 1/8 x 23 5/8 inches (135 x 60 cm). © Archivio Carol Rama, Torino. Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein.