



CENTER FOR
CONTEMPORARY ARTS
SANTA FE

1050 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87505 www.ccasantafe.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact:

Clare Hertel

clare@clarehertelcommunications.com

Shastyn Blomquist

(505) 982-1338 x 103 / shastyn@ccasantafe.org



Poetry Plagued by Comprehension, 1974

The Center for Contemporary Arts is pleased to present *The Linens*,
an exhibition including never-before-seen paintings
by the late celebrated artist Ciel Bergman in the Tank Garage.
February 9 - April 29, 2018
Public Opening Reception Friday, February 9, 2018, 5-7 PM

Santa Fe, New Mexico: November 2017 — The Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA) presents and exhibition of *The Linens*, paintings by the late Ciel Bergman never previously exhibited as a series, as well as a celebration of her life as an artist and beloved figure in the Santa Fe community. February 9 - April 29, 2018 in the Tank Garage.

ABOUT THE LINENS

The Linens is a series of 48 acrylic paintings on unstretched Belgian linen made between the years of 1970 - 77 by Ciel Bergman. The series ranges from a starkly minimal aesthetic that defines the *Spiritual Guide Maps* portion, to bold, graphic colors and vague abstractions to representations that explore ideas of philosophy, sexuality, and physicality. This exhibition features a selection of the series - more than have ever been shown together at one time - and the foundations of a prolific and inspired artist.



Debriefing with Rose, 1974

Bergman created the paintings in her studio in Berkeley, and in Eugene, OR where she was an assistant professor. *The Linens* mark a clear departure from the surreal and representational compositions that define her earlier works. In the midst of exploring the evolving mediums of the time - airbrush and acrylic paints - she began a process to 'empty'. Bergman wrote, "The first efforts to 'empty' were made on small sheets of rag paper on a small drawing table... I worked very hard and found it painful and challenging to suppress all signifying imagery. When the work became so empty that I had no idea where I was located in time or space, I felt I could begin the 'Guide Maps'."

The *Spiritual Guide Maps* are indeed the most empty and minimalist of the entire series and also correlate with a time in Bergman's life when she was in some ways, starting anew. These early linens were made with the new material Rhoplex A-33, an acrylic bonding medium which was applied in thick, broad layers, causing the drying process to influence the final painting. Duchamp's influence on Bergman became very clear to her in this early stage, "I was writing across the fields, locked into a long distance, imaginary discourse with Duchamp whom I had been intellectually hypnotized by and



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enchanted by for several years." Two years into the project she travelled to New Mexico and met Georgia O'Keeffe, further influencing her pursuit of 'emptiness' and spiritual connection to her artistic practice.

By 1973 the series began to shift away from the starkness of the *Spiritual Guide Maps* as more recognizable symbols began to appear in the compositions. "Rose Selavy (Female alter ego of Duchamp) continued to be a very large Presence during the creation of the work. Because of the cognitive and philosophical dialogue between us plagued my mind, filling me with questions, doubt, puzzlement, intrigue, the signifiers began to return *against my choice*."

The Linens grow and evolve dramatically over the seven years she created them; Nearly every painting a conversation with or homage to one of the several major influencers who shaped Bergman as an artist. The gesture is at once grateful and profound. *The Linens* take the viewer on a journey through self-discovery and graciousness, intellectualism and beauty, surrender and sheer will.

Although *The Linens* were never shown in their entirety, several individual works won prestigious awards such as the Society for the Encouragement of the Creative Arts (S.E.C.A.), Awarded by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Two paintings were exhibited as part of the 1975 Whitney Biennial, and in turn, launched a successful painting career for many years.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ciel Bergman (1938 - 2017, formerly Cheryl Bowers) was known primarily as a West Coast and New Mexico-based painter. She grew up in the Bay Area and had little exposure to art with the exception of visits to the DeYoung in San Francisco, where she gained exposure to the art of East Asia. At the age of 19 she married and moved to Germany at the time of the building of the Berlin wall. While there she visited as many of the major art museums as she could, and in turn, educated herself in the masters of Western Art. It was during this time of educational exploration that she discovered the work and criticism of Marcel Duchamp, who became a mainstay as a creative and intellectual influence throughout Bergman's career.



Upon her return to the States, she took up private lessons and dedicated herself to the study of drawing and painting. In 1970 she enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute for graduate studies, and simultaneously began *The Linens*. At age 32 while raising two small children on her own, she was going through an era of self-discovery and establishment as an artist.

Not long after graduating, she was offered a lectureship appointment at UC Berkeley where she met and became friends with the art critic and historian Peter Selz. In 1972, Bergman and Selz took a trip to Abiquiu, New Mexico, where they visited with Georgia O'Keeffe. The five-hour meeting confirmed Bergman's path as an artist. Bergman never forgot their conversation and cites it as one of most influential moments in her life and career.

Bergman joined the faculty of UC Santa Barbara as a tenured Full Professor and remained there for 18 years while continuing to exhibit nationally and internationally. In 1994 Bergman relocated from Santa Barbara, CA to New Mexico where she followed in the footsteps of her one time mentor, Georgia O'Keeffe by building a studio at the base of Cerro Pedernal near Abiquiu. During these years she retreated and lived a relatively quiet and contemplative life, exhibiting sporadically, but continued to paint prolifically. In 2006 she moved to Santa Fe where she flourished as an integral part of the arts community until her untimely death in January 2017.

The idea for exhibiting *The Linens* came about in early 2016 and was confirmed that Spring with the Center for Contemporary Arts Curator Angie Rizzo. Up until her death, Bergman and Rizzo worked together to plan the exhibition of a series of paintings that launched her career and created the foundation of her life as an artist.



Photodocumentation of Tools Used in the Performing the Fifth Ascent (Black Tool), 1976



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PROGRAMS

In addition to the public opening reception, CCA hosts a number of programs designed around the themes of the exhibition. Please visit ccasantafe.org for the most up to date information on upcoming public programs.

VIP and Member Opening Reception // CCA Tank Garage // Thursday, Feb 8 // 5-7pm
// Free

Public Opening Reception // CCA Tank Garage // Friday, Feb 9 // 5-7pm // Free

Living Altar: Art Supply Drive // CCA Tank Garage // Feb 9 through April 29

In honor of the late artist, CCA and Ciel Bergman's family invite the public to donate working art supplies that will benefit art classes in Santa Fe Public Schools. Art supplies can be dropped off at CCA and will be on view as a living altar to Ciel for the course of the exhibition.

Conversation with a Curator: Angie Rizzo on *The Linens*

Saturday, Feb 10 // 2 - 3:30pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 admission

Explore the curatorial process, themes, and issues in the exhibition through a conversational tour of Ciel Bergman: *The Linens* with Exhibition Curator, Angie Rizzo.

Story Circle: A Story is a Place Between Us

Wednesday, Feb 14 // 6-7:30pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 admission

Storytelling is healing, unifying, and a profound way of relating to one another. Your stories matter and we would like to invite you to join us for 'Story Circle: A Story is a Place Between Us', facilitated by The Forgotten Body Remembers (Deirdre Morris). This is a participatory event where individuals share stories of experiences with tenderness, vulnerability, connection, and the ferocity of love in celebration our diverse experiences and shared understandings. Those who choose too will be invited to share their stories which will serve as the inspiration for movement scores for the performance of MAPPING the FEMININE on Saturday, March 10, 6-7: 30 pm.

Critical Conversations: Feminism and Intersectionality in the Arts

Wednesday, Feb 28 // 6-7:30pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 admission

Ciel Bergman's work often addresses ideas of feminism and the artist's role and responsibility in societal issues. Curators, artists, writers, and professionals working in cultural organizations and social justice come together to expand on and explore these ideas in a public conversation on feminism and intersectionality in the arts.

Artist Workshop: Prints & Plants

March 3 // 2-4pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 admission



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Do you have old t-shirts and sheets lying around? Bring them back to life in this printmaking workshop where we will use plants and produce as stamps to create vibrant patterns on recycled fabrics and discuss the beauty of locally grown food. All levels welcome. This activity is led by local artist Liz Brindley, owner of Prints & Plants, a mobile art & ecology workshop that travels around New Mexico to teach about local agriculture through printmaking activities.

Conversation: Photography in Cuba

Thursday, March 8 // 6pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 Gallery Admission

Come and listen to a conversation on historic and contemporary photography in Cuba led by Nelson Ramirez, artist and Director of the Fototeca, Cuba's National Museum of Photography. Nelson will provide an illustrated talk, moderated by Stuart Ashman, our Executive Director & Chief Curator offering background on photography in Cuba from its origins in the 19th century to current activity in contemporary photography highlighting the work he and his partner created under the banner of Liudmila and Nelson.

Performance: MAPPING the FEMININE

Saturday, March 10 // 6-7:30pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 admission

The Forgotten Body Remembers (Deirdre Morris) and CCA present *MAPPING the FEMININE*, a series of intimate movement scores performed in relationship to Ciel Bergman's *Spiritual Guide Maps* that are seeking to express the divining of natural and feminine forces, "to locate a 'genetically felt' devotional space" (Ciel Bergman, Artist Statement). The scores for this performance will be built from stories shared in a public Story Circle, a participatory public program at the CCA Tank Garage on Wednesday, Feb 14, 6-7:30pm.

Art Talk: Peter Frank on Ciel Bergman

Sunday, March 25 // 2-3:30pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 Gallery Admission

Peter Frank, Associate Editor for Fabrik magazine and contributing writer to the Ciel Bergman: The Linens exhibition catalog, will talk about Ciel the artist, Ciel the feminist, Ciel the thinker, Ciel the person, and The Linens as a crossroads in Ciel's manifesting her full self. The Linens are as rich as they are because their maker was finding herself as a rich soul. She was both thinking and feeling her way through.

Santa Fe Zine Fest

Saturday, April 14 // 12-5pm // CCA Tank Garage // Free

Santa Fe Zine Fest is a yearly free festival that celebrates zines, comics and other forms of alternative press and DIY media with the goal of encouraging a greater community between diverse creators of independent publications and art in Northern New Mexico. Now in its second year, the festival spans over 24 zine publishers, showcasing their independently published art, illustration, photography, comics, poetry, fiction and nonfiction.



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Closing Reception and an Evening of Performance with Matron Records

Saturday, April 28 // 5-7pm // CCA Tank Garage // \$5 admission

Matron Records will curate an immersive, multi-media performance for the closing reception of Ciel Bergman: *The Linens* exhibition at CCA. The event will feature local musicians and performance artists each presenting pieces that explore feminism through the themes in Bergman's work: philosophy, sexuality and physicality. Artists will present their performance vignettes simultaneously, each staged throughout the exhibit to create an added layer of dimension to the work and inviting guests to experience the exhibit in a new way. Matron Records is a Santa Fe-based record label and creative agency dedicated to collaborative storytelling.

About CCA

The Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA) is an arts and culture hub for northern New Mexico's diverse communities. Founded in 1979, CCA is one of the oldest artist-centered organizations in the American Southwest. CCA draws more than 55,000 visitors annually for exhibitions, independent films, performances, and education/public programs.

Visit CCA

Location: Center for Contemporary Arts, 1050 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87505

Tank Garage Gallery Hours: 12-5pm Tuesday-Sunday

Tank Garage Gallery Admission: \$5 General Admission, Free for CCA Members, CCA Cinematheque ticket holders, active duty military personnel, and children under 12

Cinematheque Lobby Gallery Hours: opens 45 minutes before the screening of the first film every day

Cinematheque Gallery Admission: FREE

Administrative Business Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:30am-5pm

Parking: Free

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END