

Claire Oliver announces the representation of the creative work of Janet Biggs

The Gallery is proud to announce the representation of the outstanding multimedia artist Janet Biggs. One of the substantive group of artists who turned to video and new media in the early 1990's, Biggs was formally trained in painting and sculpture, which she has exhibited since 1987. Best known for a body of work centering on the image of the horse, the artist has used these sleek and powerful animals as a metaphor for female sexuality, examining the construction of female identity and masculine influence. Most recently, Biggs has focused on themes ranging from emoting desire and pleasure to a discourse on society's issues with aging and handicap. Biggs' continues to question the way in which our culture constructs gender and our preconceived notions on status, power and control.



"Behind the Vertical" (detail), 2006

Says the artist of her work, "I use athletes – both human and animal – as representative of the level of obsession and compulsion that is required to continue to attempt to attain a goal which is really never achievable. Making art involves a similar obsession to communicate; my artistic process is very much akin to that of an athlete's training. This is the compulsion I feel to complete the perfect installation."



"Behind the Vertical" (detail), 2006

Janet Biggs' multiple channel installations have garnered her a strong critical reputation and numerous museum exhibitions in the US and abroad, including at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, The Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, The Santa Fe Art Institute, The Mint Museum, NC and The San Francisco Art Institute, CA. She is in the collections of The Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art (Cornell University), Everson Museum of Art, University of Newcastle, U.K., Charlottenborg Exhibition Hall, Copenhagen, Denmark, Vantaa Art Museum, Finland, The Mint Museum, North Carolina and the Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum in Linz, Austria.

The artist is the recent recipient of several prestigious grants and awards, including a Anonymous Was A Woman, 2005 grant, The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Grant, 2005 (for her Rules of Engagement project) and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. Biggs' work has been written about in The New York Times, Art in America, ARTnews, Sculpture Magazine, Art Papers and The Village Voice, among others. Her singular voice has gained Biggs' work a position in the lineage of post-feminist discourse.

Janet Biggs' has been commissioned by Hermès to create a new work of art for the windows of their flagship store.

"Behind the Vertical", a multi channel video installation on exhibit July 7 through August 6 at Hermès: 691 Madison Ave. New York City

Janet Biggs presents "Behind the Vertical", a five channel site-specific video installation dealing with beauty, strength, and the performance of youth. On large flat-screen monitors a beautiful young man, the World Champion Vaulter, breathlessly performs on the back of a horse as it canters along, a synchronized swimmer is suspended upside down, dancing in slow motion beneath the water, and the United States equestrian vaulting team performs seamless and spectacular aerobatics. All are serenaded, as is the passing public on the avenue, by a young singer. The ethereal images of weightless swimmers and gravity defying horseback riders reveal the strenuous effort and dedication behind the appearance of youthful ease and beauty. The hyper-stylized gestures and affected costumes of the athletes belie the power, agility, and strength required to make every action graceful. Biggs suggests that youth is bound by social constraints that set some on a search for impossible perfection. With nods to Busby Berkeley's lavish musicals, the photographs of Muybridge, and films like Black Beauty, "Behind the Vertical" proposes new relationships between beauty and strength, as well as age and desire.

Running concurrent with this installation on Madison Avenue, Claire Oliver Gallery will inaugurate our new Video Room in the Gallery on 26th street with the premiere of Biggs' single channel work "Behind the Vertical". This breathtakingly beautiful and poignant work is not to be missed; Biggs' gaze as a female and a voyeur, author and participant, artist and rider, constitutes something contradictory yet real. Destabilizing conventional notions of gender and questioning the standardized point of view, the artist fetishizes femininity and concurrently resists it. Her work encourages a reexamination of assumptions about strength, ageing and beauty.

Biggs' "Behind the Vertical"
on exhibit at Claire Oliver
July 13 through September 2.



"Behind the Vertical" (detail), 2006