



SARAH FRASSINELLI: *FOLLOW YOUR BLISS*

May 9 - June 7, 2013

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 9, 2013 6 - 8PM

ARC Fine Art is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibition, *Follow Your Bliss*, featuring the work of the late Sarah Frassinelli. Featuring seven large-scale pastels, nearly two-dozen more intimately scaled watercolors and collages and one oversized oil on canvas, *Follow Your Bliss* is the first posthumous showing of the artist's work all of which is being exhibited for the first time.

Sarah Wheeler Frassinelli was born in 1930, a descendent of the early Connecticut settler Thomas Wheeler. Her adolescence was spent in Bridgeport and Easton with winters at Daytona Beach, Florida while her adulthood was mainly spent in Black Rock, Connecticut where she and her husband of forty years, Ferdinand Frassinelli, shared their passions for art, garden design, and entertaining in their home she named "La Dolce Vita" after the Fellini film. Interested in the arts from a young age, Frassinelli focused her attention on art and entered Sarah Lawrence College in 1947. Throughout her college career, she studied under Kurt Roesch, the noted, German abstract painter whose work was included in both documenta I (1955) and documenta II (1959) in Kassel, Germany. Roesch's dramatic and radical depictions of flora and fauna seem to have made an indelible mark on Frassinelli and would, in time, be referenced in her own evolving body of work. She was also instructed by Joseph Campbell, a preeminent mythologist and author who taught at Sarah Lawrence for thirty-eight years. Campbell introduced his students to the philosophies of the psychotherapist Carl Jung, of whom Campbell was one of the leading proponents. Jung's concept of the collective unconscious asserted that many of the universal symbols used in the interpretation of dreams were also seen across various mythologies. It is worth noting that a 1920s Columbia University fellowship allowed Campbell to live and study in Paris, exposing him to such modernists as Paul Klee, a master of color theory. In turn, both Jung and Klee's influence on Frassinelli's work is immediately evident.

The 1960s and early 1970s, the period during which the majority of this exhibition's work was created, were particularly productive years for Frassinelli. She continued formal education at the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and mastered a range of mediums including printmaking, oils, pastel, collage, and watercolor. Her exhibition activity was also vigorous at this time, including shows at Bridgeport's Museum of Art Science and Industry (now The Discovery Museum), Ball State Teachers College (Muncie, IN), The Society of the Four Arts (Palm Beach, FL), and Silvermine Arts Center (New Canaan, CT).

Follow Your Bliss, a phrase coined by Joseph Campbell, features a collection of works, which embody the spirit of Campbell's maxim while revealing the tension between joy and melancholy. The series of watercolors, for example, illustrate Frassinelli's dedication to filling the sheet with fanciful patterning, jubilant color and organic forms. They also incorporate almost supernatural faces and forms, referenced specifically, for example, in *Members of the Board* and more vaguely, in *The Upsidedowners*. Coupled with such text as "rain rain go away" and "keep off," these works of the

early 60s seem to reflect Frassinelli's awareness of life's tribulations and reference her interest in mythology and psychology.

As her work progressed, Frassinelli, like the Surrealists, continued to draw from the unconscious, her words and phrases wrapping around anthropomorphic shapes to create an intricate web of color, form, and calligraphy. This unique comingling is best evidenced in *I plan to have a lot of fun in Nineteen Hundred and 71...* . In this pastel, a mythical figure reclines luxuriantly, its limbs sprouting verdant, botanical forms, while abstract, forlorn faces hover above. Brilliant hues of pink, purple, orange, green and blue cover every inch of the surface in a fantastical fashion. As with much of Frassinelli's work, the complex color palette and whimsical, yet fervid, composition conjure ideas of reality and imagination, pleasure and pain. Tucked away and preserved in portfolios for decades, these pastels still possess the vibrant palette and spirited energy of the days they were produced.

As literal manifestations of joyous pursuits, Frassinelli's collages of the period integrate travel stamps, Bergdorf Goodman labels, and orchestra tickets - all vestiges of a life well lived. Likewise, on view is a charming sketchbook of watercolors in which Frassinelli conceived of ideas for finished works as well as a menu for one of the many elaborate evenings at "La Dolce Vita" she regularly planned until her death in 1992.

ARC Fine Art is located at 3113 Bronson Road in Fairfield, Connecticut and is open by appointment. Further inquiries, please contact Adrienne Ruger Conzelman at 203 895 9595.