

ANN HUEY & DEBRA RUEB

NEW WORKS



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

MAY 17 - JUNE 21, 2003

AUSTIN, TEXAS

ANN HUEY

As I sat down to write this, with images of Ann Huey's seriocomic portrait series, "1967," spread out before me, I inexplicably found myself humming the theme from the 60's sitcom, "I Dream of Jeannie."

At first, I thought it was Ann's graphic, caricatural style that was triggering flashbacks to the opening titles of such shows. (The style of the day for signature openings to programs of the genre – "Bewitched" and "My Three Sons," for instance – seemed to have been borrowed from a Hanna-Barbera cartoon: the very two-dimensional heroes isolated in a limbo backdrop of tempera wash.)

For it's a similar set in which Ann's family and friends now find themselves. Look at the hip, minimalist environment where Fred Flintstone's pet dinosaur, Dino, sprints (to a bongo riff) across a Mies van der Rohe living room apparently as long as a football field. Very much like it is the place where now stand (or sit) Grandma Zula, Uncle Weldon and her mom's best friend, Emma Jane.

But the late 60's zeitgeist is evoked by more than just a rendering style after "The Jetsons." Ann's subjects are perfectly cast. Like alien abductions, she has lifted her specimens directly out of their family photos because they so look



Ann Huey, *Dec 1967*. 2001, Acrylic on canvas 8" x 16"

like 1967. In hair, dress or facial expression, they're archetypes. And I don't know about you, but I know the type. They're regular folk: kind, unassuming, and for the most part, comfortable in the skinny ties, sweater dresses and big hair then in style (or perhaps a little out of it). Boy are they in for a shock.

Because, unbeknownst to them, in the next moment, tectonic plates will slip and cultural seismographs will register big changes.

I don't remember 1967 so much for what happened as much as for what happened next. Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy both died at the hands of assassins, King on my birthday and Kennedy two months later on my sister's. My blue-collar cousins in Cleveland started getting drafted and shipped off to Vietnam, and an hour north of my hometown of East Liverpool there would soon be four dead in Ohio.

After all that, it would get much harder for bubbly optimists ("Pamela 1967") to keep up a front, and I can imagine even Ann's cool, collected sister ("Jane – the Recital") dropping her little white sweater and raising one clenched fist in protest.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Ann's acrylic portraits of Texans we've all met, married, descended from or are otherwise related

to are so dead-on because her subjects are vulnerable and somewhat at ease, apparently photographed by a friend or family member. We know that we know Ann's family friend ("Dec 1967"), smiling auntie ("Aunt Winnie 1967") and the artist herself ("Ann 1969") because they allowed their snapshooter to capture the imperfection of their humanity and because Ann has, in turn, relayed it with humor and affection.

ANN HUEY Resides in Lancaster, TX. She graduated with a B.A. in Painting, from the University of Dallas in 1978. Huey has been in several group exhibits in Texas, Florida, and Louisiana since 1999.



Ann Huey, *Jane-The Recital*. 2001,
Acrylic on canvas 8" x 16"

TAMMY TEACHES US A LESSON

As a child, I was fascinated with diagramming sentences—the more complicated the better. All those modifiers, prepositions, subjects, predicates, articles, adverbs and adjectives, compounds, objects (indirect and otherwise), participles (dangling and otherwise), nouns and verbs and my favorites of all—gerunds and infinitive phrases, could keep me occupied for hours. I was (and still am, for that matter) also fond of word games and anything to do with “what’s wrong with this picture?” It’s no wonder, then, that Debra Rueb’s series of Tammy pictures challenges and entertains me. She has chosen to take a visual art form and deal with language—to act out a thought in a sort of two-dimensional game of charades—to make words “literally” come to life: *Tammy Strings Words Together*, *Tammy Rolls in the Dough*, *Tammy is on the Cutting Edge*. All of this with tongue carefully in cheek and irony not at all in check.

Rueb has taken the doll that she played with as a child—the “not Barbie” alternative, Tammy—and moved her from the 1950’s into the new millennium, photographing her in situations acting out the artist’s love of puns, metaphors and clichés. Tammy is now empowered—mirroring the progress of women in the decades since Eisenhower and father knowing best. Rueb has moved from black and white images in the 90’s to color in the last few years, and alternates the scale between modest and large. She has also created diptychs pairing visual representations of a sentence with a diagram of that sentence in picture form. She places the doll in actual environments, playing with scale by placing Tammy in the foreground and relegating the “real world” into the background, or by using “doll size” props in combination with full scale objects. Sometimes she throws caution to the wind and just allows Tammy to be a doll and the rest of the world to be itself. With the use of PhotoShop, Rueb has broadly expanded the possibilities of placing Tammy in new and challenging

situations, as well as being able to diagram her sentences with even more complexity—can prepositional phrases and dangling participles be far behind? Given my aforementioned proclivities, it is these diagram diptychs that intrigue me the most. I know of no other artist who is working in quite the same vein or exploring the same ideas.

Another issue being explored in all of this is where Tammy’s adventures leave off and Debra’s fantasies and dreams begin. Has author become actress? Has the toy of the child become the ploy of the adult? Like Gepetto, Rueb has given Tammy “life” and allowed her to be a “real woman.” And she’s a thoroughly modern woman who no longer lives in Barbie’s shadow. In fact she has confidently stolen Ken away from Barbie, crossed the line, tied one on, sown her wild oats and continues to surf the net and roll with the punches. We know all of this because Rueb has told us so in her own clever, imaginative, creative and inventive way.

Clint Willour
Executive Director/Curator
Galveston Arts Center, Spring 2003

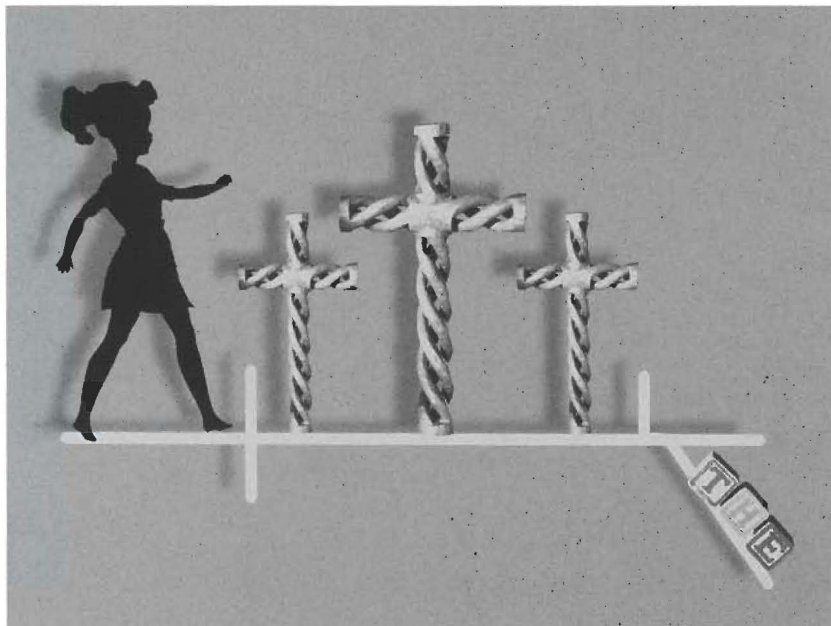
But she’s also captured a milieu, and what sticks most with me is the sociological record, the documentation of a tribe at a critical moment in time. Like Richard Avedon’s series “In the American West,” or even Van Gogh’s portraits of desperate peasants and prostitutes, her studies are true to life and might belong on the shelf alongside the anthropological research of Margaret Mead.

My daughter, also an artist, did not exist in 1967, so she might not understand why I see historical significance or even irony in the cheerful expectancy of these portraits. She may, however, someday paint her own series, to remember what people looked like before everything changed in her world. And she might entitle hers, “September 10th.”

James Michael Starr
Artist and Writer
Dallas, TX. Spring 2003



Debra Rueb,
Tammy Meets Big Wigs.
2001, Light & Ink jet prints 20" x 26"



Debra Rueb, *Tammy Crosses the Line.* 2001, Ink jet prints 8" x 20"

DEBRA RUEB Resides in Houston, TX. She graduated with an B.A. from Sam Houston State University in 1977 and a M.F.A. in Art and Photography, from the University of Houston in 1989. Rueb has had several solo exhibitions in Texas and has been in group exhibits in Texas, Oregon, Oklahoma and California since 1979.



This Panel: Ann Huey, *Mim*. 2003, Acrylic on canvas 12" x 12"

Cover Panel: Debra Rueb, *Tammy Cooks up a Storm*. 2000, Ink jet print 7" x 10"

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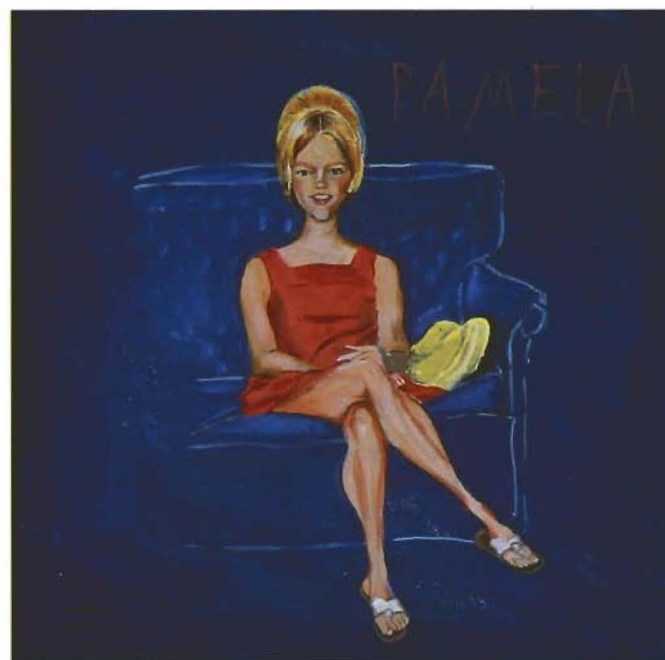
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Ann Huey, *Pamela 1967*. 2001, Acrylic on canvas 12" x 12"



Debra Rueb,
Tammy Cools Her Jets.
2001, Ink jet prints 8" x 20"

Now celebrating its 25th anniversary, Women & Their Work presents over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film. The gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,704 artists in 215 visual art exhibitions, 100 music, dance, and theater events, 12 film festivals, 19 literary readings, and 271

workshops in programming that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *ArtForum* and National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 5,000 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory

workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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