

LINDY CHAMBERS

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*THEN AND NOW*



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WOMEN & THEIR WORK

MARCH 25 - MAY 11, 2023

AUSTIN, TEXAS

## THEN AND NOW

When we first talked, during the lead-up to *Then and Now*, Lindy Chambers and I quickly got onto the subject of horses. I was flailing away in my apartment, sorting through stacks of old books; she was in her Bellville, Texas studio, decoding and reclassifying the colorful piles of raw material that would soon cohere in her exhibit; Equestrianism was, for some reason or another, on both of our minds. Months have now passed since that initial conversation. Life, as usual, has been all over the place, so the exact origin of our horse discourse is not at the top of my mind. As I recall it, the beasts just casually cantered into our email thread.

In the mind, in the world, in art, animals are adept at this sort of satisfying intrusion. Take the squirrel who showed up outside my window as I wrote this sentence, or, more pertinently, the titular lambs in Chambers' monumental painting *Lambland*. A centerpiece of this exhibition, *Lambland* depicts a big old jumble of vines and flowers at the center of an open field. Eleven feasibly supernatural lambs, presented in a spectrum reflective of Chambers' always surprising palette, inhabit the thicket. There is magic in the animals' defiance of physics as well as their borderline anthropomorphic level of expressiveness.



*Fresh Dirt*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48"



*IU-82*, 2023, Paper mache, vinyl tape, PVC pipe, fur, metal, pipe cleaners, 76 x 25 x 20"  
*Full Circles*, 2020, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48"

Some of them float around the sky as if they are a screensaver, in all manner of poses, casting puddly blue shadows that overpower the ground below. Others peer benevolently from the vegetation, making mild eye contact with viewers in a way that seems to whisper, "We are the lambs. We are here. You didn't expect us, but here we are and we are fine. It is all fine."

The splendor of surprise is felt throughout *Then and Now's* rural landscapes in numerous ways. There is one dog in *Fresh Dirt* who has leapt uncannily high to catch a frisbee thrown by a human friend. Said disc is represented by a veritable em dash of paint, an uncharacteristic detail that is in itself a small delight. The entire scene is viewed in a gradient of electric pinks from behind a rock wall, or, it's possible, from inside a mouth. Unclear, but either way: What a fortunate circumstance it is to come across a painting that is actively asking: are those rocks teeth?

Meanwhile in *Beware of Dog*, the working group behemoth from which the painting gets its title lurks in a dusky clearing behind the main scene of the work, almost in a different painting altogether. Back in the trees, silhouetted against an ombré sky, one is most likely to

discover this animal only after surveying the cheerful mess in the foregrounded lawn. Other animals exist in this yard, behind the chain link fence, lambs and rabbits and geese. But these are beady-eyed lawn ornaments, empty planters, more akin to the stray bathroom sink and hazy gazing ball than the guard dog who looms in the distance. The whole lawn is a pastel-y kaleidoscopic vision. Once again, Chambers renders shadows as bold patches of blue. And while areas blocked from real-world sunlight do often adopt a bluey tint, Chambers' shadows swallow anything tangible and replace it with what might be maps of lakes, or the pelt of Cookie Monster (more on that in a minute). The nominal Dog, of whom we must Beware, lives simultaneously in an entirely different type of shadow. Darker, dramatic. "Real." While the natural world is defined here by a sense of foreboding, the manufactured space of the manufactured home is bursting with vibrant, ramshackle joy. It is an inversion of some cynical, classist expectations that are often projected onto rural life.

Speaking of good clutter, the most recent works in *Then and Now*, and in some ways the most unexpected, are an assortment of large found-object sculptures that stand alongside the





*Beware of Dog*, 2018  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 60"

Cover Panel: *Lambland*, 2019  
Oil on canvas, 72 x 144" (diptych)

paintings. These pieces were made by Chambers over the past few years, in part as a response to a wrist injury which left her unable to paint comfortably as she recovered. This by-any-means-necessary approach to making is reflected in the works themselves. Chambers finds what she needs, when she needs it. I am able to identify roughly half of the objects she used to compose these pieces as everyday detritus, the regularly castoff ancillaries of American life: fan blades; paint cans; hammocks, tape. All this was collecting dust in my parents' garage, too. But like a tranquil, hovering lamb, these sculptures quickly float into a much more curious reality.

What I can truly only think to call the Cookie Monster pelt reappears, physically, in several of these works. It's as if this lush, ultra-synthetic faux fur, invented by Chambers as painted shadows, stepped straight out off canvas and became material. In *C-68* the blue fluff appears as a gargantuan and nearly cranial pompom that is balanced atop a lashed-together armature of scrap metal. A second, highlighter-green puff dangles off to one side from an ersatz fishing rod, though I can't for

the life of me find a properly-colored Muppet analogue for this one. A white plastic fork and spoon are secured to the makeshift rod, their respective handles wrapped in green electrical tape. The heads of the very disposable utensils face each other, tines down, bowl up, a few inches apart. It is clear that these two blunt objects are weirdly integral to the success of the whole apparatus, the tension of the space between them forming a funky surrealist ballast for the fuzzball below.

So what's with the titles of these sculptures? *IU-82*, *L62*, *R88*. Turns out, Chambers keeps bags full of letters and numbers in her studio. She blindly draws from each stash and combines the results into a name. Here is a full commitment to contingency that amplifies one of the most exciting dualities in Chambers' works. Take *L62's* balancing act: stringing from ceiling to floor, the sculpture presents such a wild daisy chain of junk that it almost seems it was dredged from a river as-is. But in observing the grounded punching bag as it is walloped into being architecture by a fragment of green pool noodle, it becomes clear that this hypothetical river was sentient. It's a sensation



*I'm Done with You*, 2016 (detail)  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 46"



*L62*, 2021  
Rubber, foam, trash, netting, pipe, 120 x 36 x 8"

the new pieces share with the earliest works in the show, a collection of paintings from 2016-17 that are less scenic and more detailed. The crumpled beer cans in *I'm Done with You*, the snaking dryer vent hose and boards lousy with bent old nails in *Glory Days*; Chambers is blissfully attuned to the neverending serendipity of junk.

To spend time with a Lindy Chambers exhibition is to be reminded of the strange, ever-flowing beauty of chance that defines our physical world. Some bricks strewn just so can elicit confounding levels of visual pleasure. But I have found, as it seems Chambers has, that the source of this surprise is oftentimes animal. So in the name of good scholarship I went back over my first correspondence with Chambers to find the source of our initial equine bond. Luckily, Gmail is a better record keeper than I am. How could I have forgotten that she once had a horse with my name? What are the odds of that?

Bucky Miller is an artist, photographer, and writer who moves between New York and Texas.



# Lindy Chambers

## EDUCATION

- 1983 Glassell School of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
1974 Albert Shakis Art Foundry, Houston, TX  
1968-70 Guildford Technical Community College, High Point, NC

## SOLO & TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Lindy Chambers*, Pearl Fincher Museum, Spring, TX  
2021 *Living the Dream*, Deborah Colton Gallery, Houston, TX  
*Gravel and Dirt*, Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Fort Worth, TX  
*Hidden From View*, Lawrence Art Center, Lawrence, KS  
2020 *On Being Human*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX  
2019 *Close to Home*, McLennan Community College, Waco, TX  
*Lindy Chambers & Lee Lee Brazeal*, Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, Christine DeVitt Exhibition Hall, Lubbock, TX  
2017 *No Glass Slipper*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX  
2015 *Alexander Rutsch Award and Solo Exhibition for Painting*, Pelham Art Center, Pelham, NY, curated by Alexandra Rutsch Brock and Kathy Rutsch  
*Lindy Chambers: Curb Appeal*, D. M. Allison Gallery, Houston, TX  
2013 *Lindy Chambers: Paintings*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Cryptophasia*, Art Museum TX, Sugarland, TX  
*Twin Talk*, Art Museum TX, Katy, TX  
2020 *35th Annual International Exhibition*, University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX, juried by Leslie Moody Castro  
2019 *Bird Show*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX,  
*34th Annual International Exhibition*, University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX, juried by Christina Rees  
*Celebration of Texas Art*, Assistance League of Houston, Houston, TX, juried by Jennie Goldstein  
2018 *5th Annual Regional Juried Exhibition, Artspace III*, Fort Worth, TX, juried by Christina Rees  
*44 Artists from Texas, Part 2*, Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, Lubbock, TX, curated by Linda Cullum  
*Vignette Art Fair*, The Women's Museum, Fair Park, Dallas, TX, juried by Erin K. Murphy  
*Celebration of Texas Art*, Assistance League of Houston, Houston, TX, juried by Anna Katz and curated by Sally Sprout  
2017 *Living Off the Grid in Rural Texas*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX  
*The Big Show*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX  
*12th National Juried Exhibition*, Axis Gallery, Sacramento, CA, juried by Mat Gleason  
*54th Annual Juried Competition*, The Masur Museum of Art, Monroe, LA, juried by Gia Hamilton

*45th International Art Show*, Brownsville Museum of Fine Art Brownsville, TX, juried by Cesar Martinez, Angel Cabrales, and Annie Moye

- 2016 *What is American Art*, The Bascom, Highlands, NC, juried by Dr. William U. Eland  
*Texas Big 10 for Art*, Katy Contemporary Art Museum, Katy, TX, juried by Andres Bardo, Patricia Johnson, and Ken General  
*22nd Texas National*, Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, TX, juried by Abelardo Morell  
*Valdosta National*, Dedo Maranville Fine Arts Gallery, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA, juried by Carrie Ann Baade  
*Painting and Seeing*, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, NC, juried by John Beerman  
*Somewhere in the Dark*, ART7 Gallery, Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Fort Worth, TX, juried by Nancy Lamb  
2015 *Menagerie, Art and the Animal Kingdom*, The Grace Museum, Abilene, TX, curated by Judy Deaton  
*Expo 34*, B.J. Spoke Gallery, Huntington, NY, juried by Adrienne Rooney  
*Assistance League of Houston Juried Art Show*, Williams Tower Gallery, Houston, TX, juried by Dean Sobel and Sally Sprout  
2014 *60+ years*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX  
*Summer Cut*, Valley House Gallery & Sculpture Garden, Dallas, TX  
*Urban Underground*, Peoria Art Guild, Peoria, Illinois, juried by Christina Cosio  
*The Big Show*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX, juried by Erin Elder  
*Artspace 111 Juried Exhibition*, Artspace 111, Fort Worth, TX, juried by Andrea Karnes and Ron Tyler  
2004 *Seismic Disturbance*, Lohin Geduld Gallery, New York, NY  
1996 *Horses in Motion*, International Museum of the Horse, Lexington, KY  
*New Works*, Becker's Books, Houston, TX  
*Tin Cans and Bottle Caps*, Fergis & Ferandiz Gallery, Houston, TX  
1993 *MS Society Show*, Meredith Long Galleries, Houston, TX  
1983 *Glassell Spring Show*, The Glassell School of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
1975 *Dimensions V*, Art League Houston, Houston, TX



QK-67, 2022

Paper mache, foam, string, lights, found objects  
24 x 108 x 28"



*Glory Days, 2017*  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36"

## WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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*Photographs by Hector Tednoir Martinez*

This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Women & Their Work is a visual and performing arts organization located in Austin that serves as a catalyst for new ideas in contemporary art. Since 1978, Women & Their Work has created significant opportunities for artists and audiences to experience contemporary art through ambitious exhibitions, commissions of new work, performances and programs that inform audiences of all ages. We have actively developed the careers of more than 2,000 women artists, presenting 336 visual art exhibitions, 164 music, dance and theater events, 30 spoken word and literary performances, 16 film festivals and 821 programs & education workshops with the goal of ensuring that diverse women artists are equitably represented in all forms of art. Women & Their Work helps meet an important need in Texas providing exhibition and performance opportunities and helping to attract critical attention to the work produced here; it is the only organization of its kind in the region and one of the few organizations in

the United States that dedicates itself to the work of women artists. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *ArtForum*, and on *National Public Radio* and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2020, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art acquired the 42-year archive of Women & Their Work ensuring that our entire history of the work of women artists and our website will be preserved in perpetuity.



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The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

