

White Columns

Carole Gibbons

March 22 – May 4, 2024

Opening Reception: Friday, March 22, 2024. 6–8pm.

*“Carole Gibbons became an artist when nearly all Scottish painters either supported themselves by teaching or emigrated. The only exceptions were those who inherited money or resigned themselves to poverty and neglect. Of the latter group some died early. Thank goodness Carole and her talent have survived. Her spiritual colleagues are painters as different as Munch, Bonnard and Braque. For like them she shows people and things coloured as much by her emotions as by the light of places where she works. Her still lives, mostly painted in Glasgow, are strong but melancholy interior harmonies where rich colours - some surprisingly sweet - glow among sombre ones.” - Alasdair Gray, author of *Poor Things*, 2003.*

White Columns is proud to present the first exhibition in the United States by Glasgow-based artist **Carole Gibbons** (b. Glasgow, 1935.)

Despite achieving a degree of local success earlier in her career, Gibbons’ practice has been largely obscured over the past half-century. The renewed interest in her work, initially from a generation of younger artists with roots in Glasgow including the painters Lucy Stein and Andrew Cranston, has resulted in a reappraisal of Gibbons’ practice that led to the publication in 2023 of her first monograph; a widely reviewed 2023 solo exhibition at Glasgow’s Céline gallery; and the inclusion of her work in Tate Britain’s current and ground-breaking feminist exhibition in London: “Women In Revolt!: Art and Activism in the UK 1970-1990.” Gibbons was a student at The Glasgow School of Art in the late 1950s. After her studies, she traveled Europe, living and working in Spain for a period before returning to Glasgow in 1967. Her paintings, produced over the past six decades, provide us with a compelling narrative that mirrors the ensuing shifts in British culture, from the post-war austerity of the 1950s, via the societal shifts of the 1960s and 1970s, to her more recent impact on subsequent generations of artists working with and around figuration. Her exhibition at White Columns, her first in the United States, takes the form of a focused survey of what she has described as her “post-mythological” period from the early 1970s to the present, and will be presented alongside a selection of works on paper and historical materials drawn from the artist’s archives.

At once familiar and utterly distinctive, Gibbons' work draws freely from both art history and the incidental poetry of everyday life. Her paintings are marked by a unique quality of attention that converges at the point where the universal meets the quotidian. Even in Gibbons' later works, a feeling of the mythic persists, an interior or psychologically fraught world always threatening to emerge through the shimmering materiality of her forms. In Gibbons' cosmos, everyday scenes evoke enchanted encounters replete with protean shapes. Objects seem to abide by a mysterious though omnipresent internal logic, what the artist Lucy Stein has described as "instinct becoming form."

The boundary-dissolving tendencies of Gibbons' paintings are echoed in the biographical facts of her life. The subjects of Gibbons' earlier works explored the mythological and the folkloric - ideas that she would all but abandon in the early 1970s, when she effectively restarted her practice by focusing on the fundamentals of still-life painting and domestic tableaux, tendencies that persist to this day. An early period spent living and working in Spain continues to influence her palette: the walls of her Glasgow home-studio, where she has lived for more than 50 years, are awash in vivid yellows and muted pinks, colors that "frame" her canvases and the many objects that sit in front of the paintings that depict them. In several instances the artist's hand-made frames are adorned with sketched-out spirals. Rather than appearing decorative, it is as if spectral tendrils of the paintings were trying to reach out into the world, or perhaps to pull the real world into the realm of painting. Lucy Stein succinctly summarizes many of the ongoing themes of Gibbons' work as: "mothers, water, drowning, the unconscious, psychoanalysis, depression, grief, feminism, domesticity, matrilineal inheritances, the power that death exerts over the living, bliss, love, motherhood, eternal return."

Writing about Gibbons' 2023 Céline gallery exhibition in *Artforum*, Susannah Thompson noted: "Carole Gibbons may be the most famous artist you've never heard of. Now in her late eighties, the Glasgow-born painter racked up a flurry of successes between the 1960s and the 1980s... And then, nothing. Yet Gibbons persevered, continuing to develop an exceptional body of work. When asked in a 2021 interview how she defined success, she replied, "a good brushstroke." In the past decade or so, though, largely thanks to those good brushstrokes and the efforts of a younger generation of curators as well as artists... her work is, tentatively, hopefully, once again attracting the attention this exhibition proves she deserves."

“We had been talking for 90 minutes, and I needed to get a train to Edinburgh... I stopped recording, said my goodbyes. I am so grateful to Gibbons. It was an honour to spend time in her world, with her art, her ideas, her memories, and her active, encouraging, collaborative, searching mind.” - Charlie Porter writing on Carole Gibbons, 2023.

This exhibition is accompanied by a newly commissioned text on Gibbons by the celebrated British writer Charlie Porter - author of *What Artists Wear* (2021) and *Bring No Clothes: Bloomsbury and the Philosophy of Fashion* (2023) - which will be available from the gallery.

White Columns would like to thank to Carole Gibbons for her enthusiasm for and commitment to this presentation of her work in New York; Carole’s son Henry Gibbons Guy for his enthusiasm and cooperation throughout; Ben Seeley and Kirstie Sequitin of 5b for their initial introduction to Carole’s work and their subsequent collaboration on this project; Charlie Porter for the wonderful text; everyone at Céline gallery, Glasgow; and to Hales Gallery, London and New York, for their invaluable advice and cooperation.

Copies of Gibbons’ first monograph - published in 2023 by 5b and featuring texts by the artists Andrew Cranston and Lucy Stein - will be available to purchase from the gallery.

For more information about this exhibition, please contact info@whitecolumns.org

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