

Studio Voltaire is pleased to present *Rising* by New York-based Judith Bernstein, her first solo presentation to take place in the UK. For this commission, the artist has conducted a production residency in the gallery, working on a new body of large-scale paintings and drawings, including her largest painting to date.

Bernstein's expressive practice embodies the psychological amalgamation of sex, violence and feminism, in varying orders and priorities. *Birth of the Universe* is a recent series of expressive paintings made using oil and fluorescent paint exploring the chaos, violence, and the nuclear explosion that was *The Big Bang*. She probes the origin of space, time, and infinity, using the rage of the "active cunt" as the primal source in the expanding universe. These paintings delve into issues regarding relationships and gender with a literal dialogue between the "active cunt" and the phallus.

In contrast to *Golden Birth of the Universe*, which dominates the back wall of Studio Voltaire's distinctive gallery space, the artist has revisited her pivotal 'screw' works; scratched charcoal drawings of hardware screws that morph into massive phallic presences. These powerful works of feminist protest, which Bernstein first began in 1969, climb the high walls of the vaulted gallery space, surrounding and challenging her fluorescent "cunt" painting. In the second gallery space, Bernstein presents *Birth of the Universe #33*, painted using fluorescent paint and exhibited in blackout light, the work completely absorbs the viewer into the physical and psychological space of the painting.

Bernstein attended the Yale School of Art as a graduate student in the 60s, during a time when Yale had an all-male undergraduate program. The gender inequality was extreme. This fact and many others led to her fascination with feminism and political injustices. Bernstein was an early member of many art and activist organisations including *Guerilla Girls*, *Fight Censorship* and *Art Workers' Coalition*, as well as being a founding member of *A.I.R. Gallery* (the first gallery devoted to showing only female artists), where she had her first solo exhibition in 1973.

Supported by The Elephant Trust

Judith Bernstein (b.1942) lives and works in New York. Recent shows include; 'Judith Bernstein: *Birth of the Universe*', Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2014); 'Judith Bernstein: *Birth of the Universe*', The Box, Los Angeles (2013); '(2013); 'Judith Bernstein: *HARD*', New Museum, New York (2012); 'Sinister Pop', The Whitney Museum, New York (2012); 'The Historical Box', Hauser

& Wirth, London & Zurich (2011-12) and 'The Comfort of Strangers', MoMA PS1, New York (2010). The artist is represented by The Box, Los Angeles.

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