

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUDITH BERNSTEIN

COCK IN THE BOX

February 11 – March 18, 2017

Opening Reception: Saturday, February 11, 6-9 PM

For The Box's fourth solo-exhibition of Judith Bernstein, a powerhouse known for her large-scale drawings of screws and provocative paintings, we expose another side of her process. Focusing on smaller-scale works, this show brings together some early masculine screw drawings with Bernstein's explorations of male-to-female form, *Anthuriums*. The space holds a conversation in gendered shapes and forms.

This exhibition features a large selection of Bernstein's *Anthuriums*, eighteen 24 x 24 inch paintings and drawings on canvas and on linen. The *Anthuriums* were started in the early 1980s for an exhibition at A.I.R., with many of the early pieces rendered in charcoal, and drawn from botanical drawings of anthuriums and cacti. As the *Anthuriums* continued to develop, a prominent shape dominated and repeated, each recurring shape exploring variance of color and line. Together they tell a story of female form and strength.

Almost in binary opposition to the *Anthuriums*, there is a never-before-seen *Circle Screw* from 1970. This rare work, a charcoal drawing on canvas, shows the long cylindrical shape of the phallic screw compacted into a stubby, round shape. This work is accompanied by a selection of framed screw drawings, also from 1970, that show the classic screws alone or in groups. Serving as studies for larger-scale multi-screw installations, these works were done prior to her infamous *Horizontal* (1973) that was censored from an exhibition at the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum in 1974.

We deliberately chose smaller-scale pieces for this exhibition as a means of showing another side of Bernstein's practice. These works served both as preparatory drawings for larger works and as a way for the artist to explore shapes, materials, topics and forms. The titular work for the show, *Cock in the Box* (1966), is an example of an early drawing that culls the language of graffiti in men's public toilets during the Vietnam era. The drawing references the *Cock in the Box* as 'America's Favorite Toy', a sentiment that can echo the current state of uncertainty in America, as it seems clear how strongly 'America's Favorite Toy' dictates authoritarian actions.

A group of Bernstein's word drawings are clustered together to show the insistence of her gesture in strong black charcoal line. These pieces from the mid 1990s reference and play off of Bernstein's now infamous signature work, originally installed at Hillwood Art Museum in 1986 and then on the glass of the New Museum lobby in 2011. Bernstein began making large-scale versions of her own signature in the mid 1980s as an exploration of the ego. As a nod to these large-scale signatures, Bernstein has designed a signature for the front roll-up door of The Box. It is the first of her signature works to focus solely on her first name *Judith*.

Judith Bernstein was born in 1942 and currently lives and works in New York. She received her MFA from Yale University in 1967. Recent solo exhibitions include *Dicks of Death* at Mary Boone Gallery, NY (2016); *Judith Bernstein* at Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway (2016); *Judith Bernstein* at Karma International, Zurich (2014); *Birth of the Universe: 18 New Paintings* at The Box (2013); and *Judith Bernstein: HARD* at the New Museum, NY (2012). Recent group exhibitions include *We need to talk...* at Petzel Gallery, NY (2017); *Coming to Power: 25 Years of Sexually Explicit Art By Women* at MacCarone, NY (2016); *Human Interest: Portrait from the Whitney's Collection* (2016) and *America Is Hard To See* (2015) at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; *Keep Your Timber Limber* at ICA, London (2013). Bernstein has work in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Jewish Museum, NY; and the Brooklyn Museum, NY.

