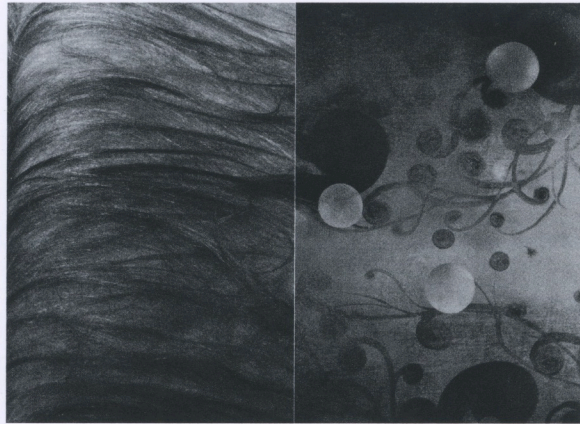




# BURIED PLEASURES

*Installations by Barbara Kendrick  
Paintings by Rosalyn Schwartz*



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*The*  
SUBLIMINAL TRIUMPH *of*  
WOMEN'S RITES

By DEBRA RISBERG, *Curator*

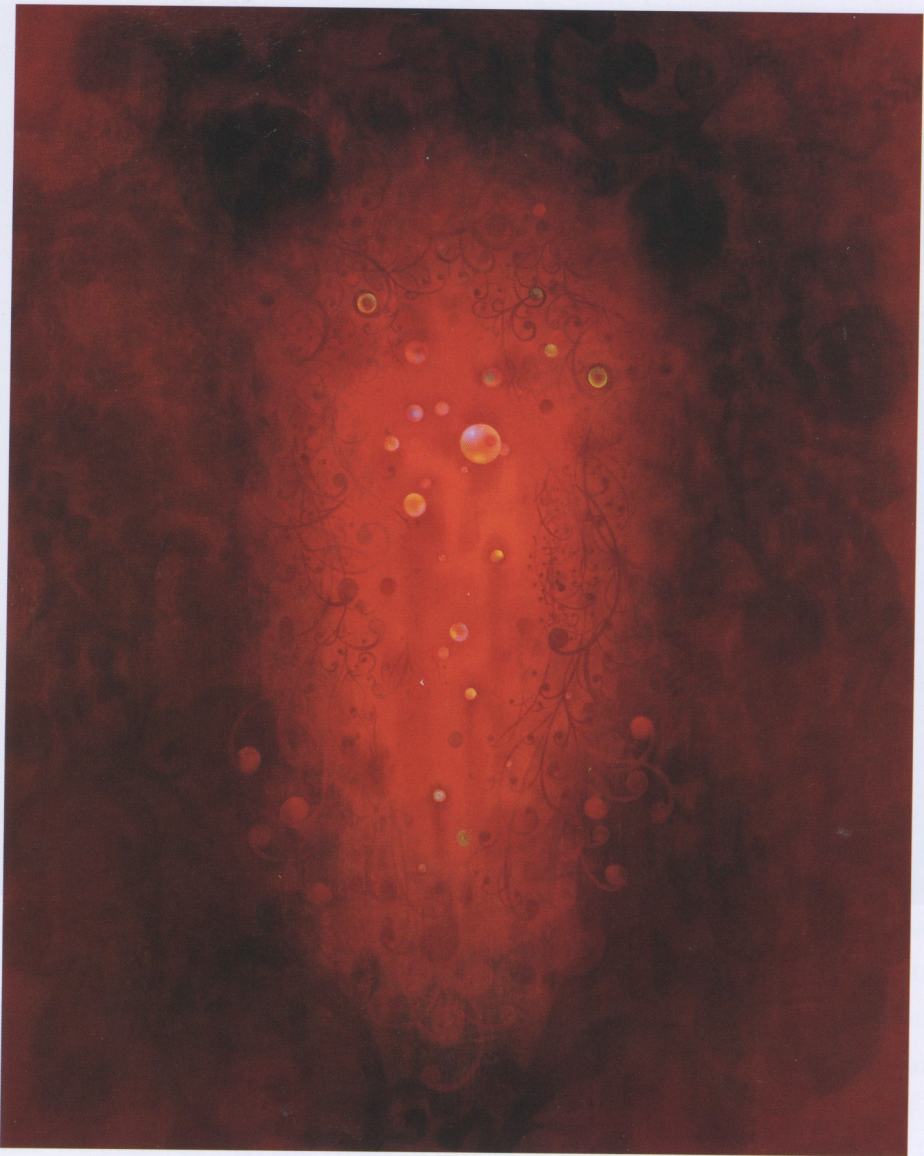
*Barbara Kendrick and Rosalyn Schwartz distill the game of seduction to its essence in symbolic representations of the dark impulses that brew beneath the skin. Compelled to transcend the limitations of our biology, we create religions, myths and technology. We struggle to control our innate drives for power and pleasure, but in spite of our knowledge and ethical ideals, we do not always choose to stay in control. At times we are compelled to break out of our social restraints and revel in the mysteries of our bodies. Kendrick and Schwartz make art that addresses the beauty and the pain of being an animal, graced with the choice of indulging, sublimating or transcending its instincts.*

*A*ccording to Freud—and later Marcuse, who elaborated on Freud's theories—the Eros principal and its complement, Thanatos, the death impulse, determine the evolution of civilization. Psychoanalytic theory proposes that every human culture was built upon the repression and sublimation of these innate drives. Men may substitute work, sports, even war, for indiscriminate sex and domination, but their discontent remains. The urge for something more, for a total release, always resurfaces. The transcendentalist and the shaman submit themselves to austerities and initiation rituals, believing that human beings are meant to rise above their animal



LAIR  
*Barbara Kendrick*  
installation, 1997

... these were based on this idea of making dispersion out of natural elements but you  
... with further & various design may make perhaps out of something reminiscent of  
... beautiful abstract forms that resemble visitors on closer inspection. The  
... to suggest that we are looking at something very private, often hidden &  
... that you have used artificial instead of real fruit when you make your paintings and  
... of going out to the landscape, you paint from photographs, you find. I think especially



FORGIVING DARKNESS III

*Rosalyn Schwartz*

oil on canvas 66" x 52" 1997

*An Interview with*

ROSALYN SCHWARTZ

**Debra: Your paintings combine aspects of the romantic with an earthy kind of transcendence. You often work from images of idealized landscapes and still lifes. For me, many of your paintings represent a sense of release, which could be biological, psychological, or spiritual. Could you discuss this concept of tension and release and what it might mean in regard to your work as an artist?**

*Roz: Over the years in different reviews and critiques of my work, there has always been a strong emphasis and discussion about its erotic nature, and whenever I read these critiques, or have friends come over and talk to me about my painting, they often talk about this. Their comments always interest me because when I am actually making the painting, I don't think about any of that. I really don't set out with an agenda. In fact, I am really anti-agenda because to me that is stifling. For the kind of work I am interested in, for who I truly am as a person, I do my best work without thinking about "ideas"—I think more about how to make a painting. The formal language, that involvement with color and translucency and light—very much about light, and tactility and just the fleshiness or the body of the paint—to me these things are really absolutely inseparable from the content. So, how much emphasis I place on composition, how I arrange shapes, how much weight I place on the brush handle when I am applying the paint, how close I stand to the canvas, how my neck is tilted, if I have to bend down to paint the bottom of the canvas—all of these qualities are really how the content of my work comes through. It is a bodily experience. There is really no separation between how I make my paintings and how I live my life, because I psychoanalyze everything. I don't consider things in terms of words, ideas, and the cerebral; I am visceral, fascinated with the subconscious, the psychological, and the spiritual. I try to deal with authentic feelings and authentic processes. I set very high standards and am highly critical when it comes to the formal language—the process. As far as meaning or possible interpretations of my work, though, I really try not to control this; I try to give full reign to my subconscious. For me, this is where the authenticity of intent lies.*

**You play constantly between organic, pictorial representation and decoration and embellishment. Art Deco was based on this idea of making decoration out of natural elements but you take it much further. A curlicue design may metamorphose out of something reminiscent of pubic hair; other beautiful abstract forms may resemble viscera on closer inspection. The paintings seem to suggest that we are looking at something very private, often hidden. I know that you have used artificial instead of real fruit when you make your paintings and instead of going out to the landscape, you paint from photographs you find. I think you are try-**

*An Interview with*

BARBARA KENDRICK

**Debra: Over the years your work has been constructed out of materials either directly from nature or materials that resemble organic substances, such as latex and synthetic hair. What is your attraction to these materials and what do they offer that cannot be achieved through traditional art media?**

*Barbara: My subject has always been the body and how the body connects to the world around it. I like using visual analogies. For example, there are similarities in how hair and water move and flow. So this idea led to my making a waterfall out of synthetic hair. I'm attracted to materials which can be used as metaphors or as "stand-ins" for the body. At times I use materials which appear to be fragile and vulnerable, but are a lot stronger than they seem. I'm interested in certain ways the material behaves. Hair and grass, two materials I've used in art-making, are very chaotic, uncontrollable. I can only impose a certain amount of control over the material.*

**You collaborate with your material.**

*In any medium you learn what you can and can't control. I'm very conscious of the control issue when I use found materials, such as hair. When I make art, I have to feel I'm inventing something new. I may not be, but it has to feel like I am. I am constantly engaged in the process of discovering how the material behaves • One thing that I like about hair, which is different from other materials I have used, is that it is loaded. When I say "loaded" I mean it carries so many associations: cultural taboos, superstitions, myths. We all, men and women, feel personally about our hair and our appearance. It is definitely not a neutral medium—so it is very challenging to use in making art.*

**We human beings tend not to identify ourselves with the other species on the planet, yet we are made of the same stuff. We experience the same sensations, from pleasure to fear, to desire to defensiveness. Your work always brings one back to this basic reality by intertwining human concepts with organic materials that come from the body. There is a sense of wildness in your work that is beautiful at times and creepy at other times. It has a tactile and sensual presence that achieves more than visual stimulation. I suspect it even plays with our instinct for touch or smell. Do you consciously appeal to instinctual impulses in your fabrications, and how does that intention weigh against the conceptual and historical references that are also significant aspects of your installations?**




LAIR

*Barbara Kendrick*

detail of hair hammock, 1997



THE  
FEMININE  
REDIVIVUS



*Rosalyn Schwartz's Paintings  
Barbara Kendrick's Installations*

BY DONALD KUSPIT

*On the one hand an old-fashioned painter, on the other hand  
a new-fangled conceptual artist: what they share is a concern with the feminine. I want to suggest that  
the paintings of Rosalyn Schwartz and the installations of Barbara Kendrick are,  
in their different ways, meditations on the feminine: allegories of the feminine. More particularly, they  
are a kind of defiant re-articulation of the increasingly debatable idea that  
there is a core meaning of the feminine.*

*I* am suggesting that for Schwartz and Kendrick, woman is not entirely a social construction, but has a biological essence, which is what makes her psychology as well as body different from those of man. In Kendrick, the feminine core is symbolized by hair, extended and twisted into a variety of extravagant, vivid gestures—a tangible demonstration of woman's "mystery." In Schwartz, it is symbolized by an intangible, apparitional spore-like ovum or germ cell, often stamped with a scroll-like emblem of royalty, and sometimes becoming tangible in luminous fruit.

Kendrick's hair and Schwartz's ovum proliferate vigorously, endlessly germinating in space, as though to deny its emptiness—the sense of absence and loss it conveys. Hair and ovum stand alone in this space, needing nothing to complete their presence.

Long, lush hair, freely growing and flowing has long been associated with woman, as an attribute indicative of her essence. For a woman to let her hair down is, proverbially, for her to declare and express her sexual and emotional freedom. The ovum conveys a crucial aspect of woman's being: her fertility or generative power. Human life renews itself through her living body, which is why it—and especially her womb, the intimate part of her body directly involved in procreation—has been idealized as a “sacred vessel.” But Kendrick's use of hair, and Schwartz's use of ovum, do not naively regress to an archaic idea of woman: in their handling, woman's hair and egg cells—indications of her vital, intimate connection with nature—function as declarations of independence, markers of autonomy. They are imbued with an “unnatural” dignity, becoming in the process symbols of selfhood. From being projections of femininity, they become symbols of the feminist project of creating a female sense of self.

Where woman's biology has been an excuse for regarding her as socially inferior and defective, for Kendrick and Schwartz it is implicitly a way of asserting her God-given competency and superiority to society—her transcendence. They build their sense of self on acceptance of their biology, regarding it not so much as a destiny they can do nothing about, but a creative opportunity—indeed, an opportunity to show the inherent, visceral creativity of woman, which is what privileges her over man. Thus, the emotional key to Kendrick's installations and Schwartz's paintings is their ironic use of biological signifiers. Whether passionately sublime, like Schwartz's images, or subliminally satiric, like Kendrick's witty installations, they make the same feminist point: woman's nature is not a handicap, but indicative of her unique identity.

Schwartz works with aura: radiant emanation is her subject matter, detached from any object, however many objects it may imbue, like a kind of visual perfume, and objectified as luminous, yearning color and atmosphere. It is the essence of woman distilled into a visual idea of pleasure: the “feminine mystique” visually privileged as an emblem of erotic transcendence. The sense of ecstatic reverie that pervades Schwartz's works, the visionary quality of their fantasy, their expressive fervor and air of baroque excess, suggest a kind of idealism and pleasure that is unique to woman, in that it involves her sense, no doubt unconscious, of her body's “self-tran-



OFFERING

*Rosalyn Schwartz*

oil on canvas 71" x 53", 1990

