

CONTEMPORARY WOMEN ARTISTS

Wendy Beckett - 1988
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CLAIRE SEIDL

From the long list of the thematic exhibitions with which Claire Seidl has been concerned we could pick out fairly apt descriptions of how this young women paints. Her free, uninhibited intensities are well suggested by, for example, "Passionate Abstraction", "Art Implosionism", "Current Memories: Painters who use their Dreams", or "Nature Transformed". Seidl does all these things: abstracts with a carefree passion, implodes realism into artistic freedom, makes her memories "current", and transforms nature with the confidence of an intelligently perceptive eye. The "Eye of the Realist is Inflatable" is a high-spirited celebration of all this potential. The real "Realist", Seidl assures us, is the abstract artist, an implicit assertion that recalls Pat Steir's conviction that the more closely we look at nature the less clearly and divisively we see. When one's eyes are open to the infinitesimal detail, then we "see" only abstraction. Seidl "inflates" her eye, widens it beyond rationality, and a splendor of line and colour appears before us. One reading of the picture could

see a massive head in the moonlike centre, with an eye inflating in all directions, but any attempt to be literal would destroy the work's happy abandon. It is only an apparent abandon, of course, one of mood. In actuality, the drawing is powerfully controlled, with the swinging black lines weaving out and round, uniting all the scattered sweetness of colour into a superbly orchestrated whole. We are made aware of geometry and, simultaneously, of nature the catalyst, bursting into change and exploding us with her. If Seidl is not solemn, she is absolute in her seriousness. We are not being asked to rejoice without cause. Here is clearly a painter who is unafraid of time's velocity, who can tackle the unknown and the unexpected, who sees no reason to protect herself with caution or with mollifying gestures. She can afford to be both realist and visually inflatable, because at base she trusts what she is and what she sees. Not all artists, young or old, have this confidence, but its innocence and sincerity make Seidl a delight for eye and heart.