



## CONDO LONDON | THE APPROACH

For Condo London 2020, Corbett vs. Dempsey presents three Chicago Imagists with distinct approaches to portraiture, featuring watercolors by Robert Lostutter, graphite drawings by Babara Rossi, and ink drawings by Karl Wirsum. All works come from the early 1970s, prime time for Chicago Imagism, its irreverent young artists drawing on Surrealism, vernacular art, and abstraction for their idiosyncratic new version of figurative art.

Robert Lostutter's early work sets the artist out on a perverse adventure in hybrid figuration. Although he never showed with the official Imagist exhibition groups at their legendary shows at the Hyde Park Art Center on Chicago's south side, Lostutter was a committed fellow traveler, his imagery as wild and powerful as that of his close friend Ed Paschke or Jim Nutt. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Lostutter produced graphite drawings and watercolors featuring costumed subjects engaged embedded in complex geometric spaces, sometimes merging with their surroundings. Meticulously rendered, his figures are constrained by the complicated vantages and surreal forms, implying a kind of bondage that grows more overt in later work, which continues unabated today, with whole tribes of hybrid human-birds and human-plants.

Barbara Rossi's decades long practice includes a deep dive into the enigma of portraiture. A member of the final Imagist exhibition group, Marriage Chicago Style, Rossi was a key figure in Chicago's art scene, both as a teacher and as a painter, for 50 years. The delicate works on paper exhibited at Condo are precursors of the bead-like weaving of pattern and line evident in her reverse-painted Plexiglas works of the 1970s. Rossi's head-and-shoulders forms, which were composed in an improvised manner, starting at one point in the center of the page and moving outward, melt and slink into states of figurative ambiguity that are unquestionably corporeal even as much as they point to the celestial.

Karl Wirsum, an original member of the Hairy Who exhibition group in the mid-sixties, is one of the central figures of twentieth-century Chicago art. Wirsum's embrace of wit, humor, and a distinctive visual vocabulary is matched by his dedication to a hardline painting style and pristine surfaces. The works exhibited at Condo are sketchbook drawings from the mid 1970s, providing insight into the artists' way of wrangling an image, a kind of permutational problem-solving, often evidenced in his margin notations. Wirsum's robotic/cartoon figure of the 1970s are part of the vast wellspring of source material on which he draws, including his enormous collection of tin toys and vintage circus ephemera.

# The annexe

## Condo 2020 Hosting: Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

11 January – 16 February 2020

Karl Wirsum  
*Untitled*, 1974  
Blue ballpoint pen and black ink on notebook paper

Karl Wirsum  
*Untitled* ("Vinegar Bent Measel"), 1974  
Pen and ink and graphite on notebook paper

Robert Lostutter  
*Untitled*, 1970  
Watercolor on paper

Barbara Rossi  
*Untitled*, 1967  
Graphite pencil on paper

Robert Lostutter  
*Untitled*, 1971  
Watercolor on paper

Barbara Rossi  
*Untitled*, 1967  
Graphite pencil on paper

Robert Lostutter  
*Untitled*, 1970  
Watercolor on paper

Barbara Rossi  
*Untitled*, 1967  
Graphite pencil on paper