

Judie Bamber: *Details of Impossible Past Lovers*

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GAVLAK, West Palm Beach

GAVLAK is pleased to present *Details of Impossible Past Lovers*, a solo exhibition by Judie Bamber. The exhibition features new and recent works that span several decades of the Los Angeles–based artist’s sustained investigation into intimacy, realism, and the politics of looking. Across painting, drawing, and watercolor, Bamber has developed a meticulous and emotionally charged practice that slows the act of viewing, inviting sustained attention to images shaped by desire, memory, and power.

Working from appropriated photographs—ranging from family snapshots to mass-media imagery—Bamber recontextualizes her subjects through fragmentation, cropping, and precise realism. Her work lingers between tenderness and confrontation, reimagining eroticism without objectification and treating realism as a mode of excavation rather than mere representation. As critic Annabel Keenan writes, Bamber’s work “creates a language of intimacy that feels wholly her own,” one that asks viewers to reconsider how images of the body are circulated, mythologized, and consumed.

Born in Detroit in 1961, Bamber entered CalArts in 1979 at a moment when feminist art histories were largely absent from the institution. Working against resistance to her subject matter, she pursued a practice that turned inward rather than distancing itself intellectually. Early works depicting sex toys and closely cropped female anatomy confronted taboos around sexuality with a combination of clinical precision and emotional care—less about shock than revelation.

A central thread in Bamber’s practice is her long-running series *Are You My Mother?*, begun in the early 2000s. Drawing from photographs taken by her father of her mother throughout the 1960s, Bamber approaches the family archive as both portrait and puzzle. Rendered with restraint and emotional acuity, these works transform domestic imagery into meditations on femininity, performance, and inherited desire. As artist and

writer Nayland Blake observes, “In Bamber’s paintings, looking, touching, time, and remembrance are in intimate conjunction.”

More recent paintings based on 1960s Playboy centerfolds extend Bamber’s inquiry into mass-distributed images of femininity. By isolating fragments and restoring the women’s names, Bamber slows down the centerfold and reframes it as a site of critical intimacy. For Blake, this process is less about representation than transformation: “The image’s power is confronted and worked through by being turned into material,” shifting the photograph from spectacle into a space of ethical and emotional reckoning.

In an era defined by image saturation and accelerated consumption, Bamber’s work insists on slowness, care, and ethical looking. As Blake writes, “Every painting contains two kinds of time coiled within it: the flash of vision and the trail of touch.” This exhibition presents an artist whose practice is defined not by spectacle, but by accumulation—of emotion, technique, and perceptual awareness—inviting viewers to reconsider the emotional and ethical stakes of every image encountered.

About the Artist

Judie Bamber uses formal ideas related to drawing, painting, and photography in order to investigate what is coded in the image as well as what is evoked in the technical treatment that allows speculation about the subject beyond the image. Her work engages possibilities of female pleasure alongside political issues related to feminism, gender, and sexuality.

She received her MFA from Lesley University College of Art and Design and BFA from the California Institute of the Arts. She is represented by Gavlak Gallery in Los Angeles, CA, and Palm Beach, FL. She has exhibited extensively throughout the United States in solo and group exhibitions, including The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA; the Center for Contemporary Art, Chicago, Ill; Carpenter Center, Cambridge, MA; University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA; Krannert Art Museum, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,

Champaign, IL; and MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA. Ms. Bamber's work is included in the permanent collection of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA. She is the recipient of numerous grants, fellowships, and artist residencies, including the Richard Diebenkorn Teaching Fellowship, California Community Foundation Grant, City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowship, and Art Matter Inc. Grant. Her work has most recently been published in *Effects Journal*, Volume 3, *Mimicries*, Jan Tumlir, and Jeffrey Stuker editors; *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing*, 2013; *Art and Queer Culture*, by Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer; and *The Queer Art of Failure*, by Jack Halberstam.

Ms. Bamber is currently an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Graduate Fine Art Department at Otis College of Art. She has been at Otis since 2001. She has taught at numerous institutions, including Cooper Union and Bard College in New York, NY; Art Center College of Design, UCLA, UC Irvine in California; Harvard University, and The School of the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, MA.