

Magdalena Suarez Frimkess

opening April 6, 7 pm

kaufmann repetto is pleased to announce Magdalena Suarez Frimkess' first exhibition at the gallery. Suarez Frimkess (B. 1929 in Caracas, Venezuela) is a ceramicist based in Venice, California. The artist began working collaboratively in the 1960s in New York, glazing the pottery of her husband before starting to produce sculptures and hand-formed pots independently in the 1970s.

While the artist's ceramics collaborations with her husband, Michael Frimkess, have drawn the attention of museums and institutions for many years — their works are in the collections of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York and the Smithsonian, among others — the 87-year-old artist only recently began to exhibit her work independently, starting with a solo exhibition at White Columns, New York, in 2014.

Magdalena Suarez Frimkess paints the surfaces of her pots with elaborate glazed compositions. Her earliest works depicted quotidian scenes borrowed from Mayan and Aztec codices, until the late 1970s, when she began to adorn her ceramics with cartoon characters, advertising slogans, and family snapshots. In her choice of motifs, the Venezuelan-born artist seems entirely unbound by convention: so inclined to paint one pot with scenes from Greco-Roman pottery followed by Mickey and Minnie Mouse dancing the swing upon the next. Though the artist often returns to a similar imagery, she never outlines her subjects in advance, instead acting intuitively upon each work. Despite the immediate sense of light-heartedness within her subjects, there is often an underlying sinister quality as well, as evident in works like those depicting the kidnapping of Olive Oyl or in the one where the cartoon character is portrayed dangling above a school of sharks.

The stories that the artist depicts may not be wholly autobiographical but her life has been eventful and distinctive. Suarez Frimkess was born in Venezuela where she first began painting; she then moved to study in Chile with artist Paul Harris, who was so taken by her work that he described her as “the most daring sculptor now working in Chile” in an article published in *Art in America* in 1962. Harris subsequently arranged for her to receive a fellowship to study in the United States.

In 1963, she moved to study at the Clay Art Center in Port Chester, N.Y., and there met Michael Frimkess, who would later become her husband. Their fifty-year collaboration constitutes a compelling body of work that resonates with many genres—antiquated pottery, mythology, pop, outsider art — all of which meet in a unique renewal and innovation of the ceramic tradition.

Perhaps it is because Suarez Frimkess is mostly self-taught that her own ceramics stray further from traditional American ceramics than those made collaboratively with her husband. The ways in which she makes and decorates her pieces serve as evidence: her forms are more sculptural than functional, and although glazes are traditionally designed for dipping, the artist applies them like paint in a process that she compares to cloisonné. Arriving a few thousand years after the Greek and Chinese vases they resemble, these objects occupy a place between numerous movements and generations and continue to enrich the tradition of narrative storytelling through pottery.

A special thanks to Ryan Conder and South Willard, Los Angeles.

Magdalena Suarez Frimkess (B. 1929 in Caracas, Venezuela) lives and works in Venice, California. Her recent exhibitions include a solo show at White Columns, New York (2014). Among her recent group shows, *The Avant-Garde Won'T Give Up: Cobra And Its Legacy*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, and *Looking Back, The 9th White Columns Annual*, White Columns, New York (both 2015); *Selected By...*, Limoncello, London, *Another Cats Show*, 356 Mission, Los Angeles, and *Made In L.A.*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (all 2014); *Grapevine*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, *The Cat Show*, White Columns, New York, and *Why is Everything the Same?*, Shoot The Lobster, New York (all 2013); and South Willard, Los Angeles (2012). Magdalena Suarez Frimkess has also exhibited extensively with her husband Michael Frimkess.