

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Gladys Nilsson: Honk! Fifty Years of Painting

January 31 – April 18, 2020

Opening: Thursday, January 30, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Gladys Nilsson: Honk! Fifty Years of Painting**, the next exhibition in his gallery at 523 West 24th Street. Featuring thirty-three paintings and eighteen related drawings made between 1963 and 1980, the exhibition is organized in collaboration with Garth Greenan Gallery, where a selection of Nilsson's recent paintings are on view concurrently. Together the two exhibitions comprise the largest presentation of the artist's work to date.

Though Nilsson is better known for the watercolors she began exhibiting in the mid-1960s as one of the original members of the Hairy Who, she has dedicated much of her career to painting with acrylic on canvas, panel, and Plexiglas. The earliest works in the exhibition depict brightly colored figures in enigmatic scenarios. In *Honk* (1964) a group of four figures at the left of the canvas confronts an uncannily similar group on the right, while in *Nightclub* (1964) a giant lime-green face leers at a chorus line of dancers on an illuminated stage. Like many of Nilsson's paintings, both works include wood frames designed by the artist.

In 1966 Nilsson began painting on Plexiglas, applying paint to the opposite side so that it is seen through the clear plastic. Laying down each painting's layers in reverse order yielded more graphic compositions, as Nilsson explains: "The line is the first thing you put down, and everything else builds from that." Her largest painting on Plexiglas, *Very Worldly* (1967), is included in the exhibition. More than six feet wide, it abounds with hundreds of characters of every conceivable size and shape, many of them piloting fantastical vehicles. After 1970 Nilsson returned to working on canvas, and although graphic figures still populate her paintings, they are often anchored by a single protagonist. In both panels of the seven-foot-high *Dipped Dick: Adam and Eve after Cranach* (1971), a human silhouette is surrounded by a menagerie of cavorting plants and animals. As Nilsson describes her approach, "I would draw a big figure, but that figure always needed another figure, and then those two figures needed a third to interact with. And then, before I knew it, the whole place would be teeming."

Gladys Nilsson Honk! Fifty Years of Painting is accompanied by a catalogue co-published with Garth Greenan Gallery. Including an interview by Alison Gingeras and more than one hundred full-color plates, it is the artist's most comprehensive publication to date.

Gladys Nilsson (b. 1940) graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1962. With five other former students, including her husband Jim Nutt, she organized a series of exhibitions from 1966 to 1969 under the name the Hairy Who. In 1973 her work was the subject of a one-person exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Today her work is in the collections of museums across the United States, Europe, and Australia, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien in Vienna.

Gladys Nilsson: Honk! Fifty Years of Painting is on view from January 31 to April 18, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. For additional information, please contact Ted Turner at 212-243-0200 or ted@matthewmarks.com.

The next exhibition at 523 West 24th Street, **Julia Phillips**, opens May 7.