



AMY CUTLER

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery
September 15–December 10, 2016

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AMY CUTLER

Amy Cutler's drawings, prints, and gouache on paper paintings portray a wildly imaginative and enigmatic world in which groups of women, seemingly from an imaginary or bygone era, carry ridiculous loads, weave and braid interminable lengths of hair, and otherwise engage in traditional but essential "women's work" in utterly preposterous situations. Intricate and exquisitely detailed, Cutler's art is informed by Persian miniatures, medieval art, Japanese ukiyo-e prints, folk art, and elaborate textile patterns from various cultures and historic periods around the world. Her process begins with pencil on paper and sketches from her journal that evolve from very personal experiences and ideas from her dreams. For the works on paper painted with gouache, a ground pigment mixed with gum arabic.¹ Cutler uses a variety of tiny paint brushes, working detailed areas with brush tips the size of toothpicks. It's a slow, labor-intensive process that, combined with the artist's extraordinary imagination and highly skilled technique, results in remarkable and most unusual works of art.

Cutler's utterly fantastical narratives are baffling but always intriguing. In *Umbrage* (2001) four individuals engage in a jousting match mounted on goats wielding umbrellas instead of lances. A procession of women in *Viragos* (2003), with hair stretched out like poles, precariously balance dozens of bird cages and houses. In *Dinner Party* (2002) a pair of women elegantly dressed in courtly finery rampage on the dinner table, while two others attack each other with chairs. Perplexing but always engaging, Cutler's "intricate and wonderfully weird narratives," as they've been described, brim with nuanced but astute social commentary. In the drawings *Extensions* (2003) and *Hair Mill* (2007), as well as the prints in the exhibition, images of girls and women combing, braiding, and weaving never-ending lengths of hair are featured. "Hair and long braids have been present in my work for a long time," says Cutler. "Normally, for me, it represents the passage of time, heredity, and sexuality."² In a recent conversation the artist stated "hair takes a long



Above the Fjord, 2010 (detail) ►
Gouache on paper
29 x 41¼ inches
Collection of the artist

time to grow, and like tree rings, can mark time. Hairstyles can mark tribal, social/and or cultural affiliation."³ In the works on view in this exhibition braids seem to function as conduits that bind and connect, but with their allusions to rope might also intonate constriction. In either case, Cutler's women in these works are endlessly busy, engaged, as in all of the artist's works, in impossible, totally incongruous, if not wild scenarios with ambiguous, unresolved narratives. Delivered with wit and humor, they allude to the many absurdities and challenges that often characterize women's lives: their prescribed roles, unending labors, fears, and dreams. Nonetheless, in an almost stoic, matter of fact manner, seemingly inured to the challenges they face, Cutler's women steadfastly trudge on. They persevere. In assessing the state of affairs for women, Cutler casts a wry, though disarming perspective, while also presenting a fictional utopia of strong and self-reliant women. Anachronistic but also contemporary in sensibility, Cutler's intricate and extraordinarily imaginative works confound but engage us. They present us with a mythic world of whimsical parables and truths drenched in fantasy for us to absorb and ponder.

Margo Ann Crutchfield
Curator at Large

¹Gum arabic is a natural gum made from the sap of various species of the acacia tree harvested mostly in Sudan and throughout the Sahel from Senegal to Somalia. Historically gum arabic was cultivated in Arabia and West Asia.

²Cutler quoted in Noémie Jennifer, "Step Inside a Drawn and Threaded Treehouse of Emotion," May 11, 2016, <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/tag/Amy+Cutler>

³Also to note: a recent installation, Fossa, commissioned by SITE Santa Fe in 2015 and also featured at Leslie Tonkonow + Art Projects in 2016, incorporated more than 900 feet of braided human and synthetic hair.

⁴Cutler in conversation with the author, June 12, 2016.

Embargo, 2010 (detail) ▼
Gouache on paper
23 x 30 inches

Collection of Linda E.A. Wachtmeister, Scottsville, Virginia





▲ *Umbrage*, 2001 (detail), Gouache on paper, 29 x 41 inches, Collection of A.G. Rosen

About the Artist

Amy Cutler was born in 1974 in Poughkeepsie, New York. In 1995, she was part of an exchange program at Städelschule, Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She received a bachelor of fine arts from the Cooper Union School of Art in New York City (1997) and participated in a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Madison, Maine (1999). Her work has been featured extensively in exhibitions in the United States and Europe. Notable one-person exhibitions of her work include those at SITE Santa Fe; the Indianapolis Museum of Art; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City. Her numerous group shows and major surveys at museums throughout the world include those at the Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany; Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense, Denmark; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; MoMA PS 1; the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the Albertina in Vienna. Cutler's art is in many distinguished public and private collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Morgan Library and Museum; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Amy Cutler lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the lenders to the exhibition for parting with these marvelous works for audiences here to experience; to Leslie Tonkonow, our deep-felt thanks for her support and dedicated assistance throughout the evolution of this project; and to Amy Cutler, thank you for sharing your world.

Photographs by Jeffrey Sturges, courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York.



▲ *Viragos*, 2003 (detail), Gouache on paper, 19 ½ x 30 inches, Collection of Susan and Arthur Fleischer, New York

Works in the exhibition

All works courtesy of the lenders and Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York

Overcast, 2012

Gouache on watercolor paper mounted on board
13 ½ x 10 1/8 inches
Collection of Andrea Krantz and Harvey Sawikin

Above the Fjord, 2010

Gouache on paper
29 x 41 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

Embargo, 2010

Gouache on paper
23 x 30 inches
Collection of Linda E.A. Wachtmeister,
Scottsville, Virginia

Weavers, 2008

Lithograph in 17 colors
34 1/8 x 24 1/8 inches
Edition 34
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
© Amy Cutler/Universal Limited Art Editions

Reserves, 2008

Lithograph in 16 colors
34 1/8 x 24 1/8 inches
Edition 34
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
© Amy Cutler/Universal Limited Art Editions

Provisions, 2008

Lithograph in 15 colors
34 1/8 x 24 1/8 inches
Edition 34
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
© Amy Cutler/Universal Limited Art Editions

Groomers, 2008

Lithograph in 17 colors
34 1/8 x 24 1/8 inches
Edition 34
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
© Amy Cutler/Universal Limited Art Editions

Hair Mill, 2007

Graphite on paper
29¾ x 22 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

Cake Toss, 2004

Lithograph in 10 colors
21 ¾ x 24 inches
Edition 39
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
© Amy Cutler/Universal Limited Art Editions

Siege, 2004

Gouache on paper
41 ¼ x 60 inches
Private collection, New York

Viragos, 2003

Gouache on paper
19 ½ x 30 inches
Collection of Susan and Arthur
Fleischer, New York

Extensions, 2003

Graphite on paper
19 x 13 inches
Collection of Andrea Krantz and
Harvey Sawikin

Dinner Party, 2002

Gouache on paper
44 x 50 inches
Collection of A.G. Rosen

Campsite, 2002

Gouache on paper
46 ½ x 47 5/8 inches
Private Collection, New York

Umbrage, 2001

Gouache on paper
29 x 41 inches
Collection of A.G. Rosen

ON THE COVER

Siege, 2004 (detail),
Gouache on paper

41 ¼ x 60 inches

Private collection, New York



▲ *Dinner Party, 2002 (detail)*, Gouache on paper, 44 x 50 inches, Collection of A.G. Rosen

General Information

Admission to galleries and exhibition-related events is free.

Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Friday, 10 AM–5:30 PM
Saturday, 10 AM–4 PM

Fall 2016 Exhibitions

Four one-person but interrelated exhibitions deal inventively with the female persona, probing the strengths, vulnerabilities, and challenges of being women.

Susan Jamison: *Enchantment*
September 1–October 8, 2016

Amy Cutler
September 15–December 10, 2016

Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle
September 8–November 28, 2016

Lynn Hershman Leeson
October 20–December 10, 2016



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