

# JDJ

## Susan Weil

February 27 - April 17, 2021

Over the course of her seventy year career, Susan Weil's exuberant practice has drawn inspiration from nature, literature, art history, and her own lived experience. Weil came of age as an artist in the postwar period, studying under Josef Albers at Black Mountain College with Willem & Elaine de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg & Cy Twombly. Although she has deep roots in the New York School of Art, her work defies easy categorization.

Central to Weil's practice is her fascination with expressing time through motion, which she does in a number of ways, including her use of seriality, collage, and kinetic sculptural elements. She often works with blueprints, exposing the paper to light and using her body and other objects to make impressions, a technique that she introduced to her then-partner Robert Rauschenberg in 1949 and that she continues to use today.

Weil's oeuvre oscillates between the abstract and the concrete, and this exhibition brings together four bodies of work from the 1970s through the 1990s that reference the female body. Regardless of form or medium, there is a sense of vivacity, dynamism, and playfulness present in Weil's work. One can sense the pleasure she finds in everyday life—her delight in experiencing the passing of time as she moves through the world with a great sense of curiosity.

The spray paint works on paper, exhibited here for the first time in fifty years, express the figure in a simple and contained way. Weil made these pieces in a free-flowing process, working on several at a time and allowing the compositions to come to her spontaneously. These works articulate the silhouettes of body parts—the curve of a hip or breast, the crook of an elbow—and evoke a sense of corporeal fullness articulated through a minimal use of line and form.

The *Soft Folds* series of paintings on unstretched canvas from the 1980s and 1990s offer a take on the relationship between flatness and voluminosity. These sculptural formations are made from simple shapes of canvas, painted on both sides and folded. The fullness of shape found in *Moon, Half Moon*, 1990, and the intricacies of drapery found in *Ampersand*, 1985, are reminiscent of a body as expressed through clothing, like the folds found in the robes of Renaissance paintings, which Weil considers an influence for this series.

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Simultaneous to the *Soft Folds*, Weil produced the *Configurations* series of collages. In *Color Configurations 2 (Red)*, 2000 and *Black Configuration*, 2000, the nude female figure is loosely painted on a series of small pieces of paper, collaged together to form a grid. Taken as a whole, these paintings articulate a dynamic sense of fractured movement reminiscent of the 19th century photographer Edwaerd Muybridge, who is a touchpoint in her practice.

Literature and poetry are a critical part of her practice and inspire her object-based works as well as her many explorations into the world of language. In 1977 she began her daily writing practice that she refers to as poemumbles—short poems accompanied by drawings, watercolors or collages. In her poemumbles Weil chronicles the quotidian aspects of her life: a cup of coffee, something she read or saw by an artist or writer who inspires her, a conversation with a family member, or whatever happened to her on a particular day. Over the course of her career, she has created dozens of artist books, and in 2011 established an imprint, Weil Books, which publishes the work of emerging and established artists, poets and writers.

On view in this exhibition are a selection of handmade artist books Weil made in collaboration with the New York-based publisher Vincent Fitzgerald & Co. in the 1980s and 1990s. These limited edition books and objects are made in the *livre d'artiste* tradition, which took shape in the early 20th century in France as a way to bring together the works of artists and writers into a special form, incorporating handmade paper, special typesetting, collage, drawing, and painting directly onto the text pages.

The meticulously designed books, many of which unfurl into spectacular forms, pair Weil's inventive vision with the works of American writer Gertrude Stein, the 13th century Persian poet Rumi, and the Irish writer James Joyce, who has been a major source of inspiration for Weil since her childhood. Also on view is *Blind Man's Buff*, 1997, a deck of 52 playing cards featuring 104 lithograph drawings she made with her eyes closed.

Susan Weil was born in 1930 and lives and works in New York. Her work has been exhibited at institutions across the United States and Europe, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Black Mountain College Museum + Art Center, Asheville, NC; and the Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid. Her work is included in a number of international museum and institutional collections, such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Menil Collection, Houston; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and The Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm among others.