

PRESS RELEASE

CHEIM & READ IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE AN EXHIBITION OF *CHAMBRE CLOSE*, 1991, A SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY **BETTINA RHEIMS** AND *QUARTERED METEOR*, 1969, A SCULPTURE BY **LYNDA BENGLIS**

OPENING TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15 AND CONTINUING THROUGH SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16.

**Bettina Rheims** was born in Paris in December 1952. After working in galleries, as a model, and later as a journalist, **Rheims** began her career as a photographer in the late 1970s by taking black and white pictures of striptease and circus artists.

In *Chambre Close*, 1991 – never before exhibited in the United States – **Rheims** creates a series of detached, yet daring portraits of women. Cheap hotel rooms provide the mis-en-scene for a concupiscent literary and photographic fiction, as **Rheims** assumes the role of Monsieur X, an amateur photographer filled with an insatiable curiosity concerning women's bodies. In the accompanying text to *Chambre Close*, Serge Bramly, known for his highly charged, fantastical novellas, describes the character of Monsieur X as a repressed city-dweller whose life takes a sudden turn when he allows himself to be consumed by his voyeuristic urges. With his photographic equipment ever at hand, he approaches his models on subways, on buses, or on the street, offering them money and luring them into a hotel, where they commit an act of "visual adultery" – but nothing more.

This series marks **Rheims's** first use of color photography – in it she moves away from the carefully posed aestheticism of her earlier work by increasing the rawness and daring of the nude portrait. She states, "I love flesh. I am a photographer of the skin."

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Also on view in the front gallery will be an important early work by **Lynda Benglis**, *Quartered Meteor*, from 1969. Born in 1941, **Benglis** moved to New York in 1964 at the height of the Minimalist movement, but her works of the mid-1960s are a rebuttal to the precise geometry and rigid materials of minimalism. In 1975, Tom Hess had this to say about *Quartered Meteor*,

“**Benglis’** concern with making soft things hard while preserving their insouciant memories of softness may or may not have something to do with feminism, phallicism, and other politico-sensualities. She is more concerned, I think, with the Romantic concept of the artist as a force of Nature. Nature can change states – freeze water, melt rocks; Benglis, too, can congeal or liquefy matter – and in the process make sculpture as calculated, precise, and refined as icicles.”

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