

Dorothy Iannone is Lady Liberty

A US-artist in Friedrichshain: The gallery Peres Projects shows the radically playful, repeatedly censorship-threatened works of Dorothy Iannone.

ANGELA HOHMANN, April 14, 2019

Her work was almost forgotten when young curators rediscovered her in the run-up to the 2005 Berlin Biennale. Since then, it has been exhibited worldwide, including a large retrospective in the Berlinische Galerie in Berlin five years ago. Dorothy Iannone, who was born in Boston in 1933 and came to Berlin in 1976, is already 80 years old. Her life is like an adventure, an endless artistic rebellion that gained late appreciation. In Berlin's Gropius Bau, she is currently being heard in an ode to the city with a smoky, drunken voice "and Berlin will always need you".

Her voice can also be heard in Berlin at Peres Projects, which shows recent works by Iannone, in a completely different timbre. The lines of the sonnet "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus from 1883 sound much lighter and clear in a light singsong. A bronze plaque with this poem has been inside the pedestal since 1903, on which stands the American Statue of Liberty. Lines from the poem are seen as dancing letters on the walls of the gallery, flanked by three murals by the joyous-libertine Lady Liberty, a figure that Iannone has been drawing on again and again since the sixties.

Her Lady Liberty is in the typical Iannone psychedelic ornamental style, brightly colored and full of ecstasy. The scepter provocatively resembles a phallus. Another silkscreen shows Lady Liberty naked with curly hair, plump breasts and clearly visible genitalia. Iannone had already shocked her contemporaries in the seventies. Since then she shows her characters as sexual beings, often united in all kinds of sexual intercourse, a real Kamasutra of Pop Art.

Iannone's art is just so bursting with color and playful eroticism

The trigger for the erotic explosion in her work was the encounter with Dieter Roth, which continued after the separation of the two in 1974. He is her male muse, just as Lady Liberty has her Lord Liberty. This figure can be seen as a wooden cutout in Peres, a male fantasy creature, also here with a large phallus. Iannone calls these characters "people" who more than once fell victim to censorship. Suspected pornography!

The works exhibited at Peres (prices on request) once again show the fresh, unconventional and radically subjective art of Iannone, which is just bursting with playful eroticism, exploding splendor of color and flowing ornamentation. The roots of this lie in the marriage of hippie culture, when one threw off the stuffiness of the fifties and got rid of everything: sexual taboos, social conventions and political patronizing. A celebration of freedom.



Dream woman. Dorothy Iannone's painting "Statue of Liberty" from 2019. PHOTO: PERES PROJECTS