

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

Katy Schimert

Niagara

November 18 - December 23, 2021

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 18, 2021



Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of ceramic sculpture and works on paper by Katy Schimert. A rigorous and poetic exploration of waterfalls, *Niagara* exemplifies Schimert's decades-long incorporation of autobiography, craft, and bodily forms, placing her firmly within the trajectory of feminist art history.

Growing up outside of Buffalo, NY, Schimert made regular pilgrimages to Niagara Falls with her family. Inspired by the sculptural paintings of the Falls by 19th century Romantic artist William Morris Hunt, she began working with clay to render this iconic image of majestic natural force. The way in which Schimert rolls thick slabs of clay and allows gravity to dictate the form is indicative of the unique formations of the Falls—be it the concave horseshoe from the Canadian side or the opposing convex curve from the American perspective. Building up and carving away the front, she leaves the back raw. Like an exoskeleton or muscle, the luminous sculptures lean and pull during the high firing process, connecting the power of physical form to the gravitational center of the viewer's body.

With a modeled front and a raw back providing a glimpse of the internal body, the varied views of the sculptures evoke a veil of water, a cloak, or fossil of a force left behind. Carefully carved undulating lines and folds imply drapery. "I would like to use the patterns of the draped body to depict the internal body, thereby dissolving the skin between the outer garment and inner body," writes Schimert. Pointing to Medieval and Art Deco representations of draped figures as archetypes for her sculptures, Schimert notes, "It seems they have an otherworldly effect as though the physical body dissolves to leave an emotional and intellectual shell."

As she has done through much of her career, Schimert alternates between sculpture and drawing, allowing each medium to inform and influence the other. The slabs of clay within the sculptures relate to sheets of paper, thereby amplifying a suite of watercolors, painted in radiant, fluid lines of red, purple, and blue. Along with the sculpture, these drawings proffer a new narrative direction for the iconic Falls, one that re-imagines them as a female body and explores the creative force of love, emotion, and intuition.

Katy Schimert (b. 1963) lives and works in New York. Schimert is currently featured in *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950-2019* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY and recently participated in *Moon Shot* at the Moody Center For the Arts at Rice University, Houston, TX. She is a 2020 recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation fellowship and an upcoming artist in residence at The Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans, LA. Schimert has exhibited extensively, with solo exhibitions at David Zwirner, New York, University Museum of Contemporary art at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and The Renaissance Society, Chicago, among others. This will be her first exhibition at the Gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday 11am to 6pm, and by appointment. For further information please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.

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