

Dorothy Iannone

(Boston, USA, 1933)

“When my work was not censored outright, it was either mildly ridiculed, or described as folkloric, or just ignored,” says Dorothy Iannone. Irreverent, self-taught, and completely independent from the art system’s codified movements, Iannone is the author of a vibrant artistic universe that is fiercely independent and exquisitely erotic. After creating a series of works in the early 1960s, depicting icons of popular culture such as Charlie Chaplin, Jacqueline Kennedy, or the rock group the Rolling Stones as irreverent wood figurines with well-delineated sexual attributes beneath their clothing, Iannone subsequently drew inspiration from her own biographical experience, focusing above all on her passionate relationship with Dieter Roth, whom she met during a trip to Iceland in 1967. Assuming a matriarchal tone in her subversion of the traditional relationship between artist and model, Iannone identifies the Swiss-German artist as her “muse,” and in the seven years that followed she concentrated on the radiant sensuality of their passion, transforming it into a joyous artistic tale, tinged by a pre-pop sensibility, in which multiple sexual acrobatics stand out, embellished with a plethora of details and decorations.

Hommage aux femmes et aux hommes (Homage to Women and to Men), 1983, represents the mature phase of the artist’s work, when her personal biography opens up to a broader dimension, devoted to spreading the idea of a liberating sexual revolution. Dominated by typically vivid colors and by a clear graphic stroke, devoid of any uncertainty, the painting is organized as an irreverent neo-medieval icon, arranged on several registers and dominated by a symmetrical structure. From the upper register, a naked woman, her legs spread apart, gives birth to a colorful central almond shape. Inside the latter, another female figure dominates the scene. Her belly coincides with the head of a bearded man, whose body dissolves into a woolly material that stretches out beyond the almond shape, as far as the figures that occupy the lower section of the painting. In the work’s central section, organized around the almond shape, dense writing in German and English reiterates the artist’s desire to go beyond possible rejections or resistance, to pursue “ecstatic unity,” that total physical union of bodies that symbolically celebrates their inextinguishable vitality. (MB)