

Ann McCoy, Paulina Peavy and Olga Spiegel

October 28 - December 3, 2022

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present three visionary artists whose various metaphysical interests and practices—such as alchemy, Jungian psychology, spiritualism and psychic automatism—unite them across time and location. Ann McCoy and Olga Spiegel currently live and work in New York City, while Paulina Peavy (1901-1999) was primarily a West Coast artist who also lived and exhibited in New York.

Paulina Peavy's extraordinary body of work includes such diverse media as painting, mixed media works on paper, and film, as well as mask-making, crafted as a means of better accessing the psychic energy of her alien spirit guide, Lacamo. Like other significant modern artists who channeled otherworldly spirits (e.g. Hilma af Klint, Madge Gill, Marjorie Cameron) in order to convey messages deemed significant for humanity, Peavy utilized a combination of abstract and natural forms. In an untitled oil on board executed between 1930-1960 (she rarely dated her work), the artist mixed fluid organic shapes with a pair of praying hands which emerge from nocturnal darkness, flickering in luminous colors like apparitions from another realm. A set of three oils from her *Phantasma* series, c. 1980, contain graphically bold symbolic forms that pulsate with vibrant color and energetic lines that call to mind such Transcendentalist painters as Emil Bisttram and Raymond Jonson.

Showing for the first time at the gallery is **Ann McCoy** (b. 1946), a New York-based artist whose long career as a painter, print maker, sculptor, art critic, and teacher has focused on the spiritual content of art history and art making.

McCoy has studied alchemy since the early seventies when she was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1989, which allowed her to work with alchemical collections at the Vatican Library. For over twenty years she studied in Zurich with Carl Alfred Meier, Carl Gustav Jung's heir apparent. She incorporated her knowledge of Jung's psychological writings on alchemy into artwork that explored her own dreams and unconscious. She joins a significant group of artists working with alchemical imagery and ideas (including Joseph Beuys, whom she knew in Berlin), and the three works in this exhibition reflect her on-going explorations into this topic. In her large-scale pencil drawings, McCoy's surfaces contain intricate layers of mysterious objects, landscapes, animals, and symbols that are rendered in exquisite detail and rise up like images in a dream. Her mural-size drawing *Dream of the Invisible College* (2018) features a sleeping woman levitating in the center as various alchemical apparatuses (an alembic distilling gold, a heated athanor) surround her in a nocturnal sky. Birds' wings, haloed heads, skulls, and even a mummy here hint of psychological and spiritual life cycles. The artist tellingly explains, "Dreams are linked to the transformation process described in alchemical symbolism, the Alchemical Great Work.... My work strives to reaffirm the dream world's place as a source of wisdom."

Olga Spiegel (b.1943) was born in France while her family was in hiding after fleeing Belgium during the war. She moved to New York City in 1964. Nurtured by psychedelic art, surrealism and science fiction, Spiegel has created a unique visual language where she can present, in her

own words, "...spaces of wonder that point to ever changing notions of the Universe and our sense of Being..." The oil paintings in this exhibition span the 1960s to 2010, revealing the full spectrum of her styles and imagery. In *Seed* (1967-68) a phantasmagoric cloud of swarming shapes and colors, both opaque and translucent, appears to flow directly from the artist's hand in the manner of psychic automatism, a technique pioneered by surrealism, but borrowed from spiritualism. *Jam Session* (1968) has the same biomorphic stream, but with a fresh and vibrant use of color that reflects the psychedelic art of the 1960s.

Merging multiple dimensions, the human figures in *Watching the Light* (1985) experience literal enlightenment while meditating in an ordinary room that dissipates before our eyes. The most recent work in the show, *A Window and a Mirror* (2010), is an update of Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin's *Spirit of the Dead Watching* (1892), a reclining nude figure floats between a window and a mirror, two magical portals into the unknown. Drenched in pulsating hues of scarlet, the sleeper is enmeshed in a dense nest of interlocking tubular forms and floating blue orbs – it is as if we are within the human body itself, or even the very fabric of life. Spiegel's mastery over a variety of styles reveals an artist who has never hesitated to explore and expand her oeuvre.

Although widely exhibited in her lifetime, Paulina Peavy was relegated to obscurity until fairly recently. Her work has found a renewed and ever-expanding appreciation, and last year was included in *Greater New York* at MoMA P.S.1, *Supernatural America* curated by Robert Cozzolino at the Minneapolis Art Institute, and her solo exhibition *An Etherian Channeler* curated by Laura Whitcomb at Beyond Baroque in Venice, California. Andrew Edlin Gallery will present a solo exhibition of Peavy's work at the forthcoming ADAA Art Show at the Park Avenue Armory in New York, November 2-6, 2022. Peavy's art is in the permanent collections of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery, Washington DC.

Ann McCoy was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1989 and has received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (2019), the Pollock Krasner Foundation (2017, 1998, 1993), and the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation (1996), among others. Her work is in many museum collections including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. She has served as a professor of art history at Barnard College and the Yale School of Drama and is currently an art critic and editor-at-large for the *Brooklyn Rail*.

Olga Spiegel studied briefly at the Académie Royale des Beaux Arts in Brussels before enrolling at Saint Martin's School of Art in London from 1962 to 1964. In 1973, she attended a seminar at the School of Fantastic Realism in Vienna with artist Ernst Fuchs. Her work has been exhibited widely, most recently, earlier this year in the New York-based group shows *Field Trip: Psychedelic Solution, 1986-1995* at the Outsider Art Fair and *Psychedelic Landscape* at Eric Firestone Gallery.

- Susan L. Aberth