

BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

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William Bailey

Thursday, October 18th – Saturday, November 24th

Opening reception: Thursday, October 18th, 6-8 P.M.

On Thursday, October 18th, Betty Cuninghams Gallery will present an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by William Bailey.

Bailey is best known for his paintings of singular vessels arranged on table tops or ledges below large expanses of muted toned walls. The cups, bowls, jugs and egg cups, which may indeed exist, are painted from memory, described with a poignancy that sets the paintings outside of time and place. The monochrome expanses of the walls, which signify a minimalist eye and brush, further remove the works from any suggestion of a real setting. This is similarly true of Bailey's paintings of female figures. The women are not artist's models but are painted entirely from imagination. They are posed sitting or standing in strange interiors looking out at the viewer. They are often nude and set almost weightlessly in their imaginary rooms.

All these works, for Bailey, are abstract. They do not pretend to be realistically described. The shadows may be a little off, the corners of the walls not quite right. The figures beg just about every question one can think of.

The catalogue that accompanies this exhibition includes an essay by Terry Teachout who describes the emergence of Bailey's mature style and the difficulties these apparently realist paintings pose for the viewer as they return repeatedly to the same subject matter:

"A naked woman sits on a wooden chair, one elbow resting on a wooden table. Next to her on the floor are four pieces of luggage, arranged in such a way as to indicate her imminent departure-or has she only just come to this cell-like room? A nearby window admits a flood of sunlight into the room, and in the distance we see green, rolling hills. Once again the woman and her surroundings appear to have been painted realistically, but a second look reveals that her slender form is simplified and stylized, and the blankness of her wide-set, staring eyes tells us nothing about what has brought her to what the title of the painting reveals to be a room near Italy's Tiber River.

Who is she?"

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William Bailey is Professor of Art Emeritus at Yale University. He is a member of The American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and a Member of the Board, Smithsonian Archives of American Art from 2000 to the present. He is a trustee for the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation from 1970 to the present. Bailey has an extensive exhibition history, and his works appear in numerous public and private collections including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Modern Art, NY; National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; among many others. Bailey has shown in New York since the late 1960's. In 2006 a traveling exhibition of works on paper was shown at the Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK, Alexander Hogue Gallery, University of Tulsa, OK and Wichita Art Museum, KS.

For the Tulsa exhibit the Betty Cuninghame Gallery published a comprehensive catalogue of Bailey's drawings. The current exhibit is accompanied by a parallel catalogue on Bailey's paintings since 1998.

For further information including biography, bibliography, and/or image requests, please contact the gallery at 212.242.2772 or info@bettycuninghamegallery.com

Next Exhibition: **Christopher Wilmarth: November 29, 2007 - January 19, 2008**