

SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MELISSA STERN: STRANGE GIRLS

October 11 – November 11, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 11, 6 - 8 p.m.

547 West 27 St, Suite 207, NYC



Melissa Stern, *The Green Room*, 2017, oil stick, oil paint, collage, clay on 20 x 20 in.

New York, NY (CHELSEA) Garvey | Simon is pleased to present *Melissa Stern: Strange Girls*, an exhibition featuring the artist's evocative and dark-witted works. Stern works across all media to include assemblage, ceramics, painting, drawings and collage. This is Stern's first solo show with Garvey | Simon, and her ninth solo show in New York. **The opening reception will take place on Thursday October 11, 6-8pm. The artist will be present. The show is accompanied by a color catalog with essay by Meg Shiffler, Director and Chief Curator, San Francisco Arts Commission Galleries.**

In *Strange Girls*, Melissa Stern explores the definition of girlhood as a state of being and state of mind. Stern's sisterhood ranges from lusty pin-up girls to minimalist, geometric bodies, embracing all within the loving arms of femininity and oddity. Though all share an innate formal elegance, each is afflicted by a sense of imbalance and loss: figures stride proudly as they are bisected by their frames, and voluptuous, fishnet-clad legs are severed from their bodies. In Stern's fantasyland, girlhood is juxtaposition: beauty afflicted by the melancholy of insufficiency. The work hits an emotional soft spot in all of us, echoing our desire to belong to the norm. "We are *all* strange girls," says Stern, "We all harbor some memory of feeling like an outsider, a stranger."



Melissa Stern, *New Boyfriend*, 2017, paint, collage, graphite, objects, 9 x 10 x 2 in.

Melissa Stern sources her images and allusions from magazines, knick-knacks, and other cultural detritus. She acts as both gatherer and creator, excavating and collecting vintage artifacts, and orchestrating these into open-ended narratives. The work is a *mélange* of random life moments and sardonic references, what the artist calls, "the flotsam of memory and the jetsam of popular culture." Her universe is at once familiar and alien. Doll parts, crudely shaped ceramic heads, and magazine advertisements combine to poke and stir-up the collective subconscious. Stern's girls recall intimate moments and prompt the viewer to converse and grapple with them. Though she baits and teases us with the apparent levity of her sculptures, these *Strange Girls* possess a grit and seriousness beneath their playful humor and wit.

A collaboration between intention and chance, Stern allows her objects to organically claim their identity in process. The sculpture, *Stiff*, embodies Stern's condition of girlhood and play with materiality. Standing innocent and self-conscious in her pink underwear, midriff peeking out from the hem of her top, the pointy-eared lass is acutely aware of her own discomfort. Her t-shirt, which Stern molded carefully from beeswax, is at once a source of discomfort and protection, a suit of armor that, when challenged, melts away. Perhaps a reference to our nightmares of being caught in the cafeteria in just our knickers--or something even more sinister--we are reminded that our insecurities are communal.



Melissa Stern, *Stiff*, 2018, clay, ink, pellen, encaustic, wood, crayon, 29 x 13 x 8 inches

"My sometimes goofy figures live in a dream world, cower in relationships or stand tall in the face of adversity. Some people think they're funny which is always interesting and never wrong."

About the Artist:

Born in 1958, Melissa Stern grew up in Philadelphia. She received a BA in 1980 from Wesleyan University in both Anthropology and Studio Art, and an MFA in Ceramics from SUNY New Paltz in 1984. Her work is exhibited internationally, including nine solo shows in NYC. Her multi-media installation, *The Talking Cure*, was introduced in 2012 and continues its nationwide tour to museums throughout the US. Stern lives and works in New York City.

Melissa Stern's work is in numerous museum and corporate collections including Museum of Art and Design, New York; American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, California; The Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis; The Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock; Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Connecticut; International Center for Collage, Bucknell University, Pennsylvania; Library of Congress: Rare Books and Special Collections, Washington DC; the Stavanger Museum, Norway; Bear Stearns & Co., New York; Designtex, New York; The Kohler Company Collection, Sheboygan, Wisconsin; The Metropolitan Home Magazine Design Collection, New York; News Corp Inc., New York; and JP Morgan, New York to name a few.

For further information and to see more images, please visit Garvey Simon or contact Elizabeth Garvey at liz@garveysimon.com or 646-869-7637.