

For Immediate Release**Katherine Sherwood*****Fierce Women and Their Flowers*****14 May – 2 July 2022****Opening Reception: Saturday, May 14, 3:00 – 7:00pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Fierce Women and Their Flowers* featuring new work by Katherine Sherwood. The show includes paintings on the backsides of found Art History reproductions from her ongoing *Venuses of the Yelling Clinic* and *Brain Flowers* series as well as a distinct group of early figurative works.

The new acrylic paintings include large female nudes juxtaposed with small to mid-sized still-life paintings. Sherwood continues her process of re-imagining the heroines of her *Venus* paintings with a specific disability such as a leg brace, arm harness or prosthetic. In 1997 she suffered a cerebral hemorrhage which caused paralysis on the right side of her body limiting her to the use of her left hand. Unlike the earlier *Venus* paintings that featured Sherwood's versions of famous reclining nude women who gaze towards the viewer, the new work references nude subjects who are shown from behind either looking back towards the viewer or away with their faces completely obscured. As noted in the painting *Rear*, based on François Boucher's painting entitled *The Odalisque*, a nearly nude woman is seen laying on her stomach with her legs open and a loose-fitting garment falling off her shoulders gathering on her lower back. The vulnerable gesture is enhanced by the woman's head turned towards the viewer with a look of innocence. In Sherwood's version the woman's left leg is shown amputated with a fitted prosthetic and the seductive shadowing of Boucher's painted sheets is replaced with a flattened geometric pattern that immediately identifies the work as that of Sherwood. The face and hair of the woman have been abstracted with the use of skillfully arranged scans of the human brain that are made of rice paper and collaged on to the surface. Another nude referencing the Portuguese painter, Josefa de Óbidos depicts a self-portrait of Sherwood seen from behind and with her leg brace attached to her right leg. The figure holds a red drape while standing defiantly on an ornate stool under a floral wreath much like in the original painting, *Salvator Mundi*.

In comparison reproductions of floral still-life paintings from the *Brain Flowers* series reference lesser-known artworks by female artists working in Europe during the 17th century. Sherwood's source material includes a diverse range of paintings by Josefa de Óbidos, Flemish artist Clara Peeters, Italian artist Giovanna Garzoni, Dutch artists Maria van Oosterwijck and Rachel Ruysch and German-born artist Maria Sibylla Merian. The still-life paintings are rendered in a similar format and style used in earlier works representing 19th century European male painters and continue to incorporate Sherwood's personal MRI scans. In the painting *Dying Marigold after Rachel Ruysch* a vase with lushly painted flowers rests upon a flattened table-top with a brown and pale blue polka dot patterned surface. The colorful bouquet includes occasional sepia-toned flowers made of clusters of brain scans that blend in wonderfully with their painted counterparts. All of the artists Sherwood emulates in this series of botanical subjects operated in the conjoined realms of art and science and made aesthetic choices that added nuance and meaning to their work.

Selected works from three older series including *Aggressive Women and Female Martyrs*, *Insurance Salesmen* and *Female Impersonator* will be presented in the back gallery. The subjects of *Aggressive Women and Female Martyrs* (1978) compare the commitment of the role of the dominatrix to that of historical female saints. These loosely painted, modern icons were done on found boards and junk store frames and capture the rawness of Sherwood's early figurative works. This series was followed by the *Female Impersonators* (1983) which explored issues of gender and feminism on portrait-sized oval canvases. The last series of *Insurance Salesmen* (1982) depicts tightly rendered portraits in black and white with an uncanny exploration of masculinity and capitalism.

Katherine Sherwood received her BA from the University of California, Davis and her MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. She is a Professor Emeritus of Art Practice at the University of California, Berkeley where she also taught Disability Studies. Sherwood is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, a Guggenheim Fellowship Award, National Endowment for the Arts grant and the Adeline Kent Award. Her work will be included in the upcoming exhibition, *Hella Feminist* at The Oakland Museum opening this summer. Sherwood was recently included in the show *The Art of Disability Culture: Artists with Disabilities Dispelling Myths, Dissolving*

Barriers, and Disrupting Prejudice at the Palo Alto Art Center and currently on view at Ruth's Table in San Francisco. Important past exhibitions include *Whitney Biennial 2000* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, *Revealing Culture* at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC, *Golgi's Door* and *Visionary Anatomy* at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington DC (traveled). Sherwood received a honorary doctorate from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago in 2020. Her paintings are in the collections of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Berkeley Art Museum, San Jose Museum of Art, Everson Museum and University of Missouri, Museum of Art and Archaeology. Our exhibition includes a new catalog which was produced in conjunction with George Adams Gallery and Anglim/Trimble.