

Alexander Gray Associates

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Jo Baer

April 4–May 12, 2007



Shrine of the Piggies
(The Pigs Hog it All and Defecate and Piss on Where
From They Get It and With Whom They Will not Share. That's It)
2000, Oil on canvas 72" x 60 3/4"



Testament of the Powers that Be
(Where Trees Turn to Sand, Residual Colours Stain the Lands), 2001
Oil on canvas, 60" x 84"

Alexander Gray Associates is delighted to exhibit new paintings by Jo Baer. Celebrated for her contributions to Minimalism in the 1960s and 1970s, Baer is best known for her spare compositions of white and grey forms with black and colored borders. Since the mid 1970s, when Baer left the United States to live in Europe, she has been making image-based works, which are largely unknown to American viewers. This radical shift in style has made her one of the most intriguing figures of her generation, and begs the question of an artist's prerogative to change.

In her polemic essay, *I am no longer an abstract artist*, (*Art in America*, No. 71, October 1983), Baer questioned the political and social relevance of Minimalism and abstraction, which she saw as co-opted by the art market and stylistic concerns; in its place, she proposed a move towards 'radical figuration.' "To construct a radical figuration is to reject the preeminence of either image or space to correspond to the parity of subject and its locale." She continues, "To enhance discourse is to paint and draw in fragment, which is an open adventure; it is having paintings talk (as opposed to talking about parts of others' paintings.) The topology is not complete until the contours and coastlines are arranged upon a coherent surface enforcing a cleaving together of those chosen fragments, split from former contexts and deformed into a new unity of meaning."

In her exhibition at Alexander Gray Associates, Baer presents four large-scale works, which she has refers to as "image constellations." These paintings, shown for the first time in the United States, incorporate imagery drawn from a range of historical, mythological, cultural and natural sources. Two paintings from the early 1990s, are epic in scale, with a soft palate of beiges and browns, with delicate ghosted drawn lines that appear fluid, through a deft application of paint. *At the Back of the North Wind* (1990) arranges maps and cave drawing-like patterns with ballerinas, gazelles, and a hanging man; *Of A Fearful Symmetry* (1991) also includes transmutations of humans and animals, a soldier's boots, and dancers. Paintings from the early 2000s are bolder in their visual impact, with deeper colors and architectural presence. The content of the paintings are associative and layered; in *Testament to the Powers that Be* (2001), topographical maps intersect with mountain ranges and details of the Hoover Dam; in *Shrine of the Piggies* (2001), outlines of male reproductive organs are overlaid on the interior view of a men's bathroom.

Jo Baer was born in 1929 in Seattle, Washington. After moving to New York in 1960, her work was included in the landmark exhibition, *Eleven Artists*, curated by Dan Flavin at the Kaymar Gallery in 1964, and the Guggenheim Museum's 1966 exhibition *Systemic Painting*. Also in the 1960s, her work was included in the 1967 and 1969 Whitney Annual, 1968's *Documenta 4*, and the 1969 *31st Biennial Exhibition of American Painting* at the Corcoran Museum of Art. In 1975, Barbara Haskell organized a survey of Baer's work for the Whitney Museum of American Art; and in 1977, David Elliot and Rudi Fuchs organized a survey show of paintings for the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford. A survey of Baer's paintings from 1960–1998 was organized by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 1999, including her image-based work. Recent re-appraisals of Baer's Minimalist work were undertaken in 2002, in the Dia Center for the Arts' *Jo Baer, The Minimalist Years, 1960–1975*; in 2004's *A Minimalist Future? Art as Object 1958–1968* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Los Angeles County Museum's *Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form 1940s–70s*.

Baer's work is currently on view at the National Academy Museum in the exhibition *High Times Hard Times, New York Painting 1967–1975*, organized by Katy Siegel and David Reed. Her work is in major permanent collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Seattle Art Museum; the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Albright-Knox Museum of Art, Buffalo; the Tate Modern, London; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Kunstmuseum Winthertur, the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterio; and the Museum für Modern Kunst, Arnheim. Jo Baer lives and works in Amsterdam.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery and advising firm based in New York. Our exhibition program focuses on mid-career visual artists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Through consulting and collection advising, we provide expertise and educational experiences for our individual and corporate clients. Our ultimate goal is to provide a direct experience with Modern and contemporary art that encourages discourse around art's role in the advancement of culture. Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11 AM–6 PM.