

# The Artwork Runs Hot, With Infusions of Cool

## At the Parrish, Unsettling Works by More Than 30 Artists, From Egon Schiele to Ron Mueck

By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

When word got out that the celebrated painter and East End resident Eric Fischl was organizing an exhibition at the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton, the Long Island art community was gripped with expectation.

**ART REVIEW** Almost 25 years had passed since Mr. Fischl arrived on the New York art scene with provocative pastiche paintings combining popular cultural imagery and sexually charged nudes.

Mr. Fischl approaches curating as he approaches composition. He strives for images that are free, poetic, full of imaginative ambiguities and, at the same time, characterized by intimacy.

And the subject matter? Suffice it to say that Mr. Fischl has not lost his appreciation of the nude female form. Yet the show, titled "All the More Real: Portrayals of Intimacy and Empathy" and organized in collaboration with Merrill Falkenberg, the museum's adjunct curator, combines two distinct if not entirely cohesive groups of artwork. One is devoted to Mr. Fischl's explicit and painterly preoccupations, the other to Ms. Falkenberg's preferences for more modest, cooler imagery.

Since the show is heavy on images of female nudity, it is reasonable to assume that Mr. Fischl had the upper hand. It is also reasonable to assume that Mr. Fischl had a strong hand in the hanging, which aside from being elegant and spare is arranged to suggest the gradual transformation of the body from birth to death.

It begins with a group of paintings that includes Alice Neel's loosely brushed portrait of a pregnant woman sitting on a bed, followed by Ron Mueck's photorealist sculpture of a naked woman and a newborn baby. From this, opening the curators go on to

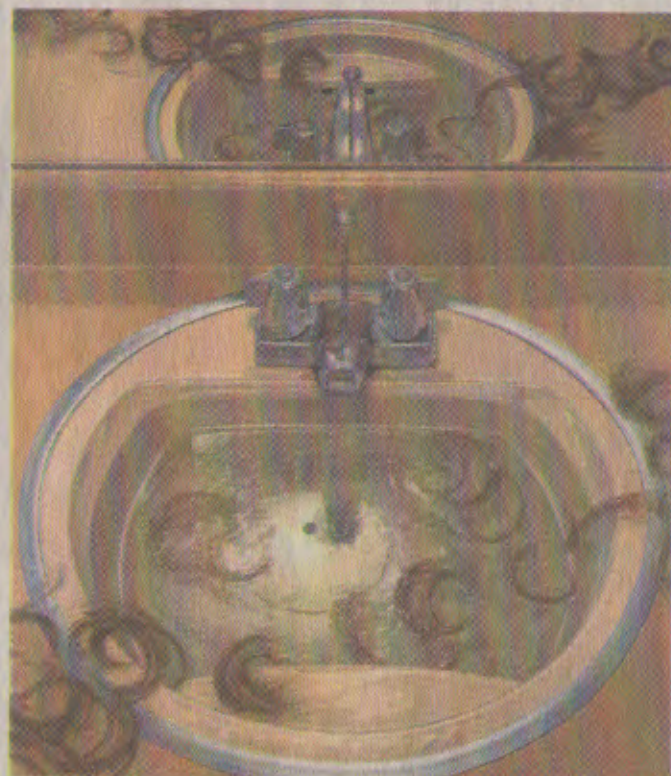
"All the More Real: Portrayals of Intimacy and Empathy," the Parrish Art Museum, 25 Job's Lane, Southampton, through Oct. 14. Information: (631) 283-2118 or [www.parrishart.org](http://www.parrishart.org).



present an engaging if highly idiosyncratic history of the body in art.

The novelty of the exhibition is the mix of contemporary and historical artwork. These days it is rare to see multi-generational art exhibitions, let alone one encompassing the work of artists as distant in time (if not temperament) as Lucien Freud, Egon Schiele, Chuck Close, Tom Friedman, Emily Eveleth, Vito Acconci, Cindy Sherman, Joan Semmel and Catherine Opie, to name a few of the more than 30 artists whose work is included.

The curators have done a marvelous job of assembling high-caliber artists and works. Several more paintings, photographs and sculptures of babies (Diane Arbus, Jeff Hesser, James Croak) are followed by imagery of early



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### UNSPARING

Clockwise from far left: a 2001 Loretta Lux photograph; a 1994 painting by Catherine Murphy; and a 2002 photograph by Joan Goldin.

childhood and adolescence. It seemed to me that the show's sensibility began to fluctuate at this point, with the introduction of more ironic, even detached imagery of the body alongside the visceral stuff like graphic nudity. No doubt Ms. Falkenberg had a hand in this selection, especially the inclusion of Loretta Lux's austere, almost robotic photographs of children innocently gazing at the camera as if posing for a family portrait. They are prim and proper.

The next section is filled with compositions that juxtapose painterly images of voluptuous naked female figures (by Jenny Saville, Cynthia Westwood and Mr. Freud) with images of food and fruit evoking the female anatomy; for example, Joan Goldin's photograph of two large melons poised against a sensual

ochre background. There is no male nudity in this part of the show, unless you want to count a Robert Gober sculpture, an unlighted candle placed on a square base embedded with black hair.

The final room is a grab bag but perhaps the most interesting area, full of thoughtful images and objects whose aesthetic origins can be traced mostly to realism. Some of the works are concerned with the technique of realism (including those by Evan Penny, Alexandra Moore and Tim Gardner), while others have more to do with expressing intimacy and empathy (Karel Funk, Do-Ho Suh, Y. Z. Kami, Mr. Close, Ms. Sherman), capturing a gesture, look, mood or moment that otherwise might have gone unseen. In art, that's what it means to be all the more real.