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Driscoll Babcock Galleries
525 West 25th Street
New York, NY 10001
www.driscollbabcock.com

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00am – 6:00pm
Saturday: 12:00pm- 6:00pm

T. 212 767 1852



Margaret Bowland, *White Fives*, 2012,
Oil on linen, 84 x 70 inches
Courtesy of Driscoll Babcock, New York

Margaret Bowland: Disturbing the Peace

February 21 – April 13, 2013

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 21, 6-8pm

DRISCOLL BABCOCK GALLERIES presents ***Disturbing the Peace***, Margaret Bowland's second New York solo exhibition of psychologically provocative paintings. Bowland draws upon legendary American novelist and social critic, James Baldwin's, rallying cry that, "Artists are here to disturb the peace," by creating a very personal series of works which questions societal expectations about gender, race and beauty.

The majority of the works focus on JJ, Bowland's muse for the past five years. Now eleven years old and on the verge of adolescence, she prepares to face the challenges of adulthood. Upon her tiny frame, weighty universal issues are placed – questions of identity, pressures of conformity, and ultimately a quest for acceptance.

In ***Painting the Roses Red***, JJ's brown skin is coated in a layer of white paint as red paint drips down upon her head and her rose-accented dress. Throughout many cultures and periods – from England's Queen Elizabeth I to the geishas of Japan – white makeup has been applied to mask individual characteristics and emphasize other "more important" attributes from innocence to economic status. In 21st century America, the application of white paint onto an African American girl not only carries this historical weight, but also the baggage of racial inequality and varieties of slavery imposed by contemporary cultures.

The desire and compulsion to not "leave well enough alone" is of course not limited to race or gender, rather, it is much more far reaching, all-inclusive and damaging. This danger is highlighted in the painting's title, which references the Queen of Hearts from *Alice in Wonderland*, who orders her minions to paint all white roses red. In Disney's animated film, they sorrowfully sing, "Oh, painting the roses red, And many a tear we shed, Because we know, They'll cease to grow, In fact, they'll soon be dead, And yet we go ahead, Painting the roses red." ***White Fives*** further underscores this

John Driscoll, Ph.D. *President*

525 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001 (212) 767-1852 fax (212) 767-1857 email info@driscollbabcock.com

menace. Here the “roses” are fabricated out of five dollar bills and barbed wire- the spikes of which enclose and contain the figure, threatening at any moment to prick.

Yet, as John Driscoll, president of Driscoll Babcock states, “these works are ultimately about strength and triumph. In each work the subject overcomes subjugation with fortitude and a certain intuitive wisdom.” In *Goddess Series I*, a woman emerges from a bathtub. Hairless and naked, she is vulnerable. Yet as the white paint that covers her washes away, and the tub surrounds and enshrines her like an altar, she arises triumphant and beautiful in her certainty of self significance. And this is the beauty that Bowland admires, paints, and comments upon, “Beauty makes sense to me, has weight for me, only when it falls from grace. It starts to matter when it carries damage.”

A fully-illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition with an essay by Leola Dublin Macmillan, original poem by Randall Horton, and introduction by Tess Sol Schwab.

ABOUT MARGARET BOWLAND

Born in Burlington, North Carolina Margaret Bowland teaches at the New York Academy of Art. She is represented exclusively by Driscoll Babcock. Her work has been shown at institutions including the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, where she was the recipient of 2009’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition-People’s Choice Award. In 2011, the Greenville County Museum of Art featured the exhibition, *Margaret Bowland: Excerpts from the Great American Songbook*, accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Siri Hustvedt.

ABOUT DRISCOLL BABCOCK GALLERIES

Driscoll Babcock, founded in 1852, is the oldest gallery in New York City, and the nation’s oldest gallery which from its inception has focused on American art. During the tenure of current president Dr. John Driscoll, the gallery has helped to secure numerous prized works for major private collectors and museums across the country including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, all in Washington, D.C.; The Cleveland Museum; The Detroit Institute of Arts; Minneapolis Institute of Arts; Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina; Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville Arkansas; The Kemper in Kansas City; The Museum of Fine Arts-Houston and dozens of other museums.