

Dreams of Pollaiuolo...



If *Battle of Naked Men* has meant anything in the past 550 years, the infinitely well-scribed contours of Sol Kjøk's contemporary figurative melees have inherited its significance. However, this battle has transcended the earthly plane. Ms. Kjøk writes of love, but her images are not necessarily sexual; at least no more than any other human image. No, if they are born of love, and therefore evoke love, it is of a higher order. The elaborate studio rituals Ms. Kjøk and her troupe of subjects embark upon are not contrived mechanisms for generating just source imagery, but rather whole-hearted human bonding. Like a healer inflicting a wound upon himself in order to achieve the curing of the same wound in another person, these primordial processes are the prefix to some genuinely potent gallery medicine. They are enactments of the sacrament of life, and the drawings are the encapsulations of those archetypal experiences; a corporeal elixir to heal our spirit.

Sol Kjøk's images remind us that human existence, like it or not, *is* physical. Aesthetic experience cannot be divorced from its physical origin. The mind and the spirit are inevitably bodily. And everything, even the experience of spirit, is rooted there, in the corpus. Kjøk implores us to feel our body, and to aspire upward, which is as often as not towards each other. In her most recent work she brings us into the drama by invitation and implication, expanding the true reality of the work of art as image, canvas, frame, and space; annexing even the casual gallery guest as media. She does this, one would have to conclude, with good reason.

In contemplating the swirling multiplicity of bodies in *String of Beads*, one arrives at a sense of a distinct singularity. The beads, and the ubiquitous red orb, while serving as effective formal devices, also beg interpretation. The repetition of the figures throughout the work echoes that of the arcing processions of beads. There is a rhythm, a structure, and a heartbeat. It is tempting, therefore, to conclude that the beads, themselves miniature spheres, represent two things; the virtually infinite genetic lineage of every human who has ever lived, and an unstoppable repetition of the crimson orb, Kjøk's symbol for the body *and* the spirit. This leads to the ultimate conclusion that *String of Beads* references the continuity of human physical and spiritual persistence – that we are all derived from and contributors to a singular shimmering globule of genetic material, the ultimate vehicle for the pursuit of spiritual apotheosis.

Strings of beads have persisted for centuries, in many cultures, as a talisman of prayer and meditation. After long contemplation on the work of Sol Kjøk, one might conclude that that which is never seen, never scribed, is the most significant element of all, the string running through the String of Beads.

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