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Gathie Falk: The Things in My Head

November 7 to December 12, 2015
Equinox Gallery, Vancouver

"I have worked throughout my life at mediating opposites: soft and hard, painterly and densely flat, form and space, emotion and control, beautiful and ugly. A synthesis of my work can be said to consist of a desire for control of opposites."

- Gathie Falk, 1986

A career survey spanning over 50 years of art-making by groundbreaking artist **Gathie Falk** opens at Equinox Gallery on November 7, 2015. This exhibition brings together 70 sculptures, paintings, installations, and performance works, including a new series of sculptures as well as works borrowed from private and public collections from across Canada. **The Things in My Head** is the largest exhibition of Falk's work in fifteen years and establishes Gathie Falk as a pivotal figure in relation to the Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and feminist art movements in Canada.

Over the past sixty years, Gathie Falk has deftly traversed the mediums of performance, sculpture, painting, drawing, ceramics, and installation establishing herself as a true multi-disciplinarian. Her bold disregard for convention has led to an expansive practice that is fueled by a desire to transform her mediums as much as her subjects. This exhibition recognizes the continuum of an incredible artist by featuring a number of ideas that have been revisited by Falk over the decades, from the fruit piles that infuse minimalism with domestic content, to the sculptures, photographs and performance works that explore body types and rituals. The works are as rigorous and pertinent today as they were in the 1960s when Falk was making the first installations and performances in Canada. Now at the age of 87, Falk continues to undertake projects that require the development of a new understanding of material and practice, and the result is a body of work that not only stands the test of time, but reflects her position as one of Canada's most significant artists.

The long-serving Vancouver critic Joan Lowndes describes Gathie Falk's work in the following way: "What strikes one immediately about her oeuvre is its diversity. She is a true polyartist, having worked in ceramic sculpture, performance and painting as well as in more eccentric combinations of materials such as pencil on painted plywood. She moves easily between three and two dimensions, refusing to be confined to any category."

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Gathie Falk has defined her practice as a “veneration of the ordinary” as it is based on close observations of everyday life and objects. Eggs, shoes, dresses, sidewalks, fruit, and shirts have recurred as her subjects as she takes these ordinary objects and transforms them into surreal and evocative subjects through her choice of medium, method, and style. Her practice has been aligned with the traditions of Surrealism, Funk, Fluxus, and Pop Art, but the influences are rarely direct. Indeed, Gathie Falk is most comfortable when poised on the edge of contradictions: the real and the surreal, the quotidian and the sublime, light and shadow, life and decay, surface and substance. She is open to all possibilities of ideas and images, explaining: “My idea was to do the things in my head. They were all experiments, but it was just to make the things in my mind that were visually and emotionally strong.”

Gathie Falk was born in 1928 in Manitoba, the daughter of Russian Mennonite parents. She began working in warehouses and packing plants at the age of sixteen, while completing her education at night, and came to Vancouver in 1947 where she trained and worked as an elementary school teacher. In the 1950s, Falk began taking painting courses, subsequently studying pottery and sculpture at UBC under the tutelage of Glenn Lewis. In 1968, Gathie Falk was introduced to performance art through workshops given by American dancer Deborah Hay. By 1976, she had created fifteen meticulous performances, as well as many of her signature sculptural works including *Home Environment*, *Herd*, *Veneration of the White Collar Worker*, *Single Men’s Shoes*, and the *Fruit Piles*. After many years of being a sculptor and performance artist, Falk returned to painting for nearly two decades, producing the renowned exhibitions *Pieces of Water*, *Night Skies*, and *Cement*. Since the 1990s, she has skillfully alternated between two- and three-dimensional work, creating her most significant papier-mâché and bronze works, and continuing her evocative exploration of paint.

In addition to over 50 solo exhibitions, Gathie Falk has received many awards, including the Gershon Iskowitz Prize (1990), Order of Canada (1997), Order of British Columbia (2002), Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts (2003), Viva Award for Lifetime Achievement (2012), and the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts (2013). Falk has been the subject of two retrospective exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1985 and 2000 (traveling to the National Gallery of Canada, Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal). Her works are included in numerous private and public collections, including the Vancouver Art Gallery, National Gallery of Canada, Glenbow Art Gallery, McMichael Canadian Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, and many more.

Gathie Falk lives and works in Vancouver.