

DANZIGER

Galleries

FRANCESCA WOODMAN

November 19, 2022 – January 7, 2023

Danziger Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of vintage photographs by Francesca Woodman – an artist who during her short life was seen as an important and fresh voice in the expanding world of photography.

What Woodman created, largely while she was a student at RISD, was a remarkably original and influential body of photographs. As the daughter of two artists, George and Betty Woodman, she came to RISD able to incorporate a mature personal investigation into tasks designed for the understanding of fundamental photographic principles. At a time when few exhibiting photographers staged imagery for the camera, Woodman fabricated haunting, psychologically charged scenarios. She frequently posed for her own pictures, saying she knew best what she wanted from them. Her photographs are less self-portraits than fictive worlds for her characters.

The photographs we are exhibiting all come from the collection of the photographer George Lange – a classmate and close friend of Francesca Woodman's during her time at RISD (The Rhode Island School of Design) from 1975 – 1978.

It was clear to people at RISD that Woodman was someone special and that she existed on a level of her own as an artist. As a classmate and good friend Lange was often gifted and exchanged prints with her as well as photographing Woodman at work and at play.

As documented in Lange's photographs Woodman lived in a state of creative disarray. When she left RISD her studio was filled with prints which she invited Lange to take as many of as he wanted and so Lange took the prints that spoke to him and put them with the prints Woodman had given him or sent him through the mail. After Woodman committed suicide in 1981, Lange put the pictures away not to be looked at for 30 years.

While Woodman was soon recognized as one of the most important photographers of her generation — Lange kept the box closed out of respect for her memory and affection for his friend. It was not until 2017 when Lange was living in Boulder, Colorado that he showed the work to Nora Burnett Abrams, Director of Denver's Museum of Contemporary Art, who quickly made plans to mount an exhibition. Rizzoli publishers joined the project to produce a book, "Portrait of a Reputation", which included a number of Lange's own pictures of Francesca and helped paint a more nuanced and joyful picture of Woodman than the doomed artist she had generally been portrayed as. The exhibition and book went on to draw great acclaim.

After getting the book in 2019, I called George (who I had known for many years) to congratulate him on the book which led to a conversation about how I might represent the work and we eventually agreed on a plan to exhibit the work in 2022. The exhibition will now take place in our Los Angeles gallery opening November 19th.

A note about the prints and photographs: In a career that essentially spanned a scant five years, Woodman's RISD work is the bedrock of her oeuvre. It was during this time that Woodman developed all her ideas and themes — self-portraiture, performance, freedom to picture her own body, and an unshakeable belief in the importance of art and being an artist. If the images are not all perfectly placed on the photographic paper or if the edges of the paper are fogged on some prints that is because the prints are so close to the act of creation they emit what I feel can only be described as a "pre-vintage" quality.

In conjunction with a selection of Lange's own photographs of Francesca at RISD we hope this show not only presents a fresh and vibrant look at Woodman's work but is also a portrait of a friendship.