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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Doreen Wittenbols

Happening

September 29 - December 2 2023

OPENING RECEPTION

Friday, September 29, 5-7 PM



Doreen Wittenbols exhibits a new series of paintings and sculptures in faux kitchen installation to subvert Western stereotypes of femininity.

(September 2023) In 2021, Doreen Wittenbols transformed eleven copies of the 1966 housekeeping manual *Woman's Own Book of Flower Arrangements* into *Paintings for Our Mothers*, a text-based sculptural artwork that questions restrictive and regressive notions of femininity in Western societies. Drawing from the same source material as *Paintings for Our Mothers*, ***Happening* continues Wittenbols' exploration of restrictive gender roles and hegemonic cultural conditioning. The solo exhibition opens with a reception at form & concept on Friday, September 29, 5-7 pm.**

Wittenbols writes, "I equate the dreary black-and-white photographs of dated flower arrangements from *Woman's Own Book of Flower Arrangements* and its 'do and don't' text instructions to the darkness enveloping our current world, which seems to be moving backward in time with its mobilization against women and LGBTQIA+ rights." Set in a faux kitchen that evokes stereotypes of feminine domesticity, *Happening* features paintings and sculptures that utilize the vernacular of the still life in surprising and unsettling ways.

A series of 12 diminutive paintings sets colorful flowers against the rigid grid of a black-and-white tablecloth—and the emphatic directives of the *Women's Own* book. Airy pencil outlines of flower arrangements resembling funeral bouquets evoke society's marginalization of aging women, while startlingly-colored chalk drawings on vintage blackboards evoke hard truths of a girl's passage into womanhood. Sculptural hangings made from green-and-silver florist's foil and a table installation bristling with vintage flower labels use fragile and tough materiality to explore societal double standards of femininity.

Despite its varied representations of the challenges women face, *Happening* isn't a despairing survey of social malaise, but rather an artful rearrangement of troubled reference material that encourages people to resist societal pressures. Wittenbols thoughtfully (and sometimes playfully) critiques how Western culture reinforces the social status quo of the gender binary. Her dynamic body of work celebrates individual expression and challenges the public to resist the "pleasant-as-possible" melancholy of entrenched narratives, much like contemporary drag queen icon RuPaul, who is a major source of inspiration for Wittenbols.

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For press or image inquiries, please contact Spencer Linford at spencer@formandconcept.center.

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BIOGRAPHY

Doreen Wittenbols (Breda) is a Dutch-Canadian visual artist based in New York City. She is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design. Her work encompasses single-session observational paintings and longer exploratory projects involving abstraction, installation, performance, serialized painting, and ephemeral art.

Since 2016, Wittenbols' figurative painting practice has expanded to include the incorporation of sentimental or "souvenir" objects from her own life as well as found vintage items. Through installation projects and conceptually driven series, Wittenbols reworks these non-traditional art elements from female and queer LGBTQIA+ perspectives to alter or subvert their superficial significance in an attempt to question the patriarchy and assumed societal roles.

Immigrating to Canada as a child and returning to The Netherlands as an adult have greatly influenced Wittenbols' life and work. Transition and transformation are recurrent themes in Wittenbols' life and naturally bleed into her artistic practice, where the poignant reciprocity of souvenir objects and memento mori symbols evoke fugitive, vulnerable, and ambivalent states of being.

Doreen Wittenbols' work has been exhibited in the UK, The Netherlands, Canada, New York, Paris, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her first solo exhibition in the United States debuts at Form & Concept in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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