

Ida Applebroog

1:
Modern Olympia
 (after Versace)
 1997 - 2001
 oil on Gampi
 56 1/8" x 39 1/2" framed

2:
Modern Olympia
 (after Versace)
 1997 - 2001
 oil on Gampi
 52 1/4" x 32" framed

3:
Modern Olympia
 (after Anonymous)
 1997 - 2001
 oil and Gampi on canvas
 2 panels overall:
 74 1/2" x 102 1/2"

All Photos: Dennis Cowley
 All Courtesy
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts
 New York

Ida Applebroog

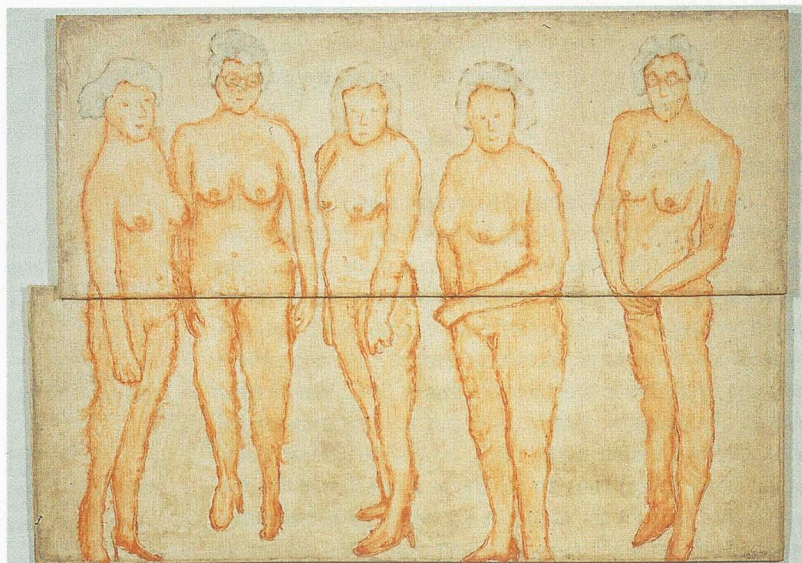
Erik Bakke

JonBenét Ramsey, perhaps, is painted as a baby boy: her father pinches her penis and warns with extended finger, even as a pudgy hand reaches out for dad. In the central panel of this seven panel work an older JonBenét wears a broad rimmed hat, in a pose made famous by countless reproductions in tabloids, and she, here in Ida Applebroog's painting *Modern Olympia* (after Giotto), again with penis, is nude except for hat and high heels.

Applebroog's recent exhibition *Modern Olympia* is of paintings dated 1997-2001 which are mostly lush, pale, limited palette works of pencil and paint on prepared paper framed or mounted on canvas.

All the works present nude figures, mostly women, and range from depicting abused and abusive individuals as in *after Giotto*, the

family dramas described above, which is complete with depictions of violent husbands and fighting males and women as victims; to depicting slight, youthful, posing women, all these entitled *Modern Olympia* (after Versace); to presenting five rather normal looking women, not young, who face the viewer with their pubic area interrupted by the ingenious overlapping lip of this two canvas work *Modern Olympia* (after Anonymous); to some fifty women drawn on paper from *Hustler* and *Playboy* photos and displayed in twelve frames of different sizes butted together. The one work which is not on paper is the sprawling, free standing, five panel painting of oil directly on canvas called *Modern Olympia* (after Manet) which, with its *horror vacui* presentation of figures, incorporates much of the imagery from the simpler compositions of the works on paper. The painting's large, central figure reclines, looking out at the viewer; it is the figure in the show most directly like the nude in Manet's *Olympia*. Unlike the subdued browns and muted tones of the other works' figures this woman is an unnatural, bright pink and her oddness is magnified by the squiggly form her lower body becomes, suggesting labia. In this work Applebroog uses a tough style (scumbled paint, rough line work, pinks, whites, greens and browns on the edge of clashing), bringing to mind Robert Colescott's direct painting style, which leaves the subject matter, by comparison to the approachable paper works, seemingly unmediated. While *after Manet* challenges the viewer, the other works of *Modern Olympia* on paper, with their delicate washes and iridescent shadow lines, read as a seductive come-ons aimed at getting the viewer to fall for a sting. And with what is the viewer being ambushed? -- from a 1999 interview with Patricia Spears Jones, Applebroog says, "There's regular rape, there's gang rape, there's regular murder, serial murder, mass murder ... I mean, there's such a long list: war, child abuse, AIDS, racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia ... the list goes on." And, finally, these recent paintings, as in Manet's *Olympia*, are about looking us in the eye and, then, asking us to put down our American flags for a minute and look back. □



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