



## BETTY TOMPKINS

**WOMEN Words, Phrases, and Stories**  
**1,000 Paintings**

**Exhibition Dates: January 20 – May 14, 2016**  
**Opening Reception: Wednesday, January 20, 6-8PM**  
**The FLAG Art Foundation, 545 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, NY**

NEW YORK, NY – The FLAG Art Foundation presents **Betty Tompkins: *WOMEN Words, Phrases, and Stories*** from **January 20 – May 14, 2016**, on FLAG's 10<sup>th</sup> floor gallery. The exhibition marks the first comprehensive presentation of 1,000 intimately-scaled, hand-painted works, each of which features a word or words used to describe women. Ranging from flirtatious to derogatory – with the four most used words being *Mother, Slut, Bitch, Cunt* – *WOMEN Words* emanates from Tompkins's career-long commitment to challenge the representation of female identity, the politics of pleasure, and the role of sexuality in contemporary culture.

In 2000 and 2013, Tompkins circulated the following email: "I am considering doing another series of pieces using images of women comprised of words. I would appreciate your help in developing the vocabulary. Please send me a list of words that describe women. They can be affectionate (honey), pejorative (bitch), slang, descriptive, etc. The words don't have to be in English but I need as accurate a translation as possible. Many, many thanks, Betty Tompkins." The response was overwhelming, with over 3,500 words and phrases in seven languages submitted, equally split between men and women. In 2012, Tompkins was invited to create a performance in Vienna where 500 of the words and phrases were read aloud. Inspired by that performance, the artist then set out to create 1,000 individual word paintings, intending the series to be presented en masse once complete. On January 1, 2013, Tompkins created the first painting *SLUT (#1)*.

Throughout *WOMEN Words*, Tompkins layers stenciled, freehand drawn, and pressed-on text over imagery, which includes lace overlays, gauzy close-ups of the female body, and a sampling of styles from what the artist refers to as the "old-boy painting" network - de Kooning, Fontana, Guston, Morris Louis, Newman, Pollock, and Richter. Derogatory, reductive, and dismissive language such as *Venus, Piece of Ass*, and *The Only Thing That Would Make Her More Beautiful Is My Dick In Her Mouth*, seem to reveal that women are often still viewed through the lens of desire or reproach. Is such language the result of love, fear, control, or anger? Tompkins does not offer answers, presenting *WOMEN Words* in the same straightforward and non-judgmental approach as her renowned *Fuck Paintings*.

Tompkins' oeuvre has never demurred from provocative subject matter; the artist's ongoing *Fuck Paintings* (1969-1974; reprised in 2003) center on tightly cropped photorealistic images of sexual intercourse. According to the artist, "My first husband had this great collection of porn and I was looking at it one day and thought: if you take out the heads and legs—all this boring stuff—and get down to the money shot, this is beautiful...really formally beautiful." Highly sexualized imagery and language have since become ubiquitous in mainstream culture and have shifted the context and reaction surrounding the *Fuck Paintings*, once dismissed as too explicit and because of Tompkins's position as a female artist with a sex-positive attitude. It wasn't until the paintings' presentation at the Lyon Biennale in 2003, that the work received an extraordinary reception and established Tompkins at the forefront of first generation feminist art.

**Betty Tompkins** (b. 1945, Washington, D.C.) is an artist living and working in New York, NY, and Pleasant Mount, PA. Upcoming exhibitions include *Black Sheep Feminism*, curated by Alison Gingeras, Dallas Contemporary, TX (January – March 2016) and Gavlak Gallery LA. Recent solo exhibitions include *Real Ersatz*, FUG, The Bruce High Quality Foundation, New York, NY (2015); Art Basel Feature, Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Basel, Switzerland (2014); *Paintings & Works on Paper 1972-2013*, Galyak Gallery, Palm Beach, FL (2014); *Woman Words*, Dinter Fine Art, Project room #63, New York (2013); *Fuck Paintings*, Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels, Belgium (2012); *New Work*, Mitchell Albus Gallery, New York (2009), among others. Tompkins’s work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including *The Shell (LANDSCAPES, PORTRAITS & SHAPES)*, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France (2014); *A Drawing Show*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (2014); *CORPUS*, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2014); *A Chromatic Loss*, Bortolami Gallery, New York (2014); *Sunset and Pussy*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY (2013); *Elles*, Centre Pompidou, Paris ((2011) ; among others.

**About:**

**The FLAG Art Foundation** is a non-profit contemporary arts institution, founded by art patron Glenn Fuhrman in 2008. Its objective is to encourage the appreciation of contemporary art among a diverse audience. FLAG organizes four to six exhibitions a year with range of curators, as well as producing public programs and catalogues. Past curators include Chuck Close, Lisa Dennison, Eric Fischl, Louis Grachos, Prabal Gurung, Jim Hodges, Shaquille O’Neal, Linda Yablonsky, among others. To date, FLAG has hosted over 35 curated exhibitions, providing a platform for over 350 international established and emerging artists.

FLAG provides a unique educational environment in which visitors can view, contemplate, and engage in active dialogue with the artworks. FLAG is also a resource that facilitates loans of contemporary artworks to museums around the world. An extensive database of available works is maintained and made available to curators.

We are on the 9th and 10th floors of the Chelsea Arts Tower, located in the heart of New York’s art district on 25th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues. Its state-of-the-art exhibition space was designed by noted architect Richard Gluckman.

Join the conversation online and follow FLAG’s Instagram (@flagartfoundation) and Twitter (@FLAGartNYC), and use the #WOMENWords hashtag when posting.