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Bette Blank: *How High the Moon*

January 17 – March 6, 2020

Opening Reception: Friday, January 17, 6–8 pm



Bette Blank © *Bather in Florida*, 2015.



Bette Blank © *Marilyn Refrigerator*, 2012.

Kapp Kapp is very pleased to present *How High the Moon*, an exhibition of the unique multimedia artist Bette Blank (b. 1940), to inaugurate its New York location.

Bette Blank's paintings and sculptures invite us in with rich colors, lively narratives, iconic imagery, and a signature sense of humor. There is no detail omitted in Blank's work. For the artist, a bust of George Washington must be accompanied by his wooden teeth, as in *The Fathers*, 2019. Or in *Groucho Pajamas*, 2007, a painting of a pair of pajamas is surrounded by Groucho Marks' famous joke: "I killed an elephant in my pajamas..."

The detail in Blank's work is never generic. In her *Marilyn Refrigerator*, 2012, a look inside the pink Frigidaire reveals a carton of Horizon milk, Hellmann's mayonnaise, a caffeine-free Diet Coke, and on the freezer, a postcard of the unmistakable Marilyn Monroe. Inside and out are nostalgic reminders of an America of the past.

Bather in Florida, 2015, a bathroom-scape of a woman soaking in her tub; the tropical palm trees and skies are just visible through the small window. We see the patterned walls and bathmat, the perfectly imperfect tile grids, the electric blue egg tempera stripes. As Blank puts it, she is fascinated by the "geometry of bathrooms."

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In *Bathroom Cabinet*, 2019, Blank uses a weathered found bathroom cabinet and instead of bottles of pills usually found in it, there is a small sculptured bathroom: a ball and claw foot tub, pedestal sink with painted mirror, commode, and a hand-painted tile floor. A bathroom in a bathroom cabinet; that is her joke.

Blank's oeuvre is singularly witty and sharp, but not unaware of its art historical connections. Blank's boxes wink to Joseph Cornell, her drawings and paintings nudging Bonnard with his upended perspectives, and the Reverend Howard Finster with his in-plane text. *Time and Tide*, a 2019 assemblage, combines a miniature replica of Hokusai's famous *Great Wave* with a handleless clock face, a seashell, a cycle of the moon, and a Roman marble bust. This puzzle-like six-by-six inch box alludes to a narrative but allows the viewer to collect and piece together the ending themselves. There are clues, surprises, jokes, histories, and stories hidden within all of Blank's work; the beauty is being along for the ride.

Blank's work is in the permanent collection of The Jewish Museum, New York; The Hunterdon Museum, New Jersey; the Fine Print Collection of the Newark Library, New Jersey; and the Zimmerli Art Museum, New Jersey, among others. In 2010, Blank received a New Jersey State Print Fellowship at the Brodsky Center for innovative Print and Paper at Rutgers University. Blank and her work were featured on NJN State of the Arts in 2007.

Exhibitions of Blank's work include *Icons, Idols, and True Confessions* at the Hunterdon Museum, New Jersey; Gallery Schlesinger, New York; and Adam Baumgold Gallery, New York.

Bette holds a BS and MS in Ceramics from Alfred University and a PhD in Engineering at The University of California, Berkeley.

How High the Moon will be on view at Kapp Kapp, New York through March 6th.