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• **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** •

Lauren Bergman:
American Feminism's Contemporary Artist
New Works

(New York, NY – May 20, 2008) — New York based artist Lauren Bergman's paintings explore the idealization of both the feminine identity and American culture by simultaneously debunking both. With a Bachelor of Arts in Art and Education from the University of Massachusetts, Bergman went on to receive a Masters in Education from Smith College. She has studied drawing, painting, and design at both Parsons School of Design and the Art Students League of New York. For more than a decade established New York City-based galleries including O.K. Harris, Knickerbocker Gallery, and Claire Oliver Fine Art have represented Bergman. She has held shows in Los Angeles, Houston, Chicago, and Washington DC. Currently, new works by Lauren Bergman are available at Corey Helford Gallery, Plus One Gallery in London, and OK Harris in New York City. Bergman's work will be featured in a solo exhibition at Corey Helford Gallery in Culver City, California in 2009.

Working primarily in watercolor and acrylic, Bergman's paintings feature women and young girls in iconic suburban-pastoral settings. The colors are soft and the images stylized and defined, reminiscent of American realists Norman Rockwell, John Sloan, and Edward Hopper, with more than a tinge of legendary pin-up artists Alberto Vargas and Gil Elvgren. By referencing this genre however, Bergman challenges this tradition, acknowledging that her "heroes are more along the lines of Barbara Kruger and Martha Rosler."

Bergman's domestic scenes reach us at both a conscious and unconscious level. They represent the mythical ideal that inhabits the American psyche, juxtaposed with the reality of foreign policy and influential media messages. "Early on," Bergman explains, "I was simultaneously fascinated and horrified by the depiction of the happy, smiling wife/mother who eagerly awaited her husband's return from work and her next shiny, new appliance. This sharply contrasted with my early childhood memories of war protests, bra burnings, and nightly news reports of body counts."

The result of such contradictions is a visually romanticized suburban setting of a woman leaning against her spotless kitchen counter, looking dreamily out the window accompanied by an enthusiastic, but jarring slogan such as, "The sights are all you dreamed they would be." Playfulness and cynicism collide obscuring this soft, iconic scene. The artist refers to these as "found texts"; their source is mid-20th century media advertisements for cigarettes, lingerie, and feminine hygiene products, as well as World War II poster propaganda. According to Bergman, by articulating the phrases, these paintings explore "the fears and uncertainties that nip at the edges of the post-feminist landscape."

Bergman's 2006 series explores an atmosphere that seems to intersect somewhere between state fair and pin-up calendar. In "You're a Big Girl," a nude woman with star nipple tassels stands on stage in between two pre-adolescent girls in pinafore dresses. The woman points her fingers to the smile on her face. Written on the red and white-striped stage banner is the expression, "You're a big girl, you've been lied to before!" Ripped from its original context, this found text seems to both challenge and confirm the woman's position as an object to be gazed upon, an innocence lost.

In the more recent work, "Class, Number 3," we see a typical elementary school classroom with children at their desks. One young boy adjusts the dial on a vintage television. On the screen is a black and white image of a Vietnamese boy, hands tied behind his back, being held at gunpoint. The depiction is a direct reference to a famous image by photographer Eddie Adams. Against the wall we read: "This is America—home of mass production, arsenal of democracy in time of war—Keep it Free!" Here, using found text with iconic images Bergman explores the imbalance between myth and social realism in the context of American culture. "Painting is a purely compulsive act," Bergman explains, "from hunting and gathering images and objects for reasons often unknown to me I find compelling— selecting, grouping, arranging, drawing, and painting, layer after layer."

MORE



ABOUT LAUREN BERGMAN

Lauren Bergman grew up in Washington, D.C., before relocating to Manhattan in 1987 to study painting and design at Parson's School of Design and The Art Students League in New York. Influenced strongly as a young woman by her mother, a model and activist, Bergman began her quest to explore and discover the complexities of female relationships, particularly the mother-daughter relationship between her mother and grandmother. Bergman grew up observing her mother's revolutionary disposition, reacting against cultural expectations of the times, an environment that encouraged Bergman to grow to become an accomplished artist. As a high school student involved in art courses at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Bergman explored narratives focusing on female relationships to each other and to society. Bergman's exceptional talents and mature narratives quickly landed her gallery exhibitions in Washington, D.C., exhibiting among renowned American realists, including Burton Silverman and Sondra Freckelton. Lauren Bergman is now regarded as a preeminent female contemporary artist emerging in the 21st Century, respected for her contributions to feminist-inspired art. Select solo exhibitions in New York City include *New Works* at O.K. Harris Gallery, and *American Dream* at Makor Gallery. Group shows include *Charity By Numbers* and *The War: The Anti-War Show* at Corey Helford Gallery, *All About Women* at Carl Hammer Gallery in Chicago, and *Innocence and Insight* at Claire Oliver Fine Art in New York City. Bergman has been published in *The New York Times*, *Xlr8r*, *Boing Boing*, *Fecal Face*, *Juxtapoz*, *Absolute Arts*, *Glasstire*, and *Vinyl Pulse*. Bergman currently lives and works in Manhattan. For more information on the fine art of Lauren Bergman, please visit www.laurenbergman.net.

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