

BY COMIX TOUCHED

August 7 - September 11, 1988

JOHN RANDOLPH CARTER

DICK IBACH

MICHELE ROBERTS

L O N G B E A C H M U S E U M O F A R T

BY COMIX TOUCHED

It is in poems, paintings, films, literature and musical compositions that creative people reveal, to those sufficiently astute to perceive them, the threads that connect their work to the past history of their formative years. The emotional climate, the weather, the landscape, the food and the books which nourished their childhood as well as the images they remember—coalesce into the cultural and psychological context which determines their point of view. The personality defines the creative ideas and vocabulary. Such motivating forces often remain discreetly tucked away behind the facade of our daily lives; the subtext of our actions is revealed in works of art or in the intimate moments of our private lives, if at all.

It is with this in mind that the works in this exhibition have been brought together. Without wishing to be precise in pinpointing specific influences or drawing attention to particular aesthetic allegiances, I felt that the paintings, monotypes and drawings by John Randolph Carter, Dick Ibach and Michele Roberts were linked by the experience of their American childhood—that somewhere along the line, they had developed a predilection for the comics and cartoons they read and looked at. I suppose this fact struck me because in my own childhood I had not experienced such an encounter. Having spent the first ten years of my life in Rumania, I had no knowledge of Disney, Herriman, Schultz or Dr. Seuss. Yet almost every child brought up in twentieth century America has had access to this form of visual communication/entertainment, and every generation has been exposed to a slightly different kind of comic strip or animated film.

It is natural, therefore, that the memory of favorite characters should haunt the adult, and that traces of this encounter be found in the art of some American artists. At times it appears overtly and powerfully, as in Roy Lichtenstein's images, or subtly, as in the late paintings of Phillip Guston.

In the broader context of art history, the exaggerations and distortions of the human figure have respectable antecedents. William Hogarth and Honore Daumier both used distortion in their drawings to emphasize, satirize or ridicule human foibles. They created imaginary situations to comment on social mores and express political opinions. In the early part of this century, George Grosz drew savage caricatures in his acid depictions of post-World War I German society—its corruption and decadence.

The works in this exhibition contain stylistic references to cartoons or animated film, but in addition, some have narrative content, others focus on visual impact or reveal the artist's inner landscape. All the works have a spirit of their own—they evoke a scary/funny feeling we associate with lighthearted satire, while the visual vocabulary of each artist is distinctive and personal. What we refer to as "the funnies" reflect American culture in many ways. They entertain while being frequently quite violent. Their trenchant observations on current social and political problems are done in a sufficiently frivolous vein to be acceptable. They gently chastise without ruffling feathers, as they tackle issues we prefer to forget. Often, as Montaigne said, "we laugh that we may not weep."

Josine Ianco-Starrels
Senior Curator
Long Beach Museum of Art

**MICHELE
ROBERTS**

Resides in Santa Monica, California
Born: 1954, Los Angeles, California
Education:
Art Center College of Design, Bachelor of Fine Arts, 1981
University of California at Santa Cruz, Bachelor of Fine Arts, 1977

Selected Solo Exhibitions:
Robert Berman Gallery, Santa Monica, California, 1987
B-1 Gallery, Santa Monica, California, 1987, 1985
Jennifer Dumas Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1983
Langman Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1983

Selected Group Exhibitions:
Laforet Museum, Tokyo, Japan, 1987
MOCA Benefit, Los Angeles, California, 1987
B-1 Gallery, Santa Monica, California, 1986
Muse Restaurant, Los Angeles, California, 1986
Fiona Whitney Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1985
Occidental College, Los Angeles, California, 1985

I view my paintings as little stories in that the image is broken up into several parts. There are characters, a line of action, drama and conflict. I try to be very honest, emotional and direct in my work. I deal with personal concerns rather than formal issues. I am not interested in making art about art, but rather about daily life.

Michele Roberts



Was It the Right Choice? 1983 Moonprint 26" x 32" Lent by the artist