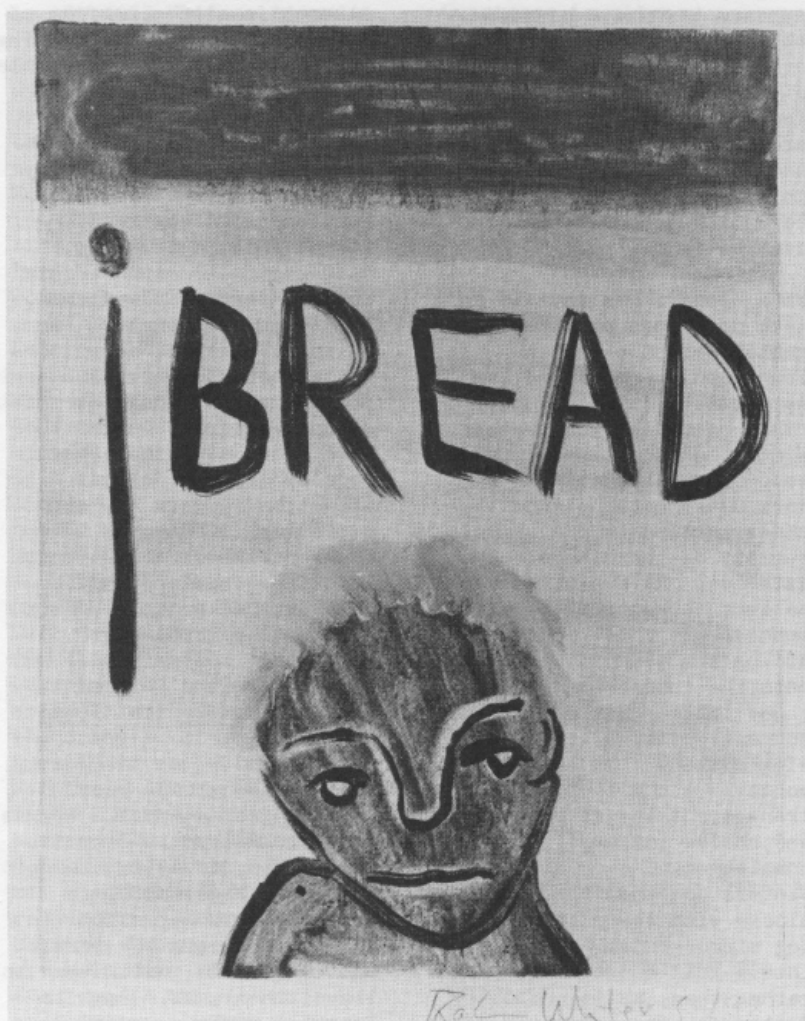


Robin Winters  
MATRIX/BERKELEY 109

University Art Museum  
May - June 1987

Cherry Block Series #32, 1986



Robin Winters has tried to remain an underground artist despite close brushes with fame. His method of subverting success has been to continually "reinvent" his work through a wide range of media, including performance, installation, video, painting and, above all, drawing. Winters sees all of his activities as facets of the same impulse, the need to communicate ideas through imagery. Indeed, Winters appears to have a boundless ability to create images and over the years has developed a lexicon of crudely rendered faces and stick figures that are poignant commentators on the human capacity to prevail in a world that seems to be careening toward self-destruction.

When Winters was invited to make monotypes at Experimental Workshop in San Francisco, he accepted the opportunity to extend his range of media even further. Winters chose to paint on wood blocks rather than the more usual metal plates in order to capture the organic quality of the natural material. He exploited a salient characteristic of the monotype in Ghost Story by adding new painted elements onto the increasingly faint ghost images that result from successive impressions from a single block. In so doing he achieved the effect of transparent layers of color and shadow imagery. At the completion of each series Winters combined the numerous blocks with their corresponding mirror-image impressions into a grid construction rather than, as is customary, destroying the materials of the process.

Winters's brightly-colored monotypes portray an array of

figures and landscapes (and an occasional still-life) that, although can be seen in the context of a general trend away from abstraction that has marked the 1990s, defy strict stylistic categorization. They are neither realistic nor abstract, psychological self-examinations nor narrative fictions, but they contain elements of all of these approaches. Often one form metamorphizes into another--a stomach is also a profile of a face, a guitar, a grimacing skull. Winters is as capable of humor (the insect-faced latter-day beatnik with a beret) as he is pathos (the shy male nude surrounded by underwater plants). Like Jonathan Borofsky (MATRIX/BERKELEY 10), Winters derives much of his subject matter from dreams, believing that through his private fears and obsessions he can touch similar emotions in others. Although at first glance Winters's images look as if they could have been made by a child, closer attention reveals sly art historical references to Jackson Pollock and Pattern Painting (the drip and splatter backgrounds), Mark Rothko (the three-part horizontal compositions) and Minimalism (the gridded Cherry Block Series: Bread Beat).

Winters has always been something of a nomad. He was born and raised in Benecia, California, in 1950. He quit the local high school to study at a Quaker school in British Columbia but left at the end of his junior year to travel in Alaska. Back in Benecia, Winters worked in factories and counseled autistic children before enrolling in the San Francisco Art Institute in

1971. He spent a couple of years studying painting and performance (Carlos Villa and Howard Fried were two of his teachers) until acceptance into the Whitney Independent Study Program took him to New York. Supporting himself as a dishwasher, Winters began a series of public and private performances in 1974 in which he assumed several personae, from Bob-E to W. B. Bearman, attracting sufficient notice to be invited to participate in the 1975 Whitney Biennial. In the Whitney piece, Winters performed simple actions--spinning, bellringing, drawing, screaming--behind a two-way mirror while wearing a series of animal masks. Winters was traveling again in 1975 and 1976, spending time in North Africa and in Europe. At a time when most young American artists were unaware of their European counterparts, Winters met and was influenced by such artists as Sigmar Polke and Marcel Broodthaers (with whom Winters worked on an installation) and also had a one-person exhibition, at the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Dusseldorf. Returning to New York in 1976, Winters teamed up with a group of artists to form Collaborative Projects (Colab), a rather anarchistic organization dedicated to artistic collaboration and the creation of art that questioned social values. For the next couple of years, Winters collaborated on performances with Colleen Fitzgibbon, first in New York and then Holland. As Fitzgibbon later wrote, working together "became a lifestyle of happy, mad, sad, glad" (a monotype in the current exhibition contains four heads symbolizing those universal emotions). In 1979 Winters and Fitzgibbon performed and organized

several group exhibitions in New York including The Dog Show and The Batman Show (with Diego Cortez). For the last several years Winters has continued working in a variety of media and has participated in several major international exhibitions in the United States and Europe while maintaining dual studios in New York and Amsterdam. He is represented by Michael Klein, Inc.

Constance Lewallen

#### Works in MATRIX:

All works are 1986, monotypes on handmade paper, lent by Experimental Workshop, San Francisco, unless otherwise noted.

1. Spearmint Workshop Series: Nos. 5, 6, 10, 15, 22, 23, 30 x 25" each.

2. Cherry Wood Series: Nos. 1, 4, 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, 28, 29, 32, 36, 9 x 7" (image size); 30 x 25" (paper).

3. Monotype Series: Ghost Story, 54 x 42-1/2".

4. Cherry Block Series: Bread Beat, monotype/wood construction, 46 x 45". Lent by Progressive Corporation, Cleveland, OH.

Awards and Grants:

New York State Council on the Arts, Filmmakers Grant ('78); Line Grant, Publications Grant ('79); National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artist's Grant ('80); and Engelhard Award ('85).

International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture, '84 (catalogue); The Brooklyn Museum, NY, Monumental Drawing, '86 (catalogue).

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Konrad Fischer Gallery, Dusseldorf, W. Germany, '75; Mary Boone Gallery, NY, '81; Sonnabend Gallery, NY, '82, '84; Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery, L.A., '83; Karen and Jean Bernier Gallery, Athens, Greece, '83; Daniel Weinberg Gallery, L.A., '84; Jeffrey Hoffeld & Co., NY, '85; Fuller Goldeen, S.F., '86; ICA, Boston, Thinktank, '86 (traveled to Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and Centre Regional d'Art Contemporain, Toulouse, France (catalogue); Lühring Augustine and Hodes, NY, '87 (catalogue).

Selected bibliography about the artist (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

Lichtenstein, Therese, "Terry Winters," New York Magazine, Feb. '83.  
Liebman, Lisa. "Terry Winters, Sonnabend Gallery," Artforum, Feb. '83.  
Carlson, Prudence. "Terry Winters at Sonnabend," Art in America, Mar. '83.  
Drohojowska, Hunter. "Robin Winters," Flash Art, Mar. '83.  
Larson, Kay. "Terry Winters," New York Magazine, Feb. 27, '84.  
Smith, Roberta. "Four Painters In Search Of...", Village Voice, Dec. 11, '84.  
Brenson, Michael. "Art-Critics Choices at Jeffrey Hoffeld & Co., 'With an Eye to Nature,'" New York Times, Apr. 32, '85.

Selected group exhibitions:

Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, Biennial, '75 (catalogue); 591 Broadway, NY, The Batman Show, '79; NY, The Times Square Show, '80; Cologne, W. Germany, Westkunst, '81 (catalogue); ICA, Philadelphia, PA, Image Scavengers, '82 (catalogue); Tate Gallery, London, New Art, '84; The Museum of Modern Art, NY, An

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