Samson Projects • Boston, MA • samsonprojects.com • Through March 30, 2013

I

nspired by Courbet’s graphic L’Origine du Monde (The origin of the world) 1866, Marcel Duchamp’s peephole-diorama, Étant donnés (Given) 1946–66, and Naomi Wolf’s recent tome, Vagina: A New Biography, Camilo Alvarez, director of Samson Projects, seeks to rekindle the public’s admiration of vaginal iconography. I say rekindle because those of you familiar with the 1970s know how violently the women’s movement stirred the primordial soup causing women around the world to explore, question, and assert their sexuality. Women artists responded in kind with brazen depictions of vaginas and variations in painting, sculpture, photography, video, and performance.

In those times, the goal was to demand respect for female power but here at Samson, the work is more about celebration. Tim Davis photographs the original Courbet but leaves the glow of his flash to shine on the model’s genitals like a hallowed light. Similarly, Kirsten Stoltmann, so pleased to have birthed a child, not only photographs her own vagina but decorates it with a tear-drop shaped amethyst, placed strategically.

In a more conceptual approach, Patty Chang shows a series of color photographs that document her pregnancy while on a research trip to Eastern Europe. As she experiences her fertility with all its complications (morning sickness and more) she witnesses a sea drying up, stranded boats, and dying fish. Perhaps the most humorous of the works is Kelly Kleinschrodt’s plexiglass pyramid, a triangular sculpture of acrylic with a photo transparency of water (or hair) as its base.

The show will evolve in its time frame. In the upcoming weeks new works in many media will be added: the 1976 Hannah Wilke video of her striptease in front of Duchamp’s The Large Glass, a Betty Tompkins Fuck painting, Robert Gober’s black wallpaper of male and female genitals etched in white, and Regina José Galindo’s controversial video, Himenoplastia, that won her the Golden Lion Award at the 2005 Venice Biennale.

All in all, the origin of the world asks, do women (and men) need to examine female sexuality, whatever their era? The work, seen now and for some, again, is less angry but no less provocative.

—Leslie Sills

March/April 2013