

FOREWORD

The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery is proud to present *Hive Universe: Nancy Macko, 1994–2006*, which includes more than sixty works. It is the most substantive and comprehensive examination of Macko's work to date, including digital and traditional prints, mixed-media paintings and works on paper, and two video installations: *Lore of the Bee Priestess* (2004) and *Bee Stories* (2006). The latter work was made specifically for this exhibition.

We have had the pleasure of following Nancy Macko's work for more than ten years, beginning with the exhibition *Manipulations*, presented at Barnsdall Park in 1995. We have been impressed by her creative process and the way in which she incorporates in-depth research into her artistic practice. Often her investigations have led her to other parts of the world to visit ancient, potentially matriarchal sites and to document artifacts that she later incorporates into her work. Throughout this period Macko has drawn upon images that explore the relationships among art, science, technology, and feminism.

Macko's interest in feminism and women's art began in the early 1970s, when she took her first feminist art studio class at Queens College in New York with artist Jane Kaufman. Kaufman was an influential professor who introduced Macko to feminism and the feminist art movement. Later, while Macko was finishing her undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin, Professor Patricia Clark introduced her to printmaking and painting. Macko continued her studies in the MFA program at the University of California, Berkeley, where another professor, Sylvia Lark, helped her to develop her art practice from a feminist perspective. Each of these three women played an important role in shaping Macko's artistic and personal vision. Inspired by these mentors, Macko began teaching art early in her career and has been a member of the faculty at Scripps College since 1986.

The mythology of the bee priestess was a central theme of Macko's art throughout the 1990s. Developing her ideas from imagery and information on honeybees, she has incorporated into her work images derived from ancient cultures in Eastern Europe, Spain, and Greece that include bee lore as well as honey gathering. This culture of bee priestesses also resonates with the notion of a feminist utopia. "Conceptually my work finds its

greatest resonance with feminist utopian novels that challenge basic assumptions about power between the genders and imagine women-centered worlds in which strong and powerful women live autonomously without fear of the restrictions and consequences placed upon them by today's society," Macko states. Her recent work combines elements of painting, printmaking, digital media, photography, video, and installation to create a visual language. This combination of media allows her to examine and respond to issues related to ecofeminism, nature, and ancient matriarchal cultures as well as to explore her interest in mathematics, particularly prime numbers.

As part of the national Feminist Art Project, Macko's *Hive Universe* is the first in a series of exhibitions that recognize the achievements of the feminist art movement. Related exhibitions include *Multiple Vantage Points: Southern California Women Artists, 1980–2006*, curated by Dextra Frankel and sponsored by the Southern California Women's Caucus for Art, presented at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery; *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, curated by Connie Butler for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and *Global Feminisms*, curated by Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, which includes the permanent installation of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. We are delighted to present Nancy Macko's work within the context of these exhibitions as they give us an opportunity to reflect on the powerful work of feminist artists.

The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and the Department of Cultural Affairs would like to thank Scripps College and the Mellon Foundation for their generous support and sponsorship of this exhibition. We would also like to thank the contributors to this catalog: Karin Breuer, curator of contemporary graphic art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Connie Butler, Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings, Museum of Modern Art; Mary-Kay Lombino, Emily Hargroves Fisher '57 and Richard B. Fisher Curator, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College; Mary Davis MacNaughton, director, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, and associate professor of art history, Scripps College; and Gloria Feman Orenstein, professor of comparative literature and gender studies, University of Southern California.

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