

HARLAN & WEAVER, INC.
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KIKI SMITH
Touch, 2006

a set of six etchings
with a poem by Henri Cole

PRESS RELEASE

Harlan & Weaver is pleased to announce their new publication, *Touch*, a set of color etchings by Kiki Smith. Each of the six prints in the set depicts a unique composition of flowers, from the elongated stems of lilies and gladiolas to an impressionistic rendering of a decaying hyacinth. The images are drawn on variously sized plates, enforcing the flowers' arrangement and physical scale. Accompanied by a poem written by the American poet Henri Cole, the prints are presented in a custom-made folio box with poem, title and colophon pages printed in letterpress.

Though not directly present in her past work, floral imagery has been of great interest to Smith. Dutch still life and flower paintings and colonial American representations of flowers have been inspirations, as have *vanitas* or *memento mori* paintings, where a dying flower or fallen petal are emblematic of mortality and the passing of time. Also influential is the flower photography of Adolphe Braun. Braun's exquisitely posed sepia-toned photographs, presented in an 1854 catalogue titled *Fleurs Photographiées*, were intended for use as templates (transferred to printing blocks) for French wallpaper and fabric designers. This domestic application of Braun's imagery provides further associations with Smith's work and her interest in wall stenciling, printed textiles, patterns and printmaking.

Smith notes that for years she had been considering ways to specifically utilize flower imagery in her own work. Though enormously attracted to the art historical and metaphoric significance of flowers, Smith felt that she did not have a personal relationship with the subject. When Smith's mother, the actress and opera singer Jane Lawrence Smith died in the summer of 2005, her home was filled with condolence bouquets that, with time, began to fade and wither. The symbolic presence of the flowers, furthered by their own inevitable transformation, provided an intimately personal context for Smith's interest in floral representation. They also allowed Smith an opportunity, through her grief, to eulogize her mother in a sort of image-elegy. The prints are meditations on beauty and transience, a physical and emotional "touch" that reference familial devotion. Strikingly beautiful and conceptually arresting, they are a profound addition to Smith's oeuvre.

Smith began the prints by drawing the bouquets, the flowers still lingering between life and death, on copper at her home. She then took several photographs of the flowers, and used these as reference when working further on the plates. The scratched copper she chose for the black (line) plates of the prints adds an atmosphere of age; its tangible surface detail further enforces Smith's very tactile approach to the printmaking process. The techniques used for the prints include line etch, drypoint, aquatint, and burnishing. Each print is a four-plate color etching comprised of a red, blue, yellow and black plate, and is printed in an edition of thirty-three, with six artist's proofs, five printer's proofs and one B.A.T. Though the plate-size varies, the paper for each print measures 30 x 22 inches.

Please contact Harlan & Weaver with any questions by email: inquiry@harlanandweaver.com or telephone: 212-925-5421.