

## An American Abroad: Sandra Fisher and her School of London Friends

March 30 to May 13, 2006

Gallery open every day 10-6 pm



The New York Studio School is to present the first American exhibition to explore Sandra Fisher's legacy both as a painter and a muse in a comprehensive survey of her vibrant paintings, pastels, drawings and monotypes. The exhibition will also include portraits of Sandra Fisher by a dozen other artists who were inspired by her beauty, friendship and dedication to art.

As a painter of portraits, nudes, studio interiors and landscapes, Sandra Fisher (1947-1994) worked directly from observation to produce works of lush, painterly exuberance and blazing color. Her style captures the energy of the Fauves and the social astuteness of the Ash Can School, with compositions that often recall the old masters. Neither her

reverence for art history nor her realism made her old fashioned. On the contrary, her work belonged resolutely to her times. Her depictions of the male nude have a particular freshness arising from a frank, contemporary sexuality, while her unaffected reexamination of painterly means made her work relevant to many artists of her generation.

The kind of erotic gaze traditionally associated with male artists and female subjects is unabashedly turned around in Fisher's joyful celebrations of young male beauty. Later work explored the artist's love of Shakespeare and opera, subjects that brought out a new pitch of painterly and chromatic intensity at the time of her tragic death at age 47.

Fisher was a vital catalyst for the revival of interest in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s in figuration and working directly from observation. Born in New York and raised in

Florida, she moved to London in 1971 where she met fellow expatriate R.B. Kitaj, who she later married. Kitaj credits Fisher with encouraging him in his personal rediscovery of life drawing. While she often painted young professional models—musicians, art students—most of Fisher’s sitters were friends and fellow painters. The exhibition therefore provides a collective portrait of a lively milieu that formed itself around this beloved, generous, independent painter.

Kitaj is represented by a drawing from life made of Sandra sleeping, from 1981, and from one of his controversial paintings of Sandra as posthumous muse in 1999, after his move from London to Los Angeles. A pencil sketch by Avigdor Arikha of Sandra and Kitaj as they sat for Raphael Soyer is united for the first time since the sitting with the Soyer painting itself. There is also a portrait of Sandra by Frank Auerbach together with a group of the photographs taken by Fisher after each sitting, just before Auerbach rubbed the unsuccessful drawing session away. Artist friends who took turns painting and being painted by Fisher who are represented here include Maurice Cockrill, Richard Cook, John Dewe Mathews, Stephen Finer, Maggi Hambling, Lino Mannocci, Susannah Phillips, and Gabriel Sempill. And there are photographs of Sandra Fisher at various stages of her relationship with Kitaj by their friend, Lee Friedlander.