

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



WILLIAM CRAWFORD

July 11th-August 3rd, 2014

Opening Reception: Friday, July 11th, 7-9pm

Freddy is pleased to present a selection of drawings by William Crawford.

William Crawford's drawings were discovered in an abandoned house in Oakland, California and can be traced back to the mid-1990s. At a glance, his work brings to mind characteristics of prison drawings, an impression that is confirmed by the fact that several were made on the backs of prison roster sheets dated 1997. These computer printouts were cut down the middle, so the exact state prison from which they come is unknown. But given their origin in the East Bay and the fact that several drawings include San Francisco landmarks, it's fair to assume that Crawford made the work in a California state prison. Other than this information gleaned from the archive itself, we know little about Crawford's life. Indeed, we only know his name because he signed just a few of the drawings, both as Bill and WM Crawford.

The archive appears to have consisted of several "books," with individual drawings in sequences of up to 30 or more adding up to tell short visual stories. Several drawings are accompanied by written captions, fragments of conversation between male and female characters. These sequences, however, have been broken up over the years and reach us now in a fragmentary and fascinating collection of around 950 delicate pencil drawings on paper. The work conveys an intense sense of sexual longing of a man behind bars with an urge to tell dynamic stories. All we know about him is what is contained within the work itself.

The drawings, which bring to mind the eroticism of Eric Stanton, the exaggerated male anatomy of Tom of Finland or the ample breasts of a John Currin, show scantily dressed women, regular drug use, rape scenarios and orgies. A cast of recurring figures also populate the drawings, notably one man with a short afro and a moustache who often figures at the center of events, presumably the artist William Crawford himself. The decoration of interiors, the hairdos and style of dress suggest that Crawford might have come of age in the late 70s or early 80s.

Remarkably, given the sheer number of drawings, there is little to no repetition in the work. Crawford's inventive eye for sexual positions, facial expressions and gestures of hand and body was vast and masterful. The singular and original drawing style makes it enticing to submerge ourselves into the world before us. We see rooms shown from unusual angles, features that are hinted at, erased or altogether omitted and articles of clothing that are drawn with obsessive precision. Geometrical details and architectural subtleties define a space which serves not only as a backdrop to where the action unfolds, but also a scenario that makes things possible, more a dream than documentation, more fantasy than perversion: the *mise en scène* of a sexual reverie in which Crawford is king.

Crawford's drawings have been exhibited at the New York and Los Angeles Art Book Fairs. A selection of drawings were also exhibited at ZieherSmith in New York as part of their fall group exhibition titled *Hope Despite the Times*. A solo exhibition of his work was presented at Galerie Susanne Zander in Cologne, Germany and also shown by Zander at Art Cologne and the Independent Art Fair in New York. His drawings are in several private collections.

The William Crawford collection is represented by Ampersand Gallery & Fine Books, Portland, Oregon and Galerie Susanne Zander, Cologne, Germany.