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JEN P. HARRIS: *Conversations* **December 4, 2009 through March 21, 2010**

Contemporary portraits of love and intimacy at the DCCA

Wilmington, Del. –3 December 2009 – The Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts announces New York-based artist Jen P. Harris’s solo exhibition titled *Conversations*, on view in Dupont II Gallery from December 4, 2009, through March 21, 2010. *Conversations* is an exhibition of paintings and works on paper of images that are reinterpretations of Hollywood depictions of romances or composites of visual information found in magazines, on the Internet, or in the artist’s digital camera with which she gives form to indeterminate but suggestive narrative and psychological content. The press and the public are invited to attend the artist’s reception on Friday, December 4, 2009, during the Art on the Town opening from 5-11 p.m.

Jen P. Harris paints contemporary portraits of love: pairs of people who are locked in tight embraces, twins or mirror images of the same person, and men holding children. Carina Evangelista, DCCA Gretchen Hupfel Curator of Contemporary Art, states that Harris “paints [love] in a gamut of incarnations and ambiguities, with a register that ranges from observation and interpretation, to reserve, indulgence, caricature, and even cryptology.” In the *American Kiss* series, Harris paints what she refers to as reinterpretations of “the familiar Hollywood image of romance, presenting couples in a cinematic light.” Using saturated colors and setting the couples on a grassy knoll, in a moonlit garden, or with the ocean as a backdrop, these paintings portray languid moments and, as Evangelista notes, they could be “pulp fiction covers, light romance film stills, or the album cover for a record that might include songs with titles like ‘Now and Forever.’” Closer scrutiny reveals that the couples are androgynous; and Harris states that she employs “a skewed gravitational and perspectival scheme, along with an obscuring of the physical boundaries and features of the body” in order to illustrate “the psychosomatic aspects of human intimacy.” By placing gay couples in the long tradition of figuration in painting, she portrays the physical reality of love between two individuals, regardless of their gender.

If *American Kiss* is immediately recognizable, with the near kitsch representations of romance, *Conversation* is more enigmatic, featuring mirrored images of the same person to explore the mysteries of selfhood and sexuality. Extracting figures from different fashion magazine photographs of the same model, Harris states that she hopes to “challenge expectations about culturally familiar imagery” and the doubles in this series channel her thinking “about reflection, opposition, attraction, doubt, and the illusory nature of a unified self.”

Two paintings, each featuring a man holding a baby, throw light on a different angle of love: the possibility of parental love between father and child. The images were also collaged from different sources and thus exude a slight dissonance. Neither man is shown with respective male or female partner but within the context of her other works, notions of the complex realities and unwarranted persecution of parenthood for gay and lesbian couples are the subtext. Evangelista concludes that Harris “paints love in its quirky, sometimes obvious and sometimes obscure permutations, for the love of painting, tipping her hat to the great masters of figure painting and candidly expanding the conversations among the many examples of love portrayed.”

Full version of Carina Evangelista’s essay for the exhibition is accessible on the DCCA website at <http://www.thedcca.org/Galleries/dupontII.html>.

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JEN P. HARRIS (Booklyn, NY) received her MFA from Queens College, City University of New York, and her BA from Yale University. She has had solo exhibitions at the Mooney Center Exhibit Hall at The College of New Rochelle in New Rochelle, NY; Paul Klapper Gallery, Queens College, City University of New York, Flushing, NY; and Studio 56, New Haven CT. Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions at venues including the Summer Festival in Wassaic, NY; Gallery 151, New York, NY; Coagula Projects and The Getty Center, Los Angeles, CA; and Antelope Valley College, Lancaster, PA. Among the awards she has received are grants from the Brooklyn Arts Council, the E.D. Foundation, and the Robert C. Bates Traveling Fellowship; selection in the Drawing Center Viewing Program; the Maryland Artists' Equity Foundation Exhibition Award; and a residency from the Vermont Studio Center.

ART SALAD Program

Jen P. Harris discusses her paintings in her exhibition, *Conversations*, on Wednesday, December 9, 2009. This free lunchtime program is held on Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. in the Wings Foundation Auditorium. Acoustical upgrade for the auditorium was made possible by the Delaware Community Foundation and a donation of acoustical materials from Armstrong World Industries, Inc.

Docent-led Tours

To arrange docent-led tours for DCCA exhibitions, contact the Education Department at 302-656-6466 x7101.

About the DCCA

DCCA gallery hours are:

10 am - 5 pm Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday

Noon - 5 pm Wednesday and Sunday

Admission is FREE

www.thedcca.org

302-656-6466

The DCCA is wheelchair-accessible; visitors with special needs are encouraged to call in advance.

DCCA exhibitions and programs are made possible, in part, through individual contributions; members' support; major grants from AstraZeneca, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency dedicated to nurturing and supporting the arts in Delaware in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts; and by Amtrak – Official Transportation Provider for the DCCA.

High-resolution images available upon request.
