

profile

# OPEN INTIMACY

## Artist Lily Ludlow's Beguiling Paintings

Text **Lauren Cross**

"There's so much penis art in Manhattan right now," observes artist Lily Ludlow, explaining her impulse to create art that is humorous, yet "a little twisted without being perverted or feminist." Her latest collection of paintings, showing in December at Canada Gallery (alongside a short film she shot with filmmaker Allen Cordell, featuring Chloë Sevigny) blends the erotic with the tongue-in-cheek, or what she calls, "sex comedy." An example is *Victorian Jump-rope*, which portrays two painted ladies, their voluptuous bodies tangled up in beads and bosoms, their blow-up-doll faces startled by the viewer's sudden appearance. Ludlow's confident pencil and ink strokes belie the hand of a shy perfectionist who struggles to not erase anything that isn't absolutely real. Eyes, for Ludlow, are the most important element in a face: "When I look at the eyes and get that feeling that it's true, then it's really true," she explains. Some eyes are drawn over each other multiple times, lending the impression that the figures are scanning your face as you study theirs, suggesting that you cannot be a voyeur if your gaze is returned. Perhaps this is a deflection of intimacy,



the reaction of someone private who feels bared and over-exposed? "It's sort of wrestling with loving to do something, and then feeling that too much is out there," she says. This inner struggle extends to her hand-sewn clothing line, Somnus, customized with the same ink as her paintings, which, she explains, are "wearable, but they're more like a sculpture. It's up to the person who [buys] them what they do with them." It's a simple shrug from an artist whose curiosity trumps any insecurity: "When you put a line on someone, the way that it moves on the person, that looks really beautiful to me. And I want to keep up with that."

Lily Ludlow's show, "*Sowing Circle: A Short Film by Lily Ludlow and Allen Cordell, with paintings by Lily Ludlow*" is on view at Canada Gallery, NY, from December 11 through January 18.