

# ARTNEWS

## JUDITH BERNSTEIN AT MARY BOONE

BY **Barbara Pollack** POSTED 07/15/15 9:30 AM

With enough vulgarity and explicitness to make a graffiti artist blush, Judith Bernstein lays out the weapons in the war between the sexes. Over the past four decades, Bernstein has developed an iconography of sexual organs, which she affectionately calls “cunts” and “cocks.” She turns these graphic images into characters, playing out the eternal conflict between winners (the cunts) and losers (the pricks).

The largest painting here, *Birth of the Universe/Cuntface* (2015), was a ferocious composition with expressionistic strokes of maroon and orange against a backdrop of fluorescent yellow.

An enormous vagina, with eyes and teeth, screams out at a crouching limp penis. In an unambiguous example of sexual role reversal, it is the female character that is strongest, with the male a cowering wimp.

Bernstein defies assumptions about gender-based work. In *Crying Cuntface* (2015), the vagina has protruding penises for eyes that are dripping something, while in *The Voyeurs* (2015), the eyes are running away from the faces entirely.

These works, like *The Voyeurs*, painted in bright orange against a pale blue background punctuated with fluorescent polka dots, defy convention and are timelessly powerful. Bernstein’s long wait for her current success has not dulled her talent or ambition in any way.

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Judith Bernstein, *Birth of the Universe #4*, 2012, oil on canvas, 96" x 96".

