

ARTS & CULTURE

A year after her death, the controversial artist Barbara DeGenevieve gets her first solo exhibition

“Medusa’s Cave” collects some of her fearless explorations of censorship, porn, and human sexuality.

by **Kate Sierzputowski**

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Credit: Michael Madrigali

During her lifetime, the artist and educator Barbara DeGenevieve fearless and controversial work was rarely shown. Iceberg Project's "Medusa's Cave" is the first exhibition of her art since her passing in August 2014, as well as her first-ever solo show. The exhibition presents many pieces from DeGenevieve's early career, including a few that have never before been seen.

Two large self-portraits dominate the exhibition. The first appears immediately upon entering the backyard gallery space: a black-and-white photograph of DeGenevieve gazing at the viewer with penetrating eyes, furrowed brows, and tufts of gray hair sprouting out over her ears.

"We felt that these stunningly lush self-portraits relayed a sense of what she was known for," said cocurator Dan Berger. "[She was] unabashed about who she was, comfortable in her own skin, talking about politically

charged issues of censorship, sexuality, pornography, race, and challenging conservative norms, all while maintaining a sense of humor and grace.”

Berger and his cocurator, Doug Ischar, also included a framed copy of DeGenevieve’s mother’s suicide note, two large-scale text-based works that layer her mother’s writing with her own, and three simple black panels that contain deeply sadomasochistic snippets of a 12-piece erotic narrative.

Although many institutions were uncomfortable showing DeGenevieve’s work, the curators at Iceberg Projects gravitated towards it, since they pride themselves on exhibiting work that is controversial, sexually charged, and queer. The gallery will screen some of DeGenevieve’s rarer video pieces on the closing date, October 10, and discussions are under way for future exhibitions that will show a greater breadth of her work.



 **[Recommended] “Barbara DeGenevieve: Medusa’s Cave”**

Through Sat 10/10

Iceberg Projects

7714 Sheridan

icebergchicago.com

Free

