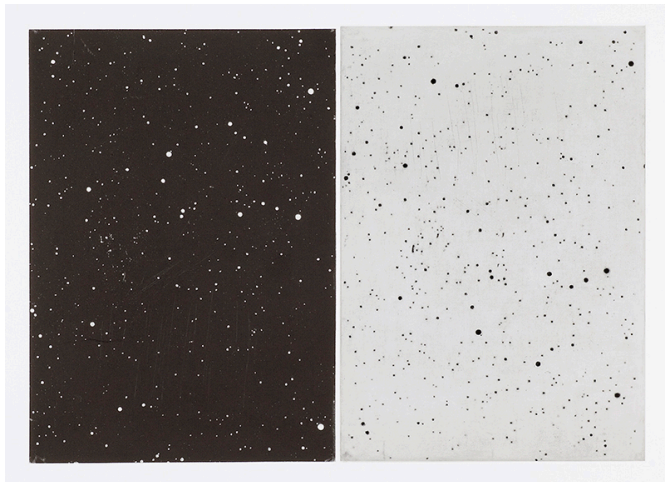


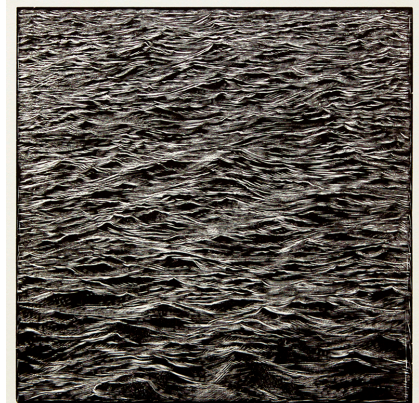
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VIJA CELMINS Selected Prints

May 26 – June 26, 2017



Black and White Diptych, 2010, mezzotint, aquatint, 11 7/8 x 16 in



Untitled (Ocean), 1995, wood engraving, 5 x 5 in

Opening May 26 and on view through June 26, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present **VIJA CELMINS Selected Prints**, an exhibition of 12 works on paper that reflect the breadth of printmaking techniques the artist has employed over more than four decades. A separate press release is available for the concurrent show of alabaster sculpture by **Aya Miyatake**.

Vija Celmins is internationally acclaimed for her repeated exploration and intense scrutiny of enduring subjects from the natural world. Comprehensive surveys of her graphic oeuvre have been featured in retrospectives at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2002 and the Vienna Secession in 2016. This show highlights the artist's masterful use of wood engraving, mezzotint, drypoint and etching for images of the ocean surface, spider webs and starry skies.

When her interest in representing the visible world first emerged in the 1960s, Celmins began to paint objects in her Los Angeles studio – lamps, heaters and other overlooked fixtures of daily life. Soon she moved away from direct observation, working instead from found imagery, and sometimes from her own photographs. In the late 1960s, after developing her distinctive, horizonless compositional approach to depictions of waves, rocks and celestial bodies, Celmins shifted her attention from painting to drawing. Printmaking became central to her practice beginning in the 1980s.

In each of these mediums, Celmins' primary focus has been the distinct potential that her materials bring to the challenge of translating an expansive visual experience onto a flat surface. Vistas that seem too vast or mercurial are re-interpreted and compressed on the two-dimensional plane. Reflecting on her commitment to the material aspects of her process, Celmins has commented, "I believe if there is any meaning in art, it resides in the physical presence of a work. Maybe all the meaning is just in the making."

(over)

In *Night Sky 1, 4 and 5*, mezzotints printed in 2016 by Doris Simmelink, Celmins preserved the experience of distance we perceive between stars as our eyesight acclimates to a “clear” night sky. Each composition presents a patch of the phenomenal depth of space illuminated by stars light years apart. Before Celmins begins generating marks on the copper printing plates, the mezzotint rocker imbues a rich texture of tiny overlapping lines on the surface. This preparation creates an ideal haze to grab the ink, and a tooth for the needle the artist later employs to soften and even erase some of lines, allowing tiny spots of the white paper background to shine through as bright stars.

To create *Untitled (Ocean)*, a 1995 wood engraving printed by Leslie Miller, Celmins carved crisp slivers out of the surface of a fruitwood block, simulating the rhythm and interdependence of ocean waves. The clarity of each incised cut delineates the crests of individual waves and glints of reflected light on the water. As in all of her works on paper, an essential aspect of her process is the painstaking attention focused on the precise proportions of the white margins surrounding the printed impression. In this small black and white engraving, Celmins captured the infinite, undulating sea through a meticulously composed fragment.

Vija Celmins was born in Riga, Latvia and immigrated to the United States with her family in the late 1940s. She studied painting and printmaking at the John Herron School of Art in Indiana and attended a summer session at Yale University in 1961 before pursuing a master’s degree at UCLA.

In 1992 the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia organized a retrospective of her work that traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art. She has had numerous other one-person exhibitions at museums across the United States and Europe, including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Reina Sofía in Madrid, the Menil Collection in Houston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and most recently the Vienna Secession where a retrospective of her prints was held in 2016. Celmins was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1996 and received a MacArthur Fellowship in 1997.

In late 2018 an exhibition of her work organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will open there before traveling in 2019 to the Met Breuer in New York.

www.drawingroom-gallery.com

Gallery Hours: Thursday through Monday 11-5

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