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## *A.I.R. Pioneers*

### Judy Cooper

November 4-December 2, 2012

Opening Reception: Friday, November 9, 6–9pm

A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to present *A.I.R. Pioneers*, an exhibition of Judy Cooper's portraits of the founding and early members of A.I.R. Gallery. Along with Cooper's photographs, a book by the same title serves as a catalogue for this exhibition.



Cooper, when a National Member of A.I.R. Gallery, spent the last five years photographing the gallery's founders. When A.I.R. Gallery opened in New York in 1972, it was the first gallery in the U.S. that was of, by, and for women artists. Cooper states, "I had long heard of the legendary women who founded the gallery. In 2007, I found out that most of them were still working artists, living in the NYC area. I got the idea of photographing them as a way of paying them tribute."

Though there were twenty original founders, several dropped out of the gallery in the first few years and were immediately replaced by other women artists who stayed on through the formative years of the gallery. In Cooper's full series of twenty-four portraits, she features nineteen of the gallery's original founders and five members who joined the gallery in the first few years. "These artists like to call themselves the A.I.R. Pioneers," Cooper comments. "Pioneers is in fact a good term to describe all of these women who have had such a profound and lasting influence on the status of women in the world of art. They boldly led the way for us to follow."

Cooper photographed her subjects in their studios to show that these women are still successful, working artists. Cooper's portraits are basically documentary in nature. Her subjects stand or sit facing the camera, looking directly into the lens, creating an immediate contact between the subject and the viewer. The large size of Cooper's prints, 30"x20", enhances the life like quality of her portraits. Cooper wants her viewers to recognize that they are in the presence of dynamic, powerful women and to feel the impact of their personalities.

Of Cooper's larger series of twenty-four portraits, fourteen are included in the exhibition *A.I.R. Pioneers*. Eleven of the fourteen portraits are of the original founders: Blythe Bohnen, Maude Boltz, Daria Dorosh, Loretta Dunkelmann, Mary Grigoriadis, Anne Healy, Laurace James, Louise Kramer, Patsy Norvell, Nancy Spero, and Nancy Wilson-Pajic. The other three subjects, Mary Beth Edelson, Pat Lasch, and Sylvia Sleight, are of women who joined the gallery shortly after it began.

The timing of this exhibition coincides with the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the gallery.

**A.I.R. Gallery** is located at 111 Front Street, #228, in the DUMBO neighborhood of Brooklyn. Gallery hours are: Wednesday – Sunday, 11 – 6pm. For directions please see [www.airgallery.org](http://www.airgallery.org). For additional information, please contact Allison Arnold at A.I.R. Gallery at 212-255-6651 or [aarnold@airgallery.org](mailto:aarnold@airgallery.org).

**Image:** "Daria Dorosh," 2007, Archival Pigment Print, 30" x 20"

\*\*Please note the gallery is closed for the Thanksgiving holiday from November 22 – 23<sup>rd</sup>, re-opening on Saturday, November 24<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

A.I.R. Gallery – Celebrating 40 years of advocating for women in the visual arts.