

For IMMEDIATE Release:

March 15, 1995

ONTOLOGICAL GARDENS / ATAVISTIC CHANTS is an exhibition of the works of Micaela Amato and Antonette Rosato, opening Wednesday, April 19th 5-8 pm -May 6th, at AIR Gallery, 40 Wooster St.NYC.

For Antonette Rosato and Micaela Amato, identity is not determined by one factor alone but by a subtle alchemy of heredity, environment, human contrariness and accident. Familial values and memories inform and inflame their imaginations. Rosato and Amato both come from families that identify strongly with their ethnic heritage and where Italian and Spanish respectively were spoken at home.

Antonette Rosato's Italian Catholic family and her visits to Italy have filled her visual vocabulary with images of saints, souls and redemption. In "The Pattern That Connects" Rosato experiments with feminist and catholic myths to refashion dogma into a vision she can believe in. An engraving of a leaf and a portion of a 1st-3rd Century Gnostic prayer, "The Thunder, Perfect Mind" appear on Rosato's renewed holy cards. The prayer is in the voice of a female revealer whose extraordinary and paradoxical discourse suggests the mystical and unfathomable nature of the Divine, the speaker. For Rosato, the leaf is both a feminine symbol and a metaphor for breathing and balance in the natural world. Her objects and settings appear to have a devotional and somewhat scientific purpose. In searching for her lost articles of faith, Rosato's installations become sensuous laboratories for testing her personal unified field.

Micaela Amato's Sephardic family assembled in the United States having wandered in exile from Spain to Italy, Greece and Turkey. Her father's Botanica in Spanish Harlem sold healing oils, herbs and incense. Amato can see the influences of European, African, Arab and Jew upon one another in her family and in her own face which confronts the viewer in one frame of the work. Amato's figures are exiled from, but living in a superimposition of the past. The work reflects the artist's experience of her own body, which has been colonized by an environmentally-induced leukemia.

The title of Amato's work "I Am So Vast I Eat My Own Placenta" is borrowed from THE STREAM of LIFE, a novella-length prose poem by the Brazilian author Clarice Lispector. Lispector's ecstatic concentration on the present resonates in Amato's concern for maximizing the moments of life. Amato's mixed media works, combining neon text, wire-glass (held by steel brackets) with transparent layers of duratrans images and paint, are metaphors of consciousness, of the awareness of unfolding instants of time, of taking "possession of the thing's is," while the physical body moves toward death. The present creates and consumes the future.

(Nancy Bless- former Curator of the Kohler Arts Center, Director of Women & Their Work, Austin, Texas)