

LUISE ROSS **GALLERY**

For Immediate Release

Violetta Raditz (1912-1998)

And

**Thomas Burleson, Thornton Dial, Tyyne Esko, Minnie Evans,
Lonnie Holley, Louis Monza, Leroy Person, and Bill Traylor**

Violetta Raditz was the first child of a young and artistic Philadelphia couple. Her father, Lazar Raditz, a Russian émigré, was a highly respected portrait painter; and her mother, Henrietta Herman, an accomplished pianist. A precocious and ebullient child, her natural talent encouraged and abetted by a home environment filled with music and art, Violetta demonstrated an unusually mature ability and prolific propensity for drawing and painting. So much so, that five of her pencil and crayon works on paper won inclusion in the 1920 juried exhibition of the Philadelphia Watercolor Club at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Violetta was eight years old at the time.

The current exhibition at Luise Ross Gallery features this early period of the artist's work. The subject matter suggests a developing fascination with things theatrical, and may be traced to Violetta's attendance with her parents at musical and dramatic performances and museum exhibitions of the day. Among these were the imported London production of "Chu Chin Chow," an elaborately staged and campy musical retelling of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." Another was the performance of the touring Ballet Russe, staged by the designer Leon Bakst with fantastic sets and exotic costumes. Finally, we know Violetta and her father attended an exhibition of Japanese modern art at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City. Orientalism, still in vogue in the States at the time, is the common thread of these experiences and proved to be the informing influence on the impressionable imagination and burgeoning creativity of the child artist.

Other self-taught luminaries included are: Minnie Evans whom God came to in a dream and said "draw or die"; Leroy Person who carved designs in any wood that he could find; Bill Traylor who drew memories from rural life in Alabama; Lonnie Holley whose poetic vocabulary in transforming found objects is legendary; Tyyne Esko from Finland, whose politics and love of nature are revealed through her poetic sensibility; Thornton Dial whose coupling of figures and animals is always sensitive yet powerful; Louis Monza whose mastery of a variety of mediums is used to express his political and social beliefs; and Thomas Burleson whose inner struggles are transformed into brilliantly colored, complex puzzles.

Dates: 2 December – 10 January 2009

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