

# LORIE HAMERMESH

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Desire/Shame

September 7 – October 2, 2021

Gallery NAGA

67 Newbury Street • Boston, MA 02116  
[www.gallerynaga.com](http://www.gallerynaga.com)



## ARTIST STATEMENT

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“The magic of all art is its ability to both capture our pain and deliver us from it at the same time.” – Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

In 2005, after my last Gallery NAGA show of layered mixed media paintings, I ran away from my art practice for almost ten years. The longer I stayed away the more averse I became to going to my studio. When I tried, I shot down my ideas before they could take form. By 2015, I gave myself the ultimatum...Either give up my studio or get back to making art.

I began taking printmaking classes to sidestep my resistance and to reconnect to art making through a new media. My printmaking teacher, Rhoda Rosenberg, asked me “Why don’t you buy your own etching press?” “You can do that?,” I responded. I knew that if I committed to such a major purchase, I would have to use it!

I went into therapy...again. This time to hopefully crack my cement artist block and discover what was paralyzing me. My therapist suggested making work to inform my therapy, with no intention of showing or selling it. The simple prints that followed revealed feelings of vulnerability, desire, and shame. I made print after print combining watercolor, carborundum, and drypoint. The recurring image was a young nude ingénue in poses of desire overlain with powerful line drawn hands. Were the hands protecting, hiding, violating, or silencing? These prints were shocking to me and I couldn’t talk about them. What was I afraid of—the fear of revealing something deeply personal, the fear of speaking about it, or the fear of actually knowing it?

Powerfully, through the process of making these prints, I simultaneously uncovered the painful feeling of shame and released myself from it.

This work is about being silenced, but it speaks in full volume.





*Me Too (1)* 2021 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 43 x 27.5"



*Desire/Shame* 2021 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 43 x 27"



## DESIRE/SHAME: MONOPRINTS BY LORIE HAMERMESH

Carol Daynard

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Lorie Hamermesh, after a fifteen-year hiatus, lays bare personal and universal emotions in an exhibit of recent masterful monoprints. Steeped in memory, her prints layer overlapping print medium and imagery, covering and revealing simultaneously. They evoke a sense of longing and melancholy facing shame...at last exposing what lies beneath.

The Renaissance artist, Masaccio, in his *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, depicts the original sin, when Adam and Eve become aware of their naked bodies. As they leave the garden in anguish, Eve covers her body with her hands, embarrassed of her sexuality, and thus, her need to conceal. Adam, although covering his eyes in shame, clearly feels no need to hide his nakedness.

The themes of budding desire, being halted by shame, permeate this body of work. The transparent layers of memory, however, give the work its mystery, both in acknowledging and revealing conflicting emotions. The viewer feels the anguish in Hamermesh's documentation of trauma and shame, as well as her voice of acceptance and resolve.

Hamermesh's palette is soft and muted, but her selective use of color charges her monoprints:

red—passion and fear; pink—the female trope, youth and innocence; and black—physicality and power.

What gives this body of work its edge is Hamermesh's striking use of hands, with their importance emphasized by their multiplicity as well as their positioning. The arresting hands disturb the vulnerable openness of the figures. Layers of *chine-collé* and line combine with sensual color washes anchor the work, but the uniqueness of these prints lies in the use of transparency as a metaphor for exposure.

In *Protect Me*, a polka dot dress contains within it a similar smaller dress. The arms and hands in contrast, rendered in black, attempt to cover and conceal what would be the sexualized body parts, challenging the viewer to imagine what lies beneath. Is it internal or external forces that are the source of intense threat?

In *Loss (1) & Loss (2)*, a child's white dress is partially hidden by dark moody veils of watercolor, expressing loss of innocence and perhaps, beauty. The dress, printed over *chine-collé* paper of fading roses or candy colored dots, conveys purity and the desire to remain a "good girl," while an inauspicious cloud spills a wash of sadness that tarnishes the innocence.

In *Juggling*, the menacing hands are wearing black gloves. They cover the naked body that is exposed to the viewer under a sheer dress. The ingénue is being prodded and silenced, but still manages to keep all of her twinkling balls spinning in the air overhead. Is she a victim of societal expectation or trauma?

Many of the dress images in Hamermesh's work are reminiscent of the coloring book/paper doll figures of her childhood. Hamermesh is the product of an era of sexual repression of the 1950s and economic and political disenfranchisement of the 1960s. A baby boomer, she came of age during the 60s when the second wave of feminism was just hitting its stride. Yet in art, the male gaze was ever present. Painting was dead, as was figuration. Abstraction and minimalism gave little voice to women artists, who were not taken seriously. Fast forward to today, with the #MeToo and the Time's Up movements that openly expose and confront sexual misconduct scandals, offering collective power for victims. It is the confluence of the political and the personal that imbues these prints with potency and force.

This exhibition of painterly monoprints reveals a woman who, over the years, has held fast to her truth, and now emerges timely and triumphant.

Hamermesh, for years as a painter, examined her world, both the domestic and the psychological. By moving to printmaking, she manages to allow the viewer to experience the evolution and resolution of her inner life. We can identify with her as a child, daughter, sister, wife, mother and most of all artist, who reveals as well as evokes the female condition, asserting it with beauty and inspiration.

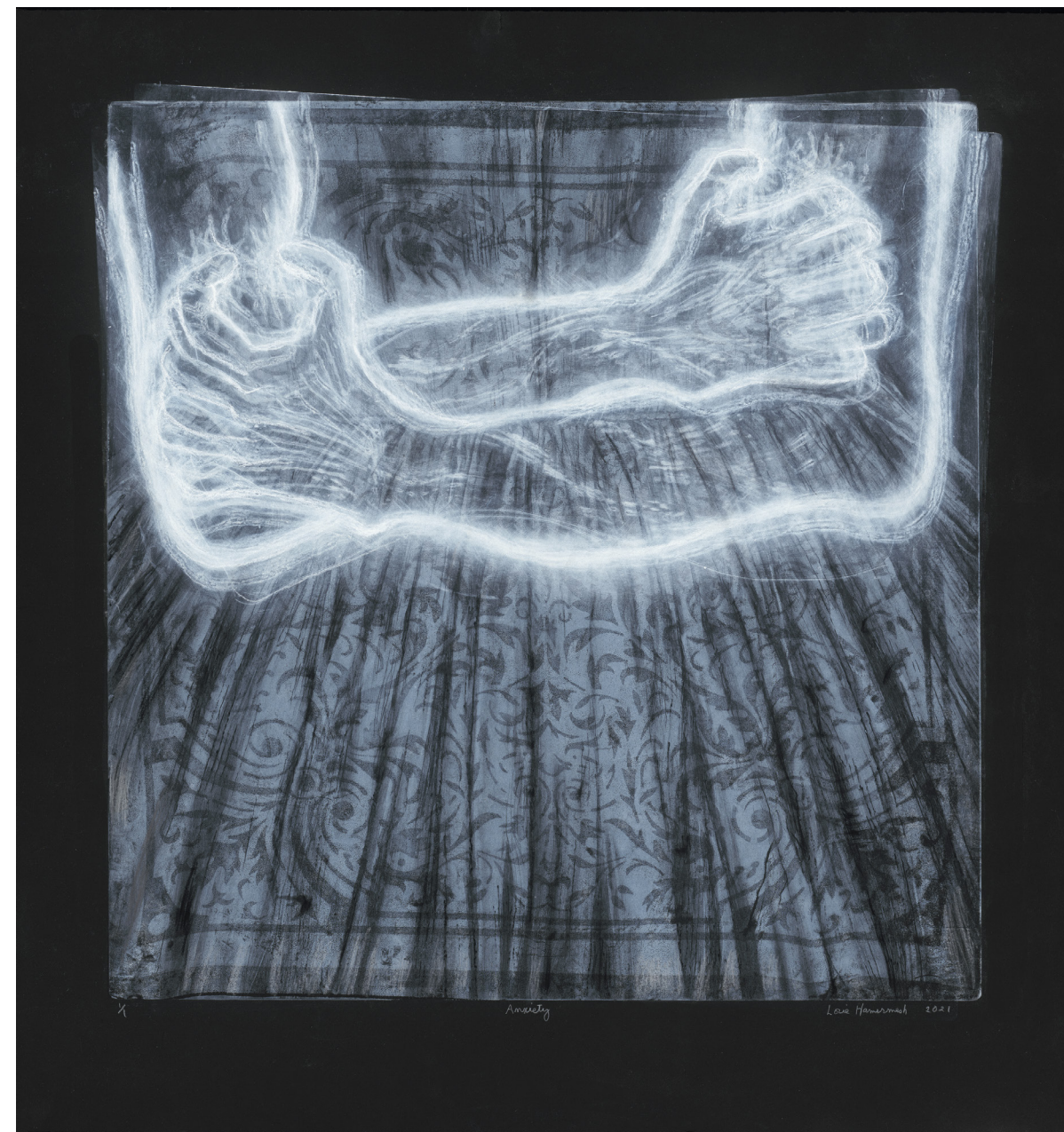
Her themes are universal struggles, not just personal ones. It is moving to see these works uncover vulnerability and find voice. These prints defy long held expectations and emerge courageous. Lorie Hamermesh has taken her time and she gives us the gift of her thoughtful process. No shame.

*Carol Daynard is a Boston-based artist and curator.*





Donny 2019 carborundum, watercolor 27 x 30.5"



Anxiety (2) 2020 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 30.5 x 29"





*Me Too (2)* 2018 chine-collé, carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 25 x 20"



*House On Fire (1)* 2018 watercolor, ink 25 x 20"



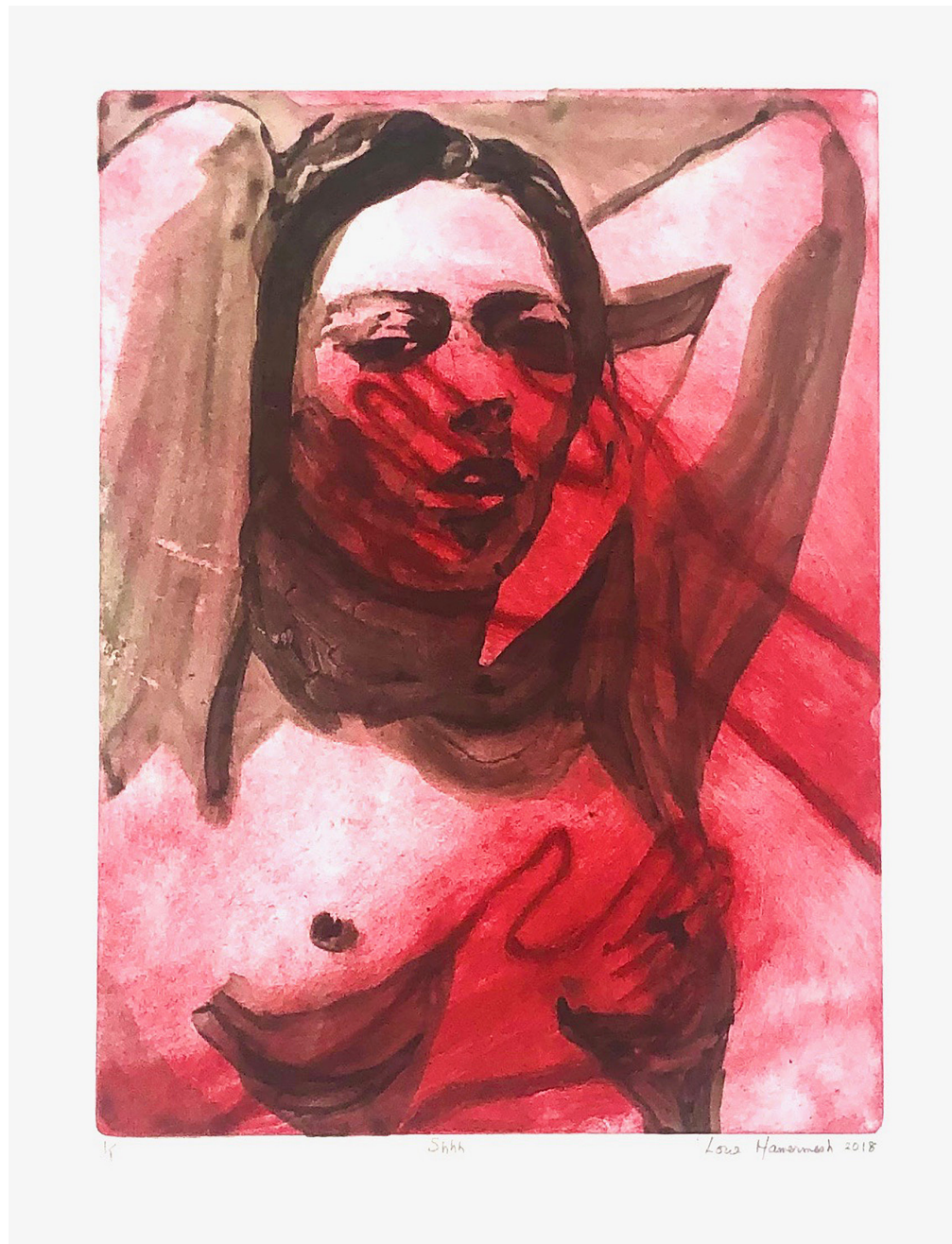


*Under Wraps* 2018 watercolor, drypoint 25 x 20"



*USA 2020* 2020 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 30.5 x 29"





*Shhh* 2018 carborundum, watercolor 25 x 19"




*House On Fire (2)* 2018 carborundum, watercolor, ink 25 x 20"

## DESIRE/SHAME: LAYERS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Cameron Barker

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 On viewing Lorie Hamermesh's recent monoprints, it becomes apparent how the themes of her work are enmeshed within the process in which they are created. The use of veils and layers has been ever present in her work, but this exhibition offers a profound clarity into vulnerability, stemming from Hamermesh's psychological exploration of self. Reflecting on her previous shows at Gallery NAGA, symbols of domestic unease and childhood innocence were there, but hidden, tucked away within heavy impasto, collage, or sheer fabric scrims. *Desire/Shame* uses the layering methods of monoprinting to confront these themes head on with unapologetic transparency.

The dichotomy of *Desire/Shame* resonates with Hamermesh's monoprint process: where painterly watercolor transfers collide with delicate *chine-collé*, finely incised drypoint marks, and boldly textured carborundum. In *Me Too (1) & (2)*, a figure in cool blue tones, perhaps deanonymizing the objectified nudes of Yves Klein, is offset by a black carborundum contour in the form of a dress with multiple arms and hands. The direct gaze of the figure imbues power, yet the hands introduce an internal/external struggle between protection

and exposure of the body. Hamermesh is not offering answers to trauma, but instead encourages conversation that explores visually, the complex ways trauma is brought to light.

Viewers may notice the same figures appearing in multiple works. Through repetition, Hamermesh positions and repositions the figure as individual and concept.

Historically, especially within western canon, the female nude has been used as symbol, rarely depicting an actual being. Hamermesh reorganizes this symbolism to show the lived consequences of objectification. *Shhh* introduces the figure found in *Me Too (1) & (2)*, but zoomed in on the upper half of the body. Her gaze is again direct but disrupted by burning red carborundum hands. This effect has been achieved by strategically underwiping the plate, resulting in a red aura forming around the line contour. The carborundum plate leaves a deep impression in the paper and consequently the figure. Signifiers of lasting touch are palpable and show Hamermesh's expertise in using mixed printing methods.

In recognizing common visual threads in the work, it is impressive to see the different intentions of each piece. Hamermesh transcends a multitude of ideas with repeated imagery. *Anxiety*

(1) & (2) and *USA 2020* share a common visual dialogue, yet express two very different themes. *Anxiety (2)* shows a floral dress bodice, resonating with topics of stolen innocence or girlhood, behind clutching arms, the plate is triple printed charging it with an anxious dissonance and vibration. The floral patterned dress can be seen through the arms, their transparency alluding to an X-ray or invasion. *USA 2020* has a similar composition, yet uses bold dripping red and white opaque stripes, reminiscent of the American flag, and expressing the collective national tension of 2020, a year of extreme hardships brought on by police brutality and racial injustice, a dishonest president who lead an attack on our democracy and a worldwide pandemic.

Most of Hamermesh's work can be considered figurative, but works such as *House on Fire (1) & (2)* and *Loss (1) & (2)* explore the absence of the figure. The dress is used in these pieces to morph with space, transcending both past and present. There is a dreamlike quality, where the components exist and fade into the grounds of the picture plane. The garment in *Loss (1) & (2)* is more of an absence than actual form, surrounded by a dense atmosphere created by the hand-made *chine-collé* paper and miasmic, watercolor

rain. *House on Fire (2)* uses the destructive element of the blaze as a connecting point between the floating specter of a dress and a distant burning home, a symbol broken from its associations of security and comfort.

Desire and shame: layers that find themselves both separate and unyieldingly pressed together in human experience. Lorie Hamermesh grants the viewer an opportunity to look into these complicated and sometimes painful themes with beauty and a sense of compassion. The work is a reminder that the swinging pendulum of opposing feelings may not have to be feared, but can be investigated and shared with generosity and open arms.

*Cameron Barker is a Boston-based artist and Post Grad Curatorial Fellow SMFA at Tufts University.*





Loss (1) 2019 chine-collé, watercolor 25 x 18"



Loss (2) 2019 chine-collé, watercolor 25 x 18"





*Louboutins* 2020 carborundum, watercolor 30 x 30.25"



*Inner Child* 2020 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 28 x 31.25"





*Protect Me* 2019 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 27 x 19.75"



*Juggling* 2019 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 37 x 28"



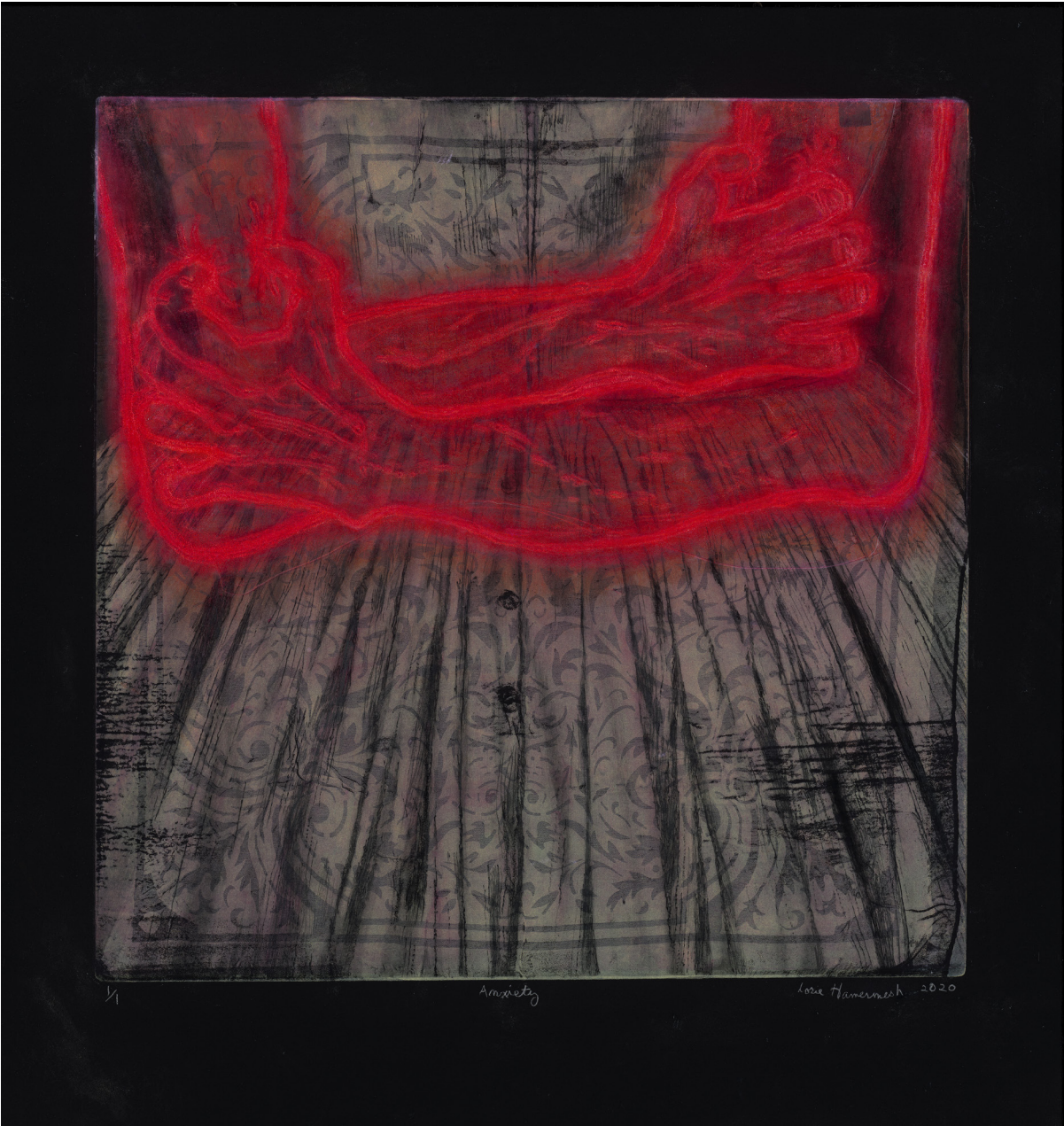


*Caged* 2018 chine-collé, carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 25 x 20"



*Silenced* 2018 chine collé, carborundum, watercolor 25 x 20"





Anxiety (1) 2020 carborundum, watercolor, drypoint 30.5 x 29"

# LORIE HAMERMESH

## Résumé

### ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 2021 “Desire/Shame”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 2004 “Enfold”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 1997 “Veiled Passions”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 1994 “Changing Light”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 1992 “Recent Work”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 1990 “Recent Work”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 1988 “Lorie Hamermesh”

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 2021 “Night Vision: Nocturnal Musings by NAGA Artists”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 2020 “Virtual Summer Camp: New Work by NAGA Artists”
- Tufts University** Aidekman Arts Center 2018 “Violence Transformed: Stand Together”
- Harriet Tubman House** Boston MA 2018 “The Artists Voice: Tell Your Story”
- deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum** Lincoln MA 2005 “Pretty Sweet: The Sentimental Image In Contemporary Art”
- Trinity Church** Boston MA 2005 “Trinity Inspires”
- Brattleboro Museum & Art Center** Brattleboro VT 2000 “Wingate Press: Twenty Years of Master Prints”
- deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum** Lincoln MA 2000 “Celebrating Contemporary Art in New England: Recent Acquisitions”
- New England School of Art and Design at Suffolk University** Boston MA 1999-2000 “Sleeping Beauty”
- Copley Place** Boston MA 1999 “Cardigan Project”

- New Art Center** Newtonville MA 1999 “What Jack Built”
- Starr Gallery, Leventhal-Sidman JCC** Newton MA 1998 “Women Whose Lives Span the Century”
- Miller/Block Fine Art** Boston MA 1995 “Art of Women Helping Women”
- Four Seasons Hotel** Boston MA 1995 “Art in Bristol” Curator: Liz Harris
- Grossman Gallery, School of the Museum of Fine Arts** Boston MA 1994 “Woman’s Caucus for Art Boston Chapter” Juror: Deborah Muirhead
- Miller/Block Fine Art** Boston MA 1992 “Gifts of Compassion”
- Fitchburg Art Museum** Fitchburg MA 1991 “The Mind’s Eye: Fantasy, Dream, and the Imagination”
- Fuller Museum of Art** Brockton MA 1991 “Interiors—Museum School Faculty”
- Howard Yezerski Gallery** Boston MA 1990 “In Spirit”
- Fuller Museum of Art** Brockton MA 1990 “Boston 1990: The Sixth Triennial Exhibition”
- Starr Gallery, Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center** Newton MA 1988 “Hanukkah Windows”
- Gallery NAGA** Boston MA 1988 “Paintings”
- Newton Arts Center** Newtonville MA 1988 “Newton’s Own: The Newton Arts Center Celebrates the Triennial”
- Museum of Fine Arts** Boston MA 1986 “Annual Traveling Scholars Exhibition”
- Boston Center for the Arts, Cyclorama** Boston MA 1986 “School of the Museum of Fine Arts Fifth Year Exhibition”
- Clark Gallery** Lincoln MA 1984 “Local Color”

(continued)



AWARDS

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA  
1986 Fifth Year Traveling Fellowship

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA  
1986 Dana Pond Award

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA  
1984 Boit Competition Award

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Maverick Arts Magazine, Charles Giuliano, “DeCordova  
Winter Show Exorcises the Blues” January 2005

Boston Globe, Cate McQuaid, “Muddying The Waters”  
April 2004

Maverick Arts Magazine, Charles Giuliano, “Boston Gallery  
Hopping” April 2004

Art In America, Ann Wilson Loyd, “ Lorie Hamermesh at  
Gallery NAGA” April 2004

Boston Globe, Cate McQuaid, “Highlights of Year’s Shows  
Recall Myriad Artistic Voices” December 28, 2000

Boston Globe, Cate McQuaid, “Wielding The Heady Powers  
of the Veil” October 26, 2000

Beacon Hill/Back Bay Chronicle, “Layers of Truth/Veils  
of Intimacy” September 26, 2000

New American Painting Northeast, Issue #14 1998

Art New England, Shirley Jacks, “Starr Gallery, Leven-  
thal-Sidman Jewish Community Center/Newton,”  
August/September 1998

Boston Globe, Nancy Stapen, “Where Newbury Street  
meets Pine Street,” May 25,1995

Boston Globe, Nancy Stapen, “Hamermesh’s Nice Girls,”  
October 20, 1994

Bay Windows, Tom Grabosky, “Not Being There,” February  
13, 1992

The Tab, “Personal Art Works,” February 4, 1992

Boston Phoenix, Rebecca Nemser, “Shock of the New:  
The Sixth Fuller Triennial Goes for the Untested,”  
December 1990

Art New England, Miles Unger, “Lorie Hamermesh: Life  
Studies,” April 1990

Boston Herald, Nancy Stapen, “Hamermesh Draws on  
Gender, Society Roles,” February 16, 1990

Boston Globe, Mary Sherman, “Lorie Hamermesh: Recent  
Work at Gallery NAGA,” February 15, 1990

Bay Windows, Tom Grabosky, “Lorie Hamermesh: Recent  
Work,” February 8, 1990

Boston Globe, Christine Temin, “Exhibits: Newton’s Finest,”  
June 9, 1988

Art New England, Meredith Fife Day, “Newbury Street,”  
May 1988

Bay Windows, Tom Grabosky, “Where We All Live,”  
February 25, 1988

Boston Magazine, David Rosenbaum, “88 Faces to Watch  
in ’88,” January 1988

Century Newspapers, Meredith Fife Day, “Traveling Scholars  
at SMFA,” June 12, 1986

EDUCATION

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA  
1986 Fifth Year Certificate

Painting School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA  
1985 Diploma, Painting

University of California, Berkeley CA  
1970 BA, Painting

CREDITS

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LORIE HAMERMESH