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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Laurie Simmons
27 April – 30 June 2006

Sperone Westwater is pleased to announce an exhibition of new and historical works by Laurie Simmons. Several works from the artist's recent series "The Boxes (Ardis Vinklers)" will be on view alongside early works that inspired the artist's debut film "The Music of Regret."

Named for Ardis Vinklers, a Latvian artist, and his three lightboxes, which Simmons discovered at an antique fair, the new series continues the artist's ongoing project of staging scenes for her camera with various figures inside constructed environments. Simmons was immediately attracted to these assemblage compositions and the opportunities they presented in terms of space and light. Combining Vinklers' original tableaux of a ballroom, a library, and an art gallery with her own aesthetic, Simmons placed figures inside the furnished rooms, using various magazine cut-outs of glamorous women and one male doll to create imaginary narratives. The scenes are simultaneously seductive and disturbing, evocative and unknown, as the figures do not interact with one another and the result is a deep sense of dislocation and isolation. She also photographed the boxes on their own, empty of her characters, creating silent and austere architectural portraits, studies in light and shadow.

In "Magnum Opus II (the Bye-Bye)," the finale of her series *Walking and Lying Objects* (1987-1991), Simmons lined up several of the objects on legs in a row on a mirrored surface. Symbols of domesticity (a toilet, a house), temporality (a clock, an hourglass), and perception (a camera, microscope, and globe) appear to be taking a bow as their reflections loom large, lending a sinister quality to these everyday objects. This image, along with the individual objects from the series, was the inspiration for Act III of the film, in which dancers bring the parts of the cake, house, book, gun, and pocket watch to life and perform for an unseen director in the ultimate audition. According to Kate Linker, "Magnum Opus" can be read as an allegory for photography itself as an "art of illusory surfaces that calls into question our carefully constructed categories—fact and fiction, reality and illusion, subject and object." Two new photographs of the dancers wearing the large objects as costumes are also on view.

A large-scale photograph entitled "The Music of Regret IV," is the culmination of the artist's work with ventriloquist dummies. A female dummy, created to resemble Simmons herself, sits surrounded by six male dummies who gaze at her with admiration. The artist identifies this series as the first pictures she ever made about love and notes that their "cornball musical theater ambience" made it easier for her to deal with the subject matter. This photograph inspired Act II of the movie; as the male dummies sing to her and she basks in the glow of their undivided attention, the female dummy slowly becomes a real woman (played by Meryl Streep). A photograph of Ms. Streep in character as the female dummy will also be on view.

"The Music of Regret," the artist's first film, is a mini-musical in three acts referencing three distinct periods of her work. "The Music of Regret", commissioned by Salon 94 and co-produced with PERFORMA, will premiere at The Museum of Modern Art on 24 May 2006 with two screenings. A third screening will take place on 29 May 2006.

Born on Long Island, New York in 1949, Simmons lives and works in New York City. Since her first solo show at Artists Space in 1979, Simmons has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and abroad. In 1997, the Baltimore Museum of Art organized a twenty-year retrospective of her work, entitled *The Music of Regret*, which included 150 photographs. Simmons was the recipient of the 2005 Roy Lichtenstein Residency in Visual Arts at The American Academy in Rome. The artist's major monograph, "Laurie Simmons: Walking, Talking, Lying," was published by Aperture in the fall of 2005.

There will be an opening reception for the artist on 27 April from 6-8 pm. For more information as well as photographic images, please contact Molly Epstein at Sperone Westwater at (212) 999-7337, or info@speronewestwater.com. Also please find further documentation on our website: www.speronewestwater.com.