

Hannah STARKEY

April 23- June 20, 2009

Gallery two

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Hannah Starkey. Comprised of new large and small-scale photographs, Starkey's second solo show with the gallery continues her investigation of the formal and psychological connections between the individual and the contemporary urban landscape. Collaborating with anonymous women who agree to be photographed, the work provides a particular exploration of this environment as seen and experienced from a female perspective. Within this conceptual framework, Starkey constructs exquisitely textured tableaux that resonate with quiet drama.

The architectural spaces that serve as backdrops in Starkey's photographs are varied, but the sleek, and often severe geometry of her settings stands in poignant contrast to the women who inhabit them. The way that Starkey frames her subjects in these environments enhances the psychological depth of her images, as she juxtaposes her enigmatic protagonists with the artifice of a complex constructed world. Starkey's new series of works place a particular emphasis on the dynamic visual effects of windows, glass facades, and vertical blinds, which formally divide the space, and layer depths of field. The women photographed in these new compositions are once more removed from the viewer, as they appear behind these reflective screens. This issue once again informs the relationship between the photographer and the subject, as the glass serves as both a physical and metaphorical barrier that extends the viewer. Further, in this new body of work, attention is given to haunting narrative conventions that appear almost as apparitions: in one work a fairy tale crescent moon shares the frame with a human subject who seems only absently aware of its presence. Elsewhere, a centaur is brought into the image from beyond the camera's gaze by way of a reflection in the window; the centaur appears to be gazing into the window as a young girl inside gazes out.

This theme is continued in a striking series of exceptional new smaller photographs taken over the past three summers on the streets of London and Berlin. More intimate in scale, Starkey engages with her subjects more directly and the vast divide between the photographer (and viewer) and the subject is breached, as one appears conscious of the other for the first time. Sunglasses, which the artist describes as allowing for a "different type of portraiture, one that blocks the consuming gaze of the camera and veils the returning one," are worn by each woman that Starkey shoots. The glasses are formally analogous to the screens, windows, blinds and shades that set the stage for the meditative female subjects in the larger-scale pieces, but they play a different role; instead of emphasizing vulnerability they seem to liberate their wearer. Starkey explains that in these images she wants to "break the hierarchy between the photographer and subject," exploring strengths instead of exploiting weaknesses.

More generally, this work portrays women that are under- represented or misrepresented within the media. Starkey intends for these new images to be an antidote to the one dimensional, highly sexualized, stereotypical portrayals of women used to sell commodities. By resisting this consuming gaze, the artist explores a viewing experience that encourages the viewer to look in a different way.

Living and working in London, recent exhibitions for Hannah Starkey include *Format09*, International Photography Festival, Derby, UK, 2009 (group); *M25: Around London*, Centre Cultural Andratx, Mallorca, Spain, 2008-2009 (group); *Something That I'll Never Really See, Contemporary Photography from the V&A*, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art, Norwich, UK, 2007 (group); *Jugend von Heute / The Youth of Today*, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany, 2006 (group); and *Whisper Not! A Different Dimension of Seeing*, Huis Marseille, Amsterdam, 2006 (group); among others.

For further information please feel free to contact the gallery at mail@tanyabonakdargallery.com or 212-414-4144.