



CINDY SHERMAN

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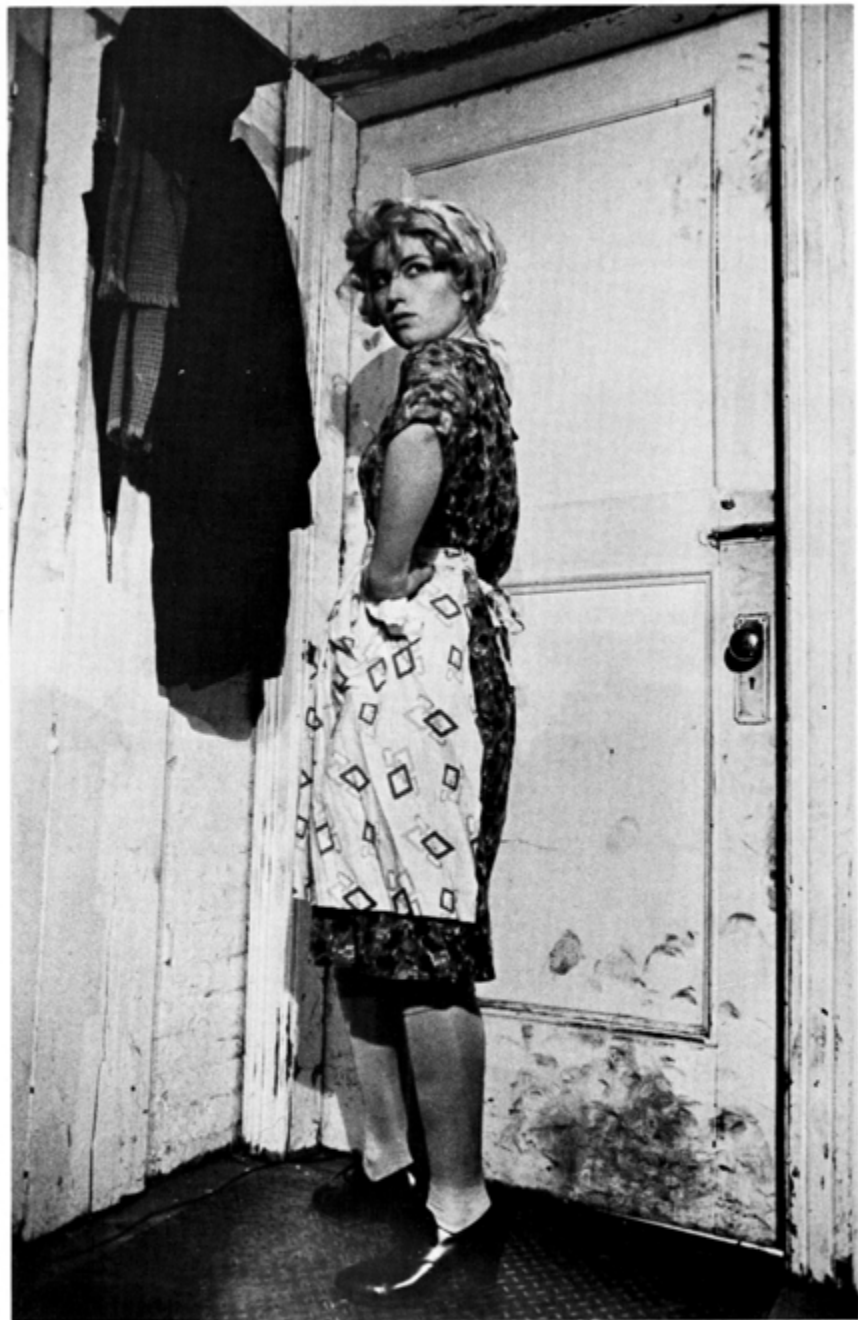
OCTOBER 1 - NOVEMBER 2, 1983

ART GALLERY, FINE ARTS CENTER
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK



NOVEMBER 9 - DECEMBER 16, 1983

ZILKHA GALLERY, CENTER FOR THE ARTS
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT



UNTITLED FILM STILL #35, 1979

The exhibition is guest curated by Thom Thompson, a member of the Stony Brook Art Department professional staff and Art Gallery Advisory Committee.

The curator and artist would like to thank the following persons and gratefully acknowledge their help and cooperation in making this exhibit possible; Janelle Reiring, Helene Winer (Metro Pictures Gallery, New York), Jean Feinberg (Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University), Mrs. Werner Dannheiser, Mr. & Mrs. Carl Lobell, Mr. Martin Sklar, Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Schwartz, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hillman, Ms. Phyllis Rosen, Rhonda Cooper, and Stony Brook Fine Arts Center Staff.

Photographs courtesy of Metro Pictures, New York

Cover: UNTITLED #70, 1980

A CONVERSATION WITH CINDY SHERMAN

interview conducted and written by Thom Thompson

T.T. - When did you start taking photographs?

C.S. - Not until I got into college.

T.T. - Did you enter college as an art student?

C.S. - Yes. In fine arts as a painter. Later, when I wanted to transfer into photography, they wouldn't let me because it was too late. The Dean didn't think I was committed enough and wouldn't let me change. I wound up with a B.A. in art instead of a B.F.A.

T.T. - What were your paintings like?

C.S. - Super-realist. They were real boring. I would take a photograph and do a painting of it, straight. Or take parts of photographs and put them together in a composition. I never really had very much inspiration to do anything in painting outside of what the teachers' requirements were for different projects. I wouldn't go home and paint or have ideas for paintings outside of class. When I started to learn what was going on in contemporary painting, I really became confused. I couldn't think of any reason for me to paint. I knew it wasn't my medium. About the same time I started going to performances and hearing and seeing a lot of different things going on besides just static work. I really didn't know what to do. Photography just kind of fell into place through a class I had to take. It was an introductory course. That's when I started to develop ideas and was the basis for what I wanted to say.

T.T. - Did you study filmmaking or movies?

C.S. - Actually, at that time I was seeing a lot of experimental films. Buffalo has a pretty good media program; a lot of well-known filmmakers like Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad were up there teaching. I knew those people and worked with some of them. They invited up other people like Hollis Frampton and Michael Snow. I saw most of the films they were working on and so my introduction to film was really from the experimental avant-garde 60's and 70's. Later on I became more interested in nostalgic films. I would go to the local cinema or watch reruns on T.V.

T.T. - But you had no formal training in film or film history?

C.S. - No, not really. I had the opportunity to see a lot of different types of films while I was in Buffalo. The silent films really interested me because they told stories with just pictures. That's what I was initially doing with my series of untitled film stills. The silent films gave me inspiration *October* and *Potemkin*, for instance, are over dramatic, but the inspiration for me was how explicit they were.

T.T. - When did you decide to move to New York City?

C.S. - I decided to stay an extra year in Buffalo because I was involved in an alternative space up there called Hallwalls. That was my real education in contemporary art. We invited people to come up from New York to have shows or give performances. After a while the energy started to change up there and the excitement died out. I

realized it was time to move down here. I resisted making the move to New York for a long time because I hoped it wasn't a necessary thing to do in order to start your career. Most people who live out of New York think that they are going to stay where they are to prove that you don't have to move to New York for your art career. I resisted the move because I had the same feelings.

T. T. - What was it like when you came to New York City?

C.S. - The first year was really awful. The first summer I was just so intimidated by the city I was afraid to leave the house. It had a lot to do with just growing up. It was a totally different way of getting by from day to day compared to living in someplace like Buffalo. The structure of a day, for instance, is so different; the way you just have to deal with walking down the street or the public transportation, and the hassles from all the people in the street. It was very hard to get used to. It took me about a year to sort everything out.

T. T. - When did you begin to show work in the City?

C.S. - Shortly after I moved here, Doug Crimp did *That Picture Show* at Artists' Space on Hudson Street. It was the first time someone put together a show of artists doing media-oriented work. People like Sherry Levine, Robert Longo, Jack Goldstein, Troy Brauntuch, Philip Smith, and myself were together in this show. Robert Longo moved down here from Buffalo around the same time I did so we knew each other, and along with the others had the same sensibility about our work.

T. T. - How would you describe the characters you portrayed in your 1977 and 1978 work *Untitled Film Stills*?

C.S. - I was thinking of general stereotypes. I would never have too much of a preconceived idea of what I wanted. A lot of it was intuitive. I was just drawing from my most general ideas of what I remembered women to be like when I was growing up. These were my role models. I was really looking for the most artificial looking kinds of women. Women that had cinched-in waists and pointed bras, lots of make-up, stiff hair, high heels, and things like that. To me that's what I hated about growing up. When I was an adolescent, those kinds of role models were awful to me. I wanted within that framework of character . . . I wanted to have something in the face that would make them seem more personable.

T. T. - When I look at some of the *Untitled Film Stills* I think I can pick out certain films, directors of films, or genre of film. Were you motivated by any of these specific elements?

C.S. - There were a few shots that I consciously focused in on. Like I wanted a young Brigitte Bardot or Sophia Loren or Monica Vitti type, but I rarely thought of a certain film. There were a few exceptions like the Sophia Loren character of a woman standing with an apron on by the door (*Untitled Film Still #35*, 1977). I was thinking of the film *Two Women*. In the film she played a character who was raped and physically disheveled and dirty. I wasn't physically imitating her but I was thinking of that character. I've seen most of the films that my characters appeared in but it was always more of the actress role rather than a director. The role of women always interested me in these films.



UNTITLED FILM STILL #15, 1978



UNTITLED #86, 1981





T.T. - In 1980 you began a series of still photos using the film technique of rear screen projections.

C.S. - Yes. That was when I was going into color. I had just finished all these black and white outdoor shots and there was something that wasn't working. I think it was the fact that I had gone through all of the stereotypes I could think of and I began repeating myself. The first thing I wanted to do was to try color. The second thing I wanted to do was work indoors. The outdoor locations were getting too complex. I didn't like lugging the equipment around and having someone else there to take the picture and dodging people on the street or waiting for everybody to clear out. I thought the slide projection would be a good solution, plus the fact that people like Hitchcock had used that appealed to me. I thought it would work pretty well. I tried some regular straight color shots about a year before that were not rear screen projections. I was doing some shooting out in Arizona where I had done a lot of the earlier black and whites. I put in a roll of color film by accident and shot it. When I got it back it looked too real. You could sense the photographer standing there and it had this real time element. The black and white work always gave me a sense of an old photograph from an old movie. I thought the rear screen would get rid of the real time aspect.

T.T. - Why don't you title your work?

C.C. - Because I want to leave it as open as possible to interpretation by the person looking at it. I don't want to influence someone's way of looking at it. For instance, the one that I described to you as being influenced by the film *Two Women* you saw as *A Streetcar Named Desire*. If I would have called it something, that would have been my interpretation — it would have ruined your interpretation. Maybe then you would have said, "That doesn't look at all like it's from *Two Women*." I just leave them untitled and use my own working title like "Women in Apron by the Door" for reference.

T.T. - Does it bother you if people misinterpret your work?

C.S. - It bothers me when the meaning is misinterpreted in a negative way. This has happened. I may think a photograph is successful in exposing sexism. Other people may think that I'm enforcing a sexist view of women. In some of the 1981 color work, the characters really look vulnerable. People think that I'm exploiting those kinds of characters when I'm not.

T.T. - You mentioned the vulnerability of the characters you portrayed. Your 1981 series seemed to focus in on that aspect.

C.S. - Yes. That series was actually a project for *Art Forum* magazine. There were certain guidelines I followed. I wanted to do a centerfold for that magazine and that's why the series is oriented in horizontal format. I wanted to do a centerfold that was really uncomfortable to look at. You would open it up expecting to be titillated and then feel uncomfortable looking at somebody in this vulnerable position.

T.T. - It seems as though you've been developing a body of work based upon a series from year to year.

C.S. - It seems as though that's how it happens. The 1982 series was all vertical format, with upright characters, stronger and very confrontational. Some of them are even threatening. After I do a certain body of work I listen to the feedback I get, whether it's from friends or criticism in published reviews. It seems to affect my thinking. I try to solve those problems that I start to see with the last group of work. I will set up projects for myself. I might want to get them more androgynous-looking, or masculine-looking, or whatever.

T.T. - What do you attribute your ability to portray these characters to?

C.S. - I don't know. I always thought that anybody could look like anything. It's just a matter of people choosing the way they want to look. Some people just aren't aware of the fact that they could really be someone else or act like someone else. Maybe I've just always wanted to be someone else.

T.T. - Is it difficult to get in and out of these characters?

C.S. - As soon as I stop looking in the mirror that's when I feel like myself again. With the mirror next to the camera, or while I'm making up, or whatever, that's when I'm most into the character. When it really works well it's really exciting. I really can't believe that the reflection is mine in the mirror. The weirdest time was when I did the Marilyn Monroe imitation. It was a commission to do a poster. It was so weird to look in the mirror because I had to hold my head a certain way. My profile wouldn't look like her, so I could only shoot it from one direction. When I held my head a certain way, it was so spooky, but then as soon as I resumed my own countenance, then I'd see myself. There is a flash when you see somebody else. That's what's really interesting.

T.T. - Your work suggests a lot of preplanning. Could you explain some of it?

C.S. - Well, it depends upon how far along I am in the series. If I'm just starting out, I'll experiment and try different things. I'll put a light up with a certain filter on it and place the [stand-in] mannequin in a certain position. I'll look over the scene and then stand in front of a mirror and look at myself in different positions until it finally snaps. That's how I get a sense of what I'm doing. I might be trying on some wigs and see a character I want to explore. It may be a costume I'm trying on or even a certain light or lighting situation. I may start from an emotion or mood. I may want a photograph to look real cold or hot and steamy. There is no one way — it's really a lot of different things. It's all really subliminal. I soak it in and then it's spit out through the work. I look through a lot of different magazines and watch T.V. all the time, but I don't look for specific characters. I guess my characters are a part of my imagination. I've done certain characters out of curiosity, just to see if I could look like this certain character, or how I would act if I made myself up to look a certain way. Mostly, it's just kind of arbitrary. Sometimes I don't know what the character is going to look like on the film. In my new work I'm not thinking about female characters or male characters. I'm trying to pick out some visual image to go along with all the other elements.



UNTITLED #98, 1982

CINDY SHERMAN

Born 1954, Glen Ridge, New Jersey. Lives in New York City. Attended State University College at Buffalo (B.A. 1976).

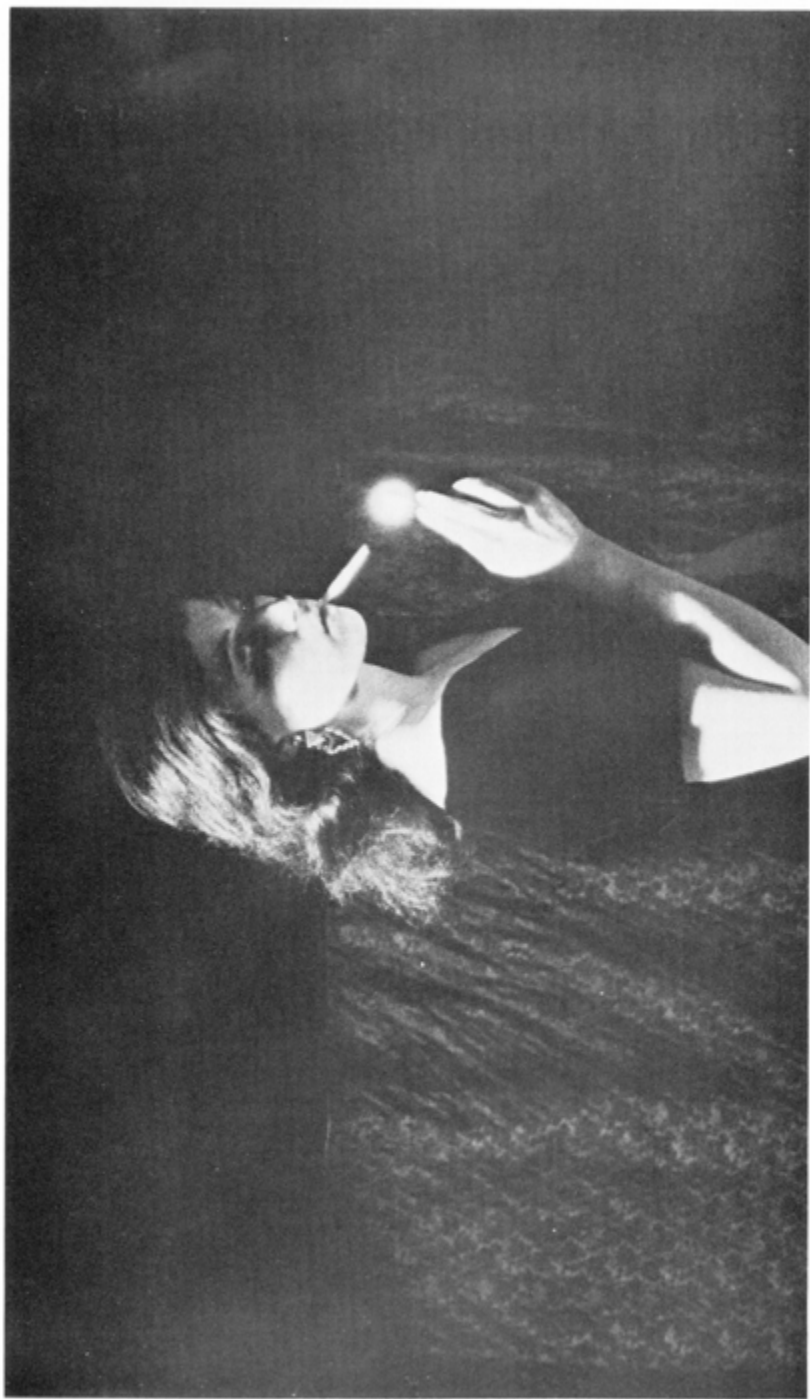
SELECTED ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 1976 Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York
- 1977 Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York
Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New York
- 1979 Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York
- 1980 Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston
The Kitchen, New York
Metro Pictures, New York
- 1981 Saman Gallery, Genoa
Metro Pictures, New York
Young/Hoffman Gallery, Chicago
- 1982 Texas Gallery, Houston
Chantal Crousel Gallery, Paris
Larry Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles
Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati
Metro Pictures, New York
The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
- 1983 Fay Gold Gallery, Atlanta
The St. Louis Art Museum
Galerie Schellmann & Kluser, Munich

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The work of Cindy Sherman is in the following museum collections:

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Albright/Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; The Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Akron Art Museum, Akron, Ohio; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Tate Gallery, London; Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University; Centre Pompidou, Beaubourg, Paris; The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



UNTITLED #32, 1979

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Entries are listed chronologically. All works are on loan courtesy of Metro Pictures Gallery, New York, unless otherwise noted.

Untitled Film Still #2, 1977
Untitled Film Still #3, 1977
Untitled Film Still #5, 1978
Untitled Film Still #7, 1978
Untitled Film Still #10, 1978
Untitled Film Still #11, 1978
Untitled Film Still #13, 1978
Untitled Film Still #15, 1978
Untitled Film Still #25, 1978
Untitled Film Still #32, 1979
Untitled Film Still #35, 1979
Untitled Film Still #44, 1979
Untitled Film Still #46, 1979
Untitled Film Still #48, 1979
Untitled Film Still #56, 1980
Untitled Film Still #63, 1980

Untitled #66, 1980
Untitled #67, 1980
Untitled #68, 1980
Untitled #69, 1980
Untitled #70, 1980
Untitled #76, 1980, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Schwartz
Untitled #80, 1980
Untitled #85, 1980

Untitled #86, 1981
Untitled #87, 1981, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Carl Lobell
Untitled #88, 1981, Courtesy Phyllis Rosen
Untitled #90, 1981
Untitled #91, 1981
Untitled #92, 1981, Courtesy Martin Sklar
Untitled #93, 1981
Untitled #94, 1981
Untitled #95, 1981
Untitled #96, 1981

Untitled #97, 1982, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hillman
Untitled #98, 1982, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hillman
Untitled #99, 1982, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hillman
Untitled #100, 1982, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hillman
Untitled #102, 1981
Untitled #104, 1982
Untitled #107, 1982
Untitled #108, 1982
Untitled #109, 1982
Untitled #113, 1982, Courtesy Mrs. Werner Dannheiser
Untitled #115, 1982, Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Schwartz
Untitled #116, 1982
Untitled Marilyn, 1982 (Poster image for "Marilyn" opera)



art gallery

PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS AT THE ART GALLERY

- 1975** FACULTY EXHIBITION
- 1976** MICHELLE STUART
RECENT DRAWINGS (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITION)
SALVATORE ROMANO
- 1977** MEL PEKARSKY
JUDITH BERNSTEIN
HERBERT BAYER (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITION)
- 1978** LEON GOLUB
WOMEN ARTISTS FROM NEW YORK
JANET FISH
ROSEMARY MAYER
THE SISTER CHAPEL
- 1979** SHIRLEY GORELICK
ALAN SONFIST
HOWARDENA PINDELL
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
- 1980** BENNY ANDREWS
ALEX KATZ
EIGHT FROM NEW YORK
ARTISTS FROM QUEENS
OTTO PIENE
STONY BROOK 11. THE STUDIO FACULTY
- 1981** ALICE NEEL
55 MERCER: 10 SCULPTORS
JOHN LITTLE
IRA JOEL HABER
LEON POLK SMITH
- 1982** FOUR SCULPTORS
CECILE ABISH
JACK YOUNGERMAN
ALAN SHIELDS
THE STONY BROOK ALUMNI INVITATIONAL
ANN McCOY
- 1983** THE WAR SHOW
CERAMIC DIRECTIONS: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW

Director RHONDA COOPER

