

girls girls girls

January 13 –
 February 24, 2011

Jenkins Johnson Gallery

Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm



Beth Hoeckel, *Volcano at Night*, 2010, photographic collage, 30 x 20 inches, edition of 6



Danelle Manthey, *Mannequin*, 2010, digital c-print, 24 x 36 inches, edition of X

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to announce a group exhibition of multimedia works featuring images of women and girls by artists including Ryan Bradley, Caleb Cole, Dru Donovan, Emile Hyperion Dubuisson, Maggy Rozycki Hiltner, Beth Hoeckel, Conor King, Carey Kirkella, Danelle Manthey, Pamela Murphy, Vanessa Prager, and Clare Stigliani. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, January 13 from 6 to 8 pm.

Art history and the art world have always been dedicated to depictions of women. The *Venus of Willendorf*, frequently considered to be the first piece of art, is a fertility figure of a woman created between 24,000 and 22,000 BC; goddesses were frequently sculpted by the Greeks, and Egyptians artistically honored their female pharaohs equally to the males. Renaissance artists were preoccupied with female subjects, and Impressionists painted women along with their waterlilies. Picasso and Matisse had their lovers for subjects – Abstract Expressionists even painted women. Contemporary artists are of course equally dedicated to depicting women in their works. The twelve artists included in *Girls Girls Girls* all have a predilection for featuring females in their works as well.

Because women are consistently a staple subject in the art world, they are always a topic of discussion as well. In the 1970s, John Berger wrote the seminal book *Ways of Seeing* in which he broadly discusses art history, but devotes a section to how women were and are portrayed within both “high art” and “commercial art,” writing, “Men dream of women. Women dream of themselves being dreamt of. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at...Women constantly meet glances which act like mirrors...” Berger also discusses the intent of the artist, giving female subjects and the artists who portrayed them a more active role in the viewing process; contemporary artists, like those featured in this exhibition, have largely removed the voyeuristic aspect of depicting women. The artworks featured in this exhibition are a revisionary look at these antiquated, marginalizing viewpoints. The artists included, while often showing how beautiful their subjects may be, remove them from their sexualized, voyeuristic capacity, focusing on telling their stories or commenting on other pertinent social and artistic topics, which may or may not be associated with femininity and womanhood.

For example, Beth Hoeckel’s collages strive to blend seemingly ordinary people with extraordinary settings and landscapes, often beyond the realm of imagination; in “*Volcano at Night*,” we observe three faceless women peering into an abyss from which red lava and purple smoke emit, a clearly fabricated though undeniably engrossing image. Hoeckel’s figures’ faces remain obscure, giving the viewer the opportunity to question the environments depicted and to assign their own feelings to the situation rather than to gaze lustily on the subjects, as often was the case in the past with faceless figures. Similarly, in Danelle Manthey’s *Mannequin* series, the photographer uses a young girl mannequin to stand in for anyone who has ever felt isolated; Manthey’s works do not necessarily revolve around the figure as female but rather as a neutral body on whom the viewer can reflect, as loneliness and isolation are experiences dealt with varyingly. The resulting images feature saturated, rich colors and yet are undeniably haunting and eerie. Caleb Cole’s photographs from the *Odd One Out* series also focus on this sense of loneliness, isolating one awkward, singular figure from the crowd; regardless of the figure’s sex, we can all empathize with that distinct disconnected feeling.

In a different vein, Maggy Rozycki Hiltner’s mixed media fabric pieces, like *Pink Cloud*, take their female figures out of their traditional “good girl” roles and turn expectations upside-down; *Pink Cloud*’s figures at first seem to be idealized little girls, but with further investigation we see them biting their playmates, trying to steal kisses, and pouting in the corner, behavior that questions the accepted ideals of feminine childhood behavior. The work imbues a sense of lavish overindulgence, like the cloyingly sweet smell of icing at a birthday party, and Rozycki Hiltner frequently uses imagery of baked goods and flowers in her work to give a false sense of sweetness. Claire Stigliani’s fascinating drawings and paintings, sometimes embellished with hair or glitter, also feature women as an effort to delve into ideas of femininity and beauty. As she explains, her works “play on the passive predicament of the heroine, appropriating patriarchal narrative structures and remaking them as vehicles of female empowerment. Wealth, youth, sex, and beauty represent the traditional requirements for the realization of dreams, but they equally represent the source of feminine psychological confinement and isolation.”

The works included in *Girls Girls Girls* all highlight how the depiction of women in art has progressed from sexualized, *Venus de Milo* works to become a powerful commentary on the arts and society at large. Whether the female figures depicted serve to represent social milieu, as in Manthey’s or Hoeckel’s work, or are purely documentary, as in Kirkella’s and King’s photographs, or serve to critique the stereotype of femininity and womanhood, like Rozycki Hiltner’s or Stigliani’s work, it has certainly transcended being purely a source of visual gratification.



Maggy Rozycki Hiltner, *Pink Cloud*, 2006, hand-stitched cotton and found textiles, approximately 5 x 13 feet