

galerie bertrand & gruner

PRESS RELEASE

CYNTHIA WESTWOOD
"BATHROOM"



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Cynthia Westwood

“Bathroom”

February 21 – April 7, 2008

Born 1969 in Texas (USA), Cynthia Westwood lives and works in London.

She took part in “All the More Real: Portrayals of Intimacy and Empathy,” a 2007 show mounted by the Parrish Museum of New York. Offering a reflection on the nature of art and the evocative power of the image, the exhibition explores the themes of the body, birth, childhood and intimacy through the eyes of artists as fundamental as Egon Schiele, Lucien Freud and Cindy Sherman.

In the same year galerie bertrand & gruner featured Westwood's work in a group show called “In your Face” devoted to portraiture. “Bathroom” will be the artist's first solo show. An extensively illustrated catalogue will be available.

Cynthia Westwood paints like a man but she does not see or feel like one. She paints what men like to look at but she does not want or need the same things from it. She does not need the way men need. Westwood paints women, young, naked and alone (not lonely), in a place normally considered private; the bathroom. She exposes us to this privacy though her women do not feel exposed by our presence. Her work can be added to the long list of artists who have worked within the historical genre of women observed at their “toilette”. This has been a genre almost entirely the domain of the male gaze. Her incursion into this territory is bold, confident and disarming.

Like the bath paintings of Bonnard, she places her subjects in a bath, poses them submerged, inundated, and still. They press against the edges of the canvas as well as the cool walls of tile and enameled iron. Unlike the bath paintings of Bonnard, in which light and color clash with his emotions to subvert beauty, Westwood confidently separates the need to possess from the experience of the corpulent bodies of her young models. Though the women avert their eyes, allowing the artist (and thus the viewer) uninhibited access to see, to gaze, upon their bodies, Westwood does not give us (men) what we want, need or have come to expect; accessibility. She does not open up her women to intrusion nor does she set up the male audience to be caught with their pants down. There is no trap here. There is flesh, there is beauty, there is intimacy but there is not the sexual exchange. She presents us, in her most uninflected way, with a celebration of cleansing.

Her paintings of women can best be described as secular icons of purity.

Eric Fischl
Artist and co-curator of « All the More Real »

galerie bertrand & gruner
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Tuesday - Friday: 15h - 19h
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