

A painting of a woman's face, rendered in a style reminiscent of Frida Kahlo. She has long, dark hair and is wearing a crown of white daisies with yellow centers. Her eyes are closed, and her lips are painted a deep red. The background is a dark, textured red. The overall style is expressive and uses thick brushstrokes.

(Re)Fashioning The Gaze

Jennifer Louise Martin

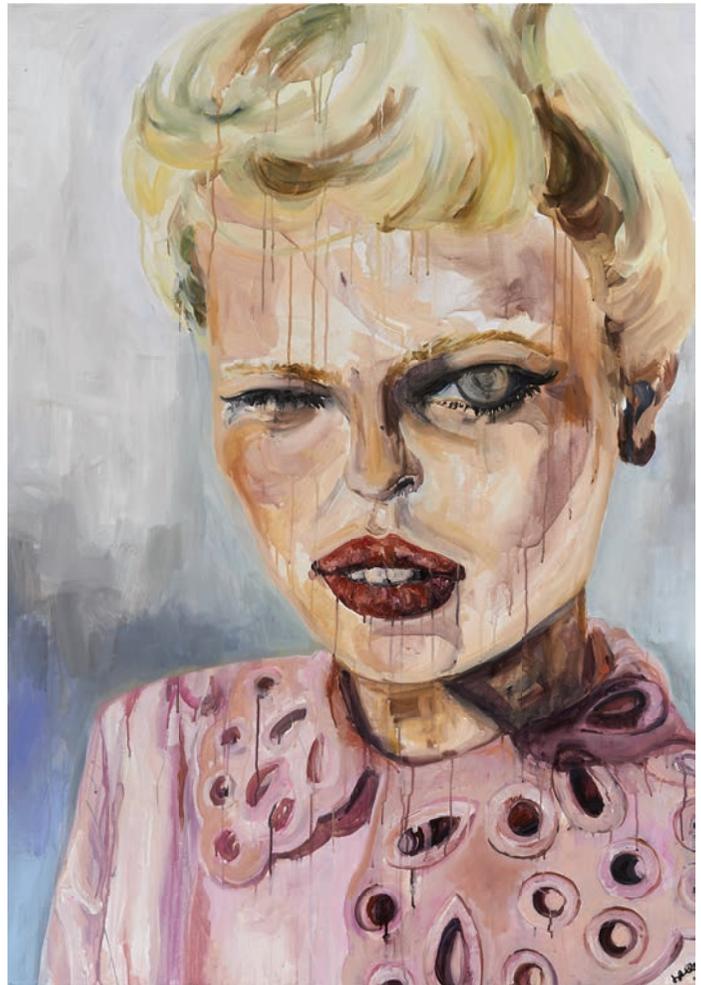
Perfectionism. It does not exist in reality but  
does in our psyche, our minds, and yet also  
in ~~our~~ the dictionary. But no matter how  
many times one hears that being perfect is a  
perception of the mind it has the tendency  
to intrude on our existence. The cognitions  
I am able to catch during painting are of  
abundance. But now the neck is too wide  
and she looks far too orange, but she is  
orange in the picture. Add a little more flesh  
tone and that will balance out the palette.  
Nearly. Just a little more red. No, no, no not  
that much. Anger, frustration. Stop. Start.  
Disappointment. Argue with oneself. Wipe  
away the vile brushstroke that has adorned  
the canvas. How can something so small make  
me feel like a failure. It's not failure, it's  
imperfect. Same thing? Debatable. Hate that dog  
it is dipping too low. Even now the aesthetic  
of my handwriting bothers me. Does it usually  
look exciting enough. Can you read it? Do I  
want you to read it? I am a painter, not a  
writer - but who says. Jack of all trades,  
master of none. I hope to be the master of many  
but now her left eye is smaller than the  
right. Leave it. Come back tomorrow. Addict  
to keep on going: One hour, two hours, three.  
Nostalgia. Hate them. So small but so complex

# (Re)Fashioning The Gaze

An exhibition of new works by Jennifer Louise Martin

Exhibition from 23rd – 28th April 2013 at the Strand Gallery,  
then 29th April – 19th May 2013 at the Oaktree & Tiger Gallery.

Private View at 6-9pm, on 23rd April 2013 in the Strand Gallery.



The Strand Gallery  
32 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6BP  
Opening Hours: 11am – 6pm

Oaktree & Tiger Gallery  
South Kensington  
London  
By appointment only.

For more details email us at [info@oaktreeandtiger.com](mailto:info@oaktreeandtiger.com)

A selection of paintings, and more, may be viewed on the website  
[www.oaktreeandtiger.com](http://www.oaktreeandtiger.com)

# (Re)Fashioning the Gaze

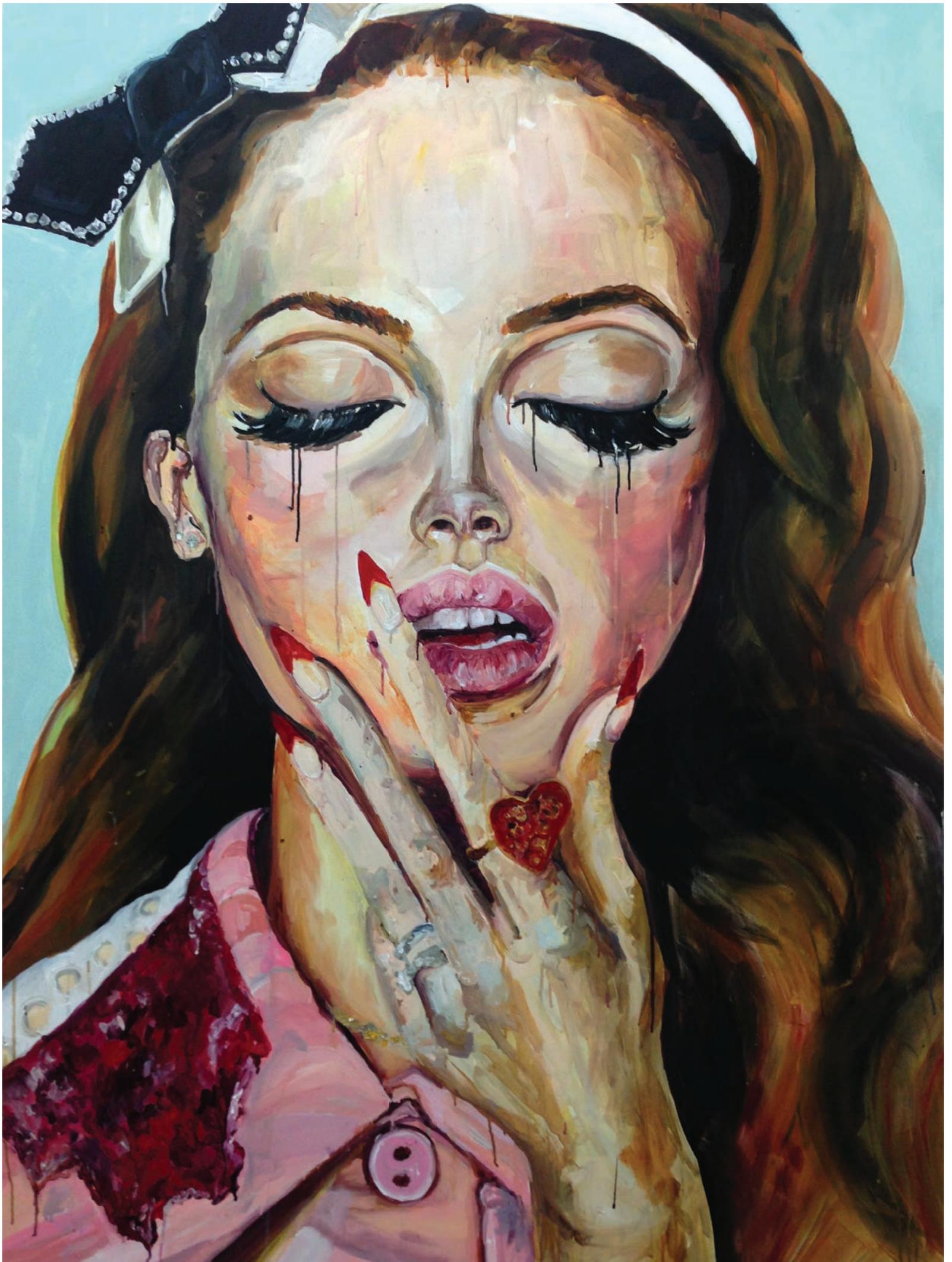
Stripped of all conceptual depth, to gaze is simply to look, to view with fixed attention. But to deny the intention and reception of this action is to deny the force of its implications — its power to subjugate and objectify its subject. To comprehend or make real it is necessary to gaze, and in doing so we shape our surroundings.

Through her work the artist Jennifer Louise Martin examines the concept of the gaze and its implications in the world of fashion. Humanity has both commodified and consecrated the ideal of the perfected physical specimen, but to what end? In light of this question, Oaktree & Tiger is pleased to present Martin's first solo exhibition in London, which invites the audience to examine the status quo of the fashion world — its idyllic beauties with pixel perfect pores, perpetuating a mnemonic gloss in our mind's eye — through the context of the gaze.

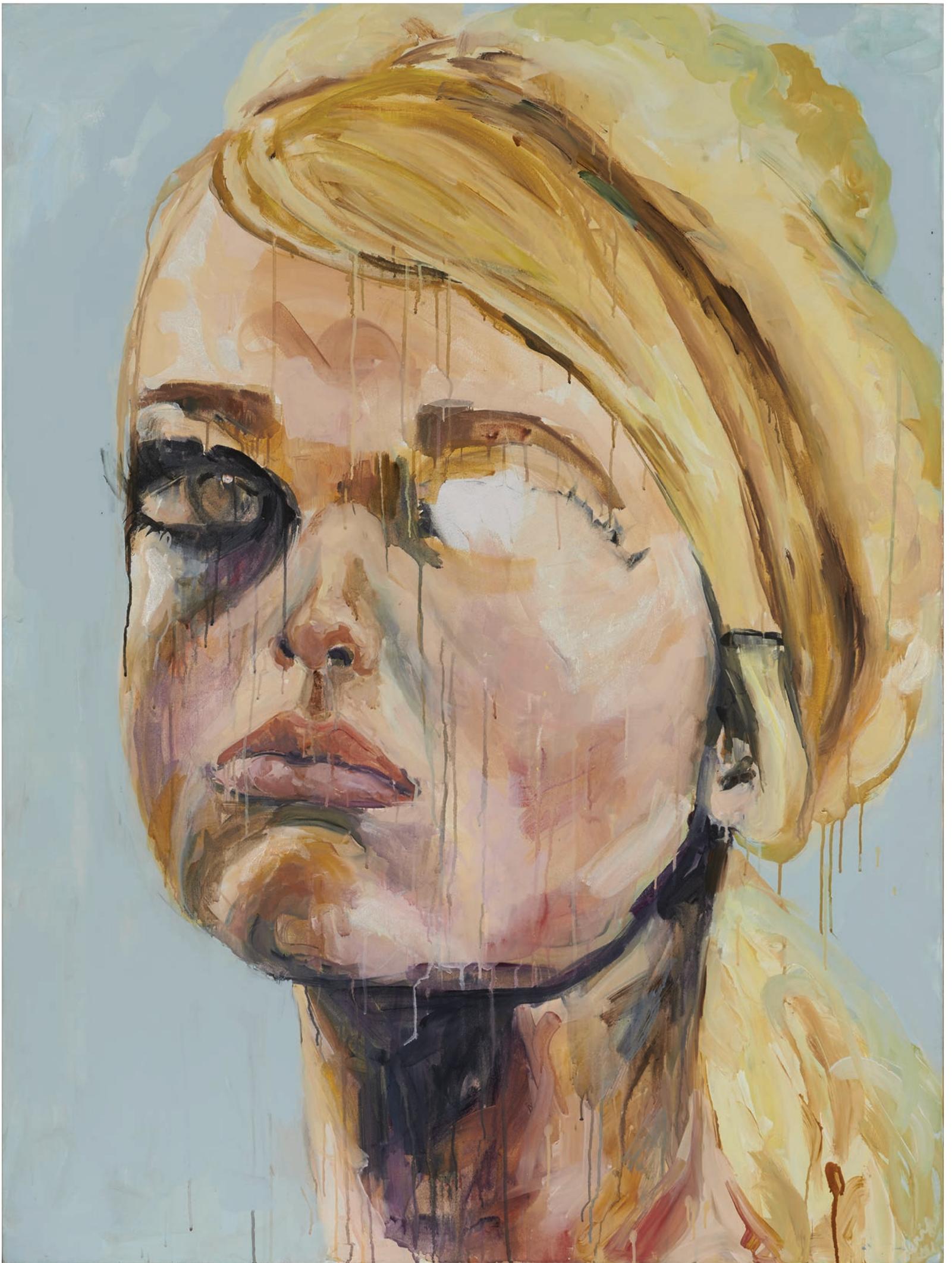
Martin's exposé questions the predicament that the gaze imposes on both the practitioners of fashion and those inundated and often blighted by the unattainable image of perfection. While graphic designers often strive to master presentability through digital manipulation, Martin's professed aim is to explore the emotional and often gritty components of fashion modeling. This itinerary is demonstrated through works such as *Paralyzed by Perfection I* where the gaze of both the supermodel *du jour*, Daphne Groenevelde, and the viewer is obstructed through the purposeful vacancy of the supermodel's left eye. Daphne is featured elsewhere in the exhibition. *Daphne I*, for example, showcases a total absence of vision, where our observation deviates away from the reciprocal norm that we experience with everyday portraiture. The viewer is forced to imagine the model's ocular presence. In other instances, the disproportionate features of the sitter intentionally overemphasize ideal characteristics of beauty. *Sublime Light* straddles the boundary between idealized beauty/perfection and deformity. Martin's muses are drawn into a state of emotional and mental imperfection by the artist who laces her subjects with a consternation inspired by her education in psychology. Lacan defines the gaze as the anxious state that comes with the knowledge that one is viewed or being viewed. Martin combines the prosaicism of the gaze with the weight of its psychoanalytic presence. As an abstract academic concept, the gaze is endlessly packaged and repackaged; fashioned and refashioned, but the powerful reality of its effect remains a constant force.

With her diverse range of half and quarter length portraits on show, Martin re-evaluates the traditional veneration of female models. The viewer is inspired to see deeper and the models to conceal less. Beauty is wrought as a burden, not a pinnacle, a difficulty, not an achievement. With each brushstroke the models features are built up, only to be broken down. From deconstruction, a new way of looking, and thus understanding, is revealed, where the drive for timeless beauty struggles against the hand of the artist and the gaze of the viewer.

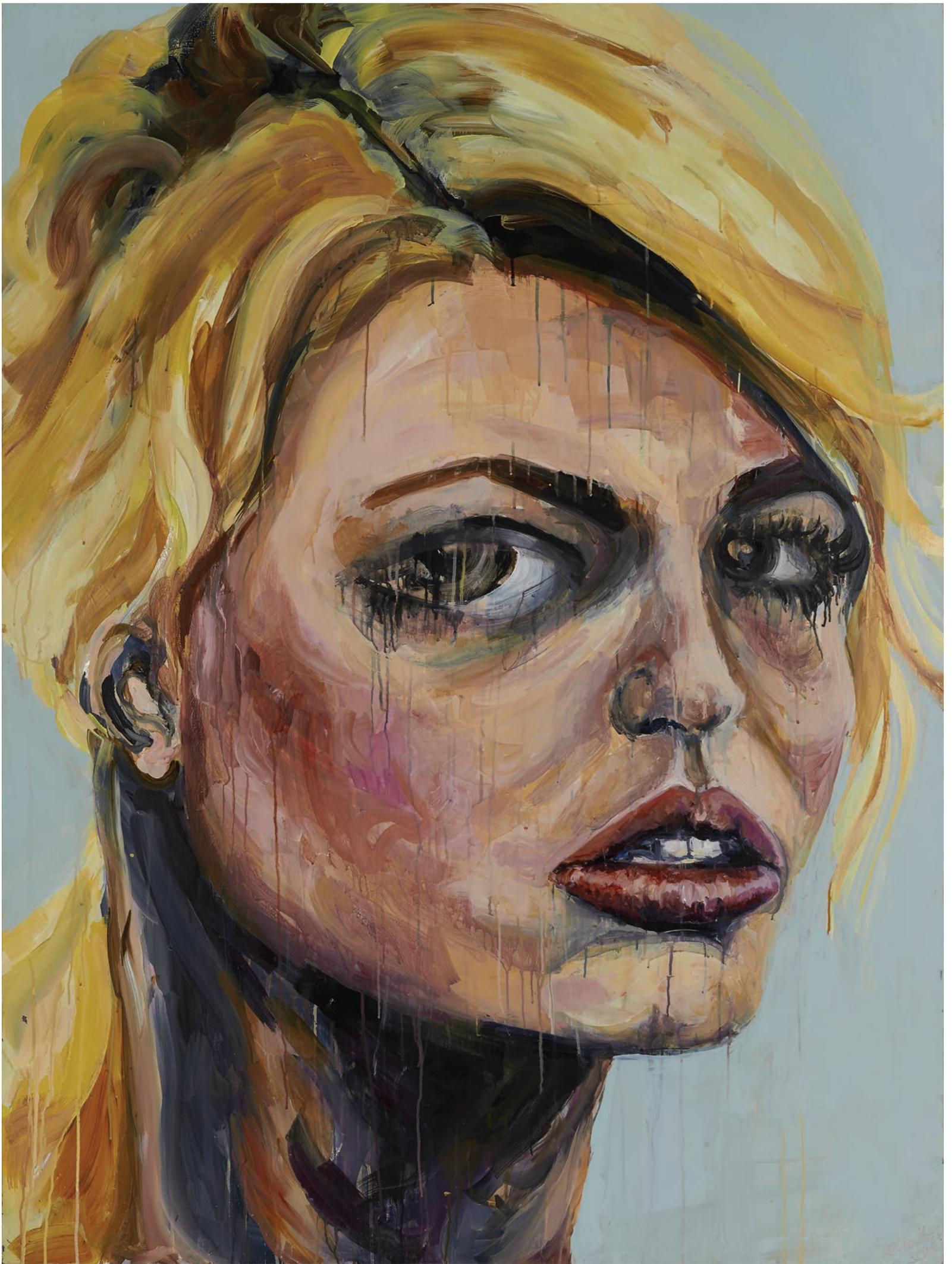
Nico Epstein  
Andrew Quick



*Femme Fatale*, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2013



*Paralysed by Perfection I*, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2012

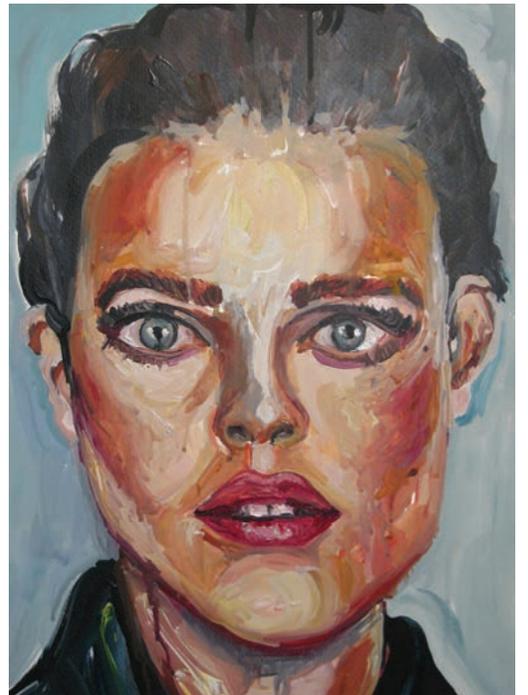


*Paralysed by Perfection II*, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2012

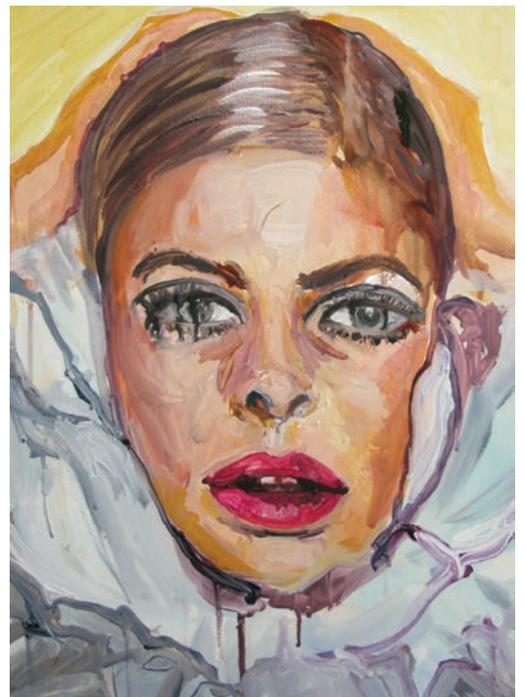
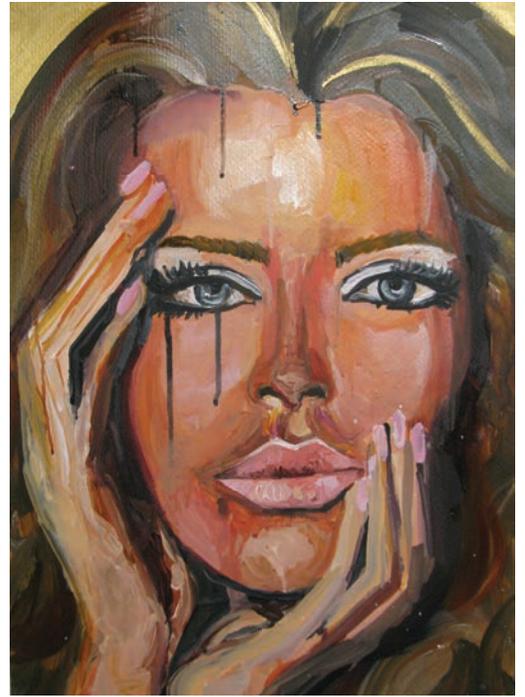


**What is it that we do to make ourselves desirable?  
Where does it end and what does it end with?**

Philosophers both ancient and modern have sought to define beauty, either in opposition to ugliness, or as a mutable yet universal truth, but beauty resists categorization as violently as it categorizes. It is an affliction to both the bearer and the beholder. Universally reified, beauty is both a state of being and an idea, neither of which could exist in isolation. Jennifer Louise Martin seeks to look at the meaning of beauty in the modern era, where flesh comes in more forms and layers than ever before, with MAC and Jill Stuart jockeying for the top spot, and technology that codifies the ideal face with surgical precision. Such developments raise new questions which are addressed by Martin through her work: How has the symbolic language of beauty changed over time? Has our understanding of beauty solidified or sublimated, and how does this effect those who have or aspire to have beauty? Working from photographs of iconic muses from the 1960's to present day, Martin challenges the viewer to consider the paradoxical and nebulous nature of beauty as an affliction, and in doing so to develop a new way of looking.



Selection from Muse Series  
Acrylic on Fabriano Paper  
35cm x 50cm  
2012



Selection from Muse Series  
Acrylic on Fabriano Paper  
35cm x 50cm  
2012





Daphne III, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2012

Since being discovered randomly while out shopping with her mother, Dutch sensation Daphne Groeneveld has blessed the cover of a plethora of widely circulated fashion magazines. She is a unique beauty whose puffy, full lips and flowing blond hair have gained her the title of "Baby Bardot".

Daisy Pose depicts the model in a quarter length portrait, adorned with a headdress of linked daisies. References ensue: is this a modern Ophelia, or a contemporaneous 1970s activist? "She loves me, she loves me not". The daisy brings with it a message of purity, gentleness and innocence.

One then realizes that the symbolism of the flower has been complicated and drastically reconfigured under Martin's brush. The lush redness of the sitter's lips adds a mischievous element that contrasts with the delicate pure white flowers. Simultaneously, the depths of the red background emphasize the pale complexion of Daphne's skin. The tension between innocence and seductiveness is felt throughout the imposing canvas.

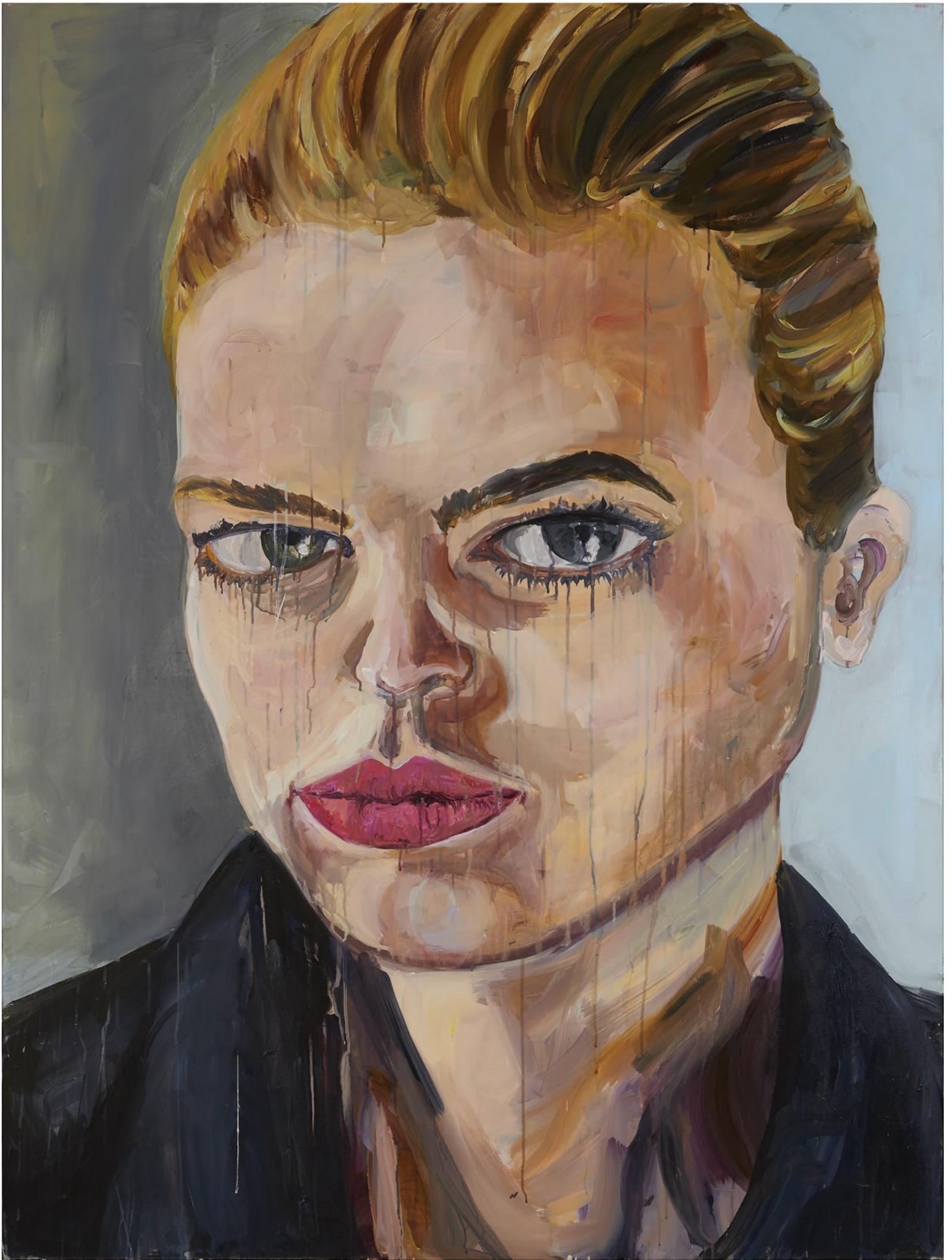
The model's eyes are vacant and her flesh drips and melts away under a flurry of richly textured brushstrokes. So often the object of another's gaze, Groeneveld's visage has been altered so she no longer returns our glances. She is transfigured into an object of sexual desire unable to see on her own accord.



Daisy Pose, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2013



Catwalk Queen, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2012



*Daphne I*, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2012

When did you first decide to pursue art as a full time career, is that also when you began to see yourself as an artist? Was there an epiphany moment?

I think there was definitely an epiphany moment. I did a residency in Los Angeles and when I got back I had a different feeling about my work. On and off for years before that I had to go through this process of "am I an artist?, am I not an artist?". Having spent time there (LA) and being so inspired, I went back again to do a solo show, and for months beforehand I hid in the garage painting. I that's when I decided it was more than a hobby.

Who or what are your inspirations? Are there any artistic heroes of yours?

There are probably quite a few. Bacon and Freud for portraiture. Bacon for questioning the line between abstract and figurative painting and Freud for his dedication to the human form. Both artists were interested in the act of painting itself, and the process it entails.

Many of your works are inspired by high end fashion photography, are there any photographers who's pictures you enjoy working from more than others? Are there ones that speak to the idea of a panoptic gaze, of beauty as an affliction, or particular sitters who do this?

There definitely are certain photographers whose work I'm more attracted to. I've noticed this more and more after collecting photographs from magazines I liked over the years and realizing that the photos I gravitated towards were by many of the same photographers. There's Mert Alas & Marcus Piggot, who are really big in the fashion world, as well as Steven Meisel, who produces very "high gloss" photography, and then there's Erwin Olaf, I'm very inspired by the muted tones that he uses and the 60s retro setups he does - So various photographers for different reasons. I think in terms of this idea of beauty as an affliction, I think that's something I put into their photographs myself.

You work primarily in acrylic on canvas, but have previously incorporated collage into some of your pieces. Is this a comment on the connection between painting and photography in your working process?

I always work with collage alongside doing my portraits. It helps me to realise the idea I'm trying to get at in my painting. I literally hide the photograph within the paint sometimes, which to me is a comment on the materiality of a printed image versus the texture of the paint laid alongside it.

Is the quality of the photograph and the way it speaks to you more important than the sitter/model, or less?

The quality of the image is always important to me, although no more so than the person within the image itself. They aren't mutually exclusive; the composition of the face, the subtlety of the features, is just as important to me as the quality of the overall image. It all has to work together, which is why it takes me a longtime to find a photograph to work from. I can flip through magazines for months, or buy huge stacks of them and find only one image that speaks to me.

How often do your muses change? Have you noticed a pattern in the faces you become interested in, or is it random?

I think there probably is a pattern, but it's something that happens subconsciously, as I've been painting models on and off for about ten years now. I used to paint more well known models but have slowly shifted towards less familiar faces, especially ones that I think serve to challenge the notion of traditional beauty. I've been inspired by images of Rita Ora, Natalia Vodianova, and Georgia May Jagger, amongst many others. Daphne Groeneveld has been a recent muse of mine, but I don't necessarily have a set face or person I look for, it's more about the image as a whole.

Is there something particular about the medium of painting that you feel allows you to realize and explore your ideas more faithfully than photography? There is this paradox where photography is in some ways the most honest, yet also dishonest, of the mediums. Painting has difficulty holding the pretence of honesty in terms of aesthetic fidelity to the visual subject, yet in doing so it can possibly be more honest than photography -more honest to the idea behind the image.

Yes, definitely. That's why I get attracted to high gloss images that are airbrushed into a hyper reality. I'm trying to see through that and get back to the essence of the image. I like to work alongside that idea, using the paint as a kind of artificial skin, a metaphor for the flesh of the person within the picture. I'm trying to paint something superficially beautiful while also getting at the underlying reality and beauty behind the image. The end result is an imperfect copy of the overly perfect original – an honest display of dishonesty. The idea of beauty and perfection can very quickly become inverted. That's something I look at through my work.

Talk to us about the gaze, the act of looking, and how it relates to themes in your work.

I think that the eyes tell us more about a person than any other feature. By removing or distorting the eyes of the individual subjects in my paintings I'm working to depersonalize, and in a way dehumanize them. The subjects are already vessels for an idea, whether it's the look they are presenting in the initial photograph, or the idea I'm trying to get at in my work. By removing the eyes in *Daisy Pose* for instance, I'm trying to encourage the viewer to re-analyze the role of the gaze. To gaze can be a form of domination or subjugation. There is a power dynamic at play there that I'm looking to question through my work.

Interview at the artist's studio in Bermondsey, on 18th March 2013



*Sublime Light*, Acrylic on Perspex, 122cm x 164cm, 2012



Iconic Candy, Acrylic on Canvas, 120cm x 160cm, 2011

# Jennifer Louise Martin



Jennifer Louise Martin's work deals with the female psyche's desire for unattainable beauty. Inspired by the glossy allure and artifice of high fashion photography, Martin explores the psychosocial consequences of the fashion industry's preoccupation with the ideal physical form through her unique style of portraiture. Working from carefully selected images the artist creates bold, arresting statements that highlight the conflict between our perception of the so-called 'desirability' of female models and the reality with which we are presented. In doing so, her works also serve to challenge the viewer to reconsider the role of the gaze as it relates to beauty and desirability. Through this process we ultimately arrive at a liberating experience that invites us away from the illusion of perfection and towards a new aesthetic appreciation.

## Website

www.JenniferLouiseMartin.com

## Education

Turps Banana, London, UK, 2012-13

PGCE Secondary Art and Design, Middlesex University, London, UK, 2009-2010

Postgraduate Diploma Fine Art, Byam Shaw Central Saint Martins College, London, UK, 2005-2006

BSc Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, 2001-2003

Diploma Art and Design Foundation, Central Saint Martins College, London, UK, 2000

## Exhibitions

### 2013

*Group exhibition*, Turps Banana, London, UK

### 2012

*Group Exhibition*, Londonewcastle Project Space, London, UK

*Verge Art Fair*, Miami, US

### 2011

*Beauty Is An Affliction Solo Show*, Takt Residency, Berlin, Germany

*Life is Elsewhere*, The Crypt Gallery, London, UK

*The Other Art Fair*, The Bargehouse Southbank, London, UK

### 2009

*Not Just a Pretty Face Solo Show*, The Foundry, London, UK

*Artsdepot Barnet Open*, Aphorp Gallery, London, UK

*Return to Reason; Painting is dead! Long live painting! Long live beauty!*, HRL Contemporary, London, UK

### 2008

*Barbs*, Redgate Gallery, London, UK

*Let the Children Use It*, Tacheles Building, Berlin, Germany

### 2007

*Perfect Illusion Solo Show*, Milo Gallery, Los Angeles, US

### 2006

*Raid Projects Solo Show*, Raid Gallery, Los Angeles, US

*Postgraduate Degree Show*, Byam Shaw Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London, UK

## Publications

Feb 2012: Dash Magazine

Mar 2011: Saatchi Online; London's Calling

Apr 2011: Office Magazine

May 2011: BMI Voyager; Rising Star

Nov 2011: Vogue Culture Edit

Autumn/Winter 07/08: Wound magazine

May 2007: LA Weekly

# Oaktree & Tiger Gallery



Martin



Cornes



Bigham



Price



Smith



Hammond

We work with carefully selected emerging artists and develop their careers through organising fascinating exhibitions. In doing so, we build relationships with collectors with the help of hard working and knowledgeable individuals beginning their careers in the art world. By supporting new artists and building collections of enthusiasts, we offer a stepping-stone for practitioners and patrons alike. It is our pleasure to use our expertise and skills to nurture and promote the best-up-and-coming artists that London has to offer.

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## Credits

Exhibition Curated by Oaktree & Tiger Gallery  
All Artwork by Jennifer Louise Martin  
Artwork on Canvas Photographed by Sylvain Deleu  
Artist Photography by Kevin Westenberg  
Catalogue by Oaktree & Tiger Team

Jennifer Louise Martin would like to say...  
Thank you to all friends and family for their continual support  
Matt Young for his exceptional transportation service  
Conrad, Nico, Andrew & Jorja for their belief and ambition

Step back, engrossed, just this one and happens. The more you do the more it grows. The illusion growing, gets stronger and becomes engraved in our neural pathways. I love the canvas but at times the demands I demand. Lay up myself bare. Nothing to see. This is surely a sign of sanity. Sanity to me. Something doesn't look quite right. It's the hands or arms. My eyes are desensitised. More ochre. No, more raw sienna. Permanent alizarin crimson. Translucency. Depth. Illusion. Need to move the nose down a few centimetres. Enlarge. Reduce size. Augment. Nose must be proportional to the rest of the face. Fabulous brushstroke. Energy. Flat. Change brush. Such a procedure. Intricate adaptation of pupil, eyelash, skin tone. Brown used. Cannot sleep. Still thinking about the bottom lip. More gloss. Shiny. Alamo. Manic. No patience. The end is near. Fuzzed up and dye. In the beauty parlour. Beauty is skin deep in the eyes of the beholder. Lashes. Extend them. Elongate. Flutter. Mascara. Fuller. Longer and thicker.



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