

(Re)Fashioning the Gaze

An exhibition of artworks by Jennifer Louise Martin

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 works 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 psychological 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 prosaicness 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.

The Strand Gallery
32 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6BP
Opening Hours: 11am – 6pm
23rd – 28th April 2013
www.thestrandgallery.co.uk

Oaktree & Tiger Gallery
South Kensington
London
By appointment only
29th April – 19th May 2013
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&



Oaktree & Tiger Gallery



Martin



Cornes



Bigham



Price



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