

CINDYRELLA – THE CURATOR’S STORY

PESACH SLABOSKY

We have here works in installation by Nomi Tannhauser and Adva Drori, two Israeli artists, two women, who are taking inspiration from the American photography artist Cindy Sherman. Sherman literally burst onto the art scene in New York with her exhibit *Untitled Film Stills, 1977–1980*, a series of sixty-nine black-and-white photographs. In each of the Stills Sherman herself acts the role of a cliché female character typical of low-budget American films of the 40’s to the 60’s, particularly from the urban tales of the Film Noir genre. It is always a woman alone; she is an ordinary person caught in a drama that is not of her making. She is in a kitchen, a library, an evil street, a lonely country road. Always there is a sensation of fear, anxiety, apprehension, of foreboding. Sherman said that she stopped at sixty-nine pictures because she ran out of clichés. If you were grown-up, alive, and walking into an art gallery in 1980 you remembered pictures just like that outside of movie theaters, like the Royal or the Varsity in my hometown Detroit.

The Stills were shown the first time at New York’s Metro Pictures Gallery in 1980. Had I seen ahead thirty years and had I known that I would now be writing this small essay as curator of *Cindyrella*, for sure I would have documented exactly when and where I first saw *Untitled Film Stills, 1977–1980*. It was somewhere in New York, and sometime in the early to middle 1980’s.

Since that time Sherman is a fact in the firmament of international art. She is as well known in Israel as in the United States. The images of the Film Stills series have in particular acquired classic status. They have inspired cover versions by many artists, and in different mediums. Sherman herself has continued to work and exhibit. She has maintained thematic consistency while working in color, producing large-size prints, wearing masks and elaborate makeup and costumes. This all was known to me. What I had not known was the extent to which the work of Cindy Sherman is iconic for women. She touches their most intimate moments. There were times in my meetings with the artists, the three-way conversations, when I was amazed that I was present. The words of the artists, Nomi and Adva, [They have their own say in this catalog.] received naught but confirmation from other women with whom I spoke and whose voice I sought, my curiosity already having been piqued. I find myself grateful and changed for this experience.

Nomi Tannhauser claims Sherman’s *Untitled Film Stills, 1977–1980* as her inspiration for her works in *Cindyrella*. Adva Drori looks at the range of works that Sherman has done during a nearly forty-year career.

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