

# METRO PICTURES

Eckardt, Stephanie. "Cindy Sherman's Latest Guise: Extreme Vulnerability," *WMagazine.com* (May 3, 2016).



Cindy Sherman is now four decades into her career of professionally dressing the part, but her latest series – a grouping of 20's Hollywood publicity-style photos opening at New York's Metro Pictures on Thursday – still managed to surprise her. "What I didn't know would creep into the portraits was a vulnerability behind the strong façade that most of them wear," she said. "I identify with that." Here she shares more about the latest portraits, and how aging has affected her work.

## **How did you come to focus on 1920s cinema?**

I'd been thinking about using makeup in a more extreme way, perhaps since the last two bodies of work (the Chanel series and the mural) didn't involve any makeup at all, as I'd been tweaking the faces with Photoshop. As I was looking through a book about German Expressionist films and their stars, it all came together: Because of the extreme way actors made their faces up in those early day of film in order to pop out in the black-and-white. I just wanted to use makeup in the same way, partly perhaps because as women get older they're told to wear less makeup. I loved the idea of doing the opposite.

## **Did *Sunset Boulevard* have any influence on this series?**

Not directly, no. But lots of portraits of all the actresses from that time certainly did.

## **Do you identify at all with the film stars you portray?**

Well, these women aren't necessarily strictly film stars – I was really just thinking of portraits of women in the style of silent films. Unlike my "Untitled Film Stills," these aren't meant to be from films. I see some of them as portraits of CEOs, real estate moguls, or heiresses posing in front of or outside their domains. My intention was to try to make flattering portraits of these women. I wanted pretty pictures of older women – women who are trying too hard but succeeding – pulling off an extreme look. What I didn't know would creep into the portraits was a vulnerability behind the strong façade that most of them wear. They've maybe taken some wrong turns along the way, but they're on the right track now. I identify with that.

## **You last showed a new body of work in 2012. How has your break since then influenced you?**

I've consistently had years in between series of work; this one was just slightly longer than most. I always need to get away from whatever it is I've just finished, to feel a distance from it. The working solo gets draining, too. And it wasn't just a break without producing anything: I had two traveling museum shows, two other museum shows, catalogs for each, a project with Louis Vuitton, an appearance in a small film for an opera, etc.

## **How has aging affected your portraits?**

Even though I'm disguised in my work, the makeup doesn't hide the wrinkles and extra pockets of flab, and since I've been in front of the camera for 40 years, I see the difference. And at my age, every five years makes a huge difference. My range of characters is more limited.

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