

MNUCHIN GALLERY



CINDY SHERMAN: ONCE UPON A TIME, 1981 – 2011

April 18 – June 10, 2017

Mnuchin Gallery is proud to announce *Cindy Sherman: Once Upon a Time, 1981 – 2011*. This will be the gallery's first exhibition of works by Cindy Sherman, one of the most influential artists of our time. Featuring more than two dozen works spanning thirty years, it will take as its focus three of Sherman's most acclaimed series: the Centerfolds, the History Portraits, and the Society Portraits. Co-curated by Philippe Ségalot and gallery partner Sukanya Rajaratnam, and organized with the support of the artist and Metro Pictures, *Cindy Sherman: Once Upon a Time, 1981 – 2011* will be on view from April 18 through June 10, 2017, with an opening reception on Tuesday, April 18 from 6:00 – 8:00pm.

Since the debut of her seminal *Untitled Film Stills* in New York City in 1978 and her early days as a leading figure of the Pictures Generation, Sherman has played the role of both photographer and her camera's own exclusive subject. The artist has created a groundbreaking body of work that explores the nature of representation and the ways in which the images of film, television, and advertising influence our understanding of our identity and of the world around us. Employing elaborate makeup, costumes, and props to transform herself, Sherman creates "portraits" that mine the stereotypes and genres of art history and mass media while drawing attention to the power structures that have shaped this imagery.

"Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of communication, and visual storytelling is nearly as ancient," says Sukanya Rajaratnam. "Throughout history, the women who have populated these narratives have had their stories told predominantly by men—and their image has been shaped predominantly by culturally accumulated archetypes. What Cindy has done, brilliantly and bravely, is taken on these standards of femininity to reveal the absurd constructs that exist at their core. She has done so with wit and grace, boring deep holes into these so-called icons, calling upon us to do the same. Thanks to her work, the visual narratives of art, film and photography have been permanently upended."

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Cindy Sherman: Once Upon a Time, 1981 – 2011 takes Sherman's iconic Centerfolds series as its starting point. Among the artist's earliest works, the Centerfolds launched Sherman into the spotlight when they were first exhibited in 1981 to critical acclaim. These horizontal color photographs depict closely cropped images of reclining women—a format that references the erotic centerfolds of men's magazines. However, Sherman replaces the traditional centerfold pin-up girl with a series of fully clothed female subjects lost in private moments of poignant emotion triggered by unpictured narratives. In this way, Sherman subverts our expectations for a familiar type of picture, drawing attention to the way we look at and process images—particularly, images of women.

The exhibition continues with examples from Sherman's History Portraits series, created from 1988 to 1990. Traditionally scaled and adorned with gilded frames, at first glance, the images appear to belong on the dark walls of a European museum. However, closer examination reveals the works to be primarily pastiches of various art historical styles simultaneously drawing on tropes of Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassical painting. In these works, Sherman transforms herself into a sweeping range of historical sitters, bestowing her subjects with exaggerated prosthetics. Notably, the History Portraits mark the first series wherein a significant number of the works depict Sherman as male characters.

The show's story continues with highlights from Sherman's Society Portraits from 2008. In this series, the artist casts herself as various stereotypes of wealthy women of a certain age, heavily accessorized and posed in a variety of stately settings. The sitters' cosmetic surgery and heavy makeup reveal a struggle with society's impossible standards of youth and beauty, while their slightly pained expressions and whiff of vulgarity suggest a critique of excess. Sherman created these works by photographing herself in front of a green screen, then incorporating backdrops of various New York City locales that she shot herself, including Central Park, the Cloisters, and the National Arts Club.

Cindy Sherman: Once Upon a Time, 1981 – 2011 opens on the heels of Sherman's recent solo museum exhibitions at the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; the City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand; and the Broad Museum, Los Angeles. It is the first historical presentation of her work in New York City since the Museum of Modern Art's major traveling retrospective in 2012. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog featuring essays by Francesco Bonami and Betsy Berne.

Image: Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #94*, 1981, chromogenic color print. 24 x 48 inches (61 x 121.9 cm), Edition of 10. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.