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O'BORN CONTEMPORARY presents: *GLASS CEILING*,
A solo exhibition by JILL GREENBERG



A Scotiabank CONTACT Feature Exhibition

APRIL 28 – JUNE 2, 2012

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© Jill Greenberg, *American Girl Doll*, Archival Pigment Print, 2011

DATES:

FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 2012, 6 – 9 pm

Exhibition Opening and Reception

Show Continues to June 2, 2012

Artist will be in attendance.

LOCATION:

131 Ossington Avenue, Toronto.

GALLERY HOURS:

Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6 and by appointment.

TELEPHONE:

416.413.9555

SYNOPSIS

Jill Greenberg's newest work, *Glass Ceiling* marks a return to the postmodern feminist theory, which directed her practice throughout the 1990s. In these images, female athletes attempt to pose but the water knocks them into awkward positions. The heels, overtly absurd hinder all movement while underscoring their lack of control. The women's identities have become inconsequential as their heads are visually cut off, leaving only the bodies in focus - Clearly an analogy for the female experience, clashing beauty, power and violence.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The *Glass Ceiling* project is about the "set up" of being a woman. These women are professional athletes and dancers; therefore, they are dressed for work. In 2008, I was commissioned to do a "fashion" shoot using the US Olympic Synchronized Swim Team as models. Two of the set ups included high heels. Inspired by the shoots outtakes I hired a local synchronized swim troupe in 2010 and directed the women with gestures as I sat at the bottom of a pool in full scuba gear with a state-of-the-art 65 megapixel back on my digital camera. As these athletes attempt to pose for me the water knocks them into awkward positions. The heels are overtly absurd and hinder their movement, amplifying their lack of control in this world. "The disciplinary project of femininity is a setup, it requires such radical and extensive bodily transformation, that a woman is destined in some degree to fail." This quote by Sandra Lee Bartky was the crux of my senior thesis, "The Female Object" at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1989. At the conclusion of the multimedia presentation that was the "Female Object," the final projected slide declared "Exit the Powder Room." It was my assertion that this project of femininity is a self-created distraction from accomplishing more serious goals.

Glass Ceiling marks for me the return to my explorations throughout the 90's of the depiction of the female body as if directly channeled from the male psyche. In these images, the identities have become inconsequential as their heads are cut off, the sexualized bodies are the focus. As a female artist, I have experimented with imagery, which explores the objectification of women for many years. First, a series of drawings of women as seen by men, just breasts, vaginas, heels, then a multimedia digital piece called "Eve of the Future" which posited that if man could genetically engineer the woman of his dreams, she would have multiple orifices and no head. This work was acquired as part of a collection by SF MOMA. The images channel the feelings I have of being powerless in a culture run by men. The psychic violence is made pictorially overt. The subjects are victimized despite their physical strength, health and any other good luck they might have been born into. The fact that they had the bad luck of being born women makes them a punchline. The violence in our slang and street vernacular used in discussing women and sexual intercourse makes it apparent that the collective male culture feels aggressively dismissive of women. I felt it was important to show the violence and emotion I feel as a woman in contemporary culture, from a woman's point of view. The images might be read as violent towards women, they are meant to be. This is what it feels like to exist in the female body.

- Jill Greenberg, 2011

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Since the age of 10, Jill Greenberg has staged photographs and created characters using the mediums of drawing, painting, sculpture, film and photography. She is known worldwide for her uniquely human animal portraits, which intentionally anthropomorphize her subjects, as well as her infamous series, "End Times" which struck a nerve in its exploration of religious, political, and environmental themes exploiting the raw emotion of toddlers in distress. Her newest work marks a return to the postmodern feminist theory that inspired her senior thesis, "The Female Object" as an art student at RISD in the 80's: "The disciplinary project of femininity" and the predetermined failure of all women who attempt to "succeed" at it. As a working photographer she travails to straddle the line between assignment work and her own personal work. On one notable occasion, a conflict arose when she was assigned to photograph the Republican candidate for presidency in the summer 2008, at the height of his popularity; after delivering the assignment exactly as requested, she chose to speak out in the form of agit-prop outtakes on her own website, which she was legally allowed and morally compelled to do. The violent backlash from her political art has informed this return to the question of what is tolerated by women in our culture.

For Media Information:

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