

the PARIS REVIEW

WOMEN BY WOMEN

curated by
Charlotte Strick

In this portfolio I have mainly steered away from deliberate self-portraits (though it's of course likely that many of the images in the next few pages are imbued with their creators' personal histories and obsessions). What interests me is the different ways and moments in which women artists choose to portray and record other women—whether it's the beautifully terrifying giants that Marilyn Minter captures in acute, glittering detail, the amorphous and victorious abstract figures of Nicola Tyson, or the madly capering revelers depicted in June Glasson's ink-wash series "The Foulest of Shapes." Many of these images share a raw and tender confidence and a penchant for storytelling.

Hybrid, the desexualized title of Jenny Saville's nude, challenges our instinctive response to this

woman's nakedness. She's been truncated and dissected. This is not a youthful classical ideal; Saville paints her subject not as an object of desire but rather as a body made up of interesting parts that can be considered piece by piece (even if one's impulse might be in fact to turn away). Seducing us with sweetly chaste floral-wallpaper backdrops, Wanda Ewing reveals, reclaims, and revels in the sexual beauty of her pinup girls. Ghada Amer uses the traditionally female medium of embroidery thread to weave scenes of women engaged in erotic acts. Her works become a maze of fine, colorful lines that intersect and drip, blurring our vision and altering our perception of the acts themselves. There is one self-portrait here, but in Francesca Woodman's photograph, the shadow burned on the floorboards seems to me more complete and more confident than the young woman sitting, vulnerable, off to its side, as though she has had second thoughts about the mark she's left behind.

While assembling this "group show," I discovered several artists whose work I have yet to see in person. I wonder about their pieces. If I'd only ever glimpsed Leah Yerpe's work online, would I still have been lured by the delicacy of the deftly executed bodies that twist and turn, as if choreographed by Yerpe's own hand, and ascend more than nine feet high? Conversely, does the mystery of Nikki S. Lee's double portrait hold the same eerie beauty in person as it does for me on my backlit computer screen? Perhaps it will have an entirely different energy when seen on paper: you and I are about to find out.

93

