

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

October 12, 2006

Laurel Nakadate

Filed under: [artists](#), [filmmaking](#) — alecsothblog @ 11:13 am



video still from "I WANNA BE YOUR MID-LIFE CRISIS"

A critic once observed that my photographs of men are often comical whereas the pictures of women are more reverant. He might be onto something. I suspect the pictures of men have an element of self-portraiture.

Laurel Nakadate's fantastic videos and photographs are the flip-side of this equation. She often photographs herself in the presence of awkward men. In a review of her 2005 show, the New York Times wrote:

For her notorious project "I Wanna Be Your Mid-Life Crisis," Laurel Nakadate invited middle-aged men who tried to pick her up to collaborate in videotaped performances. A three-channel video in this exhibition continues in that vein. One segment shows the young, exceptionally charismatic Ms. Nakadate and one or another of her down-at-the-heels partners crawling on the floor pretending to be cats. In another she and a balding man listen to each other's chests with stethoscopes and hear the Righteous Brothers singing "You've Lost That Loving Feeling."

The men in these and other scenarios look both amused and bemused, and the overall effect is both sad and comical. Ms. Nakadate may be asserting feminist self-empowerment and satirizing seamy sexual dynamics, but you can't help feeling sorry for the apparently harmless and lonely men whom she teases.

Read a long and juicy interview with Nakadate in the current issue of [The Believer](#). And see her work in NYC. She has an opening on October 19th at [Danziger Projects](#) and will be in a group show at Mary Boone uptown that opens on November 2nd.

7 Comments

1. hehe

Comment by [Tarsh](#) — October 12, 2006 @ [1:44 pm](#)

2. If the gender roles were reversed here, I don't think this project would get very far. What if she were a young guy who brought home middle aged droopy women and made them roll around on the floor pretending to be dogs? Then again maybe that's the point, maybe she's subverting the idea that men can get fat and old and still be desirable, whereas a woman's worth is much more tied to her appearance. However, this still seems mean and exploitative to me.

Comment by [Derek](#) — October 12, 2006 @ [5:10 pm](#)

3. none the less, she is pretty hot.

Comment by [e g powell](#) — October 13, 2006 @ [9:00 pm](#)

4. you just want to sleep with her. that's how she gets this far.

Comment by [ss](#) — November 20, 2006 @ [8:17 pm](#)

5. I have been in some of Laurel's work and it's been fun. I don't really know how accurate "men who would try to pick her up" is. I met her because we lived in the same building. Another guy in the building at the time has been in a lot of her work. I know I didn't "try to pick her up" when I met her and I don't know that he did, although he might have. I don't even know for sure that he found her or finds her attractive. I did and do but I also find her amazingly creative and, in person, qujite amusing. I try not to hold her fondness for really silly pop music against her.

Comment by [Bill Reich](#) — July 17, 2007 @ [3:43 pm](#)

6. I find here work to be exquisite, it is really hard not to get moved by it! Even if it is exploitative it is very intelligent work that makes a strong point.

Comment by [Asen](#) — November 9, 2007 @ [2:18 pm](#)

7. I just saw the little video interview on youtube and really was impressed with her whole bit. After reading the interview on The Believer I am sure that her heart is in a good place...like most artists that is.

Comment by [matthew capuano](#) — January 5, 2008 @ [6:26 pm](#)