

ALIKA COOPER'S FLAWED BEAUTIES

<http://www.tenover6.com/blog/2012/06/alika-coopers-flaw-ed-beauties/>

July 4, 2012



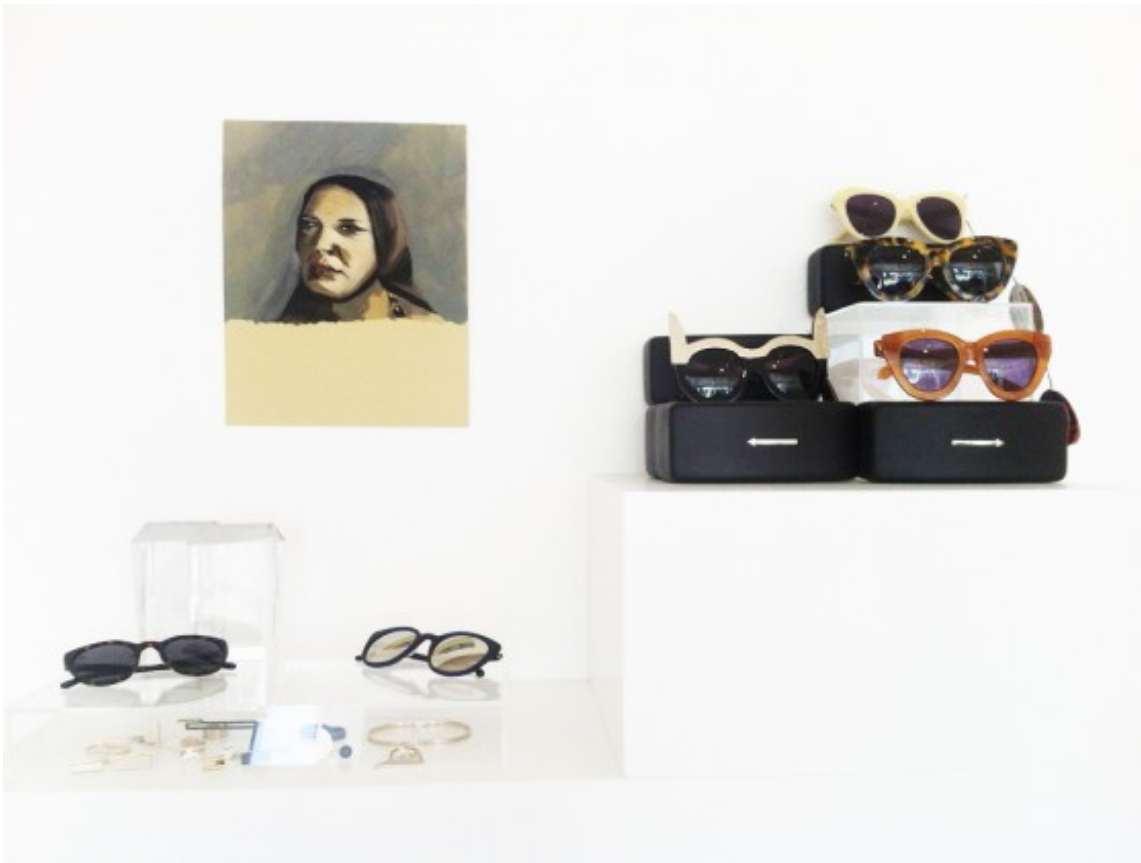
Brigitte (on couch) (2008)

Maybe this is the wrong place to start, but most paintings of women make me want to punch myself in the face. If you've ever read anything I've written on this blog, I'm pretty sure my distaste for most representations of females in, like, every media ever is clear, so it should come as no surprise that whenever I see another painting of a woman – especially if she's naked – I tend to give the painting major side-eye, mutter something about originality and single-notedness under my breath, and walk away. And then there's Arika Cooper.



Grace (Keith Haring Body Paint) (2010)

WOMEN/works ON PAPER, curated by Yaoska Davila and up at TENOVERSIX until July 7, is a selection of Cooper's paintings of famous women, starring the likes of Edie Sedgwick, Grace Jones, Brigitte Bardot, Twiggy, Farrah Fawcett & Little Edie Beale. Not only are these women famous; they're women whose image literally made them who they are (or are remembered as) today. And that's where this show just starts to get interesting; all of these paintings are based not solely on the women depicted, but rather on famous photos and stills of these women as depicted by someone else. Whether it's Grace Jones as painted by Keith Haring as photographed by Tsen Kwong Chi or Brigitte Bardot in a scene from Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt*, this body of work, created between 2007 and 2010, is definitely right on meta-trend.



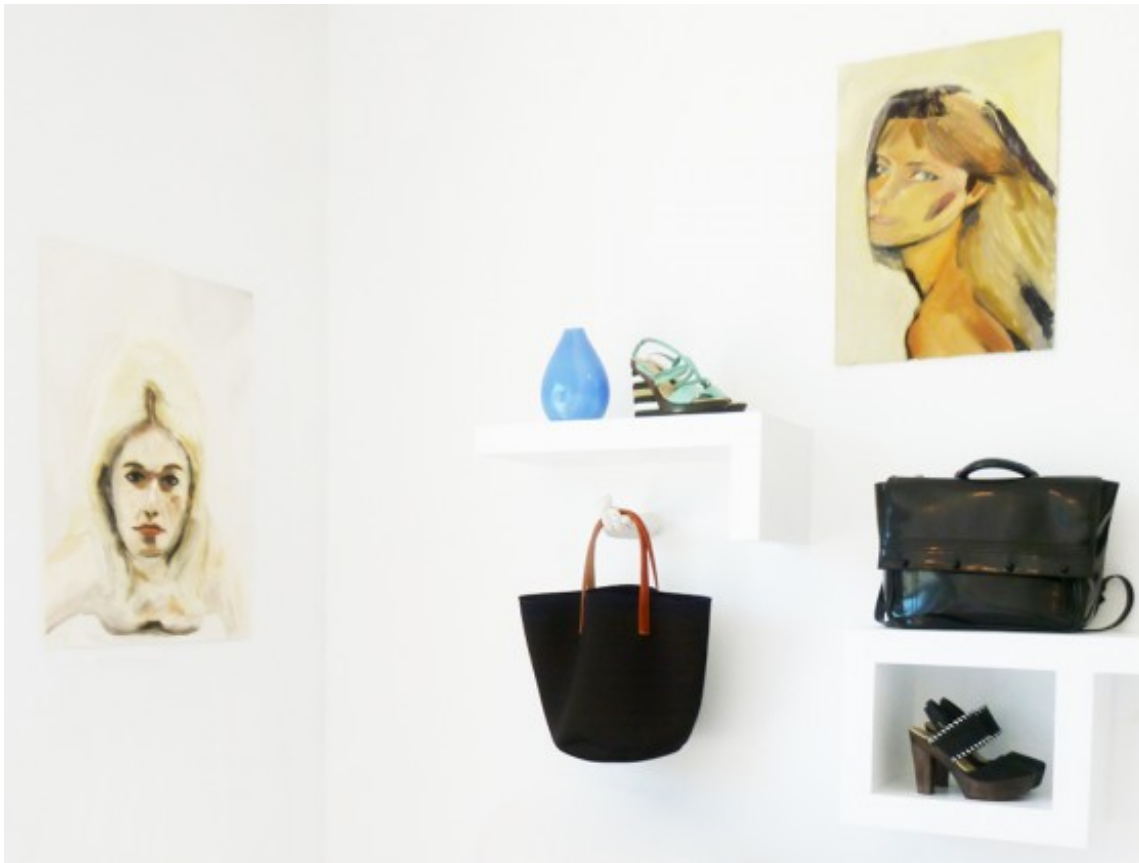
Edie (grey gardens) (2008)



Edie (ciao manhattan) (2007)

The work definitely doesn't stop at its meta-ness, however; just saying that these are paintings of

pictures of famous women doesn't at all do justice to the experience of looking at them. Cooper's style turns these otherwise familiar images on their heads. They're dirty, they're gritty, they're a little confusing. They add new and varied dimensions, sad and beautiful, vulnerable and strong, to the faces and bodies of women we've already seen thousands of times. *Edie (ciao manhattan)* (2007) seems to show a young neanderthal deep in thought. *Edie (grey gardens)* (2008) could be a painting of Joan of Arc. Adding to this disorientation is the fact that these celebrities are portrayed in gouache on paper with torn, uneven edges. Cooper takes the idea of idealized female celebrity and simultaneously flips it off and caresses it, telling it everything will be ok.



(L to R) *Brigitte (large)* (2007); *Farrah (by Andy)* (2008)

I guess in a way these paintings apply the modern lens through which we see young, beautiful female celebrities to their forebearers from a time before Wikipedia and the stalkerazzi. Britney was in a bad place for so *long*, but now it seems like she's marrying a nice guy, and that makes me happy. Lindsay! Oh Lindsay. You wanna hate her, but then you remember her parents and understand everything. They're beautiful, they're ugly, they're objects of desire, they're objects of disgust, which is exactly how I feel while looking at (and sort of being judged by) *Brigitte (large)* (2007). She's a little cross eyed and her skin is awful but that hair is so perfect. She's clearly Brigitte Bardot, but there's also something very off. Through these paintings we get to see a side of these women that may only exist in Cooper's head but feels so real you wanna pop open a can of Sofia and drink champagne with them. Out of a can. Cause they actually seem like in this world, they'd be down for that.



Twiggy (2009)



(L to R) *Brigitte (small)* (2009); *Grace (Runway)* (2009)

WOMEN/works ON PAPER will be up at TENOVERSIX until July 7.

For images from the opening of *WOMEN/works ON PAPER*, please...



Arika Cooper, Yaoska Davila, and guest.



