



Keltie Ferris, *Aviator*, 2008, oil, acrylic, pastel, and spray paint on canvas, 80 x 70".

Ferris's paintings also evoke Albert Oehlen, a similarly restless formalist who uses as many techniques as he can fit into one painting. The difference is mostly generational: Where Oehlen employs a computer mouse, among other devices, to spoof on "expression" and the painter's hand, Ferris is strictly (on the canvas, at least) postdigital.

This is the dilemma for her generation of painters, who grew up with (and on) computers: Feign ignorance and act like a Luddite, or embrace the knowledge and absorb it into your work? Ferris's paintings appear as though they originate far from the computer screen, and yet their surfaces seem predicated on a kind of Windows-age logic. Passages with varying palettes and textures hover next to, under, and over one another like different software programs, all open at the same time and yet designed to perform different functions.

In many ways, Ferris's subject is archaeology, but not Foucauldian archaeology: She treats art-historical traditions as strata rather than as ruptures, embedding them in her compositions. It will be interesting to see what happens when she clicks on and closes a few of those programs, shrugging off her influences and finding what's left.

—Martha Schwendener

Jaimie Warren

HIGHER PICTURES

Jaimie Warren is by no means the first—or the best—artist to embrace self-portraiture as an artistic methodology, but she certainly looks to be having the most fun doing it. An uneven selection of forty-two of her droll, scrappy photographs constituted "Don't You Feel Better," her recent solo debut at Higher Pictures; the title, like the exhibition, betrayed a cathartic impulse at once frustrating and entirely refreshing.

Warren's work invokes a lineage of other female self-portraitists, most obviously Cindy Sherman and Nikki S. Lee. Whereas Lee, however, often dresses to pass—as stereotyped figures or subcultural archetypes—Warren primps to fail; whether made up as a scaly carnay (*Untitled [Self Portrait, Smoking Mermaid]*, 2006) or a sleepy, sultry girl on a plane (*Untitled [Self Portrait, Tupac]*, 2006), she is everywhere, always herself. If Sherman and Lee are character actors, Warren is a vaudeville expressionist.

One particularly emblematic image, *Untitled (Self Portrait, Decoration Girls, Tokyo)*, 2007, which shows Warren standing miserably

shifted that dialogue from figurative expressionism to abstraction.

The allusions and references in these canvases come fast and furious. Ferris is closest to gestural mark makers like Joan Mitchell but also recalls totem lovers like Adolph Gottlieb. Her compositions' colorful dots run the gamut from pointillism and André Derain to Sigmar Polke and Ross Bleckner, with his ethereal, astral markings. They also have traits associated with the 1980s, recalling Peter Halley's Day-Glo colors (peeking out, particularly, around the edges of *Sincerely Yours*), Keith Haring's ambling lines, and Jean-Michel Basquiat's neo-primitivist scrawls. With its sprayed-on chevrons, *Aviator* might be a Kenneth Noland attacked by graffiti artists.

apart from a gaggle of teenage Harajuku girls, seems a send-up of Lee's "Projects," 1997–2001, in which the Korean-born artist poses amid generic social groups, attempting to masquerade as one of their own. Warren's goofy juxtaposition of her own face amid a messy display of Halloween masks in the two *Untitled (Self Portrait, Mask)* photographs, both 2007, could be a stab at Sherman's abjection pictures; her garish *Untitled (Self Portrait, Blue Mexican)*, 2007, a flamboyant riff on Martin Parr's series "Common Sense," 1995–99. Warren's *Normal Girl* photographs, in which she gleefully dons "normal" outfits and flourishes a fake French manicure, also gesture toward parody. But that such pictures were hung amid other, less obviously satirical ones suggests that the artist considers such examples of "criticality" as instances taken from a broader array of quasi-documentary snapshots rather than as discrete bodies of work.

Tackling the history of pictures with a quotidian joie de vivre, these photographs rub shoulders with critique but stop short of any programmatic declarations. A more succinct exhibition could have made a more convincing statement, but this one's rather indiscriminate arrangement of pictures, by turns insipid and inspired, is arguably more compelling. What, the viewer wonders, might be the reference or theoretical underpinning of *Untitled (Self Portrait, Black Cat)*, 2007, in which Warren, sporting sunglasses and a grin, pokes her face through the cutout head of a painted feline? Surely one could be found, but does it matter? Seen through Warren's lens, such questions seem pretentious and vaguely embarrassing. Don't you feel better?



Jaimie Warren, *Untitled (Self Portrait, Decoration Girls, Tokyo)*, 2007, color photograph, 8 x 10".

Warren's haphazard deployment of artifice and irony speaks to a certain established, perhaps uniquely American, code of authenticity. Why are we not surprised to find that Warren, based in Kansas City, Missouri, has her own wildly inclusive, kid-friendly, traveling variety troupe (called Whoop Dee Doo) that features an outrageous cast of oddball characters? Of course she has a fun-loving rock band that played the night of the exhibition's opening, and of course the police arrived shortly into the set to bust up the party. She is Jack Smith by way of the B-52s and the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black. Her originality has precedents. If Warren had never been born, John Waters would have invented her. Or so, perhaps, she'd like us to think; she is an earnest student of camp.

Contrived and yet wholly authentic, Warren's images seem representative of a period in which cameras have become principal facilitators of self-presentation. One can't help but imagine her works among the vast corpus of self-portraits free-floating around the Internet; a few Jaimie Warrens might make this world of Tila Tequilas and lonelygirl15s more interesting.

—David Velasco