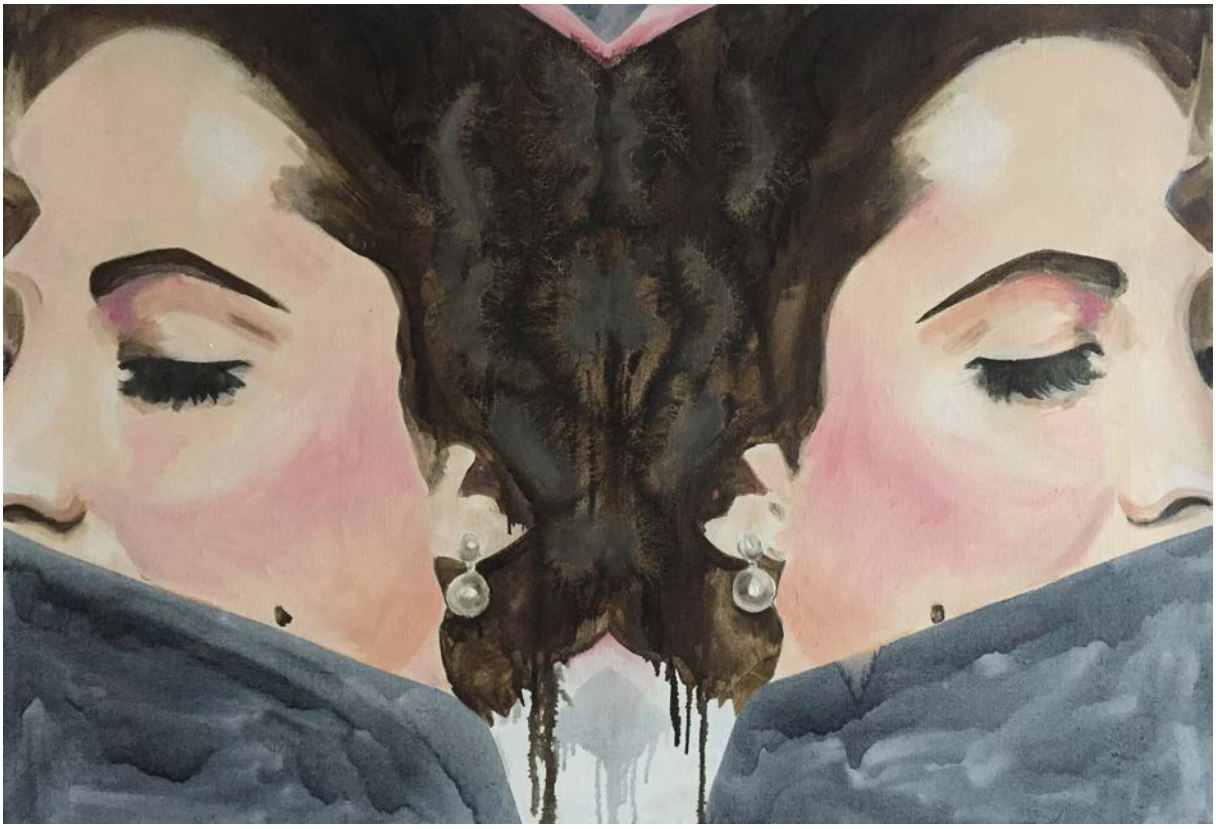
Cathy Lomax: *Painting the Scene of the Self.*

By Paul O'Kane

Spring 2017



Double Visions (Secret Ceremony), 2017, oil on linen, 54.5x80cm

INTRODUCTION

Modernity brings with it manifold opportunities to review, enhance and publicise the self. Photography, film, video, TV, social networks, fashion, and advertising all reflect an accelerated, mediated world of screens and glass, enhanced by increasingly intense illuminations. If Shakespeare's Renaissance world was a "stage" then today's is a labyrinthine scenario populated by personae, plots, and plays within plays, prompting

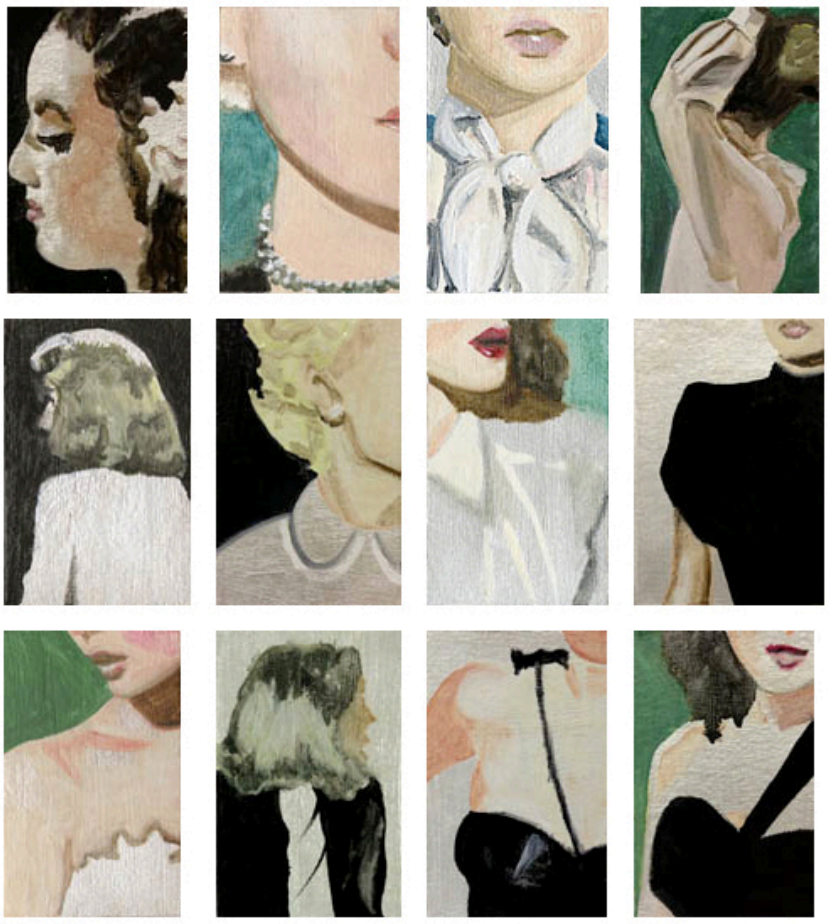
constantly updated performances based on hurriedly written scripts. We spend our time traversing a veritable Versaille made of malls and multiple media and are thus unable to help ourselves glamourize the self, its context and narrative. And yet, despite a constant rapport with spectacular visibility, deep down we may quietly concede that the self remains a 'blind spot' within our perception, an absence or *aporia*, around which, and *because of* which we construct the self as a protective and shapely shell for a vulnerable, aqueous creature.

In 19th century Paris, the quasi-Impressionist / quasi-Realist Gustave Caillebotte painted the fashion-conscious bourgeoisie in their newly rebuilt city like characters on a stage, intensely conscious of all 'appearances'. In 1960s London, quasi-POP painter Patrick Caulfield celebrated his own newly technologized environment, made graphic, glossy and bright by designers utilizing fashionable plastics and textiles. Meanwhile numerous late 20th century and early 21st century artists also alluded to the modern phenomenon of a spectacularised and optical self. Think of Bas Jan Ader, crying to camera, Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills,* or Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests*. Then there are Jo Spence's intimate, in-camera journals, and Tracy Emin's video confessionals. We could also include a cinematic phase of Peter Doig's early work evoking an endless night-in with a rented DVD, or, more recent works by online artist's, including Petra Cortright, Jon Rafman, Amalia Ullman, Ryan Trecartin, Jesse Darling and Erica Scourti, who candidly articulate life online.

Into and through the 21st century's hall of cultural, technological and psychological mirrors, Cathy Lomax practices her painting, occasionally also delving into installation and assemblage.[1] But her approach to painting and to cinema is usually singled-out as the most notable means by which she critically examines our heavily mediated *milieu*. Her modest sized, mostly matt, deadpan and slightly wan pictures provide a softly spoken translation of a

culture unavoidably influenced by drama, glitz and glamour.

We could further contextualize Lomax's painting among a range of contemporary painters for whom she expresses admiration. Kerry James Marshall, Donna Huddlestone, Kai Althoff, Mamma Anderson and Ella Kruglyanskaya all meet with the artist's approval. Then there are more historical figures, including Massimo Capigli and Domenico Gnoli, and a respectful adoration of Piero della Francesca, master of the Italian Renaissance, whose famously graceful palette and subtle line is emulated by Lomax's own luminosity and lightness of touch.



Collect the Set, 2013, oil on card, 8x4cm each

As an accomplished, prize-winning artist, with a specialist focus, Cathy Lomax brings a subjective perspective to bear upon the heterogeneous and fragmented archive of cinema, in

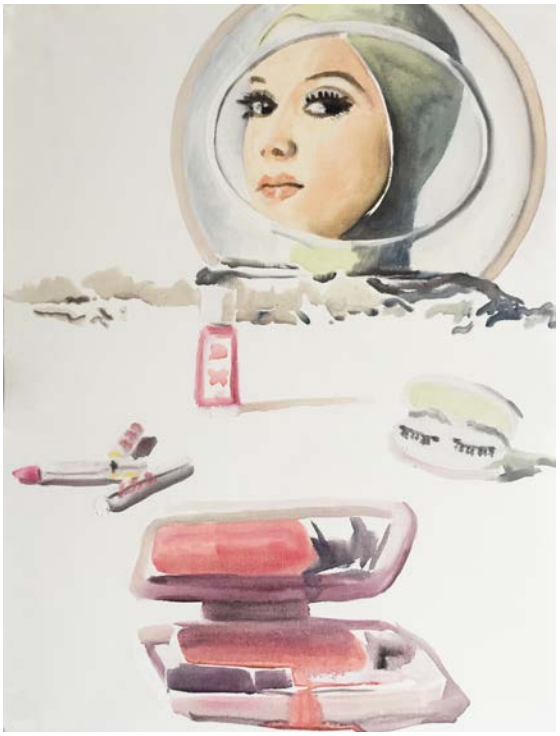
which we all have a stake. In doing so she makes a claim for herself that is simultaneously made for all of us. Often using series', sequences and grids Lomax invites us behind the scenes of her own fascination with painting and cinema, testing and probing the style and look of movies and 'stars', narratives and scenes, costume and make-up, gesture and dialogue. She thereby implicates a certain performative aspect of identity influencing all of our 21st century lives.

GLAMOUR

Within her wider practices Lomax has turned her attention to creating a literalised version of a 'glass menagerie',[2] while in many painted series she invokes mirrors, adverts, tights and foundation cream, persistently deploying her water-thin oil paint as a means by which to critique and explore the peculiar and elusive value of glamour. [3] But what is glamour? It may be a psychological costume, protecting the self from imminent threat, lack, or loss of value. In an environment that assails us with spectacular, large-scale, and now 'Hi-Res' ideals of beauty, designed to make us grasp for a concocted ideal, glamour is perhaps a personally constructed and conducted aura, projecting the self beyond the self. It protects us from a fear of being overlooked, ignored, and ultimately of not existing at all.

'Glamour' may have seem to have some slightly sleazy or anachronistic associations, and yet Lomax suggests its influence is pervasive. It may be modern but could also be common to all times, places, and cultures. It is not the same thing as beauty, not e.g. a category of aesthetic experience to which the austere philosopher Immanuel Kant gave any critical attention. Charles Baudelaire (d. 1867) however, spawning his early theories of modern art, did praise

make-up as a non-natural element of modern beauty, while implicitly theorizing glamour in his analysis of the modern dandy. But we *are* most likely to find the term clearly affirmed and explicitly used within the enunciations of the media-savvy, postmodern, and unabashedly consumerist artist Andy Warhol.[4]



Space Face, 2016, oil on paper, 46x36cm

Max Factor Magic, 2016, oil on paper, 46x36cm

Glamour may then inform a male world as much as a male view of the female world, and yet it is difficult to deny that glamour is, or has been - in recent cultural memory at least - a constant and crucial consideration, in some way influencing how women see *themselves* and how women are seen. Glamour is not just the presence of a 'star' or celebrity, but rather a form of self-preservation and self-affirmation by means of which we each 'carry off' an identity with a certain confidence, and if possible, *panache*. It does not require a stage, a public space, or even an external audience, any mirror or reflective surface will do, and even in the absence of reflections, the self, perceiving *its*elf both from within and from without,

irrepressibly adds narrative, pathos, drama and glamour to any life, however barren or baroque, enabling us to make a 'scene' of any situation.[5]

BLACK VENUS

Our identity, for whose appropriate image we often seek in vain, may ultimately reside, not in any particular event or frozen image but in fleeting, fugitive gestures and their momentary reception by others. Meanwhile, painting is capable of bringing to bear on any quest for beauty and identity, its very own means of composing and fixing a mercurial material image, hardening into stilled permanence as its initial shining liquidity 'dries down'.

Identities are not only frustratingly elusive but also demand an indeterminate future, a way forward, a narrative or adventure that refuses any closed, narrow or over-familiar road. Identity insists on maintaining a way, real or imagined, by means of which we can, or hope to continue becoming and reforming. Any search for a satisfactory identity thus relies on mobility and we negotiate and create changes in our world by refusing immobilizing interpretations imposed upon us, either by others or by our own established understanding of the self.

Cathy Lomax's *Black Venus* highlights a consistent interplay in her practices between popular cultural, material references and a psychological analysis of what we are here calling 'the scene of the self'.[6] This painting confronts us with the painted image of an elevated, yet precariously balanced figure. A glossy black torso represents a woman, who holds her head proudly and wears a glamorous halter-necked gown but is grounded by an absence of legs. This immobilsation may account for the awkwardness of her arms as they hold each other defensively across the body.

Black Venus, oil on linen, 2014-15, 60x40cm

To be immobilized threatens to condemn us to the status of an object, denied the freedom to escape, diminishing us as the passive object of any more mobile, active and thereby empowered gaze. Any declaration of the interest of others may seem welcome, and yet, like sunlight or 'the (real or metaphorical) spotlight', if intense or direct it soon renders us blind, inhibiting our ability even to see ourselves. As we become the diminished and immobilized object of an other's gaze it reduces us, not only to something judged (and invariably pre-judged), but to something seen, *only seen*, and thereby – we might say- to a 'scene',

Lomax's *Black Venus* is a multi-media persona, a painting of a female figure that appears to have previously been cast, carved or modelled. The resulting hybrid sits awkwardly, somewhere between an academic, sculptural tradition of busts and lay figures and the perennial use by artists (from de Chirico through to contemporary artist Cathy Wilkes) of retail or dressmaker's manikins.[7]

In the context of Lomax's wider, cinematic practices *Black Venus* also echoes the aspirational and curvaceous figure of the Oscars statuette, coveted by so many aspiring actors. And yet *Black Venus* suggests an elusive grail that even the greatest actor could never expect to collect from a podium.[8] The work's title was taken from a short story by Angela Carter (d. 1992), a tale inspired, in its turn, by Charles Baudelaire's heady poetic references to his 'exotic' lover Jeanne Duval. But Lomax's *Black Venus* seems to play down any further racial implications that might reverberate within the title. It does not refer in any clear way to either of the movies of that name (one from 2010 by Abdellatif Kechiche and another made in 1981 by Claude Mulot), nor does the female figure we see here suggest the famous Sarah Baartman (d. 1815) to whom the 'Black Venus' title was first applied as an othering sobriquet. The 'black' in '*Black Venus*' might nevertheless suggest some form of inversion, perhaps leading us to see this figure as a negative trophy, an inverted identity, or the ungraspable grail of a prescribed ideal of beauty.

'Venus' embodies only a very particular idea of beauty, one bound-up both with classical mythology and the male gaze. For a woman in a patriarchally infused and dominated society aspirations to 'Venus' might inevitably be connected with identity, but identity and beauty are clearly separable. Meanwhile 'beauty' and the particular beauty proffered as and by

'Venus', are also different things. If, in Lomax's painting, 'Venus', as a signifier of classical, mythical beauty, is 'blackened' and thereby negated, reversed or inverted, it might be thus transformed from a passive, elusive, desirable ideal into an autonomous, 'owned' and claimed territory. A form of *détournement* is implied, i.e. a creative, critical strategy (derived from the mid 20th century Situationist art movement), whereby we can take what is aimed at us – an acquisitive, prejudicial, racist or xenophobic gaze; a term of abuse; unwanted advertising that we find offensive – and turn its power back on itself, forcing it to do *our* work for us and no longer its own work *on* us. By means of this strategy we can also demand that any such *détourned* imposition takes a long hard look at itself and reflects critically on its own assumptions.

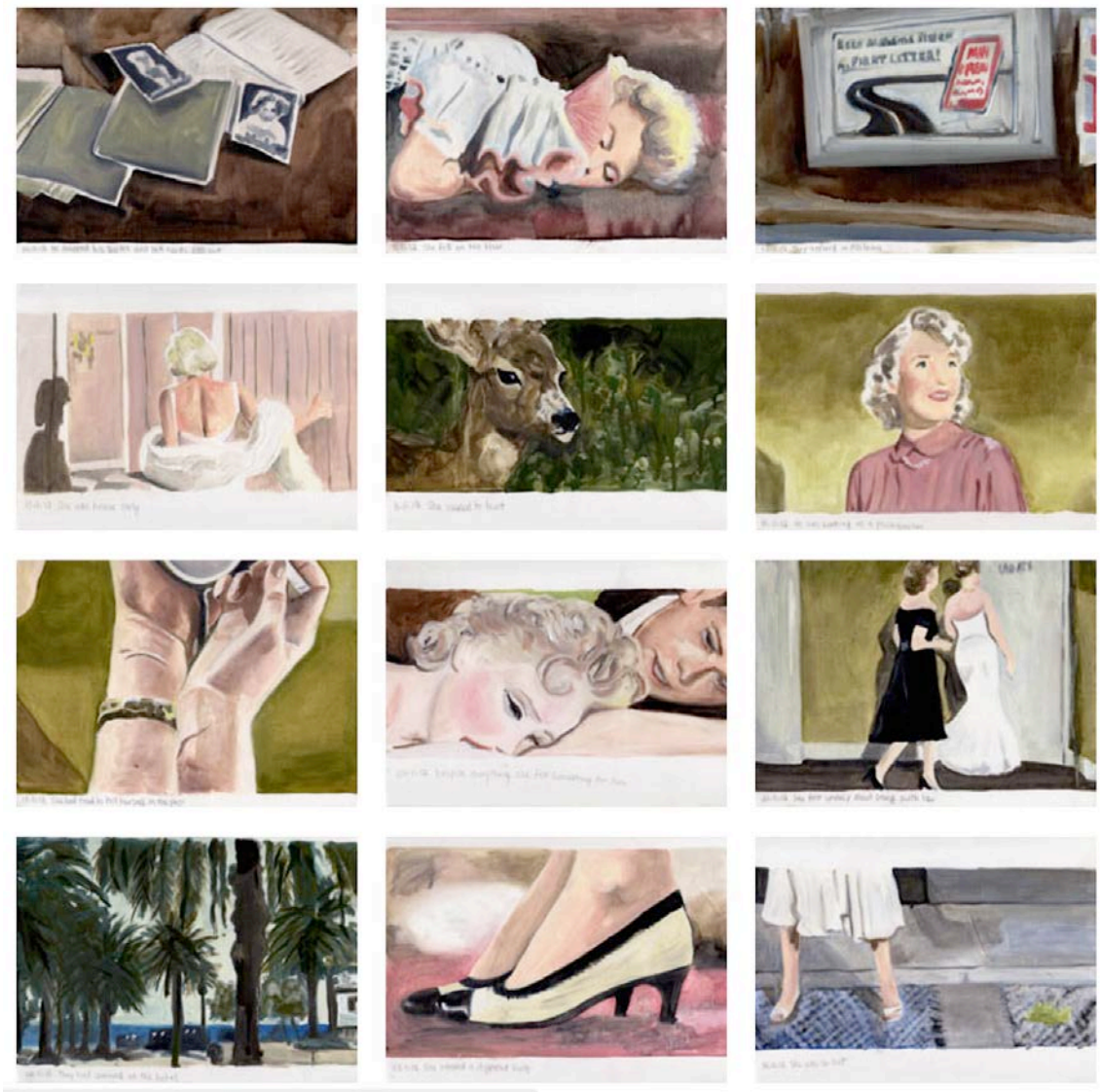
Perched on its plinth, laid on its canvas, and hung in a show, Cathy Lomax's *Black Venus* (2014-15) is only as powerful as it is precarious, only as elevated as it is endangered. Any status that its central figure may have acquired by being sculpted, painted and plinthed is tempered and troubled by a pink and grey, 'retro' looking, candy-striped backdrop, a curtain or veil tumbling down the canvas in runny paint like rain on a window. As it runs it appears to make its way behind and in front of, over and through both figure and its support, thereby playing with our perception of painted space, confusing any clear distinction of figure and ground, and alluding to the painting as both image and object. The dribbling journey of these candy stripes thus breaks the 'fourth wall' of Lomax's painting, affording us a special insight, taking us 'behind the scenes' of its 'production'.

FILM DIARY

Painting has never had to shoulder the same modern burden of 'forensic' proof that we might associate with mechanically reproduced photographic and cinematic images. Rather, painting

retains hand-made traces of pre-modern, less secular, and less scientific – though more magical and alchemical - times and cultures, through and beyond which it has grown and evolved its very own history of technical variations and styles. Painting might then, for the 21st Century, preserve and maintain a particular space for imaging and imagination, a special site for depicting a 'certain' uncertainty that we value and need to retain. At a time when an extensive and varied archive of historical technologies is readily available to us, we might wish to question or rebalance any claim to predominance made by new technologies, high resolution, VR, and other 'new media' which, if unchallenged might colonise, monopolise, and *un*balance, not only notions of beauty and identity but our understanding of reality too.

In 1998, *avant-garde* filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard completed his *Histoire(s) Du Cinema* (made available as a DVD boxed set). The relatively new technology of video has increasingly allowed us all, not just this notoriously progressive director, to review - in an inspired, experimental, but inevitably valedictory mode – our various stories of a medium that has shaped our times and which those of a certain generation acknowledge as a formative passion. [9] But cinema, in its purest form, may be slipping inexorably into the past, under pressure from newer technologies that are increasingly crowding it out, even as they extend, disperse, usurp and mimic it. Moving images today occupy the tiny screens of hand-held and laptop devices, every bus stop is replete with its own animated hoarding, and even automated cash registers can entertain a captive queue with quasi-cinematic clips. Thus we are less and less able to avoid or forget the influence of the moving image on our lives, even if we more rarely visit an actual cinema or watch a whole movie without pausing, replaying, slowing, skipping or scrubbing through.



Film Diary #39 (10.11.12 – 26.11.12), 2014, oil on paper, 12x (23x30.5)cm

Cathy Lomax's paintings are a reflection of *this* age of cinema, the age perhaps of *post*-cinema. Her selections might appear comparable with the actions of a religious devotee or fan, but closer inspection reveals that the artist is not obsessed with any particular star, director or movie but rather dedicated to exploring a certain tension between the ancient art of painting and what might be the fading 'star' of cinema itself, a modern culture and technology that might just have seen its apotheosis come and go.

Movies, in their original form, were inherently fragmentary and kaleidoscopic, made of thousands of frames (up to 24 per second)[10], and still come sliced into edits, trailers, clips and posters, imprinting themselves on our identity and memory as so many fragments - scenes, poses, gestures, quotes and 'stills'. We tend to register relatively brief cinematic images as iconic, and yet, in doing so, seem to contradict cinema's fundamental contrivance of tricking the eye into believing it sees movement reproduced when what it actually sees is a rapid procession of frozen tableaux.

As if to illustrate and perhaps compare, painting's and cinema's rich dialogues, between still and moving, single and multiple images, Cathy Lomax, in *Film Diary* (one of her many expansive series) paints a single scene from every movie she watches.[11] These relatively modest, relatively quickly executed paintings then become sequences and grids, growing, over the years, into a large, personal, and inevitably also a public archive, of film celebrated and investigated by painting.

Movies might begin, narrate, and work their way to an ending, but Lomax's outtakes isolate and suspend a moment of broken cine-time that consequently exists both beyond the clutches of any intended narrative and beyond the technology for which its original narrative value was designed. In rendering selected cinematic scenes as 'stills' Lomax transforms a fraction of a movie made, seen, and apparently familiar, into a state of renewed potential, strangeness, and possibility. She makes a memory of a memory, hand-crafting keepsakes of fleeting scenes originally made for and by a very different technology.

The *Film Diary* series, based on subjectively chosen, re-viewed, and partially remembered scenes, becomes an archive of further edits, sequestrations and dislocations that divert their

cinematic source into a both pre- and post-cinematic condition, so that what might look like excerpts from a 20th century storyboard also have affinities with the 21st century boom in graphic novels. The results are unique to Lomax, even as they subtly implicate further art historical references and precedents, including Edward Hopper, that arch-American, arch-cinematic painter who, most obviously, painted usherettes, theatre audiences, and his famous night cafes with panoramic windows, but also described, with a narrative swish, trepidatious arrival in a city and isolated clapboard houses that seem to have influenced Hitchcock's *Psycho.*

Meanwhile, we can locate an update on the so-called 'Hopper-esque' aesthetic in the paintings of Alex Katz, whose spartan, stylish scenes, and flattened figuration seem to owe their deoxygenated atmosphere as much to the 'silver screen' as to TV or the pages of glossy magazines. Lomax's work, like that of Hopper or Katz, is inescapably imbued with enigmatic temporal tension, a beguiling narrativity and other 'cinematic' qualities. As such it speaks of our inescapable immersion in a highly mediated environment, and of the way in which painting, as much as our experience of time, have become irresistibly influenced by cinema.[12]

OPENING NIGHT

In search of one, appropriate and relevant movie to select from the rambling history of this exemplary popular culture, I soon alight on *Opening Night* (1977), directed by John Cassavetes. It is one of my own favourites and a film to which Cathy Lomax has previously responded, both in painting and in her own written reflections[13]. *Opening Night* is a film in which the so-called 'fourth wall' of any theatrically constructed illusion is not only broken but irrevocably dissolved, and in a way that is difficult to articulate. The result is a sublime

work of art. It fascinates and enthralls without allowing us to easily embrace its idiosyncratic value.

This film makes its very own agonistic interplay between cinema and theatre, allowing us 'behind the scenes' of every scene, then drawing us further, into a labyrinth of internal narratives (none of which could comfortably be called a 'subplot'), leading only to unreliable sources in the psyches of the film's various characters, each of whom seem helplessly dependent on each other. Cassavetes thus presents us with an unusually sophisticated *mise-en-abyme* wherein both cinema and theatre seem to collapse before our eyes, only to produce what many critics and fans of movie history nevertheless regard as a masterpiece.[14]

Gena, 2015, oil on paper, 30.5x41cm

Ultimately, this interplay of film and theatre, the exposed and potentially farcical shenanigans of assembled script-writers, producers, stage-managers, actors, audience and the director, exemplifies what we are here calling 'the scene of the self' - i.e. an understanding of identity that is inherently dramatic, gestural, posed, modelled, theatrically mediated, and, when and

where possible, glamorous. But to think of *Opening Night* is also to think of a woman. Despite memorable performances by Ben Gazzara, Ray Powers, John Tuell, Paul Stewart, and Cassavetes himself, it is Gena Rowlands's character, Myrtle Gordon, who indisputably maintains the central and leading role. She is a late 20th century, Medea-like figure who draws all eyes to focus on her increasingly impassioned and disheveled countenance as she brings the pillars of an unsustainable self, along with those upholding a contrived tradition of theatrical representation, crashing down around her own, irrepressible personal narrative. For a film that appears in every way anarchic, self-reflexive, self-destructive, and deconstructive Myrtle/Rowlands is undeniably its 'star', its hero, or anti-hero. It is not difficult then, to interpret *Opening Night* - despite its male director - as describing not only the 'scene of the self' but the staging of womanhood. It is the very complexity, *in*consistency and *un*reliability of Myrtle; of her performance by Gina Rowlands; and of the performance, in turn, *by* Myrtle *of* Nancy (probably the character referred to as '*The Second Woman'* in the play's title); it is this labyrinthine inconsistency and unreliability that proves so 'unprofessional' and disruptive to everyone else involved (mostly men with various forms of power invested, but also one or two women who similarly depend upon the lead's performance and the play's success).

My own most salient memory of any particular image from *Opening Night* is of Rowlands' character Myrtle Gordon removing her sunglasses to reveal a pair of battered eyes. However, memory is as much a disorganized museum as it is a stage, on which elements of recall compete for attention and strive to convince us of their reality. Therefore, in remembering this image I am at first unsure just what state Myrtle's eyes were really in, what it was that may have brought her eyes to such a battered condition, and even when, or if, she actually *did* remove her sunglasses? Furthermore, what I tend to think of as a singular, more or less still

image will eventually, and inevitably, manifest itself as a moving image, a scene, and a gesture – 'the removing of sunglasses'. This particular gesture then begins to appear to me to be particularly '20th century', extremely cinematic, and, I suspect, also strongly associated with women. In fact it is surely used, not only here, but in so many movies that I may just have my memories confused? I briefly ponder the possibility of tracking down every incidence of this gesture and (in the style of Christian Marclay's video artwork '*The Clock'*, 2010) compiling a celebratory montage.

For us to remove sunglasses in mid-conversation is inevitably (also echoing artist Cindy Sherman's long-running *Untitled Stills* project) to make a citation from movie culture. It might be described as a 'reveal', a dramatic celebration of sight itself, bravely showing the self-as-eye (my eyes as my 'true' self) to the eyes of others. It thus suggests a momentary demonstration of undisguised truth in our heavily mediated world. To remove sunglasses is also to banish fear: fear of others, fear of truth, fear of light, and even fear of any real and hidden blindness that a pair of large dark glasses might disguise.[15] To remove sunglasses is akin to awakening, 'opening', to the drawing aside of curtains, the raising (or 'erasing') of 'blinds', banishing darkness and ending night. But it also evokes cinema itself, reminding us of a 'wipe', or fade-in, from darkness to light, or even the removal of a lens cap, an essential gesture necessary to the initiation of each and every cinematic adventure. To remove sunglasses is, in short, an 'exposure', an 'appearance'.[16]

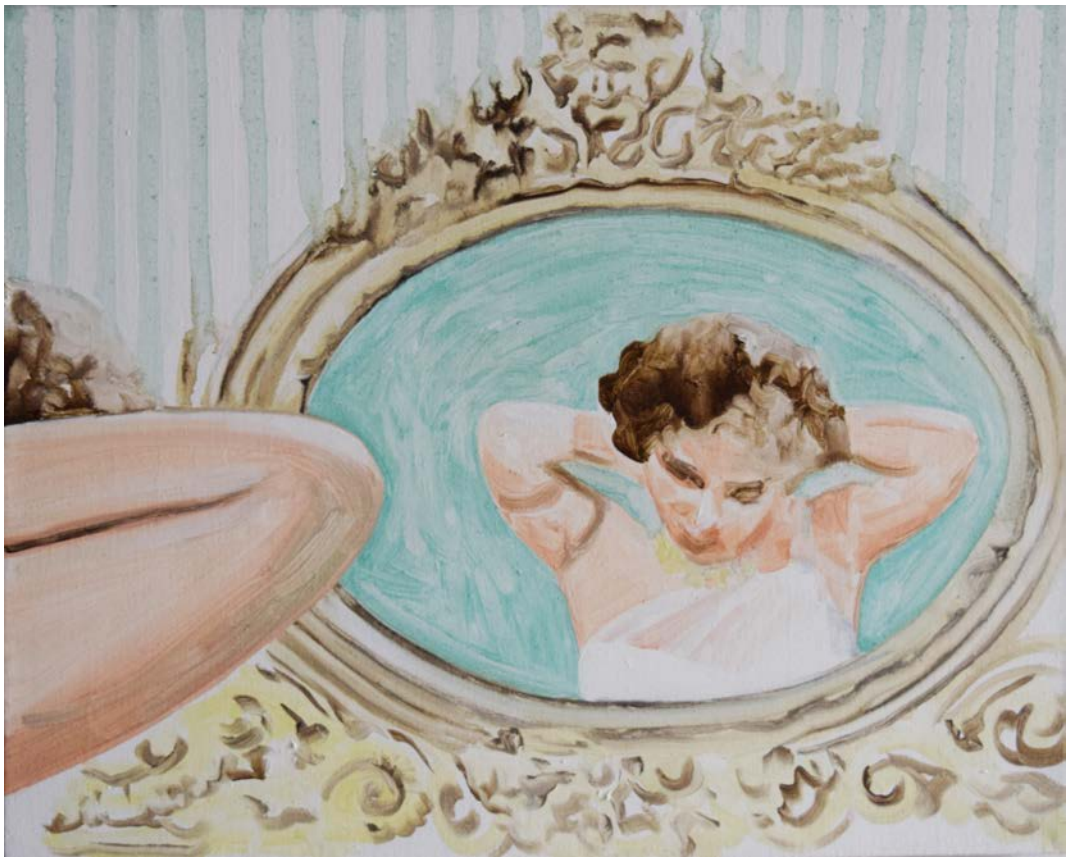
Setting aside these ramifications, premised, after all, only on a vague, unreliable memory, further research reveals that at one point in *Opening Night*, Myrtle's sunglasses are indeed thoroughly broken, in fact one lens is completely knocked out, emphasizing her chaotic state between success and failure, glamour and abjection, youth and ageing, art and life. Then, in a

YouTube clip from the movie, Ben Gazzara's character, Manny, is found at a café table, speaking close to Myrtle's face. He tells Myrtle that she is: "… a woman I find attractive beyond comprehension …" then exclaims: "Jesus Christ!" as Myrtle removes her sunglasses revealing numerous grazes around her eyes, simultaneously announcing: "Manny, I'm In trouble… I'm not acting…"

PERENNIAL PERFORMATIVITY

Event, gesture, icon, frame, mirror, drama and scene, all of these seem crucial to Cathy Lomax's unique commentary on film and painting, identity and beauty, glamour and womanhood. By illustrating what we have here called the 'scene of the self', and by using the ancient art of painting, in dialogue with movies, Lomax reminds us that our relationship with some form of theatricality is unavoidable and intractable, and not just in an age of cinema, of Warhol's Marilyns, of celebrities, selfies and re-issue Polaroid cameras, but as far back as pre-modern peoples whose behaviour and sense of self was also, perhaps equally, informed by dramatised narratives of heroes and gods.

Identity also relies on memory, short and long term, natural and mechanical, an elongated thread, a trail of crumbs, a series of scenes and images by means of which we retain some form and consistency amounting to a self. Memory has been significantly enhanced and informed by the arts of painting, drawing, sculpting, storytelling and writing, then by photography and cinema's mechanical reproductions, and now also by digital reproductions and the manifold archives they have exponentially multiplied even as they appear to poke us into the future. The resulting repertoire of gestures, scenes, costumes and styles, sets, performances and 'lines' these arts and technologies bequeath to us, are synthesized in and as increasingly complex identities.

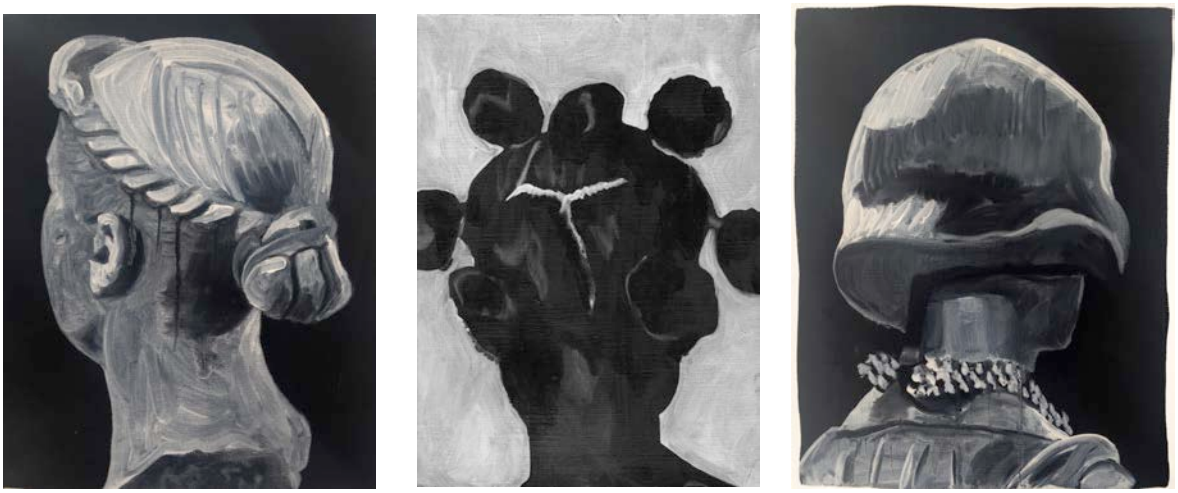


Hooking Up, 2017, oil on linen, 40x50cm

Meanwhile, various identity-theorists, feminist theorists, post-human theorists, and gender-theorists, most notably Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, but also, in his own way, Jean Baudrillard, have set before us notions of identity that are no-longer essential, 'real' or even human but rather accumulations of image, iteration, prosthesis and event, performance and performativity - and when and where all becomes performance, there and then all also becomes audience.

However, many apparently innovative and progressive ideas often turn out to be perennial, not just recent revelations, and so it may prove that our understanding of identity has, in one way or another, always been sceno-graphed, story-boarded and narrated. Perhaps we have

always lived ‘dramatic’ lives, the self forever unfolding its narrative, in a sequence of more or less memorable scenes. Consider e.g. the ‘scenic’ implications of the title of the classic Freudian paper ‘*A Child Is Being Beaten’* (1919). Meanwhile Aristotle’s theory of art as ‘cathartic’ suggests that the self, and the health of the self (as well as society and the health of society) relies on an intense dialogue, *not* with modern facts, stats, news, proof and evidence but with a tradition of dramas and narratives, designed to manipulate the emotions and thereby stimulate personal and social moral debate.



Belladonna series (*Nodus & Vitta*, *Mkpuk Eba*, *Karen*), 2014, oil and acrylic on paper, 30x23cm each

Today it is often said that we inhabit a ‘post-factual’ or ‘post-truth’ world, but just a generation ago we were equally impressed by Jean Baudrillard’s interpretation of postmodern culture as the scene of the death of the real. Thus the real, truth, proof and facts, along with ideas of beauty, glamour, and identity, do not necessarily exist in themselves, or at least other than as malleable and historical concepts. Their credibility waxes and wanes with varying legitimacy and changing levels of clarity as each manifestation is informed by equally varying technological, social and economic change. Thus today’s fact or truth, beauty or

identity soon becomes tomorrow's tale or myth, while what we call 'history' is only the greatest of these stories, or their compound accumulation.

Ultimately, and unavoidably, every moment, of each of our lives, the very inhabitation of our presence, our existence, becomes, on closer scrutiny, an 'opening', an 'exposure', an 'appearance' for which we are rarely well prepared. Each time we speak or awaken we subliminally experience a more or less voluntary movement of lips and blinking of eyes akin to the operations of a camera's or projector's shutter. The daily drawing aside of bedroom curtains announces the start of another unpredictable episode in an "enacted biography". [17] Our context is a *mise-en-scene*, and our utterances are heard, not least by our own ears, as so many, more or less well delivered 'lines'. Meanwhile, somewhere, someone (and if no one else then certainly that mysterious 'blind spot' we call the self) is always watching, watching the self, *the very same self*, always, evaluating and negotiating identity.

In Cathy Lomax's *Black Venus*, as in her series *Film Diary,* and in John Cassavetes' *Opening Nigh*t, images and scenes conspire, critically, self-consciously, reminding us that, even if we concur with a theatrical and cinematic interpretation of identity, we may, nevertheless be left with the age-old question of the extent to which we are able to determine, guide, shape, 'script' or 'produce' any adequate, convincing, hopefully inspired performance of self. Our attempts may, after all, become 'hammy' or stale. It is always a telling moment, and one from which profound self-knowledge can be gleaned, when our own dramatic outburst reverberates within us with hollow familiarity, and our internal narrative (oedipal, paranoid, pious, scheming and desirous, envious, hysterical and occasionally ecstatic) flinches and shrinks under the scrutiny of a front-row critic, who turns out to be just one more member of

the cast of a shaky, underfunded and unrehearsed production that is our very own 'scenic' self.

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[1] Cathy Lomax also publishes a regular zine '*Arty*' plus an arts journal '*Garageland*' and is currently pursuing a PhD in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London.
In partnership with Alex Michon and Alli Sharma she also runs *Transition* gallery, London, programming and curating its exhibitions and events.

[2] Here explicitly referencing Tennessee Williams, who might also lurk somewhere in the historical influences on John Cassavetes' psychodramatic movie *Opening Night* (see below)

[3] Cathy Lomax recommends: '*Glamour: a history*', by Stephen Gundle,
New York, Oxford University Press, 2008. And see also '*A Note on Glamour*, by Susan Wilson, in Fashion Theory, Volume 11, Issue 1, pp. 95-108.

[4] In the 'Art' chapter of his 'Philosophy …' Warhol writes of the 'glamorous risks' taken by artists in proffering and speculating on the new. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol : (from A to B and back again)* by Andy Warhol, Penguin Modern Classics, London, 2007.

[5] *The Scene of the Self* by Paul O'Kane, in: *'This 'Me' of Mine: Self, Time & Context in the Digital Age*' Ed. J. Boyer, Pub Xlibris, 2013, pp.12- 19.

[6] See previous footnote.

[7] See *Silent Partners: Artist & Mannequin from function to fetish,* exhibition held at Fitzwilliam Musuem, Cambridge, UK, 14 Oct 2014 —25 Jan 2015, and at Musée Bourdelle, Paris 31 March —12 July 2015.

[8] It is strangely appropriate then that '*Black Venus'* is the painting that won Cathy Lomax the Contemporary British Painting prize, 2016, for which this essay is also being written.

[9] In 2011 cinema theorist and historian Mark Cousins made *The Story of Film: An Odyssey,* his own reflective TV series (also available as a boxed set), based on the 2004 book of the same name, describing the complex arc of cinema's global history. The emergence of these two projects seems to signal the end of an era.

[10] A technical notion exploited with comprehensive, creative, cultural and philosophical depth in: *Death 24 x a second: stillness and the moving image*, by Laura Mulvey, London: Reaktion Books, 2006.

[11] Alex Michon wrote insightfully about Lomax's '*Film Diary'* series in her article '*Film Stilled*', in *Garageland* 14: *Film*, pp. 35-38.

[12] Suggestive of Gilles Deleuze's suggestions re cinema's influence on the possibilities of philosophical thinking in *Cinema 1: the movement-image* by Gilles Deleuze London, Athlone, 1986, and also: *Cinema 2: the time-image* by Gilles Deleuze, London, Athlone, 1989.

[13] See: '*I seem to have lost the reality of the … reality'*, article by Cathy Lomax, in Garageland issue 19 - *Self* pp. 65 – 68.

[14] In the final scene of the movie, the 'fourth wall' is even more comprehensively ruptured by the casual appearance on set of Cassavetes' contemporary and/or mentor Peter Bogdanovich, who, six years earlier, constructed his own self-reflexive cine-masterpiece *The Last Picture Show*, which could perhaps be regarded as a cine-historical 'bookend' to *Opening Night*. [14]

[15] Here, I also think of the touching, compelling and inspiring movie '*Notes on Blindness*' 2016, adapted with extraordinary sensitivity and invention by director Peter Middleton, from the book of the same name by John Hull.

[16] Kaja Silverman, in her essay 'Suture: the cinematic model' (see: *Identity: a reader*, edited by Paul du Gay *et al*, published by Sage / Open University, 2000, pp. 76 – 86) refers to the moment in Hitchcock's *Psycho* when the traffic cop, with large mirrored 'shades', does *not* remove his sunglasses. This evokes an ancient sign of foreboding, and suggests Lacan's concept of 'The Real', a terrifying state of human experience beyond

language and yet nevertheless immanent. Cathy Lomax also mentions the repeated image of large sunglasses appearing in Alex Katz's paintings, as well as a prevalence of spectacles in the paintings of Luc Tuymans.

[17] See: *Legend, myth and magic in the image of the artist: a historical experiment,* by Ernst Kris and Ottow Kurz; New Haven ; Yale University Press, 1979.