

# LE MAXIMUM

Gillian Steiner

*Blind for Love*

December 10, 2022 - January 22, 2023

In “Une Femme Mariée,” Jean-Luc Godard’s 1964 film critiquing consumer culture, a woman is obsessed with various gadgets and snake oils that might give her bigger breasts. We witness her pursuit in vain. She flips endlessly through lingerie catalogs, runs her fingers over magazine advertisements and watches commercials on television. She observes other women’s bodies, always considering her own. In one scene, she stands in front of a billboard of her ideal bust while a pop song plays with the lyrics, *when the film is sad it makes me cry*. With a stylish poise, Godard notes the ways in which images exploit our desires, arouse, and evoke self-consciousness.

In Gillian Steiner’s new body of work *Blind for Love*, the photographer hones in on a similar feminine self-consciousness and rituals in pursuit of youth. Steiner’s graceful, probing eye lingers on moments of banality in the performance of these rituals. Girls in matching white dresses sit in waiting focused on their cell phones, uniform skirts wade through a hallway of deflating balloons. A grimacing teenager with black dust on her forehead, the Christian tradition alluding to Christ’s crucifixion and subsequent eternal life, is juxtaposed with the sterile office of a plastic surgeon, the setting for another kind of pursuit of eternity.

A couple of weeks ago Gillian and I were in Las Vegas where every act is a ritual accompanied by a system of symbols. Ace is eleven. Money is a plastic circle. Colors are numbers. My body is good luck. Over bloody marys on our way out of town, Gillian and I discussed the way we never felt more in possession of our bodies, aware of their value and worth as a kind of object. Never were we more conscious of our youth, our femininity, both their power and precarity. In Vegas, no one lets you forget it. During this conversation, someone interrupted us to take our photo. Flattered, we posed only to learn that we had to pay for the picture.

When the film is sad, it makes me cry.

—*Gracie Hadland*

Gillian Steiner (born in Los Angeles, CA) received an MFA from ArtCenter College of Design in 2020. *Blind for Love* is her second solo exhibition in Los Angeles.