

"Girl Watcher Lens" was one part of my MFA show at UCSD in 1972 under the heading of Surveillance. The "Lens" was also used at the same time to photograph students talking with each other (about revolution, of course) which I intended to work up into another part with a kind of police state frame; the antiwar movement at the time was under significant recorded monitoring with still and moving cameras, microphones and phone taps by local and national police agencies. That "part" just did not get done in time for show and I moved on after it.

"Girl Watcher Lens" started with the ad exhibited and purchase of the lens. I needed a telephoto lens anyway to fill out my camera equipment and it was very inexpensive.

By 1972, feminism was completely imbedded in the student movement at UCSD. National movement literature attention was robust with the issues of gender equality and in, and around classes, informal groups and organizations there was a forceful presence of feminist women. And, of course, there were all the denials and push backs. I was then one of the men, young and older, who aligned with the women and considered ourselves as male feminists or, at least, fellow travelers. The "Lens" provided me an opportunity to attempt a provocative artwork which would be exhibited in the ground floor gallery of the library which appears in the background of many of the photos. Others were taken in the outdoor tables by the newly constructed Muir Campus cafeteria.

I viewed the photography as a parody of the selling point of the "Girl Watcher Lens" to male photographers. Parody, of course, can be risky in that some viewers may not "get" that intent and others who do get it may question its motives or find it problematic or even offensive anyway. I wondered what kind of reception the work would have given that the women photographed were students and many had been photographed only a few weeks earlier in the large Revelle Campus plaza right outside the gallery.

So, the strategy of "shooting" and printing was to frame women bodies in whole or in part to provide the visual cues for what I later came to know as the "male fetish." It would be a few more years before I became aware of the "gaze." I had been made aware of the fragmentizing mode of male erotic stimulation so went for it with the lens. The culture had long recognized that there were leg, breast, etc., guys and movies, magazines, etc. played to these tropes. And, it was all played out in public where even by late spring most of the women were pretty much clothed. And the gaze goes on visually, mentally, in print and in our dreams, no? But, there was little reaction to my MFA show; not even "29 Arrests" came back to me. The gallery had Work Study sitters so we were all only intermittently present for our exhibitions and the art department was a fair distance away. If I did something like this now, I would have done a lot of outreach on the campus: leaflet the plaza

frequently for one. The next fall a group of us exhibited together (in the same gallery) the "Vacation Village Trade Show: A Raw Material Piece" where a much wider representation was made with photos of photographers "shooting models," a text by Allan Sekula, an audio tape of interviews with models and photographers and several pages of camera magazine ads pretty much along the same lines as the "Girl Watcher Lens" ad. By this time, much of the "movement" had implicated capitalism into our broad social critiques.

So, what to make of a work about the male fetish and gaze by a male? On simplistic levels, there are the affective/mental sides of these things including their non-visual aspects and then there are behaviors. These all are related but in enormously varied ways socially and at the individual level of any specific male. And the reaction to all this varies quite a bit among feminist women. Also, there are distinctions that many would make between levels of sexual imagery and I provided three for consideration as examples of "Pornography": "Genteel," "Soft Core" and "Hard Core." Just using that term was an intended provocation. Are these types of images equally damaging in their impacts on women and gender relations? In the case of "Lens," is undressing selected women with our minds a gender crime? It is easiest to answer if we can point to behavior and there was no doubt in my thinking at the time that as complicate as it may be in the hearts and minds of men, we do act out. Broadly speaking, then, there are two audiences to wrestle with the implications of all this. Women were having consciousness raising groups to do just that. Us guys were (are) pretty much on our own except in our relations with women. Given the patriarchal tendency to judge women heavily on the visual, what should women who what to be judged on other attributes instead of or in addition to looks, do? Can men who want to change in their erotic attractions do so? Without going deeper than behavior, will there not be leaks and seepages into other or all relations with women but especially in the most intimate spaces?

And now? In the labor movement here one often hears, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Well, a lot has changed but I observe that the conventions of female attractiveness are pretty much the same. Certainly, Hollywood and Madison Ave. replay the same cards over and over and are to be seen all over the planet. In my mind, this indicates that social change will have to go very far to provide gender equality and I do not know how that would be possible with the existence of social classes. In a couple more years, my whole practice shifts to dealing with gender, "race," orientation, etc. within the frames of class struggle.

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