

**Naida Osline @
Grand Central Art Center**
by
Marcus Bastida

Looking at Naida Osline's photos has a similar effect as looking at a burn victim: it's a little unsettling and creepy, yet has a magnetism that hooks you and makes you want to see more. It's clear that her images are manipulated with theatrical makeup, but it doesn't matter; concealment is not the issue here.

I am also reminded of drag queens who display their gender costumes so exuberantly that they can hardly be described as disguises, rather they become part of the over-all persona. So it goes with Osline's photos. She doctors her subjects (often herself), then captures the moment with instamatic film, which itself she does not manipulate. Her subject is changed, but not in the way the make-up would initially suggest. A gash, for instance, becomes something other than a gash since it so obviously faked. The images are anonymous close-ups of body parts: an elbow, an underarm a portion of the back, a crotch, etc. Each with its own small tragedy, played out in heavy makeup.

Her photos explore self-conscious personal transformation as it relates to identity. Sometimes these transformations are clear but often they are ambiguous "What's that thing on the skin? Is it a wart, a nipple or a tumor?" The viewer gets sucked into a visual riddle with no apparent answer.

One of the striking aspects of Osline's art is the degree to which she invests herself in the subject matter and individual pieces. If her outside personality matched her art she would be a female Peter Lorre straight out of the final scenes of *M*. But she actually is a demure, soft-spoken smarty who seems to channel her creativity in a



Untitled, *Deeper Skin series* (1999-2001)

focused and thoughtful way onto the Polaroid.

Her images are beautiful and singular. Through them she evokes Cindy Sherman, *Fangoria* magazine and medical textbook photos. Her technique of transforming the subjects with makeup is a nice lo-fi contrast to the photo manipulations that we often see through either darkroom or digital technology. The questions that Osline poses with these Polaroids earned her a place in

the recent group show at Laguna Art Museum, *Cyborg Manifesto, or the Joy of Artifice*. *Deeper Skin* is her first solo exhibition and features an extensive collection of photographs that she took in 1999-2000; the exhibition provides an in-depth view of her work with Polaroids. □

Deeper Skin, Photographs by Naida Osline; Grand Central Art Center September 1-October 8; (714) 567-7233