



Naida Osline, *Untitled #50*, Polaroid print, 3-3/4" x 2-7/8", at CSU Fullerton's Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana.



Naida Osline, (top) *Untitled #34*, Polaroid print, 3-3/4" x 2-7/8"; (bottom) *Untitled #48*, Polaroid print, 3-3/4" x 2-7/8", at CSU Fullerton's Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana.

Naida Osline at CSU Fullerton's Grand Central Art Center

The meaning of the verb to "transfigure" is multifarious, opening up and out. To "figure" means, in essence,

to comprehend, to imagine. If you "figure yourself into a landscape," you insert yourself, either unwittingly, or with considerable stealth, into the scene, "figuring" perhaps no one will notice, or better yet, care. Thus, to "transfigure" requires even greater imaginative skill; the stakes are raised; the bar elevated, cloud-level. Naida Osline's photographs at CSU Fullerton's Grand Central Art Center are menacingly beautiful, divinely "transfigurative." Her photographs, Polaroids of setups, images of the human body transformed by various synthetic materials, makeup, prosthetics, etc., activate ugliness into a sort of ribald beauty, an

improbable seduction, a series of marks, the defacement of the physical documented for our witnessing, and what exactly we witness is less a series of answers than a multiplicity of unsettling questions.

Osline figures nakedness in terms of what has been cut away, and that which has been attached in place of what has gone missing. In *Untitled #48*, a man's body is shown from the waist up, his nipples incised, leaving behind two deep gashes, a bodily erasure, an eviscerated memory, an unexpected image of Machiavellian eroticism. Osline's sense of the macabre is transposed differently in each image. In *Untitled #52*, a man's face is obliterated, leaving behind a giant, Claymation-like mouth, impossibly long and seemingly quavering. The image is particularly striking and strangely comic given the fact the figure's neck and shoulders are all too human, elegant, pristine, the body's musculature clearly evident in opposition to the gruesome face which looks as though it was hit by a series of renegade banana cream pies somehow grafted onto the skin, dissolving the eyes and nose. Perhaps this is what aliens look like after a night of hard drinking, carousing and, or, a pie fight that extends the length of the universe.

What gives these images power is their unmitigated fierceness, their implicit refusal to please in any conventional sense. The images call into question the nature of desire itself, jarring our precepts, the learned conceptions we have about our bodies. But Osline goes further still, and torques our notions of comfort, predicated on staid and predictable notions of sexuality, our own private imaginings pushed under, the impulse and attraction to that which repels us, buried, driving us deeper into ourselves. These bodies seem activated beyond

themselves, as though inhabited by ghosts. In *Untitled #32*, an old woman's feet extend into the center of the frame, haunted from underneath by the image of an infant's tiny foot, disembodied; or perhaps it grows like a separate appendage from the old woman's foot. Subtle and alluring, this image is the most successful and the most haunting, imbued with quiet mystery. The slow, inevitable progression toward death is implied, embodied within the image. Yet it is also imbued with a strange, contemplative quality, as though the feet themselves were recollecting a journey, a lost beginning, its softness, then a roughness, the tenuousness of things settling in, the mounting terrors that haunt each day as it falls from a life.

Osline has a wild hope—that we will become all of what we are, wholly irreverent, at once fractured and illuminated, and embrace the schisms and contradictions inherent in human experience; that from these disruptions, we will transfigure our lives not into something better, but into a "thing" of greater texture, broadening the trajectory of our perceptions into lives that allow for uncertainty, to grief and ugliness, to the unexpected disjunctions that come all at once. Osline privileges nothing, not the human body, not her own body, laying it bare, countermanding her own desire to witness herself with the obsessive act of witnessing others. And in our witnessing of these images, it is as though she asks us to do without our predetermined assertions of how things ought to be. She asks for nothing really but that we stand for awhile in the widening distance of ourselves without turning.

—Eve Wood

Deeper Skin: Photographs by Naida Osline closed in October at CSU Fullerton's Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana.

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