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### Tart Incognito

by Jolene Torr

#### *AUTOPORTRAIT from the Reconsidered Archive of Michelle du Bois*

Eleanor Harwood Gallery  
1295 Alabama Street, San Francisco, CA 94110  
November 8, 2008 - December 12, 2008

The woman is fabulous. With her 70s Wedge hairdo and campy smile. Her provocative poses and happy hooker disposition make her almost larger than life, like Joan Collins, or a cougar with the secret to eternal youth (or the lie thereof). She called herself Michelle Dubois, an alias as flamboyant as her hair and makeup, and she is the subject of Zoe Crosher's current exhibit at the Eleanor Harwood Gallery.



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The collection of photographs are a found archive of this sexually liberated and adventurous woman who traveled around the Pacific Rim in the 70s. Crosher re-purposed and contextualized the images in a way that seems a little mythic and slightly ominous. A woman traveling on her own, exploiting her own sexuality is an unnerving reality. Her highly-charged identity as a sexually free woman is both frightening and tempting. It's this mix of awe and scorn that makes this exhibit so successful. Here is a woman, adopting multiple identities and disguises (for instance a frumpy brown wig and thick glasses and sulking expression) who is supposedly free from the social constructs of how a woman is to lead her life. Free. And incognito.

Cindy Sherman she is not but just as intriguing. Crosher uses Dubois' image to tell the story of a woman in voluptuous expectation. Willing. Naïve. And mythic. The woman almost seems unbelievable as a person; rather she is a symbol. Or even an omen. Curiously, Crosher camouflages the men in the photos so they appear to be shadows, blacked out and just a shirt at the table with Dubois: countless suitors resembling the invisible man, making Dubois look all that more naïve (to their potential badness, to who could be lurking in the shadows) and at the same time making her the lascivious one, like a black widow with nameless Johns. The duplicity expressed in the multiple personas embodies that of a feminine mystique, the lack of fulfillment in women's lives and the distances they are willing to go.



--Jolene Torr

(\*Images, from top to bottom: Zoe Crosher, *AUTOPORTRAIT*, from the *Reconsidered Archive of Michelle du Bois*, November 8 - December 12, 2008; Eleanor Harwood Gallery, *The Cindy-Shermanesque, But She's the Real Thing (detail)*, 2005, ink jet print mounted to plexi, 11 x 14", courtesy of the Artist and Eleanor Harwood Gallery, SF. Zoe Crosher, *AUTOPORTRAIT*, from the *Reconsidered Archive of Michelle du Bois*, November 8 - December 12, 2008; Eleanor Harwood Gallery, *Like Miko Almost Laughing for Christopher Williams*, 2008, black and white fiber print, 20 x 24", courtesy of the Artist and Eleanor Harwood Gallery, SF. Zoe Crosher, *AUTOPORTRAIT*, from the *Reconsidered Archive of Michelle du Bois*, November 8 - December 12, 2008; Eleanor Harwood Gallery, *The Cindy-Shermanesque, But She's the Real Thing (detail)*, 2005, ink jet print mounted to plexi, 11 x 14", courtesy of the Artist and Eleanor Harwood Gallery, SF. Zoe Crosher, *AUTOPORTRAIT*, from the *Reconsidered Archive of Michelle du Bois*, November 8 - December 12, 2008; Eleanor Harwood Gallery, *Looking Away*, from the Polaroided Collection, 2008, unique polaroid, sharpie, 3.5 x 5", courtesy of the Artist and Eleanor Harwood Gallery.)

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