

Los Angeles Times | ENTERTAINMENT

LOCAL U.S. WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HEALTH LIVING TRAVEL OPINION MORE

MOVIES TELEVISION MUSIC CELEBRITY ARTS & CULTURE COMPANY TOWN CALENDAR THE ENVELOPE FINDLOCAL

JAMES CONLON conducts

LOHENGRIN

by RICHARD WAGNER

25th Anniversary

LA OPERA

NOV 20 - DEC 12



Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

« Previous | [Culture Monster Home](#) | Next »

Stay connected:

[RSS](#) [twitter](#) [facebook](#)

advertisement

Art review: Zoe Crosher at Charlie James

November 4, 2010 | 11:22 am



Whether we are conscious of it or not, we all perform different versions of ourselves as we fill the roles required by daily life: co-worker, lover, relative, friend. In some cases — say, call center operators or movie stars — the roles might require a different name and a separate persona. Taken to extremes, they may demand a life all their own. Zoe Crosher takes a close look at one such life in “For UR Eyes Only: The Unveiling of Michelle duBois,” a suite of photo-based work, curated by Emma Gray, at Charlie James gallery. (Additional pieces that I did not see are on view at Dan Graham gallery and the Orange County Museum of Art.)

It seems “Michelle duBois” was one of many pseudonyms used by a flight attendant and call girl in the 1980s who gave her personal collection of photographs and memorabilia to Crosher. The artist has re-photographed, enlarged and altered some of these items to create a fragmented portrait of a woman with a penchant for self-display, dressing up and emulating classic tropes of femininity. In these images — most likely taken by male admirers or clients — we see DuBois alternately as a belly dancer, a blond *femme fatale*, a society wife and a burlesque star in silk panties. (Move over Cindy Sherman.)



The details of DuBois’ actual identity and relation to Crosher are murky — a gallery attendant suggested that the two might be distant relatives (there is a slight resemblance). But it’s not entirely clear whether DuBois is a real person or an elaborate fiction. In addition to the photographs Crosher took of DuBois’ collection, she has included a few items that seem original — Polaroids and, most convincingly, a set of negatives on disc film, a now-defunct format that dates from the early '80s. These seem to function as a kind of proof, even though the pictures on the disc appear to be taken by DuBois, rather than of her. As such, they might provide glimpses of the world as she saw it — or they might not.



FALL ARTS CHEAT SHEET:
Our critics’ guide to arts and culture events.

About the Reporters

Mike Boehm
Jori Finkel
Lisa Fung
Christopher Hawthorne
Reed Johnson
Christopher Knight
Charles McNulty
David Ng
Kelly Scott
Sherry Stern
Mark Swed

Recent News

Comedian Dane Cook to appear on Broadway in Neil LaBute's 'Fat Pig' | [November 18, 2010, 11:50 am](#) »

'Cavalía,' equine-themed touring show, returning to L.A. in January | [November 18, 2010, 9:00 am](#) »

Monster Mash: Robert De Niro establishes new art prize, Broadway's 'Book of Mormon' finds lead elders | [November 18, 2010, 8:38 am](#) »

Music review: A George Crumb Green Umbrella | [November 17, 2010, 6:00 pm](#) »

Jasper Johns, Yo-Yo Ma to receive Presidential Medal of Freedom from Obama | [November 17, 2010, 5:27 pm](#) »



This uncertainty is the point, it seems. The project is not so much about getting to know Michelle DuBois as it is a meditation on the impossibility of really knowing anyone. DuBois' fantasies may be less purposeful than Sherman's roll call of B-movie

vamps, but they are no less revealing when it comes to the influence of hollow media archetypes and the performative nature of identity.

What's more, in interpreting duBois' collection, Crosher adopts another artistic strategy from the "Pictures" generation — photographing photographs à la Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine. Like them, Crosher reframes and recontextualizes relatively straightforward photos as layered works of art. One trio of photos captures how someone — presumably DuBois — attached handwritten notes to the original prints, obscuring the figures' faces. The notes record DuBois' thoughts or memories about the scene depicted, but they also throw the identity of the subject into question. Here, Crosher turns DuBois' idiosyncratic filing system into a new photographic record that removes DuBois from view even as it offers up more intimate details of her life.

In another image, part of a series of misty black-and-whites of DuBois in a trench coat (and little else), Crosher has left the inkjet print uncropped with its computer filename printed on the lower edge. This small detail points to how the artist, even with her light touch, has thoroughly transformed these materials. Not only has she turned personal effects into art; she has converted analog objects into digital ones, which, like DuBois' self-fashioning, are endlessly malleable. In this sense, it hardly matters whether Michelle duBois was a real person or not, as whatever she left behind dissolves into digital ether.

-- Sharon Mizota

Charlie James Gallery, 975 Chung King Road, L.A., (213) 687-0844, through Dec. 4. Closed Sundays through Tuesdays. www.cjamesgallery.com

Images: "Mirrored Autoportrait #2" (top), "Obfuscated Mae West (and the 1,001 Knights)" and "Silhouetted #2." Credits: Courtesy of the artist and Charlie James Gallery.



More in: [Architecture](#), [Art](#), [Art review](#), [Arts](#), [Criticism](#), [Critics Choice](#), [Photography](#), [Sharon Mizota](#)

Twitter: [@culturemonster](https://twitter.com/culturemonster)
Facebook: [culturemonster](https://www.facebook.com/culturemonster)

Read Later Comments (1) ShareThis 10 retweet Like 73 people like this.

Hotels near Art Gallery

Summer Fun Ent. Packages & Savings Visit Vancouver Art Gallery & Save mayfairhotelsandresorts.com

Beautiful Wild Birds

Join our online Birding community Share photos & download free guides [Facebook.com/PenningtonBirds](https://www.facebook.com/PenningtonBirds)

ADS BY GOOGLE

Verify your Comment

Previewing your Comment

Posted by: |

This is only a preview. Your comment has not yet been posted.

Post Edit

Your comment could not be posted. Error type:
Your comment has been saved. Comments are moderated and will not appear until approved by the author. Post another comment

The letters and numbers you entered did not match the image. Please try again.

As a final step before posting your comment, enter the letters and numbers you see in the image below. This prevents automated programs from posting comments.

Recent Comments

RE: What is the West? From sunsets to gangbangers to 'no idea,' 1,000 takes in new Doug Aitken book | [comment by Charles J](#)

RE: Was Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment' inspired by visits to brothels and bathhouses? | [comment by dr.roger allen](#)

RE: 5 colleges whose architecture echoes Harry Potter's Hogwarts | [comment by CmW](#)

RE: Krystian Zimmerman's shocking Disney Hall debut | [comment by Lex](#)


RE: Was Michelangelo's 'Last Judgment' inspired by visits to brothels and bathhouses? | [comment by Donald Frazell](#)

RE: Hammer Museum to offer free admission Nov. 26 to Dec. 18 | [comment by kt](#)

 [@culturemonster/staff](https://twitter.com/culturemonster)

 **KnightLAT** Like Crocker Art Museum that opened 10/10/10 RT@TylerGreenDC Crystal Bridges: We'll open to the public on 11/11/11 2 hours ago

 **KnightLAT** The continuing exodus of artists from NYC, priced out of live/work space: Will it be a place art is presented not made? <http://bit.ly/a6hvnE> 3 hours ago

 **KnightLAT** "Forbes's brave 400 billionaires, many newly minted ... retain art advisors (who know next to nothing.)" <http://bit.ly/9pcUTa> 3 hours ago

 **Ifung** The 'Asian guy' on 'Glee' gets promoted to series regular. <http://lat.ms/cortfj> 4 hours ago

advertisement

"A FUNNY, TOUCHING AND VITAL SALUTE TO WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE! SALLY HAWKINS IS IRRESISTIBLE!"
—Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE



SALLY HAWKINS BOB HOSKINS MIRANDA RICHARDSON

MADE IN DAGENHAM

OPENS NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES
NOVEMBER 19TH
COMING SOON TO A CITY NEAR YOU