

Carolyn Drake
Glorify Yourself
February 22 – March 30, 2024



Begun in 2020, *Glorify Yourself* is the newest photographic series by Carolyn Drake, in which the artist turns the camera on herself, experimenting with self-portraiture and offering an exploration of, as Drake says, “*the universe of desires and delusions that gave rise to the world I inhabit.*” The exhibition will be on view at Yancey Richardson from February 22 through March 30, 2024. An opening reception will be held on February 22, from 6 – 8 PM.

The series takes its title from the book *Glorify Yourself*, a “beauty and charm guide” for women, popular in the U.S. during the 1940s and 1950s. The guide included chapter titles such as “Inviting Lips” and “Sitting Technique,” offering advice for its female readers on how to increase their allure to men. With pages of the book’s instructions plastered on one wall of the gallery, Drake’s darkly comedic self-portraits intersect with the misogynistic material that inspired them.

Describing her process, Drake states; “*With a mixture of satire and scorn, I began putting myself in the positions described in the book, exploring my relationship to its creed.*”

In *Self-Portrait with Gene Tierney (Inviting Lips)*, Drake holds a page ripped from the book in front of her face. The page shows a portrait of a woman whose face has been cut out, replaced by Drake’s own mouth, agape in a silent scream. The caption beneath the image reads “Gene Tierney’s beautiful full mouth is one of her most attractive features.” In what could be seen as the pair to this image, *The Face of Gene Tierney (Inviting Lips)*, these so-called “inviting lips” are revealed in a surreal composition that includes Tierney’s disembodied face suspended by a thread, and a pair of tweezers, held by the artist, pointing ominously towards it.

Drake’s irreverent interrogation of this highly constructed, stereotypical notion of femininity exposes the degree to which women’s bodies have been controlled in service of the male gaze. Indeed, when we consider the series within the context of current events, including the recent rollback of abortion rights in the U.S., we can see it in part as Drake asserting her agency to present her body in whatever guise she chooses. In an act of defiance, the artist offers us so-called “self-portraits” in which her face is mostly obscured behind cut-outs and pages from the book, or disguised with a wig as she attempts to perform the prescribed exercises. Drake challenges our traditional understanding of the genre, offering us an introspective exploration of her identity and her shifting experience of gender and sexuality that refuses to be confined within fixed boundaries.

Born in California in 1971, Drake’s work has recently been exhibited at the Henri Cartier Bresson Foundation, the High Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She has published five photo books: *Two Rivers* (2013), *Wild Pigeon* (2014), *Internat* (2017), *Knit Club* (TBW Books, 2020), and *Men Untitled* (TBW Books 2023). Drake’s forthcoming project *I’ll Let You Be In My Dreams If You’ll Let Me Be In Yours* (Mack 2024) is co-authored with her partner Andres Gonzalez. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship, the Henri Cartier Bresson Award, and a Fulbright fellowship, among other prizes. Drake is a member of Magnum Photos and lives in Vallejo, California.

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Image above: *The Face of Gene Tierney, (Inviting Lips)*, 2023, from the series *Glorify Yourself*. Archival pigment print, 20 x 15 inches.

Image at right: *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 2021, from the series *Glorify Yourself*. Archival pigment print, 50 x 37 1/2 inches.

