

CINDY BERNARD



Ask the Dust

Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery

The *Why I Love Violence* Speech

by Benjamin Weissman

Desert

The clouds never formed one picture longer than a minute. One minute it was a bearded man frowning, the next, a pair of shattered tea cups, the third minute three work boots descending in size.

The only weapons available were rocks. They were all over the place. It was Land of the Happy Weapon, so I grabbed a smallish one, nice and round with a tiny divot for my index finger to get a grip, and smashed it in your face. You went down like a drunken doll, all liquid and floppy. I thought, funny. One whack, face down, blood running into the dried-up earth. Messy. I don't have to clean up. That was your blood, friend, the inside syrup, rich and dark like anyone's. The cracks in the earth took you in like a drain, whether the dirt likes it or not; it doesn't know the difference between a decent guy and the world's worst citizen. A rock splits apart from its mother, tumbles down the slope, lands at her feet. Never without an outward sign of judgement. The base is cluttered with piles of sharp little crumbs. So you're still around in some way, again, like everyone else. Your friends might forget you but this sensitive hell hole remembers your name. That's the law of the land. The earth bears witness to what I've

done and then absorbs the entire matter. Your bald head looks at home with all this rock. Boulder to boulder.

One little tap with a rock and that's it, you're out. I knew it wouldn't take much even though you always acted like Mr. Swaying Iron Gonads, but now there's not a whole lot happening in dem balls. No more arms akimbo, chest inflato, *I am here to tell you what to do*. I flipped you over, waited to see if you'd move, but you just lay there with your nose that made a sharp left on your face, your fucked-up lips open like big baby wanting another spoonful of banana mush. So I kicked you in the stomach and your mouth closed. I kicked you a bunch more times, moving higher and higher till I reached your face again. Then I jumped in the air and stomped down. I wanted to crush your skull, bust up the brains. I assume that's where your ability to count and remember names is stored. Somewhere along the back wall, behind the ears. Your flat oversized forehead always gave people the wrong impression. That you were smart. If I had a truck, and I still want one, an orange half-ton, I'd park it on your head, and then roll it over different sections of your body until you were level with the road, so flat that your jaw bone and cranium reformed into some unrecognizable mosaic. The teeth would dislodge from your gums and bite into earth all cockeyed like a buck-toothed fool. I've wanted to stop you from talking for so long it's hard to believe, and now that you're dead

the fun's sort of over. But I can manage. I keep seeing all those stupid looks on your face through the years. That smile of yours is what moved me. Those gooey stones you have for eyes. I'm going to leave you here. They call it desert meat. A big old uncooked sausage measuring six foot five, seasoned naturally on the exterior from its own juices and salts. Served raw at room temperature, on a bed of rock, we're proud to call him Horace Tartare. A bird or coyote will find you and be most grateful. That's got to be more than you ever hoped to achieve. I thought I could erase you, but I was wrong. You're a monster now. If someone filled you up with air, they'd see the ugliest guy on the planet.

I'm thinking, time for a beer, just as every cloud in the sky leaves me with nothing to think about but an infinity of the darkest, most relentless, blue.

Mountain

A single shot rang out through the trees. But that's not going to disturb the pretty picture. The postcards of this land are all deaf. Brown sullen tree bark don't give a shit. Daddy put a bullet in her boy friend's brain, or more precisely blasted a shot right through the whole head, rendering the handsome buck faceless, permanently unable to come to the phone. No open casket for



Ask the Dust: Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill! (1965/1990)

1990

Black and white photograph

13 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 23 inches

that fine fellow. He looks like the side of a hill dug up by miners. The woman grabbed her face and yelled *what* and then started running. Should we've repeated ourselves? The shotgun sent an echo off the pine needles of every tree up and down the mountain like it was a secret they had to wiggle out in special tree language. It wasn't hunting season, yet. Elk knew that. Trees never seem to mind what we do. They accomodate all sorts of activity, always able to see both sides of the matter, just like the old stumps in Washington, the Supreme Court Judges, so by law, if I, the scribe of this team, am reading the signs of life in the forest correctly, she was ours to keep. The woman. We found her. And now we find ourselves chasing her up the hill, she wasn't going to take this lying down, at least not in the beginning. Daddy said she'd make a perfect wife. We'd catch her and find out. She was built like a deer, strong thin legs, a firm soft looking chest, giant brown eyes, and she was real quick. Her features connected like a curvy map I already had memorized. She was kicking up a dust trail, tripping over cones, so we were never going to lose her, plus we could hear her panting *oh oh oh oh*, like she was hurt, but we hadn't touched her yet. Even if your first thought is, kill it, eat it, hang the head on the wall, with her it's different, you think, she's a woman, remember, they're like people, you've got to love her like a mother or a saint or like your

favorite dog. Pet her, let her lick you. But she's the one who'll prepare the food and shove it in front of you, she'll feed me, so I'm technically the dog, seated by his bowl. Maybe we'll each have a plate of food, and eat together, at the same time, then we'll strip and do the dog like married people, but daddy demands a front row seat. Plus, he's got first dibs on the woman. He says he's got to try her out for me, he's the expert, which is true, see if she's okay for his boy. Daddy said he's going to make love to her on the table. We've got a picnic table in the house. Isn't that crazy? Stole it from the camp site. Daddy says he likes fucking on the table so he can see it all clearly and he can walk away when he's done. He says a woman's belly is like a sacred meadow, all soft and if they're muscular in the stomach they've got a quiet little ravine in the middle, speckled with a little fur. That's where he likes to unload his spray, so it puddles in the center. A microscopic fisherman could catch a shitload of some weird ass tadpoles in that milky pond.

Irrigation Ditch

When the circus comes to town you have to be prepared for fun. So many good things happen near the big top. The sad clowns come out and play. They're so silly. Even though I flunked clown college I'm still a clown. I can't even eat a sandwich without spilling jelly down my front. But

when the show's over the clown leaves his red nose on and gets fucked up on booze. Then he goes berserk. He plays again, all by his little lonesome. But this time none of the children laugh and the stupid fat parents aren't bored anymore, especially after I, or after he, pulls the trigger of the squirt gun and wow, drills metal into your sweetbreads. Is that a warm thought, I mean feeling? Don't you feel giddy? I know I do. Then the off duty clown cuts you down to size with the goofiest hatchet and boils your bones—maybe I'm a witch, maybe I'm amazed—for a rude smelly soup, and throws the parts he doesn't like away, into an irrigation ditch. Can't run very fast, oops, not with these big floppy shoes.

People among us live to cut off heads. I fuck to cut them up and shit Hail Mary. I cum all over myself in the hope that your head will roll down the street. I spray a load in the dirt. The fertilizer of tomorrow. Jack off techniques have gone down hill. My accuracy and distance are an embarrassment. Clown fuck badly. Fuck myself in the mud with the sprinklers clicking all around my head. Clown fuck funny: aims for the eyes, only dribbles on cheeks. Clown fuck sadly, cum like tear drops.



Ask the Dust: Dirty Harry (1971/1990)
1990
Color photograph
11½ x 23 inches

CINDY BERNARD

Education:

California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), M.F.A., 1985
California State University, Long Beach, B.A., 1981

EXHIBITIONS (solo)

1990 Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery, Santa Monica
1988 Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles

EXHIBITIONS (selected group)

- 1990 *Biennial I*, California Museum of Photography, Riverside, California. Catalog.
Spiel der Spur: The Poetry of Chance, Shedhalle, Zurich, Switzerland. Catalog. Texts by Harm Lux and Christoph Doswald, projects by artists.
The Köln Show, Monika Spruth Gallery, Köln, Germany. Catalog. Texts by Isabelle Graw, Dierich Diederichsen and John Miller.
- 1989 *Abstraction in Contemporary Photography*, Fred L. Emerson Gallery, Hamilton College, New York; Travelled to Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University. Catalog. Texts by Andy Grundberg and Jerry Saltz.
Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Catalog. Text by Richard Armstrong, Lisa Phillips and Richard Marshall.
Photography of Invention: American Pictures of the Eighties, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., Travelled to Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Catalog. Text by Joshua Smith.
- 1988 *Recent Art from Los Angeles*, Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio
Contention, New Langton Arts, San Francisco, California
Information as Ornament, Feature, Chicago. Catalog.
After Abstract, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, California. Catalog.
- 1987 *The Hallucination of Truth*, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, PS1, New York
Spiral of Artificiality, Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York. Catalog.
New Photography, Feature, Chicago
Breaking through the Looking Glass: West, Fahey/Klein Gallery, Los Angeles
Breaking through the Looking Glass: East, Holly Solomon Gallery, New York
CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s), Renaissance Society, Chicago. Travelled to Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California. Catalog. Texts by Howard Singerman, John Miller and Stephen Prina
Room 9, Tropicana Motel, Los Angeles
- 1986 *T.V. Generations*, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles. Catalog. Texts by John Baldessari and Bruce Yamamoto.
- 1984 *The Cotton Exchange Show*, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles

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- 1989 American Art Today-A View From The Whitney: 1989 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1989, (video interview).
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Grundberg, Andy. "The Pendulum Swings Away From Cynicism," *New York Times*, October 22, 1989, Section 2, pp. 41, 45.
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Knight, Christopher. "Bland View of Art Served at Biennial," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, May 7, 1989, pg. E1-2.
- 1988 Selwyn, Marc. "New Art L.A.: Eight Young Artists Discuss Their Work," *Flash Art*, Summer 1988, pp. 109-115, illus. pg. 111
Knight, Christopher. "Pictures envelope traditions," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Weekend Magazine, May 13, 1988, pg. 30, illus.
Knight, Christopher. "Focusing on the Hidden Meaning of the 'Untitled' Works," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, February 7, 1988, pg. E2
Jalon, Allan. "'Skeptical Belief(s)' Exhibit Displays Varied Styles of CalArts Graduates," *Los Angeles Times* (Orange County Edition), Calendar, January 24, 1988, pg. 49C-D.
- 1987 Grundberg, Andy. "From New Talent, Bold New Images," *New York Times*, November 13, 1987, pg. 17, 24.
Knight, Christopher. "'Looking Glass' reflects art's new identity," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Weekend Magazine, July 10, 1987, pg. 36.
- 1986 LaPalma, Marina. "Beware the Grids," *Artweek*, vol. 17, #12, March 29, 1986, pg. 1.
Rugoff, Ralph. "Artists on T.V.," *L.A. Weekly*, vol. 8, #13, March 7 - 13, 1986, pp. 51 - 53.

Cover Image:

Ask the Dust: North by Northwest (1959/1990)

1990

Color photograph

12½ x 23 inches

Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery

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