

LAURIE SIMMONS
MARILYN MINTER



WORDS BY **WILLIAM J. SIMMONS**

Marilyn Minter and Laurie Simmons, two of the most innovative and intelligent people in the art world, have been close friends for years, making them a pretty intimidating pair. What is more, they have always used this influence for good. Last year, Minter and Simmons (alongside Cindy Sherman) chaired a benefit auction for Planned Parenthood—an organization that provides essential medical care and sexual health education—and raised an impressive \$2.3 million.

Since the 1970s, Minter and Simmons have been concurrently investigating what it means to be a woman in an increasingly commodified world. Still, the stylistic affinities between these two icons has yet to be fully explored, so here we present a selection of their work to be considered together.

It is clear that both artists recall the innovations of the Surrealist and Dada avant-gardes of the early 20th century, thereby combining a European flair for subversive manipulation of reality with a distinctly American twist. Once you contend with the impact of the images, you start to notice a variety of details that reveal how truly vast the Simmons/Minter world can be. Take, for example, their allusions to the masculinist lineage of Minimalism, or their sumptuous, comical, and, at times, dark, references to images that we frequently take for granted. Linoleum floors and simple white pumps become nuanced vehicles for revolution and social upheaval. Simmons and Minter embody the essence of the uncanny; they show us what we have already seen and yet when these images return to us, glamorous and teeming with emotion, we hardly recognise them.

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MARILYN MINTER
QUAIL'S EGG 2004

bottom
LAURIE SIMMONS
WHITE SHOES/BLACK ROOM 1978

top
LAURIE SIMMONS
TOURISM: LAS VEGAS 1984

bottom
MARILYN MINTER
BLACK ORCHID 2012



top
MARILYN MINTER
SPILL 1977

bottom
MARILYN MINTER
TREASURE TRAIL 2003

I have a vision about what I want something to look like. Sometimes it's a rainstorm, like a eureka moment, and other times I get a thought about a video, painting, or photo and I will just sit with it for a while, deciphering whether it stands up over a period of time. I never make something in response to theory or illustration. It's always metaphor.



MARILYN MINTER
QUAIL'S EGG 2004

One example is *Treasure Trail*. I think it's because of the androgynous nature of the piece. People of both genders, regardless of their sexuality, are attracted to its ambiguity. Women think it's a woman, men think it's a man—I'll never tell!

Spill is my favorite painting from the whole series. At the time I was making it I thought it was really smart and conceptual, but then everyone told me that I was a photorealist—just a really boring one. I love the idea of being a boring photorealist, especially in relationship to what other people were doing at the time—shiny balls and technical masturbation.

I have always admired Laurie. I think she's a great artist—she's in the canon and she changed photography. Our careers have both focused on what it feels like to be female and we try to make a picture of how we see the world according to our different visions.

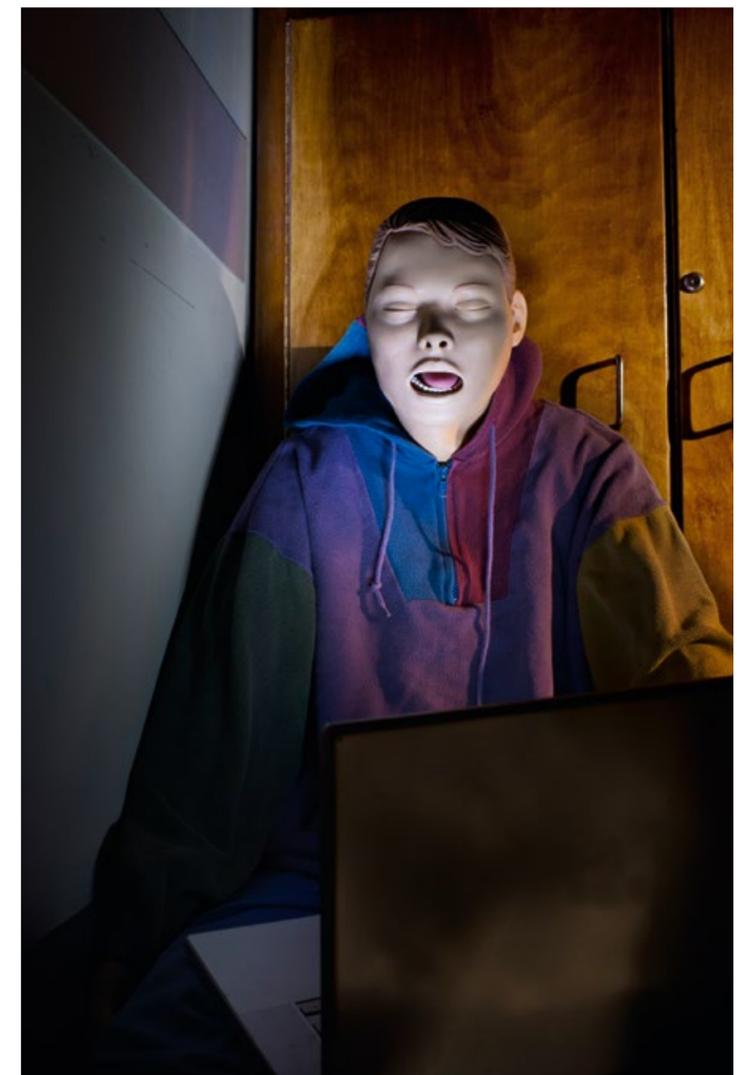
I've always worked in series and I've always had a concrete understanding of the beginning, the middle, and the end. When something is finished, I know it, and I also know the seeds of the next group of pictures are right there in the middle of it. I am really curious about a lot of things and I express that through a range of imagery and subjects. There's a kind of "permission" an artist needs to give themselves sometimes in order to tackle something new and I find I'm comfortable with allowances into new territory.

One thing that has remained constant is that my work has always played with roles of the feminine and the masculine. In fact one of my first series, "Cowboys," (1979) were portraits of men. "Café of the Inner Mind" was on the heels of the "Walking Objects" series which was so much about brawn, and body—about women hoisting up the artifacts of their lives, these domestic objects that women had emotionally and psychologically meshed with. I thought about brains vs. brawn, which led to researching the dual brain of the ventriloquist and the dummy. This was a period when I was coming into a new awareness of my political mind, and trying to parse out who amongst our talking heads was speaking 'truth' and who was speaking lies—who was speaking through whom.

However, my work never scares me. Two or three women traveling alone or being in a house alone seems perfectly acceptable to me, and, in fact, gazing at a sunrise or a relic while isolated away from hordes of tourists is a spectacular idea. I think people may confront certain psychological registers in my work but, for me, I am not haunted or scared. I'm making my work.



LAURIE SIMMONS
CAFE OF THE INNER MIND: MEN'S ROOM 1994



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LAURIE SIMMONS
MIDLAKE 1997

bottom
LAURIE SIMMONS
BOY I/CORNER 2013