

ARTFORUM

Julie Orser

PAUL KOPEIKIN GALLERY AT DOMESTIC PROJECT SPACE

6150 Wilshire Boulevard

June 30–July 28



View of "Julie Orser: Anna Moore."

Rarely has the project space at Domestic been as smartly employed as it is for Julie Orser's photo-and-video exhibition, curated by Kaycee Olsen as part of her Opus Projects and titled "Anna Moore." The gallery space mimics the interior of a house and gives shape and context to the on-screen performance. A classic 1950s-style blonde experiences—and, on the audio track, narrates—a series of incidents both domestic and sinister, and each screen in the three-channel installation plays out different portions of a noirish suburban melodrama. Anna is a primly dressed housewife, a wigged and black-suited femme fatale, and a ravaged, hysterical prom queen. Footage of each role is intermixed with dreamy close-ups of sexual caresses that are either her own soft-focus fantasies or a ravishment that spurs madness. Her flat, ghostly voice reverberates throughout the gallery, haunting the various rooms with a fragmentary narrative that complements rather than illustrates the simultaneous six-minute videos loops.

As Cindy Sherman did with her "Untitled Film Stills," 1977–80, Orser creates a female image that falls somewhere between icon and cliché. But Orser's blond star cycles through multiple roles in one work, evidencing the twists and turns of the postwar genre film. The visual tropes of that era's movies make for beautifully composed period pieces, prompting the question of how these fifty-year-old formal elements currently affect the popular imagination. In examining the conventions of genre, Orser foregoes narrative complexity to maintain semiotic integrity. But as an examination of signs, "Anna Moore" deftly re-creates the lurid dramas of cinematic pulp to study them as sites of fictional femininity.

—Andrew Berardini

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