

COME ON

DESIRE UNDER THE FEMALE GAZE

We may be the inheritors of twentieth-century feminisms, yet the continued objectification of young girls and women remains devastating and oppressive. Despite the protests and critiques shaped by two generations of thinkers, activists and image-makers, mainstream culture continues to enforce the notion of dichotomous gender. Double standards, as well as double entendres, are the stock-in-trade of television programming, prevalent humor, dominant cinema and insidious advertising.

The young artists whose work comprises **COME ON: Desire Under the Female Gaze** seek to present desire as a polymorphous experience. They reject the use of their nude bodies, a foundational strategy frequently employed in feminist art since the 1960s. Instead, they direct our focus to the performance of looking and at the objects of their gaze. **Rachel Rampelman's** video calls attention to the gross imbalance between the cultural championing of male debauchery and the repudiation of female promiscuity. **Juliet Jacobson's** drawings depict the mythic blurring of physical, emotional and spiritual thresholds transgressed by subjects in love. **Jo-Anne Balcaen's** sculpture and language-based work unveil the commodification of desire as simply cheap, seductive materials and socially scripted feelings.

COME ON presents unabashed explorations and unapologetic articulations of female libido. It encourages us to widen our notions of acceptable behavior for women and girls, and to expand our tolerance for images of sexualized, passive males. This exhibition is a response to both the barrage of sexually "available" female figures and to the rejection of queer and eroticized male imagery in mass media.

The title of the exhibition, **COME ON**, works in a number of ways: it can be read as a dismissive phrase, referring to the way the female gaze and empowered female sexuality are often discounted; and, simultaneously, as encouragement, invitation, goad, proposition, incitement. Ultimately, **COME ON** aspires to open up radical possibilities of pleasure.

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