

# LA WEEKLY

## “BITCH IS THE NEW BLACK” AT HONOR FRASER



CHRISTOPHER MILES × AUGUST 26, 2009

Though the title of this exhibition might leave one expecting some kind of curatorial polemic on bad-girl behavior, fashion, post-feminism and post-blackness, curator Emma Gray had something else in mind. She lifts the line from a 2008 campaign-season *SNL* diatribe by Tina Fey — later retorted by Tracy Morgan’s “Bitch may be the new black, but black is the new president, bitch!” — taking issue with the negative assignation of bitchiness to women (Hillary Clinton included) who get things done, don’t suffer fools and are serious and intense about what they do. Fey’s comment, which both suggested the proud wearing of one’s attitude and the muddling of marginalized positions, becomes something of a synopsis of the practices of the artists included here, who in only a few instances articulate stances overtly rooted in gender politics, but collectively own and wear the combination of seriousness, intensity and attitude Fey sought to redeem. All of these young female artists, Cathy Akers, Kathryn Andrews, Rosson Crow, Krysten Cunningham, Pearl C. Hsiung, Annie Lapin, Shana Lutker, Ruby Neri, Amanda Ross-Ho, Anna Sew Hoy, Mindy Shapero, Kirsten Stoltmann and Bari Ziperstein — with Catherine Opie represented by one of her edgier works from the ‘90s, serving as a kind of talisman — are not only get things done but they do it with smarts. One might quibble with whether some other artists should have been included here as well, and one certainly could imagine this roster being expanded to include other worthy contenders in a larger venue. But there’s not one among the group who falls short of a bar set high for talent, which makes what could be a fairly standard summer gallery group show a more compelling proposition. If there’s a disappointment here, it’s that nearly all the artists are represented by just one work, and in more than a few cases, the artists have made, and exhibited elsewhere, hands-down stronger works than those representing them here. But there are also some terrific pieces, from sculptor Cunningham’s poetic, iconic and formally smart *Burnt Wheel*, to a rough-and-ready painted ceramic figure by Neri, to Hoy’s wormy, snaking form cobbled from stuffed jeans, draped over a hook cast from a fisted and flexed arm, to Stoltmann’s photo of a woman, cropped between the knees and the nipples, and wearing only a fascia T-shirt, having just spray-painted her crotch a shocking pink. Call it color-coding. *Honor Fraser, 2622 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A.; Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6p.m., through Aug. 29. (310) 837-0191 or [honorfraser.com](https://www.honorfraser.com) (<https://www.honorfraser.com>).*

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