

Cindy Sherman

Rendezvous in Black

Ann Chernow

November 10, 2016 through December 16, 2016

Burt Chernow Galleries
Housatonic Museum of Art



Cindy Sherman. *Untitled Film Still #7*. 1978.
Gelatin silver print. 10 x 8 inches; Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Rendezvous in Black

Cindy Sherman and Ann Chernow draw from the film noir style to create pieces that are contemporary yet offer moments that could have been seen on the movie sets themselves. Both artists mine the noir genre, calling on the viewer to analyze the narrative of each scene.

Cindy Sherman's series, *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980), (re)presented female identity by deconstructing the prevailing visual tropes of femininity. Utilizing the 8 x 10" format of film stills used to promote a Hollywood starlet's most recent B-film, Sherman created numerous female identities. Twelve of the sixty-nine photographs that comprise this series are on view in the exhibition and evoke the three roles women commonly play in noir films: the virtuous woman, the marrying woman and the femme-fatale.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #35*, 1979.

Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches; Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Ann Chernow's NOIR series of stone lithographs and etchings are inspired by the characters and contexts of classic film noir, focusing mainly on the femme fatale. Noir's femme fatale rejects the position of "saintly woman," as well as the equally confining job of wife. She is dedicated to not becoming tied down by conformity: love, commitment, and family life. Independence and personal agency are often the fundamental values that lead the femme fatale to murder, using sex and desire to manipulate men, a necessary means to achieving her freedom.



FALLEN ANGELS:

"You don't seem very sorry." "I am sorry. Sorry that I was caught."

Ann Chernow, Lithograph printed on Canson paper, 7 3/4 x 10 7/16 inches

Both artists deftly subvert the film style of noir, using familiar postures and expressions to investigate the way mass media images shape the attitudes and perceptions of and toward women within the dominant culture.

Cindy Sherman Checklist

Untitled Film Still #1, 1977

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #7, 1978

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #14, 1978

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #16, 1978

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #19, 1978

Gelatin silver print

8 x 10 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #23, 1978

Gelatin silver print

8 x 10 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #33, 1979

Gelatin silver print

8 x 10 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #35, 1979

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #37, 1979

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #39, 1979

Gelatin silver print

10 x 8 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #53, 1980

Gelatin silver print

8 x 10 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

Untitled Film Still #62, 1977-2003

Gelatin silver print

8 x 10 inches; 25.4 x 20.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures

About Film Noir

Viennese film maker, Fritz Lang, released *M* in 1931, a thriller acknowledged as the “ultimate proto-noir,” and in 1933, Lang’s film, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, caught the attention of Germany’s propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, who invited Lang to make propaganda films



for the Nazis. Lang, of Jewish heritage, fled to Paris, and ultimately made his way to MGM Studios in Hollywood, directing movies that blended the theatricality of German Expressionism with pop culture’s pulp fiction, and a distinctly American film style emerged: *noir*.

Noir filmmaking incorporated the stylistic elements of deep shadows, striated light, distorted angles, menacing alleys and dead end streets, with cops and killers, marks and dupes, and gumshoes and bums. The result: an atmosphere of anxiety, distrust and uneasiness within the viewer. But of all the character types portrayed, there is none so compelling as the femme-fatale. This double-crossing dame played a pivotal role, establishing much of the tension and intensity that have become the hallmarks of *noir*.

Now Playing in the Gallery

Saturday, November 12 @ Noon

***M* by director Fritz Lang and featuring Peter Lorre. Germany, 1931.**

Whistling a haunting tune, serial killer Hans Bekert searches for his next victim in this harrowing masterwork. Fritz Lang creates a psychological thriller with chilling suspense as it explores the madness of a predator and his terrorizing effect on a community.

Thursday, November 17 @ 7PM

***The Maltese Falcon* by director John Huston and featuring Humphrey Bogart in his career-defining role. USA, 1941.**

Film historians consider this the first, and the best, American film noir replete with witty dialogue, deceitful characters, and menacing scenes. This low budget and highly stylistic film is remembered for a number of notable portrayals of corrupt, deceitful, hard-nosed villains and tough heroes, as they move through a labyrinth of complex interactions that include double-crossing intrigues and deceptions, betrayals and greed.

Saturday, November 19 @ Noon

***Night of the Hunter* by director Charles Laughton and featuring Robert Mitchum. USA, 1955.**

This is the only film directed by the celebrated English stage and character actor, Charles Laughton, and is considered a one-of-a-kind masterwork that blends elements of horror into the noir aesthetic. A traveling preacher turned serial killer, played with sinister perfection by Bridgeport's own Robert Mitchum, whistles into town in search of his executed cellmate's wife, Willa, played by Shelley Winters. The film is based on a true story of Harry Powers who murdered two widows and three children in West Virginia.

The Night of the Hunter was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by the United States Library of Congress and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in 1992. In 2008, the influential film magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* selected *The Night of the Hunter* as the second-best film of all time, behind Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*.

Thursday, December 1 @ 7pm

***In a Lonely Place* by director Nicholas Ray. USA, 1950.**

A down on his luck screenwriter, played by Humphrey Bogart, becomes the prime suspect in a vicious Hollywood murder. With a hair-trigger temper and a propensity toward violence, he eventually alienates his only alibi (and love interest), Gloria Grahame. Adapted from a novel by Dorothy B. Hughes, *In a Lonely Place* is the devastating tale of two people caught up in a turbulent love affair where violence and fear eventually corrupt and destroy any hope of a life together. Bogart and Grahame deliver powerhouse performances in a film that is considered a masterpiece of 1950s noir and a hallmark in the career of auteur, Nicholas Ray.

Saturday, December 3 @ Noon

***Out of the Past* directed by Jacques Tourneur and featuring Robert Mitchum. USA, 1947.**

Considered one of the quintessential noir films of all time, *Out of the Past* weaves a multi-layered tale through the definitive use of flashbacks, and utilizes all the elements of the noir aesthetic for maximum melodramatic impact. In the California town of Bridgeport, one-time investigator turned gas station owner, played by the sleepy-lidded, laconic Mitchum, is tracked down by gangster Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas) and pulled out of retirement to locate the dangerous and double-crossing Kathie Moffat (Jane Greer). Betrayal, corruption, erotic obsession with a heavy dose of fatalism create an atmosphere of terror that ends only when all three characters meet their inevitable downfall.

Thursday, December 8 @ 7pm

***Christmas Holiday* directed by Robert Siodmak with Gene Kelly and Deanna Durbin. USA, 1944.**

Considered the primary architect of the *noir* style, no director produced more quality thrillers than Siodmak. His oeuvre is mandatory for any authentic study of noir. His most notable films noir include *Phantom Lady*, *The Strange Affair of Uncle Harry*, *The Spiral Staircase*, *The Killers*, *The Dark Mirror*, *Cry of the City*, *Criss Cross* and *The File on Thelma Jordan*.

Siodmak's films employ psychological trauma, domestic strife, gender conflicts, professional criminals and violence that is never coincidental. His deft use of modernist cinematic techniques such as deep focusing, multiple flashbacks, meticulous set design, and expressionistic lighting are masterful. *Christmas Holiday* is neither about Christmas nor a holiday, instead we are gifted with a dark story of love, sex, betrayal and revenge woven together by one of the incomparable masters of *noir*.

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