

YOU AM I
Irini Karayannopoulou

Irini Karayannopoulou's latest body of work is a series of grotesque self-portraits grafted onto quasi-vintage fashion printed matter. Her canvas is the found imagery of old fashion magazines and she paints directly their pages, particularly the faces and the bodies of beautiful females - either anonymous and forgotten models or icons of the past, like Paloma Picasso. Karayannopoulou mocks and plays with her self-image while constantly re-creating her face and specifically her gaze. She covers the original images with paint until they disappear; Iconic femme-fatales are converted into one woman: the artist is omnipresent.

Karayannopoulou constructs her own persona on the imagery of luxurious items and the ideals of beauty and happiness these material objects transmit. All messages associated with these old ads appear now to be less relevant, somehow hyperbolic and outdated. In a current state of things, the relevant ideals and messages are closer to a healthy way of living, to natural beauty, simplicity and to a deeper realization of the fragility of nature. Also, the treatment of the female figure can be easily critiqued and questioned as sexist. Ironically and with self-awareness the artist claims present in an outdated iconic world.

YOU AM I is a body of work about mutation and distortion. Karayannopoulou's face appears everywhere stunning, her beauty is almost beyond real. Could this be a mirror or a mask? A game the artist plays with herself and with these beauty queens with her perfectly self-constructed persona. Is this persona a caricature of the artist or a mirroring response? In reality it is a distortion, her omnipresent self-portraits become the masks, the façades even, which mutate aesthetic perfection with the artist's own twisted vision.

Olga Hatzidaki