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AOIFE ROSENMEYER ON ERICA EYRES AT HAAS & FISCHER, ZURICH

A glimpse of Erica Eyres' work was on show at the recent Volta art fair in Basel, but Haas & Fischer's exhibition offered a more detailed look at two bodies of work by the Canadian artist: ballpoint pen portraits on paper and video works starring Eyres in every role.

Images created to drive consumption catalyse Eyres' drawings, glossy food to be consumed with a fleeting glance or detailed examination. Each face has a familiar hint of potential gratification, be it a purchase or a seduction. Her compulsive use of throwaway materials mimics the painstaking honing and paring of magazine images to create a carefree aesthetic, a long established contradiction that shows no sign of abating. Just as any personality is a mutable identity under the gaze of camera and graphic software, Eyre's figures elide recognition. Her references are oblique and difficult to pin down amidst smoky eyes and piled up hair. The two girls in their underwear in 'Dorm Room', for example, combine early Britney Spears ingénue, schoolgirl fantasies and the brittle honesty of L.A. Raven's self portraits; any comfort has gone, replaced by an awkward lack of fulfilment. Another image, 'Jackets', shows a cluster of raincoated girls with matching bobs and rosy cheeks clinging together with the sincerity of a well-run ad campaign, though the gaiety of the pose upsets the balance of the group, and with steely smiles they teeter to one side. This Burberry world is peopled with nervous blonds with greyhound eyes and smart clothing, imprisoned by their determined embraces like other figures are martyred by sleek and heavy hairdos.

While Eyres' drawings engage with the fodder of glossy European magazines, her videos examine the constructs of low budget North American television. 'Commercials' is a reel of gleeful incitement to indulge in dodgy pleasures, from talk shows to foodstuffs, while Imaginary girlfriend is a vignette of an unhealthy mother son relationship. In the first of these, Eyres' alter egos show television as the media par excellence for manufacturing identity, screen personalities being unobtrusive layers of makeup, accessories, a condescending yet beguiling tone and a brazen stare at the camera. A wannabe dancer who feels she is 'really really unique' is a harsh antidote to the supremely smug Orange County inhabitants of Kutlug Ataman's recent work 'Paradise' (though terrifyingly Ataman's subjects never get that the joke is on them).

The subject of Erica Eyres' works is not new, but she gets to the disconcerting core of advertising and popular images. These models share empty confidences, yet painfully remain seductive.

Aoife Rosenmeyer

Erica Eyres 10 May - 20 June Haas & Fischer, Zürich

Aoife Rosenmeyer is based in Zürich after several years as a curator with Artwise in London. In Switzerland she is doing all manner of work art related and contributing to publications including Art World Magazine.