

Nice Little Girl's Wonderful Dressing-up Room by Minako Nishiyama

screens, transforming an everyday youth sub-culture into something larger than life.

Let's Entertain also features a variety of less-fully-realized film and video works, such as Leigh Bowery's *Death in Vegas*, a trite re-creation of Elvis Presley's undignified death, and Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*, a rather obvious re-editing of the *Wonder Woman* television series. Time has been especially unkind to Birnbaum's videos, which are from the early '80s and, in retrospect, too trendy and simplistic.

The real revelations are on the exhibit's second floor, where more elaborate and imaginative video installations by Gillian Wearing and Doug Aitken reside. In Wearing's *The Regulator's Vision*, a troupe of British re-creationists of the American West are shown playing out their Lone Ranger fantasies in a stark museum space. It's an insightful probe of the prescribed, inaccurate nostalgia permeating our culture. Aitken's satirical *These Restless Minds* depicts marathon-tongued auctioneers wandering through—and selling, one presumes—the wasteland of America's warehouses and convention centers.

Wearing's excellent piece reveals what seems to be an unwarranted liberal-guilt inclusion of the subpar; Let's Entertain suffers no paucity of queer or women artists, but frankly too few of Wearing's rank. One wonders why her peers—more inventive gay (Todd Haynes) and women (Sadie Benning, Miranda July) artists grappling with the exhibit's cultural theme—couldn't have been presented instead.

It is, perhaps, a comment on the overall scattershot quality of the exhibit's film and video content that the most unified, exciting filmic element is entirely static. By sheer force of conceptual and technical perfection, 69 selections from Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* dominate the viewer's attention from their unassuming space on the museum's walls. In these stunning and oft-discussed pictures, she shares the poker-faced blankness and preoccupation with surface that marks the rest of Let's Entertain, but it's a blankness informed by fecundity, intelligence and subtlety.

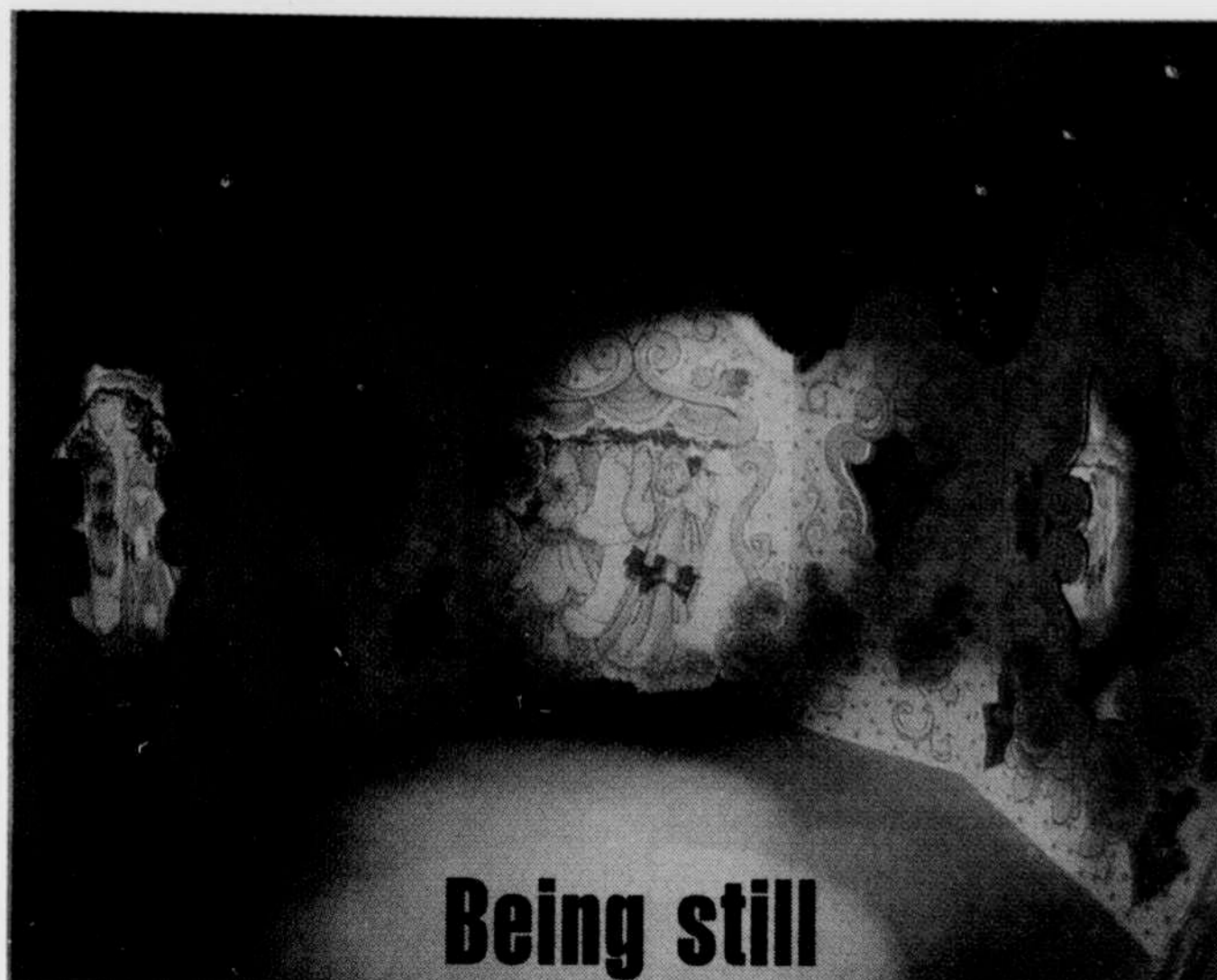
In an exhibit obsessed with changeability, her photos define what exactly that means: They're the only objects in the show with the sublimity to guarantee timeless relevance. These photographs are thoroughly, devastatingly clever and inspired, with their paradoxical combinations of immediate corporeal charisma and sly, insistent hints at what lies behind and beyond them culturally, socially and personally. Sherman's shots are the suggestive, assured and permanently elusive Mona Lisa smile of the late 20th century and by themselves make Let's Entertain worth a visit.

—CM

■ The PORTLAND ART MUSEUM, 1219 S.W. Park Ave., is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is \$7.50. For more information, call (503) 226-2811 or visit www.portlandartmuseum.org.

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Two perspectives on the current show at the Portland Art Museum

BY ORIANA GREEN AND CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN

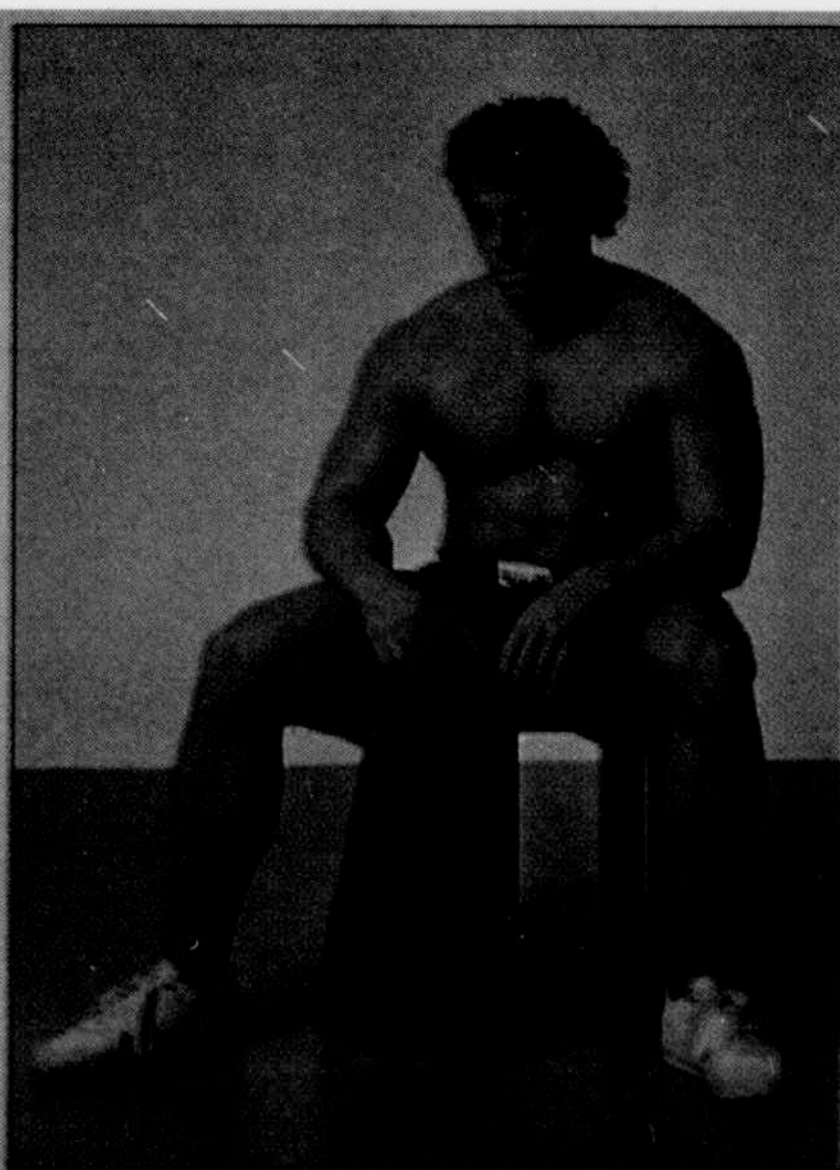
media of film and video. Everything seems to be plugged in, lit up and flickering. Although very uneven, this show is a long-overdue, irreverent antidote to the Portland Art Museum's hackneyed field-trip exhibits and safe, pretty-is-good aesthetic.

Some of the most interesting pieces in Let's Entertain are little more than rescued cultural debris. On one television screen, a segment of

TV and Andy Warhol's *Fifteen Minutes*, the early '80s cable access programs produced by the celebrity-obsessed artist, are on display in all their garish, glaring, dawn-of-videotape glory. Warhol's presence, along with guest appearances by John Waters, Divine and *Out* magazine columnist-to-be Michelangelo Signorile, is the most obviously queer representation, although the exhibit's broader explo-



Still from *Kyupi Kyupi++*



Body Builder by Duane Hanson

If you've never visited the Portland Art Museum because you think it'd be stodgy or dull, now is a good time to dispel that notion.

On view through Sept. 17 is the traveling exhibition *Let's Entertain*, a multimedia extravaganza put together by curators from the Modern Museum in Paris and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Their goal was to explore the intersection of pop culture and contemporary art, and the result is anything but dull.

Although the show has a heavy emphasis on nontraditional media and immerses viewers in a raucous atmosphere, the contemplative, static works are what carry the show. A pair of paintings by Damien Hirst set the tone for me. Hung side by side, the huge, round paintings are whorls of vibrant color, all aiming for the vortex, suggesting planets in turmoil, energy hurtling toward implosion and self-destruction. Yet they are simultaneously oddly joyous and seem to symbolize a fall-of-Rome attitude: We're all going to die soon, so let's at least have a party on the way out!

Another thought-provoking piece is *Nice Little Girl's Wonderful Dressing-up Room* by artist Minako Nishiyama, a meditation on the '90s fad in Japan called *kawaii*, which means cute or pretty. A candy-colored enclosure surrounds the viewer and invites examination in a series of distorting fun-house mirrors as well as introverted antidote to the Portland Art Museum's hackneyed field-trip exhibits and safe, pretty-is-good aesthetic.

The centerpiece of the show is *Untitled Film Stills*, a series of 69 photos taken in the late '70s. Cindy Sherman, who states she is "not a photographer but an artist who uses photography," explores the fictional femininity of postwar America in this collection of self-portraits. Deftly choosing her settings, props and costumes, she catalogs the range of female roles in Hollywood films of the 1940s through the '60s. Some of the images suggest certain actresses, but they are not intended to mimic particular stars or movies. Instead, they provide a sweeping portrait of how women were viewed during that era, with an emphasis on objectification and isolation from the true self.

Taken as a whole, they are overwhelmingly moody and brooding, a quality that is enhanced because they are black-and-white. Individually, they invite viewer identification, imagining oneself in each picture or perhaps finding a frame of one's life captured in someone else's dream. The only disappointment is that they are separated into three groups and cannot be swallowed in a sweeping panorama.

After all the stimulation of the noisy exhibit, it's especially fun to wander the far reaches of the second-floor galleries and savor works by 20th century masters, such as Monet and Munch, to witness the extreme span of artistic taste in a mere century. —OG

To simultaneously revel in and cast a critical eye upon the always-accelerating mutations of culture and life in the entertainment-obsessed contemporary world—this is the goal of Let's Entertain.

The exhibit's sometimes brilliant, sometimes portentous modernity and conceptualism engender a refreshed focus on the modern

a 1981 *American Bandstand* appearance by Public Image Ltd. mockingly calls attention to the fact that none of the performances are ever "live"; lead singer John Lydon does everything with his microphone but sing into it, while his prerecorded voice rings out loud and clear. This contradictory gesture—on one hand the bubble-bursting disregard of the unwritten agreement to fake it when promoting records on television, and on the other hand an almost joyful assertion of the pleasure of pretending, regardless of some old-hat notion of authenticity—encapsulates what the exhibit's about.

In a similar vein, episodes of *Andy Warhol's*

ration of culture's impact on identity will be of interest to visitors of all sexual orientations.

The first floor also features two giant video installation rooms: *Kyupi Kyupi++* by Japanese performance group Kyupi Kyupi and Rineke Djistra's *The Buzz Club/Mystery World*. The former is an ecstatic, colorful, all-singing, all-dancing music-video-like entertainment whose meaning, or absence thereof, is as up to the individual as what color lip gloss to wear. The latter projects simple, isolated moments of club kids dancing, kissing and striking disaffected poses on two large