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# i-D

## Marilyn Minter and the Importance of Porn and Glamour

The legendary artist has a new exhibition, in which she continues to explore her favorite topics – “things that culture thinks of as shallow and debased.”

By Clementine de Pressigny



Speaking to i-D for The Female Gaze Issue, feminist artist Marilyn Minter said that she's drawn to "things that culture thinks of as shallow and debased, like pornography and glamour. I'm interested in exploring the things are considered so worthless." It's the tension between the lack of reverence given to female-focused industries like fashion and beauty, and their undeniable importance on an cultural and economic scale that fascinates the artist. "These are billion dollar industries — fashion and glamour," says Minter. "It's just amazing to me that these industries drive culture and yet at the same time they're so easy to kick in the teeth, and it's a way to shame women, because if you're interested in fashion and beauty you're a shallow person. I feel like I get questioned because I won't condemn fashion and beauty and glamour, and why would I? there are very few industries that women have any power in."

In her upcoming exhibition at Salon 94, will show new paintings that take as their starting point the images from her 2014 book *Plush*, which celebrates the beauty of the bush. The images in *Plush* — close-ups of women's long and luscious pubic hair; un-retouched — were originally taken for *Playboy*, but unsurprisingly, the magazine known for its unrealistic portrayal of women's bodies prefers the shaved look.

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Playing with the sexy cliché of the shower scene, Marilyn re-shot the women from *Plush* behind steamed-up glass, then instead of using Photoshop to erase blemishes, used it play up the unique human elements even more. This imagery then became the foundation for her enamel on metal paintings. The works conjure both private moments alone — time taken during beauty rituals perhaps — and acts of voyeurism that are invited, the women in charge of their own sexuality, assertive with their bodies and enjoying being watched. The artist subverts the usual power roles of porn, exploring self-determination rather than titillation.

Marilyn has long been a self-described pro-sex feminist, and when she was younger was shocked to find that her liberated view wasn't universal. "I just assumed everybody I knew thought like I did, I thought all the new feminists thought like this," she said. It wasn't the case, and for many years she had a hard time from other feminists who felt that her art was glorifying porn at the expense of women. "I had a real pushback from working with sexual imagery. I was pretty young. I really saw there was just so much fear attached to the idea of a female repurposing images from an abusive history, it was just unheard of. It's one of those things that just made sense to me. It wasn't like I had a choice in the matter, this is what I had to make."

With the saturated color and reflections of advertising that Marilyn is known for, the works are entirely modern, while simultaneously reaching back to impressionism as well as the realist works of 19th century painters Édouard Manet and Gustave Courbet, who caused shock and horror with the unvarnished honesty and direct sexuality of their works.

Marilyn Minter at Salon 94 is on view through December 22, 2016.