



SALON 94  
FREEMANS



Best in Show

## The Grand Delusion

Recommendations by R.C. Baker

by **R.C. Baker**

January 22nd, 2008 8:57 PM

When it's up close and personal, photography can really get under your skin. In these separate but related bodies of work, Katy Grannan employs California's paradisiacal sunlight and a gritty empathy to illuminate life at society's margins. In a culture that worships youthful and surgically perfected flesh, one might imagine life as a sagging, middle-aged transsexual to be a tough row to hoe, but in this photographer's downtown show (at Salon 94 Freemans), we meet Dale and Gail, best friends who revel in their ersatz femininity. Despite her truncated plumbing, Dale can't escape her own square shoulders and boxy torso—whether posing in sheer pantyhose or nude on a bed, she projects a blond ideal closer to Edgar Winter than Marilyn Monroe. And yet those 20 jungle-red nails and that coquettish body language achieve a poignant, corporeal dissonance. Then there's a photo of Gail, in tasteful white pumps, her russet tresses and frilly, crocheted shawl wafting in a Pacific breeze. Grannan's models pose as they desire to be seen, even if, as Gail once told the photographer, "All we really have are our delusions, dear."

Nicole, in the uptown show at Greenberg Van Doren, is not a transsexual—just a woman Grannan met on the street in San Francisco. Yet with her well-sculpted, if weathered, starlet's mug, she has delusions of her own. We first see her in low-riding pants, writhing in a pebble-strewn parking lot. Then she's a naked, red-haired siren, grinding meaty hips on a vortex of rock, surrounded by a blaze of vegetation. Or she's sprawling across a fancy hotel bed, bleached wig seemingly dug out of Cindy Sherman's costume trunk, black stilettos complementing white teeth exposed by snarling lips. In one shot that eschews theatrical pretensions, Nicole stands nude in a ratty, crepuscular apartment, cigarette smoldering, head thrown back in ecstasy—or is it resignation? Whichever, her belly is starting to bulge, portending a child on the way and paralleling a teddy bear in the frame, a talisman of youth burned through on the quick. Grannan's models willingly offer themselves, sans texts or testimonials, for our delectation. All we know is what we see, but that's plenty, thank you very much.



**Concrete blonde: Grannan's Nicole, Crissy Field Parking Lot (I), 2006**

Courtesy of the Artist & Greenberg Van Doren Gallery

Salon 94 Freemans  
1 Freeman Alley  
Through February 23

Greenberg Van Doren  
730 Fifth Avenue  
Through February 16