Helen Molesworth’s Best of 2012

CINDY SHERMAN’S WALLPAPER (MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK) Sherman’s foray into wallpaper is, for me, a near Brechtian exercise in affect: Laugh or cry?


Alone, misshapen, melancholic, Sherman offers herself as a Pierrot for the twenty-first century. If Watteau’s fêtes galantes were covert critiques of an aristocracy run amok, in which the artist was imagined as a kind of decorator-clown, then Sherman’s wallpaper intimates that decades of feminism have resulted in modest gains in a game whose rules remain dishearteningly unchanged.