

Scarborough, James. Review. *Flash Art* (October 1993), p. 88-89.

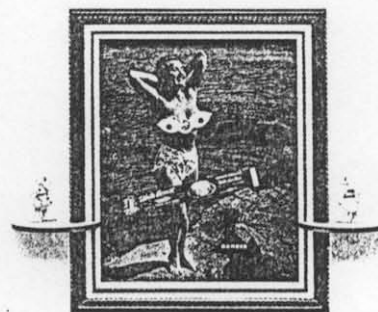
R E V I E W S

ALEXIS SMITH
MARGO LEAVIN

Somewhere, Erica Jong wrote that reading Henry Miller provided women with a way to understand how men thought. Similarly, I should think anyone who wants to understand a woman's point of view should consider the work of Alexis Smith. Her work exists in that space between June Cleaver and Kathy Acker, not peaches and cream but then, not sawtooth-frank, either. And so, when Alexis (using her first name only seems apt here, like Jackie) appropriates a *Life* magazine cover (Be Happy — Go Lucky) showing an Aryan *madchen* dancing in front of a full-length mirror, the scene littered with the confetti of nights on the town at "21" — lobster, champagne, a blue crown which confers Queen for a Day status on its wearer — she undercuts the whole image by anchoring it in *The Morning After* with bits of clothing — actual gauze on one of the arms to match the fishnet stockings, held up with an actual garter. She serves notice that, while the scene is the stuff of which feminine dreams are purportedly made of — be healthy, be desired by men — the dream is as evanescent as a champagne bubble. This is why girls gotta have fun when they can: one prick and the dream is gone.

And when she takes a pinup model in a bikini ad (Gander), affixes swim goggles to her (of course, ample) breasts, a label from a can of white breast tuna ("eat me" it seems to say; it is also a vulgar joke) beneath that and two Donald Duck dolls on platforms gawking at the sight, it's not to present an interpretation of *Beach Blanket Bingo* but rather the way, to paraphrase Prufrock ("and when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin") that male-eyes (of advertising, photo-journalism, packaging) formulate women stereotypes. This explains Alexis's redoubtable wit: the play on the word, "gander": a male duck, to be sure, but also a quick look. And let's not forget, "what's good for the goose is not good for the gander."

James Scarborough



ALEXIS SMITH, GANDER, 1993. MIXED MEDIA
COLLAGE, 24 X 30 X 4".