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R E V I E W S

LOS ANGELES

Alexis Smith

MARGO LEAVIN

Alexis Smith knows her way around popular culture. She is particularly sharp on the subject of sexual stereotypes: in a dozen new collages made of found objects and images, works featuring dancing girls, pinups, and femmes fatales make the point with Smith's characteristic light touch.

Her method is one of cross-referencing, with each element adding a poignant twist while referring to other components and enriching the total effect. Viewers may fix on details—such as a curvaceous silhouette that might have been plucked from a truck's mud flap or a horoscope clipped from a newspaper—but they soon discover that everything is related.

Take *Gander*, which has a photograph of a bathing beauty as its central image. At once demure and sexy, this joyous "girl" could be taken for a picture of grown-up innocence, ca. 1955. Posed by the ocean, with her chest thrust forward and her head tilted back to soak up the sunshine, she luxuriates in her body and in nature.

But the media's use of women as advertising tools and sex objects is made hilariously clear by Smith's pointed choice of additional components. A pair of tanning glasses fits neatly over the woman's bra, leaving no doubt that her breasts are the center of attention, both formally and conceptually. Meanwhile, two Donald Duck statuettes perched on shelves attached to the frame take a gander at the model, and the label from a can of White Breast tuna stretches across her legs.

What's wrong with this picture? Nothing, if you take it as a joke. Everything, if you consider the social implications.

—Suzanne Muchnic



Alexis Smith, *Gander*, 1993, mixed media collage, 30 by 21½ by 4 inches. Margo Leavin.