

# AnOther

Magazine

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There are secrets brooding in the shadows. What we don't see is as important as what we do



**Malerie Marder**

Gregory Crewdson on the bathrooms, bungalows, motels **and mirrors** of Malerie Marder's world

These erotically-charged images shot in anonymous Los Angeles motel rooms by American photographer Malerie Marder are taken from the debut collection of her works in print, entitled *Carnal Knowledge*. In this essay, Marder's mentor and former teacher at Yale, the celebrated photographer Gregory Crewdson - known for his elaborate, cinematic images of eerie suburbia - offers his meditation on the strangely compelling power of Marder's work.

The artist nude, staring at her blurred reflection in a hotel room mirror. The artist's father nude, sitting awkwardly on the carpet in front of a fireplace. The artist and her sister nude, kneeling towards each other in private seance. The artist's boyfriend nude in the shower, staring at her mother, with her back to him. The artist's mother nude in a bedroom, staring at her boyfriend, with his back to her.

This is the world of Malerie Marder. A disquieting, hermetic world of psychosexual encounters where the artist is the essential protagonist - at once voyeur and central participant. Marder is the director as well as the documentarian. Even in the pictures where she does not appear, there is

a pervading sense of her presence; the key figure linking her subjects in this unfolding psychological drama.

The classic depiction of the nude figure takes on its own role, serving as a means to express a sense of loneliness and alienation. Despite the sexually charged imagery, the pictures are infused with a sense of clinical detachment and emotional separation.

Settings too play a central role. Anonymous hotel rooms, bathrooms, Hollywood bungalows; the outside world seems to disappear in these enclosed, claustrophobic interiors. Mirrors, windows and doorways are recurrent framing devices, heightening the sense of voyeurism.

The contrast between dark and light recalls the tradition of film noir. There are secrets brooding in the shadows. What we don't see is as important as what we do.

At the core is her obsession to capture these charged moments. Moments that will remain forever elusive and unresolved.

Words Gregory Crewdson  
Photography Malerie Marder  
*Carnal Knowledge* is published by Violette Editions in March 2011