



LAURA LONDON

London's Photos Depict Teen Dreams, Fantasies

Art Reviews

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“Rock Star Moments,” Laura London’s new series of photographs on view at Works on Paper Inc., is a tour through the literal and psychological costume trunk of a 13-year-old girl named Clancy. The first five of the 10 photographs in the series feature Clancy in the guise of Marilyn Manson, Courtney Love and other rock stars, complete with wigs, makeup, jewelry, padded breasts and a guitar. If it weren’t for the clear markings of a teenage girl’s bedroom, the images would be surprisingly convincing.

Clancy conveys all the trappings of contemporary glamour with ease: the adolescent indifference, the sultry posture, the detached gaze, the cool sexuality. She wears the costumes not as clothes but as psychological states, as though she’s internalized their logic. But there is nothing schizophrenic about Clancy’s performances in these pictures; rather, her ease in role playing is conveyed as a form of mastery.

The sixth photograph in the series takes us behind the scenes. In this image, Clancy sits on the floor of her room, holding a red wig in one hand and sorting through piles of clothes with the other, out of character and not paying attention to the camera. It’s a charming and powerful moment in the series, not because it exposes a “real” Clancy underneath the adult disguises—it doesn’t—but because it exposes her as the clear-headed author of her own image.

The remaining four photographs also depict Clancy out of character, in various states of costume. In the last image, she appears as a regular 13-year-old girl in blue jeans and a tank top, although we are given no reason to believe that it is any truer an image than any of the others.

It is to London’s credit that Clancy’s talent for shape-shifting is not presented as a sign of capriciousness or soulessness but as a gesture of power. London centers Clancy in every image, shooting from eye level or near eye level. Clancy gazes directly (and dauntingly) into the camera in most of the shots, and in no case does she seem to have been caught unaware. London has not attempted to seize more than Clancy wants to give to the camera. The resulting effect is a charming camaraderie between the two, a sense of respectful cooperation that seems to have brought out the best in both of them.

● Works on Paper Inc., 6150 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, (323) 964-9675, through Dec. 2. Closed Sundays and Mondays.