

The background of the poster is a vibrant, abstract photograph. It features a central vertical axis of small, bright purple and pink flowers, possibly cherry blossoms, which are in sharp focus. The surrounding area is filled with soft, out-of-focus bokeh in shades of green, yellow, and pink, creating a dreamlike and ethereal atmosphere. The lighting is dramatic, with some areas appearing darker, suggesting a night scene illuminated by light sources.

**WHITNEY  
BIENNIAL  
2006**  

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**DAY FOR NIGHT**



## MARILYN MINTER

Born 1948, Shreveport, Louisiana; lives in New York, New York

Marilyn Minter has been considering representations and ramifications of glamour for the last thirty years, but it is worth considering just what is connoted by the word. Minter, it seems, defines this concept by the book, or at least intuitively leans toward its etymological truth, which aligns glamour with magic spells and illusory attractiveness—never with fictional ideas that propose glamour as some kind of natural condition. All of which is to say that Minter has been plumbing the depths of (al)chemical beauty (and its breakdowns) for a very long time.

In one of her earliest series of work, a group of black-and-white photographs from the late 1960s, Minter went right to the source—her own mother. Snapping pictures of her aging, substance-abusing, bedridden parent, Minter captured the queasy day-to-day undoings and recastings of physical appearance. Obsessed with tasks of pruning and priming, Minter's mother, clad in nightgown and propped with pillows, refused to let even a stray eyebrow lay seed. The photographs, at once gorgeous and grotesque, made nearly everyone who saw them so uncomfortable that the artist hid them away in a drawer for the next three decades.

In conjunction with her practice of photography, Minter makes paintings (enamel on metal), showing a special interest in Photo-Realist methods of representation. Culling imagery from cooking shows, porn videos, and beauty advertisements, the artist posits a visual continuity between seemingly disjunctive sensual experiences. By intentionally conflating the pleasures of cuisine and cunnilingus, Minter renders straightforward yet ambiguous images that shore up the constructed nature of their meanings.

In Minter's hands, a lobster tail is apt to become infinitely sexier than a penis, and the accoutrements of beauty will never ensure perfection. In recent works, she paints hyperrealistic images that look more photographic than photographs, and snaps photographs that look utterly painterly. Choosing models whose race and gender are open to interpretation, Minter hones in (literally and figuratively) on the imperfect trappings of high couture in large-scale color photographs and paintings that at once magnify, fetishize, and abject their subjects. Plumped, rouge-stained lips drip with slimy egg yolk; the glittered eye of a model is accompanied by a peach-fuzzed face; the wearer of studded Christian Dior pumps has apparently been doused in mud, and dirt infiltrates every crease of her perfectly manicured feet. The ambivalence in Minter's works does not leave us any less seduced by them: we simply have a harder time cleaning up and simplifying the true nature of our much more complicated desires.

JB



*Stepping Up*, 2005. Enamel on metal, 96 x 60 in. (243.8 x 152.4 cm). Private collection; courtesy Salon 94, New York