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## **NATALIE REIS** *Got Face*

by Benjamin Klein

Does an image contain reality, apart from being contained by it? Is a picture of a beautiful female serial killer different in kind from one of a simply beautiful woman? In other words, can painting reflect undeniable fact? A painting can propose a claim to knowledge; therefore, a series of very similar, but individual and unique paintings can simultaneously pose both questions and answers to such a claim, constituting an essay on a difficult, painful, irresistible subject. The multiplication of a killer's images can accuse, question, bewilder and also confuse: Who can say what is an evil look?

In Natalie Reis's paintings, ideas about obsession, art and femininity intertwine around the factual background of her subjects. Her answer to "real" identity is to take a sustained, microscopic look at her subjects, to consider the idea and reality of the hidden versus the supposedly obvious, creating a dialectic between things that seem exactly to resemble one another, but that can be proven, perhaps, to be anything but alike. In *Got Face*, her series of paintings of Karla Homolka, Reis demonstrates that seductive qualities, in people as in painting, are dangerous: intellectually, by leading us into hypocrisy and error — and literally, lethal.

When told it was taboo to paint the figure, Willem de Kooning answered that, if so, he therefore had to. Reis has performed a parallel act of protest and transgression: painting a person whose image is automatically obscured by her appearance, whose nature is in a sense beyond description, whose face is a lie, but also the truth. There is no reason why the seductive cannot be the lethal — in art, as in life.

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Got Face.  
oil on canvas.  
2' x 2'. 2007

