

Exhibition at Tisch explores Race, Beauty, and Art



Few people would deny that the representation of African and African American women in art has a controversial history. Jean-Paul Goude is a photographer whose book, *Jungle Fever*, featured on its cover a nude Grace Jones posing in a cage. That image was published in 1982, however Goude recently photographed model Amber Rose for a layout in *Complex* magazine that includes a re-enactment of the shot. Whether the images are demeaning or not is a question that lack a definitive answer. After all, each of the women agreed to be involved and the new photo shoot is published in a reputable magazine. Is it respectable art that pushes social boundaries, or is it merely fetishizing black women by portraying them as animals?

Posing Beauty, an exhibition sponsored by the Tisch School of the Arts Department of Photography and Imaging, explores this and other questions of race, beauty, art and the complex relationships among them. The exhibition explores the portrayals of African and African American beauty in art and media. Seen through both a historical and modern perspective, it allows one to examine the relationship between attitudes toward women of color and how they are portrayed in art. In an age where one is bombarded by images, it is exceedingly important to examine how far society has yet to go in both its treatment and depiction of black women.

"Beauty" is a constant focus in our society. How it is portrayed in the media has an undeniable impact on our culture. The other side of this exhibition is its investigation of the media's representation of beauty and how it affects one's world-view and a society's social norms. It is a topic well worth examining when *American Vogue* has still had less than ten African or African American women grace its cover in 25 years and when women (as well as men) go to extreme lengths to become and stay "beautiful." The exhibition features approximately 80 works, covering a wide range of media from various artists. It is open to the public and there is no cost for admission. Opening week starts September 1st at the Gulf + Western Gallery and in the 8th floor gallery of the Tisch School of the Arts (721 Broadway).