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You Look at Me Like an Emergency

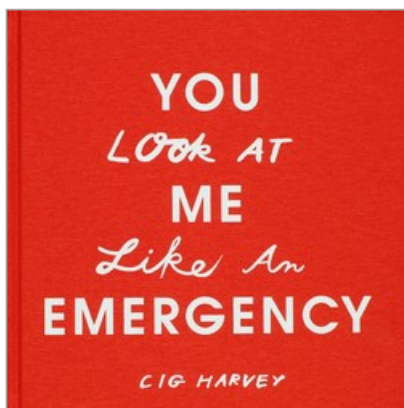
REVIEWED BY GEORGE SLADE, PUBLISHED ON MONDAY, JUNE 18, 2012

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Cig Harvey | **You Look at Me Like an Emergency**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CIG HARVEY

Schilt Publishing, , 2012. Hardbound. 144 pp., 74 color illustrations, 8-3/4x8-3/4".



Upon first learning that Cig Harvey's wondrously whimsical photographs were being published I was skeptical. Not all photography needs to be seen in book form, and I was less than clear about how Harvey's images would fare on paper. They look great individually, and great framed and hung on walls. One by one they are enigmatic artifacts of an anomalous, nomadic imagination. Would this seemingly disconnected set of parenthetical tableaux translate effectively to book form? My guess was no. And my guess was wrong.

The narrative constitutes three numbered sections. The imagery is often simplified, with a protagonist seen in various unusual, though not life-threatening, situations. One advantage to the book form is that through accumulation we discover that Harvey herself, who is frequently her own model (though she mutes her identity through modes of disguise and self-effacing/-erasing distance), is not pursuing a Sherman-esque set of revelations or character critiques. The roles enacted throughout *Emergency* are quotidian meditations, common and remarkably graceful in their introspection—a modest turn on Bruce Charlesworth's scene-setting self-portraits.

Harvey's own appearances are supplemented by numerous other actors. Instead of memoir, the sequence assumes the atmosphere of fable; the pictured figure (usually lone, usually female, often over-dressed for the circumstances, and of various ages) gives viewers surrogate agency in moments of serendipity, encouraging us to project ourselves into this Magritte-inflected landscape.



Two elements tie the fragments together, enrich the whole, and bring meaning to the book form. One is a series of comments, about self and relationships, that might be either thought balloons from the photographs, travelogue commentary, or steam-of-consciousness reverie that functions parallel to the photographs and draws us along in search of the through-line. The other crucial element lies in the dedication—"For Doug/A Love Story"—which propels this book as a tale of longing and connection.



Through words and pictures Harvey has recorded an imaginative epic of unknowing, discovery, and deepening; she reveals herself, in all her complications and anecdotal delight, as a person coming to grips with that significant other who does, now and then, regard her as amiably odd, perhaps even needful of loving care. Readers of the book may feel the same way.

—GEORGE SLADE

http://www.photoeye.com/magazine/reviews/2012/06_18_You_Look_at_Me_Like_an_Emergency.cfm