

Maria Marshall
Team Gallery, through Sat 14
(see Chelsea).

One of the core contributions of early feminist writing about film and art was identifying the “male gaze” that underlies the long history of artistic depictions of women—from the attentive, painterly renderings by the Old Masters to the lingering, soft-focus close-ups of classic Hollywood films. Indeed, one can find examples throughout the centuries of how art catered to male viewers by the framing, appraising or positioning of the female subject in ways that emphasized her weakness or sexual availability.

The centerpiece of Maria Marshall’s latest show makes the “gaze” a contemporary concept. *When are we there?* is a six-minute DVD loop that winds through dim hallways of a Modern-style building and ends up in a room in which Marshall herself stands, clothed in a plain white, knee-length dress. The camera approaches, zooms in and then courses over her body. And before our very eyes, Marshall’s skin begins to move, as if being touched. Indentations appear on her breasts, and the skin on

her exposed throat creases, as if caressed by invisible fingers. Using digital editing technology to achieve her special effects, Marshall has created a work that spells out, in frighteningly graphic form, the ideas of myriad feminist writers and theorists. Under her direction, the camera’s gaze borders on the tactile and becomes an instrument of harassment.

Two other DVD loops feature her sons, who often figure into her works. In *Theresa’s Story*, one of her boys retells a story he heard at school—highlighting his self-consciousness in front of the camera. *President Bill Clinton, Memphis, November 13, 1993* matches sped-up images of Marshall’s two sons unwrapping gifts with a voice-over in which one of them reads excerpts from a Clinton speech. Putting adult words into the mouths of children (including such lines as “Who will be there to take care of these children?”), Marshall reminds us that public discourse, no matter how general or abstract, often has personal consequences. Still, this show shines most in *When are we there?*, as Marshall employs an emerging medium to reenergize a traditional theme in feminist politics.—*Martha Schwendener*

