

Linda Dolack “Divine Excess”

by James Yood

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Linda Dolack is a Pop pointillist who employs glass beads and glossy sequins to embellish what are already extremely culturally jazzed-up materials. She makes the alluring more alluring, intensifying the surface glamour of objects—magazine covers and packaged sweets—that are themselves cleverly designed to cajole our appetites for creature comfort and celebrity. Dolack revels in this stuff—a cover of OPRAH or The Globe, a box of Good n’ Plenty or a jar of Fluff—seeing them as already so charmingly redolent with the insatiable cravings of mass culture that they need no more than a judicious (and here, a literal) embroidering. And that’s what she does; she takes, for example, an actual copy of Rosie (and that we live in a civilization where there is an entire magazine about Rosie O’Donnell pretty much makes Dolack’s point) and painstakingly and scrupulously stitches on a carpeting of glass beads and pretty sequins. These fairly carefully reproduce the cover of the magazine, making it even more glossy and electric, causing it to shimmer with faux splendor, fetishizing it into something beyond gilding the lily.

In Dolack’s magazine covers—and these included, among others, an issue of Money with Michael Jordan’s beaming visage upon it, People emblazoned with Princess Di, The Globe informing us of the doings of JFK Jr. and Madonna, and Oprah with (you guessed it) Oprah’s transcendent smile—she will leave the actual heads on these covers as they were photographed, and sets to all the rest, surrounding what are almost certainly airbrushed photos with an aureole of shine. (She even uses a sequence of vertical black and white glass beads to mimic the magazine’s UPC barcode.) Her attentive stitching—and Liza Lou does come to mind here—makes a wonderful sheathing, only tangentially ironic or deflating, but curiously celebratory, as an appropriate dappling activity around the creation of these temporal icons. This is practically Warhol-like, to recognize what is simultaneously poignant and pathetic within the vernacular and by slight but keen intervention to expose its inclinations remarkably clearly, providing a platform for a closer consideration of this material.



Dolack’s sequins and glass beads continue on the back cover as well—that almost always a full page color ad—making these magazines into little sandwiches of art. Candy and foodstuff get her attention too. While she’ll bead away on something as ubiquitous as a can of tomatoes (and be as attentive to the blazoned logo of Red Gold brand as to the photo of the tomatoes below), Dolack has a bit of a sweet tooth. Sometimes, as in her sparkling Trix cereal package or box of Good & Plenty Dolack will, as with the magazine, cover the literal box. In smaller cases, a bag of M & M’s, or a roll of Lifesavers, she will handsew her glass beads onto cotton, simulating rather than carpeting her source material. It doesn’t matter much, her target is both specific and generic. It chronicles the way communal desire—what we want to eat, who we want to be—is manifested in a poetic of graphic and visual exaggeration, in an endless stream of breathless importunity perpetually asking for bits of our time and money. Dolack packages packages, and in so doing might just be touching on the central substance of contemporary life.



– James Yood

