



A girlie's nudes: Orly Cogan at Projects

By Libby May 17, 2007

Libby sees the ornate embroidered nude portraits by Orly Cogan at Projects Gallery and calls them empowered, playful and of the moment.



Orly Cogan, Cupcake Girl, 55 x 53 inches, embroidery applique and paint on vintage print tablecloth

The embroidered nudes of **Orly Cogan** have it both ways. They express the artist's exuberant self-possession of her own body in circumstances that are clearly of this moment in time (with cellphones, hair dryers, current clothing styles, etc.). But they refer copiously to the history-art history and archetypal fairy tale roles—of women objectified. So Cogan gets to have her cupcake and eat it, too, by icing her feminist perspective with a little titillation.

I had a lot of favorites in her exhibit, . . . and don't forget to rescue the princess!, at [Projects Gallery](#). I like the way the embroidery and the old fabric prints work together and in competition with each other (see the first and last images in this post, Cupcake Girl on top and Surveying Suitors, last). It's a nice metaphor for the present and the past working to create something new.



Orly Cogan, Noah's Playpen, 42 x 54 wide, embroidery and applique

But I also like the obvious art historical harem references in Noah's Playpen. Projects Gallery's **Helen Meyrick** mentioned that Cogan's model is herself, by in large, but the who's who and what's the point is not exactly pinned down in this piece, which makes me like the portrait of the ladies in the Noah's harem all the more.



Coffee Break, 26 x 17" hand-stitched embroidery and paint on vintage linen, by Orly Cogan

Cogan has a wicked sense of humor, as in the nude seated on a vacuum, pausing for a coffee—the image embroidered on a linen tea towel. The tea towel suggests all those women of the past in the kitchen. Not our Orly. The nipples and the towel stripes match in bold red, and the Electrolux is one sexy machine. As is so often the case, Cogan is on top.



Surveying Suitors, by Orly Cogan, 30 x 24 inches; handstitched embroidery on printed raw silk

A number of pieces rewrite fairy tales. The frog princes in *Surveying Suitors*, however, are less rewritten than a statement about who's in charge. For all her storybook source material, Cogan is not so much an illustrator but a chronicler of a modern woman who knows how to play the game and not go all serious on us. She clearly is enjoying the position she's in.