

Paradise Row

presents

KISS ME DEADLY: A Group Show of Contemporary Neo-Noir from
Los Angeles

Text accompanying the exhibition:

THE SINGING AND THE GOLD

By

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SCENE TWO, ACT THREE: I SAW MYSELF THROUGH THE TREES

An image of a dark ocean fills the screen; it is night and the flash of a slowly turning lighthouse lamp illuminates and erases the landscape again and again. The water is still and dark, we hear the clanging of a boat moored somewhere off screen and some kind of vague shout, though we cannot tell what the voice is saying. The camera pans down a rocky shore, the white strobe from the lamp partially revealing a scene that is occurring just on the edge of the screen. We see a man struggling with one of two identically dressed women, the camera zooms in and focuses on their feet: a pair of high heeled shoes is slipping and scraping against the rocks; we watch them lose footing and hear the splash of a body hitting the water. A pair of identical shoes walks slowly into frame, stopping at the edge of the rocks. The camera focuses here as waves pass over and break. We hear a frantic voice issue from the edge.

DROWNING WOMAN (TINA)

Harry! Harry, help me! Help me!
She's lying to you! You've got the
wrong...

THE CAMERA PANS TO A PURSE THAT HAS BEEN DROPPED ON THE ROCKS. WE WATCH A GLOVED HAND RETRIEVE AND OPEN IT.

BOBBI

(Mocking tone)"Harry! Harry, help
me! You've got the wrong girl!"

WE WATCH THE GLOVED HAND REMOVE AN ID AND A SMALL BLACK ENAMEL COMPACT. THE COMPACT OPENS TO REVEAL ITS BEARER'S FACE NEXT TO THE PHOTOGRAPH ON THE ID. WE ARE ALLOWED TO SEE HOW SIMILAR THEY ARE FOR BARELY A SECOND, UNTIL THE LIGHTHOUSE FLASHES OVER THE MIRROR AND THE FLARE BLEACHES THE SCREEN.

DROWNING WOMAN (TINA)

Harry!

THE CAMERA PANS BACK TO THE WATER, WE WATCH A HAND LOSE ITS GRIP ON THE ROCKS AND SLIP BENEATH THE SURFACE. THE MOORED BOAT CLANGS HOLLOW IN THE DISTANCE, WE HEAR SOUNDS THAT TELL US THAT HARRY AND BOBBI ARE RETREATING. THE CAMERA ZOOMS TOWARDS THE WATER AND WE SEE THAT A LETTER FLOATING ON THE SURFACE HAS BEEN CARRIED ONTO THE ROCKS. THE DARKNESS MAKES

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IT HARD TO READ THE WORDS, BUT WE SEE A CHAIN OF NUMBERS, A DATE, AND THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF AN INN. THE CAMERA FADES OUT AS THE LETTER STIRS SLIGHTLY UNDER THE WIND, AND WE LISTEN TO HARRY AND BOBBI SPEAK IN GRADUALLY DISAPPEARING WHISPERS UNTIL THE SCREEN GOES GRAY.

BOBBI

I didn't think that it would spook me so bad, Harry. It was like watching myself go under, you know?

HARRY

Alright, already. You've got the key?

BOBBI

Yeah, Harry, I've got the goddamn key. Thanks for asking....

END SCENE

SCENE THREE, ACT ONE: A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

The screen frames an image of a split level beach side motel with a sign in front that reads Condor Break Inn. It is early morning, and the camera follows the flight of a small bird from a filthy birdbath by the parking lot up to room number 21. Through a window we watch from behind as a man uses a small hand saw to remove a square of plaster from the wall in the room. The man then reaches into the hole and removes a cassette tape and a cigar box, which he hands to Bobbi, who is standing behind him holding a smoldering cigarette and eating chocolates out of a large, red, heart shaped box. It's a Wonderful Life flickers in black in white across the curve of the television screen positioned next to the hole.

HARRY

Bobbi, put that damn thing out and get over here.

BOBBI

Don't you talk to me like that,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harry. I'm not stupid, you know;
you need me now, you son of a bitch,
and I'm not gon-

HARRY GRABS BOBBI BY THE HAIR AND PULLS HER TOWARD HIM. HE
HOLDS HER FACE MILLIMETERS FROM HIS OWN.

HARRY

(In a snarling whisper) Now you
listen to me, "Bobbi;" I will bury
you if you don't shut up and do what
you're told. Now put that goddamned
thing out and start looking through
that box for the letter.

BOBBI

Sure, Baby. You know I'll do
anything you say....

BOBBI TAKES THE CIGAR BOX OVER TO THE BED AND BEGINS TO SORT
THROUGH A PILE OF OLD PHOTOGRAPHS THAT SHOW TWO GIRLS WHO WE
UNDERSTAND TO BE SISTERS. SOME OF THE FACES IN THE IMAGES
SEEM TO HAVE BEEN OBSCURED OR BURNED. JUST AS SHE IS OPENING
WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SECRET BOTTOM IN THE BOX, THERE IS A
KNOCK FROM OUTSIDE. HARRY GESTURES FOR HER TO OPEN THE DOOR.
THEY ARE BOTH STUNNED WHEN THE DOOR OPENS TO REVEAL A CHAMBER
MAID WHO, THOUGH BLONDE AND UNMADE-UP, LOOKS UNCANNILY LIKE
BOBBI. SHE IS WEARING A NAME TAG THAT READS "CHRISTINE;"
BOBBI STARES AT HER IN HORROR.

CHRISTINE

Hi Ma'am - I'm from the front desk
and we just wanted to see how you
all have settled in. Do you need
some towels? Tumblers or an ice
bucket or anything?

CHRISTINE LOOKS PAST BOBBI AND SEES THE EXCISED SLAB OF WALL
LAYING ON THE GROUND INSIDE THE ROOM. BOBBI CLOSES THE DOOR
SLIGHTLY AND ANGLES HER BODY SO THE CONTENTS OF THE ROOM ARE
OBSCURED.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI

No, Miss. We don't need anything.
Please do not disturb us again.

CHRISTINE

I'm just in the front office if you
need anything, Ma'am.

BOBBI CLOSSES THE DOOR AND WATCHES THROUGH THE ROOM'S FRONT WINDOW AS CHRISTINE WALKS AWAY, PUSHING HER HOUSEKEEPING CART. WE WATCH BOBBI DO A DOUBLE TAKE: SHE HAS SEEN SOMETHING ON THE BOTTOM OF THE CART AND HER ALARM IS OBVIOUS. SHE RUSHES OVER TO THE CIGAR BOX AND REMOVES THE FALSE BOTTOM; INSIDE SHE FINDS A PHOTOGRAPH OF HERSELF, TINA, AND HARRY FROM THE BEACH. THE CAMERA ZOOMS TO FILL THE SCREEN WITH HER FRIGHTENED LOOKING EYES AND THEN DOWN TO THE PHOTOGRAPH IN HER HANDS. WE WATCH AS SHE TURNS THE PHOTOGRAPH OVER; THERE IS AN ADDRESS AND A LOCKER NUMBER SCRAWLED ON THE BACK. SHE PUTS THE PHOTOGRAPH IN HER PURSE AND THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

END SCENE

SCENE FOUR, ACT ONE

WE HEAR HEAVY, NERVOUS BREATHING RASPING OVER THE CLATTER AND DIN OF A CROWDED TRAIN STATION. A PAIR OF WOMEN'S LEGS IN SEAMED STOCKINGS AND HIGH HEELED SHOES NAVIGATE THE CROWD, CLICKING OVER A GLOSSY TILED FLOOR UNTIL THE WOMAN WEARING THEM ARRIVES AT A LARGE BANK OF BEIGE LOCKERS. SHE SETS DOWN A VALISE AND OPENS A SMALL PURSE. WE WATCH HER HANDS REMOVE A KEY AND THE PHOTOGRAPH OF BOBBI, HARRY AND TINA; SHE PAUSES FOR A SECOND, CONSULTING THE NUMBER WRITTEN ON THE BACK. WE WATCH HER HAND TURN THE KEY IN LOCKER #44; INSIDE WE SEE A DARK WIG, A SUIT IDENTICAL TO THE ONES TINA AND BOBBI WORE TO THE BEACH, AND A SMALL REVOLVER. SHE REMOVES THE CONTENTS OF THE LOCKER AND PUTS THEM IN THE VALISE. THE SCREEN IS FILLED WITH AN IMAGE OF THE EMPTY LOCKER, THE DOOR SHUTS, THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

END SCENE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCENE FIVE, ACT ONE

A WOMAN'S MANICURED INDEX FINGER PRESSES PLAY ON A TAPE RECORDER; WE WATCH THE TAPE BEGIN TO SPOOL. THE SOUND OF A WOMAN'S VOICE ISSUES; SHE SOUNDS FRIGHTENED, CHILDISH.

WOMAN'S VOICE/TINA

I told you that I don't know! I told
you both that I don't have what you're
looking for. I haven't seen
any of them in 10 years and I don't
have it!

MAN'S VOICE/HARRY

Come on, Tina. (We hear a struggle,
we hear a woman choking) Hey Bobbi,
let the hell up on her, will you.
You're gonna kill the bitch.

WOMAN'S VOICE/TINA

It's in the wall at The Condor! It's
in 21! Please! Ple-

The tape cuts to static, the manicured finger stops the tape and removes it from the cassette recorder. The scene widens to show us that the listener is sitting at a small kitchen table; we watch from behind as she unspools the tape and sets the reel on fire.

END SCENE