

# ARTFORUM

## Martin Schoeller

HASTED HUNT KRAEUTLER

537 West 24th Street

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Martin Schoeller isn't the first artist to photograph female bodybuilders; Robert Mapplethorpe's images of weightlifter Lisa Lyon from the early 1980s are noted for the aestheticization of her muscular, seemingly masculine body. While similar in topic, Schoeller's pictures eschew the stylization of these earlier images, instead presenting their subjects with an unblinkingly straightforward, nearly anthropological sense of objectivity. In each of the photographs, a woman directly addresses the viewer in an act that gains further impact given the works' larger-than-life scale. Schoeller developed this trademark deadpan approach through headshot-style images of celebrities and artists as wide-ranging as Bill Murray and Marina Abramović, which are also included in the current exhibition.

The sense of irony here is both nuanced and complicated, as viewers are confronted with the ambiguous gender of the female bodybuilders. While attention is most immediately drawn to their bulging, impeccably toned physiques, it remains impossible to ignore their deliberately crafted feminine appearance. The subject of *Carmella Cureton*, 2007, for example, appears in a rhinestone-studded bikini top with matching bright red lipstick and dangling earrings. Whereas Mapplethorpe's earlier photos intended to highlight the graceful beauty of their masculinized subject, Schoeller presents Cureton's superficially contradictory appearance without comment or explanation. This juxtaposition of traditionally gendered characteristics highlights both the complicated position these women inhabit as well as the limitations of the feminine stereotypes they reject and redefine.

By Britany Salisbury

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Martin Schoeller, *Carmella Cureton*, 2007, color photograph, 89 x 72". From the series "Female Bodybuilders," 2007.

— Britany Salisbury