

# Haunting, powerful photographs at the Gardner Museum

By Stan Grossfeld  
GLOBE STAFF

"The Body in the Picture" is the first exhibit by a living artist to be held at the Gardner Museum. Under the terms of the Isabella Stewart Gardner's will, nothing new could be added in the museum. But this special exhibition space is outside the original gallery area. Museum officials even checked with the attorney general's office to make sure.

The exhibit is both provocative and evocative. The artist, Dorit Cypis, asked subjects to bring in several photographic images, including one autobiographical and one from popular culture. These images range from baby pictures and family photos to the pop star Madonna and a famous photo by Life photographer Margaret Bourke-White.

The photos are copied and then projected as slides on a wall using at least two projectors. Then comes the therapy. During a six-week holistic experience the subject enters and interacts with the images projected on the wall. Cypis uses a variety of techniques including yoga, body awareness, body-mind centering, breathing and voice techniques used in the theater to seek the truth.

"Most of us are numb," said Cypis, 41, during an interview. "Most of us are cut off from our bodies. We have not accessed our full selves. We forget our spirituality. I'm trying to bring spirit and flesh together."

Subjects use their bodies like paint brushes, casting shadows and highlights on themselves and the projected images. Cypis waits behind her Nikon FE mounted on a tripod with a 50mm lens. When she sees a provocative relationship between the subject, the subject's



"Malka Mickelson" by Dorit Cypis.

shadow and the projected images she yells "freeze" and then makes a half-second exposure.

By her own admission she is an artist, not a photographer. "I took a three-week course in photography 15 years ago," she says. Yet despite a few technical shortcomings — like inadequate depth of field — the exhibit wildly succeeds in introducing inner thought into photography's shadows and light. The result is the psychophoto — the capturing of the mind on the emulsion. The final result challenges the viewer to interpret the subject. For clues, accompanying each print is a line sketch that serves as a map of how the image was created.

The dozen subjects in this exhibit range in age from 20 to 60. They include artists, graphic designers, art collectors, photographers and a social advocate for rural women. The Israeli-born Cypis, whose work has been presented at the Whitney Museum and the Institute of Contemporary Art, plans to teach several seminars this month while she is an artist in residence at the Gardner. At least one will be an interactive photographic workshop.

In "Adrianna Marcione" we see a photograph of Adrianna at age 3. Projected over that is Madonna. But when the 20-year-old Adrianna strolls into the scene, Madonna's image becomes split. Madonna is on her back and Madonna's eye blinds her image as a child. Erotica becomes neurotica.

In "Malka Mickelson" we first see the gaunt, haunting faces of Margaret Bourke-White's "The Living Dead of Buchenwald, April 1945." Mixed in is a young Malka, healthy and bursting with life. Facing the two combined images is the shadow of present-day Malka Mi-

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chelson, whose family includes Holocaust victims. Her upturned palm seems to ask, "Why not me?"

Some of the other images are troubling. In "Harvey Sherman and

THE BODY IN THE PICTURE  
Works by Dorit Cypis  
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum  
Tomorrow through Oct. 24

Rene Savage," a nude man touches a nude pregnant woman on the rear as the projected image of a fire rages behind her.

"The images bring out our own interpretations," said Cypis. "It's our psyches reflected up there." Cypis also appears in her own exhibit in three panels featuring paintings from the Gardner Museum. In one, her caressing shadow links the ghostlike 1922 portrait of Isabella Gardner by John Singer Sargent with Giovanni Bellini's "Madonna and Child." The symbolism is obvious to Gardner fans. It was after Gardner lost her only child at age 2 that she began collecting art (and numerous Madonna and Child images) obsessively.

"I feel her presence here," said Cypis, smiling in the beautiful garden. "I hope she likes it."