

**Allegra LaViola Gallery presents:
Andrea Mary Marshall - Toxic Women**

Exhibition Dates: December 9 – December 22, 2011

Opening Reception: Friday, December 9 | 7-9PM

Susi Kenna and Allegra LaViola Gallery are pleased to present the inaugural solo exhibition of Andrea Mary Marshall entitled *Toxic Women*. Through a series of provocative self-portraits rendered as paintings, photographs, and film, Marshall examines the intersection of identity, female sexuality, and consumer culture in the context of the "ideal woman."

"A Woman is a beast. She is as lovely as she is repulsive. She is one part demon and one part goddess...one part slave, one part muse...one part child and one part mother...these contradictions are what make a woman so intoxicating." – Andrea Mary Marshall

Toxic Women is a narrative collection of work that looks at the implications of trying to live up to the cultural figment of the "ideal woman". Through identity play that borders on performance, Marshall reinvents herself as highly developed characters meticulously crafted through the art of fashion, makeup, wigs, and props. For her series of "Vague Covers", Marshall depicts the "toxic woman" as a dichotomy, born out of a pursuit of the ideal, simultaneously adored and rejected by society. There is the addict, the temptress, the woman with no boundaries, the self-saboteur, the perfectionist and the fame whore—archetypal toxic women Marshall has both encountered and embodied. Beginning with the "Vague Covers", and carried out through the entire collection, the work explores the space where feelings for this toxic woman turn from infatuation to disgust, from attraction to repulsion.

"We all have our demons. We can't move into the light unless we're willing to look at our darkness." – Andrea Mary Marshall

For her series of "Demon Paintings", Marshall paints herself into contradictions and conflicts of identity that demonize the muse, melding religious iconography, sexuality, fashion and fetishism with a lexicon of repetitive motifs used throughout the artist's practice. Against black-painted canvas, she renders herself as that historical fiction of female identity: one part Madonna, one part whore. She is a luminous Cicciolina-as-Christ-the-Shepherdess, or a masturbatory St. Theresa clad in Viktor and Rolf. These metaphorical self-portraits act as a two-way mirror, reflecting on Marshall's own dual nature while judging herself from within a culture based on a constant comparison to the "ideal woman."

While the work is mostly self-portraiture, it does not concern itself with communicating within a vacuum of the artist's own experience, nor does it only have to do with women. Rather, it speaks to the larger grand narrative and opens up the space to ask the viewer, "What are your demons?"