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MANON
APR 29 – JUNE 30 2009
TIME OUT NEW YORK
JUNE 18 – 24 2009



Manon

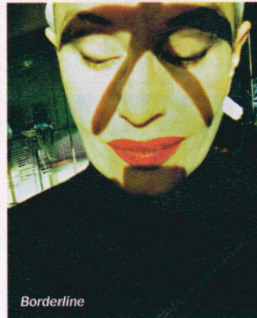
★★★★★

Swiss Institute, through June 30
(see Soho)

This retrospective of the little-known model-turned-artist Manon, who made her name in the 1970s with a series of provocative performances, photographs and installations, is noteworthy if only because it introduces her as an early proponent of mixing fashion and art. For this show, the curators have painstakingly re-created her debut, *The Salmon-Colored Boudoir* (1974), an installation of a diva-esque bedroom, complete with cat food, discarded chocolate wrappers and hundreds of trinkets.

The show also includes her groundbreaking *The End of Lola Montez* (1975), named for the 19th-century courtesan who, legend has it, spent her last days in a circus cage. In the original performance, the dominatrix-attired Manon sat chained to a chair in a cage for several unrelenting minutes—shocking, so we are told, her mystified audiences. Here, it's presented without the artist, eerily suggesting a recently vacated electric chair.

Early black-and-white photographs feature Manon in various disguises and poses: One



Borderline

series, shot in Paris, strikingly contrasts her shaved head, linear makeup, svelte body and haute-couture outfit with a backdrop of stolid architecture. As in other aspects of her art, this transformation into mannequin suggests an affinity with the Dada movement born in her hometown of Zurich. But her recurring themes of identity and gender roles are more in line with the work of other female artists on this continent. In *She Was Once Miss Rimini* (2003), the aging Manon embodies a parade of female characters (and one male), à la Cindy Sherman, but with more heart and less irony.—*Nana Asfour*