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SILENT HEALTH

Camerawork

'I'm just an old broad, honey...' Ava Gardner's words might serve as a neat motif for Camerawork's latest, a celebratory enquiry into the way that popular imagery influences women's attitudes to health, ill-health and ageing. Perhaps most accessible is Melanie Friend's portrait/soundtrack look at our society's peculiarly panicked attitudes to menopause. Against a soundtrack of various women talking about ageing - writer Buchi Emecheta and Indian agony aunt Kailash Puri in rather odd contrast to an inately energised Barbara Cartland, railing for HRT for all - Friend counterpoints a row of portraits of various 'fortysomethings', famous and not-so-famous. Janice Howard's photo installation looks back to the mediaeval predominance of women as medics and carers, and to the corresponding male response to this threatening autonomy, as expressed via witch hunts and purges. Kate Musselwhite's poster and magazine project is almost totally ambiguous, which is good and bad. With a logo that reads 'If Men Feel Comfortable With My Body Then So Should You', a man stares out of one poster. That the format is suggestive of government AIDS-scare posters, while Musselwhite's stated target appears at least in part to be the moralising muddle-headedness of cervical cancer health education, compounds the difficulty of reading this work. Most interesting perhaps for relating ideas about artistic practice



Claire Collison 'Peeling Potatoes In Paradise'

to society's attitudes to women and health are Claire Collison's photomontages. Made as a response to suffering from ME, and in allergy to photographic developing chemicals, the images are in simple, slightly bleached-out colour photocopy form, with one of the most striking showing a woman curled at the centre of a monstrous whirl of half-peeled potatoes. About letting go from the pressure to be in isolated control-over life and artistic practice, these are odd and moving images.

ROSE JENNINGS.