

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Harris, Mark. "Critics' Picks: Catherine Opie." *Artforum* (June 2015) [ill.] [online]

ARTFORUM

Columbus

Catherine Opie

WEXNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS
The Ohio State University, 1871 North High Street
May 16–August 2

Filling two galleries are nine blurred photographs of national parks interspersed among thirty-four sharply focused chiaroscuro portraits. In a conversation with the writer, Catherine Opie explained that these groups are complementary: the claustrophobia of the studio portraits, whose subjects often press up against the edges of the picture plane, are tempered by the breathing space of the luminous outdoor scenes. Usually twenty-four to fifty inches high, the photographs of authors, artists, and Opie's close friends (including Ron Athey and Idexa Stern, memorable subjects of earlier portraits) smolder within black-framed ovals and rectangles of impenetrably dark backgrounds, readily evoking the Renaissance models she so admires.

References to blood occur frequently, recalling Opie's early cutting self-portraits. *Miranda July* and *Hamza Walker* wear red, as does Opie's son, with a mouse in his breast pocket and assuming the pose of Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine*. In *Friends*, 2012, Pig Pen feeds a needle and thread through Julie Tolentino's bleeding lips, while the naked man in *David*, 2012, looks down tenderly at his penis, which bleeds without evident cause as he cradles it in his hands. Opie details how the two decades of advances beyond the culture wars that paralleled her early work, and contributed to its intensification, allow these images to be less confrontational. Moreover, her newfound experience of menopause has induced in her work a more rueful representation of blood.

Invariably gazing off-camera, spotlighted and in shadow, Opie's sitters appear deeply introspective. She unflinchingly scrutinizes the effects of age and experience on skin and tissue to invite a deeper reflection on temporality and a more intimate encounter between the viewer and the subject.

— *Mark Harris*



Catherine Opie, *Miranda*, 2013, pigment print, 33 x 25".

<https://www.artforum.com/picks/id=52736>