A woman on the verge
Shaw digs deeper into desperation in a much-improved ‘SMILF’

BY MATTHEW GILBERT | GLOBE STAFF

Frankie Shaw (right) stars with Rosie O’Donnell on the Boston-based Showtime series “SMILF.”

B eing a single woman is certainly nothing new on TV, unless you’re so old you’ve forgotten about “That Girl” or you’ve consciously blocking out the idiosyncrasy that was “2 Broke Girls” and the adorability outbreak that was “New Girl.”

But a few recent shows, the best of which are “Insecure,” “Fleabag,” “Better Things,” and, returning on Sunday at 10:30 p.m., Showtime’s “SMILF” have succeeded in pushing the old single-and-dating-as-a-woman concept to a deeper level of intimacy. Two of them — “Better Things” and “SMILF” — up the ante further by making those single women mothers. We follow all these women from the barroom to the bedroom to the bathroom, and we’re privy to their identity quests, their takes on culturally bred gender games, and their feelings before, during, and after sex. The shows aren’t coy in the least; Honesty is their virtue.

“SMILF” premiered in 2017, and it added a new element: poverty. Created and sometimes written by Frankie Shaw, who is originally from the Boston area, “SMILF” gives us a heroine — Shaw’s Bridgette Bird — who can barely afford the grimy studio apartment in Southie that she rents for herself and her son (who is,

Hopper and contemporaries, awash in the modern

By Murray Whyte

HARTFORD — One thing about Edward Hopper: You can take the artist from the gloom, but not the gloom from the artist. That’s the thought that imprinted on my viewing of a small suite of Hopper watercolors at the Wadsworth Atheneum recently: bright and sunny scenes of Cape Cod, rendered in the most quaint and fussiest of paints, made brooding, moody, bleached-out. Never mind the locale or the medium, I suppose. Hopper’s got to be Hopper, and if you needed further proof, here it is.

Not to dwell, though, on America’s premier artist of the disaffections of modernity, whose trademark scenes of urban isolation counterweighed the rising optimism of the industrial era’s economic explosion. At the Wadsworth, he’s one among many enlisted to recover the medium itself from its twee reputation.

Ty Burr

Putting it in black and white

Early-January film-centric culture columns like this have a tendency to ramble because, except for December Oscar-wannabes, the month is walking death in the moviehouses and Sundance hasn’t happened yet (I head for Park City on Thursday). But a few things have been on my mind, and one of them is black and white cinema.

Oh no, is he going to talk about “Roma” again? Well, just for a bit, or, rather, about how the Alfonso Cuarón movie and the Boston-area release of Pawel Pawlikowski’s achingly Iron Curtain love story “Cold War” have me thinking of the things a black and white movie used to mean, what it means now, and what that’s worth in cultural value.

For decades, of course, black and white photography was how we captured and fixed reality via machine-based technology (as opposed to painting). BW & photo images in the newspaper and the images on a movie screen were the accepted representation of the physical world and processed as such by the human brain. This had nothing to do with preference and everything to do with chemistry: The silver halides of a photographic plate or a film strip only turn dark when you expose them to light, and color at first came strenuously, and expensively, afterwards, through dye baths, tinting, filters, and won-

Inside

COMEDY

FROM LAW TO LAUGHTER
Lucas Brothers took strange path en route to their blossoming comedy career | N3

BOOKS

FATEFUL BIRDS OF A FEATHER
A poultry farmer is trapped by tragedy in “An Orchestra of Minorities” | N12

BUZZSAW

REINVENTING A GENRE
Teen sex comedies on Netflix, Hulu have more than one thing on their mind | N8
Repositioning watercolor painting

Continued from Page N1

If you’re John Marin, you’re recast in a heavy brew of urban claustrophobia. Here’s another: “Big Wood Island,” from 1914. There’s a point here, I think, that the exhibition makes in the lowliest of ways that art history can be narrowed down to a few points, and being Modern was a broader enterprise than many of us might know. Isn’t that the truth, as canons expanded to include so many things left in the margins? Make them smaller, maybe, and we might look at that next garage sale a little differently.

Standing in front of them, you can feel the spontaneity of the moment crackling: Marin’s “From the Bridge” (1933), Charles Burchfield’s “Looking Thru a Bridge,” from 1936, a bleak, muddy view of a rail yard — something I never thought I’d say — whose sunny disposition could buckle now and again under modernity’s load.

Charles Burchfield’s “Looking Thru a Bridge,” from 1936, a bleak, muddy view of a rail yard. (top), Stuart Davis’s “Gas Pumps” (left), and John Marin’s “From the Bridge” (below) are in “American Moderns: Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries.”

Burchfield’s black and white “From the Bridge” (1935) a dizzyingly live, jazzy little piece here, “Gas Pumps,” 1935, a dizzingly lively, blurry collage, “Gas Pumps,” 1935, a dizzily alive; heavy-limbed trees, painted as sound waves) are fluidly alive; heavy-limbed trees, halved in beatific light, seem almost to pulse. Here, though, Burchfield is static and blank, showing even his sunny disposition could buckle now and again under modernity’s load.

He makes a good companion for Hopper — something I never thought I’d say — whose “Customs House, Portland,” from 1927, hangs across the mid-frame, for further fracture. There’s a point here, I think, that the exhibition makes in the lowliest of ways that art history can be narrowed down to a few points, and being Modern was a broader enterprise than many of us might know. Isn’t that the truth, as canons expanded to include so many things left in the margins? Make them smaller, maybe, and we might look at that next garage sale a little differently.

Returning to the beautiful…

IN WATERCOLOR: AMERICAN MODERNS

Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries

Art Review

AMERICAN MODERNS IN WATERCOLOR:
Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries

At the Wadsworth Atheneum, 600 Main St., Hartford, through March 17. 860-278-2670, www.thewadsworth.org

Lynn Auditorium

March 15

 Cheap Trick Feb 23

 Lynn Auditorium

599-3926

Charles Burchfield’s “Looking Thru a Bridge,” from 1936. A bleak, muddy view of a rail yard. (top), Stuart Davis’s “Gas Pumps” (left), and John Marin’s “From the Bridge” (below) are in “American Moderns: Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries.”

108 Stitches

Get everything baseball straight from the desk of Alex Speier. Follow him on Twitter @TheMurrayWhyte

Globe.com/newsletters

At the Wadsworth Atheneum, 600 Main St., Hartford, through March 17. 860-278-2670, www.thewadsworth.org

LynnAuditorium.com

1800-745-3000

Coming to the beautiful…

Cheap Trick Feb 23

Charles Burchfield’s “Looking Thru a Bridge,” from 1936. A bleak, muddy view of a rail yard. (top), Stuart Davis’s “Gas Pumps” (left), and John Marin’s “From the Bridge” (below) are in “American Moderns: Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries.”

American Moderns in Watercolor:
Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries

Charles Burchfield’s “Looking Thru a Bridge,” from 1936. A bleak, muddy view of a rail yard. (top), Stuart Davis’s “Gas Pumps” (left), and John Marin’s “From the Bridge” (below) are in “American Moderns: Edward Hopper and His Contemporaries.”