



SHOWTIME

TELEVISION

A woman on the verge

Shaw digs deeper into desperation in a much-improved 'SMILF'

BY MATTHEW GILBERT | GLOBE STAFF

Being a single woman is certainly nothing new on TV, unless you're so old you've forgotten about "That Girl" or you're consciously blocking out the idiocy 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,

Frankie Shaw (right) stars with Rosie O'Donnell on the Boston-based Showtime series "SMILF."

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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 aching 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). B&W photos 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-

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ART

Hopper and contemporaries, awash in the modern

By Murray Whyte
GLOBE STAFF

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.

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"Marshall's House" by Edward Hopper.



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Art



CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD FOUNDATION

Repositioning watercolor painting

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Watercolors, it needs hardly be said, are the Sunday painter's weapon of choice: Blurry seascapes and flowery fields litter many a garage sale, coast to coast. Here, curator Erin Monroe makes a case: In the right hands, watercolor is a sharply pointed arrow in an experimental modern painter's quiver. It can be immediate, spontaneous, demanding: When painting with water, there's no scraping, smoothing over, painting out; a brush stroke is a brush stroke, mottling the paper for good and forever. One false move, and the whole thing gets tossed. (Though Stuart Davis's jazzy little piece here, "Gas Pumps," 1935, a dizzyingly lively harbor scene that's as precise as anything he ever did with oil, makes it look easy.)

If you're John Marin, you're content to leave tracks as you go. Right next to Hopper, whose "Marshall's House," a razor-sharp scene of a Cape cottage

with angular shadows, feels rigid and joyless, a pair of Marin paintings are kinetic, alive, and free: a roiling aquamarine sea in "Green Sea, Cape Split, Maine" (1941), or robust swipes of pale color coalescing into a forest and lake scene in "Big Wood Island," from 1914.

Standing in front of them, you can feel the spontaneity of the moment crackling: Marin, one of Alfred Steiglitz's circle of early American Moderns — Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove — was the furthest thing from a fussy traditionalist. To bolster the point, the show is cleaved neatly in two, rural and urban, exorcising watercolor's plain-air cliché more fully. In the gallery filled with cityscapes, Marin's cut-and-paste watercolor collage "From the Bridge" (1933) brims with hectic energy, edging toward abstraction.

That's a take I hadn't imagined — watercolor, light as air, recast in a heavy brew of urban claustrophobia. Here's another:

Charles Burchfield's "Looking Thru a Bridge," from 1938, a bleak, sludgy view of a railyard in the artist's hometown of Buffalo. It surprises on a couple of points. Burchfield's later work — all watercolor on paper, some as large as 6-by-6 feet — is idiosyncratic, bursting with vitality and totally unique.

It feels almost as though the medium was made precisely for him: Bright forest glades filled with birdsong (which the artist painted as sound waves) are fluidly alive; heavy-limbed trees, haloed in beatific light, seem almost to pulse. Here, though, Burchfield is static and bleak, 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 way. Hopper being Hopper, the washed-out street scene, bleached in bright gray light, isn't quite dour enough; he

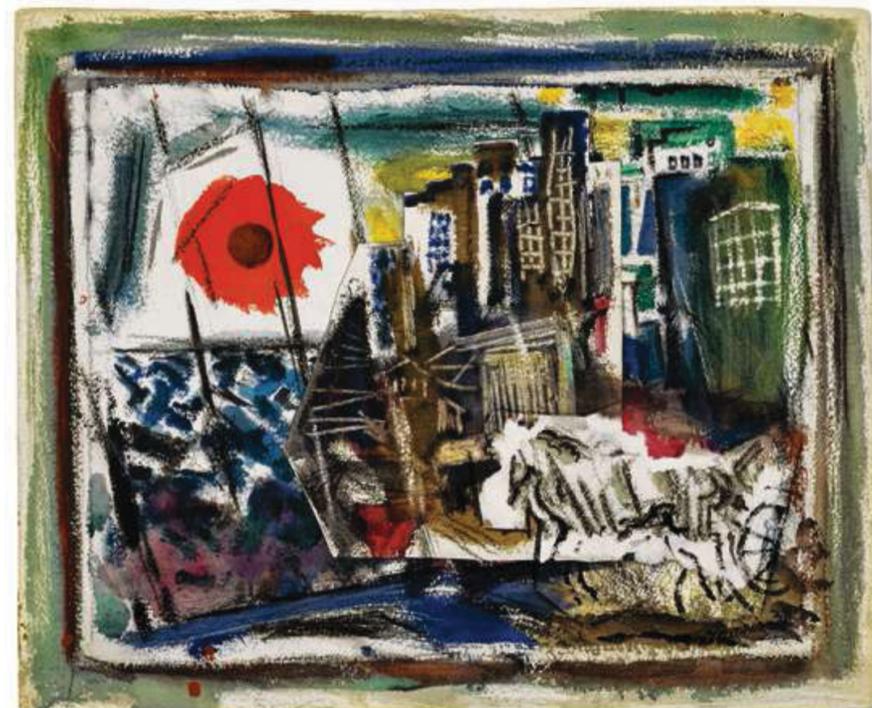
plants a scrubby telegraph pole mid-frame, for further fracture.

There's a point here, I think, that the exhibition makes in the loveliest of ways: that art history can be narrowed down to a fine point, and being Modern was a broader enterprise than many of us might know. Isn't that the truth, as canons expand to include so many things left in the margins? Make them a little wider still, maybe, and we might look at that next garage sale a little differently.

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Charles Burchfield's "Looking Thru a Bridge" (top), Stuart Davis's "Gas Pumps" (left), and John Marin's "From the Bridge" (below) are in "American Moderns in Watercolor: 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

108 Stitches



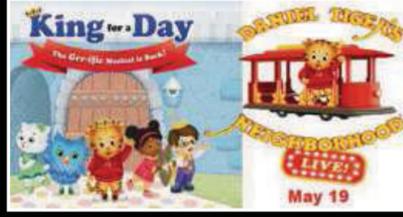
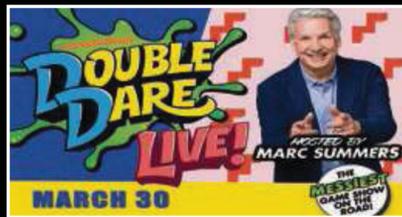
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