

Body of Work

THIS SPRING, the Bay Area takes a deep dive into the work of one of its own, the acclaimed photographer and feminist artist Judy Dater. While “Judy Dater: Only Human” runs at the de Young Museum (through September 16), Modernism is showing “Judy



Dater: Personas: A Survey of Works from 1965–2016” in its San Francisco gallery space until the end of June.

Though Dater’s photographs revolve around certain themes—they are often, but not always, black and white, and they often take nude bodies or Dater herself as subject—her oeuvre, as clichéd as it may sound, is full of surprises. Her pictures are playful and humorous, but in the Shakespearean or Chaucerian sense that in jest there is truth. In Dater’s work the body is portrayed honestly as both a decorative and an emotional element in an image.

Modernism’s show features what is perhaps Dater’s most



famous photograph and one of the most famous images of the period, *Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite #132* (1974, gelatin silver print). The first full-frontal photograph published in *Life* magazine, the image features fellow photographer Imogen Cunningham (then in her 90s) encountering the model Twinka Thiebaud nude in the woods, as a mortal might come upon a nymph in Greek myth. Also in the exhibition are several self-portraits, including *Self-portrait*



with Bugs Bunny (1983, archival pigment print), in which the artist, clad in a full-skirted white dress, dips her toes in a silky blue pool while clutching a plush toy, and *Self-portrait with Stone* (1981, archival pigment print), a powerful black-and-white image of Dater’s sculptural nude body curled in the middle of an expanse of rocky, barren terrain.