



## Malerie Marder

### Photographers Gallery Photography

**T**wo women stand naked, side by side. Framed within the sliding door of a patio window, a view of lush gardens behind them, they are poised between nature and culture. Yet there is nothing wild about these sleek beauties, hair well groomed and faces immaculately made up, flesh glistening with body lotion and pubic hair shaved to the bikini line. Nor is there anything natural about their poses. They hold hands, yet the nature of the bond between them is uncertain: while the dark one gazes ahead, the Pre-Raphaelite redhead watches her intently. This dual presentation is reminiscent of that strange Tudor portrait of two sisters, one pinching the other's nipple. Malerie Marder lives in Los Angeles and this shot of herself and her sister hints at sibling rivalries and fierce familial loyalty, but also seems infected with the hyper-reality of Hollywood.

Marder appears again reclining on a surf-drenched towel beside the sea. It's a

stormy day and, if this were a nineteenth-century salon painting, it would be titled 'Shipwrecked' or 'Flotsam'. But since Marder uses photography, a medium we associate more with truth than artfulness, the implausibility of her situation becomes paramount – while we might accept Ingres' hairless beauties, Marder prompts us to wonder why she has shaved her pubic hair. A middle-aged man sits naked beside the fire. Marder's self-portrait may mimic a naked odalisque, but her balding model could not be mistaken for a fallen warrior. Once you know that he is her father, 'Victor Marder' becomes a moving testament of trust between parent and child. Marder's mother poses for a more complex shot. Fully dressed, she sits on the edge of the bath, her resolute expression suggesting disapproval. Watching her from the shower is a young man, who seems concerned or apologetic. You don't have to know that he is Marder's boyfriend to read the image as a confrontation between generations. The advantage of a still over a soap, though, is that you get to write the script. *Sarah Kent*