

ART

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Maria Marshall, *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a Cooker*

**Team Gallery, through Nov 14
(see Chelsea).**

As some of you might be able to guess from the title of her current film installation, Maria Marshall is British. (*Cooker* is a Britishism for “stove.”) So while she’s likely to be all too aware of the artistic travails of fellow countrymen like Salman Rushdie, she may not know that in this country, using your children in your art can get you into deep doo-doo. Just ask Sally Mann or Jock Sturges.

The reason I mention this is that the star of Marshall’s work is her son, and the image of him she presents is, well, incendiary. *When I Grow Up...* revolves around three repeating shots of Marshall’s two-year-old boy smoking a cigarette. The scene was shot on 35mm motion-picture stock and digitally enhanced so that the

tip of his cigarette glows like a lightbulb and smoke wreathes his cute little head like a halo. (Interestingly, Marshall uses some of the same special-effects programs that the makers of *Titanic* did.)

There’s something hypnotizing about the repetition of images—the puffs of smoke, the close-ups of the young boy’s face—that’s at odds with the shock of seeing such a young child ingesting toxins. But then, that’s the point: Marshall forces us to wonder whether she would really do this to her son, or whether what we’re seeing is just an illusion.

Marshall heads up the path trod by a whole slew of contemporary artists, like James Casebere, who play upon photography’s reputation for objectivity. Her work is inflammatory but carefully orchestrated. She knows she can manipulate us as easily as she can manipulate film. And she succeeds brilliantly.

—*Martha Schwendener*



Maria Marshall, film still from *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a Cooker*, 1998.