

ACT OUT

PERFORMATIVE VIDEO BY  
NORDIC WOMEN ARTISTS

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## WITH SUPPORT OF:

**ACT OUT****PERFORMATIVE VIDEO BY NORDIC WOMEN ARTISTS**

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# ACT OUT

## PERFORMATIVE VIDEO BY NORDIC WOMEN ARTISTS

Edited by Teresa Furtado





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## Project Organization and Acknowledgements

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The project key associate was the curator and artist Anna Linder from Filmform, an institution dedicated to the promotion, distribution and preservation of experimental film and video in Sweden. The Nordic video art anthology *Hit the North*, curated by Anna Linder and edited by Filmform, was one of the inspiration sources for this project.

The event was part of the programme of FIKE 2008 curated by João Paulo Macedo and organized by the non-profit organizations Workers Society for Education and Recreation Joaquim António de Aguiar, UE Film Society and Mixreel. We would like to express our most sincere appreciation and gratitude to our kind sponsors without whom this project would not have been possible, namely the Nordic Culture Fund, the Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and Finish Embassies in Portugal, the Foundation for Science and Technology/Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in Portugal (FCT), the Regional Directorate for Culture – Alentejo, Évora Municipality, Hotel Santa Clara in Évora, Cortes de Cima, and the International Artists Studio Program in Sweden (IASPIS), the International Programme of the Visual Arts Fund (a branch of the Swedish Arts Grants Committee), The Danish Arts Council, the Norwegian Seafood Export Council, and, last but not least, CHAIA.

Finally, we want to extend our most warm thanks to all the artists, academics students and staff of the following institutions for their support and enthusiasm: Filmform, Stockholm, Sweden; College of Arts and Design of Caldas da Rainha, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal; Centre for Humanistic Studies of the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal; University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm, Sweden; Umeå Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå, Sweden; Mount Mercy College, Iowa, U.S.A.; National Academy of the Arts, Oslo, Norway; Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen, Denmark; The Funen Art Akademi, Odense, Denmark; UE Department of Visual Arts and Design, Évora, Portugal; CHAIA, University of Évora, Évora, Portugal.

MANUELA CRISTÓVÃO | TERESA FURTADO

## Introduction

Nordic video art, and specifically high quality video art made by Nordic women artists, is scarcely known in the Portuguese cultural domain. This was one of the main reasons that drove us to conceive ACT OUT as a discussion, interaction and presentation forum to inquire into today's women's performative video art in Nordic countries, exploring such issues as racial and gender identity, politics, and oppression. It should be noted that in choosing Performative Video by Nordic Women Artists as the conference's title and main theme, there was no intention to encapsulate the creative work of Nordic women video artists inside a restrictive label by attempting to characterize it within the bounds of a perfectly identified, well known and limited framework of common defining features. Asserting diverse women's identities and productions, in this particular context, was not meant as a way to establish universal feminine identity, interests, concerns, approaches and creativity. The idea expressed in the main theme of the conference was rather used as a «strategic essentialism» – Gayatri Spivak's concept indicating a political and temporary use of essentialism for the subversive purpose of creating or understanding a group self-consciousness: essentializing the group brings forward a transitory and simplified group identity in order to be able to take action and achieve certain goals – and the conference itself as an attempt to tackle the problem of the systematic exclusion of women from the artistic arena as opposed to men's overwhelming presence.

In addition, we were not concerned with attempting to put together a definition of Nordic women's performative video, but sought to unite scholarly and creative interventions, to juxtapose video and performance and bring together perspectives that derive from various visual artists' traditions so that their work could be compared and contrasted with one another and with video art paradigms from the Anglo-American world as well as from our Portuguese art context. Some art critics and artists might have some reluctance in labelling artists according to their geographical provenance and we certainly didn't intend to imply that an artist must create a specific kind of work because of her or his place of origin, but it seems, in this instance, undeniable that certain artists choose to engage creatively with their socio-political contexts evidencing their cultural ties to the Nordic post-colonialist nations. Moreover, we wanted to invite Nordic women artists to debate their own work instead of adopting the formalist approach of only showing their video pieces and having them commented upon by academics, as we didn't want to objectify the subjects of our analysis but to give them a proper voice.

Performance and video art are two important media, which emerged in the 1960's and allowed women, until then marginalized by the visual arts' mainstream, to proclaim a place for themselves that could not be achieved through the western male dominated disciplines of painting and sculpture. Since then, women artists have created social and political analyses of the structures of patriarchal culture. They have used video to explore their bodies, self and gendered identity, revealing the hidden discourses and ideologies behind them. The study of contemporary Nordic women artists' work is indispensable for a proper and complete women's video art research, since their production embraces a wide variety of approaches, contexts and experiences and continues with the questioning of the social and political constructed nature of racial and gender identities in western societies, initiated in the 1970s. Nordic women artists practice in performative video includes influential topics in contemporary art debate like power, identity, family, gender roles, transvestism, war and post-colonialism. These issues are brought into their work through a varied range of formal and conceptual strategies of performative video art.

This project gathered artists, academics and students from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United States, who came together for the very first time to debate issues concerning Nordic women's video and performance art. The result was a very engaging, intense and positive experience, which met the considerable expectations and anticipation in the minds of participants. Lively interaction and interchange between participants during the conference and workshops lead to the presentation of a wide diversity of views, approaches and creative procedures, which, in turn, gave rise to a deeper and broader understanding of the issues under discussion. This had a cross-fertilising effect, enabling innovative thinking, and new approaches and ideas to be generated and explored. The event had a fruitful and enriching outcome that we feel will serve as inspiration and come to have a positive effect in the mindset and working practice of all those involved with the project, hopefully promoting the sharing of ideas and creativity, broadening the range of comprehension and discourse, and encouraging new partnerships.

We would like to conclude by briefly mentioning some of the highlights from the closing panel debate and discussion. Firstly, all participants concurred in the view that, when dealing with women-related issues, a strategy focusing on the diversity and heterogeneity of experiences of women, in line with third wave feminisms' pluralistic and inclusive approaches, must be pursued. In comparing the experiences of Nordic and Portuguese women artists, it became immediately apparent

how much harder it is for Portuguese artists to find support from institutions, to project themselves into the public eye and promote their work, and how easier it is for Nordic artists to manage to earn a living as professional artists. Nevertheless, Nordic artists cautioned the audience against the myth of equality in Nordic countries, stressing that there is still a long way to go before full gender equity is attained, and that artistic institutions, including private and public museum collections, continue to be dominated by decision-makers favouring male artists. The ongoing need to be vigilant about equal representation in the art world in Nordic countries, as well as in Portugal and in the USA, even if in varying degrees, was strongly emphasized.

Secondly, it was interesting to note that the great majority of artists present at the meeting don't think of themselves as feminists, possibly because they are not willing to identify with what may be perceived by a segment of the general public as a synonym for organized politics by groups of irrational, angry women on a man-hate rampage, and even refuse to accept the occasionally associated designation "women artists", which is understood as paternalistically charged and bestowing upon the artists and their work a secondary and clearly minor status. Therefore, artists shy away from being labelled as feminists and/or women artists fearing this might contribute to exclude them from the artistic scene.

Eventually everyone agreed that feminism continues to be an important tool for theoretical analysis and social activism and, although most of the artists don't see themselves as feminists it was rightly pointed out that their work presents conceptual content that can be identified as feminist, namely the interrelationship between gender, race and sexual orientation, all of them topics highly valued by Third Wave feminisms.

TERESA FURTADO



CURATOR: ACT OUT  
PERFORMATIVE VIDEO BY NORDIC WOMEN ARTISTS



ANNA LINDER

CURATOR: ACT OUT

PERFORMATIVE VIDEO BY NORDIC WOMEN ARTISTS

PRODUCER: FILMFORM

WWW.FILMFORM.COM

### it's a matter of not becoming tired at the mere thought of all the work

When Teresa Furtado contacted Filmform by email during the summer of 2007 I immediately felt a strong desire to help. Initially there was the question of Nordic participation in the film festival annually held in Évora, Fike – Évora International Short Film Festival. As we exchanged thoughts and ideas, a wider and more extensive project developed that came to be about video art with a focus on feminism, performance and political action, subjects we shared as a common interest. Teresa with her academic background and knowledge, and I with my more practical experience in curating and organizing. Together, we began a strenuous period of fundraising for the project. With great persistence and enthusiasm Teresa undertook the task of both putting down a description of the project in text and dealing with the application procedure. My part was to choose which videos to show and to advise on structure and schedule. Starting from the initial idea of showing a video programme, we evolved to the notion of inviting participating artists to a symposium where they would all present their art pieces on site in Évora. We wanted to create a venue for meeting and discussion on topics that usually did not get as much attention. Portugal was unknown to me but I was aware of the fact that women were only granted unrestricted right to vote in 1974 and that legislation allowing women to request an abortion until the 10th week of pregnancy had just been in place since 2007. The more thoughts spun around the situation of women in Portugal, the more important became the implementation of the project.

The choice of artists fell upon those included in the Nordic distribution project *Hit the North*, which Filmform had carried out a couple of years earlier, and those who worked on issues from a feminist, political and social perspective. For example, Joanna Rytel who worked on the abortion issue and the right of women to a sexual identity. It felt more and more as an extremely important project for women's rights, the right to take their place as a woman. Teresa definitely wanted *High Heel Sisters (HHS)* to participate, despite the fact that they had really ceased their activity, and the group were invited, both as individual artists and as a group.

The fact that I myself was part of this artistic group felt a bit awkward, but I chose not to participate in the presentation that was made. Klara Lidén from Sweden was also invited with her poetic and philosophical videos in which she herself takes part. Lilibeth Cuenca and Jane Jin Kaisen, who both work with performance, were invited from Denmark and Aurora Reinhard and Pirjetta Brander from Finland. Ane Lan and Lotte Konow Lund were chosen from Norway and, finally, The Icelandic Love Corporation from Iceland.

Teresa was inspired by the idea of having everyone in place and simultaneously holding workshops for Portuguese students. We now expanded the entire concept additionally and invited the Nordic art colleges to participate. At this point, we had received a positive answer from Sanne Kofod Olsen, Director at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde, Denmark, who would be lecturing on feminist performance from a historical perspective, and with her help we were able to get the attention of schools in Denmark and Norway. The main idea that all participants would travel to Évora, spend several days together in the small town and get the chance to listen to each other, inspire further work, pursue lively discussions and exchange experiences, was also the most difficult to realize. An intensive search for travel funding and accommodation took place. Teresa tore her hair out and the fight against the clock became increasingly intense. In some countries it was easier to obtain travel assistance and in others completely impossible. Teresa managed the feat of getting funds from various parties in Portugal and also Nordic money.

All of the invited guests had accepted to come, but that was dependent on their seeking travel funding themselves in their own countries. In the end, we were quite a large crowd that was present and we can probably all say that it was a special experience to be in Évora with its idiosyncratic architecture and ambiances. Not in any way in a negative sense but more like we were part of something important. There were two very different cultures meeting and those who felt this most were probably the students taking part in the workshops held by Line S. Karlström and Jane Jin Kaisen. During the lectures and artist presentations, it felt like we gave each other concentration and attention. It was enormously exciting to hear everyone's presentations and I

think it left us all hungry for more.

During one week the video programme was shown in an old building, Torre do Salvador, which was adorned with a large banner with the logo on it.

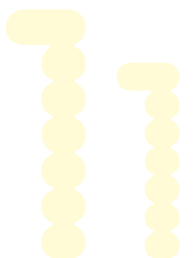
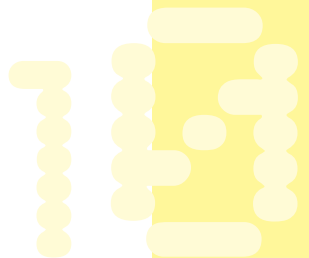
A website was created for the project and later also a blog for everyone where the discussion could continue for those who wished to. The fact that it's almost never possible to follow up and continue the discussion over the net really shows just how important it is to actually meet in the flesh from time to time.

The important thing was that the project was implemented and that Teresa was supported by the Portuguese institutions, the Nordic embassies and the Nordic Cultural Fund. That after great effort she also gained the support of Évora University, which had never before ventured into anything quite like this. Teresa managed to get technicians to install the video projectors. She persuaded them all to lend a hand with the stage work and was the first woman at the university to organize a conference totally focused on performative video by women artists.

I feel proud and happy to have had the opportunity to be a part of this unique event and I want to thank Teresa Furtado for her tremendous commitment.

I would also like to thank all of the artists who contributed with great presentations and videos and all the organizations that made it possible for us to implement Act Out. Finally, I would like to let you know from Filmform in Stockholm that we look forward to continued cooperation with you all.

ANNA LINDER



Auditorium of Colégio do Espírito Santo at UE: Nov. 24 - 25, 2008

# CONFERENCE

ANA GABRIELA MACEDO

JANE LAN

HIGH HEEL SISTERS

JANE GILMOR

JANE JIN KAISEN

JOÃO MANUEL DE OLIVEIRA

JOANNA RYTEL

KARIANNE STENSLAND

LILIBETH CUENCA

MANUELA CRISTÓVÃO

MALIN ARNELL

SANNE KOFOED OLSEN

TERESA FURTADO



## Women, Art and Power: Feminist *matters* in a global world

Ana Gabriela Macedo.

Professor at University of Minho

*Not to transcend this body, but to reclaim it. To reconnect our thinking and speaking with the body of this particular living human individual, a woman.*

(Adrienne Rich, 'Notes toward a Politics of Location', 1984)<sup>1</sup>

I'll start on an autobiographical note, since I believe the sharing of experience and information is particularly relevant in this context. I teach in a Faculty of Human and Social Sciences in a Portuguese University (Universidade do Minho, located in the North of the country), where the teaching of Feminism and Gender Studies has an important role to play, both as a critical methodology indispensable amongst other recent critical and hermeneutical approaches to the text (be it strictly literary or otherwise visual, i.e., painting, film, performance, etc)., and as a way to anchor literature and globally art in social reality, inviting thus a 'situated' engagement with the object of our study. It is not however 'easy' to teach Feminist/Gender Studies in most places in the world (as it is not easy to be a feminist), and certainly in Portugal this is the case.

You have to fight for it to feed it in the curricula, you have to be prepared to argue your case when you propose a course, or even a discipline within a course, and it is not easy either to find a willing publisher for a book or a collection on the field. I experienced it myself in many instances, concretely with two collaborative projects which gave origin in 2002 to a *Critical Anthology of Contemporary Feminism*<sup>2</sup>, for there wasn't any anthology of its kind in Portuguese until then, and another project which, after a long battle for its approval, gave birth in 2005 to a *Dictionary of Feminist Criticism* in Portuguese<sup>3</sup>.

### 1- Feminism as an interdisciplinary field and an *indiscipline*

Therefore, I can't envision Feminist Studies as a straight jacket or simply as a discipline which should provide a sample of readymade answers on literature, or the art, their authors or creators, and the society that circumscribes them. I rather see Feminist and Gender Studies as an '*indiscipline*' (to borrow a sharp term used by W. J. T. Mitchell in a text called 'Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture')<sup>4</sup>, first, because 'it names a problematic rather than

a well defined theoretical object' and, most important yet, since it discloses and therefore renders permeable moments of rupture, turbulence and incoherence 'at the inner and outer border of established disciplines', to quote again Mitchell (p. 542). Besides, as an (inter)discipline, it lives within and through a cross-fertilization with other disciplines and fields of enquiry.

### 2- Feminism as a *Counter/Diction* and an heteroglossia

Furthermore, I would argue that Feminist Studies should keep its original condition of a '*counter/diction*', that is, its interpellating and provocative capacity, regarding essentialisms and universalisms, and refuse to become one itself. I am here implicitly reporting back to Luce Irigaray's thought, her *parler femme* as a discursive rejection of phallogocentrism contained in the famous apostrophe 'Comment dire l'autre sans le subordonner encore à l'Un?'<sup>5</sup>, but also pointing forward, towards Donna Haraway's ironic and utopian 'Cyborgue manifesto'<sup>6</sup>, which celebrates our 'fractured identities' and the 'pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and [argues for] *responsibility* in their construction' (1991: 150). The manifesto moves beyond the 'dream of a common language' (as postulated by the North-American poet Adrienne Rich<sup>7</sup>) and, in true poststructuralist fashion invites us to engage, instead, in the 'dream of a powerful and infidel heteroglossia' (Haraway, 1991:181).

I believe however it is of paramount importance that Feminist Studies preserve *partially* its utopian dimension (and I mean partially because there's an important interventionist side to it which ought to be actively and concretely realized), as a prerequisite for its non-accommodation to the *status quo*, as a refusal to ideological instrumentalism, and in the name of a 'future anterior of language' and a positive disruption which is at its core.

### 3- Feminism/ Post-feminism and Post-modernism – a global issue?

Another issue worth signalling in this context, is the overriding assumption that we all live in a global 'post-feminist world'. This is, it seems to me, a dangerous fallacy which rather too hastily obliterates geographic, social and political differences, in the name of a 'pseudo-global world' silencing one of the main ideological struggles of Feminism: the necessity for taking into account

the 'politics of location' (Adrienne Rich's reminder), since women know different realities, however much they fight similar battles, in different parts of the world. Thus, the affirmation of the existence of a *global post-feminist world* is, in my view, as false as the claims for the existence of a *global post-modern world*.

Recently a Portuguese daily newspaper published an opinion article by a woman who argued how easily it is for the so called 'Western civilized world' to 'otherize' the problems that afflict women all over the world (be they sexual, religious or political discrimination or domestic, ideological or political violence), with a tranquil and clean consciousness which are all too readily identified and harshly denounced in the cultures of *the others*, whereas many equally barbarian and uncivilized traditions and behaviour against women are daily sanctioned, sometimes even by law, amongst the Western 'civilized' ones (domestic violence, for example, is one of the worst ailments within South European countries). Just one brief example to refer the Abortion Law which was under discussion in the Portuguese Parliament in 1998, was rejected by a public referendum in 1999, and after having finally passed a second referendum only in 2007, is now still causing all kinds of political and social controversy, having to face moral prejudice and political obstacles. Here too the value of Feminism as an oppositional force, a localization and a *counter/diction* is still far from being made redundant. (It should here be signalled the crucial role played by Portuguese women artists, namely Paula Rego, who actively exposed and denounced the situation in exhibitions throughout the country, e.g., *Centro Cultural de Belém* and *Museum of Contemporary Art, Gulbenkian Foundation*, in Lisbon, *Museu de Serralves*, in Porto).

### 4- Feminism as a "politics of location"- bodies as a site of resistance

Intricately linked with the concept of the 'politics of location' is another topical issue in Feminism today and crucial for the arts: the related 're-presentation' and politics of the body<sup>8</sup>. And I will now quote at length from Adrienne Rich's fundamental essay which hasn't ceased to inspire generations of feminists working and creating in different fields, be it sociology, philosophy, literature or the arts: 'As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning

its government or by saying three times 'As a woman my country is the whole world'. (...) Begin, though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in – the body. (...). *The politics of location*. Even to begin with my body I have to say that from the outset that body had more than one identity. (...) Trying as women to see from the centre. 'A politics', I wrote once, 'of asking women's questions.' We are not 'the woman question' asked by somebody else; *we are the women who ask the questions*<sup>9</sup>.

Likewise, and closely drawing on these claims, Adrienne Rich also called upon the urge for the *re-vision* of History, as a fundamental strategy in the context of a feminist poetics, engaging women as actors and critical agents in their specific fields:

Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, it stands to evidence that the focus on the body as a central location – 'the geography closest in'- has indeed become a key term in the discourses that define contemporary feminist thought and agenda: the body symbolically understood as a sign, a construction, a representation and a potential site of resistance. In this context, the work of Griselda Pollock, as feminist scholar, art historian and critic is of major relevance. In one of her early books on the subject, she wrote:

'The new feminisms are, in significant ways, a politics of the body – in campaigns around health and the claims for female sexualities, the struggle against violence and assault as well as pornography, the issues of motherhood and ageing. The new politics articulates the specificity of femininity in special relation to the problematic of the body, not as a biological entity, but as the psychically constructed image that provides a location for and imageries of the processes of the unconscious, of desire and fantasyL (Pollock, 1996:6)<sup>11</sup>.

The work of Michel Foucault, his questioning of the 'docile bodies' and his research in the *History of Sexuality*<sup>12</sup> has contributed to set this debate into a wide anthropological, sociological and philosophical perspective. However, as the feminist philosopher Moira Gatens has argued, 'the impact of feminist theory in the social sciences has no less a claim

to credit for bringing the body into limelight<sup>13</sup>. In fact, the need to ‘re-conceptualize the female body’, so as to bring it into a variety of discussions and struggles, from abortion to contraception, maternity, body image, sexuality, pornography, etc. has been a major concern of feminist thought and critique, as well as a crucial issue in its political agenda, since at least the 60s<sup>14</sup>.

Today, Feminism is still at odds with this issue, which, however, as Judith Butler argues<sup>15</sup>, has somehow shifted from ‘writing the body’ (the concept of *feminine écriture* postulated by French feminists in the 60s and 70s<sup>16</sup>, and even Virginia Woolf’s symbolic killing of the ‘Angel in the house’, to free the authoress), to ‘inscribing the materiality of the female body’ (Butler, 1993:ix). The awareness of the materiality or corporeality of the feminine has thus come to mean the redesigning of the boundaries of the female body and the search for new patterns of representation, in parallel with a redefinition of patterns of identity, subjectivity, social roles.

Many other writers, critics and feminist activists have been pointing out in this direction, such as the need for the construction of a ‘geopolitics of identity’, as affirmed by Susan Stanford Friedman<sup>17</sup>, accounting for difference, but also embracing contradiction, dislocation and change; or Rosi Braidotti, author of the influential book ‘*Nomadic Subjects*’ (1994)<sup>18</sup>, who describes the body as ‘an inter-face, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces, (...) a cultural construction’, and a ‘place of location’<sup>19</sup>.

Notwithstanding, the critic Elizabeth Grosz in *Space, Time and Perversion* (1995), has argued against the dangers of an excessive ‘discursivization’ around the body. In turn, and along the same lines of Judith Butler’s argument, she has emphasized the need for Feminism to come to terms with the body’s materiality: ‘(...) there is still a strong reluctance to conceptualize the female body as playing a major part in women’s oppression (...). Analyses of the representation of bodies abound, but bodies in their *material variety* still wait to be thought’ (1995:31).

Furthermore, Grosz proposes a critique of representation ‘from within’, which transforms women’s role in art from ‘a function of men’s self-representations’ into ‘viewers of themselves represented’, subjects who are capable of ‘returning the gaze’ of the viewer (1995: 38). She argues for a

critical and empowering aesthetics, where bodies are not opaque surfaces, but meaningful ‘sites of struggle and resistance’:

Bodies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become coded with and as signs. They speak social codes. They become intertextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideals become incarnated. If bodies are traversed and infiltrated by knowledges, meanings, and power, they can also, under certain circumstances, become sites of struggle and resistance, actively inscribing themselves on social practices (Grosz, p. 35–6).

#### 5- Feminism(s), plurality, dialogics and empowerment

Finally, I want to bring to our discussion a much debated but still burning issue: the relation of Feminism with Postmodernism namely in the Visual Arts, which I will try to articulate with my previous topic (I will illustrate this point with some images later on)<sup>20</sup>.

I will start with a statement by Susan Rubin Suleiman, from *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-garde* (1990):

The appropriation, misappropriation, montage, collage, hybridization, and general mixing-up of visual and verbal texts and discourses, from all periods of the past as well as from the multiple social and linguistic fields of the present, is probably the most characteristic feature of what can be called the ‘postmodern style’ (Suleiman, 1990: 191)<sup>21</sup>.

I believe it is important to contextualize our observation of the work produced by many contemporary women artists within the theoretical framework of Postmodernism, so that we can inquire into the ways Feminism has appropriated or subverted postmodern strategies or indeed added a new, more radical and political perspective to the postmodern questioning of art, namely through its particular usage of the tropes of irony and parody<sup>22</sup>.

In fact, by bringing a *political edge* to the postmodernist critique of representation, by transforming its practice into an *action and intervention*, Feminism offered Postmodernism a decisive and positive argument for the re-writing and re-vision of culture, for, as Suleiman claims, ‘if there existed a genuinely feminist postmodernist practice, then postmodernism could no longer be seen as the expression of a fragmented, exhausted culture steeped

in nostalgia for a lost centre’ (Suleiman, 1990: 188–9)<sup>23</sup>.

Another critic worth mentioning in this context is certainly Linda Hutcheon who, in a series of books and articles published throughout the 80s and early 90s (i.e., *The Politics of Postmodernism*; *The Politics of Postmodernism*; *Irony’s Edge*) has insistently called attention to the ‘oblique relation’ that Postmodernism has developed with Feminism and vice-versa, and how the feminist interventionist action has been affecting the redefinition of the concept of the postmodern itself, touching upon its ambiguous relation with History (a paradoxical relation of complicity and criticism)<sup>24</sup>.

In this view, Feminism has aptly been defined as the ‘cutting edge of Postmodernism’<sup>25</sup>.

In this cross-fertilization of Feminism and Postmodernism it is also worth mentioning the influential work of Jo Ann Isaak, and her publication of *The Revolutionary Power of Feminist Laughter*<sup>26</sup>, for its focused analysis of the work of many contemporary women artists in the context of both Feminism and Postmodernism.

Finally, to concentrate more closely onto the field of *Visual Arts*, I would like to refer again to the fundamental contribution of Griselda Pollock in establishing and affirming the role of feminist criticism in art history and criticism. In a chapter in one of her early works, *Vision and Difference* (1988), she analysed a polemic that took place in the journal *Screen* around Manet’s *Olympia*<sup>27</sup>.

In this context, she argues that it is no longer possible not to take into account the ‘feminist work on psychoanalysis’ and ‘feminist theses about the representation of woman, fetishism and the gaze’ (Pollock, 1988: 159). Thus, and in reply to T.J. Clark’s interrogation, ‘Do dis-identificatory practices matter?’, her answer is definitely positive, setting these however in a large political frame. And she claims in the follow up of this debate: ‘Dis-identificatory practices refer to the strategies for displacing the spectator from identifying with the illusory fictional worlds offered in art, literature and film disrupting the “dance of ideology” which engages us on behalf of oppressive regimes of class, sexist, heterosexist and racist classifications and placements’ (Pollock, 1988: 158).

I would further argue that in articulation with these we can identify in most contemporary women’s art another set of strategic practices which are, I believe, of equal importance

as the previous ones and play a major role in redefining women’s art, which I will name ‘strategies of empowerment’. These often coexist with the former, but nonetheless challenge them by simultaneously de-constructing a reality which no longer represents woman, while suggesting alternatives away from reifying stereotypes, fixed patterns of behaviour and representation, and thus point towards more affirmative and positive directions.

I would like to end this text by offering some concrete examples of that dis-ruption and the empowerment referred to above, seen in the work of two Portuguese contemporary women artists: *Paula Rego*, one of the most prestigious contemporary artists in the European scene, who has been living intermittently in the UK since the late 1950s, although she never severed her emotional and even physical bonds with Portugal, and *Joana Vasconcelos* (1971–), whose challenging performative work is now also becoming internationally recognised.

Joana Vasconcelos’s work consistently exhibits the principles of serialism and multiplicity, which the artist pragmatically displays as a form of criticism to consumerism and a false idea of versatility in contemporary society. Conceptually, her work is a reflection of a world in a continuous depletion of meaning – ‘the problem today is not emptiness, but multiplicity’, she says<sup>28</sup>; notwithstanding, it positively requires the performative interaction with the public, the belief in the existence of plural identities and an unprecedented communication amongst the disciplines, as well as the blurring of the boundaries between kitsch and high art.



Joana Vasconcelos. *Bride*, 2001<sup>29</sup>



Joana Vasconcelos. *Independent Heart*, 2001<sup>30</sup>



Paula Rego. *The Artist in her Studio*, 1993

Paula Rego belongs to a different generation of women artists, for whom the word Feminism or 'feminist' has very practical and powerful echoes, implying political commitment and often direct social action and intervention (as shown in her 'Untitled' series on abortion). She is therefore less sceptical of its meaning and assumes it bluntly in her work as in her life and does not shy away from it in the frequent interviews she generously gives <sup>31</sup>. 'My pictures are pictures that are done by a woman artist. The stories I tell are the stories women tell. If art becomes genderless, what is it? A neuter? That's no good, is it?' <sup>32</sup> Rego's work thus may be said to express to the full the concept of *feminine empowerment* as I described it above. In sum, one could say that the work of both artists illustrates an aesthetics of resistance and provocation, which undeniably has its roots in a version of Feminism that affirms plurality, complexity and dissonance, rather than homology or essential truths.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Talk given at the First Summer School of Critical Semiotics, *Conference on Women, Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s*, Utrecht, Holland, June 1, 1984.
- <sup>2</sup> Ana Gabriela Macedo (org.), *Gênero Identidade e Desejo. Antologia Crítica do Feminismo Contemporâneo*, Ed. Cotovia, Lisboa, 2002.
- <sup>3</sup> Ana Gabriela Macedo e Ana Luísa Amaral (orgs.), *Dicionário da Crítica Feminista*, Ed. Afrontamento, Porto, 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> WTJ Mitchell, 'Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture', *Art Bulletin*, Dec 1995, vol LXXVII, n.4 (pp. 540-544).
- <sup>5</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Parler n'est jamais neutre*, Paris, Ed. de Minuit, 1985.
- <sup>6</sup> 'A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, a Socialist-Feminism in the Twentieth Century', (1984) in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The reinvention of Nature*, Free Ass. Books, London, 1991.
- <sup>7</sup> Rich, Adrienne, *The Dream of a Common Language. Poems 1974-1977*, Norton, W.W. & Co., New York, 1993.
- <sup>8</sup> This section of my paper is further developed in a previous essay of mine entitled 'Herstories: new cartographies of the feminine and the politics of location', in *The Controversial Women's Body: Images and Representations in Literature and Art*, eds. V. Fortunati, A. Lamarra, E. Federici, Bononia : Bononia U.P., 2003 (pp. 71-86).
- <sup>9</sup> Rich, Adrienne, 'Notes toward a Politics of Location (1984)', in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-85*, London: Virago, 1987, (pp. 212-16) . My emphasis.
- <sup>10</sup> Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence. Selected Prose 1966-1978*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London [1971; 1979], 1995 (p. 35).
- <sup>11</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- <sup>12</sup> Vide by Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. I: An Introduction*, New York, Pantheon, 1978 and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. Alan Sheridan), New York, Random House, 1979.
- <sup>13</sup> Moira Gatens, *Imaginary bodies: ethics, power, corporeality*, New York and London: Routledge, 1996, (p. 67).
- <sup>14</sup> As argued by Elizabeth Grosz in *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, (p. 31).
- <sup>15</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- <sup>16</sup> See for example Hélène Cixous' claims in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' ('Le rire de la méduse', *L'arc*, 1975): 'Write your self. ... Your body must be heard. ... To write. An act which will not only "realize" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength ... her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; ... inscribe the breath of the whole woman' in Marks, Elaine and de Courtivron, Isabelle, eds., *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* ( New York, Schocken Books, Univ. of Mass. Press, 1981), p. 250; Luce Irigaray's 'Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un' (*Minuit*, 1977), as well as Julia Kristeva's 'La Femme ce n'est jamais ça' (*Tel quel*, Autumn 1974).
- <sup>17</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- <sup>18</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994.



Paula Rego. *Martha, Mary and Magdalene*, triptych, 1999



Paula Rego. *Shakespeare's Room*, 2005

- <sup>19</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Between The No Longer and The Not Yet: Nomadic Variations On The Body* ('Bologna International Women's Conference', Sept. 2000; <http://4thbo.women.it/plenary/braidotti.htm>).
- <sup>20</sup> I developed this issue in a longer essay entitled, 'O sorriso da Gioconda: Feminismo, arte e performance', in *Colóquio Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Isabel Capeloa Gil, Lisboa, Univ. Católica Portuguesa (in press).
- <sup>21</sup> Vide Susan Rubin Suleiman 'Opposition in Babel? The Political status of Postmodern Intertextuality', in *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*, Routledge, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass., 1990, (pp. 191-7).
- <sup>22</sup> For a further discussion of this debate see, among others, Craig Owens, 'The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Post-Modernism' in Foster, Hal, *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983); Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Post-modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988).
- <sup>23</sup> As Suleiman adds, more than simply describing the postmodernist aesthetics, the essential thing is to understand its practice as an action or as an intervention, 'an object to be read or a statement requiring a response' (Suleiman, *Ibid.*).
- <sup>24</sup> See Hutcheon in 'Fringe Interferences: Postmodern Border Tensions', *Style* 22, 2 (1988), p. 300.
- <sup>25</sup> Margaret Ferguson e Jennifer Wicke, (eds.), *Feminism and Postmodernism*, Bloomington, Duke Univ. Press, 1992, (p. 4).
- <sup>26</sup> Isaak, Jo Ann, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Woman's Laughter*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996.
- <sup>27</sup> For a further and eloquent discussion of this debate, see Griselda Pollock's chapter 'Screening the Seventies: sexuality and representation in feminist practice – a Brechtian perspective', in *Vision and Difference. Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988,

- (155-199). Here Pollock revises a central debate on Modernism between Peter Wollen and T.J. Clark which took place in *Screen* in 1980 (21, 1 & 2), and which was launched by a study of T.J. Clark on Manet's *Olympia* (1863). The polemics concerned the political agenda of the modernist project but, as Pollock demonstrates, the real 'site of the debate was the representation of the body of woman' (Pollock, 1988, p. 158). Challenging Clark's views on the 'inconsistencies of the painting (...) in relation to the signification of sexuality', Wollen aptly emphasised the *apport* of feminist theorizations of sexual difference, and the role of psychoanalytical analysis of the gaze, fetishism and subject position, concerning the representation of woman (*Ibid.*, pp. 158-9).
- <sup>28</sup> Vide the interview with Agustín Pérez Rubio, 'Do Micro ao Macro e Vice-Versa', in *Joana Vasconcelos*, ADIAC, Lisboa: Corda Seca, 2007.
- <sup>29</sup> A 5m high, 2m width lampshade built with 20.000 feminine tampons, exhibited for the first time at the hall of the prestigious 'Arsenale' in the 2005 Venice Biennale.
- <sup>30</sup> Replica of a traditional Portuguese piece of jewelry, a filigree heart, made of 5.000 twisted plastic forks, spoons and knives, in a red, a black and a golden version. It was exhibited in different locations, namely at the ARCO, Madrid, 2007.
- <sup>31</sup> I was fortunate to have had many of those pleasant interviews. Some of the texts I have written on the artist's work draw on them, e.g., 'Through the Looking-Glass: Paula Rego's Visual Rhetoric, an 'aesthetics of danger'' in *Textual Practice*, 15 (1), 2001 (pp. 67-85); 'Paula Rego's Sabotage of Tradition: "Visions" of Femininity', in *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45/1, 2008 (pp. 164-174).
- <sup>32</sup> Paula Rego in interview with Melanie Roberts, 'Eight British Artists – Cross Generational Talk', in Lloyd, Fran, ed., *From the Interior: Female Perspectives on Figuration*, London: Kingston Univ. Press, 1997, (p. 85).



## Ane Lan

My name is *Ane Lan* and I work in the field of Performance, video art and music.

I graduated in 2002 from the National College of Arts and crafts in Oslo where I studied 2 years of tapestry and then 3 years of fine arts.

I work under the artist or project name: *ANE LAN*.

I do this because it is interesting for me to think of myself as a female artist.

Besides being a common Norwegian girl name, *ANE*, the name *ANE LAN* was also the name of one of the early suffragettes in England in the early 18th century, these were the first women activists that fought for women's right to vote. If you divide the name in AN ELAN, ELAN is the name of a specific species of African gazelle. In this species the female has a growth under her belly that resembles a penis, so when the English, during the late Victorian period, colonised the African midlands they were really chocked and repelled when they discovered this 'Unnatural' Species. When watching them copulating it really looks like it is two males... They actually worked out a plan to exterminate it, to get rid of this sodomizing beast. Fortunately the National geographic society, and their scientists were able to stop the extermination plans.

A man taking a female pseudonym can also be a subversion of the history of all the women artist/photographers/scientists/writers that had to pretend to be male and use male names to be able to present their work in public.

Recent queer and feminist theory suggests that the woman is conceptually the first 'other' related to the masculine subject. The notion of 'the other' is a term in philosophy that questions the relationship between two subjects, and in queer theory 'the other' as the one that suffers suppression from this masculine subject. First the women, then the coloured man, the homosexual, etc... According to queer theory you are only the subject if you are male, white, heterosexual, and financially secure.

My project evolves under the assertion that there is no such thing as gender and that the so-called differences between sexes are purely subject to cultural and society norms. I find that I can easily adopt the female image, that is to say,

apply the feminine image to my body. I discovered, as thousands of women before me, that being a woman actually is all about creating yourself in the female image, and then performing the virtues complementing this role. I then found it interesting to look at the specific aesthetics of this image and what it represents in our society today. As art is been said to represent 'the other' related to society, that which will propagate otherness and the sublime, I want to suggest that the image of the feminine is actually the ultimate image of art today, or rather the ultimate image of artificiality. In admiring the beautiful and feminine, one is admiring art itself. It is also interesting to assert that the Human race has become what it is because of its creativity and thus artificiality, and the uttermost enhanced creation is that of the objectified image of the feminine... is that image not the uttermost image of the human race itself?

In my first video, titled simply *Ane Lan*, which was presented as an video installation, I experimented with the idea of the realm of this femininity and then especially related to the images of the media-industry, who has introduced ideas of thorny histories like those of Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, Diana etc... For me it has been interesting to look at the female image that represents the desirable iconisation of the passive, the suffering, and the victimised, which are the psychological attributes of these media characters.

Then I was invited to do a video installation in a site specific exhibition in a catholic church in London in 2002, called *Additions*. The church was in use and the priest performed ceremonies there during the exhibition period.

In 2002 one of the major breakdowns in the peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine took place, and soon after there were massive Israeli attacks on Gaza. What was interesting was that one of the populations that suffered under these attacks was that of Christian Palestinians. This made me think of the actual complexity of this conflict and all the historical implications, and especially that of the Christian church with all the bible history that took place in this area. The organizers of the exhibition employed a marketing-firm to do the press and promotion of the exhibition, and they did of course their best with big press heading selling 'Transvestite in catholic church'!!!, and then there was a lot of controversy about this, but the thing was when people came to see the exhibition nobody could actually spot the transvestite.



Ane Lan. *The Carpentrial Son*, 2004. Video, 2:42, colour, sound



And this is something I experience a lot, that people have a lot of expectations about me as a 'transvestite', and they often get very disappointed when they meet me as a 'normal' person in flesh... or a gender-confirming self... So if you do a cross-gender project people have very strong conceptions of what that implies. And it is of course the history of 'drag' and cross gender projects in art history. Men playing female roles in early theatre, etc. In this specific video work I started to employ the ANE LAN character as a mediator for looking at current political and social issues. The idea is to perform the figure that would represent the ultimate "other" in international conflicts, and through the mis-interpretational eyes of this victimised 'other' express a subversive political strategy. My point is that the mis-interpretation and mis-translation of the media-represented reality and especially the media coverage of international conflicts, may reveal some important aspects of the history of these conflicts and their relation to the media history and how this is conceived by ordinary people living today.

When I talk about mis-interpretation of images I refer to Guy Debord and the 1950's situationists. He was asking: What is the difference between the images of the media industry and those of Art in Museum/Galleries/Theatre /Performances... etc. How can art be political and question this media Industry when it is mirroring this industry? He suggested that art should be performed as an activity where the end result or the art object was of no importance, but the activity itself could possibly result in a subversion of the media reality. A good example is the art project where they pick up rich people's luxury trash, restore it and sell it in luxury shops back to the rich...

I further elaborated the idea of the awkward media personality *Ane Lan* through the video works *Amerika*, *Europe* and *Afrika*, exploring different current issues of international conflicts related to a personal mythology also as a kind of questioning of the increasing focus of the media industry on the individual, the personal history, and longing for the authentic... hence the exploitation of people in reality TV (note that it is mainly the working class – uneducated class that gets exploited in these shows). In recent years there has been a focus on documentary means in art and then especially related to video art and film. I soon started to wonder if one also can talk of

documentary means in performance and theatre? For me it is always very important to present a very transparent fiction in my video work, so that there can exist several layers and different histories at the same time. For me it has been a natural consequence to explore my performance strategy also in live form in the theatre space. What I think is exciting with performance/Theatre is when the obvious fiction presented through costumes, scenography, narratives and stereotypical characters is contrasted with another layer of fiction that speaks of the actual lives of the performers and their personal histories. For me it is as if the images of the performance itself enhance the history of those who create it. The interesting thing again is not the end product of the performance piece, but the pure intentions or the 'desire' to create it.

In all my work music plays a very important role, and I do also compose all the music myself. The music and the singing are the main driving force in all my works... For me, it's a way to insist on the personal voice, which I feel is best expressed through the singing voice. For me, it is also interesting to look at the history of the theatre, where as you know, in the earliest forms, everything was performed through music and singing. It is also interesting to look at various native cultures where there was a belief that if you didn't sing, it had not been said. Hence you are obliged to sing it for it to become real. Also in our own Nordic Viking culture we had the Skald (a singer and poet) who would sing the important laws or agreements made collectively on the 'ting'. The laws or agreements were not written down but were sung for the people to remember them.

It is also important for me to use the Norwegian language, both because it is my first language, but also because I can work with mis-translations related to the English language. See for example the title *The Carpentrial Son*. When using the Norwegian Language I also construct Mis-translations of old ballad and lyric traditions in order to comment on various historic implications on the topics that I address. In the translation of the Norwegian lyrics in *Migrating Birds* I have used an incorrect English translation that supports the awkward feeling of displacement and amateurism.

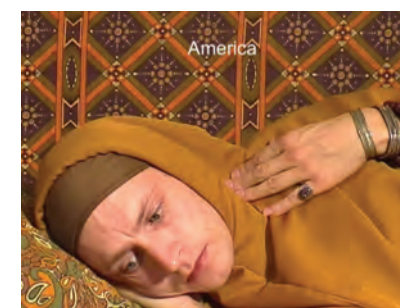
ANE LAN



Ane Lan. *The Carpentrial Son*, 2002.  
Video, 3:40, colour, sound



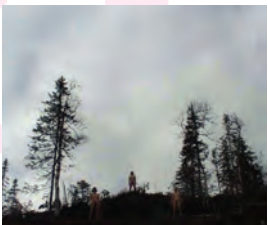
Ane Lan. *Afrika*, 2007.  
Video, 4:19, colour, sound



Ane Lan. *America*, 2002.  
Video, 3:16, colour, sound

Germany, 2004

Udbygning, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2007



bottom - High Heel Sisters. *Screaming Mountain*, performance/installation, gaze.space.desire, Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2007



**Backing Forwards: The 1976 All-American Glamour Kitty (runner-up) Finally Meets the High Heel Sisters.**

A presentation by Jane Gilmor, artist and professor of Art, Mount Mercy College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa USA

...*Third wave feminists, lesbians and cyber feminists may have only experienced the feminist art of the 1970's second-hand, making work that responds to it's legacy---implicitly, explicitly, and /or with parody.* (Toronto-based critic Helena Reckitt, CAA Bulletin, pg. 7, New York, March 2006)

What influence has The Women's Art Movement of the 1970's in the U.S. had on contemporary feminist video, in particular, contemporary Nordic women's performative video? With this question in mind, I have been asked to discuss my own work, which began as performance and video in the early 1970's.

In becoming acquainted with contemporary Nordic performative video, I've been impressed by the transnational nature of these works. The videos being discussed at this conference deal with what curators Maura Rielly and Linda Nochlin label, in their recent exhibition of the same name at The Brooklyn Museum in New York, *Global Feminism*. The works deal with identity, gender, lesbianism, race and socio-economic class. The key word here is feminismS. In contemporary arts, according to Reilly and Nochlin, there seems not to be just one definition of feminism, but many. This plurality exists in part because of the differing circumstances and contexts in which women around the world live and create art. For those of you who are students the contemporary reaction against one solidly defined term, feminism, versus feminisms as a plurality of meanings may seem odd without some background on the Women's Art Movement of the 1970's.

In the early 1970's I was a graduate student with Ana Mendieta, Jayne Hileman and a few other actively feminist students at The University of Iowa in Iowa City. Though the University of Iowa is in the middle of the country, in what some consider the middle of nowhere, their School of Art and Art History was already well known among the East Coast avant-garde as a center of innovation. Both Philip Guston and Jackson Pollock were on the faculty at The University of Iowa in the 1940's and 50's and in the late 60's and early 70's Hans Breder, a German intermedia artist, started the first graduate program in multi-media (performance, video, installation, conceptual) outside a major coastal city. Through a major grant Breder collaborated with other departments and faculty to create the CNPA, Center for New Performing Arts. Artists,

not yet, but soon to be, art household names arrived on a regular basis to interact with a small group of faculty and students. I recall Stephen Foster's courses on Dada and Fluxus when we met many of the main players from the Fluxus and Gutai groups in Europe, Japan and New York. Nam Jun Paik discussed how video would change the art world and other visitors like Ben Vautier and Wolf Vostell saw Iowa as a last bastion for shocking an audience.

With the efforts of Chicago, Shapiro, and Lippard (all of whom visited our campus early on) a grass roots women's art movement began to develop. The movement questioned the content, form, and theory that had supported the avant-garde of modernism. Many of us who felt marginalized by both gender and geography suddenly felt like contributors to this cultural dialog. Though criticized as exclusionary later, there was a democratic inclusionary method in these early activities with no juries or judges. Everyone was encouraged to participate.

Critic Lucy Lippard was a most frequent visitor. In the early 70's she began a project encouraging women from all over the country to share their work by sending her slides. From her slides lectures we were able to see what women artists were doing in response to the debates begun by Lippard and artists like Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro. As the Women's Movement in 1960's and early 70's culture was developing, Chicago and Shapiro set up the first graduate program for women art students and soon after organized the Woman House Project in southern California. They raised questions: *Are women's life experiences different than men's? How does culture construct our notion of gender? If women's experiences are different than men's, is their art, or should their art be different?* Artists such as Mary Beth Edelson, Linda Montano, and Lynn Hirschman, Martha Wilson from Franklin Furnace in New York, and the grandmother of feminist performance, Carolee Schneeman, all made multiple visits to campus to give performances and installations and to collaborate and critique graduate student work.

Even at that time we disagreed about feminism as a term and became aware of what seemed to be the white, middleclass, suburban, and Western bias of the movement early on. Criticism from outside and within the ranks challenged so called goddess imagery like that of my friend and colleague Ana Mendieta as essentialist, affirming the cultural bias that associates women with nature and men with culture. (See images by Ana Mendieta, Mary Beth Edelson and myself using the iconography of the ancient Minoan Snake goddess as a Feminist political gesture of defiance).



Jane Gilmor. *Great Goddesses - Foreclosure*, 1978, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Athens, Greece, performance tableau

Though criticized as exclusionary now, the movement was much more democratic and inclusive than the existing avant-garde and these were healthy debates that brought up many of the issues dealt with in the Post-Modern 80's and 90's. The women artists, historians and critics of 1970's movement can be credited with helping open this kettle of worms by questioning the Western white male hierarchy in the avant-garde culture of the art world.

In 1975, I noticed an unusual form on the back of my bag of kitty litter. It was for the Eleventh Annual All-American Glamour Kitty Pageant Contest. For the past year I had been making clothes for my cat, Ms. Kitty Glitter, as part of a feminist conceptual artwork. I took several photos of Ms. Kitty wearing her outfits (housewife, go-go girl, Indian maiden, cheerleader, bride, etc.) and entered them in the national competition. Over a period of several months, she was graduated from one of 250 regional winners, to one of eighteen semi-finalists, to one of the nine finalists out of 20,000 entries nationally. Waverly Mineral Products, the company that produced the All-American Glamour Kitty brand kitty litter, sponsored the contest. This contest provided their main annual publicity for the product for a dozen years. Ms. Kitty began to receive local and national media attention, as well as numerous prizes including a year's supply of kitty litter, jewelled cat collars, engraved silver platters, and a TV set. As one of the nine finalists, Ms. Glitter and I were flown to Miami Beach for a week of *competitions* at the luxurious Hotel Fontainebleau. Two other events were being held at the Fontainebleau while we were there, an international conference on psychics (including academics and psychics like Sybil Leet) and the annual conference for The National Organization of Little People. Included in the week's events were the Mouse Mobile

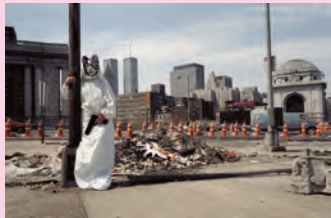
Motorcade through downtown Miami, (nine Volkswagen Bugs painted like big mice from the local exterminating company) The Kitty Fashion Show, The Kitty Olympics, and the Coronation (emceed by former Miss Universe Pageant announcer Chuck Zinc). Sister Mary Louise from Pennsylvania won the fashion show competition. She dressed up like Pocahontas and dressed Harry, her cat, like Davy Crocket. The Grand Prize winner would get their cat's picture on the front of the All-American Glamour Kitty brand cat litter for one year and a trip to Philadelphia for a week's vacation at the hotel where the first outbreak of Legionnaires Disease had occurred the week before our competition! No one really wanted to win after the Legionnaire outbreak. Thank goodness Ms. Kitty Glitter won the 1976 Ms. Congeniality Award and NOT the Glamour Kitty crown and the trip! Later that year I did a series of installations, and performance/events based on this bizarre experience. In the following years I developed a series of tableaux and performance pieces based on a cat-masked, toga-clad alter ego attempting to deconstruct everything from Classical Greek Mythology to Mary Kay Cosmetics. I often use animal-human hybrids to parody gender related roles. These performance tableaux involved elements of satire and melodrama to question the myths being constructed within the image.



Jane Gilmor. *All American Glamour Kitty Pageant*, 1976, Miami Beach



Jane Gilmor. *Ms Kitty Litter*, 1976



Jane Gilmor. *Terrorist Kitty at the Entrance to The Manhattnan Bridge*, 1986, New York City, photo tableau



Jane Gilmor. *Erma's Apparition of her Greatness*, 1981, Maple Lanes, photo tableau Cedar Rapids, Iowa

So what, then, did the Women's Art Movement of the 1970's contribute to contemporary feminist inquiry in the arts? Many essays such as those found in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970's, History and Impact*, ed. Broude and Gerrard, Abrams, 1995 discuss this topic. I'd like to give an overview of seven contributions I feel are most important to this discussion.

**1. The Women's Art Movement introduces a renewed interest in content:** There was a recognition that content in art is related to the experiences of the artist in culture. Lucy Lippard said that a woman's social, biological, and political experiences differ from those of men in our culture. Art is born of one's experiences and must be true to them to have integrity. (Paraphrased from notes taken at a Lippard lecture at The University of Iowa in October 1975.) Autobiographical content became acceptable again following modernism emphasis on form alone.

**2. The WAM was interested in the notion that culture constructs the meaning of gender, race, ethnicity, social class.** By re-appropriating images previously lost to negative discourse many artists attempted to deconstruct such images' meanings. This manifest itself more pervasively in the criticism of the 1980's Post Modern era.

**3. The WAM transformed methods of artistic production.** Art was generated in collective, cooperative, and collaborative environments through such venues as Woman House and The Women's Building in Los Angeles.

**4. The WAM adopted new forms to better articulate the new content.** These were pluralistic approaches that included, installation, performance, video, ritual, tableau, and intermedia. Forms like traditional painting and sculpture came with a litany of *rules*. It was easier to say something new with a new medium where history did not impose an existing aesthetic.

**5. The WAM used art as a vehicle for encouraging social change and making political comment.** Works by many women artists, in particular those created by Suzanne Lacy (*Whisper, Wind, The Waves*, 1979), unabashedly took a political point of view and attempted to influence opinion.

**6. The WAM was responsible for the rediscovery of elements of traditional women's culture and crafts, of folk arts, naïve and primitive art.** This resulted in a partial reconciliation of the so-called *Minor Arts* (such as weaving, embroidery, other textile processes as well as ceramics) and *High Art*.

**7. The WAM instituted a critical rereading of history in general and art history, in particular.** Lost art by women from past decades and centuries was rediscovered. There was a re-evaluation of *Woman* as subject. Issues of origin were raised and the *Great Goddess* archetype became a symbol for the female principle as a strong creative force.

It also seems to me that there is a pattern in the artistic development of my own work and that of many other early feminist artists. As years went by we seemed to go through several stages.

1. Self-awareness was the first stage. Through consciousness raising and reading contemporary feminist theory, among other things, we became aware of our unique cultural and biological situation as related to gender. This lead to use of more autobiographical content and with that came more narrative content. Gradually we began to better understand how culture helps construct our definitions of gender, race, class as well as how personal experience influences our perception of the self. (The work done at Woman House, organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, and later the work of Ana Mendieta, Mary Beth Edelson and Lynda Montano come to mind). In my own work there seems to be an early emphasis on autobiographical content that quickly becomes a cultural critique. This is exemplified by the All-American Glamour Kitty Pageant project of 1976.

2. Next many women artists began working in collaborative and cooperative environments using new forms as a means of cultural critique in an effort to bring about change for women. There was an activist and group collaboration element to this stage. The work of Suzanne Lacy dealing with The Hillside Strangler in LA and Judy Chicago's Dinner Party project are good examples of this. My 70's and 80's performances, tableaux and videos of cat-masked Isadora Duncan's in the ruins of Greece and with her modern woman sidekick Erma, in the bowling alleys and Laundromats of Iowa also fit this stage. *While taking a tongue in cheek look at the way contemporary society associates animal images with gender characteristics, Gilmor challenges the viewer into recognition of these stereotypes, and a subsequent questioning of their validity....* (From exhibition essay by Paul Brenner, Real Art Ways, Hartford, Ct 1982)

3. Many feminists then went out into community to affect changes that go beyond issues of gender to issues of class, race, and ethnicity. This initiated the many art in the public interest projects of the 1980's (and continuing to this day) by artists like Mierle Ukeles. In my own work I began a series of community-based projects in homeless shelters and hospitals in the mid 80's through the late 90's.

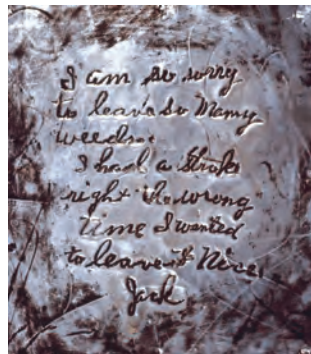
After living on the Lower East Side of New York in the mid 80's, my work began to deal with issues of homelessness and loss of identity. One component of my work was a series of community-based collaborations with disenfranchised individuals living in shelters and state hospitals. In large rooms or smaller walk-in structures, walls and floors are covered with metal notes juxtaposed with found objects, metal books, video and elements such as steam, water, and light. In these projects we concerned ourselves with those experiences where object, place and identity intersect. In workshops and journaling, we found the bed, in both its domestic and institutional settings, became a source for memories of sounds, words, and images.

The *Homeless Drawing Home, Windows '95* and *Wisdom Pass* projects (late 80's through mid-90's) were collaborations with homeless shelter residents, hospitalized children, and adult cancer patients and their caregivers. During workshops we created drawings and writings on metal foil, based on journal entries. My intention in these public projects was to give seriously ill individuals and their families access to non-traditional art forms and to encourage use of the imagination as a survival tool. It was my earlier experience working with groups of women and with collaborative processes during the 1970's Women's Art Movement that led to this point in my artistic practice.

My more recent work (2005-present) presents room-sized installations



Jane Gilmor. *Beds*, 1993, installation detail, metal wood, video, text, water, cabbages, each bed 5 ft x 3 ft x 2ft, Bemis International Center, Omaha, Nebraska



Jane Gilmor. *Jack's Weeds*, 1988, found note, 8 x 11 inch, text on aluminum, ink



Jane Gilmor. *Wall of Homeless Notes*, 1990, detail, installation, 18 x 20 inch metal, text, ink, Davenport, Museum of Art, Iowa



Jane Gilmor. *Jen and Her Art*, 1995, Windows 95 workshop, photo documentation, University of Iowa children's Hospital

of wearable structures activated with robotics and embedded with video. Extending from previous work in my *Containers for the Self* series, these situations further explore those psychologically and culturally based entanglements of image, language and space through which we try to locate our own identity.

Earlier wearable structures, *The Architecture of Migration* and *The Architecture of Fatigue* explored the dualities of presence vs. absence and border issues relating to public/private, rural/urban, poverty/privilege, and life/death.



Jane Gilmor. *The Architecture of Fatigue*, 2003, 7ft x 3 ft x 3 ft, wearable structure, of metal, wood, text, video



Jane Gilmor. *The Architecture of Migration*, 2001, wearable structure, 7 ft x 2ft x 2ft, metal text, video, artists books

My recent installation, *Blind*, at AIR in New York continues this exploration while also developing a cultural critique of international politics.

*In the installation Blind one enters the gallery and is confronted by a seven-foot high cave-like structure tracing its roots to a wheelchair accessible, camouflage hunting blind. Shining through a slit and projected on a nearby column is a video loop of my hand endlessly unzipping a zipper. Around this larger phallus-filled igloo several smaller motorized versions of the hunting blind circulate, helpfully dispensing Kleenex, vacuuming up and responding to remote control demands from viewers.*

*...We cannot help but be swept away by the slapstick spirit, checked by a note of dread and caution supplied by the hand in its endless Sisyphean pursuit of the completed zip. Everything, and everyone (including, crucially, the artist herself) is caught in a permanent vicious cycle, a perverse closed loop of good will, bloodlust, vanity and pure brilliant stupidity.* (Matt Freedman, *Blind* catalogue essay).

For the past thirty years, then, my practice has been concerned with social issues, found situations, and psychological narrative. From *The 1976 All-American Glamour Kitty Pageant*, to my 70's and 80's photo tableaux of cat-masked Isadora Duncan's in the ruins of Greece and the bowling alleys and Laundromats of Iowa, to my twenty years of community-based public work in shelters and hospitals--my search is for some unspoken connection in these random collisions of objects, images, and voices. For me the work is both an intuitive response to personal experience and a cultural critique.

To bring you to my contemporary work I will show a brief excerpt from my 2005 film, *Blind*. My own work has most recently focused on creating a critique of American politics, consumer culture and personal values. This video, shown recently at the Anthology Film Archives in New York, is 6 minutes long and was created here in Portugal and Évora while I was a Fulbright Scholar here in 2003-04.

*Blind*, the film, follows a six foot high, wheelchair accessible hunting blind on its journey through Portugal (2003 and 2005), a country whose government supported the American government's war in Iraq, but whose people did not. The *blind* is a phallic-shaped portable tent made in China from camouflage-patterned fabric and compressible into a backpack for easy transport. The hunting tent is outfitted so a wheelchair bound hunter can set up in the woods and maim other species. Ironically the *Blind* is similar in form and surface to the Neolithic dolmen and stone circles found in the Alentejo area of southern Portugal. Using the *blind* as my "container", I move through the 5000 year-old Cromeleque dos Almendres (stone circle), the Anta Grande do Zambujeiro (dolmen), up the stairwells of a 16th century abandoned Renaissance convent, and through an abandoned pasta factory turned art school.

I hope I've successfully backed you forwards to the present state of *Global Feminisms* and prepared us historically for discussions of the Nordic performative videos we are seeing at this conference.

In many instances these works also use irony, humor autobiographical content, collaborative methods and new media and technologies to critique the cultural construction of gender, identity, race, socio-economic status and issues of power. Perhaps the embracing (and sometimes the simultaneous rejection) of popular culture and mass media forms marks one of the several major differences in the contemporary Nordic work we are seeing.

I think a further discussion of these historical referents with the Nordic artists themselves and you, the audience, will reveal much more than my analysis, however. At this point, then, I will leave you with this image and open my presentation to audience questions and discussion.

JANE GILMOR



top left - Jane Gilmor. *Blind Installation*, Detail, 2005, AIR Gallery New York, smaller structure 3 ft high, fabric, metal, projected video, robotic  
top right - Jane Gilmor. *Blind*, video still, 2003-04, Convento do Bom Jesus de Valverde, Évora, Portugal  
bottom left - Jane Gilmor. *Blind Gate Keeper*, 2003, photo tableau, University of Évora, Leões campus, Visual Arts Dept., Évora, Portugal  
bottom right - Jane Gilmor. *Blind at Cromeleque dos Almendres #2*, (5000 year old Neolithic stone circle), video still, Guadalupe, Portugal, 2003



### Interview between me and Jane Jin Kaisen

: You were one of the artists presenting work at the conference *ACT OUT: Performative Video by Nordic Women Artists*. Did you think there was something in the works of yours or other artists' that could be said to be specifically 'Northern'?

: Place is very complicated in my view so I would be hesitant to put national or geographical labels on my own or other artists' work, or to presuppose that there is such a thing as a 'Nordic' or 'Scandinavian'. On the other hand, by somewhat sharing geographical and cultural context, there might be i.e. certain similar things to act out against, so to speak. There might also be strategic or methodological approaches, such as the use of irony and humor that several artists shared in common, but that could also be said to be an overarching tendency in contemporary art or in our generation's approach, as well as in a feminist approach so it would be too simple to describe that operation as a local or geographical tendency...

: How do you relate your work in the context of feminism? Do you regard your work as feminist?

: First of all, I definitely identify as a feminist and I am always happy to see my work or practice within a feminist context. However, I prefer to say that my work is *also* informed by feminism. As much as I identify as a feminist, I feel that a

consideration of geography, class, race, and ethnicity is often disregarded or assigned a marginal position in Western feminist discourse. I personally feel a sense of being racially other much more immediately in a Scandinavian or for that matter, in an American context in which I function right now. That having said, the racial body of the Asian is also extremely gendered, or the combination of woman and Asian is over-determined.

To put it simply, I think I can align with a feminism that equally takes queer politics and racial, economic, geopolitical, and cultural privilege into consideration.

: Which works did you show at the conference?

: When preparing to give a talk about my work and practice for *ACT OUT: Performative Video by Nordic Women Artists*, I decided to show extracts of a number of my videos and performances and to focus my talk on the intersection of the two mediums and what they signify in my practice.

: Can you explain what you consider to be the intersection of those mediums? What are their similarities and differences?

: What I consider to be the ontological signifiers of the mediums of performance and video serve very specific and somewhat different roles. Although they are both timebased mediums, to me they function in very different ways and illustrate different forms of critique or propositions, even when combined within one work. There are differences in process and presentation and differences of signification and effect on a very elemental level. In my work, performance as act, as a body, as in my body and sometimes also as in the bodies of others, enacting something, whether live or on video, always function as disruptive and overturning, whether by way of insertion, mocking, mimesis, or transgression.

Reversely, video as a function of recording and framing, thereby stabilizing and consequently archiving or historicizing, has served as a tool to establish an awareness of given ideological structures or forms of consensus. In my videos, the performative element as a bodily act or apparition, becomes the trickster and the disrupter of the shield of the video frame and thereby a transgressor of consensus and dominant ideology.

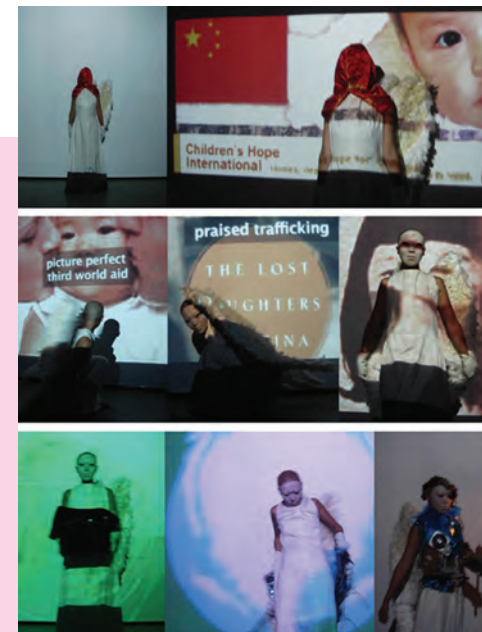
The performing body is never neutral and often it is also in disguise, masked or in masquerade, or it may be a phantom, a type, even a stereotype, although functioning reversely.

In a sense the body operates in a similar manner as the cut functions in my editing. It creates rupture or incision, resulting in a pause or juxtaposition and thereby destabilizes chronology, meaning, and ideology. On the other hand, video is almost always an element in my performances and here serves as a backdrop on which the body reacts and enacts its subversion. Sometimes the backdrop is like a dream where you are in a room and you can't quite make it all out. It doesn't make sense, or it is over-determined...

: Can you give a concrete example from your work?

: I showed extracts from several quite different works, but let's use the video *Tracing Trades* as an example. The film is build up around a number of fractured narratives that take outset as an investigation of a trace: A Peter Paul Rubens drawing of a Korean man, who may have been the first Korean slave and adoptee to set foot on European ground. Slowly related contexts are revealed through parallel narratives that lead to a critique of the history of international adoption mainly perceived as a postcolonial and humanistic welfare phenomena.

Jane Jin Kaisen. *Amnesia Ritual for Transborn*, 2006. Video/performance, 4:47, colour, sound



The adoption traffic is put in relation to a larger narrative of cultural import and misrecognition, migration and human trafficking. The investigation of these traces through a revision of photographic evidences of Danish nation building, lead to a recount of Nordic colonialism, Orientalism, and the cultivation of exotic, foreign people exhibited in Tivoli and in Zoos.

In the film there is a number of performers. The central figure is a disguised person in a studio who is re-organizing an archive. The person wears a hood so you are unable to make out the person's identity. There are certain signifiers, but you can't be sure. The archive is not a normal archive. It is a deviant archivist in a deviant archive. Papers, photographs, and documents are filed in transparent plastic bags normally used for storing frozen food. The scenes with this person throughout the film serve as a connecting link between the different narratives. It is impossible to tell if the person exist in the now, past, or future. It is a studio setting so everything is constructed. Still, it has an immediate presence and one gets a sense that this character could be *enacting* the author's voice. It becomes a struggle for meaning or a struggle about history and the right to reinterpret parts of the National history. The performer is transgressive and becomes an actor who disrupts, disturbs, and re-assembles.

JANE JIN KAISEN

Jane Jin Kaisen. *Tracing Trades*, 2006. Video, 38:00, colour, sound





## The Bonnevillian blonde and the ghost that refuses to forget: notes for an understanding of performativity in queer multitudes

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The line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps as indistinct, as possible' Allan Kaprow  
In Miguel Bonneville's website<sup>1</sup> one is surprised by the inscription:

"My name is Miguel Bonneville.  
I was born in January 1985, in Porto, Portugal.  
My work is autobiographical.  
It is about destroying and reconstructing identity.  
Destroying and reconstructing the past.  
I work in the fields of live art, performance and visual arts."



Miguel Bonneville. *Cross*, 2006, video



His avant-propos allows for the identification of a genre and the disciplines from which he operates his artistic practice, but beyond strict categorization, it gives us a conceptual space to think his work through a methodological positioning (deconstruction-reconstruction) and two coordinates that will reconfigure themselves in his proposal: the past and the idea of identity. In this essay we will be positioning these coordinates in relation to some of the theoretical propositions of feminist and Queer theory in order to examine two works: Miguel Bonneville's *Cross* (2006) and Carlota Lagido's *notforgetnotforgive* (1999).

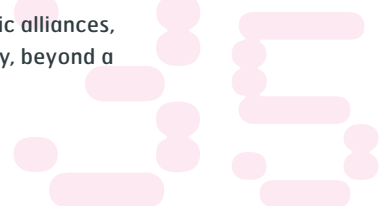
### Hybridizations and Phantasmagorias: gender resignifications

The uses of the past in autobiographical work are associated with the idea of experience. According to Joan Scott (1992), the category of experience rapidly invokes a foundationalist and essentialist notion of identity, a common place in literature about these issues: 'They take as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalize their difference' (p.25).

This self-evidence of the identities prevents a deeper questioning of the subjects' production and addressing conditions and of the way in which this subjectivity conforms to norms that precede it and dictate the modes of reading, the intelligibilities, it can assume (Butler, 1997). Judith Butler's theory of performativity shows how subjectivity necessarily implicates conformity to norms that may be resignified through subversive gender performances (Butler, 1990) challenging the hegemonic heterosexual norm (Butler, 1993).

It is, therefore, unacceptable to view autobiographical work as a less opaque modality and dwell on the foundationalist beliefs of identity, seen as understandable in the eyes of the beholder of a performative autobiographical work. It is not, however, a question, of yielding to Cartesian solipsism nor to a more transparent access to the idea of identity. On the contrary, in Miguel Bonneville's autobiographical artwork one can see the destruction of categories of identity as a *modus operandi*. The opposite of the idea that the presence of past experience in autobiography could be a way of maintaining an identity

that is cohesive, permanent and resistant to change in space and time. In his video *Cross*, Bonneville recovers the figuration of the cross-dresser and clearly refers to queer issues and to the failure of gender binary to account for a multiplicity of bodies performing beyond the straitjacket we have come to call masculine and feminine. Thus, Bonneville dresses as a woman, in a performance that relies on cross-dressing, while maintaining nonetheless a body signification as a man's body<sup>2</sup>. This approach allows him to simultaneously demonstrate the failure of both hegemonic masculinity and essentialist and unchanging gender system proposals while not leaving uncriticized the representational space of the feminine. Bonneville uses a plastic tiara (the cheap coronation of an ideal femininity?) and a blonde wig, introducing a representation of an identity that he has been addressing lately (the blonde woman) which is a symbol of the object of desire. However, it is apparent that the bonnevillian blonde is a mask and her femininity a 'masquerade', as Joan Riviere (1929) has shown: "Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask (...) The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'". My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference, whether radical or superficial. They are the same thing." (p. 308). Bonneville lets us progress toward a queer hypothesis: that it is not in gender binary we find a solution. It is precisely in terms of the deconstruction of gender norms, in a search for resignification that does not force autobiography to the inclusion in a normativity of an essentialist kind as identity. On the contrary, it is in the refusal of gender binary (Sedgwick, 1990) that this video can be understood. It is mainly a question of using the idea of body experience to deconstruct it outside hegemonic gender norms. In this video, Bonneville places himself beyond sexual difference, building and constituting a body close to what Preciado (2003) calls queer multitudes, where sexual difference is not a binding element of identity, but rather the many differences when set against gender norm regulations that allow coalitions, strategic alliances, deconstructing the very notion of identity, beyond a biologicistic unison of sexual difference.



The case of Carlota Lagido's work *notforgetnotforgive* is remarkable from this point of view since it allows for reference to a questioning of a collective condition: the idea of woman. This piece can be read as a positioning on the importance of the inscription in an increasingly amnesic world. This refusal to forget and therefore to forgive is linked to a denial of the collectively shared memory. In *notforgetnotforgive*, this amnesia is refused and deconstructed through policies of memory, with possible autobiographical readings present in Carlota Lagido's work. *Boys in the backroom*, originally sung by Marlene Dietrich, echoes an historical period, a cinematic memory materializing in this work. We are, thus, in the presence of a piece that not only recollects<sup>3</sup>, as Fellini's *Amarcord*, but also makes an inscription of a collective condition's past, re-inscribing it in the present.

This piece draws on a certain idea of 'woman' and is re-presented in a male lavatory, as a fantasy from a phantasmic domain, a figuration, present in that space which is designed to be exclusively masculine. This proposal of alterity, which emphasizes a gender code marked by opposition, could be read as an assertion of the feminine in a world marked by patriarchy.

Yet in this case, methodological procedure is of a different character: Lagido uses a stereotypical image of a 'femme fatale' (a figuration of a woman marked by desire, a recurrent theme in male – heterosexual? – lavatories) and appears thus to place herself in this category. But if we make our inquire in another way, using Butler's performativity proposals (Butler, 1997) rather than an essentialist scheme based on the notion of character<sup>4</sup>, we could question the effects of that performance, which makes use of an identity category. And so, the she-ghost becomes a remembrance of a collective identity, without necessarily fully identifying with that category. As Haraway (1991) argues, 'Identities seem contradictory, partial, and strategic. With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in "essential" unity. There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state of "being" female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices' (p.155). Viewed in this way, the woman who does not forget nor

forgive is neither a homogeneous assemblage of all women nor the essential Woman. This is an effect of gender performativity that deeply questions its own production conditions. Were it not so, neither this could be the site nor the choice of the 'femme fatale', a complex category built by gender technologies to produce certain female ideations (De Lauretis, 1987), would be legitimate. Lagido recalls a condition from the phantasmic domain with which she maintains a relationship, not of identity, but of alliance, a strategic, conscious and partial alliance. This is also clear in the way in which this phantasmic positioning is focused on an aesthetic of intransigence with regard to the idea of forgiveness. This alliance between creator and phantasmagoria allows a glimpse into the rejection of forgiveness with regard to the way in which patriarchy and gender technologies have used and exploited this category of 'woman', proceeding to build upon it a normative empire nourished by a techno-scientific and political discourse that we came to call gender (see Preciado, 2008, for a review).

#### Sexual difference's queer disruptions

In both works the structuring and questioning of identities, trough hybridization in Bonneville as well as trough Lagido's phantasmagoria, seem to justify a deconstruction of the rules governing gender performativity not resorting to the identification with one of two possible categories. So we could say that we are dealing with a universe that is rather a universe of queer multitudes (Preciado, 2003) than a celebration of an original sexual difference, in both cases trough the questioning they cause in the very notion of identity. Moreover, it would be pertinent to remark that we are facing strategies of disidentification (Preciado, 2003): the woman who is a ghost of the feminine and the hybridization of both male and female, without in either case the emergence of a gender norm based on sexual difference.

Autobiography is thus a powerful way of questioning and politicization, allowing for the explicit statement of the way in which individual and natural phenomena can specifically be seen as more general processes. This ability to transpose levels of analysis, to move from the idiosyncratic to the collective, to that which concerns the whole of society, is therefore one of the features of the

autobiographical plane, rather than merely itemizing and depicting what is important in the artist's life. From this point of view, autobiography is a way of turning the personal into political. Autobiographical processes are not based on the idea of identity. They are based on performativity, through which these identities are constructed and reconstructed as says Bonneville. In our lives, as in autobiography, it is performativity that governs the way we conduct our performances and identity is thus a result of that construction of a subject. It is therefore legitimate to add a queer dimension to both these works, if we understand queer dimension as Sedgwick (1990) does i.e. 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality are not made (or can not be made) to signify monolithically' (p. 8). I believe that only Lagido's ghost or Bonneville's blond could have said it better.

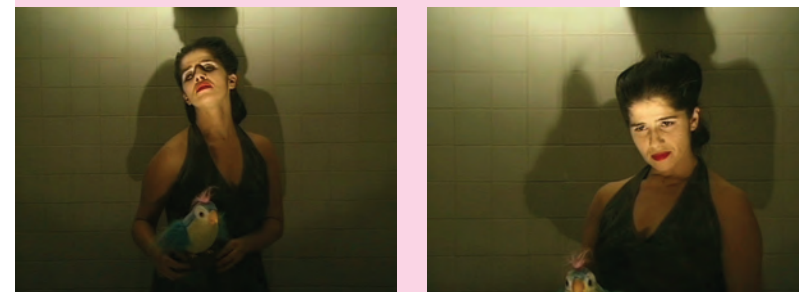
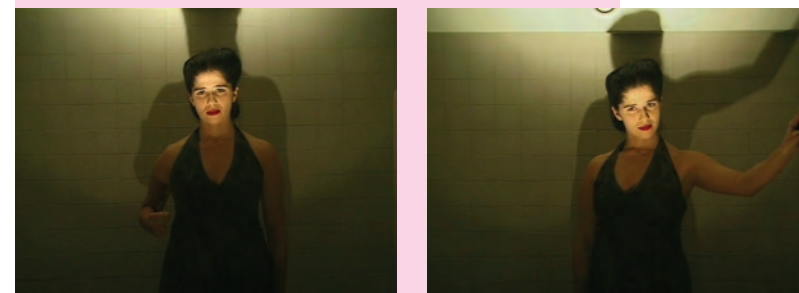
#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.miguelbonneville.com>
- <sup>2</sup> This doesn't mean we assume a male essential identity in Bonneville's body. We merely refer to the performance effects of a body signification as a man's body.
- <sup>3</sup> This is striking in the use of a plastic parrot that plays the theme sung by the performer.
- <sup>4</sup> Since the idea of character would mean accepting the idea of an authentic self.

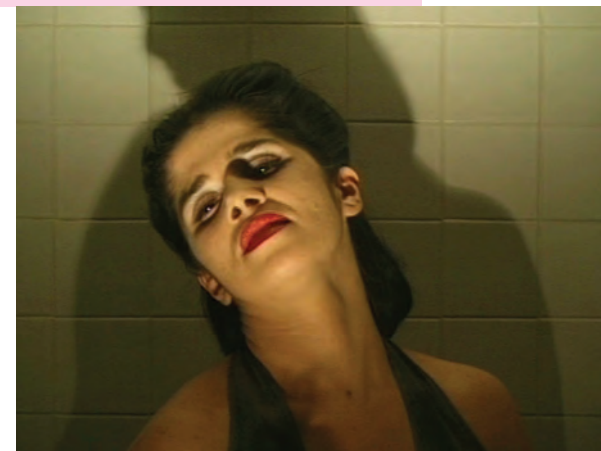
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JOÃO MANUEL DE OLIVEIRA



Carlota Lagido. *notforgetnotforgive*, 2002. Video, 5:30, colour, sound





### To think things you don't want to

Many have reacted strongly when stopping for a while to look at *To think things you don't want to*. The film is intense, the language is deliberately strong and it deals with the very sensitive subject of racism. It's a journey inside a white Swedish woman's head while she gets to know, falls in love with, has sex with and splits with a black man. It's a wandering on the underworld of thoughts, the ones on the other side of our political correctness. It's not a journey in our obscure thoughts though, neither in the dark sides of humanity – it's a journey into our collectively suppressed and sublimated selves, with 'self' understood as a complex socio-historical construction. The artist says, '*To think things you don't want to* is a project about unwanted racial thoughts.' The story-line is told in a diary format and is about the ambiguity of a white woman's racial thoughts and desires for a black man. By voicing out a highly sensitive problem, such as racism, the artist does not try to set us into a liberating experience. She rather exposes our common fears and our constructed barriers that hinder us from reaching towards each other. Gradually and boldly she reveals to us that we all are at the same time abusers and victims of our social preconceptions.

### Abortion cemetery and Happy aborted children's birthday.

I have made a virtual graveyard for aborted children, a place that offers mothers or fathers (that weren't able to become parents at that very moment) an opportunity to say farewell to their unborn child. After realizing how many people actually felt guilty after having gone through an abortion, I also made an installation entitled *Happy aborted children's birthday* to reduce the guilt and shame around abortion in our society. In the installation /performance I'm celebrating all happy aborted children's birthday and how old they would be.

In the installation there is a text saying:

'Everyone want to have children wholehearted, therefore they wait.

P.S It's for the sake of the baby.'

'It's important to celebrate birthday of Happy abortion children, but maybe nobody get it' and 'Of course that you keep track of how old they are.'

On a certain hour the audience can eat the birthday-cakes with me, the cakes have shapes of a foetus/embryo.



Joanna Rytel. *To think things you don't want to*, 2005. Video, 23:00, colour, sound

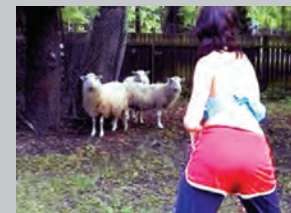
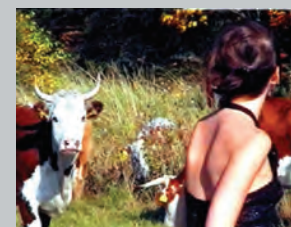
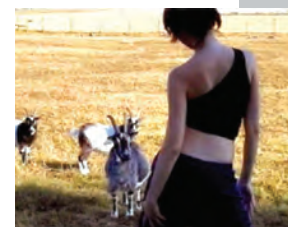


Joanna Rytel. *Abortion Graveyard*, website and performance

### Animal performance

I have made performances for animals and filmed their reactions. In the video *Animal performance* I dance and strip for monkeys, cows, goats, ships and horses. I'm interested in the animals reactions to human behaviors. Society denies animals their identities in order to justify our usage of them as objects, as food, in the zoo, for experiment etc.

I am interested in the human ethics that denies ethics of animals and our double standards of morality. But also how we project our human norms on animals.



Joanna Rytel. *Animal Performance*, 2002. Video, 10:00, colour, sound

### Want to play doctor with your dick?

is investigating if it's possible to sell sex with a superior position and if it's only the opinion of the society about selling sex that makes sex-workers feel that they are in a weak position. If yes, than I want to explore and break peoples prejudices about selling sex.

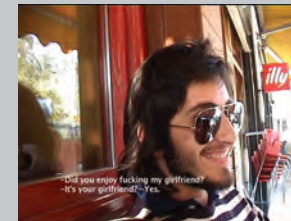
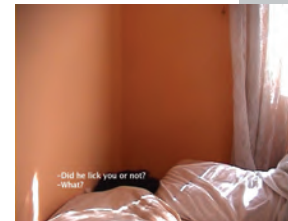
I'm dressed up as a prostitute with different attributes and I'm handing out flyers to men that I could imagine my self selling sex to if I was a sexworker. Most of the men are excluded of getting a flyer even if they ask.



Joanna Rytel. *Want to Play doctor wiyh Your Dick?*, performance

### Play Girl

Play Girl is breaking conventions and norms and going against patriarchal rules of how a girl 'should' behave. The film deals with gender specific rules, gender subversion, taboos, honor between men and how to be more forward, as a girl, than what is generally accepted and allowed.



Joanna Rytel. *Play Girl*, 2008. Video, 5:00, colour, sound.

JOANNA RYTEL



A Melody in Évora

*This text is not autobiographical. This text is not a concern about biennales, soloexhibitions, artlectures or building careers. This text is not religious. Not political. This text is not linguistic correct. This text is a song, a melody. This text is a concern about new generations who don't intend to become artists. Before we save the artworld, we must bring back the love and equal status into society. This must be our first priority.*

Sing out load, Sister. Play the guitar, Sister. Even if you're not good, Sister. Play your guitar. Sing your song. About existence. Life and death. About beeing an artist. About reality of beeing a female artist. Sing out your trash economy, Sister. The trash fee for every cheap work you do. How come artists work for free? How come you smile opening after opening, carrying heavy rocks in your bag? Does the free wine satisfy you? Does the alcohol make you calm and forget about your financial trouble as we talk nice and polite. Strangers will sense glimpses of artistic upression expressed through harmless videoworks. Where is the blast effect?

Stop moaning about your choice of profession. Either work your ass off for nothing, or find something else to spend your time at. My Daughter is already bored of exhibitions. I brought her with me from the age of two, now she's twelve. She will not become an artist, she proclaimes. A consequence of the struggle for every little penny. One night she asks me: Mother, why are we poor? I answer: We are not poor, little Girl. We are full of love and strenght. We eat the food we buy, we rent a house of a landlord, I have four different jobs. My head starts to spin and I can't think. I must not loose control, not loose control. Dizzy, let me sing you the Dizzydizz-song:

*I am not gay, I am not a thirdworld transvestite, I am a 40 years pale, sexual, mediocre artist, slightly concerned about the future. I don't have time to produce new art. I don't have time to discuss serious matters. I don't have time to give birth to several children. I care for comfort, property and vanity. I am dizzy dizzy dizzy.*

Once I left my Daughter for three months. I was going to do some artstudies in Dublin. This would improve my work, my process, my career, I thought. I didn't work during my stay. I drank. Unhappy Mothers can't work. Once you give birth, you sell your spirit to your child.

The artworld will burn, ashes will float as grey fog from neck to cheek. We must transform new colours, new canvas, new words, new songs, new philosophies, new children, new expressions, new sexes, new isms, new houses, new machines. Leave us God, for a moment, we must reinstall emotions.

Flocks of flocks of Sisters and secret meetings in the trees. From above Angels sing their Troopsongs of war and hope. Heaven help us from burning, heaven rain all over, and wet our flaming souls. I think I've heard this song before.

The Artworld is Burning

Let me tell you some stories from the Artworld  
I know some stories from this world  
I know about it cause I'm an Artist  
The Artworld is burning  
The Artworld is burning  
The Artworld is burning in flames  
In flames  
Nobody care for Art anymore  
cause Art has no importance in society  
and Art has no impact in our everyday life  
and everybody is ignoring my sculpture  
and nobody is buying my painting  
and everybody is passing by without any movement  
the only thing people want is bread and beer  
bread and beer

and the Museum and the Galleries are empty  
Cause nobody is visiting them anymore  
And the Artist is getting more and more depressed  
And they start to burying themselves alive  
together with their Artwork  
Cause the Artworld is burning  
The Artworld is burning  
In flames in flames  
The Artworld is burning  
The Artworld is burning in  
In flames  
In Hell

KARIANNE STENSLAND



Karianne Stensland. *The Artworld is Burning*, performance, Évora, Portugal, 2008

## Staging Josephine Baker and Yves Klein...

The stage is a frame in a setting where something is expected to happen. In the visual arts the stage for a performance work is closely related to the context of the space itself, whether a public space, an art space or even a private space. (The latter is most often as a performance in front of a camera rather than an audience.)

The staging and the performative element are consistent lines throughout my video works. My point of departure was various stagings of my own family in a private space. The result was a series of performances in front of a camera instead of an audience. In *Family Sha-la-la* from 1998 my family and I performed the same dance accompanied by a disco anthem of the era, a smash hit in the Philippines at the time. The video documents the rather awkward attempt of my parents, my brothers, my sister and I at trying to synchronize our moves. While we appear all dressed in black as a unity, i.e. as a nuclear family, our internal differences show even more clearly. My Family pieces from this period deal with identity and social relations and constructions that are now basic recurring topics throughout my work. Issues of gender, faith, and ethnicity also inform my performative video work.

Working with my family as prime material eventually lead me to revisit my native country, The Philippines, where I started doing documentaries. Documentary filming placed me in a different position behind the camera, playing a role comparable to that of a pseudo-anthropologist. Instead of directing I now sought to capture the right images and moments. It is in the process of editing and with the use of music that I actually staged my source material. Utilizing **music** to frame a narration and re-tell a story, I sometimes mixed documentary with staged footage.

As music became a major component of the work, I began writing, singing and performing my own lyrics. Realizing that direct **confrontation** was an important issue in my art, I decided to create a more immediate style of expression in order to address the viewer right on. My act became more in-your-face and my lyrics more explicit.

The video *Absolute Exotic* from 2005 deals with exoticism and the complex circumstances of the existing race-hierarchy between emigrants and ethnic minorities in society.

Here I am acting out the role of the Asian girl posing as a exotic stereotype while delivering a bitchy rap about the popularity of black girls. My inspiration was the first exotic phenomenon in Europe, African-American singer Josephine Baker. Roleplaying became a major theme as well as a strategy in my work.

The videos *Ego Song* and *Cock Song* (2006) were both produced for the exhibition *The Ego Show*, a solo presentation at the Danish national gallery, Statens Museum for Kunst. The *Cock Song* is a rap about being a cock. The lyrics play on the dual meaning of the word cock – the fighting rooster and the male sex. Performing dual roles of fighting bird and woman, I confront macho culture and the brutal game of cockfighting. In this staging the female/cock faces the fact that she is an object controlled by men. Cock Song combines my staged rap performance with documentary footage filmed in a cockfight arena in Manila.

*Ego Song*, where I use spoken words while mimicking the great German diva, Marlene Dietrich, is inspired by the variety genre. The performance deals with egotism and identity defined in terms of surface appearances and cultural materialism. Here I pose as a sun dressed in yellow and golden hues, while delivering the lyrics: ‘...I am the center of the universe / I don’t care about anybody else...’.

The video *Artist’s Song* from 2007 takes a critical approach to the making of art history. I am dressed in white as if a contemporary living sculpture with attributes that I successively endow with masculine and feminine qualities. A horn, for instance, serves at one moment as a breast, the next moment as a penis. While rapping, my ‘living sculpture’ walks among classical sculptures in the museum Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen.

All four of these performative videos take a straightforward and confrontational approach. The characters embody stereotypically masculine as well as stereotypically feminine qualities. Eventually I began to re-perform these pieces live. This added a physical dimension to my work that corresponded with my urge to communicate more directly with the audience. This urge has also compelled me to work interdisciplinary, i.e. to sample from other artistic genres, mainstream culture and art history, so as to expand the possibilities for narrative construction.

My live performances of the earlier video works lead me to **re-enact** historic performance works by other artists. Reading about the history of performance art seduced me into an academic discourse that I had intentionally avoided previously. I created thirteen different re-enactments written as one coherent story. I played double roles as the storyteller and various characters in the script taken from works by Yves Klein, including Ene-Liis Semper, and by Yoko Ono to name a few. Naturally I named the piece *A Void*, in reference to Yves Klein.

I performed *A Void* for the first time in 2007 in a gallery space, Kirkhoff Contemporary, in Copenhagen. The original performance was three hours long, but I recorded and edited it down to forty minutes for the gallery exhibition. In this case I was aware of the work being staged simultaneously as a live action and a performative video piece.

My most recent re-enactments are a series in three parts taking place on three different days. *How to Break the Great Chinese Wall* from 2008 consists of three individual performances. A new version of *Artist’s Song* was written especially for the entire script. The three acts are documented and presented in different ways as part of an installation. One of these video documents was edited to fit the duration of the four-minutes-long *Artist’s Song*, presenting all three acts as rapid video clips coherent with the lyrics. The result is a hybrid between a music video, film trailer and a documented live act.

My intention with the re-enactments is to create an explicit discourse about referential art, a common issue in contemporary art. Contemporary culture is a culture of sampling. I find it relevant to question the originality and authenticity of an artwork, as well as the role of being an innovative contemporary artist. Switching characters or costumes I reference either art history (e.g. miming Yves Klein) or music history (Marlene Dietrich as inspiration for *Ego Song*.)

The fact that I am woman and I am staging myself in these works automatically becomes a layer in all these pieces. I consciously utilize this as a tool and a force rather than neglecting its significance. My aim is to create an image of a powerful female character with both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities. I believe it is possible to approach feminist concerns while communicating with both men and women.

LILIBETH CUENCA



Lilibeth Cuenca, *How to Break the Great Chinese Wall*, re-enactments in 3 parts, 2008, performance.



top left - Lilibeth Cuenca, *The Artist's song*, 2007, performance  
 top right - Lilibeth Cuenca, *Ego Song*, 2006, performance  
 bottom left - Lilibeth Cuenca, *Cock Fight Song*, 2006, performance  
 bottom right - Lilibeth Cuenca, *Miss United*, 2007, performance

### Intimate Photo/Videographic Images

Manuela Cristóvão

Auxiliar Professor at DAVD, UE / CHAIA researcher

Photography, Painting and Printmaking are the subjects that I teach. My work, including research, is developed in a transdisciplinary mode with different media. It is based on photography, with focus on the image. By approaching these different videos my analysis is centred in the relation between the photographic dimension and the video's sequential image including different ways to present the body's intimacy. There is in this set a constant use of fixed plans common to most of the videos submitted, and this is also due to an approach that I consider important in this context.

Today we are attacked by such a quantity of images that we can't realize the difference between the direct experience and what we saw seconds ago on tv. In our memory are kept, in different layers, thousands of broken pieces of images, as a garbage deposit, where is less and less probable that one of them comes to the surface.<sup>1</sup>

Italo Calvino

The quantity of prefabricated images would create, according to Italo Calvino in the: 'Six proposals for the new Millennium' a lack of imagination.

The surfacing of image technologies, in the second half of the XIX century, the invention of photography and cinema, more recently video and computer, greatly influences the way we contemplate the world and the contemporary society. The "culture of image" isn't restricted to social space but, above all, it includes a subjective space, operating on the sensibility plan, as how the person relates with the world and with ourselves.

Images have always worked as an effective mediation in the relation between Man and the world (on drawings, pre-historical cave paintings, totems, sculptures, paintings, etc).

The XX century has been characterized by the irreversible need to consume images, due to the constant presence of the media. Little by little, the reproduced image has invaded daily life at all with different expressions, shaping the way society perceives itself.

The presence of the human body features the present publicity, identifying products and defining labels. Nowadays, the demanding of a lifestyle is implicated in our world and in our society. Today consumption must be considered as part of a structure of relationships, which are influenced by the globalisation that defines a lifestyle as a feeling of belonging to certain groups that assume certain attitudes in life.

The project of construction of an identity can be changed any time during a life span. There is no doubt that the identity is a construction of the social dimension.

With the arrival of the modern vanguards the art movements take place with a rupture of the traditional established concepts, being that the processes and art works reveal their results as a reaffirmation of historical art traditional concepts.

From the XX century on we find the need to look for a renewal or 'recode' as Hal Foster names it.

The more traditional artistic media of expression was not entirely denied, but was allowed to join together by other ways of expression taken from the everyday world. This being said, the art becomes a hybrid space where plurality is based on the adoption of new processes and media and not by approaching it's specificity. We find a fusion between the areas of art and science, a new media and an industrial production mainly due to photography, cut and paste along with the readymades of Duchamp. In these three procedures we realize that there is a similarity, that of an appropriation. We realize that in order to let the new artistic object exist, part of it or the object as a whole, the attitude of the artist is that of appropriation. Photography and video tend to appropriate images of reality, that of an instant or of a referent. Being expressive, they drink from the culture of their time, while giving a form to that same culture, in order to lend them a significant impressive materiality.

In spite of the connections, which unite the birth of performances and painting, we can't forget the major achievements in what concerns the relation between the artistic manifestations and the public. The public, as an 'element' of art, while contemplating, was a passive element. But since the first performances (named *happenings*) the public wasn't put apart from the process, the public wasn't a simple witness anymore. The public became part of the artistic process itself, acknowledging art, integrating the artistic process, transforming it into an essential part of the creation of art. This being, the public's eye is considered in some way as an art form. Who looks up, holds their intervention on reality and changes the meaning of what happens. For this reason, during performances we acknowledge three modes: the author, his own work and the receptor, making possible the conversion into two elements: author workforce and the receptor, or even one element: author-work-receptor at the precise moment of the event. The audience leaves their post to join the creator. At this moment this action needs the receptor because he is part of the action itself.

At the moment that the ephemeral act becomes 'eternal' by the support chosen (photo or video), there is no longer the need of an immediate receptor or public. The subject or the action itself can be presented later to the receptor, without the presence of the author and the action in real time. The receptor still does the interpretation of the action but isn't part of it directly.

When the public isn't present in real time, regarding the photography and the video, what the artist looks for is no longer to represent, present or reproduce the reality but disguise it in a kind of re-duplication of itself. The moment and the object lose their function and the image is all that remains.

The import of concepts between many artistic domains is nowadays a common practice and is linked to a transmutation of hierarchies and traditional division of knowledge. The concept of *performance* is one good example of this. This concept is mainly associated with the idea of role-playing, being related with other artistic means and techniques, such as photography, as I have mentioned before.

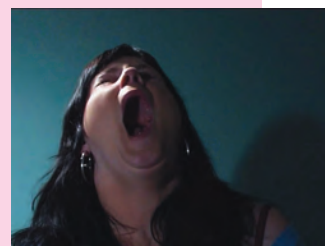
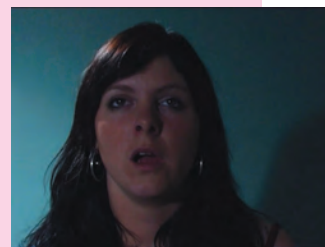
The cut produced by frames and sequences, the modifications introduced by lighting onto the surfaces of objects, the interventions regarding the shifting of scales and, mainly, the possibility of building scenarios as if they were fragments of life, show us how photography and video are a good detonator for the *reinvention of roles*. These techniques, those of photography and video, when producing contiguous images of reality give us an ideal field for fiction of the Self. The presentation of scenarios is a practice that recreates moments with certain goals, being the main goal one that transmits messages. Analysing the images, we can face them as instants of performance but also as photographic instants (staged or simulated).

The process of recording the image chosen here is the sequential image presented in the video. The frames are mainly of fixed plans where the movement of the actor isn't absolutely vital for the transmission of the message.

High Heel Sisters. *Shoe Piece*, 2002.  
Video, 6:00, colour, sound.



Lotte Konow Lund. *At the Peak of Boredom*, 2005.  
Video, 2:00, colour, sound



This is a sequential ambiguous imaginary construction that converts the actor into a creator of its own narrative, converting the photographic image into video-narrative. The performance moment in the majority of the cases beholds a close or intimate sense that is fixed by a video camera and carries a later viewing of the moment to a small space thus creating senses that are offered at some times of intimacy and refuge with close proximity and even tenderness.

This feeling of intimacy is proposed as a place where the actor tends to visualize his own interpretation and is reflected in the recorded image. The image that is reproduced by the mirror is intrinsically linked to the condition of presence of the body. Once away from the mirror the body ceases to reflect on it and eliminates every trace of its presence.

The reflected image is a fleeting image, and as priory stated, only the presence of the body against a surface reflection guarantees an image. However, every image requires a projection surface, a support material. But of course when we discuss image, we understand some any kind of representation process (often of reality) available and thus fixing the image. The images that constitute our culture are fixed, this also applies to when discussing film or video. Images with movement are entered in sequence on a surface. The iconic status does not relieve the physicality of their membership of an indicial moment to any registration or fixation. The mystery of presence, touch and the feeling of having been there are the common definition of photography that we can also feel on the video image. The viewer, when viewing this representation acquires the ability to take role of the 'mysterious' presence.

With the theory of the '*Stadium of the mirror*', Lacan<sup>2</sup> understood that for the human being the image has an organising function. Thus, making the child's experience in front of a mirror as one step in structuring subjectivity. Therefore, the human being is that of a projected image and in consequence made up by it. The first human subjectivity approach is related with the form of the body, as a symbol of the individuality, the image of the Self, that when reflected in the mirror, is a way to idealize the real situation of the person.

There is a radical and constitutive disagreement between self and forms. There isn't only one way at the human being; each one learns his own corporality in a hesitating way, depending on the approach Others. The individualized image is produced by the Other, by the way that others visualize us as a total image. We the subject, are fitted in the field of the Others desire, and established as the overall of an object. The global reading of the representation created by the self/actor is complete only when the Other, the receptor, is able to take role of the representation, while the content of the communication is passed, and finally the receptor feels the subtle meaning of the intimacy of the image/message. It is in this context that all images/videos offer a selected direction and (in)tentional reading of modes and moments of intimacy, interiority and proposals for consideration for different receptors.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'Hoje somos bombardeados por uma tal quantidade de imagens a ponto de não podermos distinguir mais a experiência directa daquilo que vimos há poucos segundos na televisão. Em nossa memória se depositam, por traços sucessivos, mil estilhaços de imagens, semelhantes a um depósito de lixo, onde é cada vez menos provável que uma delas adquira relevo.' Italo Calvino (1990:107 CALVINO, Ítalo, 'Seis propostas para o novo milénio', São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1990)
- <sup>2</sup> LACAN, Jaques, 'O estádio do espelho como formador da função do eu tal como nos mostra a experiência psicanalítica', Escritos, Rio de Janeiro, J.Zahar (originalmente publicado em 1949).

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## I didn't do it for Nothing

The performance *I didn't do it for Nothing* (2008) is a tribute to and confrontation of Valerie Jean Solanas (1936–1988) and her literary manifesto *SCUM Manifesto* (New York, 1968). Valerie Jean Solanas, scientist, philosopher, whore, surfer, man-hater, and author of *SCUM* (*Society for Cutting Up Men Manifesto*) – talking from the darkness of the street, mental illness and prostitution. The performance is based on the project ‘Solanas’ Sisters’, a collaborative project from 2005, together with the Swedish author Sara Stridsberg.

Brief description of *I didn't do it for Nothing*.

I am sitting behind a desk in a dark room. I am completely dressed in black. There is a microphone on a stand. The audience is invited to participate by reading, into the mic, chosen excerpts from the *SCUM Manifesto* and Jacques Derrida's lecture *The Ends of Man* (New York, 1968). My assistant, dressed in a light colored body stocking, stands behind me. On my instruction she holds up signs depicting statements taken from the *SCUM Manifesto*: The Man is responsible for 1. WAR 2. NICENESS, POLITENESS, and “DIGNITY” and so forth. A thirty minute video film, footage documenting Solanas' life and the time she lived in, is screened on the wall behind us. Words are not enough – there is too much to be said. Valerie says, ‘My instincts tell me to dig chicks. Why should my standards be lower than yours?’ We dance.

In the spring of 2005 Sara Stridsberg and I travelled through the USA re-tracing the footsteps of Valerie Jean Solanas. The purpose of the trip was to examine Solanas' destiny, her life story and our relationship to her vision and ideas, as well as the surrounding society's reaction to her manifesto and beliefs. We explored and examined Solanas' extreme stance of being able to express a great feminist utopia while at the same time selling sex on the street.

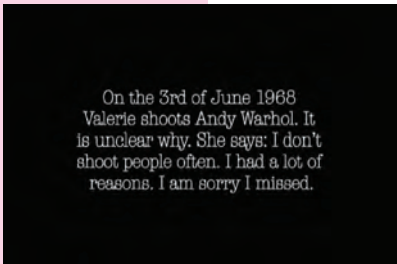
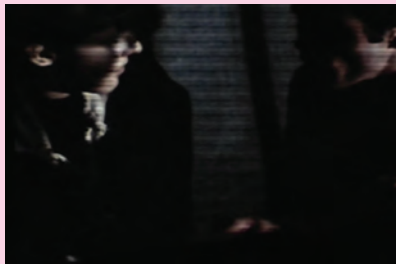
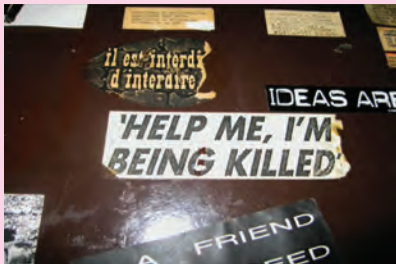
Valerie Solanas represents the positions of so many other disenfranchised people. The working class girl with dreams of being an author. The man-hating whore. The mentally ill patient with masterpieces in her handbag. In Sara Stridsberg's novel *Drömfakulteten* (*Dream Faculty*), 2006, Valerie Solanas exists outside of written history. There is almost no documentation of the life of Solanas and the very

few accounts that have actually surfaced are contradictory. Therefore we had to travel in the fiction surrounding Solanas' life. A journey for the future in the traces of a lost utopia.

The trip took us first to Atlantic City, Virginia, Valerie's place of birth and where she grew up; continuing to College Park, Virginia, where Valerie studied at University of Maryland; to Washington DC, Virginia; followed by Miami, Florida, where Valerie was admitted to a mental institution during the 1970's. We then travelled to Chicago, Illinois, where several of the major Women's Liberation demonstration marches took place in the 1970's. We later went to San Francisco, California, where Valerie spent her last dark years in the prostitution area living in the half way house hostel Bristol Hotel. Our journey ended in New York City, New York, where Valerie lived at the end of the 1960's and for some time during the 1970's.

The *SCUM Manifesto* starts: *Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation, and destroy the male sex.*

MALIN ARNELL



*I didn't do it for Nothing*, 2008. Performance, 35:00, Évora, Portugal. By Malin Arnell. Assistant: Klara Liden



## Feminist art in Denmark – a short introductory history

By Sanne Kofod Olsen

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Since the late 1960's feminist art appeared on the Danish art scene. There were a number of significant events that outline a short history of feminist art in Denmark. The feminist art activities centered in Copenhagen and Århus. In Copenhagen the feminist movement came out of the Royal Danish Art Academy where a group of students worked with contemporary aesthetics and experimental art. Some of the first feminists belonged to the male/female collective Kanonklubben (the Canon Club) and some worked independently.

This article is an attempt to sketch some of the major events.

### Women's Images

In 1970 a collective of female artists realized the project 'Damebilleder' (Womens' images). It was a series of seven works and events that took place at different locations in Copenhagen. All tableaux dealt with the woman's role in society from the beauty parlor to dish washing. The group consisted of Lene Bille, Marie Bille, Rikke Diemer, Kirsten Dufour, Kirsten Justesen, Jytte Keller, Jytte Rex and Gitte Skjoldjensen. The first of the seven images was *The Hooker*. This scenic event lasted 2–3 days. A woman sat in a window (Dutch style prostitution) and was in this way being framed. The second image was called *Dish Washing*. For this the artists collected their dirty dishes and brought them all to the exhibition space. The third image was entitled *The Beauty* and a make-up company was invited to give lectures in beauty care. The forth image was *The Wedding Cake*. In this installation an outdoor building was decorated like a wedding cake. The fifth image was given the title *The Defense* and consisted of a self-defense course for the group and the visitors of the exhibition. In the sixth image, with the title *The Garments*, the exhibition space was changed into a sewing factory, where the group produced red dresses that they were going to use in the final image number 7, called *The Camp*. The group lived together for four days and discussed the themes of the exhibition with the visitors. The exhibition project ended in a big party in red!

A lot of feminist art works were produced during these years. Kirsten Justesen, Jytte Rex, Ursula Reuter Christiansen and Lene Adler Petersen – and group-oriented projects by Kirsten Dufour among others – did very significant works during these first years of the feminist art movement in Denmark.

Lene Adler Petersen had done provocative collective performances with her husband Bjørn Nørgaard, where she wandered through the Copenhagen stock exchange stark naked. In the early 1970s she did a number of works, dealing with women's liberation and at the same time their cultural attachment to the domestic sphere. In 1977 she did the installation *Liberty leading the people* in which she appropriated the well known Delacroix painting and turned it into a socialist feminist scenery, in which a woman's figure and a stove are the central elements. The focus on the liberation of the domesticated woman was a central theme.

Kirsten Justesen did several works on her life as a woman, mother and artist, in which these various elements coalesced. Some works dealt with the experience of the revolution of liberation seen through the kitchen window as the poster with the title *Class Struggle* from 1976. The poster is showing the artist in her studio, reading a newspaper with the front-page text "Class Struggle". The text is referring to the slogan of the Danish feminist movement in the mid 1970s saying: 'No women's struggle without class struggle, no class struggle without women's struggle'.<sup>1</sup> The poster goes along with other works from the period, in which the artist portrays herself in her home, which was also her studio. Others art works, especially from the early 1970s, dealt with the female body as a vehicle of significance such as the photo series *Circumstances* in which the artist poses as a pin-up, but being at least 7 months pregnant. Referring thus to the specific condition of being a woman, but also to the sculpturality of the body, Justesen combines the art practice with her personal life, thus interweaving the personal, the professional and at the same time also the political. Kirsten Justesen also did collaboration with the Danish artist and film director Jytte Rex. Together they did the film *Sleeping beauty*, 1970, which consists of five portraits of women talking about sexuality, sex and lovers. The film, which was released in 1971, is not only to be seen as a feminist statement, but also as a part of the sexual liberation that took place in Denmark during the early 1970s.



*The Wedding Cake (1)* from 'Women's Images / Damebilleder' exhibition, 1970, Council Cellar, Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen



*The Wedding Cake (2)* from 'Women's Images / Damebilleder' exhibition, 1970, Council Cellar, Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen



*The Camp* from 'Women's Images / Damebilleder' exhibition, 1970, Council Cellar, Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen



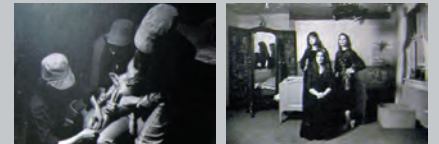
Poster from 'Women's Images / Damebilleder' exhibition, 1970, Council Cellar, Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen



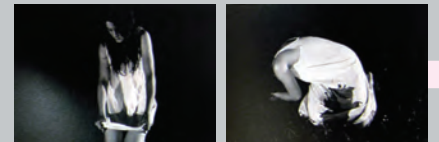
*Beauty* from 'Women's Images / Damebilleder' exhibition, 1970, Council Cellar, Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen



Lene Adler Petersen and Bjørn Nørgaard, *The Female Christ*, naked performance at the Copenhagen stock exchange, 1969, National Gallery of Denmark / Statens Museum for Kunst



Ursula Reuter Christiansen, film frames from *Three Girls and a Pig / Tre Piger og en Gris*, 1971



Ursula Reuter Christiansen, film frames from *The Executioner / Skarpretteren*, 1970

The work of Ursula Reuter Christiansen from the 1970s also specifically took its point of departure in domestic life and how to be a mother, a wife and a professional working artist at the same time. The film *The Executioner* from 1971 is a psychological drama about a pregnant woman, a wounded soldier and an executioner (as well as several other figures). Set in a beautiful landscape in the countryside, a story is told as a fairytale about a pregnant woman who wanders around in idyllic nature, seemingly happy until she finds a dying soldier and meets the (her) executioner. The story ends with the decapitation of the woman. In this way, as in many of her other works, the film deals with the complications and frustrations of being a woman, the difficult man/woman relationship of giving and taking, being a wife, a mother and at the same time have to act as a professional artist.

The domestic theme is also the central theme of the film in three acts *Three girls and a pig* from 1971 in which Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Lene Adler Petersen and Elisabeth Terkelsen are the three leading female characters. It was initially intended as a vampire movie with Dracula as the main character, based on a concept by the Danish painter Per Kirkeby. Instead Dracula became the invisible factor in the interpretation of the three women and the film shows the domesticated women's fear — expressed by knitting and gossiping— of the invisible dangers outside. The women were all dressed in Victorian dresses in the first part of the film and thus compared to the Victorian image of woman as the de-sexualized and house based subject of the past. However, they do overcome their fear after concluding that Dracula (Man) does not enter their privacy. In the last part of the film, the women have become soldiers in a "field kitchen", cleaning potatoes and singing German soldier songs. In the room there is a small pig of male gender, which in the end is castrated by the three women. The man or the male factor obviously plays a significant part and is finally overcome. The film can be seen as a history of liberation, despite the fact that what they overcome is not the blood sucking Dracula (an evil image of Man), but rather an innocent little male pig.

Among some of the most significant events in Denmark during the 1970s was the women's exhibition at Charlottenborg <sup>12</sup> in 1975 (December.) The show, called 'XX' or the 'Women's Exhibition', involved various groups of women artists as well as

internationally known artists like Marina Abramovic and Valie Export. Both Marina Abramovic and Valie Export did some of their well-known actions as part of the exhibition program. During the 13 days of the exhibition, from December 8 to December 21, 1975, various events took place with Danish as well as foreign artists and performance groups. The first performance that opened the exhibition was quite significant. It was executed by the Danish theater group 'Solvognen' (the solar wagon) and was called *A Wedding*. A wedding parade had walked all through the city and finally through the courtyard of Charlottenborg and ended up in the big entrance hall, which was decorated as a church interior. Here, the wedding was supposed to take place and the bride and the groom walked up to the priest, saying the traditional words. But when the bride had to say her 'yes', instead she said 'NO NO NO' and ran up the stairs. With this manifestation the exhibition was open<sup>3</sup>.



Kirsten Justesen, *Image of a Wife 2 / Hustrubillede 2*, 1970, Serigraph. The text featured is a passage from the bible, which reads "And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside [that] which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty" (First Book of Kings, 10:13)



Kirsten Justesen, *Pussy-Power*, 1970, (Poster for Artists' 'Easter Exhibition', 3 - 12 April 1971)



Kirsten Justesen, *Circumstances series / Omstændigheder*, 1973, Photography



Kirsten Justesen, *The Class Struggle / Klassekampen*, 1976, Photography



Kirsten Justesen, *Lunch*, 1975, Photography

### Feminist art of the 90s

The 'Women's Exhibition' was one of the last manifest events from the womens' movement during the 1970s. Women's galleries and magazines were still published, but the hay days of Danish feminism of the 1970s seemed to be over. During the 1980s feminism was more or less taboo in Denmark. The younger generation turned away from the radical political movements from the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the early 1990s everything seemed to be forgotten. However, a new interest in feminist practices arose, especially among the new generation of women artists and curators. But also in the established museums various exhibitions on deceased women artists were produced. Most significant, however, were the major feminist exhibitions at Kunsthallen Brandts, curated by Lene Burkard, partly in collaboration with Kirsten Justesen. The first exhibition 'Dialogue with the Other', which took place in 1995, combined past feminist art with the present and showed a lot of impressive works by older and younger women artists. In 1996 the second exhibition (co-curated with Kirsten Justesen) called 'Body as Membrane' focused on the aspect of the body in feminist art.

In the early 1990s two groups of women artists were established: 'Bob Smith' and 'Room Service'. Both existed for quite a short while, and one of them was hardly a group but rather a short-term collaboration ('Room Service'). 'Bob Smith' (Susan Hinum, Christine Melchior, Eva Larsson and Ann Lislegaard) had a quite clear agenda in relation to the question of gender and equality. Bob Smith member Susan Hinum writes: 'The idea behind the collaboration was simply to point out, and to satirize, the extreme favoritism shown to young male artists, which still characterized the Danish art world in 1990. As a consequence of this the group decided that it was necessary that a fictitious 'Bob Smith' should represent them, and officially stand as the artistic director of all of their exhibitions'<sup>4</sup>. The Bob Smith group featured a number of projects during a year or two and initiated in many ways the new wave of feminism in the Danish art world.

Together with Susan Hinum and artist Malene Landgreen, who had initiated the project in the first place, I took part in the first publication on Danish women artists in 1990. Because of difficulties of finding sponsors, the publication ended up as an Internet publication in 1997 entitled 'Inserts – 69 Women

Artists in Denmark'. A lot of young women artists participated and others declined. It seemed still to be the most prevailing opinion, common since the 80s, that feminism was a closed chapter and women's liberation something we didn't have to talk about anymore. Our opinion was somewhat different. The 'Inserts' project developed into an exhibition in 1998 called 'Boomerang' with more or less the same agenda: to focus on women artists and what seemed to be unequal opportunities in the art world. The whole project was initiated on the basic question where the women artists went after their academy graduation. Despite of equality in the number of students at the academies, the art scene seemed still to be dominated by male artist considering the number of scholarships, museum sales, positions of trust, general visibility and so on. What became of a lot of women artists remained an unanswered question.

The same agenda was shared by some students at the art academy in Copenhagen who arranged a study group and various lectures in an open school project called 'Aircondition'. 'Aircondition' offered the opportunity to invite several feminist art historians and feminists, among others Laura Cuttingham and Gertrud Sandqvist, to teach or give lectures at the academy. This initiative established the implementation of feminist strategies in art and theory at the art academy and thus created a new base for a more equality conscious idea about the art world in a Danish context. Some of the artists participating in the 'Aircondition' project established the still existing artist group 'Women down the pub' which has been contributing significantly to the feminist discourse concerned with gender and equality since the late 1990s. The group was established in 1997 by Åsa Sonjasdotter, Andrea Creutz, Kirstine Roepstorff, Marika Seidler, Christina Prip and Lisa Strömbeck on the occasion of the event 'Women down the Pub' at the pub The Moose in the city centre of Copenhagen. The event was intended to gather women in a social sphere that traditionally belonged to men. Men, however, were also included. During the following years, some members went out of the group and new artists were included. Katya Sander was participating during a brief period, and Nanna Debois Buhl, Vibeke Mejlvang and Sophie Hesselholdt later joined the group, which today consists of the three last mentioned, as well as Andrea Creutz, Åsa Sonjasdotter, Lisa Strömbeck and Nynne Haugaard.

In 2000 the group made a significant event, when they did the social action *Herstories Tour*. The *Herstories Tour* used a typical tourist attraction in Copenhagen as its form, namely the Canal Tours. The Canal Tour is a guided tour that sails around the canals of Copenhagen, focusing on historical sites, sculptures (such as the little mermaid), and the like. 'Women down the Pub' made an alternative history that told the history of women: from well known historical figures, to the existence of the women's prison to other significant events in the history of women related to Copenhagen. The tour was reinvented in 2009 with the question of women and ethnicity as its main focus, which seemed more up to date at the present time. In 2004, 'Women down the Pub' contributed to the history of feminism by editing the book *View – Feminist Strategies in Danish Visual Art*. The book is almost a documentary of what has been going on for the last 35 years in Danish art, specifically focusing on feminist contributions. Until this date, it is the only survey on this history in Denmark.

### Other activities

The institutional domination of male artists was proved in 1998, when the Agency of Cultural Heritage published a report on gender representation in museum collections. This report revealed the terrifying fact, that only 6% of the artists represented in public collections were of female gender. This bad news was little noticed at the time. Five years later they came to attention in a seminar called 'Before Invisibility', which addressed the problem of inequality in official, often state-funded institutions. Sadly enough nothing had really changed during these five years from 1998 to 2003. New statistics showed more or less the same numbers, despite the ongoing activism throughout the 1990s. However, the seminar pointed to the fact that more women artists acknowledged this fact of a maybe unintended repression within the institutional system and started to act on it. The seminar gained a broader audience and the question about the representation of women artists in for instance public institution reached the institution itself, which started to talk about it and considered it in relation to their institutional politics of purchase. So where are we now? Most recently a new seminar was arranged by the Visual Artists' Association (BKF) and called 'The Blind Spot' (2008). This seminar addressed the same complex of themes and examined what had changed during the past years. A slight improvement is recognizable, but there is still a long way to go.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Tania Ørum; "Class Struggle", see [www.kirstenjustesen.com](http://www.kirstenjustesen.com)
- <sup>2</sup> A castle that was turned into the Royal Danish Academy in 1756, a part of which has functioned as an art exhibition space since the beginning of the century.
- <sup>3</sup> See Hanne Foksal; "En dagbog over Kvindeudstillingen på Charlottenborg i København December 1975", in ed. Jytte Rex; Billedet som Kampmiddel, op.cit., s. 176–183.
- <sup>4</sup> Susan Hinum; Cooperative projects by women in the Danish art world since 1990 – and no, it isn't the business about "Sisterhood is powerful!", i ed. Women down the Pub; View – Feminist strategies in Danish Visual Art, s. 214. (English translations appear in the back of the book).

Sanne Kofod Olsen



'Bob Smith', Art curator Bob Smith, Installation wooden boxes, four Beauty Boxes in all 12m long, 1991, photography, Exhibition at Charlottenborg, Copenhagen



'Bob Smith', Street Sign, 1991, Copenhagen

'Women Down the Pub', Watch Out! Poster, 2002, Made by 'Women Down the Pub' / Lisa Strömbeck and Nanna Debois Buhl for the billboard project 'Rent-a-bench' on commercial benches in Los Angeles, organized by Jacob Fabricius



'Women Down the Pub', Herstories Tour, Copenhagen canal tour, 2000

## Embodiments: a brief approach to Portuguese women video art

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The Act Out event is organized around the work of today's Nordic women video artists, but in this essay I would like to propose a feminist approach to a number of video pieces by Portuguese women artists concerning issues related to gender, class and nationality, among other social-political themes, which they have in common with their Nordic counterparts joining us here today. There's not a long history of Portuguese video art or a Portuguese women's video art tradition related to feminist issues, like in Northern European countries. However, it's possible to trace features in contemporary Portuguese women video works to the third wave inclusive feminisms, namely the importance of women identities' multiplicity and difference and the complex interrelatedness between codings of gender, race, nationality, language, class, etc.

The Portuguese video boom came only in the late 1990s, when the medium was embraced by artists that rejected the formalist and modernist paradigms of Portuguese art from the 1980s. Therefore, most of the Portuguese video art is fairly recent. The Sony Portapak video system arrived in Portugal in the late seventies about a decade and a half later than in the U.S.A., Japan and the rest of Europe. In the 1970s, the Portuguese artists willing to use video could not do so because the technology was not available in the country and was set at unaffordable prices abroad. Video equipment was for the first time made available in 1976, from the National Gallery of Modern Art, for the use of the artistic community. The emergence of the portable video technology in U.S.A., Japan and the rest of Europe, happened at a time when artists were questioning the modernist protocols, namely by challenging the normative boundaries between painting, sculpture and drawing and renouncing the exploration of the internal specificity of each 'medium' and the dissociation between art and the external social reality. Video acted as a kind of fuse for the dissatisfaction with modernist greenbergian paradigms existing in the artistic arena (to the exponents of modernism, as art critic Clement Greenberg, the essence of each 'medium' was inherent to its specific physical properties).<sup>1</sup> In this respect Krauss asserts: 'For, even if video had a distinct technical support – its own apparatus, so to speak – it occupied a kind of discursive chaos,

a heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core. (...) it proclaimed the end of medium-specificity (...) we inhabit a post-medium condition'.<sup>2</sup> Thus, video art met the demand for interdisciplinarity on the part of the artists, since video can combine different 'media' and reflect the external social reality overcoming the modernist aesthetic categories of the intrinsic and the specific, and the barriers between art and life, that underpin modernist art, and can embrace the extrinsic and the hybrid, which are categories of postmodern art.

The flourishing of video in the mid 1960s, coincided with the advent of Second Wave feminism, establishing feminist theories as the main foundation for many of the artworks made at the time by women. For female artists, video art was a completely new and particularly attractive 'medium' because it had no history of exclusion of and, unlike other art forms such as cinema, was free of aesthetic codes created primarily by male artists and art critics. As Catherine Elwes argues: 'Video, with its structural affinity with human temporal existence, its durational synchronicity with the human predilection for sustained observation, enabled women video-makers to shift their conventional position as object of the gaze, to bearers of the look, of the unblinking stare and ordering eye of the beholder'.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, video technology contributed to the passage of the status of women from passive objects of male gaze to active creators of images. In Portugal, in the 1970s and 1980s, video was used almost exclusively by male artists. However, from the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, artists like Ana Hatherly and Helena Almeida made movies in 8 mm, Super 8 and, more rarely, 16 mm formats. In the context of performative video art made by women, Julia Ventura and Ângela Ferreira stand out during the 1970s, as do Cristina Mateus in the mid 1990s and, more recently, Martinha Maia, Maria Lusitano, Catarina Campino and Carlota Lagido.<sup>4</sup>

### Helena Almeida: denying cultural boundaries imposed on women

In the 1970s, Portuguese women artists often had a discourse that questioned the position of women in society. The artist Helena Almeida started working with super 8 film in the 1970s. In Almeida's works, her body is presented like an anthropomorphised canvas, physically limited, and the artist tries to deny and surpass the body/canvas borders. Almeida's body questions the space as a social construction, the product

of a discourse of power that inflicts cultural limitations on women. However, Almeida doesn't assume a feminist discourse, she wants her body to be read as neutral, not genderized. In Portugal there are many preconceived ideas about feminism and, generally, women artists don't like to overtly assume a feminist discourse because they are afraid to be excluded from the artistic arena.

Almeida's hybrid work combines the techniques of manual art practices like drawing, painting, and performance, with mechanical reproduction techniques such as film, video and photography, reaching beyond traditional disciplinary categories, and reveals her disbelief in art as a cultural discourse dominated by rigid and constraining rules. In her video piece 'Study for the work "Seduce"' (Portugal, 2002), she is in a studio wearing high-heel shoes, barely keeping her balance, trying to steady herself on just one high-heel shoe. From a feminist perspective, this is a metaphor for the social gender roles imposed on women, which compel to behave in a very specific fashion – like having to squeeze into and balance in artificial, uncomfortable, unhealthy and nonsensical outfits – just to pleasure men. This video piece can be compared to the performance video *Shoe piece* by the High Heel Sisters, featuring all of the characters wearing tight high-heel shoes, walking senselessly around in small circles and working hard to keep their balance.

Already in the 1970s, her works, anticipated the concerns of the 1980s poststructuralist feminists that rejected the category of woman, replacing it with the multiplicity of identities of women. More recently, in 1994, Almeida, referring to her own works, states: 'they are not self-portraits because I don't find my own "subjectivity" in them, but rather my "plurality", which I display in a sort of theatrical scenery' <sup>5</sup>. Thus, the artist does not seek a univocal essential subjectivity, a self-representative character, but instead a plural embodiment of multiple performative selves.

### Maria Loura Estevão: place embodiments

Maria Loura Estevão is an artist with migrant status. She left Alentejo, Portugal, in the 1960s with her mother, when she was nine, and joined her estranged father in France to rapidly become aware of a multiple identity of interwoven stories at a very early age. Her work has as central theme female identity addressed in an autobiographical way, focusing on life stories of the artist and the daily lives of Portuguese women, particularly in rural Alentejo where the artist spent her childhood. The artist uses video as a storytelling medium,

combining real memories with fictive elements characteristic of popular folk tales. Often in her works she makes use of ancestral attributes of the domestic and personal realms traditionally associated with women, like cooking, sewing, washing, the menstrual cycles, and the personal relationship between mother and daughter, so as to rediscover their inventive potential and use them as a way of transmitting women's creativity.

Her artistic project deals with assimilating the Other, taking in another country, another language, other customs and traditions, and, above all, the refusal to forget her own life stories but also those of the women who surrounded her during her childhood in Portugal. In the recent video work *La femme qui court* (*Running woman*, France, 2007), she addresses memory, place and immigration. Estevão films the usual route taken by Portuguese immigrants working in France from Portugal to the French border at Irun, through the windscreen of a travelling car. Superimposed on the passing landscape, her silhouette – a white lined body outline – runs along the road. This representation of the body – the white outline – should not be understood as disembodiment, a spiritual uplift or dematerialization, a rejection of the material physical body based on a Cartesian mind-body dualism, but rather as a personification of the social place itself. The artist's flesh is substituted by multiple identities, reflecting her immigrant status, symbolized by the variety of the landscape itself – at times tender and embracing (the meadows, trees, gently sloping countryside and clear sky) while at other times harsh, displeasing and cold (the asphalt, motorway viaducts and cars). The running body silhouette presents the viewer with an ambiguous interpretation: it can be understood both as a figure running ahead of the car and moving towards the same destination, and as someone moving towards the car and running in the opposite direction, as if seeking to turn back to the journey's point of departure, to the immigrant's country of origin. The immigrant appears as unrepresentable, as a contour opened to be. Portuguese immigration has, like many others, its litany of shame, hopes, and humiliations. In exploring her own personal story as an immigrant, Estevão's work is heir to the personal investigative strand of the 1970s' feminist art inspired by the feminist dictum 'the personal is political'. Still, the artist is also informed by the more recent debates of postcolonial feminism as she sets up a speaking position from which to articulate a standpoint of social identity for the culturally different others – the immigrants of her generation.



Maria Loura Estevão. *La femme qui court*, 2007. Video, 30:00, colour, sound

#### Cláudia Ulisses: absent bodies

Cláudia Ulisses' video *UTOPIA, Mod. 273/99* (Portugal, 1999), is part of a series of artistic interventions that took place in the city of Oporto, included in the project 'Barracks, Art, Work, Revolution' on the occasion of the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the 25th April Revolution.

*UTOPIA* is a political and social analysis of the very concept of revolution, ideals and its failures, the human condition and its subjection to power mechanisms. The video is part of an installation displayed in the basement of an old wool storehouse whose considerable size and architectonic significance, symbolize the splendour of a period of commercial, industrial and cultural development of the city, at the end of the 19th century.

The video's title, *UTOPIA*, evokes the term first used in Sir Thomas More's 1516 book 'Utopia', meaning a perfect fictional society or state of affairs. In the video, this is suggested by the depiction of an entirely staffless small factory floor where

machines alone perform repetitive work, implying an imagined future totally devoid of the need for human workforce. The artist's aesthetical concerns displayed in the video images constitute a means to a conceptual structure: from the construction and cutting of the moulds to the making and finishing of the product, all manufacturing phases are shown through the movement of machines and objects with no traces of human presence, which have been carefully digitally removed suggesting a technology-based future.

Ironically, rather than simulating an ideal utopian future, the absence of workers in the video piece closely reflects the present situation in most of northern Portugal's clothing industry, which is staggering towards bankruptcy. Therefore the utopian environment depicted in the video is, in fact, an ironical commentary on a dystopian and socially degraded community. As it happens, when the video was made the factory had only two employees still working there, and only one quarter of its total space was in use.

Quoting the artist:

'(...) this work is the result of a political and social analysis of revolutions, of their ideals as well as of their failures. The revolutionary process also dies in the end, but this does not mean it has been a complete failure'.<sup>6</sup>

The digital deletion of workers' bodies, their complete absence from the images, has the effect of highlighting the terribly dehumanizing situation affecting unemployed individuals.

Cláudia Ulisses. *UTOPIA, Mod. 273/99*, 2007. Video, 4:12, colour, sound. Projection's dimensions: 300cm x 400cm



#### Susana Mendes Silva: disrupting the rules of the game

Susana Mendes Silva's video piece *Xeque-mate* (*Checkmate*, Portugal, 2003), was created in partnership with Frederica Bastide Duarte during the residency program and exhibition 'a Dois' ([Made by] a Duo), presented at Francisco Tavares Proença Junior Museum in Castelo Branco, Portugal.

*Xeque-mate* is a video piece full of humour and irony and I understand it as a sort of quotation of the duchampian 'game' element. The concepts of game and ready-made are important contributions of Duchamp who broke definitively with the modernist myth of the artistic object and the artist as craftsman.

Rosalind Krauss considers two main features in Duchamp:

- the cerebral Duchamp, that gave up painting - above all abstract, retinal, modernist painting - for chess; she argues that '[t]he gray matter is what is most forcibly at the game of chess, a purely conceptual interaction, shorn of visual "incident",<sup>7</sup> and;
- the carnal Duchamp that courts '(...) the condition of obscenity, on its obvious connecting of the mental to the carnal'<sup>8</sup> as in his painting *Étant donnés* (1946), which combines the system of vision used in renaissance central perspective with the mechanisms of desire of the peeping male voyeur. It is important to highlight the critical analysis of central perspective, understood as a visual system centred on the observer (a white Western man), being taken as the paradigm of representation of the 'real' in the various disciplines of visual arts, held in the 1980s by feminist theorists like Gill Saunders and Lynda Nead and more recently by author Rebecca Schneider and artist Annie Sprinkle<sup>9</sup>.

As important as Duchamp's contribution to the disruption of the modernist myth may be - through such works as his own 1910 painting *La Partie D'échecs*, and Julian Wesse's 1963 photograph, *Marcel Duchamp and Eve Babitz playing chess at Pasadena Art Museum* -, he didn't venture to escape the patriarchal tradition defining sexuality as a dualist system of gendered opposites: male artist versus female model, analytical subject versus passive object, culture versus nature, among many others.

Silva's *Xeque-mate* video piece clearly distinguishes itself from modernist representations of chess games (by Duchamp, Cézanne and others). In *Xeque-mate* the artist portrays a chess scene in which the viewer is confronted with an unusual situation: instead of two players facing each other across a table, two women dressed in black, each bound to the other by one of her arms - Silva's left arm strapped to Duarte's right

arm - sit alternately on either side of a table, leaving unoccupied chairs on the opposite side from where they are both sitting. Thus, this piece invites the viewers to occupy the available chairs on one side of the table - each time a different one -, in order to take part in the video piece and inhabit its time and space. The dialectical antagonism and competition of this traditional strategic game based on the binomial white opponent - black opponent is disrupted by two players in peaceful mutual assistance and cooperation, synergistically acting as one, reflecting third wave feminists' rejection of dualistic western concepts - integrated in a model generally ascribing positive values to men and negative values to women - which constitute the basis of a regulative collective discourse and promote social injustice based on gender, class, etc. Eventually a king is checkmated and the women say in unison "Checkmate!" while exchanging a knowing look.



Susana Mendes Silva. *Xeque-mate*, 2003. Video loop, 2:08, colour, sound.

### Teresa Furtado: performing the ideal woman

My 2008 installation *Doll's House*, is a project I did for the exhibition 'Where Are you from? Contemporary Portuguese Art' at the Faulconer Gallery in Iowa, U.S.A. This project deals with the cultural construction of femininity and the concept of ideal woman conveyed by fairy tales, as is the case of 'The Sleeping Beauty'<sup>10</sup>. Fairy tales are a favoured means of consolidating the universe of myths, ideologies, and patriarchal norms in regard to matters of sexual difference. As a child, I was deeply influenced, like so many children through the generations, by the power of fantasy, magic and metamorphosis in fairy tales, but also by the gender role models transmitted by them. At present, fairy tales have been adapted, rewritten and sanitized – trough the extirpation of swearing and all explicit sexual content, for example – in various cultural arenas, including film, literature, opera, theatre, advertising and even in the world of toys. The project *Doll's House* consists of two interconnected parts: – a wooden doll's house, just big enough for people to sit inside, understood as one among many cultural places where 'femininity' is conceptualized and constructed. The viewer is invited to enter – physically as well as psychologically – into a space that evokes the period of her or his life when gender roles are more intense and effectively ingrained, and; – the video *The Loveliest Woman in the World* (Portugal, 2008), which is a parody retelling of the fairy tale 'The Sleeping Beauty', namely the passage in which the fairies bestow their gifts upon the baby princess. The gifts awarded promise to transform Beauty '(...) into an "ideal" woman – virtuous, beautiful, and wealthy. (...) the girl is given beauty, an angelic disposition, grace, the ability to dance perfectly, the voice of a nightingale, and the ability to play instruments'.<sup>11</sup> The characters in the video are dolls manipulated by me in a parodic and performative way in order to deconstruct traditional narratives. This video piece renders visible the ideas and ideologies about women that have been integrated and naturalized into the psychological and social fabric of human culture with the help of fairy tales, which are particularly apparent in the very sentences the fairies utter when offering gifts to the little princess. These video narratives deconstruct the roles culturally assigned to women in a 'mimetic-productive' irigarayan<sup>12</sup> way. Women's roles are established by a set of well-defined standards widely disseminated in society such as those of subservience and beauty, conveyed, among others, by toys and fairy tales. According to Irigaray, women can playfully use mimesis through the repetition and

appropriation of a discourse that reifies them. Thus, through mimesis, women stand in the position of architects and broadcasters, as creators, organisers and conveyors of ideas, knowledge and experience, entirely aware of social discourses, and thereby prevent their own reduction to a mere object of the discourse and subsequently hinder their own exploitation. The questioning of popular culture is one of feminism's concerns since the 1970's and this video may be said to relate to a lineage of artists that have been deconstructing fairy-tales and gender stereotypes such as Eleanor Antin, Cecilia Condit and Ellen Cantor.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that, although increasing technological user-friendliness and ease of access, and internet platforms such as You Tube have rendered video into a mass and omnipresent phenomenon, influencing our lives, culture and way of being, even if often conveying content that is conservative and not fitting with the apparent novelty of the medium, today's video art still retains the transformative and revolutionary potential that it had in the 1960s and 1970s in the hands of women artists, as shown in the work of Nordic artists present here and in various experiments of Portuguese women video artists.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Lesson on video art given by Miguel Wandschneider at University of Evora, in April 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> KRAUSS, Rosalind – 'A Voyage on the North Sea'. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition. London: Thames and Hudson, 2009, pp. 31–32..
- <sup>3</sup> ELWES, Catherine – 'Video Art, a Guided Tour', London [etc.]: I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 58.
- <sup>4</sup> GUARDA, Dinis; FIGUEIREDO, Nuno, eds. – Videoarte e Filme de Arte e Ensaio em Portugal / Video Art and Art & Essay Film in Portugal. Lisboa: Número – Arte e Cultura, 2008.
- <sup>5</sup> '[n]ão são auto-retratos porque não encontro nelas a minha própria 'subjectividade' mas antes a minha 'pluralidade', que faço aparecer numa espécie de cenário de um palco'. Almeida apud Phelan. Helena Almeida, p. 205, cat., CGAC – Santiago de Compostela, em PHELAN, Peggy – 'Helena Almeida: O Interior de Nós'. In 'Intus. Helena Almeida.' Centro de Arte Moderna José de Azeredo Perdigão, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Coord. by Isabel Carlos. Portugal: Livraria Civilização Editora, 2006, p. 69. [Catalogue].
- <sup>6</sup> '(...) este trabalho surgiu de uma análise política e social das revoluções, dos seus ideais, e também dos seus fracassos. O processo revolucionário acaba também ele por morrer, o que não significa que tenha falhado por completo.' Cláudia Ulisses interviewed by Catarina Campino. In under surveillance | sob vigilância. Oeiras: Câmara Municipal de Oeiras / Clube Português de Artes e Ideias, 2002, p. 52. [Catalogue].
- <sup>7</sup> KRAUSS, Rosalind E. – 'The Optical Unconscious', U.S.A.: The MIT Press, 1994, p. 108.
- <sup>8</sup> IDEM – *Ibidem*.

- <sup>9</sup> Vide NEAD, Lynda – 'The Female Nude. Art, Obscenity and Sexuality'. London [etc.]: Routledge, 2009; SAUNDERS, Gill – 'The Nude: a New Perspective'. New York: Icon Editions, 1989; SCHNEIDER, Rebecca – 'The Explicit Body in Performance'. New York: Routledge, 2008. SPRINKLE, Annie – 'Post Porn Modernist', performance, U.S.A., 1990.
- <sup>10</sup> The tale 'Sleeping Beauty' appears in a catalan version 'Frayre de Joy e Sor de Placer' of the 14th century, as 'Troylus et Zellandine' in the French 'Perceforest' of the 16th century, as 'Sole, Luna e Talia' in 'The Pentameron' by Giambattista Basile of the 17th century, as 'La Belle au bois dormant' in 'Histoires ou contes du temps passé' by Charles Perrault, as 'Dornsröschen' in 'Kinder und Hausmärchen' by Jacob e Wilhelm Grimm. GOLDBERG, Harriet – 'Sleeping Beauty'. In – 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: The Western fairy tale tradition from medieval to modern'. United States of America: Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 467.
- <sup>11</sup> TATAR, Maria, ed. – 'The Classic Fairy Tales'. New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1999n. 4, p. 97.
- <sup>12</sup> There are two types of irigarayan mimesis: the 'non-productive' mimesis embraced by women when mimetizing femininity in their social every day (a femininity that doesn't belong to them but rather is an outcome of the patriarchal system) and; 'productive mimesis' though produced inside a male order offers resistance strategies when rendering visible, through playful repetition, what should remain invisible, namely the artificial character of the 'feminine' as an outcome of the patriarchal social discourse. ROBINSON, Hilary – 'Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women', p.18. IRIGARAY, Luce – 'This Sex Which is not One', Ithaca [etc.]: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 76.

#### TERESA FURTADO



Teresa Furtado. *Doll's House*, 2008. Installation, (W) x 200 (H) x 140 (D) cm, 'Where Are you from? Contemporary Portuguese Art', Iowa, U.S.A.



Teresa Furtado. *The Loveliest Woman in the World*, 2008. Video, 30:00, colour, sound

# JANE JIN KAISEN

Edifício dos Leões at University of Évora: Nov. 26 – 28, 2008

# LINE KARLSTRÖM

Alexandra Croca | University of Évora | Portugal

Ana Fernandes | University of Évora | Portugal

André Pinto | University of Évora | Portugal

Ângela Trindade | University of Évora | Portugal

Anna Bak | The Funen Art Academy Odense | Denmark

Billie Johansen | The Funen Art Academy, Odense | Denmark

Carlos Centeno | University of Évora | Portugal

Carlota Almeida | University of Évora | Portugal

Cátia Casquinha | University of Évora | Portugal

Cláudia Santos | University of Évora Portugal

Cristiana Pena | Escola Superior de Artes e Design | Caldas da Rainha

Daniel Mira | University of Évora | Portugal

Daniela Peixe | University of Évora | Portugal

Gabriela Leitão | University of Évora | Portugal

Gabriella Jonsson | University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm | Sweden

Hans Skovholt | National Academy of the Arts, Oslo | Norway

Hugo Afonso | University of Évora | Portugal

Ida Hansson | Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå | Sweden

Ingela Ihrman | University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm | Sweden

Johanna Adebäck | University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm | Sweden

Line Dalmar | University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm | Sweden

# WORKSHOPS

Lisa Teles | Escola Superior de Artes e Design | Caldas da Rainha

Mafalda Hortas | University of Évora | Portugal

Maja Thomsen | Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen | Denmark

Maria Marques | University of Évora | Portugal

Marko Wiik | Satakunta University of Applied Sciences | Finland

Marta Alberto | University of Évora | Portugal

Marta Lebre | University of Évora | Portugal

Natasja Loutchko | University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm | Sweden

Paula Soares | University of Évora | Portugal

Rasmus West | Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå | Sweden

Ricardo Reis | University of Évora | Portugal

Sandra Cardoso | University of Évora | Portugal

Sara Christensen | National Academy of the Arts, Oslo | Norway

Sara Dantas | University of Évora | Portugal

Selini Halvadaki | Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen | Denmark

Sigmund Skard | National Academy of the Arts, Oslo | Norway

Signe Aarestrup | The Funen Art Academy, | Odense | Denmark

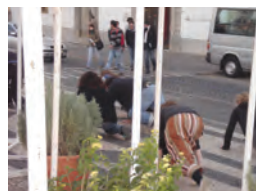
Sofie Holten | Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen | Denmark

Tori Wrånes | National Academy of the Arts, Oslo | Norway

Vitor Estudante | University of Évora | Portugal



Performing in Edifício dos Leões campus



Performance at Giraldo Square in Évora

## Intervention/Confrontation/Transformation: A practical and theoretical workshop on performative video art.

### DAY 1:

#### Morning: Introduction to performance and video art.

I will give a brief theoretical and historical background of video and performance art and the merging of the two mediums through a PowerPoint presentation and by showing video examples of different artists' approaches. I will put an emphasis on feminist performative video art and make references to the artists presented at Act Out! I will also briefly introduce my own video and performance practice and talk about intervention, confrontation, and transformation as common themes or modes of address that many performative video artists' work touch upon.

#### Afternoon: Assign the workshop project:

##### Introduction to the theme

##### Intervention/Confrontation/Transformation.

We will brainstorm on what transformation, confrontation and intervention may be expressed by talking about the previous examples from introduction of performative video art and look at how many artists have used their body as a tool to intervene, confront, and transform society, ideas and physical spaces. By taking the following circumstances into consideration, we will discuss how the body can be used as a signifier and a as symbol and how the body is read into the context of time and space.

##### Concept

They may use the theme Intervention / confrontation / transformation as inspiration, but these keywords are only meant as a guideline. They could think of the body as something that is being transformed or is transforming its surroundings and how the body may be used to intervene with - or confront sites, conceptions, and norms.

##### Site

I will suggest different possibilities for sites and the different potentials in constructing a space or using a site-specific space. The students will be told that they can work in the Old Pasta Factory and construct simple scenes and stages or they may want to choose a public location or something else as the site of their video project.

## Performance as a happening or performance as a staged event:

Talk about the difference between a live performance and the use of performance in video and how editing and adding music, text, and voiceover are some of the tools that makes performative video art different from a live performance, which they may want to consider when developing their project.

### Character(s) and objects:

We will talk about the signification of the body as a tool, symbol, and object and they should think about what they intend to express by using a performative element in their video project. We will discuss how objects can be used and they should think about and plan whether they want to use costumes, props, or other kinds of objects when filming.

### Dividing into groups and brainstorming ideas:

The students will be told that they should divide into groups of 2 or 3 people (4-7 different groups) and that they should work with the group for the rest of the workshop.

In smaller groups, the students will brainstorm ideas for a short performative video (1-3 minutes is fine). They should decide on a concept and plan where they want to film. They should decide what they want to say by the finished piece and arrange with each other how, where, and when to film the video.

I will be assisting them conceptually and practically during the brainstorm.

We will distribute video cameras and I instruct how to use the video cameras for those who are not familiar with filming.

### DAY 2 DEVELOPING IDEAS AND FILMING.

#### Morning:

We will meet in the morning and I will make sure all the groups are doing ok.

Each group can briefly inform the other groups where they will be, and in case there is shortage of video cameras or editing facilities, we will make a schedule.

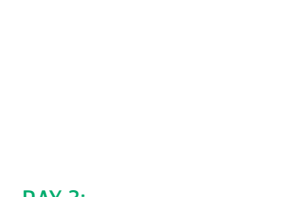
They can use the whole day 2. To develop their projects by performing and filming.

Hopefully by the end of the day, there will be enough time to log in the video material on computers.

I will be assisting the whole day in the classroom and at the Old Pasta Factory and there will also be different texts and videos that they can look at for inspiration.



Jane Jin Kaisen's workshop performance on Leões campus



### DAY 3:

#### EDITING AND SHOWING PERFORMATIVE VIDEO PIECES

Morning: Editing, finalize projects (editing material, maybe adding text, still images, music, etc.)

#### Afternoon:

We will all gather together and make a screening of all the videos.

Some groups may find that there is not enough time to make a finished video, so it is ok if they can make a video draft, film a rehearsal, or make a script for how they imagine their performative video to be. They can instead present their ideas or their video drafts. After screening, talk about the process, the outcome, the collaborations.

JANE JIN KAISEN



Better not question. Instead, the airport is a place for making arbitrary claims. It is a place for a combined assertion of privileges and modesty. In the airport I am Danish and I spell it out against my face. I claim my assimilation and privilege with rehearsed conviction in order to rush through as fast as I can to catch my proceeding flights.

*"I am adopted" (= I am culturally as white as anyone gets.)*  
*"No. I am not here for business. I am not an artist. I am just a student. Just a tourist. Just a visitor. I am just traveling. You know, vacation, Thanksgiving Holiday".*

Too jetlagged to sleep, I spend the night going over my presentation in my mind. Airplanes. Wings. Transmigration. Silent migration. Forced migration. Voluntary migration.

I am on my way to a conference on performative video art by Scandinavian women artists and to do a workshop for art students from Scandinavia and Portugal on aforementioned topic. Through my temporary non-presence I try to earn enough money to pay next quarter's non-resident tuition fees. I never sold an artwork since I stopped painting. Instead I sell artistic services that require my presence. The artist fee for the presentation, some money for teaching the workshop and then this piece of writing for a blog about performance and writing initiated in Finland and called *Edge of Europe*. Does the title of the blog indicate that Finish people feel peripheral...to Europe? I wonder how that question will resonate in the minds of my Portuguese, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish students to-be?

Is Portugal the edge Europe? Is Denmark? Should we not just dismiss any discussion of center - periphery - any national or geographical branding? Or should we rather take a stand against claims that any place is as good as another, alike to any other? A masquerade is being performed - the falling in and out of - the claiming and disclaiming of one nation, culture, location in relation to itself, to another.

Paris - Rome  
Air France. Flight no. AF 1604.  
Departure Gate: F30  
Departure time 11.45 Central European Time, November 23rd 2008.

Framing, re-framing or re-claiming feminism, the diverse background of the students and possible disjunctions of language, culture and experience...

place.  
Feeling a wave of  
fasten my seat belt  
the movies and my

place.  
Feeling a wave of  
fasten my seat be  
the movies and my

the students from Évora Art Department and the Scandinavian students who flew all the way here to take part. My suitcase arrives on the third day. When I get it back, it's content no longer seems relevant. We start the workshop discussing collaboration, feminism,

“home” as something alien, something objectified, apt for research. It feels however like a necessary step to physically traverse the city and to feel our collective discomfort and our subjective interpretations in order to try to grasp this place that we temporarily inhabit together.

I travel to Paris with another artist. Here we depart. She boards a plane to Copenhagen. I head towards Terminal E and have a cigarette in the Smoking Room before boarding the plane back to Los Angeles.

JANE JIN KAISEN

JANE JIN KAISEN

## The Naked Truth: On Gendered Bodies in Performance Art

The overall theme for the workshop is performance artists' strategically use of the body in order to disturb norms pertaining to gender and to stress visibility of queer bodies. The workshop is open to all, and do not presuppose being or thinking queer to be in the workshop. The time distribution of the workshop is equally divided between theory and practice.

### DAY ONE

#### Morning: The usage of the body in performance art

In the introduction I will try to outline how the concept of the body has been practised historically by feminist performance artists. I will present photo documentations (power point) that will give the group a brief historical background to important works, strategies, goals and approaches.

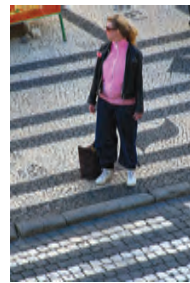
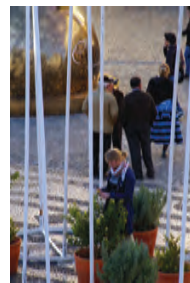
I will continue the presentation with an overview of contemporary performance art, concentrating on artists who's approach is queer and who's interest lays in identity politics. In this session I will also include works of my own as well as work by High Heel Sisters.

The intention with the overview is to introduce the group to basic positions within the field of critical performance art, to initiate a discussion on the nature of the body as producer of cultural and identity values, and to talk about how to navigate that agency. I will reflect on the meaning of nudity, and argue that nudity within performance art is still crucial. I will discuss the concept of the "normal" body, and show examples of works by lesbian/gay artists whose performances question and disrupt that concept. Lastly I will talk about, and give examples of the special conditions of working with the body in public space.

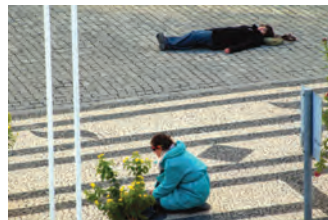
#### Afternoon: Working on it, brainstorming and production

We will brainstorm ideas of a performance that the whole group can do together that relates to the theme of the workshop and which takes as its starting point the input that I have provided them.

I will prepare some ideas and proposals. The group decides on whether the performance takes place indoors, or in public space. I will talk about documentation, and decisions one has to make concerning how to document a piece. I will also touch upon the concept of collaboration, and making works in a collective. When a concept for a performance is agreed upon, the students divide into smaller groups, each with a specific



Line Karlstrom's workshop performance at Giraldo Square in Évora



responsibility and task relating to the production. There should be a film group, a props and costume group (which might be a light task hahahaha), and a group that develops the idea to become more specific. The smaller groups will work developing their areas during the rest of the afternoon. I will assist them with conceptual input and technical advises. The afternoon program ends with the smaller groups reporting on their work to the rest of the group, and giving each other feedback.

### DAY TWO

#### Morning: Reading group

Collectively we will read a few (2-3) shorter theoretical texts. Texts will be handed out to the students prior to the workshop, though it will not be required that they have read it before we meet. We will read out loud, and have time for questions and discussions.

Emphasis will be on the notions, problems and concept introduced in the presentation day 1:

- why and if nudity still is a relevant strategy to use in performance practice
- the concept of the body as producer of cultural and identity values
- disrupting normativity and the concept of the heterosexualized body

I will also introduce the group to a photographic book (Marianne Wex: Let's Take Back Our Space: "Female" and "Male" Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures)

#### Afternoon: Performance

The group will make a performance, indoors or out in the streets. If it is possible timewise, the video group will start editing right after, and I will assist them.

### DAY 3

#### Morning: Postproduction and The usage of the body in performance art continued

The group gather and report on their work, possibility to get feedback and advises. There is an open structure for the morning session, depending on the status of the performance documentation, or if perhaps new ideas to works has come up. The video group continues editing. I will show the group a film (Yvonne Rainer: Lives of Performers), afterwards discussion.

#### Afternoon: Sum up, evaluation

Watching documentation of the performance.

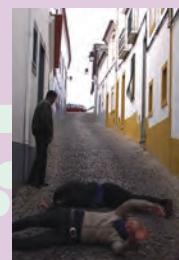
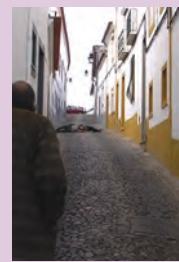
Discussion and evaluation of the working process.



### Statement

The overall theme for the workshop was performance artist's use of the body in order to disturb norms pertaining to gender and to stress visibility of queer bodies. Students were presented to the theme on a theoretical (lecture, text seminar, group discussions) as well as on a practical level. The group was first given an introduction to how the concept of body has been practiced historically by feminist performance artists, and to various positions contemporary body artists operate from, including my own and High Heel Sisters work. Following the presentation the group divided into smaller groups for brainstorming. Much time was spent discussing and preparing ideas for performances the group could do. In this process I was amazed by the students will to collaborate, by the group insisting of making a work together all the 20 of them, and of the groups' drive to self-organization. On the groups' request and instructed by them we spent one half day making beautiful improvisations in the old spaghetti factory. One afternoon was spent in the city, where the group decided to make homage to High Heel Sisters— a Stand Piece on the main square. Everybody participated, and for many of the Evora students I believe it was their first physical experience of performing in public space. The workshop was finished off with an afternoon presentation in the spaghetti factory. Students from my group and from Jane Jin Kaisens group showed and talked about works, and some even made live performances. It was a very nice and special afternoon, and I believe very valuable for the students to watch each other's works. Taken that the starting points for the students were very different in relation to previous experience in the field of gender and performance I was especially proud and amazed by the braveness of those who, in the context of the workshop, encountered and opened up for new thoughts.

### LINE SKYWALKER KARLSTRÖM



Performing in a downtown street of Évora

ANE LAM

AURORA REINHARD

HIGH HEEL SISTERS

ICELANDIC LOVE CORPORATION

JANE JIN KAISEN

JOANNA RYTEL

KLARA LIDEN

LILIBETH CUENCA

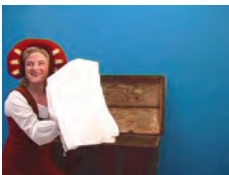
LOTTE KONOW LUND

PIRJETTA BRANDER

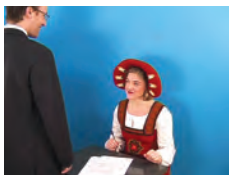
EXHIBITION

Torre do Salvador, Direcção Geral da Cultura do Alentejo, Évora: Nov. 24 - 30, 2008

EUROPE



*Europé*, 2004.  
Video, 4:00, colour, sound



ANE LAN (selected biography)  
**WWW.ANELAN.COM**

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)

2007 F15 Gallery, Moss, Norway, "Woman of the World"

2007 Galleria Rosa Santos, Valencia, Spain, "Vesta"

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)

2007 10th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey, "Nightcomers project"

2007 Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin, Germany,

"Sexarbeit"

2007 Museum Arte Contemporaneo Rosario, Rosario, Argentina,

"selfportrait"

#### FILM FESTIVALS (SINCE 2007)

2007 Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, "Rencontres Internationales

Paris/Berlin/Madrid"

#### SCREENINGS (SINCE 2007)

2007 Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK, "Surrealism in Art and Design"

AURORA REINHARD (selected biography)  
**WWW.AURORAREINHARD.COM**

#### FILMOGRAPHY (SINCE 2007)

2008 Inhale Exhale, 0:29 sek.

#### SELECTED SOLO SHOWS (SINCE 2007)

2008 Teaser, Galerie Anhava, Helsinki

2006 Teaser, Extrapazio, Rome

#### SELECTED GROUP SHOWS (SINCE 2007)

2008 Just Different, Cobra Museum, Amstelveen, The Netherlands

13..-22.9.08

2008 Fennofolk, Design Museum Helsinki, June-August

2008 La position de la terre, 17.2-4.5.08 CRAC Alsace, Rhineland Contemporary Art Center

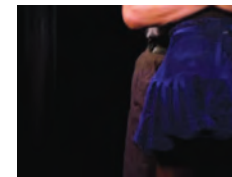
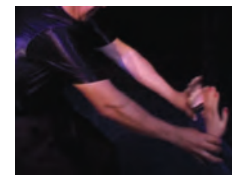
2007 In Search of the Miraculous, Kunsthalle, Helsinki

2007 Love Addiction, Gallery of Contemporary Art Monfalcone, Italy

2007 Lost & Found, Shedhalle, Zurich, Switzerland

2007-2008 CasZuidas, Public Art Project, Amsterdam

2007 Images Festival, Toronto, Canada (screening)



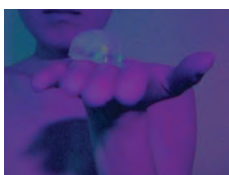
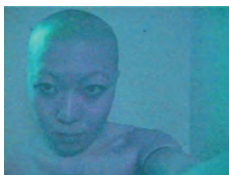
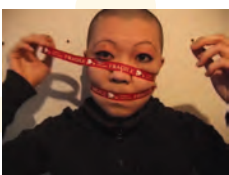
Aurora Reinhard.  
*Julio & Lupita*, 2004.  
Video, 4:35, colour, sound

EUROPE

EUROPE

EUROPE

*Dissimilate and Transgress*,  
2005. Video, 3:50, colour,  
sound



JANE JIN KAISEN (selected biography)  
**WWW.JANEJINKAISEN.ORG**

Jane Jin is co-founder of *Grassroots Cinema Center for Women of Asia*, co-founder of the collective *Chamber of Public Secrets*, broadcasting independent news on tv.-tv, a non-profit TV station in Denmark and organizers of "Made In Video" International Festival of Video Journalism in Copenhagen. She was co-curator of "International Adoptee Gathering Exhibition" in Seoul 2004 & 2007, co-founder of the artist group *UFOlab (Unidentified Foreign Object LABORatory)*, part of the exhibition collective "Orientity Exhibition" and co-curator of *Prelude, or Better!: In Time!*

Jane Jin has performed at festivals in Denmark, The Faeroe Islands, South Korea, Indonesia (National Gallery 2005-6), China (798 Factory, Beijing), Hong Kong and Chile (2<sup>nd</sup> *Deformes Biennale*) and is initiator of the ongoing performance project "24 hours" which has taken place in a number of countries.

#### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)

*Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program Exhibition*, New York, *Unnamable Name*, Ithaca, New York,

JOANNA RYTEL (selected biography)  
**WWW.JOANNARYTEL.COM**

#### EXHIBITIONS, FILMFESTIVALS AND PERFORMANCES (SINCE 2007)

2008

Färgfabriken, 6808-Stockholm

Videoex festival - Zurich

Stena Salen - Göteborgs Konstmuseum

Liljevalchs - Vårsalongen

The Kosova Art Gallery - Kosovo

Pasarokalo Filmfestival - Athen

The renaissance society, Black is, Black Ain'I - Chicago

Festival 404 -Trieste, Italy,

2007

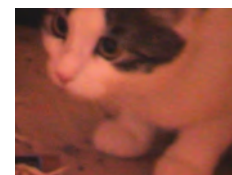
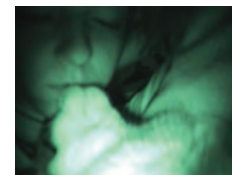
Zurich Filmfestival

ARC/Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris. - Playback

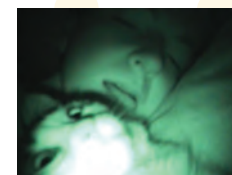
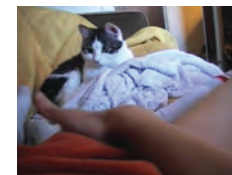
11th Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival

12th Split Film Festival

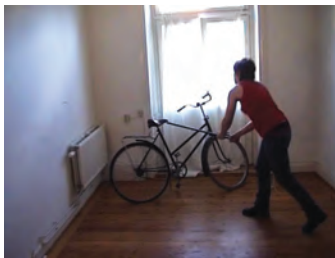
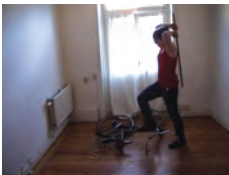
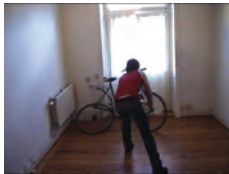
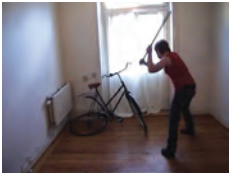
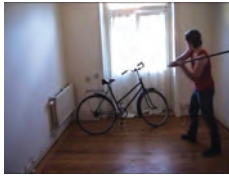
Göteborgs Konstbiennale



Joanna Rytel.  
*Then I'll Take Your Cat*, 2002.  
Video, 5:00, colour, sound



EUROPE



Klara Liden.  
*Bodies of Society*, 2006.  
Video, 5:00, colour, sound.

KLARA LIDEN (selected biography)  
[WWW.REENASPAULINGS.COM](http://WWW.REENASPAULINGS.COM)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)  
2008

Elda för kråkorna, Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York  
2007

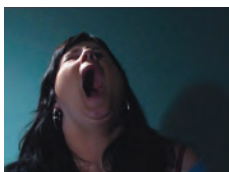
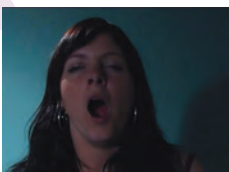
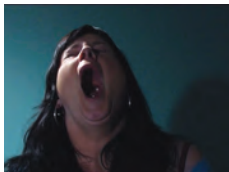
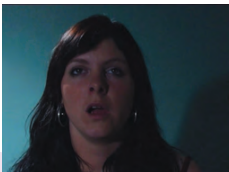
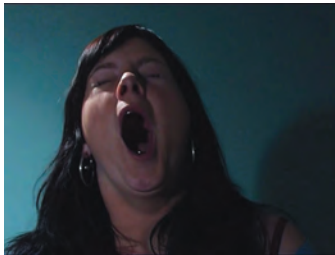
Klara Liden, The Hayward Gallery, London  
Unheimlich Maneuver, 05.01-06.24, Moderna Museet, Stockholm,  
Sweden

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)  
2008

MD 72, Berlin  
UM-KERHUNGEN / INTERAKTION I, Kunstverein, Braunschweig  
Beneath the Underdog, Gagosian Gallery Madison Ave, New York  
Uncertain States of America, Center for Contemporary Art,  
Warschau  
2. Moscow Biennale. 2007, Moscow  
Nothing Else Matters, De Hallen, Harlem  
Massive Analogue Academy, Galerie Christian Nagel, Cologne



Lotte Konow Lund.  
*At the Peak of Boredom*, 2005.  
Video, 2:00, colour, sound.



LOTTE KONOW LUND (selected biography)  
[WWW.LOTTEKONOWLUND.COM](http://WWW.LOTTEKONOWLUND.COM)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)  
2008 Gallery Bouhlou, Bergen

2007 What has been shown cannot be said, Stenersen Museum,  
Oslo, Norway\*

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (since 2007)  
2008

I dialog med Balke Galleri Bouhlou, Bergen  
Without end no state of drawingness, Galleri Gann Sandnes  
Drawing, Galleri Gann, Stavanger, Norway  
Shifting Schisms, Galleri Rekord  
2007  
MEGA shop in St Petersburg, Russia.  
Culture Factory Korjaamo, screening  
Cinema K-Suns, Riga, Lettland screening  
Destroy Athens 1st Athens Biennale, Athens\*

LILIBETH CUENCA (selected biography)  
[WWW.LILIBETHCUENCA.COM](http://WWW.LILIBETHCUENCA.COM)

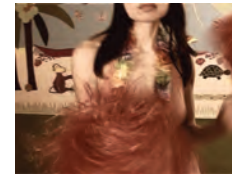
SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)

2008: Mis United, Lilith Performance Studio, Malmö.  
A Void 3 & Mis United, Renwick Gallery, New York, USA.

2007 A Void 1, Kirkhoff Contemporary, CPH. DK.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)  
2008

In Transit, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.  
KropAmok, Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense, DK.  
U-Turn, Kvadrianale, CPH. DK.  
Soclé du Monde, Herning Kunstmuseum, DK.  
HotDocs, Documentary Film Festival, Toronto, Canada.  
Museo Nacional Centro de arte reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain.  
2007  
Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum, New York & Davis Museum and  
Cultural Center at Wellesley College in Wellesley,  
Massachusetts, U.S.A.



Lilibeth Cuenca.  
*Absolute Exotic*, 2005.  
Video, 4:00, colour, sound.

PIRJETTA BRANDER (selected biography)  
[WWW.PIRJETTABRANDER.COM](http://WWW.PIRJETTABRANDER.COM)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)

2008 Village, Musée Mac/Val, Paris, France

2007 Single Room, Muu Studio, Helsinki

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (since 2007)

2008

Pixar – 20 years of animation, Art Museum

Tennispalatsi, Helsinki

Fennofolk, New nordic oddity, Design Museum, Helsinki

New Animation, Haydon Art Centre, Nebraska, USA

MoA, Taik, Helsinki

Changing Lines – 150 years of drawing, Lillehammer Kunstmuseum,

Norway

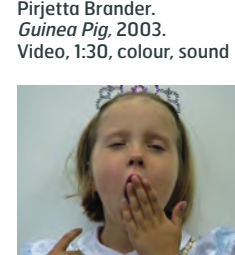
2007

Chinese Whispers, Mäntinranta Art Centre, Tampere AV-arkki

Hallelujah!, Cable Gallery, Helsinki

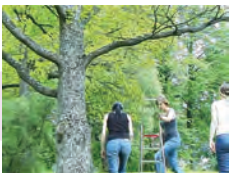
Kvartetti, Culture Centre Stoa, Malmintalo, Kanneltalo,

Vuotalo, Helsinki Love Is Hole, Galerie Good Friday, Brussels, Belgium

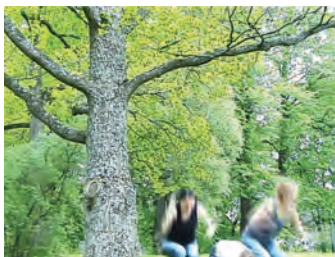


Pirjettabrander.  
*Guinea Pig*, 2003.  
Video, 1:30, colour, sound





High Heel Sisters.  
*Shoe Piece, Swim Piece,  
Tree Piece*, 2002.  
Video, 6:00, colour, sound



HIGH HEEL SISTERS – HHS (selected biography)  
**WWW.HIGHHEELSISTERS.COM**  
**WWW.ROLLOVERALLOVER.BLOGSPOT.COM**

Between 2002 and 2007 Malin Arnell, Line Skywalker Karlström, Anna Linder and Karianne Stensland collaborated as the feminist performance and artists’ group High Heel Sisters. High Heel Sisters’ work took as its starting point the mutual and diverse experiences of being taller than 178 cm, wearing shoes bigger than size 41 and being older than 30 years. Through their work High Heel Sisters investigated and renegotiated their own, as well as, societies expectations and norms. Filtered through feminist analysis, issues of esthetics and privilege in public space pertaining to gender, sexuality and class were being discussed and reworked. With a large dose of humour and a burning feminist zeal High Heel Sisters examined and took on many of society’s (and their own) expectations and accepted norms primarily pertaining to gender, sexuality and class. Their activity focused on negotiating different forms of privilege in public space(s) while simulataneously disturbing and playing with the notions of aesthetics and frames of contemporary art.

The starting point for High Heel Sisters collaboration was Malin Arnell’s, Line Skywalker Karlström’s and Karianne Stensland’s shared yet varying experiences of the physical attributes of height (miniumum 178 cm), shoe size (minimum size 41) and age (minimum 30yrs).

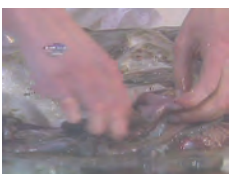
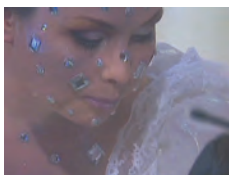
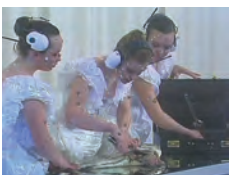
Since starting their collaboration in 2002 High Heel Sisters, consisting of Anna Linder, Karianne Stensland, Malin Arnell and Line S. Karlström, has participated with performances, installations and video works in international group shows, screenings and festivals, among others *6808*, Färgfabriken, Stockholm (2008), *Gaze. Space. Desire*, Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, Copenhagen (2007) and *We Love YOUko (Hommageparty for Yoko Ono)*, Kulturhuset, Stockholm (2004). Solo shows of theirs has been *Art Holes. High Heel Sisters*, Trace: installaction artspace, Cardiff, Wales, UK (2005), *Art Holes. High Heel Sisters*, Gallery Lars Bohman Projectroom, Stockholm (2002) and *Three pieces by High Heel Sisters at Blunk*, Blunk, Trondheim, Norway (2002). Solo performance works of theirs counts *Never Too Much*, Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), London, UK (2003), *Never Too Much*, Kulturhuset, Stockholm (2004), *High Art Fraktion*e, Performance Art in NRW, Maschinenhaus Essen – Produktionsort der Künste, Germany (2004) and *The Last Straw*, The Human Factor, ARS06, Kiasma, Helsinki, curated by Roi Vaara (2006).

High Heel Sisters ended their collaboration in 2007. Anna Linder lives and works in Stockholm. Karianne Stensland lives and works in Trondheim. Malin Arnell lives and works in Stockholm and Berlin. Line S Karlström lives and works in Malmö, Copenhagen and Berlin.

THE ICELANDIC LOVE CORPORATION (selected biography)  
**WWW.ILC.IS**

The Icelandic Love Corporation is a group of three artists: Sigrún Hrólfsdóttir (1973), Jóni Jónsdóttir (1972) and Eirún Sigurdardóttir (1971). (Dora Isleifsdottir (1970) joined the ILC in 1996 and left in 2001.)They graduated from the Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts in 1996. Since then they have lived and studied in New York, Berlin and Copenhagen and are currently based in Reykjavik.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)  
2009 “Black Swans” – Kling&Bang, Reykjavik  
“ILC” – Platform Gallery, Winnipeg, Canada“Hospitality III” – CAST Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania“Hospitality II” – The Darling Foundry, Montreal, Canada  
2008 “Hospitality” – Safnasafnid, Svalbardsströnd, Iceland  
“The Tent Lady’s Hospitality” – ArdBia, Berlin  
2007 “ILC”– Hafnarhusid, Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland  
GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SINCE 2007)  
2009“Thank You” – Lífróður, Hafnarborg, Listasafn Hafnarfjarðar, Iceland  
“Woman” – Off the Beaten Path, Stenersen Museum, Oslo  
“Indeed, of course!” – Brennið þið vitar! Gardskagaviti Lighthouse, Iceland Arts Festival  
“Zeitgeist” – Fashion Biennale, Arnheim  
“Dreams of the Sublime in contemporary Icelandic Art” – Kuntsi Museum of Modern Art, Vaasa, Finland  
2008 “From Another Shore: Recent Icelandic Art” – Scandinavia House, New York  
“Dynasty” – Australian Cinematheque, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia  
Dreams of Sublime and Nowhere” – Reykjavik Art Museum, Kjarvalsstadir, Reykjavik  
“Photofestival” Toronto  
“As the Sun Rises” – The Drake Hotel, Toronto  
“Dreams of Sublime and Nowhere” – BOZAR, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels  
“Envisioning Change” – Ministry of Culture, Salle d’Expositon, Quai Antoine, Monaco  
2007 “Dynasty” – Envisioning Change, NWM, BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels  
“The Tent Lady” – The Tent Show, Nikolaj Kunsthallen, Copenhagen  
“Dynasty” – World Environment Day, The Natural World Museum, Nobel Peace Center, Oslo “Mother Earth” – The Natural World



The Icelandic Love Corporation.  
*Thank You*, 2002.  
Video, 3:00, colour, sound



