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Into *Deep Water*: Interview with Lyndal Jones

Lyndal Jones interview by Katy Deepwell, June 2001

Deep Water/Aqua Profunda was the title of Lyndal Jones' exhibit at the Australian Pavilion in Venice, 2001.

Lyndal Jones: This exhibition came together from two different sources. One is my knowledge of the Australian pavilion itself which built like a little boat. It really has an ephemeral sense, a little boat amongst all these big tankers - frantically hoping, it's a yacht that I am! And the second, where I had shot some footage off the back of a vaporetto at the last biennale in 1999. I was looking through my video material and found this footage, when I was working on the Ikon Gallery (Birmingham) show, *Demonstrations and Details from the Facts of Life* and then the invitation came through for this. This footage was unexpectedly beautiful and this became an important source for this piece. The third source, which came later, was the sign at the end of swimming pool in Fitzroy in Melbourne which said, 'Danger, Deep Water/ Aqua Profunda'. It was in Italian because a lot of Italians live in that area. This suddenly became a wonderful source. The work is not about all water around the world being the same. This is a national pavilion and it's not about



questions of adjustment or assimilation to the same, it's about the possibility of different people speaking different languages all living together and you not having to understand everything, every word. This is against government policy of course which is that people must learn to speak the official language in a culture. So those things were very important to me. Like at a swimming pool, where people will be talking to each other in different languages and it's an enrichment.

Katy Deepwell: Were you setting up equivalents, parallel spaces rather than reducing everything to the same?

Lyndal Jones: In the end, they are equivalents, and there's difference but it doesn't matter. Some of the audience from Venice told me that they couldn't tell in some parts whether it was Sydney or Venice which was filmed. That was fantastic for me as this was what I was intending to do with all the details and then moving completely into abstraction. What they then said was, 'do you understand what it's like when people come to Venice and make films about us, full of melodrama, and they put us in a museum. You're saying in a sense that this could be Sydney and you're saying that we are part of the world, of the contemporary world.' It was very moving for me that they said this. I hadn't realised it, but I understood it immediately. The waring of Death in Venice.



Katy Deepwell: The multi-screen projection work between Sydney and Venice downstairs is rather framed by the woman's portrait at the entrance. There are two ways in which you could read this. One that, they are two separate pieces or two, that they have a relationship. Only the catalogue indicates directly that they are related to each other. This framing seems to heighten the tension or the anxiety dilemma of the *Deep Water*.

Lyndal Jones: When you make work about the everyday. Most artists I know seem to deal with the little bits and pieces of the everyday. But part of the everyday is full of deep emotion, if you're walking past a bus-stop as I did the other day and there's a young woman talking into her mobile with tears pouring down her face, lovers in the park, parents dealing with children throwing tantrums on the floor in the supermarket, funerals going by. People sitting in cars not talking to each other. Everyday life is redolent with deep emotion and this is what I started to be really aware of. People tried to say they were separate pieces, but you can hear her voice



when you are downstairs. If you move through fairly fast, you wouldn't notice this. If you hear her upstairs, she is, as the description in the voiceover says, in deep water.

KD: And the fragmentation and editing of the shot upon her face increases this tension. It's not a blank or vague look. I didn't initially hear the voiceover, partly because my attention was caught by the images downstairs and partly because there were too many people crowding into the pavilion. When I returned to listen, the scenario as a mini-narrative about downstairs became clearer.



LJ: I hoped that people when they were downstairs would stand in amongst her or would go into their own emotional spaces as well or avoid them - as there are all of those possibilities - but that nonetheless it is inescapably there.

KD: I think the figurative narrative as it is told by her is reinforced by the images downstairs. I wanted to ask a more complex question about immersive environments if video multi-screen projection can be described in this way. I just did an interview with Mary Kelly in which she suggested that most painters seem to want to escape into cinema, but you seem to be doing precisely the reverse here, by bringing out the painterly qualities of video, through the abstraction you've used.

LJ: What is really fabulous is, when I started to really play with this, is that you can take a highly representational image, a face, a bit of a wharf or what have you and just go in closer and closer and it becomes abstraction. Which is really fantastic. I love working like that because you have shifted to a very different place.

KD: You have shifted to a stronger internal sense, focusing on what something is, an internal sense. Downstairs, there are three dominant images and you have two others working behind you and to the left and right. Are all the images are working on different sequences and timers?

LJ: What actually happens is, when you are on the wharf, the three main screens project what is happening from the wharf. In Sydney, there are boats coming in and out on either side. It was a five camera simultaneous shoot. In a sense the projections place you on the wharf as you watch the boats coming in and leaving. It's filmed in real time, the time it would take you to get on one of those boats and then it leaves. The, when you look back at the wharf, there is a cut and the cut is the yellow stripe

on the vaporetto wharf and then you have one single view as it's difficult to have a view of every direction on the boat.

KD: And that is where the most abstract of the water sequences occurs?

LJ: Yes. That's also why I pull away from the relentlessness of this big three screen projection for a while. And also so people feel the travel and the moving, from one to the next. It goes for two vaporetto stops in real time and then you return to the wharf in Sydney. There are only two cuts in that material. I took nothing out of it, I didn't doctor the film in any way. It's really raw footage.

KD: I didn't realise it was so neatly timed. I really like the lip window in the other projection, it enhances the idea you are on a boat. Standing on the stairs watching the 3 main projections, you really feel the swaying of the water - as on a vaporetto.

LJ: I chose a wharf in Sydney that really moves, like the jetties here. So the boats are moving, the cameras on the wharf are moving. I thought, this is really mean, perhaps, but it increases the feeling you are really in something on the water. Someone rather cynically said to me, 'when you're in Venice everything is moving and when you're in Sydney, nothing happens!' (laughs). It was an Australian who said that!

KD: The light across the water and the rushing feeling across the water in the most abstract sequences of the film is very hypnotic and powerful. In *Demonstrations and Details* there is a sense that your focus is on the everyday. You manage to use the camera to focus the audience's attention and hold our attention as we pass our eyes over details everyday. This is something which I think is quite remarkable.

LJ: Do you? That's great! It's quite intuitive. I realise I tend to intellectualise the works a lot afterwards and tend to discover things in them. In that piece, I discovered the joy of working in detail. And yes, you are absolutely right this has some relation to *Demonstrations and Details* and that was closely related to the work I did on sexual selection in the *From the Darwin Translation* series. But this work *Aqua Profunda* is really going for it in terms of emotions.

KD: You could see the editing processes in *Demonstrations and Details* - although the interactive elements of it were not working when I was there at the beginning - and shift people's attention about time and detail in the three, four stories moving through the different video projections - maybe this is

clearer because it is one single realisation.

LJ: That was a different kind of experiment. I did it again at Newlyn but I changed it a lot and had only two screens with the interactive material working full. There was a problem with the programming at the Ikon but we had a chance to develop it further. The conservatory atmosphere of the gallery suited it. It was great to see the depth of the piece. I want to return to this more complex interaction of stories, showing the work in a different way.

KD: The final question is about time. In this biennale setting, everyone's attention is about 15-30 seconds - very short - as they rush through trying to see everything but seeing only fragments of most videos. Do you think this environment is counter-productive to a decent showing or understanding of your work?

LJ: Yes. But a lot of people are staying which is very interesting. This is the basis on which all my practice exists, which is to provide a meditative space, rather than an adrenalised one. I'm saying, you can do it. A lot of people will, if they are interested. One of the things I did do was to try and provide within 5 minutes a sense of what the emotion or some of the sensation would be and, because I left it uncut, to really not try and adrenalise it. In a sense, the piece contains the same thing said differently, lots of different times to meet those audiences.

KD: The catalogue presents your work as a collection of major series, each taking 5-10 years, is this how you see your own work developing, starting on day 1, or is it only through looking back and someone else in a sense 'archiving you'?

LJ: I started the *Prediction* series as a five year series. Then I doubled it and made it a 10 year series (1981-1991). I made an arbitrary decision when I came back from London to Australia in the 1970s to start a work that would take five years and then I doubled it. It is hard for any artist to go and do something else - economically. The other benefit that you get working on series is because you research at the start, and as the series develops, this accumulates. You don't have to start again each work.

KD: Didn't this method of working suit the content of the piece? Because it had clear limits and structures to it.

LJ: Yes, and at the time video was made on pneumatic and was twenty minutes long. And all the *Prediction Pieces* were 20 minutes long. Of course the (VHS) video explosion happened during this time but I stuck to the pneumatic format.

KD: Have now you extended this format from performance to video projection, in the sense that the piece lasts for a set number of minutes, in this case 30 minutes?

LJ: No, this piece was designed so that people could come and go at any time. But the *Prediction Pieces* started as fixed length 20 minutes performance pieces and moved into installation. In the UK, the only works people have seen are the sexual selection series: From the *Darwin Translations* (1994-1998). I made six pieces in that series about women's sexual fantasies, one of which was *Spitfire 1 2 3* (shown in *Video Positive*, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, 1997). I published a script version of *Room with Finches* (1994) in the magazine *Coil* (London) of woman speaking her sexual fantasies on a Freudian-type couch for 40 minutes. They get more explicit as she goes on....

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Two senses of representation: 49th Venice Biennale

Platea dell' Umanita; Plateau of Humankind, Plateau d'Humanite, Plateau der Menschheit (2001) curated by Harold Szeemann

Katy Deepwell

Part 1: Some statistics

In 2001, Harold Szeemann's *Plateau of Humankind* included: 63 nations with 113 groups/ teams which included 130 individual artists of which 27 women artists were included. In 2001, women artists were 23.8 % (of 113 teams/artists): 20.7 % (of the 130 individual artists) included.

The percentage of women in such international shows although it is widely perceived as generally rising across the twentieth century from less than 10% to more consistently levels of 20% is not any simple measure of progress or finally the acknowledgement and international recognition due to women artists. The figures at international shows like the Venice Biennale vary quite dramatically and go up and down. Surveys of Venice Biennales 1978-1986 showed women's participation as moving from 10% (1978); to 13.6% (1980), to 20.4% (1982), but down to 10.3% (1984), and 9.7% (1986) (figures from Pauline Barrie "The Art Machine Part 2" *Women Artists Slide Library Journal* (London) Feb/March 1988 no. 21 pp.16-17. Figures researched by Fre Meijer, Nicole Roeperts, Sya Stam & Annet Zondervam for SVBK). *n.paradoxa* (print edition, volume 4) surveyed the number of women in the last Venice Biennale in 1999 where Harold Szeemann's *D'APERTutto* showed the work of 103 artists, 25 of which were women (24%). In the 1999 national pavillions, there were 98 projects/ artists: 25 of which were by women artists or joint projects in which women artists participated (25%).

Some countries have shown the first woman artist ever in their pavilion in the early 1990s, while others have maintained their record of never showing any work by women. Some national pavilions have chosen to alternate between the sexes in their

strategy of showing a single artist each year or maintained a well-calculated gender balance in the groups of artists they have chosen to show every two years. Several countries showed for the first time in 2001, New Zealand and Hong Kong, for example.

The question remains: why has the percentage of women artists dropped in 2001, especially in an exhibition which lays claim to bring together a platform for humanity? Did Szeemann's selection of themes for "humankind" reproduce a male-centred account of the issues facing "humanity", even as it chose to focus on artist's perceptions of the representation of humankind? Below are the names of artists, Part 2 goes on consider these last two questions in relation to what did this exhibition represent?

Women Artists in 2001: Chantal Akerman, Vanessa Beecroft, Tania Brughera, Rineke Dijkstra, Regina Galindo, Cristina Rodero Garcia, Laura Horelli, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Susan Kleinberg, Christiane Lohr, Eva Marisaldi, Marisa Merz, Chantal Michel, Priscilla Monge, Tanja Ostojic, Alexandra Ranner, Heli Rekula, Tracey Rose, Ene-Liis Semper, Georgina Starr, Fiona Tan, Alessandra Tesi, Salla Tykka, Eulalia Validossera, Minnette Vari, Maaria Wikkala

All Artists included in 2001 were:-

A1-53167 (Anibal Asdrubal Lopez Juarez), Chantal Akerman, Sunday Jack Akpan, Francis Alys, Tiong Ang, Gustavo Artigas, Atelier Van Lieshout, Samuel Beckett, Vanessa Beecroft, Joseph Beuys, Richard Billingham, Pierre Bismuth, Botto & Bruno, Martin Bruch, Tania Brughera, Roderick Buchanan, Chris Burden, Maurizio Cattelan, Loris Cecchini, Com & Com, Cracking Art Group, Chris Cunningham, Josef Dabernig, Max Dean - Raffaello D'Andrea, Lucinda Devlin, Rineke Dijkstra, Stan Douglas, Atom Egoyan - Juliao Saramento, Helmut Federle, Regina Galindo, Cristina Rodero Garcia, Yervant Gianikian - Angela Ricci Lucchi, Luis Gonzalez Palma, Paul Graham, Veli Grano, Hai Bo, Frederico Herrero, Gary Hill, Laura Horelli, Yishai Jusidman, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Marin Karmitz, Abbas Kiarostami, Susan Kleinberg, Mattheiu Laurette, Marko Lehanka, Christiane Löhr, Ingeborg Lüscher, Mark Manders, Tuomo Manninen, Eva Marisaldi, Viktor Maruschtschenko, Barry McGee/Stephen Powers/Todd James, Marisa Merz, Chantal Michel, Priscilla Monge, Ron Mueck, Marco Neri, Ernesto Neto, Carsten Nicolai, Olaf Nicolai, Manuel Ocampo, Arnold Odermatt, Joao Onofre, Tatsumi Orimoto, Tanja Ostojic, Manfred Pernice, Paul Pfeiffer, John Pilson, Alexandra Ranner, Neo Rauch, Heli Rekula, Gerhard Richter, Gerd Rohling, Alexander Roitburd, Tracey Rose, Mimmo Rotella, Anri Sala, Charles Sandison, Sarenco l'Africano, Ene-Liis Semper, Richard Serra, Santiago Sierra, Lars Siltberg, Nedko Solakov, Eliezer Sonnenschein, Georgina Starr, Do-Ho Suh, Fiona Tan, Javier Téllez, Alessandra Tesi, Jaime David Tischler, Niele Toroni, Gavin Turk, Richard Tuttle, Cy Twombly, Salla Tykkä, Keith Tyson, Eulalia Validossera, Minnette Vári, Francesco Vezzoli, Bill Viola, Not Vital, Massimo Vitali, Jeff Wall, Magnus Wallin, Nick Waplington, Maaria Wirkkala, Yu Xiao , Zhen Xu , Vadim Zakharov, Heimo Zobernig.

Plateau of Thought - Erich Bödeker, Seni Camara, Ousmane Ndiaye Dago, Gilberto De La Nuez, John Goba, Ettore Jelmorini, Cheff Mwai, Jean Baptiste Ngnetchopa, August Rodin, Hans Schmidt, Peter Wanjau....

Special Projects: Poetry Bunker - Marco Nero Rotelli; Homage to Chen Zhen; Refreshing : - Massimo Bartolini, Cai Guoqiang, Olafur Eliason, Tobias Rehberger, Rikrit Tiravanija; Human Condition - Anur; Museum in Progress - Ken Lum; Heli Global Art Tour - Michael Schmitz; Secession Vienna - Matthias Herrmann; Homage to Alighero Boetti.

The 49 pavilions and national projects included 144 groups, teams, or individual artists of which were 29 women artists: (20 %).

Argentina: Leandro Erlich, Graciela Sacco; **Armenia:** Hamlet Hovsepian, David Kareyan, Tigran Khachatrian, Hovhannes Margarian, Karine Matsakian, Tate Mnatsakanian, Mher Azatian, Nora Badalian, Samuel Saghatelian, Harutyun Simonian, Arpine Tokmajian, Ara Hovsepian, Diana Hagobian, Sona Abgarian, Narine Aramian; **Australia:** Lyndal Jones; **Austria:** Granular=Synthesis; gelatin; **Belgium:** Luc Tuymans; **Brasil:** Vik Muniz, Ernesto Neto; **Canada:** Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller; **Chile:** Juan Downey; **Croatia:** Julije Knifer; **Czech Republic & Slovak Republic:** Jiri Suruvka, Ilona Németh; **Cyprus:** Andreas Karayan; **Denmark:** Ursula Reuter Christiansen and Henning Christiansen; **Egypt:** Mostafa Ramzi El-Sayed; **Estonia:** Ene-Liis Semper, Marko Laimre; **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:** Milija Pavicevic, Oleg Kulik; **France:** Pierre Huyghe; **(FYROM) Macedonia:** Jovan Sumkovski; **Germany:** Gregor Schneider; **Great Britain:** Mark Wallinger; **Greece:** Ilias Papailiakis, Esri Hatzirygyrou, Nikos Navridis; **Hungary:** Tamás Komoroczki, Antal Lakner; **Iceland:** Finnbogi Pétursson; **Ireland:** Siobhan Hapaska, Grace Weir; **Israel:** Uri Katzenstein; **Italy:** Alighiero Boetti; **Jamaica:** Arthur Simms, Keith Morrison, Albert Chong; **Japan:** Masato Makamura, Yukio Fujimoto, Naoya Hatakeyama; **Korea:** Michael Joo, Do-Hu Suh; **Lithuania:** Deimantas Markevicius; **Luxembourg:** Doris Drescher; **Netherlands:** Liza May Post, Frank van der Salm, Edwin Zwakman, Rob Johannesma, Mike Tyler, Marijike van Warmerdam, Job Koelewiin, Michael Raedecker, Mark Manders, Aernout Mik; **New Zealand:** Peter Robinson, Jacqueline Fraser; **Nordic - Norway:** Anders Tomren; **Sweden:** Carl Mikael van Hausswolff, Leif Elggren; **Finland,** Tommi Gronland & Petteri Nisunen; **Poland:** Leon Taraswicz; **Portugal:** Joao Penalva; **Latvia:** Veistures Kairis & Ilmars Blumbergs; Laila Pakalnina; **Singapore:** Suzann Victor; Chen KeZhan; Mathew Ngui; Salleh Japar; **Slovenia:** Tadej Pgarar, 0100101110101101.org, Vuk Cosic, Context, Gheorghe Ravovsky; **Romania:** Gheorghe Rasovszky, Context Network; **Russia:** Sergei Shutov, Olga Chernysheva, Leonid Sokov; **Spain:** Ana Laura Alaez, Javier Perez; **Switzerland:** Norbert Moslang/Andy Guhl, Urs Luthi, Terapia; Turkey:

Lawrence D "Butch" Morris, Ahmet Oktem, xurban.net, Sermin Sherif, Murat Morova;
Ukraine: Panorama; **USA:** Robert Gober; **Uruguay:** Rimer Cardillo; **Venezuela:**
Victor Hugo Irazabal.

Cultural institutions: Bolivia: Ugalde Gaston; Chrystal Ostermann Stumpf, Hortensia Montenegro, Ricardo Perez Alcala; Columbia: Nadin Ospina; Costa Rica: Villacruz, Rafa Fernandez; Cuba: Ibrahim Miranda Ramos, Luis Gomez Armeteros; Dominican Republic: Dionisio Blanco, Antonio Guadalupe, Mariano Sanchez; Ecuador: Jose Antonio Cauja, Roberto Noboa; El Salvador: Vladimir Montufar; Rene Chacon; Guatemala: Juan Francisco Yoc Cotzajay; Doris Contreras; Haiti: Mario Benhamin, Guerdy Preval; Honduras: Regina Aguilar; Nicaragua: Hugo Palma Ibarra; Panama: Alessandra Rosas Fuentes, Aristides Urena Ramos; Paraguay: Lucy Yegros "Arete", Christian Ceuppens, Adrian Gonzalez Brun; Peru: Roberto Huracaya.

China - Hong Kong: Ellen Pau, Siu-Kee Ho, Chi-Wo Leung.

Taipei: Shu-min Lin, Shih-fen Liu, Michael Ming-hong Li, Chien-chi Chang, Wen-chih Wang.

Additional Special Exhibitions at Venice, part of the official program

Allora Dunque - Lothar Baumgarten, Willem Boshoff

Authentic/Excentric - Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Godfried Donkor, Berni Searle, Zineb Sedir, Yinka Shonibare, Rachid Koraichi

Hollywood - Marizio Cattalan

IASPIS project: Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, Jeppe Hein, Annika Larsson, Annee Olofsson

La Trahison des images: Nordproject & Co. & Ann Veronica Janssens, Marcel Berlangier, Francois Curlet, Michael Dans, Edith Dekyndt, Eric Duyckaerts, Patrick Everaert, Michel Francois, Jean-Marie Gheerardijn, Patrick Guns, Johan Muyle, Benoit Plateus, Benoit Roussel, Jacques Lizene.

The Deliverance and the Patience - Mike Nelson

Terraferma - Gabriele Basilico, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Gabriel Orozco, Louise Bourgeois.

Awards at Venice were given to

Richard Serra, Gregor Schneider (Pavilion prize), Anri Sala, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, Pierre Huyghe, Marisa Merz, John Pilson, A1-53167.

Special Mention to Fiona Tan and Yinka Shonibare.

Lifetime Award to Juan Downey.

Part 2

'The Plateau of Humankind is not a theme as such but rather a declaration of responsibility - to history, to the events of the present day. It opens up a dimension...." Artists look at the world and address the world, searchig out and recounting all the multiple dimensions of contemporary humanity.' (2001, Venice Biennale official press release)

'In the reaction of artists now one can see a clear difference to that of ten years ago: there is no longer the intense affirmation of one's own identity, but rather an appeal to what is eternal within humankind - an appeal that is only valid if it draws on what is local and "rooted". (Harold Szeemann, 2001 Venice Biennale official press statement)

'people still expect me to think up a common denominator..That's not the case, nor does the exhibition illustrate a particular sort of "plateau of humankind".That's why I brought up Edward Steichen's Family of Man by way of comparison. That tremendous optimism after the Second World War, whereby he presented all these different portraits as one big family, is no longer the issue today. Today's artists are much more interested in the physiognomy and behaviour of people. In addition, the focus is not so much on the individual as on the outside world'

(Harold Szeemann interview with Jan Winkelmann *Metropolis M* (Holland), Second edition, Summer 2001 p.24)

Why has the percentage of women artists dropped in 2001, especially in an exhibition which lays claim to bring together a platform for humanity? Did Szeemann's selection of themes for "humankind" reproduce a male-centred account of the issues facing "humanity"? What did this exhibition represent as a current view of human concerns and what it means to be human? Were women artists marginalised because of a false idea that they cannot produce knowledge about what it means to be fully human, only ideas about femininity and womanhood ?

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Fluxus, Flirt, Feminist?

Carolee Schneemann, Sexual Liberation and the Avant-garde of the 1960s

Anette Kubitza

(This essay is based on Anette Kubitza's dissertation *Fluxus, Flirt, Feminist? The Emergence and Reception of Carolee Schneemann's Body Art of the 1960s* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, forthcoming 2002.)

In 1963, Carolee Schneemann embarked on the expansion of one of her wooden 'painting constructions' that filled her Manhattan loft. She included her nude body. In a series of transformations entitled *Eye Body*, the artist established her body as visual territory, interacting with various materials such as paint, chalk, ropes, plastic sheeting, mirror glass, animal fur, a bull's horn, and two live snakes. Despite its affinity to works by Jackson Pollock, Rauschenberg, and Yves Klein, *Eye Body* remained largely unnoticed by the avant-garde at that time and was, at best, met with sexist comments.¹

However, in the 1970s, *Eye Body* was re-contextualized within the new feminist movement. This piece and others from the 1960s were firmly placed into the canon of feminist art. In the 1970s, *Eye Body* was identified with the great goddess movement (remember the snakes), as well as with feminist explorations of the female body. Later, in the 1980s, the artist was criticized for catering in her work to essentialist ideas and male fantasies. And lastly, in the 1990s, Schneemann was catapulted into the ranks of so-called bad girl artists such as Karen Finley and Annie Sprinkle, since her work shared the transgressive sexual boldness prevalent in this more recent turn in feminist art.

Schneemann herself was quick to align her 1960s work with later feminist ideas and practices.² However, while feminist paradigms have provided a welcome and useful frame for the reception of Schneemann's oeuvre, the simple regrouping of the artist's early pieces with various trends in later feminist art impeded a contextual, in-depth examination of her unique sexual aesthetic. In an effort to distinguish the artist's work from post-1970s acts of sexual and gender transgressions, Kristine Stiles recently suggested that Schneemann's life and work constitute a breach of decorum. Stiles differentiated, that a breach of decorum is, in contrast to a conscious act of transgression, usually unintentional, an act for which one is ostracized and rejected, not legally punished or celebrated.³ Such a concept proves valuable to classify the reactions to Schneemann and her work. However, I see Schneemann's "breach" not as incidental but as thoroughly grounded in the artist's philosophical beliefs she developed in the early 1960s.

Recently, art historians have begun to explore psychological approaches to art and its interpretations that do not rely on Freud and Lacan. Along the lines of this endeavour, I suggest a reading of Schneemann's body art in terms of the philosophical themes advanced by Austrian-born psychologist Wilhelm Reich. I argue, that Schneemann's reception of Reich's writings was vital in her development of an erotic aesthetic that was quite different from the emotionally detached representations of sexuality by other avant-garde artists in the 1960s and has posed some problems for feminists.

In the early 1960s, Schneemann's art was deeply embedded in the formal and philosophical considerations of the New York avant-garde. Trained as a landscape painter, she realized as a master's student in Illinois in the early sixties that, as she put it, 'painting was dead'.⁴ Like artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow, Robert Morris, and the Fluxus group, Schneemann struggled with the hegemonic legacy of Abstract Expressionism. She introduced everyday objects and images into her 'painting-constructions' and was concerned with the expansion of the two-dimensional canvas into space and time. Whatever has been attached to *Eye Body* in later years, its driving force at that time was the artist's interest in exploring the properties of materials, including flesh and the moving body.⁵ Schneemann became the first visual artist to collaborate with the Judson Dance Theater in Greenwich Village, a group of dancers concerned with introducing commonplace gestures and minimalist movement. Alongside well-known avant-garde dancers such as Yvonne Rainer, Judith Dunn, and Trisha Brown, she staged several of her early performance pieces. The artist also participated in performances by her male colleagues, such as in Claes Oldenburg's Ray Gun Theater productions, Bob Morris' *Site* and danced a nude solo with a parachute in Oldenburg's *Waves and Washes*.

However, Schneemann later characterized her role in those years as an outsider. She did not feel treated by her male colleagues as a serious collaborator but rather

as a 'body beautiful'. The artist once wrote that she felt like the "Cunt Mascot on the men's art team" [...] 'a questionable element since I could never play your games your ways [...]'.⁶ Her assessment might be surprising. After all, some other female artists such as Yoko Ono, Allison Knowles, and Shigeo Kubota seemed more accepted in that avant-garde. Further, with its emphasis on the body and open eroticism, Schneemann's work ought to have melded perfectly with the increasing sexual explicitness in the art of that period. How did Schneemann's representations differ from that of her contemporaries, male and female?

Depictions of body and sexuality at that time were depersonalized, ironic, sterile, theatricalized, and curiously void of passion. Examples include Tom Wesselmann's coolly painted paper dolls beaming with the seductiveness of consumer goods; Yvonne Rainer's and Steve Paxton's minimalist dance *Word Words* in which the two dancers, nude except for G-strings, carried out the exact same sequence of simple movements, which distracted attention not only from their sexual difference but from sexuality itself; Yoko Ono's mocking series of buttocks filling the screen in her *Film No. 4 (Bottoms)*, a humorous contribution to mainstream culture's obsession with certain body parts and an homage to the liberalization of cinema; Andy Warhol's camp pornographic movies which depicted a subculture of fluid sexual orientation and identity; Kenneth Anger's underground classic *Scorpio Rising*, in which he portrayed the fetishistic, leather-bound homoeroticism of a biker gang, and the highly theatrical orgies of Jack Smith's film *Flaming Creatures*, in which actors of questionable gender, in different states of dress and undress, dominate the screen.

These examples have in common that they deny the idea of an "unmediated", "organic", or "natural" sexuality. They do not just reflect a concern for more liberated sexual values. Rather, the emotionally detached quality in these representations marks an emerging awareness of the social constructedness of gender and sexuality and its political implications. Avant-garde artists in the 1960s anticipated and prepared the gay rights movement, feminism with its critique of phallocentrism, and poststructuralist analyses. Schneemann's approach to inject her art with joyful, heterosexual passion seems, at first glance, retrograde and naive. I propose, however, that the artist developed an independent aesthetic and sexual politics that do not only undermine patriarchal values, but also constitute themselves beyond narrowly defined feminist and gay politics.

While minimalism, conceptualism, fetish, and leather culture became fashionable in the art around her, Schneemann did not shy away from raw edges, messy materials, and passion. In her Kinetic Theatre piece *Meat Joy* (1964), Schneemann abandoned the confinements of the canvas for a multi-sensual space, in which visual pleasures were combined with tactile joys, smells and sounds. The approximately one-hour long performance was shown first at the Paris Festival de la Libre Expression, in a modified version in London, and lastly at the Judson Church in Manhattan. The cast consisted of four men and four women, including

Schneemann. Clad in trunks and elaborately decorated bikinis, the performers interacted with mounds of paper, flashlights, transparent plastic sheeting, raw chicken, sausages, smelly fish, wet paint, and each other's bodies. The performance was accompanied by a sound-collage of Paris street noises and latest hits.

Schneemann considered *Meat Joy* an analogy to the sexual act. Particularly in the first two sequences, she visualized the erotic energy of the sexes rather stereotypically, giving the men a more active, the women a more passive part. This pattern, however, came apart when Schneemann seized the paintbrush and painted her partner's body. Further, an attempt by the male performers to form the women into sculptural shapes ended with all of them collapsing on the floor. After that, all eight performers entered into a passionate trance and equally actively interacted with each other's bodies, raw meat, fish, and wet paint. In the beginning very structured and well rehearsed, *Meat Joy* grew into an orgy of the senses that ended in a messy tangle of bodies and materials.

In an effort to bring all senses into the arena of performance, Schneemann welcomed the bodily smells and secretions that were created in the process, which are considered taboo especially in regard to women's bodies. In 1963 she wrote into her notebook about women's sexuality: 'These women are fastidious: the living beast of their flesh embarrasses them; they are trained to shame...blood, mucus, juices, odors of their flesh fill them with fear. They have some abstracted wish for pristine, immaculate sex...cardboard soaked in perfume.'⁷ The smell of cheap perfume, which the artist had giddily sprayed into the audience at the beginning, was soon replaced by the odor of sweating bodies, oozing chicken, smoked sausages, and dead fish.

While Schneemann worked on *Meat Joy*, she began her first film *Fuses*.⁸ In *Fuses*, the artist interspersed graphic shots of her companion James Tenney and herself making love, with views of her ever-watching cat Kitch, the surrounding landscape, and images of the domestic environment which anchor the couple's sexuality in their everyday life. Schneemann attempted to communicate the sexual experience through an elaborate, highly innovative post-cinematic editing process that was influenced by the experimental films of Stan Brakhage. As David James has shown in his excellent analysis of this film, Schneemann took Brakhage's approach a step further. She transported the intense emotions between the lovers directly onto the celluloid. She manipulated the original footage by fragmenting and superimposing the images, and by scratching and painting on it, as well as by exposing it to weather, acids, and, last but not least, to heat in an oven.⁹ The explicit sexual images were considerably distorted in the process, and a rather abstract image evolved that at times unrecognizably fused male and female body parts into a flow of colors and movements as in the process of lovemaking itself.

Instead of rendering a sexual narrative that follows a climactic structure typical in conventional (porn) movies, Schneemann organized her images rhythmically. She constantly interrupted, fragmented, dissolved, collaged and repeated the images.

While conventional films rely on the notorious cum-shot to signify the climax, and rather ineptly render the feelings involved, Schneemann was concerned with the complexity of the sexual experience, for both, men and women. In *Fuses* the highpoints of sexual passion are conveyed by a convulsive densification of imagery.

As one male contemporary critic, unsure of Schneemann's sex, wrote: 'The cultural history of male America has passed down too much shit for a man to have made *Fuses*, which views love-making subjectively, from within. The interior view [in *Fuses*] is both more erotic and less pornographic, more like doing it than watching it. An American male would have to uncloud his eyes of several thousand playmates to see things that way.'¹⁰ With her treatment of imagery in *Fuses*, Schneemann undermined the objectifying mechanisms of fetishism and voyeurism heavily at work in conventional cinema.

The artist has noted repeatedly that her study of Reich's writings was influential in her work.¹¹ Schneemann had become acquainted with his books in 1960, at a time when their distribution was illegal in the United States.¹² To summarize, Reich contended that total mental and physical health was impossible in the absence of complete sexual satisfaction. In his psychoanalytic practice he found that dammed-up libidinal energy results in neurosis. Total discharge of this energy, he claimed, would only happen if the individual possessed 'orgastic potency' which he described as 'the capacity to surrender to the flow of biological energy, free of any inhibitions, [...] to discharge completely the dammed-up sexual excitation through involuntary, pleasurable convulsions of the body.'¹³

In the early stages of his career, Reich emphasized the socio-political dimension of the widespread 'orgastic impotence' he detected, calling it an 'emotional plague' that invited totalitarianism. However, he focused increasingly on the biophysical aspects of his findings, for which he became a highly controversial figure. From his observations on orgasm, Reich derived his scientific experiments on bioenergy and discovered a pulsating life-energy he coined 'orgone energy'. He found that this energy was not only involved in human sexual activity but in all life processes, and he sought it vital for a healthy organism. In order to concentrate orgone energy, Reich developed his notorious orgone energy accumulator in the early 1940s. This was a box-shaped structure made of alternating layers of organic and metallic materials.¹⁴ The orgone-box was not, as many falsely believe, devised as a sex-stimulant promising orgiastic potency.¹⁵ Rather, Reich stressed its general healing functions claiming that the blood and body tissue of the user would be charged with the life-energy, and that the general condition of the organism would thus improve..¹⁶ Still, the orgone-box came to symbolize the core of Reich's theories: the crucial role of sexual satisfaction for the well being of the individual as well as society as a whole.

Reich's theories confirmed Schneemann to integrate her sexuality into her art making. She infused her art with the sexual energy considered so valuable by Reich, and structured seminal works such as *Meat Joy* and *Fuses* deliberately around the

experience of the sexual act, in fact, the experience of orgasm itself.¹⁷ Aside from this, Reich's method of analysis surfaced in Schneemann's selection and preparation of the performers for *Meat Joy* and other performances. For *Meat Joy*, she picked most of the cast from bars, concert halls, and the street in each of the cities it was shown. In selecting the performers, Schneemann looked for specific qualities: 'a natural sexual presence - unself-conscious and vital and "untrained" bodies, which moved integrally, rhythmically in commonplace actions.'¹⁸ As she had done in earlier pieces, Schneemann used a training method to prepare the performers for the acts of *Meat Joy* derived from Reich's therapeutical practice of character analysis. This method involves the physical loosening of the patients muscular body armor, which Reich believed to be essential for a successful analysis and healing process to take place. Schneemann found out later, that some of the performers had actually gone through Reichian therapy.

Schneemann also identified with Reich's political struggle against a sex-negative society. She stated that by using the naked body in her work she wanted 'to resist an oppressive system that alienated people from their bodies.'²⁰ Her goal was 'to break into the taboos against the vitality of the naked body in movement, to eroticize my guilt-ridden culture and further to confound this culture's sexual rigidities - that the life of the body is more variously expressive than a sex-negative society can admit.'²¹ However, while Reich focused on genital sexuality, Schneemann's interest in the material value of the body, its sensual properties and its multifaceted expressiveness also liberated the body from a narrow sexual identification. As *Meat Joy* and *Fuses* vividly demonstrate, Schneemann embraced a wide concept of body-positiveness that went beyond simply equating more sex with more liberty.

Reich was marginalized, excluded, censored, and even expelled from several countries for his radical ideas and politics.²² He had developed his orgasm theory on the fringes of the psychoanalytical establishment around Freud in the 1920s, and was excluded from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Association in 1933 when his colleagues began to question his mental health.²³ Opposition among psychoanalysts to Reich's work grew, however with the shift from Freud's early emphasis on sexual disturbances in the development of neurosis to his belief that social adjustment, not sexual fulfillment, was the crucial criterion for emotional health.²⁴ The pleasure principle thus had to give way to the reality principle.²⁵

Reich, who had fled from the Nazis-regime, eventually found refuge in the United States in 1939. Ironically, however, his persecution did not end there. In the late 1940s, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began to investigate him and declared his orgone accumulator 'fraud of the first magnitude.'²⁶ The agency sought legal action against Reich, which led to a court order in 1956 demanding the destruction of the accumulators, the withdrawal of several of Reich's books from the market, and even the burning of literature concerning the device and Reich's orgone theory.²⁷ Reich himself was imprisoned in 1957, technically not for fraud,

but because he had not complied with a court injunction. Reich died in prison only months later. Interest in Reich's ideas diminished after the FDA intervention. It was only in the mid-1960s that the Reich's writings were rediscovered by the counterculture, and several of his books were reissued, illegally at first.²⁸

The FDA-investigation, the ensuing trial against Reich, and the literal destruction of his work speak of the fears that Reich's device and theories were able to evoke in American society. In his detailed study *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.*, Jerome Greenfield recounts that, as an attempt to burn the accumulators at Reich's residence failed, the psychologist's twelve-year old son joined two government officials in chopping up the devices with axes while Reich watched on. For Reich it must have felt like the libidinal potential of an entire nation was being crushed before his eyes. Reich, in a way, had become victim to a double betrayal by American society. Beside the physical destruction of Reich's devices and research, Reich's ideas were corrupted by the very movement they had been feeding, the movement for sexual liberation. While Reich identified more liberal sexual values with a more liberated, anti-totalitarian society, it became obvious that sexuality could easily be turned into just another convenience. The political activism Reich had envisioned to go along with a sexual liberation had, with the advent of glossy magazines such as *Playboy*, instead been replaced with another instance of commercialization in a capitalist society.²⁹

It is not surprising that *Meat Joy* and *Fuses* were subject to government censorship in the 1960s, when obscenity laws regarding nudity were strictly enforced. Originally, Schneemann had planned to have the performers of *Meat Joy* be nude. However, the moral decency laws in Europe and the US at that time did not allow naked performers in motion. At the performances in Paris and New York, police informants and members of various moral decency groups were present. As Schneemann recounted, the performance in London was interrupted by the police, and the actors had to flee via the back exit.³⁰

Fuses was considered one of the most outrageous underground films in the 1960s and censored in several instances by government authorities. It was one of two films seized by the Los Angeles police for obscenity and for not complying with the laws concerning sexual activity on the screen, when it was shown in a special program of underground films.³¹ In a more recent case of censorship, *Fuses* was taken out of a program of sexuality in American film shown at a Moscow film festival in 1989. It was scheduled to be screened among Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*, Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*, and Stephen Sonderburg's *Sex, Lies, and Video* but after an unscheduled opening night showing was not rescheduled.³²

Schneemann was, by no means, the only avant-garde artist whose work was subject to government censorship in the 1960s. Other banned works include Smith's film *Flaming Creatures*, a transvestite orgy of sexual pleasure, several of Kenneth Anger's films, Ono's *Bottoms*, and Charlotte Moorman's topless cello-solo in Nam

June Paik's composition *Opera Sextronique*, which landed her in prison. These works questioned traditional ideas about sexuality and breached the accepted moral codes and, sometimes, laws, as well.

However, in Schneemann's case, some extreme reactions by her audiences, as well as her marginalization within the avant-garde, surprise. During a performance of *Meat Joy* in Paris, a man from the audience came on to the stage and tried to strangle Schneemann. Recalling this incident, the artist wrote: 'Steeped in the writings of Wilhelm Reich I understood what had affected him but not how to break his hold on my neck!' ³³ Eventually, three women threw themselves on the man and dragged him off the stage. By the time *Fuses* was released in 1967, the Hippie movement was celebrating its Free Love ethic in the Haight Ashbury Summer of Love, and communes were blossoming in Europe. Still, when the film was shown in Cannes in 1968, where it received a special jury award, a group of about forty men slashed the theater seats with razors, threw the shredded padding around and shouted, apparently airing their distress about unfulfilled expectations....

Schneemann's ambivalent role within the avant-garde manifested itself most pointedly in her official excommunication from the Fluxus group in the mid-1960s, a group with which Schneemann was associated through common interests and friends. Several of her performances in the early 1960s, such as her *Glass Environment for Sound and Motion*, were staged with well-known Fluxus artists such as Dick Higgins and Phillip Corner. She later also collaborated with Yoko Ono and Shigeo Kubota, both highly accepted members of the Fluxus group. While Schneemann cannot be considered a Fluxus artist per se, the severe judgement against her work by the ideological leader of this group, George Maciunas, who gave other female artists a fairly comfortable dwelling, ³⁵ sheds light on some of the problems that her art posed to the New York avant-garde. He characterized her work as 'operatic', 'political', 'sexual', 'metaphoric' and 'messy'. In a later statement, Schneemann expressed her ambivalent standing:

'fluxus can be lots of fun when the boys let you on their boat
sometimes they throw you off the boat
you have to be NEAT all your words games philosophy
and things you make have to be NEAT (except for wolf and claes
they can smear their pages its o.k.)
if you don't wear underpants or show your pussy you get pushed over the side
[...]' ³⁶

The sexual explicitness of Schneemann's work may well have been used as a pretext to censor it in the 1960s. I want to suggest, however, that some extreme audience reactions to her work and its marginalization within the avant-garde and later in feminism are due to the fact that she injected her art with sexual passion. ³⁷

Schneemann's particular representations of body and sexuality posed an open threat to patriarchy (and I include a good portion of the 1960s avant-garde here) by

challenging a phallogentric, controlled sexuality and its visual representations. By using the naked female body permissively and by presenting sexuality, including heterosexuality, as a joyful experience, Schneemann's work also ran counter to later feminist ideas about this subject. While accepted as an initiator of feminist body and performance art and appropriated as role model by various feminist artists, her work has been continuously criticized for not complying with a narrowly defined feminist correctness in the field of vision.³⁸

Schneemann, one could argue, is a naïve child of the sexual revolution. Though keenly aware of women's discrimination in the art world and of the misrepresentation of women's sexuality in dominant culture, it is likely that Schneemann was one of the women who objected to early feminist analysis of the male-female power relations in the bedroom.³⁹ Kate Millet was right, of course, when she stated that sexual intercourse does not take place in a cultural vacuum. It would be short sighted, however, to interpret Schneemann's early representations of the women's body as sheer ignorance in feminist terms. A closer look at *Meat Joy* shows, that by defiling the bodies of the female performers, Schneemann consciously disrupted dominant notions of the female body as beautiful spectacle and of female sexuality as pristine. And, my analysis of *Fuses* shows that Schneemann quite systematically undermined the very premises on which gender specific visual pleasure in the cinema is based, assumptions feminist film critics began to expose only in the mid-1970s.⁴⁰

Further, while there is no doubt that *Meat Joy* and *Fuses* are built on heterosexual lovemaking, a closer look reveals that they are not merely about heterosexuality. Amidst the tangle of bodies and materials in *Meat Joy*, or the grid of spots, scratches, and colors over(p)laying the sexual imagery in *Fuses*, it becomes impossible to define exactly what we are looking at. In those sequences, a coherent body image defined as male or female is dissolved. For Schneemann it becomes irrelevant whether we can decipher female or male body parts, plucked chicken legs or hot dogs, menstrual blood or red paint, white dots or ejaculate, as it is the complex sensual experience involved in the action that she tried to capture. The artist made bodily sensations and pleasures themselves her subject.

Schneemann's crusade for the acceptance and validity of unmediated bodily sensations continued to permeate her work into the 1980s, as the correspondence with a fellow artist testifies. After watching Schneemann, then in her early forties, performing nude in her *Fresh Blood: A Dream Morphology*, artist colleague Dick Higgins suggested that she should find a beautiful, young feminist artist who should operate as a surrogate, a stand-in for Schneemann in her performances.⁴¹ Apart from Higgins' blatant bias against the erotic portrayal of a middle-aged woman, such a suggestion misses the core of Schneemann's work, which is exactly to criticize substitute experiences. The artist responded thus that it would be 'a shame to forgo the opportunity to perform as an ambivalent-erotic. I have only one chance to be middle aged, right? So why not see what that tells? I can be the wrinkled knees I once

wished off “the stage” [...], the double chin, rounded belly, etc...’⁴² Schneemann's answer to Higgins' insulting suggestions emphasizes that her work centers on her body and her (sensual) experiences in an immediate way, and in that also does not make a claim to represent "everywoman".

Even Schneemann's more recent installations of the 1990s, in which the artist does not appear in person, mark a continued critical path away from the 'semiotic turn' that became so popular among artists and critics in the early 1980s. For example, her installation *Vulva's Morphia* (1981-96) entails a cunning criticism of society from vulva's point of view (that is Schneemann's vulva, of course). The installation consists of a laser print grid of images of goddesses, the artist's vulva, V-shaped objects of everyday life, and obscene graffiti, among others. These images are interspersed with texts, telling vulva's adverse story in a society that denies women's multi-faceted sexual pleasure. Vulva, for example, 'reads Masters and Johnson and understands her vaginal orgasms have not been measured by any instrumentality and that she should only experience clitoral orgasms...' Vulva also 'deciphers Lacan and Baudrillard and discovers she is only a sign, a signification of the void, of absence, of what is not male... (she is given a pen for taking notes).' Lastly, vulva 'decodes Feminist Constructivist Semiotics and realizes she has no authentic feelings at all; even her erotic sensations are constructed by patriarchal projections, impositions, and conditioning...' (43) One can conclude from these side-swipes aimed at feminism, that Schneemann's personal experiences did not correspond with mainstream feminist analyses, which have been, at times, quite proscriptive.

In her multimedia installation, *Known/Unknown: Plague Column* from 1996, Schneemann tackled the relationship between erotic and medical body, personal experience and "objectivity" of medical data, as well as conventional and alternative healing methods. Inspired by an eighteenth century pest column she encountered in an Austrian rural chapel, the artist explores the social meanings of diseases and their various treatments. Schneemann combined large columns of permuted-color laser prints of vastly enlarged healthy and unhealthy body cells, wall-texts of reactions to certain diseases and forms of treatment by friends and doctors, oranges spiked with injection needles hanging from the ceiling, and a circle of video monitors placed on a bed of polyurethane breast casts and medical hoses. Projected is a video of doctor's visits, breast examinations, and scenes from a domestic, rural life - the artist's. However, as the origins of widespread diseases such as cancer and AIDS and their successful treatment remain an object of debate, it also does not become entirely known to the viewer whether the artist herself is an affected patient, or a detached observer of potentially fatal illness.

While the artist is careful not to reveal her condition to the viewer, the following enlarged wall-text of *Known/Unknown* captures, I find, the quintessence of Schneemann's oeuvre: 'He told her he knew a woman who had a very pretty breast reconstruction. She reminded him that the reconstructed breast had no erotic

sensation at all.⁴⁴ This short dialog also highlights the challenges that accompany the preservation and exhibition of Schneemann's body art. Just a couple of years ago, the environment in which the artist performed her pioneering body action *Eye Body* mentioned at the beginning of this essay, was laboriously reconstructed for the show *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-79* in Los Angeles.⁴⁵ However, the reconstruction, which included 36 black-and-white shots that resulted from Schneemann's body action, failed to convey the core of Schneemann's work. It remained lifeless and cold, and rather signified the absence of what it so meticulously attempted to reconstruct.

I do not mean to suggest that Schneemann's work in the 1960s and thereafter was exclusively influenced by Reich. However, I find an acknowledgement of his influence, in view of the artist's intense study of the psychologist's writings, crucial in understanding Schneemann's individual brand of sexual aesthetics and politics, as well as her continued marginalization.⁴⁶ Both, Reich and Schneemann, have mined a sensitive spot in this society in their work. By making a claim for the validity and necessity of physical sensations in a sexual as well as in a cultural-political context, they are rebelling against a society preoccupied with the visual, the make-believe, the surrogate, and, last but not least, the construct.

Notes

1. For sexist comments about *Eye Body* see Carolee Schneemann, interview with Rebecca Schneider in Schneider: *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 37. *Eye Body* can be interpreted as combining and transcending Pollock's Action Painting, in which the painter's body became a moving agent, Klein's *Anthropométries*, in which the artist used women as live paintbrushes, and Rauschenberg's *Combine Paintings*, in which he used everyday objects and images in order to bridge the gap between life and art. In *Eye Body* Schneemann was an active agent using herself as an additional material and ground.

2. Schneemann herself was quick to align her works of the 1960s with later feminist ideas and practices. Beginning in the mid-1970s, she connected them in particular to the Great Goddess appreciation among feminist artists in her later artworks such as *Homerunmuse* (1977) and *Unexpectedly Research* (1962-92), as well as in her writings (see, for example, her interpretation of *Eye Body* in *More than Meat Joy*, p. 52).

3. Kristine Stiles #Schlaget Auf: The Problem with Carolee Schneemann's Painting' in *Carolee Schneemann: Up to and Including Her Limits* (New York, NY: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996) p. 22.

4. See Carolee Schneemann's *Labyrinth* (University of Illinois, 1960), Carolee Schneemann Papers, #95000, box 1/1960-67, file: *Labyrinth*, 1960, Getty Research Institute.

5. In an interview with art historian Moira Roth in 1979 Schneemann stated that when she did *Eye Body*, her traditions were still so painterly that she would have objected very strenuously to the

literary implications of autobiography. She rather, at that time, saw the body as a primary material that she wanted to explore, as she explored other materials such as metal, glass, and plastic. See the unpublished interview in the Carolee Schneemann Papers, #950001, box 14, file: Censorship, 1990, Getty Research Institute.

6. Carolee Schneemann *More than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings* (New Paltz, NY: Documentext, 1997 (1979) p. 196.

7. Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy* p. 58.

8. Schneemann's film *Fuses* was shot with a 16mm camera. It is silent, ca. 22 minutes long at 24 frames per second (sometimes screened at 16 frames per second), and was first shown around 1967/68. The video version of 1992 is about 18 minutes long.

9. For my analysis of *Fuses* I am indebted to Scott MacDonald's insightful essay 'Carolee Schneemann's Autobiographical Trilogy' *Film Quarterly* 34:1 (Fall 1980), 27-32 and his interview with the artist in his *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988) pp.134-151, as well as to David James' excellent structural analysis of this film in his *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989) pp. 317-321.

10. Dave Mc Cullough 'Eat Movies' *San Francisco Express Times* (February 25, 1968[?]).

11. Schneemann mentioned the influence of Wilhelm Reich's theories on her work repeatedly in her *More than Meat Joy*, beginning with the preface, p. 7. She also discussed the importance of Reich's ideas in her work in an interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997.

12. Schneemann, interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997.

13. Wilhelm Reich *The Function of the Orgasm: Sex-Economic Problems of Biological Energy* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1973 (1942) p. 90.

14. See for a description of the orgone accumulator and its functions Jerome Greenfield *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974), 50, 58ff.

15. Journalist Mildred Brady first made the claim, that the orgone-box was devised as a sex-stimulant promising orgasmic potency. Her articles 'The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy' and 'The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich' which appeared in the April 1947 issue of *Harper's magazine* and the May 26, 1947 issue of the *New Republic*, respectively, led to an investigation against Reich by the FDA. See main text below.

16. Reich used his orgone energy accumulator apparently successfully in his treatment of cancer patients. He described his use of orgone therapy, for example, in his *Selected Writings: An Introduction to Orgonomy* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973 (1951) pp. 229-264.

17. Schneemann, interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997.

18. See Carolee Schneemann 'Meat Joy: Notes' in Michael Benedict (ed.) *Theatre Experiment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 359.

19. Schneemann, interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997. For Schneemann's use of Reichian therapeutic methods in her work with performers in other pieces, see also Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy* p. 17. The goal of Reich's character analytical treatment is to loosen a person's muscular armor to overcome resistance to analysis. The muscular armor, Reich believed, corresponded to a character-armor, certain attitudes developed in defense against emotional

excitations. The practice involves actual, sometimes painful, physical contact between the therapist and the patient. See Wilhelm Reich's writing on *Character Analysis*, published as a book first by the Orgone Institute Press in 1945, and included in other publications by Reich such as *The Function of the Orgasm and his Selected Writings: An Introduction to Orgonomy*.

20. Schneemann, interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997.

21. Schneemann *More than Meat Joy* p. 194.

22. Reich was forced to leave his exile countries Denmark, and later Norway, where he had immigrated in order to escape the Nazi-regime, because of controversies surrounding his work. See Greenfield, Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A., chapters 2-15.

23. Reich was also expelled from the Social Democratic Party in 1929, and from the Communist Party in 1934, after having been well regarded in both parties. See Myron Sharaf *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press/Marek, 1983), 5f.

24. Reich related, for example, that his first major paper on genital sexuality in 1923, in which he outlined his contention that genital disturbance was perhaps the most important symptom of neurosis, was met with chilliness and rejection by fellow psychoanalysts. Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, p. 86.

25. See Greenfield *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.* p. 25.

26. Greenfield *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.* p. 66.

27. It is not yet clear, whether some of Reich's books unrelated to his orgone research were burned, as well. While the FDA denied these charges, co-workers of Reich, who had witnessed the burning, called this denial a cover-up. See Greenfield *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.* p. 253.

28. While his ideas on biopsychiatric orgone therapy found widespread application in an allied system of therapy called bioenergetics, the New Left became interested in Reich's early politically inclined writings, such as in Paul A. Robinson *The Freudian Left* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1969). For the reception of Reich in the 1960s, see Greenfield *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.* p.11.

29. I thank Carolee Schneemann for her insightful comments regarding Reich's betrayal by American society.

30. See Carolee Schneemann 'The Obscene Body/Politic' *Art Journal* 50:4 (Winter 1991) p. 29.

31. See 'Police Seize Two Underground Films' (July 19, 1969), Carolee Schneemann Papers, #950001, box 64, file: Film and Performance Clippings, 1969, Getty Research Institute.

32. See Carolee Schneemann 'Notes from the Underground: A Feminist Pornographer in Moscow' *The Independent* (March 1992) pp.23-25.

33. Schneemann *More than Meat Joy* p. 194.

34. See Aviva Rahmani 'A Conversation on Censorship with Carolee Schneemann' *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: Contemporary Art Issues* (November 1989) p. 4 and MacDonald *A Critical Cinema* p. 141. At a later screening of *Fuses* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, Schneemann was called a 'Deranged, Frigid, Nymphomaniac' by one viewer, and another, a young newspaper critic accused her of having assaulted his sexuality. See Schneemann *More than Meat Joy* p. 195.

35. Among the female artists George Maciunas accepted into the Fluxus group were Shigeo Kubota, Yoko Ono, and Mieko Shiomi. He, in fact, was close friends with Kubota and named her vice president of the movement, and he was deeply impressed by the democratic nature of Ono's early conceptual

works, which he held up as an example of Fluxus ideals.

36. Carolee Schneemann quoted in: *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus, 1990-1962* (Milano, Italy: Mazzotta, 1990) p. 89. Schneemann's exclusion from the American Fluxus-movement continues today. Her affiliation with that group still remains unacknowledged in major US-American compilations of Fluxus art. Editor's note: For a discussion of the relation to "mess" see Joanna Frueh 'Making a Mess, Women's Bane, Women's Pleasure' in K.Deepwell (ed) *Women Artists and Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) pp.142-158.

37. One can argue, that with her hedonist approach Schneemann fit more readily into the European Happenings movement which tended to be openly political, sexual, and, in particular the work of the Viennese Actionists, utterly messy. In spite of these similarities, the aggressive sexuality of these actions was quite contrary to Schneemann's positive approach.

38. At a showing of *Fuses* at the Art Institute in Chicago in the early 1970s, a group of lesbians became extremely angry because the film did not provide a role model for them. *Fuses* has further been criticized for offering the naked female body, and therefore inviting appropriation by male culture as pornography.

39. Judith Hole and Ellen Levine noted about this objection that '[W]omen who believed that they were defining their own sexuality, by virtue of their freedom to have sexual relations whenever they chose, resisted the notion that their sexuality was still defined by men.' in Hole and Levine *Rebirth of Feminism* (New York, NY: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 221. The authors also state that Anne Koedt's essay 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm', first distributed in 1968, prior to its publication in 1970, met with resistance within the new women's movement. The authors expected that women would have felt a sense of psychological liberation at Koedt's "discovery," which countered the notion that full maturity into womanhood depended on moving from clitoral to vaginal orgasms, maintained by Freud and his followers. See pages 220.

40. See Laura Mulvey's influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' *Screen* 16 (Fall 1975) pp. 6-18.

41. Dick Higgins in a letter to Schneemann, March 10, 1981. Carolee Schneemann Papers, # 950001, box 37, file: Higgins, Dick, Getty Research Institute.

42. Carolee Schneemann in an undated answer to Dick Higgins. Carolee Schneemann Papers, # 950001, box 37, file: Higgins, Dick, Getty Research Institute. See the entire correspondence regarding Higgin's criticism in this file.

43. It is interesting to note that Schneemann's *Vulva's Morphia* was created around the same time Eve Ensler's award-winning play *The Vagina Monologues* was originally produced. The play, however, only debuted Off-Broadway on Valentine's Day 1998. The play, which has been performed with different casts nationally and internationally, gives voice to women's vaginal experiences, from rape to self-stimulation, and explores the power, pain, humor, wisdom, outrage and excitement hidden in women's vaginas. Carolee Schneemann's *Vulva's Morphia* was republished as artists pages in *n.paradoxa* (print version) Vol. 6 Desire and the Gaze, July 2000. pp.44, 46-47.

44. Wall-text from the installation *Known/Unknown: Plague Column* (1996) exhibited at the Elga Wimmer Galery, New York City, 1996. Copies of the wall-texts are in the author's possession.

45. See also the catalogue *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-79* (Los Angeles,

CA: Museum of Contemporary Art/Thames and Hudson, 1998), illustrations on pp. 6 and 293 of a previous reconstruction in Schneemann's Manhattan studio, which differed from the later one at the museum.

46. It is interesting to note, that Schneemann has openly rejected the interpretation of her work in Freudian terms. Schneemann, for example, does not consider the umbrella, which frequently appears in her work, as a phallic object but a manifestation of vulvic space, which unfolds when you open it. See Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde Since 1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 171f. At a performances of her *Up to and Including Her Limits* in the mid 1970s, in which Schneemann was swinging naked in a harness, a man in the audience, well-known sociologist Erving Goffman, maintained that the artist's use of a rope evoked ideas of sado-masochistic pleasure. Schneemann objected that his interpretation disregarded the actual feelings involved, and that the motion of swinging for her triggered pleasurable childhood memories. Dick Higgins came to her aid claiming that 'the rope is innocent'. Schneemann related this incidence in a public lecture at the University of California in Santa Barbara, January 25, 1994.

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Diary of an Ageing Art Slut from London, the Montmartre of the Millennium

End of January 2001

Why does one have such romantic expectations about Christmas?? Come that time of year and I still revert to childhood expectations regarding presents. Nothing to do with reality. Bet's present to me this year was a lovely tablecloth and matching napkins but no washing instructions were included. In her attempt to help the third world economy she buys strange but unusual and totally useless gifts from Oxfam catalogues. So the end result is that the present got washed in a low temperature wash but not low enough. We had stern words regarding this when she came over and saw a greenish plaidish table cloth with matching napkins that sort of looked like it might have been the blue and white plaidish one she gave me for Xmas. I was called such names as "domestic slut" which I did not deny.

G. never managed to buy me a present this year instead she took nearest and I out for a meal at a rather nice local bistro that cooks organic food in a sort of French manner with modern English influences. The wine was good. Em bless her socks bought me a 1950s handbag with a contemporary hat that matched it. N & D was really off sorts this year. I got flowers on Xmas Eve and a book and lots of chocolates the next day under the tree. His heart just wasn't in it. I am a bit worried about him - so I was really nice to him and we went down to the country to his employer's big estate house on the coast. They had gone somewhere warm so we had the whole huge place to ourselves. Well almost, the aged mother was in her wing. I played cards with her at night before we went out to the pub.

The twelfth night celebrations were at the local and only pub in the village and were great; complete with fireworks shooting off into a wonderful night sky filled to

the bursting point with stars and constellations. We had serious thoughts - for about five nano seconds - about living out in the country.

Now about the present from my parents. My mum can be one of the tightest skinflints ever known in the evolutionary scale of civilization. N & D and myself for years only ever got a money order that did not change in value for eighteen years. I finally called a halt because it was now only worth, after the bank charges for cashing it, a gin and tonic for the both of us. My aged parents reasoning behind all this was they didn't want the government to get all that money in postage from sending presents?!?!? So instead of not sending anything, we got magazine subscriptions for a few years. Which was nice if not a tad obscure:- such titles as *The Contemporary Canadian History Journal* covering all 150 years of it were not well received. Well that stopped and we went back to money orders for a year or two again. Then this year after an subtle hint like 'Mum, let's call it quits on your presents'. We got a piece of paper saying that our names had been etched on the TransCanada Trail, a hiking and biking trail that goes right across the country. When I phoned up my brother and told him what I got he said:

'I can just see it. Your name etched on a privy, miles from nowhere and someone has put a telephone number beside it with the message "Good party girl!".'

'I don't think that is very funny.'

'Well you could put the piece of paper to some creative use.'

'It's too shiny for that.'

'I used mine to light my Christmas cigar from the Yule log.'

When I tried to quizz my aged mum on why we were sent such an interesting gift. She went quiet and then said. 'Well I bought you those running shoes this year so I sort of used up my budget on you.' What does one say!

Bet says it's because that generation has what is known as the Depression Syndrome!

'The what?' I asked.

"They grew up in the great depression you know the Dirty 1930s and now even though they have got money and your parents do have it coming out of their ears, they can't spend it. It has to be something practical.'

Nice theory but somehow I don't know...The strange thing is they get real upset if I don't send my traditional Xmas parcel to them. If it doesn't get there in time, life is not worth living til Easter!

Anyways, a good opening at the Camden Arts Centre coming up soon. Studio work is driving me crazy. It is so cold in my studio that I have started to work from home on digital images out of sheer fright from the cold. To top it off the studios have outdoor loos which means that I get into a vicious circle of drinking hot tea to keep warm then having to go to the loo. I try to put off going outside to the loo but there's only so much your bladder can hold. The outcome is that I get really chilled in the most vital of places and have constant colds during the winter. What one suffers for ones art!

The annual cocktail party went well this year with some newer neighbours being initiated into the ritual of staggering home from my strong but delicious dry martinis.

End of February

Just as I was getting into my stride again in going to openings and checking out recent exhibitions my mother-in-law goes and dies. Death always catches one on the hop. She had broken her arm at Xmas but unfortunately I couldn't get the dearest to go up and see her. We found out later the fall was caused by her blacking out - which was caused by her heart. Then it just gave up one day. So now we had to go and see her dead. It was all very family this and family that which I like. My nieces, the police woman and all the others were as great as they always are. There was a bit of argy bargy between his brother and him regarding Nearest and dearest not visiting his mother very much of late i.e. in five years. And all in the usual suppressed way that the family deals with such issues. But generally it was very emotional as funerals are. It took a good three weeks out of February helping to sort things out and the will etc. But the really weird thing that came out of the whole process was the lifting of nearest and dearest's depression.

I like my in-laws and liked my mother-in-law especially but my husband and her had a strained relationship to say the least. They were very much alike. Later when I met Bet and the others at Maison Bertaux and they all had a slant on this issue. Bet started with openers on the subject of men and their mothers and their weird relationships.

'All of them do. There's no exceptions.' she pronounced.

Emm was more prosaic.

'I am glad he's not so blue anymore. He has changed since Art School when I first met you two. He really has just got more and more miserable over the years. I hope things do get better.'

G. who still was smarting from the last unsuccessful attempt to find sperm donor of the year just snorted and ate more cake.

'Really you guys, it's been much nicer now that he's been resurrected from the living dead. I saw him smile for the first time in years.'

'Anything to do with the money she's left him?'

'A £1,000 is not much. She lived in a council flat and has been widowed since 1954.' We all just sat there silent and ate our cake for a moment which is serious work mind you.

'You never know', piped up G suddenly, 'You might just strike it lucky and have sex again. Now that would be something to celebrate!'

If my mouth wasn't so full of cake I would have said something sarcastic about her sex life or the lack of it.

'Perhaps you all would like to come over for a meal?' said Emm. Then just as casually said 'and the wedding is on August 25. We're having a wedding breakfast

with intimate friends and family and a bop in the evening for everyone else. Do come. Invites are in the mail.'

There was a deep and profound silence. 'Why?'

'Stop it Bet' and I kicked her under the table. I meant to ask why August?

'It seemed a good time that suited everybody'

'Not me.'

'Is there ever a good time for you Bet?'

Just before G. and Bet could started in on another traditional G. and Bet argument, I butted in and asked about wedding arrangements. They sat and just glowered at each other like opposing nuclear power stations. So the story goes that Em is actually getting married at 40 to her 10th fiance or is it the 13th? The other 9 or 12 being not the right one(s) for her. Not only that but she is determined to become a mature mother with or without IVF treatment. Which has left G. somewhat pissed off at being 39, unattached and not pregnant. Bet and I being the mature section of this foursome friendship and now past childbearing age say nothing. We are happy now that we have sorted the menopause out. Sort of.

Later at home when I told near and dearest he was very happy for Em and he actually got up and called to congratulate her. Next thing he'll be going to openings with me again.

Mid March

Tube strike messed up my plans with Bet to go to champagne opening at the Museum of London. A big show on the artistic quarters in London. The East End featured prominently and Acme Housing and Studios for artists especially. Driving a car was out of the question. I could have walked but Bet was stuck in deep south London with the ticket so that was that. Been trying to hustle up a show with a gallery for my computer work but it's really hard work. Went to discuss a show at another gallery and was having an uphill battle with the wet limpet that manages the place. In the end I got worn out. As I was leaving the place I bumped into my old mate K. who I hadn't seen for yonks. He's moving two streets over from me and I found myself volunteering to help him for a morning! But in exchange for him helping me with my digital imagery. He asked if I still had that obnoxious dog - the one who used to leave its artistic comments in front of his paintings!! That dog knew more people in the art world than I did. He was the best networking aid I ever had. Unfortunately he moved to Paris. I know this sounds absurd but it is true. I originally said I would look after him for two weeks and two years later he was still with us. However he eventually left and resettled in Paris. Em hated him which is now very strange because she now is completely dotty about dogs as well as cats and babies and ironing. Which just goes to show you not only is life very strange but hormones can bring about weird shifts in women's lives.

AND THEN I went to New York for a week as part of a field study trip!!!

IT WAS ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS.

I saw every museum and art gallery - public and private including all the Soho ones as well. The thing I have to give the Americans credit for is not just their enthusiasm for culture but the way they go about being so open about it. Now I know this only applies to a certain segment of society as it does in England but there are overriding national personalities. The English are just so eccentric and open in a wacky non-conformist way while the Americans are equally but differently open about the future and doing things that haven't been done before and trying ideas that haven't been done before and yet still manage to be just as conformist in a very peculiarly American way.

You can gather I really enjoyed it all and we just walked our feet off. We stayed at the YMCA. Sparten and to the point, as you would expect Hostel-like standards, but clean and just what you needed as we didn't want to relax there. Also we could use the pool etc so I landed up losing weight from all the walking, rested from going to bed early and watching TV at 8 every night and fit from getting up at 6 and going for a swim every day. I think I should do it more often!!! I bought N & D a golf game for his computer and a duty free bottle of whisky which made him purrr. It stopped him from thinking it was all fun. It was not! Art is really hard work. I have the blisters to show for it.

April somewhere in the first week

Okay. I finally made it to one of the many openings that the Whitechapel Gallery is having through the month to celebrate its birthday for 100 years. I think. I just know that there was work chosen by a selected artist who had shows there at some time in the past. Lovely lovely old friends were on the walls. Frida Kahlo in all her glory shone out. That was a good show but then Nick Serota was a curator and he was a hard act to follow. The usual suspects were there. G and Bet had both gone to more prestigious private views for those who are "in the know" whereas I just got the ordinary artists invite to come with all the other artists. Neither of them thought to ask me but then both are either avoiding me. G is so busy cramming too much into her life with her new man, work, her new man and more of her new man.

Studio-wise this year has been a disaster. I'm not too sure about this part time Phd lark, I started. I find it confusing having supervisors talking to me about the work. Usually one just works away and thinks about stuff, throws out some things about stuff, talks to other artists and does more work. Themes and ideas evolve in an illogical way and gradually threads emerge but actually talking about it and defending it to strangers is so unsettling. I have to work out a plan of defence to cope with it...

Private views.. ahhh there lies a tale. With all the extra reading and writing on such interesting subjects as French Feminist Thinking, one just doesn't have the time or shall I say one forgets to go to as many private views as one should or would like. I have been getting the razzle from G and Bet and even Em about my lack of

appearance of late. Bet wondered if by chance dearest and dearest since the demise of his mother had a revival of the libido. I had to warn her that it was still early days yet. But I wonder if there is a lost and found department for libidos. It would be great to find it... that is if it existed???

Diary of an Ageing Art Slut was published anonymously 1997-2004

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The Rise of Feminist Awareness and the Feminist Art Movement in Taiwan

Victoria Lu

In Taiwan's period of democratic awakening in the 1980s, the general social movement's struggle and revolution fueled the earliest awakening of a female consciousness in political life. One of the pioneers of the woman's movement at that time went on to become the Vice President of Taiwan. The intellectuals that led the women's and human rights' movement in the 1980s also became representatives of the general rise in a female consciousness. In the 1990s, a great number of communities joined the women's movement bringing younger members and extending the movement's reach outside of the capital, Taipei to many areas of Taiwan. However, the awakening of female consciousness in the art world occurred much later than in the literary world or in political life.

As art critic Ni Tsai-Chin points out: 'In Taiwan's history, feminism was initially nurtured from women's involvement in politics.' ¹ The earliest feminists to come back to Taiwan, after a higher education abroad, included Li Yuan-Chen, Lu Hsiu-Lien and others who had all focused their energies on political activities. Towards the end of the 1980s, local and returning female artists became the key figures of a new wave in art. Nowadays, the many woman scholars who are active in the art world include Li Ming-Ming, Yen Chuan-Ying, Victoria Lu, and more. Artists included Emily Shih-Chih Yang, Wu Ma-Li, Yan Ming-Huy, Hou Yi-Jen, Chen Hsing-Wan, Chou Pang-Ling, and others. ^{1a} There are also many women working in the theater and cinema.

When aesthetics scholar Lu Chin-Fu analysed the characteristics and groups in the art scene of Taiwan he considered that: 'The Taiwan art scene in the 1980s coincided with the tendencies of a global art scene. Among the[se tendencies was] installation art, the surfacing of space displacement, and women's art or feminist



Victoria Lu *Marriage*



Cho Yo-Jui *Banana*

art. Then there was the banana painter Cho Yo-Jui, Yan Ming-Huy who was anti-male, and Teresa L.C. Huang who braided, Victoria Lu who for a time was called Mister Lu, and others. In the West, women exhibited anti-establishment actions on the principles of minority group resistance via various channels in the first half of the 1970s. Even disadvantaged minority art - handicrafts - became an instrument of resistance. The traditional crude and non-elegant crafts have been elevated to the stature of fine art. Naturally, the techniques Western women used were very versatile and included images, performance, and mixed-media which were greatly used; sometimes as autobiographical manifestations, and at other times to express religious feelings.’ The author refers to this mode of expression as ceremonial inclination in this article. ‘No matter what form it may have taken, it is critical of the male viewpoint.’²

In reality, prior to the 1990s, female artists’ activities took place at a more individual level. Even with the formation of associations or organizations like The Women Artists Association of Taipei, most groups organized simply gatherings or joint exhibitions, and seldom included any discussion of what a female consciousness might be. The stimulus for any discussion of a female consciousness in art circles came mainly from external forces like the women’s groups outside of art community in the 1990s initiated by Li Yuan-Chen, Wu Ma-Li and others. With the Awakening Foundation, I curated the first exhibition embodying female awakening and its importance at the Eslite Art Space in Taipei. Wu Ma-Li, Yan Ming-Huy, Hou Yi-Jen, along with other female artists held a forum publicly discussing the theme of feminism the first time. During the process of recruiting for the exhibition, some women artists made clear that they did not wish to be labeled as “feminist”, nor did they want to be involved in any feminist movement.

Returning from the US in 1990 after completion of her studies, Yan Ming-Huy (1956-) was the first open advocate artist of a feminist movement in the Taiwan art scene. She publicly admitted her mishaps in marriage and used her marriage as the



Yan Ming-Huy *Three Apples*



Yan Ming-Huy *This is Art*

Three Apples (1988) was evidently the vulva of woman, something that had not been previously seen in Taiwan. She explained in the article 'Dream Shadow of Water and Moon':

'Few people consider me an artist who uses sex as the subject of my work. In reality, I paint with human nature as a subject. Sex is a part of human nature and painting a couple of women's busts or a male's genitals is not painting sexually. I am drawing human nature in a patriarchal society taking advantage of the framework of gender distinction.'³

Yan Ming-Huy stood up to fight for an expansion in feminist understanding, creating paintings, drawings and writing scripts which agitated for a female self-consciousness and self-encouragement. The pressure to do so came from the very conservative climate in Taiwanese society which had imperceptibly generated visible scars in her life. Yan Ming-Huy has now shifted her focus toward exploring Buddhism and seldom appears or takes part in public activities. At the time of Yan Ming-Huy's calling for the importance of women's self-awareness during the first part of 1990s, there were several female artists who joined in, most of whom were born in the 1950s.

For instance: Li Mei-Jung (1951-), Tzeng Shai-Shu (1952-), Jun Tsun Tsun Lai (1953-), Fu Chia-Huen (1953-), Wu Ma-Li (1957-), Lulu Shur-Tzy Hou (1958-), Tang Huang-Chen (1958-), Tricia Pey-Chwen Lin (1959-) and the author of this article (1951-) amongst others. There were also a group of artists who were born in the 1960s who took part later, which included Juin Shieh (1961-), Lulu Shur-Tzy Hou (1962-), Lin Chun-Ju (1964-), Elsa Hsiang-Chun Chen (1969-). Though they may not all claim to be feminist artists, nevertheless they have all advocated a female consciousness and this movement is evident in their own artwork or writings.



Lin Chun-Ju *Civilisation and Its Dissatisfaction*

Among them, Wu MaLi was the most active member at the beginning of feminist movement in Taiwan. Wu Ma-Li, (1957-) graduated from Tam Kang University's department of German language. She studied at the Applied Arts School in Vienna, and majored in sculpture. Later, she transferred to Dusseldorf National School of Art. She returned to Taiwan at the completion of her studies and has written many articles, translated other feminist writings, and was editor-in-chief of a series of art books for Yuan-Liou Publishing Company. Wu Ma-Li focused her work on society

and gender issues. Cleverly using the patterns and strategies of social movements to convey her ideas, she also utilizes ritualized art forms to express her aesthetic concepts or make prominent and manifest the act of art itself. After her first individual exhibition at the Shen Yu Gallery in Taipei in 1985, Wu Ma-Li carried out more than twenty individual exhibitions in and out of Taiwan and attended many international exhibitions. In 2001 Wu Ma-Li collaborated with the Awakening Foundation, linking up



Wu Ma-Li *Secret Garden*. Photo: Chih-Hui

sixteen women from the community involved in the "Wan Bu" studio. The process of tailoring a "spiritual bed sheet" was a group effort presented via a video recording, a collective work designed to mirror some social issues concerning Taiwanese women and centered on the making of a quilt. For years, Wu Ma-Li has continuously dedicated herself to women's groups and the women's movement. Her persistence not only contributed to the spread of contemporary Taiwanese art education, but she has also advocated an art where female consciousness is prominent in both her work and her writings. Her accomplishments in the contemporary art field have set up many milestones which have involved not just championing women artists but

also doing things that most male artists cannot ignore. She was personally involved in the social democratic process of Taiwan. From her life we not only see the course of contemporary art development in Taiwan, we can also see traits which have epitomized the track which Taiwan's social reforms took in the 1980s. This cultivator of feminism has incorporated both willpower and endurance and represents a paragon of the avant-garde artist today in Taiwan. (see *n.paradoxa*'s profile of Wu Ma-Li = The conceptual work of Mali Wu, Taiwan (5,Nov.1997))

The awakening of a female consciousness in Taiwan has been a gradual process. Initially concentrated in the area surrounding Taipei, its influence gradually seeped into the male chauvinist south of the country. In the early 1990s we see a very limited number of works which appeared here that distinctively reflect a female consciousness. At the time, the response of female artists to the issue of "gender distinction" was generally more ambiguous or hesitant. Mei-Hua Lai, slightly older than Yan Ming-Huy, might be considered the earliest female artist to present a "gendered distinction" to issues in the south but due to her low-keyed nature and her residence in the south, she stood on the fringes of the art world in Taiwan.

Mei-Hua Lai (1948-) graduated from the Fine Arts Department of National Taiwan Normal University. Her stylized painting was developed independently by focusing on recollections in her personal life experiences and developing a style which appeared to be in defiance of any known branch of a school or genre. Women artists from the same generation as Mei-Hua Lai have also painted or expressed an art based completely on the explosion of internal potentials but generally this work has not been influenced by the rigid theoretical framework of the art world.⁴



Mei-Hua Lai *Female Image*

Juin Shieh (1961-) graduated from Fine Arts Department at the National Taiwan Normal University and moved to New York where she received her master degree from Pratt Institute. She is one of the few artists in Taiwan with a doctoral degree in studio art, which she received from New York University. Returning to Taiwan after travels around the globe and married to her husband who has a high tech background, she began living as a wife in the environment of the Hsinchu Science Industrial Park, and has since become a professor at the National Hsin-Chu Normal College. Juin Shieh describes how she represents herself in her work: 'So I must detach from the mythical mirage I have painted for a long while and turn to examine my own ever-changing stream of consciousness. Painstakingly investigating the relationship between gender distinction and the society, I dissect the symbols and the network of connection



Juin Shieh *Gift Package II*

amongst them.⁵ In her paintings, Juin Shieh has raised her suspicions about symbolic language and tries to subvert any simple reconstruction of these images back into their Western traditions. From the exploration of a pure art, her work extends to a broader human sympathy. From the minuscule “I” in the family clan, her work extended to dissect an anatomy on a human scale and raised in a new way the issue of female identity and its predicaments. She is an artist who manifests a humanitarianism with a black humor. When Juin Shieh’s paintings are placed among a clan of women artists, it is clear she possesses a revolutionary explosive force, challenging traditions

with her work. But when her work is placed without gender distinction in the contemporary art arena, she remains a rare and epochal artist who is simultaneously retaining the depth of humanistic virtues and employing remarkable techniques.

Following the development of a feminist art in the late 1990s, more and more women artists were unafraid to face the female body and sexual desire. Works of art which display female characteristics or express female consciousness were no longer perceived as secondary or placed in separate exhibitions and received much more attention on a whole new level. Works exposing women’s genitalia are now considered “chic” in some young artists’ circles. The new generation of women artists clearly face up to this new representation of the female body and to the question of relations using gendered distinctions with a more open attitude. A female consciousness has become the main concern of some of the younger generation and they do not avoid subjects or issues related to these questions.

A more diversified approach toward the subject of female consciousness, the liberation of sexual desire, of sexual appetite and representing more primitive urges have become the mainstream concerns of women’s art expressions in the late 1990s. Some young artists even compete in creating more revealing and sensational means to stir up the controversy of sexuality. The situation is very different from the early 1990s when those of the generation of artists like Yan Ming-Huy were suffocated by controversy and suffered during a completely different era and in a wholly different space-time.

Early on in the awakening of female consciousness, women artists used “sex” as a tool of resistance to compete for equality with man. Sex was what oppressed women and made them miserable even though its representation was flexible.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, when this day and age is quite populated with ideas from a female consciousness, representing sex has become a beneficial tool for self-propagation or has started to serve as a short cut to fame. Sex is now seen as a form of autonomy, joyous, unbridled and impudent.

Lulu Shur-Tzy Hou (1962-) graduated from Taipei Municipal First Girls' Senior High School and the Philosophy Department at the National Taiwan University, which in order to enter one had to possess a generally acknowledged elitist academic background. Originally molded to become an "obedient daughter", "proper maiden", "a dutiful wife and loving mother", Hou departed for America for her studies in 1989. She first exhibited eight different series of black and white photographic works in 1996 in New York. In her self-portraits she captured the trunk of her body and intentionally omitted the head and visage. Underneath the clothes, she placed a chrysanthemum, a lemon, a banana and other vegetation which people generally associate with sexual allegory in our voyeuristic culture. Her intentional shifting of the line of vision was to allow males to experience the sensation of being stared at, surveyed, oppressed and humiliated by being so closely examined. When Lulu Shur-Tzy Hou publicized the same piece of work in Taipei in 1997, she irritated a few male viewers and brought out a very negative response from male critics.



Liu Shih-Fen *The Multiple Sophism of Skin and Membranes and the Shadow of His/Her Tones* (1999) detail

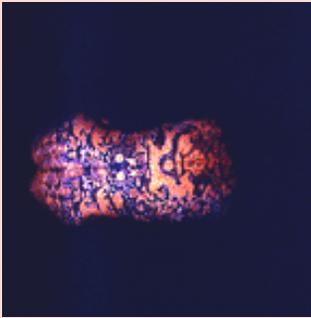
Liu Shih-Fen (1964-) started off in the Taiwanese art arena in 1988. Since then she has become a peculiar target of interviews by the media. At the age of eighteen, she passed her examinations and worked for an extensive period as a professional nurse at the Veterans General Hospital operation room. Her piece composed of composite media *Understanding Hearts and Sound* was chosen by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum for exhibit in 1996, and was acclaimed by Japanese curator Fumio Nanjo. After being

chosen to be in his 1998 Taipei Biannual Exhibition, she used real human bones covered with an artificial skin membrane made from silk stockings. These were placed on a stainless-steel operation table to which she tied sketches she had made from medical textbooks. This blockbuster exhibition raised many eyebrows and she was then invited to the 1999 Liverpool Biennial show. In 2001, she was also one of the artists selected for the Venice Biennial Show and was later invited to participate in the Florence Biennial. In 1998 Liu Shih-Fen created *Feast of Papi*, which explicitly displays her grounding in feminist ideas. It depicts with sarcasm, the attitudes of a patriarchal society in so far as it considers women's bodies as only qualified as an apparatus for spawning or carrying on the family name. An artificial penis was belted



Liu Shih-Fen 99 *Kinds of Love*
Gene: *Eyeball of Lovers*

entered in the 2001, 49th Venice Biennial called *Ninety-nine gene Mappings About Love - Lover's pupil* where she also used as an image her own cardiac nuclear magnetic resonance chart. Via computer, she joined the image of her nude to form the flashing eyes of lovers which the viewer experienced in a darkened room of the exhibition. Liu Shih-Fen's artworks range from illustrations, to graphic design, to essay writing, drawing and to conceptual forms of installation art. The multiple displays of her personal ability to cross many spheres of expression, and especially her integration of images from medical technology into her expression have enabled her to be regarded by many as a pioneer. Liu Shih-Fen even though she has experienced international recognition has remained at her post as a nurse and continues to use the medical world as her creative inspiration. She uses her spare time to fully dedicate herself to the creation of her art and to manage her second identity as an artist.



Chang Hsing-Yu *The Song of Skin*

ceremonies, which depart from typical classic religion, while exploring human psychology, by examining the interaction between the environment and modes of behavior.

This idiosyncrasy of indirect ceremonial work reveals that the new generation of female artists is more concerned about the meaning of their own egocentricity.

onto a male skeleton and placed on an extravagant baroque-styled dining table as if it were a feast created by women. In the same year she produced *The Multiple Sophism of Skin and Membranes and the Shadow of His/Her Tones* (1999) and in both these works, it is the artificial skin membrane made from silk stockings which clearly characterizes the medium of her work. A 2000 version of *Ninety-nine Gene Mappings About Love* used Liu Shih-Fen's own gene mapping, and evolved into the version she

The new generation of women artists from the 1990s like Chang Hwei Lan (1964-), Kristy Cha-Ray Chu (1965-) Chang Hsing-Yu (1971-) have also opened up many new prospects for women in terms of both "concept" and the "handling of medium". The open dialogue between them has helped to unearth and reconstruct a new interpretation or viewpoint in history. Constantly piecing together, matching, re-grouping and re-generating ideas, it would be correct to say that only sometimes is the issue of gender distinction also considered. Female artists of this new generation tend to integrate work in a performance-type abstraction of

They have shifted away from the persona dominant in the recent past of being manipulated and compelled to act their role into a new situation in which they clearly become the predominant director of their own destiny in life. A keen sense of autonomy amongst the new generation of female artists is manifested here. Because there are no historical resources for both sexes to use, women often compete head-to-head with their male peers in the domain of non-traditional new media. This was also in the 1980s, when a number of outstanding women artists achieved excellence in the field of electronic media and recording arts.

Conclusion

The awakening of Taiwanese female consciousness occurred late, at least a decade or two later when compared to the West. Post-1980s, there have been numerous women scholars in the art world who have returned to Taiwan with an education from abroad and worked alongside locally fostered talents to form an enormous lineup. These female intellectuals who have influenced female consciousness may not have all agreed with the concept of feminism but nevertheless feminism and female consciousness as intellectual forces have had a significant impact and substantial influence. Having undergone a decade long journey, the Taiwanese women artists who have emerged during the 1990s no longer conceal their personal views. Their standpoint on feminism is more distinct or definite, and they work without issuing extensive comments or strong denials.

However, few artists with feminist stances have emerged from Taiwan to receive recognition in the international art arena. In spite of their splendid exhibition records, Wu Ma-Li, Lulu Shur-Tzy Hou, Liu Shih-Fen and others still face difficulties in breaking into the Taiwan art market. This fact reveals that the heart of Taiwanese society still rests under “the framework of sexual discrimination and patriarchy”, and that the awakening of female consciousness remains a process of sisterhood and friendship amongst a handful of women in the art world. Overall, even though it could not be claimed that the feminist movement has shaped Taiwan, there have always been pockets of fragmented feminist revolutions. Unable to generate a major influence in Taiwan’s contemporary art scene at present, there is still much space to strive for in the future.

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Notes

1. Ni Tsai-Chin 'Essays in 1993' *Artist-Taiwan Art: Retrospect of Last Twenty Years* (Taipei: Artist Publishing Co., 1995) pp. 199-200.

1a. Please note Chinese spellings for names of artists have been retained throughout this article,

- i.e. surname first, then first name (Wu Ma-Li). This is the opposite of the European convention of first name, then surname (Ma-Li Wu).
2. Lu Chin-Fu 'The Individuals and Clams in the Art Community of Last Ten Years' *A Decade of Taiwan Modern Art (I)* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Art Museum, 1993) pp. 9-10.
 3. Yan Ming-Huy 'Dream Shadow of Water and Moon' *Yan Ming-Huy* (Taipei: Hoark International Art, 1995).
 4. Mei-Hua Lai 'Artist Statement' *Power of Women's Creation* (Taipei: Explore Culture, 1995) pp. 76-77.
 5. Juin Shieh 'Artist Statement' May 10, 2001.

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If white is just a colour, the gallery is just a sight?

Marion von Osten

(Art and Feminism, paper from session at ARCO'02 Madrid, February 2002)

Ute Meta Bauer asked me to talk about the very specific approach to questions of gender and marginality in the exhibition projects that I have been organising and to focus on the necessity of connect gender debates to their context in various hegemonic settings, in order to introduce ideas about how collaborative practices can create new spaces of discourse. I would like to refer to a specific project which I initiated at Shedhalle Zurich at the end of the 1990s, in which the institutional framework, the “exhibition”, was made into a communicative space and integrated the audience/public as part of the setting. For, in highlighting the aspect of usage, these projects were going beyond linear speaking structures: ie a one way communication by the institution to its audiences. As each particular institutional setting is relevant in order to develop new forms of speech positions, I would like to give you a short introduction to the institutional frame, before I present and reflect on the project itself.

The Shedhalle Zurich - a contemporary art space - had become, due to its conceptual change in 1994 and the program of the first curatorial team Renate Lorenz and Sylvia Kafhesy, a space, for cultural political discourse on the one hand and newly politicised forms of exhibition practices. The projects organised in the Shedhalle have been and are still strongly issue-related, using post- structuralist and feminist theory, post-colonial and city sociology as the theoretical frameworks for the projects it initiates. Specific to the exhibition program during the 1990s were projects like *Game Grrrl*, *Natur TM*, *erotisch aber indiskret*, *Sex&Space*, *Kultur*, *MoneyNations* and a lot of others which were developed collectively or in

collaborative formations with other groups of people and the public. The curatorial team itself was constituted in the 1990s by two or, during my own time there, three curators and not as is more usual by a single curator. This created a collective notion of curatorship and deconstructed in some ways the master narration of the curator and his or her power and position in choosing, collecting and valuing work. Another important aspect is that in this first constellation of curators, Renate Lorenz (in that time part of the group), Büro Bert, Ursula Biemann, Sylvia Kafhesy and myself have all been artists and in a broader sense cultural producers. This created an atmosphere more like a producers' space, where projects have been on the one hand developed over a longer period together with the persons involved because of common interests in that specific issue, and on the other hand, the people involved in the projects have been not just artists, but in relation to this expanded context architects, gender theorists, political activists as well.

In Shedhalle Projects, the exhibition space has been used in a way which tried to change the body politics of the exhibition as well as its representational paradigms. First of all with regard to the audience in relation to the artist, the notion of a single cultural producer has been transgressed as well as the separation of the two was constantly put into question. The practice in Shedhalle during the 1990s tried to broaden the concept and understanding of exhibition practices, analysing the institutional framework as a hegemonic position: a position that has been the ground for works of artists of the second generation of Institutional Critique in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. This was also the ground for my own reflections as an artist outside and as a curator inside an institution.

The image politics of the annual publications of Shedhalle 1994-1998, for example, represented the exhibition always in relation to the spectator and presented the public as actors/ participants within the exhibition. The publications used small black and white images and presented the spectators not as neutral objects in front of works but actively engaged in viewing, discussion and interactions in the space. It is not by chance that you do not see the spectator's back in front of the work in many of these images, (for as Brian O Doherty pointed out in his famous article 'Inside the White Cube', this is typical for the representation of the spectator in installation photographs), but instead what you see is, for example, the back of the artist Lia Perjovschi from Romania, as she explains her work to the audience at the MoneyNations opening in 1998, and we all become spectators of the photograph and the scene with which we are confronted.

In the publication *Agenda: Perspektiven Kritischer Kunst*, the artist Julie Ault (a member of Group Material) points out as well, that the practice of viewing an exhibition typically puts the viewer in a specific silenced and disciplined position. Referring to exhibition projects like *Alt Youth Media* at the New Museum (New York) in 1996, Julie Ault argues that this show, gave the public (in opposition to the art gallery in general) space and access to much more everyday life practices (the not so

serious ones) in the exhibition hall: reading magazines, viewing videos, copying Fan-Zines, doing research, meeting with friends, and listening to music etc.

In most of the projects I organised or co-organised, the exhibition space became more like a workspace, a public studio for critical discourses, a space for political theory and interdisciplinary collaborations rather than a space for visual and textual representation and artistic works only, in the manner which Julie Ault describes. I tried to use the institution itself as a producer of content and inter-connectivity, as a social space as well as a space for critical issues. I would like to point to the project *MoneyNations*, in this context again, which has been a exhibition, workshop, congress, video program on the one hand but, much more importantly, a network of producers, a kind of supra-national community, between West- Middle- East- and South-European cultural producers from different disciplines on the other hand, who from a cultural perspective developed projects over the Schengen (visa) Border, by making the border itself an issue (see www.moneynations.ch).

Similarly in the *Sex&Space Project*, in Zurich, which was later presented as part of the steirischer herbst festival in Graz, TV set-like situations were installed in the exhibition space alongside information material and videos, which obviously were to be used by the public and at the same time the artists as they chose. (see *Sex & Space* website). These sets gave the impression that performances could take place, or film shots made, or that the space itself was a stage-like situation. The Props represented some general assumptions of space, like the division of public and private spaces, but as they were Props, they were de-naturalised and appeared at the same time in their status as "common sense". However you would not have found any "finished" work in the exhibition hall in the manner which would be usual in an exhibition hall, or an information design exhibition. In fact, it seemed as if there was only a small amount of material around. Indeed, the show had even not enough information included, to say that this would have been a clear information-orientated or designed exhibition, a precise, where you would be guided along one line of argument to get into the debate. Everything you saw only suggested that there would be a potential of expression and analysis, that there are multiple references, actual, historical, and that the space did not fulfil its usual purpose: TO SHOW. To EXHIBIT knowledge.

This strategy needs to be understood in terms of its background in institutional critique, namely, that the exhibition - as a historical product as a stage of ordering knowledge and discourse - always has been and still is a place of inclusion and exclusion, and that every act of showing privileges knowledge, and constructs a certain history. In case of *Sex&Space* the concept of space itself had been an issue and therefore it became highly relevant that in the history of exhibition practices woman (producers) were structurally written out, or more accurately included only as the sexualised image or muse.

The idea for a productive space/environment of *Sex&Space* in Zurich came out

of a long process and some group work, which I initiated when I started to work in Zurich. My "curatorial" decision for the Zurich project had been to change the roles of audience, by inviting them to take part. Artists from Berlin and Vienna like Josef Strau, Ariane Mueller, Lukas Duwenhoegger, Cornelia Schmidt Bleek, Michael Zinganel and Jochen Becker, were also invited to hold lectures or lecture performances, which addressed issues of deconstructing modernist planning paradigms on the grounds of their heterosexual normative implications. The invitation of artists to be theorists highlighted the context of an artistic practice, which uses theory as a practice in itself as well as for design and art production. My "politics" in these invitations tried to make transparent that the interest in theory, has been always part of artistic practices, but has often been left out of the representation of artistic production as a value in the exhibition space. Parallel to this I initiated, together with the art historian and gender theorist Rachel Mader, a reading group with younger not-yet-known artists and cultural producers, who mostly came from the School of Visual Arts in Geneva, like Pauline Boudry, Martine Anderfuhren, Lea Jaeklin, Susanne Sauter, and others. This process, in itself, made the exhibition in the end into a much needed space for production, instead of a more traditional show with finished works. But that was not just a curatorial decision. The group of women involved decided it mainly together and stayed almost every day in the exhibition hall during the four weeks of the project and worked further on the issues, debated, or just had dinner together, listened to music, read books or viewed videos. This meant the space was misused for personal activities as well. When the audience came in they started to talk with them about the project's aims and these women involved them in the project's discourse. In the public workshops, geographers, architects, media activists and city planners were confronted by artists, critics and political activists and the same process occurred the other way round in specifically organised panel discussions in a TV studio setting which we used to record the events as well.

In terms of a feminine practice to analyse power structures, but also to produce specific relations, solidarity and forms of collectivity which go beyond reduced identity articulations, the field of everyday life and its living conditions are of same importance as the symbolic space of representation and are shown to be relevant for the production of "Works". These aspects cannot and should not be seen as separated from a political and theoretical point of view, but up until now they always have been in the Art World, and our question was, how can we establish a space that takes this political notion for granted?

But the most interesting aspect in looking back on this processes today is that it was not the act to open the space itself which transgressed the practice of representation, or made it more adequately feminist, but that we established our own history through this act, and helped to form a collectivity which went far beyond the actual show. This creation of a particular but common history, made the project

an important point of reference. The project formed a collective memory, a counter cultural narration, as seemingly the participation had not been only symbolic. *Sex&Space* (Sex & Space website) and *MoneyNations* (www.moneynations.ch) as exhibition projects have become a basis for future activities for a lot of people concerned with critiques of heterosexual norms or racist attitudes, as well as a basis for a new notion of capitalist critique from a feminist or queer position, (see i.e. *Reproduktions Konten faelschen*, by Pauline Boudry, Brigitta Kuster and Renate Lorenz, or my own reflection in the *Agenda Publication* and other activities by *Sex&Space* participants). The institutional practice gave us the possibility for new temporary groupings and collaborations, which are, in one way or another still active today and, much more importantly, they became a means for initiating production and for self-articulation by young feminists and queers at that time, in 1996, when the project was made.

For myself these projects raised all the above mentioned questions, which then influenced later projects like *MoneyNations 1 and 2*, also held in Zurich and Vienna, where the aspect of self articulation from an anti-racist perspective in relation to cultural producers in Eastern Europe became the central aspect. *Sex&Space* opened in this way our perceptions about an informal and marginal, but extremely, tactical use of the exhibition space.

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Art and Feminism, papers from session at ARCO '02 Madrid, February 2002.

Katy Deepwell

I would like to thank the organisers of this session for inviting me to speak about *n.paradoxa* and contemporary feminist debates.

In order to explain what *n.paradoxa* does and how it sees itself as an active intervention in feminist discourse, I want to begin by discussing 3 publications on feminism and the visual arts, which came out in the last 12 months. My reasons for beginning here are firstly, that they can tell us something about the current state of feminist discourse and secondly they project a view of feminism, which is worth analysing. The first is Hilary Robinson's anthology of one hundred texts of feminist art criticism from the 1970s to the present - called *Feminism - Art - Theory 1968-2000*, a 1000-page volume published by the UK academic publisher Blackwells. The second is Helena Reckitt's *Art and Feminism* - which is introduced by a long essay by Peggy Phelan but also is also structured an anthology of artworks and texts and is published in a well-illustrated format by Phaidon. The third is Ute Grosenick's *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Centuries*, from Taschen books, which profiles the work of 93 women artists, a largely contemporary selection since around 80 of these artists are still working today.

These books share a remarkable consensus in so far as they position American feminists/ feminist artists as around 50% of what constitutes their definition of feminism. Peggy Phelan in her introduction to *Art and Feminism* remarks on the fact her account will only follow the American women's art movement as this is what she is familiar with. The picture is not uniform concerning who is otherwise important in the remaining 50%. The German publisher Taschen does seek to emphasise contemporary German women artists, positioning them as 14% of the

other contributors, while both Phelan and Robinson include around 25% of artists/contributors from the UK, leaving 12.5% for Europe and 12.5% for other countries including Australia, Asia, Canada, Japan and South America. The emphasis within these publications raises many questions for me because it does not coincide with my understanding of the spread of feminist thought internationally, nor my knowledge of the many different initiatives by women artists around the world. Yet what struck me as I reviewed these 3 new books was the steady building of an orthodoxy - a taught discipline, and a linear history - which while providing an effective account to support "the emergence, impact and triumph of the American feminist movement" (the subtitle of Mary Garrard and Norma Broude's *The Power of Feminist Art*) was marginalising and eradicating alternative perspectives and very different forms of feminism in other locations in the world, in an attempt to "mainstream" its own account.

Language is part of the problem. Translation into English of many feminist texts from Germany, Italy, Spain, France or many other countries partly accounts for the absence from anthologies without funding for translation costs. But it is not the only explanation, given the large volume of American and British texts translated into many other languages. There is no doubt that the account of the American feminist art movement is the most well published and widely disseminated account of all the potential histories of feminist art movements in the last 30 years - but this does not mean it is the only account around - or the only major feminist art movement to have emerged - as even the most cursory look at the history of international feminist art exhibitions organised in Europe in the last 30 years would indicate. In spite of evidence to the contrary or "insider" knowledge (ie active participation in the women's movement in someone's life experience) which would counter this view, the popularisation of one account of feminist art continues relentlessly.

When I began *n.paradoxa*, this was one of my concerns - namely that there existed a homogenisation and closure on feminism's potential and effectively its archiving as a historical movement. *n.paradoxa* is fuelled by an active research principle, embedded in its title. *Para* - meaning "beyond or through" and *doxa* - "accepted opinion, taught knowledge". It began with my own research on an academic, but government-funded, research trip which I undertook in 1996 to Canada and around Europe (to 7 countries), looking at the history of feminist art. I was already then questioning what I had the greatest knowledge of, and which had been an inspiration to me, the Anglo-American account of a history of feminist art, especially the false idea that it was the only history of feminist activity.

The result of this research trip was to set up *n.paradoxa* as a website, an e-journal. Initially I envisaged it as an online resource for students, artists and lecturers with information and articles about the work of contemporary women artists. 1996 was the moment at which most Universities internationally became connected to the net and made this facility available to their staff and students and this was to be my

main constituency - an international one, which in spite of my decision to publish mainly in English, would be available to anyone who logged on from anywhere in the world. I also wanted to ensure that it could provide a starting point to the terrible ignorance of students (and some staff) about the volume of publications internationally on the histories of feminist art and the work of contemporary women artists in the last 30 years. In this sense, *n.paradoxa* was to be a “meta-site” bringing together sources of information found nowhere else on the web which it has proved to be, and maintained its uniqueness because of this active research principle. So, on this site, you will find information pages and links to women’s art organisations, film festivals, and publications on contemporary women artists. I recently reorganised the *n.paradoxa* booklist by country and here you will find the many publications from Germany, Australia, Canada and many other countries which challenge the picture created by the 3 books I began by discussing. The feminist art movements in those countries are not the minority players, that this account makes them appear to be, but have their own documented histories and debates.

In 1998, I began to publish *n.paradoxa* in print and as a bi-annual journal it is now entering its fifth year of publication. The conception for this was to continue the tradition of feminist art journals which I had read and admired in the past, *LIP* (Australia); *Heresies*, *Women Artists News* and *Chrysalis* (USA); *Ruimte* (Netherlands): all of whom had ceased publication. The aim was partly to do more and different things using the print medium but also to reach an “art-world” audience who tend to use the internet as a communications and marketing tool rather than as a form of publication equivalent to print. Art exhibitions use the web to distribute or republish material that they would generally publish in leaflets, rarely going beyond this format, with the exception of a few very specific commissions to web artists. Art criticism and analysis are very poorly represented online, compared with the volume of actual information pages on exhibitions. Art journals tend to use their websites to summarise and supplement their printed form and to act as advertising for subscriptions - the exceptions to this general rule are the journals on new media.

Women’s studies/feminist theory online also has had very little to say about women artists as producers of culture compared to the work on woman in terms of representations within culture. *n.paradoxa* also distinguishes itself from the many feminist cultural e-zines and journals as it is not a project about “women’s culture” in the inter-disciplinary sense of embracing literature, film or dance and theatre. *n.paradoxa*’s focus is always on the work of women artists (visual arts only) and their projects. The different forms of analysis published are about this work’s relation to a wide variety of feminist theories of gender, politics, experience, social and cultural mores, historical understanding - and this is taken as an open-ended enquiry not as a fixed position or as “one type of approach or method”. Recognising these types of constituencies online and analysing their existing work, lay behind the decision to develop the website and later go into print. *n.paradoxa* perversely went

from website to print and continues to maintain the two forms as separate editions. They publish separate copy and have separate identities. I believe, they also have different audiences/ readers - especially in terms of geographical spread - to judge from the emails I get. The print version is sold by mail order and has a wide international audience but its distribution in bookshops - principally for reasons of cost - is limited to the UK and Northern Europe.

It was my ambition for the journal (in both forms) that it should be a platform for feminist debate from different locations in the world. Each printed volume contains contributions from 10-12 different countries (and the countries themselves continue to change). While feminism has often been dismissed as a “local” or localised event - a specific peer reaction - it is my belief that the appearance of feminism in art is a truly unprecedented global phenomenon and that it is the exchanges between feminists internationally which form one of the most rewarding areas in which to work. *n.paradoxa* seeks to publish in-depth analysis of women artists’ projects, rather than following simply the reviewing practices of most art magazines of current shows. Attention is paid to women’s presence in international biennials as an indicator of changing trends. This idea is the consequence of taking up one of the major feminist criticisms of the dominant culture, namely, its systematic marginalisation of the “value” of women’s work. Serious scholarship and in-depth analysis are the means to counter this view of women’s art practice and to intervene to change this value system and to give space and meaning to women’s work. There are no regular correspondents for *n.paradoxa* and this principle is designed to continue to widen the scope and range of contributions published. Contributors are women artists, curators, critics and art/social historians from different parts of the world. No media is allowed to predominate and a wide range of work in painting, sculpture, installation, new media, video, photography and performance and public art work have been discussed as well as very different forms of debates, conferences, workshops and exhibition strategies undertaken by women artists. To date, contributions from probably more than 30 countries have been published in its 2 versions and this list will continue to expand: from Uruguay to Taiwan, from Australia to Slovakia, from Russia to Canada, from Poland to China, from Switzerland to Mexico, from Ireland to Iran, from India to Turkey, from Hungary to Iceland, from Finland to Uganda, from Germany to Japan, from the Caribbean islands to Denmark, from Spain to France and Israel as well as from the USA to the UK.

n.paradoxa’s ambition is inter-national in the sense of knowledge and ideas moving between one place to another. This is often called “trans-national” but I chose international to provide some distance from any one specific kind of discourse or a modified post-colonial or third-world vs. first-world form of discourse even though this form of analysis does regularly appear on the pages of the journal. Another principle is that a plurality of narratives, different voices and different perspectives are essential to the structure of each publication. Discussions of the inter-relations

of class, sexuality, ethnicity and race in the work of women artists and the cultural politics which gave them visibility is present within the journal, alongside discussions of feminist psychoanalytic theory, different methods of feminist art criticism and discussion of different working practices and cultural concerns. If heterogeneity is the organising principle, the effect is not random or chaotic, because of the organising themes of each volume, which provide a structure through which to reveal difference.

Although gender unites women artists as producers into a marginalised group in culture and in popular perceptions of cultural value - in terms of representation, gender alone rarely structures their interests or concerns as individual artists. There are nevertheless subjects which women artists have tackled which have never been tackled in the work of male artists because of their experiences as women in the world. Women artists' approaches to their chosen subjects have been consistently different from the work of their immediate (male) peer group - as much work in feminist art history and art criticism has continually shown. The platform *n.paradoxa* provides is unusual and many times, the essays published could not have been published elsewhere, not for reasons of quality, but because they fell outside the policies of existing magazines and journals. In choosing the themes, I was conscious of trying to link up with classic pre-occupations in feminist art practice or feminist theory, 'Desire and the Gaze' or 'Body, Space and Memory' but I was also trying to provide a space for emerging debates. One of the earliest volumes was on 'Women and New Media' and this is one of the earliest publications on the subject of cyberfeminism in the visual arts. There was a volume on Performance Art called 'About Time', another on 'Sculpture/Public Art and Installation'. The current volume 'EcoLogical' has two very different ideas within it - the first ecology and eco-feminism, the second systems of logic in women's work, especially around collections. The purpose of providing a platform like this is to publish people's research work, in a well-produced, thoughtful and provocative manner which raises the visibility of the writers and the artists, opening up avenues for future enquiry. This trend continues in the next volume, 'Rethinking Revolution'.

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Diary of an Ageing Art Slut from London, the Montmartre of the Millennium

Late August

Our family “holiday” this year in Canada had once again taken us to the Wild West and even further North, to 900 miles north of Edmonton. That is North, believe me! Why my brother lives up there beyond all known civilisation is beyond me. But his work is with trees and ecology and believe me there is a lot of trees and ecology up there. But this sacrifice in cultural terms was to help him celebrate his 25th wedding anniversary. And to give moral support as this year his daughter has made him and his wife grandparents. It was not planned. In fact, it was a major trauma in the family’s life as she is not married or living with anybody and has just graduated from high school. He was rather pissed off at it all. The whole extended family came to stay for a week. That included my aunts from my father’s side. the matriarchs of the family. I felt sorry for her boyfriend as they were now living together with my brother and his wife because he lost his job. And there were now forty of the family encamped in and around the homestead. Nearest and dearest said to me that he thought he saw the boyfriend shaking at one point. Just when you think things can get no worse they usually do. The ex to whom I sent the sizzling letter to for air brushing me out of history, drove up with my nephew to meet us all. I am now well and truly over this.

Well, Em is finally married! It had to be the best wedding I have ever been to. And I have been to some.

Nearest & dearest and myself had just got in the door from the airport when Bet was on the phone enquiring what I was going to wear.

‘Oh that’s simple. The outfit that Em was going to get married in the first place!’
There was for once a loss of words on Bet’s part.

‘WHATTTTTTT!’

‘The 1950 strapless dress with matching coat in ivory. I showed it to you. Remember?’

‘What are your accessories?’ she queried accusingly.

‘I have made a huge black net hat with a black clutch bag and shoes.’

‘Good. At least something is appropriate!’

‘Don’t be a meany. and don’t spoil her day. I hope you are not bringing anybody?’

‘She told me not to as she didn’t want to pay to feed somebody she was never going to see again! Bloody Cheek!’

‘And G is coming on her Own also.’

‘You bet! She hopes to pick up a new sperm donor.’

‘Well, I am glad everything is normal then. What are you giving her for a present?’

A question which then produced a conversation that wandered into Surrealist proportions. As I was giving her one of my art works, at her request I may add, I was up to date on what I needed to do for the wedding.

‘Look Bet, just give her some gorgeous towels. Two complete sets from bath sheet down to face cloth. That should set you back a bit.’

‘I have some thing like that set aside at John Lewis. Boring but practical. From my own experience of setting up home.... I threw in a day at the Sanctuary for her. She is going to need it when reality sets in.’

But before I could get her off the phone as I was finding it rather hard to concentrate from Jet lag, she landed her her final punch.

‘Just what is Em wearing to get married in if you have the “old” outfit?’

‘Oh, a floor length strapless white dress with a gauzy shawl for her shoulders. Why?’

‘A white dress? Like a bride’s dress?’

‘I think it would be appropriate for the occasion, don’t you - she being the bride and all that?’

‘Ummmmm?’

As I said to Bet, ‘Don’t ruin her day. I will think nothing stuffing a champagne bottle down your throat if you so much as begin to utter a disparaging word - UNDERSTOOD?’

The conversation then took a turn for art gossip and the subject of dress was dropped. I also learned that G had gone all domestic and had sent a huge amount of gift vouchers to Em, intended for Habitat. The next day I got a panicky call from Em to come help her with the arrangements. So off I went and did so every day that week doing all sorts of dumb little chores from finishing the embroidery on bridesmaid’s dresses to filling little bags up with sweets and toys for the dinning tables.

The day before the wedding as we all stood in Em’s kitchen checking off things that had been done and drinking some white wine. I gaily enquired where were the wedding photos going to be taken.

'The Park, of course.'

'Well, I hope you have checked with the authorities that it's okay?'

Stunned looks !

'Why wouldn't it okay?'

'Well, there has been a huge outdoor screen erected for an outdoor cinema for the last three nights and they will be taking it down on Saturday around the time you are going there.'

Looks of frozen panic set in until Em blurted out 'You'll have to fix it! I am too busy.'

So, off I went to the telephone and blurted out the problem to the parks manager. He grumbled it was all short notice but as his daughter had got married last year and he had to sort out last minute hitches he could understand and would send a dispatch rider down to the office of the caretaker and all would be sorted out for tomorrow. Phew!!

The Wedding Day in August

Come the day of the wedding it was a brilliant hot august day that promised to more close in humidity and even more hotter as it developed. Dearest looked out the bathroom window and warned that we would be melting before noon.

'Well, I'll just have to drink lots of liquids then!'

'Don't get too drunk! You booed the best man last time and told him to get his kit off.'

Em had outdone herself in the level of her original planning skills this time. Her partner and herself hired a London route master bus. You know the double decker red, "jump on - jump off" types that are THE tourist symbol of London.

We had all been instructed that if we went to bus stop J beside Liverpool St station for 9:15 leaving at 9:30 sharp a bus would take us to the Registry Office at Finsbury Town Hall. N & D was beside himself with excitement as was every other man at the wedding. I don't think they could have been more excited if a cement mixer or steam train had been hired for the event. When I donned my hat and stepped out, two complete strangers commented on how nice my hat looked.

'Nice hat lady!'

On the tube I stood out a mile amongst all the Saturday morning casual dressed passengers going with their kids to lessons and other Saturday excursions. But the bus was there and we helped Em's partner soon-to-be husband load the bus with cooler boxes of champagne and other boxes of plastic champagne glasses. Dearest and I tied on gas filled balloons that said JUST MARRIED and put a satin banner across the side of the bus that said WEDDING SPECIAL. We felt dead chuffed with ourselves for thinking that one up last night at two in the morning when we lay in bed too hot to sleep. I had suggested I would make a pot of tea if he went and got his big felt tip pens so we could we start on some fabric I had underneath the bed. We

were too excited to sleep anyway. It's not everyday one of your longest friends finally gets married to her fourteenth fiancé.

Late September

Life goes on. Of course the issues of life and death are in everyone's thoughts this month after the tragedy in New York. Dearest and I have been having very long and serious talks about "the meaning of it all" as we sit in bed watching the news flashes and various programs. He had moved one TV into the bedroom and another into the kitchen so we wouldn't miss anything. We were glued to the television sets for two weeks and then I had enough and moved the TV back to the living room out of the kitchen and banned the one in the bedroom to the study. We needed some space to think and be quiet.

I like my kitchen because it now opens out onto my garden with all my vegetables and plants. I can watch my cats and the birds and the footballs from the kids next door come bouncing over the fence. When that happens we go through the ritual of me throwing it back. The little girl and her friend climb onto the shed roof and call through the kitchen door to me. They like to do this because I always ask if they want a biscuit and then we have great chats about what they are up to and what they are planning to spend their pocket money on this week. It always normalises me talking about such important issues as games, school and sweets and going to the museum and dolls clothes and building little dens in the garden. It puts a perspective on the world that makes you realise what is important and what isn't.

Then Bet calls and can't make up her mind over what to buy for some flash art function and has to have my opinion. I have refused to lend her anything after the last time one earring was ground into the floor of Tate Britain at the opening bash, while she oblivious to its fate danced merrily on grinding it into nothing. Enough is enough! Those were really good 1950 earrings. You can't replace things like that every day.

Went to a really good opening at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. It surprised all of us. Two American artists who use drawing, each in their own unique way, were really great. Met my cousin the lawyer there. Hadn't planned it. But there he was as large as life and that is large these days with all his wining and dining with rich media clients. He likes to show me off. So he bought me a drink and then another one and then H. turned up with his partner and we got into some great gossip, then Sadie Cole from the Sadie Cole Gallery who represents one of artists came by and on it went. I learned some amazing things which I promptly forgot. But sort of remembered several days later. I staggered home later after they kicked us all out. Bet was not there, neither was G. Cousin commented on that fact.

'Where's the poisonous pair?'

'Don't be mean. They are my friends.'

'Still chasing men are they?'

I didn't know what to say to that because it's absolutely true. Bet is madly in love she tells me with this new man. She thinks because she has been going out with him for over a year that it is serious. Might even be LURV !!! When I told H this at the opening he just snorted.

'Well, it just goes to show you well-grounded she is in reality!'

My Birthday Again

Another birthday comes and is gone. My parents telephoned me to wish me 'Happy Birthday' and I must admit I am now getting very worried about my mother. She doesn't pick fights with me any more. Nor does she criticise me.... at all. In fact she complemented me about how talented I was. Which made me think that she is just too ill to be grumpy. Which is really worrying. Another point of worry is how quickly she seems to be fading. Her voice is less strong. There isn't that vibrancy in it any more and she is prone to cry about things but... get her on the subject of her sister and suddenly she rallies. The old acid wit jumps out once more. But it is for less and less time. What use to be a good hour rant about her sister is down to a few minutes and fading. My father runs the house with the home help and manages all right. But as he says, he has to take out his hearing aids so he can't hear mum's constant instructions. The home help pretends they can't read English so as not to have to listen to her instructions. Which prompted my mother to throw Germaine Greer's book *The Female Eunuch* at them according to my father with the words 'Try learning to read by reading something decent!' So, I now telephone every Sunday evening to just check up on them. My brothers who actually live on the same continent phone less regularly. We have had a few interesting words about this.

October (midish)

The country curator was down with his daughter on mid-term break. He telephoned the night before and asked if it was okay on such short notice. As he had some really good invites to some rather tasty private views, how could I refuse him. Like so many of my conversations these days we talk about the war and how the New York tragedy has affected his daughter. He had stopped her watching the news reports from the first day as he was afraid she couldn't cope with it. He has had some rather long talks with her about all her fears and anxieties around the attack. That same conversation between parents and children must have been repeated all over the world many many times last month.

We trundle off to the opening at the National Portrait Gallery of an exhibition called *Mirror*, *Mirror* about women and self portraits. Great wine! Country curator's daughter at eight years old is really sharp at spotting pretentiousness and badly curated exhibitions. She was off to a good start with the Susie Cooper self-portrait in that was meant to be hung on the wall but was lying flat in a case.

'Dad, this is really bad. You have to be a big person to see this. I can't see anything. It's too high.'
And she stood on her tiptoes trying to peer at it.

Fortunately the chief curator of the exhibition was standing beside her. You could spot her because of her bright red face. The little nipper enjoyed looking at all the works. When it was time to go and she was asked what she thought about it by another curator from the education department. She replied 'I like the older pictures. The ones by the artists today aren't as good.'

Funny, but that was my sentiment as well. Only two works, that of Jo Spence and Helen Chadwick, stood out amongst the contemporary and post-1970 works. The rest were very weak and thin. But the women from before the 1970s shone out. There were some wonderful unknowns and some which were just really great paintings.

November 15th

Em and her new husband came over for a meal last weekend. It was really great fun. She brought dessert (from Sainsburys) while dearest and I cooked a proper roast dinner complete with homemade Yorkshire puddings. G refused to come as she would just be on her own. It is really bothering her that Em who she always saw as not successful when compared to her had gotten married while she is still looking for a suitable sperm donor.

Bet has telephoned. We have not actually seen each other for over two weeks which is very unusual. She is so busy with her new job and new man while I am up to my eyes in projects, trying to find paid employment and trying to go to college for my part time Phd. There just aren't enough hours in the day. She just wanted to tell me she put my name down for the Tate Britain's artists Xmas party. I wanted to ask why but thought I better not look a gift horse in the mouth so as to speak.

Decent private views and partys have been a bit thin on the ground lately. G meanwhile has raided my wardrobe looking for bits and pieces to complete her Turner Prize Dinner outfit. She was most annoyed that she couldn't find anything.

'There seems to be certain vintage pieces I was looking for that are missing? Where are they?'

'I have put them away,' I replied.

'Why? I need them.'

'Because I was not wearing them. Everyone one else but me was and I was tired of seeing them on TV at the Turner prize and me not in them that's why!' She just looked at me sheepishly and said 'Wellllllll... I could get you an invite to a really good big Xmas party.....'

I was so disgusted with her at such cheap bribes that I nevertheless decided to string her along and see what she offered before I finally refused.

Christmas is coming and there are a few events I want to make.

For some reason or other known unto themselves the Turner prize has been rescheduled for December. I think it has something to do with Madonna. The gossip is that she has agreed to lend her Frida Kahlo paintings to the Tate Modern for the BIG show on Surrealism. For a price! In exchange for her presenting the prize at the

Turner show. Sort of an offer the Tate can't refuse!!

The Surrealist show is good, really quite good, worth at least two visits. The trouble is the Tate Modern has a really good Friend's Room. I try not to go there first, so as not to get side tracked – getting my cappuccino and the free newspaper and sinking into the soft sofas and just watching the River Thames go by or the dome of St Paul's sparkle in the sunlight. It is possible to go there and somehow forget about the art. It is a divine place for a secret tryst. If one has a life like that! One can act so drop dead casual when drinking wine and being sucked into the soft leather.

However back to the Turner prize... as I was saying Our Madge, that's what they are calling her these days here since she calls London her home gets to open the awards envelope and present the prize to the winner for lending her pictures. All this happens after her big tour so maybe that's why it was changed.

Dearest and I have settled us in front of the TV for the event and to tape it for Bet. Not enough her being there! She has to see what got out into the art loving public.

Madge looks hip in her understated fashion and gives a good little speech about there being no real winners because real art is not about that.

Once again a piece of my wardrobe has made it to the Turner prize but I did not. I had just brought in glasses of wine for us and curled up on the sofa when nearest and dearest said.

'Oh look. It's one of your nice 1920s jackets made it to the event again. Only I don't recognise who is wearing it. Has G had a face lift?' I peer at the screen. That is not anybody I know and there can't be many jackets like that about. Coincidence Maybe? Just then G comes into the screen and I saw her talk to the woman wearing MY Jacket!

'That's her boss!' I hiss 'She has lent her line manager my 1920s jacket.'

I was still fuming about it when Madge finished her speech and then spoiled it by adding 'Right on you Mother Fuckers!'

That poor girl really blew it. Any social nuances that she may have picked up about how to act in London social gatherings obviously haven't stuck. There was a deathly silence from the audience. A feeble clap spread through it as the winner Martin Creed came to collect his prize. We were given a quick sight of Nick Serota's face frozen in a half smile with a glazed look of terror in his eyes. The censor hadn't the time to bleep it out, as it was a live broadcast. The bleep sort of followed her words.

Even the hip arts commentator that followed. He, who used to have a space above me, came on the air afterwards and just said. 'Sad. Real sad.'

He paused, then sighed. 'Isn't it great Martin got the prize?' Then sighed again. Near and dear turned and said 'Boy! she blew it.'

I was mad at G for borrowing my jacket then lending it to her boss. Lucky for me I taped the event so G can't lie her way out of it with her usual denials.

The term this year at College where I am desperately trying to pursue a MPhil

part time has been very rough moneywise. I have had very little lecturing work at any of the education establishments where I have worked. Sales are dreadful. My dealer who broke her leg three years ago, then picked up a microbe-resistant bug in hospital and to put it nicely she has gone a bit batty under the pressure. I need to find a new dealer and gallery real quick like. Things haven't been helped by the fact my head of department walked out last year, which meant the four remaining students, have been sort of lost. We don't even know if the department will keep going. I then got really distraught because I spent all my money for the fees on going home and seeing my family and then seeing my mum. I thought it was a good move because she has had pneumonia and had been in and out of hospital. I really thought it might be the last time I saw her.

Then I was refused a career development loan because I was too old. When I went to see the new supervisor and head of research about something completely different and I suddenly bursts into tears. I couldn't stop once I got started. I kept apologising then going 'boo hoo hoo'. She sat there with her mouth open. The next week I got a letter saying all my fees had been paid and I was left with a small supplement. The thing was I didn't even mention money!

I have started up a small private class in my rented studio for professional people on Saturday mornings. The building work on my studio is going really slowly and looks like it won't be finished until March next year. Thus I have sublet my friend K's studio for three months to get any work at all done. BUT it is at the top of five floors, which is ten flights of stairs even before I get to work. It's the sort of exercise people will pay big money to fancy gyms for the pleasure of doing. At least that's what I tell myself every time I go to work there. Who says artists are wimps? I have to give the private students strong coffee every time they come to revive them after the climb.

December 28

We managed to come down to the coast to spend a few days in the empty home of Dearest's wealthy employers again over the Xmas Break. They get so bored with their second home they need a holiday elsewhere. The elderly mum who lives in her wing has been great on the cooking front and the local pub has great fish, all caught locally. At night the stars are so many and so bright in the country they come as a shock.

Managed to start my running again in an attempt to get the body back in shape from spending too much time in front of the computer and happily eating my way through Christmas. The trouble is all the weight gain goes to a limited area around my middle.

The week before Christmas we ate out every night. Suddenly all the people who I have fed or supported over the past year got all guilty and invited us over for a meal. There was one little hiccup in the eating binge. Just before Christmas when dearest walked in one night with a brace of pheasants in his grip. I let them hang in the

garden shed for a week as directed before plucking them. The feathers are spectacular but there are rather a lot of them - an awful lot of feathers for such a tiny body in the end. But they did taste all right. One needed a rather fruitier wine than usual to go with them...but they were free!!

I invited the next door neighbour who was on her own and two ex-pupils of mine who are doing rather well in Germany around for the pheasant dinner. Not the greatest success as the woman ex-student had a very bad cold and the only thing she was interested in was the advent calendar. I sigh of relief went up when they left early and the three of us could do some serious drinking. Dearest had found a strange silver spoon in his favourite junk shop the day before. The discussion, after the two student guests left, centred on this object and a good bottle of port. The next door neighbour who is terrible well spoken and a high ranking civil servant to boot was convinced it was for snorting coke in the 1920s. Which did cause dearest eyebrow to twitch a little. However, in the end, we discovered it was for cocktails. How sensible indeed!!

I was after all invited to the Tate Britain's artists' Xmas party. Bet was as good as her word. Some pretty weird people showed up. Dearest expressed an unusual desire to go as it was being held in the new extension. I had an appointment with the head of research before had and turned up in my hip London party gear. It seems they are pleased with my work at the college. In fact I bumped into one of my supervisors at the party an hour later. Right state she was in.

'I am tttttthelebrating my viva. Hic! I got my PhD last week. Hic!'

I knew it was happening because she mentioned it during the tutorial the day before. She had been rather nervous about it.

'Good for you' I said but I don't think she heard me before she staggered off into the crowd apologising to a piece of sculpture she bumped into along the way.

Dearest enjoyed himself. We wandered into the Turner prize show to view the entrants. We viewed it in silence then walked back into the party and began a chat with Bet.

Dearest suddenly said: 'Videos are the still life of the 20th century.'

We looked at him stunned. Then Bet's face lit up and she launched into this heavy conversation with him about this issue. I walked off and left them to it. I had just spied the hor d'oeuvres waitress. So off I went in hot pursuit. They were brilliant. The wine was awful. I have gone off wine served at private views because it is always so cheap and nasty.

There was one artist there who dresses up like a Victorian Shirley Temple wandering about. I had met him before when he was in jeans at a previous private view so he came up to me to say hello. I must say it is rather disconcerting talking to a transvestite Shirley Temple. He calls himself a tranny and couldn't see why I thought he must have a good sense of humour. He was deadly serious about it all.

'Compulsion' - as he called his need to dress up as a Victorian eight-year-old.

I asked him 'Do you get a sexual thrill out of it?'

'Of course!' And he indignantly walked off. I stood there with my mouth open. Dearest came up beside me.

'Who was that awful child? She needs a shave. You know, I think I have seen some people here who look just like the parents of some of the artists I knew in the Wapping studios.'

I looked at him. Where has he been for three decades?

'They are not their parents, Sweetie. It is them. You are still looking for people who you saw twenty - thirty years ago. Have you looked in the mirror lately?'

'Have you?'

'Did you enjoy your conversation with Bet?'

'Oh yeah and with several other people. I should come to more of these things. Did you see G yet?'

'No. Did you?'

'Yes and I think she is trying to avoid you. She keeps looking for you and then when she sees you she goes in the opposite direction. I have been watching her. She saw me watching her and mouthed hello before running off.'

'Have you seen Bet's boyfriend?' I queried, as he seemed to know so much.

'You mean the one who is the young geriatric? No. He is not here and you should know he did not come to the Turner prize dinner either. She was most upset about it but tried very hard to act nonchalant and act as if it really was planned that way all alone. It didn't work. He did help her pick out the dress she wore.'

'How did you find all this out?'

'She was crying on my shoulder!'

I looked at him in amazement. I must remember to bring him to more events like this He's proving to be very valuable.

I tried to find my friend J that got married to a Russian this summer. They have this arrangement where they only get together about five or six times a year depending if their work and schedules can coincide. I think they will be married for a very long time or it will fall apart very soon.

Mid-January

I have a confession to make. Once again I was lurking around the shelves of the supermarket desperately trying to decide what to feed us for the next two weeks when a neighbour pounced me upon. The same one who last time roped me into mending the Church's crucifix and it came out piebald. This time the local parish is doing a pantomime and she wanted me to help with the sets and costumes. I should have pleaded insanity but no.... I said I would do a day.... One week later I had not only been cast as the old wise woman but all the set had been designed and painted by me. It looked great. Everyone loved the sets. The show was amateurish but who cared. People were wetting themselves from laughing so much and close to £700

was raised for Charity. The neighbourhood was all a-chatter about the production. We are even getting a review in the local residents' association newsletter. How's that for fame and fortune? Dearest came along with K and they both won raffle prizes. K said his faced ached from laughing so much for days afterwards, which wasn't meant as a compliment. Dearest won a hamper of what he said were dubious canned goods. What did he expect for a 20p ticket?

Bet and I are planning to go to some PV's this week. Her holiday back home with new boyfriend did not go too well. All will be revealed.

February, First Week

I have been so ill with flu. Cancelled all private views. The country curator came down for weekend in the midst of it and was very pissed off that I was too sick to go to a really good Robbie burns night party complete with Kalley band. During the week Bet phoned up and said the PV at the Barbican was at 7:30 not 6 and she was too tired to go. I was also so whacked that we cancelled it. Sad isn't it? Both of us had too much work to do the next day. I was still done in with the flu as well. However we are meeting up this weekend at Maison Berteaux.

In the midst of my illness and hiding in bed and the country curator visiting, dearest decides to take down a wall between the kitchen and conservatory. AS one does. I crawled further under my covers. Building rubble everywhere! Dust deep enough to write novels in. Hysterical cats! But he was grinning and very happy about it all. I have only been asking him to do it for fourteen years. Now, he decides is a good time. Perhaps it was threatening to run away while under the influence of a high fever that did it.

The back to college adventure even though it is part time is getting to me. Nothing in my life is part time. It's like saying you'll be married part time. Writing abstracts, essays and whatnot takes up a lot of my time. My brain aches! Then there's the reading. Well that has been a revelation in itself. Why are all the French philosophers so angst ridden? And it borders on theology! Those last revelation came about with the discussions I have been having with my neighbour, the deaconess. I have been known to raid her bookshelves in search of a few difficult authors. I am rather impressed with her collection of current and up-to-date writers in contemporary thought.

Meanwhile I am slowly and I do mean slowly winding myself up to go to private views. My mate K has been a great instigator. For himself he is determined to break through with his art this year. At 46 that is no mean feat. I do not know what he means by that but I have fair idea that it's about more recognition and much more MONEY than what he has at present. Now I can identify with him on both of those matters. But how it is going to happen is another thing altogether.

S managed to wrangle a few days teaching for me at her university. She is under heavy weather at her work, battling with the male members of staff. The younger

males taking their cues from the older ones in sniping at her whenever the chance presents itself. I witnessed an example of it in action when I found that the room booked by S for me to give tutorials had been mysteriously double-booked for other students by the younger male farts. Now, as S was away in America at a conference, she couldn't do battle with the twerps responsible for this. Needless to say, the technician who witnessed the booking and saw it was free did a great impression of rage. With me throwing insults in for good measure. Just wait till she gets back. I have seen her throw a desk at a man from thirty feet and still hit him.

Still not back in my studio!! The renovations are taking six months and not the six weeks promised. The studio let is killing me being five floors up. The drawings I have been working on have a lot of graphite in them and can be very slippery.. It is also used as a lubricant in industry. I have gone sailing on it and almost broke my neck so when of the private students took flight I had to grab her by the scruff of the neck before she went sailing out the window and out into the blue and down into traffic lights below. That's all I need. Must remember to go to P's private view in an obscure gallery in Shoreditch. However one of the nicest things to happen in ages was a night at the ballet with Bet and a friend of hers from college. Em could not make it and neither could G. both being bed bound with colds. But Bet just sneered at the possibility of G in bed with a cold.

'A cold man, darling, is what she means.'

The ballet was at the Royal Opera House. So I guess we had a night at the opera. It was a freebie from Bet's new job. I still can't work out whom she is working for these days but it does have its benefits. Apparently in some capacity she was at the reception afterwards for Sam Taylor-Wood's new exhibition opening at White Cube2 and just happened to be sitting next to the PR person for the Royal Opera House and he just happened to give her four free tickets for some of the best seats in the house - for the hell of it.

Sam Taylor-Wood and Jay Joplin. Now there's a cosy situation. Your husband just happens to be the hippest art dealer in London and you manage to get great commissions and show at his wonderful gallery and get on the list for the top best-dressed women in England. Bitter MOI? No, just pissed off. It goes to show who you know counts a lot. But knowing Bet and G hasn't helped me. Perhaps sex is a vital ingredient that is missing.

Now, the ballet was sumptuous. I dressed up in a little designer number I had at the back of the wardrobe and had bought last year in a moment of weakness and inspiration. An Issey Miyaki dress I had silently paid for on my cards. It is always well worth having a few really good pieces at times and just dress in jeans the rest of the time. Well that's my theory. I did the lot - make up, hair and heels. Bet walked by me in the foyer.

'It's amazing what a little makeup can do, isn't it.' She remarked after I hailed her down.

'You should try it some time.' I bounced back. I wasn't going to let her get away with that one.

The ballet was Ondenian, a tale of spurned love and regret - beautifully danced by men in body forming tights. It's amazing what fabric technology has done for the dance world. At the first break we were all out of breath even the college friend who is gay. There was a wide-eyed sparkle and restlessness about us after all that close exposure to so many well formed male bodies. They were such good seats.

'That calls for champagne and smoked salmon sandwiches.' My college friend declared.

'MY treat.' She added.

One could get used to this life style, so gracious. I had a charming man flirt with me at the little circular stand where we alighted to eat the classy snacket. After he left I said, 'What I need is a wealthy lover.'

'Don't we all!' was the joint reply.

Then we burst out laughing and choked on our sandwiches, which meant we had to have another round of champagne. Such is life.

At the second interval I bought the G and T's. We went to the older part of the building to lounge graciously and pose as wealthy art patrons. What an evening! If only some of the art shows I go to could raise the same emotions as seeing men dance in tights.

I went to see the Sam Taylor Wood show at White Cube² the next day. She is being hailed as THE only contemporary artist who is dealing with religious imagery! I had a LONG look around. Yes I know she is sitting on the steps holding Robert Downling JR in her arms like Michelangelo's Pieta BUT... and the sheep bound with a cord around its legs is like one of the Flemish alter paintings BUT. It's all just a bit of a caricature of real emotions. Sorry, but where is the imagery that speaks about today's religious crisis and alienation. That is what made those images so relevant to their times. Her work looks like a pastiche - trying to be spiritual with no idea of what she is talking about.

The home renovations are doing us in.

Late February...

The renovations are still doing us in. I have given up finding anything. A deep layer of dust has turned my home into an archaeological dig. The kitchen is covered in tea towels and clothes to prevent us being poisoned with all the cement and plaster dust. Also I remember that an old friend from my student days working in the mountains is coming over with her youngest son who is now 16 for a week. MY body shudders at the work involved. I am also moving out of K's studio that week as well. I need my assistant back. He sent me a Christmas card but will not return my phone calls. Am I going to be reduced to pleading with him?

During my illness, Em brought over all her videos of Sex and the City. I can't

remember my generation being so angst ridden about sex and relationships but then the pill was just out and AIDs hadn't been discovered yet. I got hooked on it. There's nothing like watching other women screw up on relationships and identifying with them to make your flu fly away. So now I watch the double bill late on Wednesday nights after the research day. I tell dearest and nearest it relaxes the mind so that I can sleep.

He said, 'Do you realise that you use less brain cells watching television than when you are asleep.'

The banker who is now in Sheffield working for the University emailed and asked if I wanted to meet for lunch at our favourite restaurant in Soho. Of course I did. I'll meet anyone for a free lunch. It was lovely and he is as unhappy as ever. So everything is normal. He thinks I am nuts for attempting a higher degree at my age at my age. How dare he! He thinks that just because he has a gold credit card he is urbane and sophisticated.

At college I am attempting to put on an interim show with three other students on my course. One of them is on heavy medication and it is hard work. She has a tendency to look through you to some other universe when talking to you. It makes communication a bit difficult at times to say the least. The thinking isn't quite joined up so that she carries on two conversations at once impervious to the fact you are trying to discuss serious details. A few things have got rather mixed up and confused.

K and I went to the PV of the Atom Egoyan show at what used to be the Museum of Mankind but is now part of the Royal Academy. We toyed with the idea of not going at all until he pointed out that they were charging £7 otherwise to see it. Stuff that! After the opening when we were walking to the tube K said he thought it was not worth paying any money to see it, as the PV was bad enough. I didn't quite agree but then nobody walked off with my bottle of beer that I just paid for when I put it down to blow my nose. We didn't know anybody there. K was on the look out for his brother who is not speaking to at the moment. Apparently they had a bust up at Xmas, as so many of us do with family. Only some of us don't let it get out of control like K. He sent his Xmas present back. I thought was going a little too far. At our age we don't get too many presents at Xmas. I must admit it was a bit much seeing tape looping around a room again. It was so 1970s. Heard a yawn being stifled from behind me during the long shuffle through the installation. At one stage we were in a small room standing about three feet in front of a twelve-foot screen. It does something to your sense of space. K muttered it was more to do with your eyesight than space but that was before he lost his beer. I did bump into the curator known affectionately as the "poisoned dwarf". He's small as ever and still looks like a Jewish Mickey Mouse. It amazes me who gets work these days.

We were supposed to be meeting Bet but she is so busy that she skips PV's and goes home to bed to catch up on her beauty sleep. I just rolled my eyes backwards when she confessed this over tea and cake at Maison Bertheaux the next Saturday. Jet lag is one of the downsides of her job. It doesn't wash with me as now I have no

part-time or full-time work of any sort and my sales and commissions are thin on the ground. I have no downside to anything at the moment except the maniac I am married to who decides suddenly to renovate the house room by room.

'What's the matter with your dealer?' she sneered at me when I rolled my eyes backwards and said she was fortunate to have a disadvantage to anything. 'Don't you remember the story of her breaking her leg then it getting infected with a microbe-resistant bug in hospital so that some how one leg has come out shorter than the other and that after three years of endless operation she is massively depressed and just getting back into dealing again.'

'Did you make that up?'

'I can't lie that good?'

'How do you pick them.'

'Look Bet if you could just mention my name and how talented I am to some of the dealers and collectors and general high and mighty that you swan around with just once then maybe I wouldn't be in such a situation.'

'You couldn't afford the bribes. Just get yourself a decent gallery and dealer. You used to have one.'

'I used to have a lot of things and I don't now.'

'You're impossible. Look, My birthday is coming up and I am thinking of having a birthday lunch for a few select people.'

'You're not going to cook, are you? Besides, you don't have a birthday every year.'

'This is special.'

'I looked at her for a moment with raised brows while I did a quickie mental calculation. 'Bloody hell Bet! You're 50. Aren't you?' and she actually blushed.

'Well. My beau thought it....'

'Bet since when did you call one of your many men, your beau? How coquettish.' She went even redder.

'Do you want to come or not? R is cooking a meal at his place in the country. We are all going out there. He suggested it. And my beau thought that it would be nice if we all drank champagne on the train out. I am not inviting your husband or G or Em.'

'Why not G and Em. You have known them over 15 years. They will be very hurt.'

Well as it would happen Em and her have had a serious fallen out. At least according to bet. I have yet to hear Em's side of the story. I wonder if Em has any idea of it happening. Later that week I was trying to phone Bet to clarify a few details about her forthcoming party so I telephoned her on her mobile. It's the only way to get hold of her these days. To my shock, horror she was on the Eurostar blithely zooming throughout the French countryside and quaffing champagne as she sped along to her skiing holiday. I say shock, horror because it is so expensive to phone out of the country to her mobile. I never get asked to go with them as she knows I am too broke. Which is true but it would be nice to be asked just so I could refuse - once in a

while. I heard what seemed like G's maniacal laugh in the background going off like a demented dog. I couldn't get her off the 'phone and it was costing me a packet. So I pretended that I couldn't hear her because the reception was so bad. Pathetic I know that but there you go if you are an impecunious artist like me.

Is Em a bit do-lally from her antidepressants? Or is Bet going bonkers on the menopause? Or is it, as G so sweetly told me, that

'Bet is on her usual form. She has to be pissed off with somebody. Usually it's one of her men. But as she has gone soft on the last four and Em has picked the short straw. Actually Em has never been more calm and rational and together in her life. Marriage suits her. She is working part time with a small firm of publishers well out of the art world and she is very happy. I expect any day she will announce that she is pregnant. Talking of which my friend who has the long distant husband is pregnant and has gone all gooey and mumsy. Amazing isn't it what hormones do to a woman. This stuff called oestrogen and progesterone it's all pretty powerful. I know I could be called an essentialist, which I was by G when we pondered on the thought in my studio over tea one day. She sweetly dropped by to see how I was surviving the renovations.

'Well .. I am not but you can't get away from the body and its functions. At first I was really apprehensive about stopping my cycle but now I would never go back.'

I was actually talking about the house and the renovations, not your body's. I gave her a mean look. Wait 'til she starts the menopause.

She continued, 'I want to get pregnant soon. So I have decided on a sperm bank and fertility drugs.'

'It may be too late, G.'

'No way!' What does one say against such determination? So I changed the subject.

'What are you getting Bet for her 50th?'

She lit up with glee. 'A subscription for a year to a gym.'

'That's nice.... And expensive. Where did you get all that money from?'

'Oh! It's a special deal and she'll need all the help she can as I have a new job.' All said ever so causally.

I stopped what I was doing and glanced over my electric drill.

'Oh it's working in Cork Street. A slight drop in pay but I thought I could afford it now my great uncle left me a little money.' And smiled sweetly at me.

'I suppose you got danger money for working in the Burbs and who is this great uncle and how come he was so foolish to leave you money?'

Well good luck to her. The art world is a vicious place. Of course the knock on effect for me is a better class of private view to go to and nicer hor d'oeuvres at the openings. So I just smiled back and said, 'Nice one G.'

End of March

The interim show proved to be pure hell and a lot of hard work. Basically just one bloke and myself did all the work. The third student was and still is on heavy

medication. We had Friday and Saturday to paint walls and hang work. So I went after the lunch with the banker. I was in a “going-to-lunch” outfit. And unfortunately I forgot to bring any painting clothes .So I stripped down to knickers, a T-shirt and my cowboy boots, put on my walkman and got on with the job singing along to Janis Joplin at the top of my voice. Suddenly I knew someone was in the room. I had locked the door.

Turning around I saw one of the fruitier fashion students mincing about. He was wheeling in a big fashion dummy dressed in one of his creations oblivious to anything. . He placed it on a plinth and began tweaking its ruffles. I went over to him and watched in amazement.

‘What do you think, luv?’

‘Is the wearer supposed to wear knickers with it?’

‘NOOOOOO not really.’

‘It could be chilly.’

‘UMMMMMMMMM ’ and then he began clicking away with his camera.

Then he left taking everything with him. I locked the door again.

He hadn’t even noticed anything strange. Here I am, middle aged woman paint splattered dressed in bikini knickers, a tea shirt and cowboy boots dancing around painting the walls. I have cellulite and I am not slim. He didn’t bat an eyelid. I have seen him around the collage since and actually mouthed ‘Hello’ in the dinner queue but he looked at me like he had never seen me before.

At times putting on the show was a real headbanger but in the end it looked great. I realised that I had done a lot of work, It still is not what I want but I am getting there. The private view was packed and the wine was great.

Bet came the next morning at 8:30 to see it as it was the only time she had.

I have come to realise that academia is stranger than the art world. Artists are relatively normal compared to these people. I forgive all my artist friends for all the strange but wonderful quirks that I have accused them of and condemned them for in the past. I am beginning to think that they are the only sane people in the world.

Parents aren’t any better either. In fact my dad has collapsed from exhaustion after looking after my mum for so long. They are very old now and just want to sit in front of the fire and let others take care of them. Unfortunately none of their children live within 1,000 miles of them. All the large extended family is dwindling on both sides now. Only middle aged nieces and nephews are around and they are exhausted from their own commitments to family and work. Then again my mother’s sharp tongue doesn’t help any. We were debating on going for a visit. But it will have to wait until the Fall. Money is so short at present. I have emailed, faxed and telephoned my brothers into going for visits. It is hard work!

Studio is finally finished - all the new storage and shelves have been built and everything unpacked. I was so tired I went to the doctor and all she did was ask me what I’d been up to recently. When I told her, she just looked at me and said stay in bed for a week or take a holiday!!

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