

~~Alison Jones~~

~~& Millie~~

Thompson

C21ST

RECENT

HISTORY

~~ANSON~~ Jones)

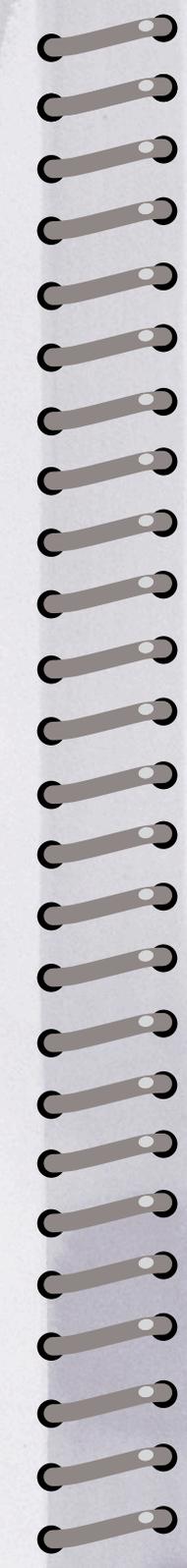
& ~~Mill~~

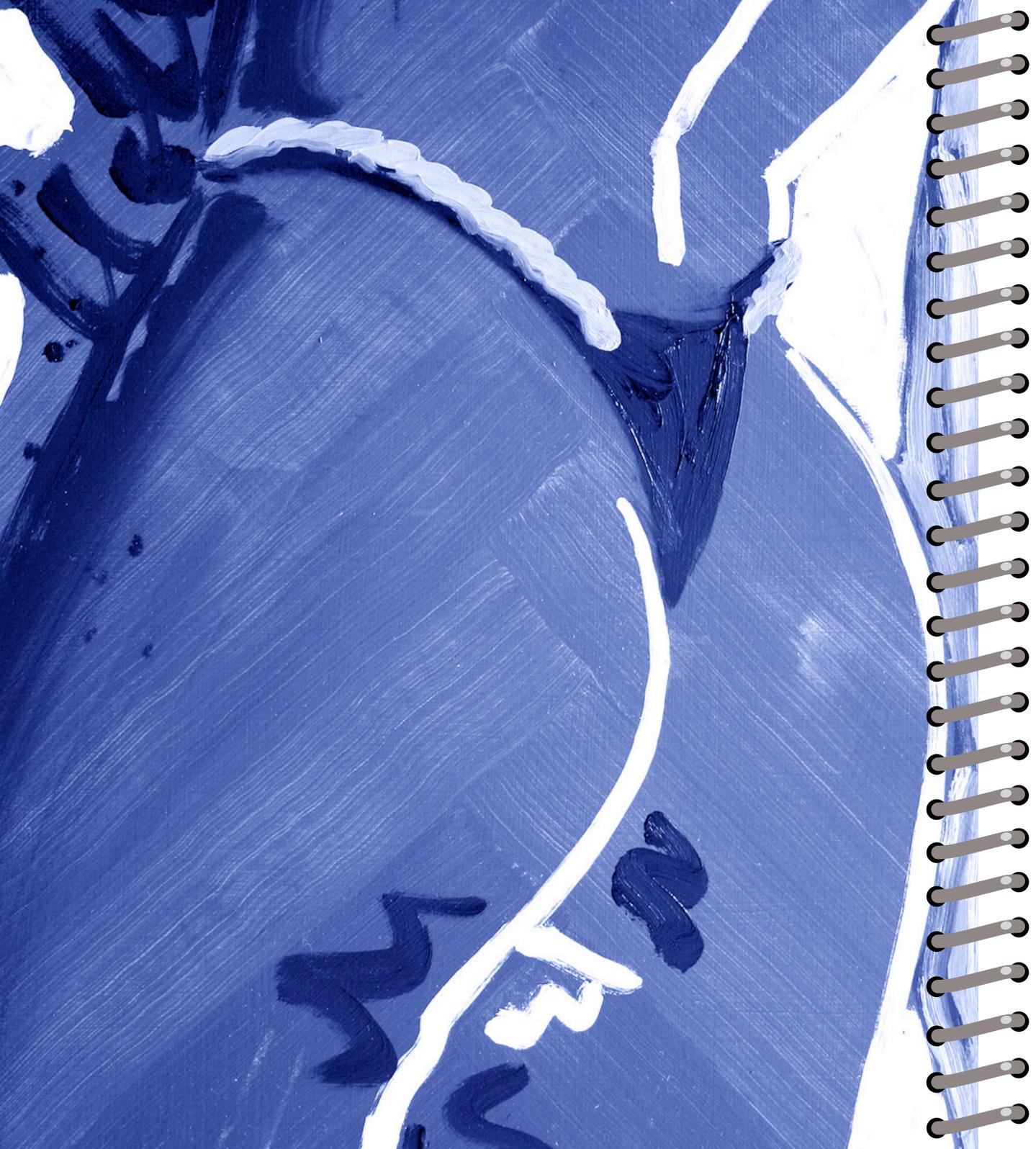
Thompson)

(21ST)

RECENT

HISTORY





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**His photographs hit you, they make a mark you never forget. They speak of desire, tell secrets you feel you've always known, about men, about women, human nature.**

**Alison Jones**

**2010, ink on paper, 100 x 70cm**

**Hotlips**

**Martha Rosler**

**2010, digital image, 19 x 6cm**

**Beauty as isolating as genius (Romance Posters series)**

**Milly Thompson**

**2010, archival inkjet, 55 x 109cm**

**Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Alison Jones

Martha Rosler

Milly Thompson

Beauty as  
Isolating  
as genius.

Milly Thompson

Alison Jones

Martha Rosler

Milly Thompson

MARTHA ROSLER READS VOGUE



Martha Rosler

# EXHIBITION: MARTHA ROSLER READS VOGUE

The works in this show by Alison Jones, Martha Rosler and Milly Thompson span three decades. The show reflects on post-feminism as anti-feminism where new forms of self-objectification correspond with the old forms of oppression through the discourse of the free market and consumer culture.

Alison Jones, Martha Rosler, Milly Thompson

Grey Area Shanghai, 13th March - 4th April 2010

<http://www.greyareagallery.org/index.php?/exhibitions/martha-rosler-reads-voque/> ☰

Alison Jones

Martha Rosler

Milly Thompson

MARTHA ROSLER READS VOGUE

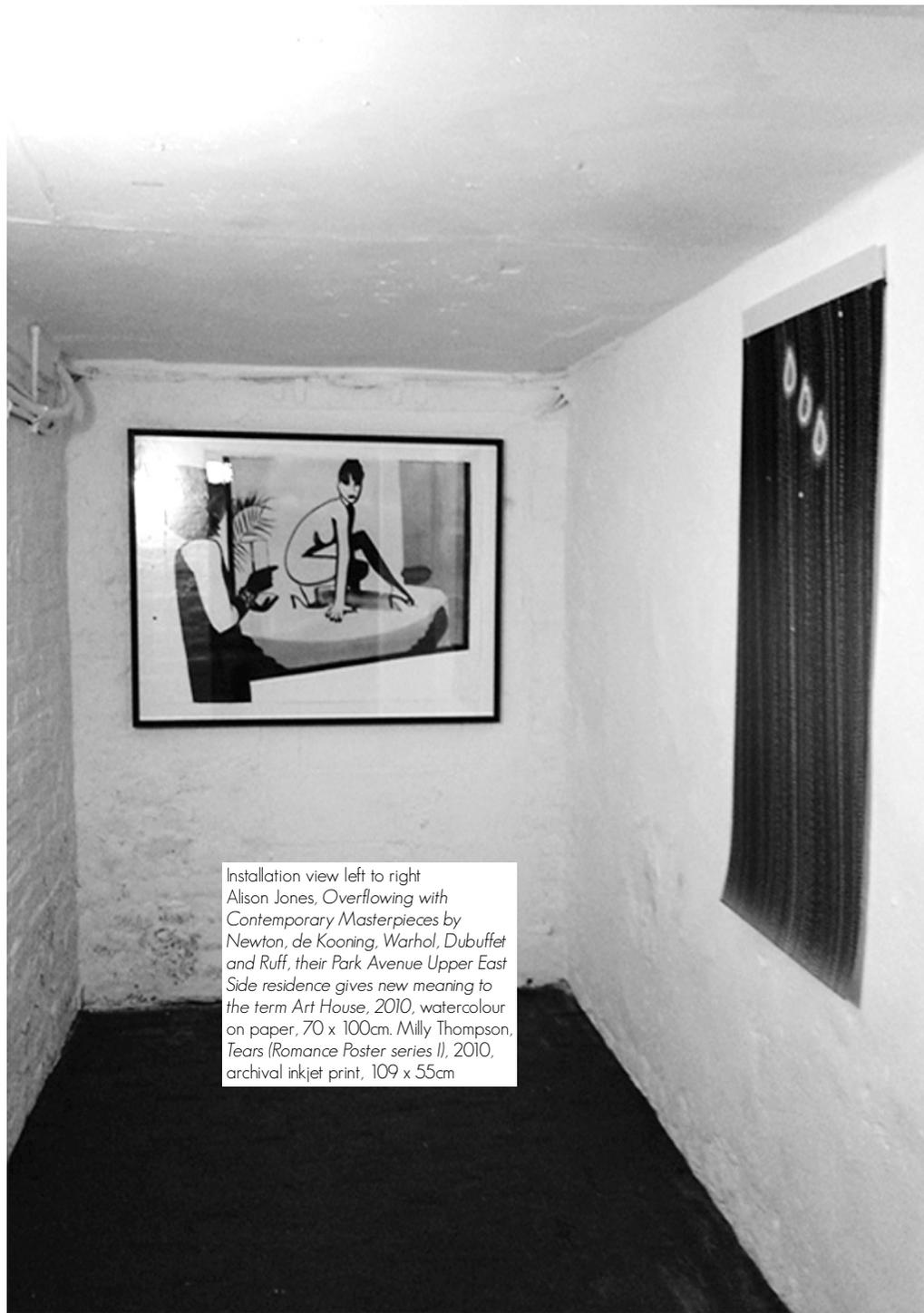
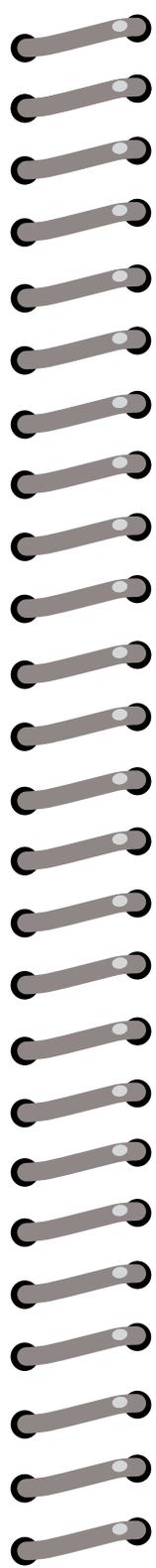
Grey Area, 31 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XA



Alison Jones



Martha Rosler Reads Vogue catalogue,  
Martha Rosler, *Hot Lips*, 2010,  
digital image, 6 x 19cm



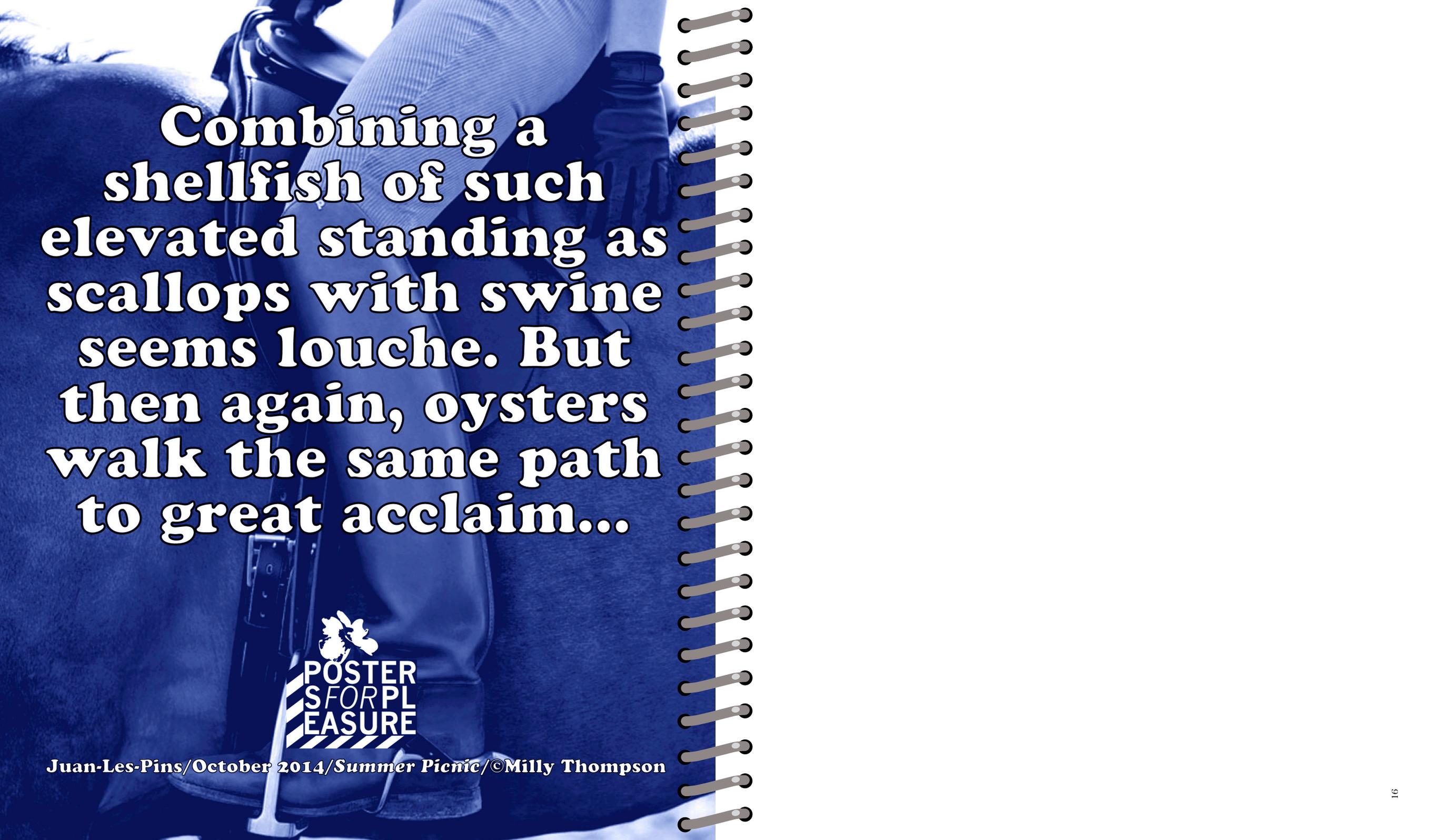
Installation view left to right  
Alison Jones, *Overflowing with Contemporary Masterpieces by Newton, de Kooning, Warhol, Dubuffet and Ruff, their Park Avenue Upper East Side residence gives new meaning to the term Art House*, 2010, watercolour on paper, 70 x 100cm. Milly Thompson, *Tears (Romance Poster series I)*, 2010, archival inkjet print, 109 x 55cm

Installation view left to right:  
*Martha Rosler, Martha Rosler Reads Vogue*,  
1982, colour video with sound, 25:45 mins.  
*Milly Thompson, Alone - 9.30pm (Romance  
Poster series II)*, 2010, archival inkjet print,  
109 x 55cm



The video *Martha Rosler Reads Vogue* (Martha Rosler, 1982) coincides with the moment a backlash against feminism was first identified and the term post-feminist was coined. The values Rosler interrogated then are now ubiquitous within popular culture, but granted legitimacy through the invidious incorporation of feminism within mainstream politics.





**Combining a shellfish of such elevated standing as scallops with swine seems louche. But then again, oysters walk the same path to great acclaim...**



**Juan-Les-Pins/October 2014/Summer Picnic/©Milly Thompson**



# EXHIBITION: ÉVASION

*ÉVASION*, an exhibition which performs genuflection before the neo-liberal imperative - institutional critique in f&\*k-me shoes. *ÉVASION* considers the veils through which the amorous glances of commodities charm and fascinate with their illusions: identification, aspiration, wealth, social superiority, luxury, distinction - all imbricated in an orgy of bourgeois values. To-be-looked-at-ness and being-for-others are the enduring signs of women's asymmetric relation to power, insistently pervasive throughout the private world.

The elliptical worlds of *Fashion-Art-Media-Entertainment* circle each other in the galaxy of *F-A-M-E* and the nexus is money.

Alison Jones, Josephine Meckseper,  
Martha Rosler, Milly Thompson, Nicole Wermers

LGP Paris, 14 January - 19 February 2012  
<http://lanchestergalleryprojects.org.uk/project/evasion/>



# Alison Jones

Four monochrome watercolours of private art collections featuring Modern and Contemporary Masters (de Kooning, Dubuffet, Newton, Ruff).

*Moving the Helmut Newton*, 2011,  
watercolour on paper, 70 x 100cm



*Contaminator*, 2010,  
colour video with sound, transferred to Blu-Ray, 3:11min  
©Timothy Taylor Gallery, London

# Josephine Meckseper

*Contaminator* is the film of Meckseper's project for *W Magazine's Nov 2010 Art Issue* in which she styled accessories for a photo shoot in the style of her own work - a standard commissioning format for *W Magazine's Art Issues*.

The film shows the photographic equipment, lights, technicians, reflector panels and dry ice rolling over the shop fittings and handbags to a soundtrack of industrial noise.



*Martha Rosler Reads Vogue*, 1982,  
colour video with sound, 25:45 min  
©Electronic Arts Intermix, New York

# Martha Rosler

*Martha Rosler Reads Vogue* is the video of a live performance for *Paper Tiger Television's* public access cable program in New York. Rosler sits leafing through *Vogue* reading selected excerpts from the copy, adverts and her own text. She reads aloud a Visa ad quoting Robert Louis Stevenson, "To be what we are and to become what we are capable of becoming is the only end to life", and an article about Conde Nast, the "cunt crazy" publisher of *Vogue*.

# Alone 9.30pm

Milly Thompson

*Romance Posters* are aestheticised utterances - subliminal messages of solitude, anticipation, and rejection. The electric pulse of neon signs throb through dark streets and deep rain.

*Alone - 9.30pm* (*Romance Posters, Series II*), 2012,  
digital print, wallpaper paste, hardboard, wood, 245 x 122cm



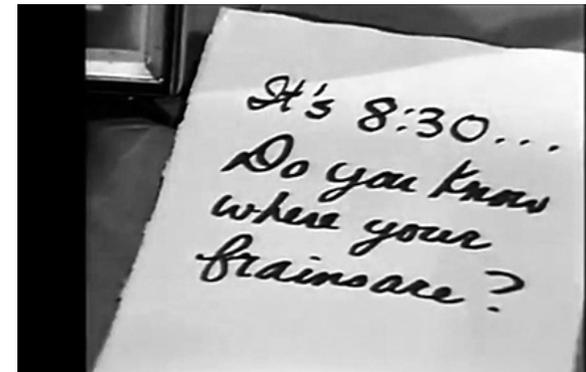
*Suite 2*, 2011,  
upholstery, painted steel, zinc coated polystyrene,  
lacquer, stainless steel chain, dimensions variable  
©Herald Street, London

# Nicole Wermer

*Suite 2* comprises three sculptural elements; white upholstered modernism, black zinc cosmetic and crunched up ball of printed sheet-steel all linked together by heavy gauge chain. The work fuses formal aspects of modernism with the bewitching aesthetics of consumer culture.

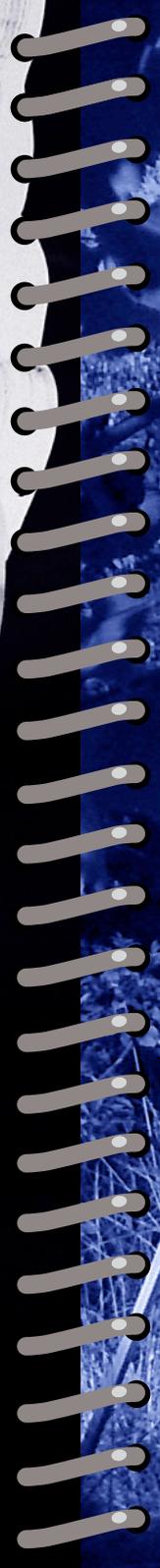


Martha Rosler, *Martha Rosler Reads Vogue*, 1982,  
colour video with sound. 25:45 min  
©Electronic Arts Intermix, New York

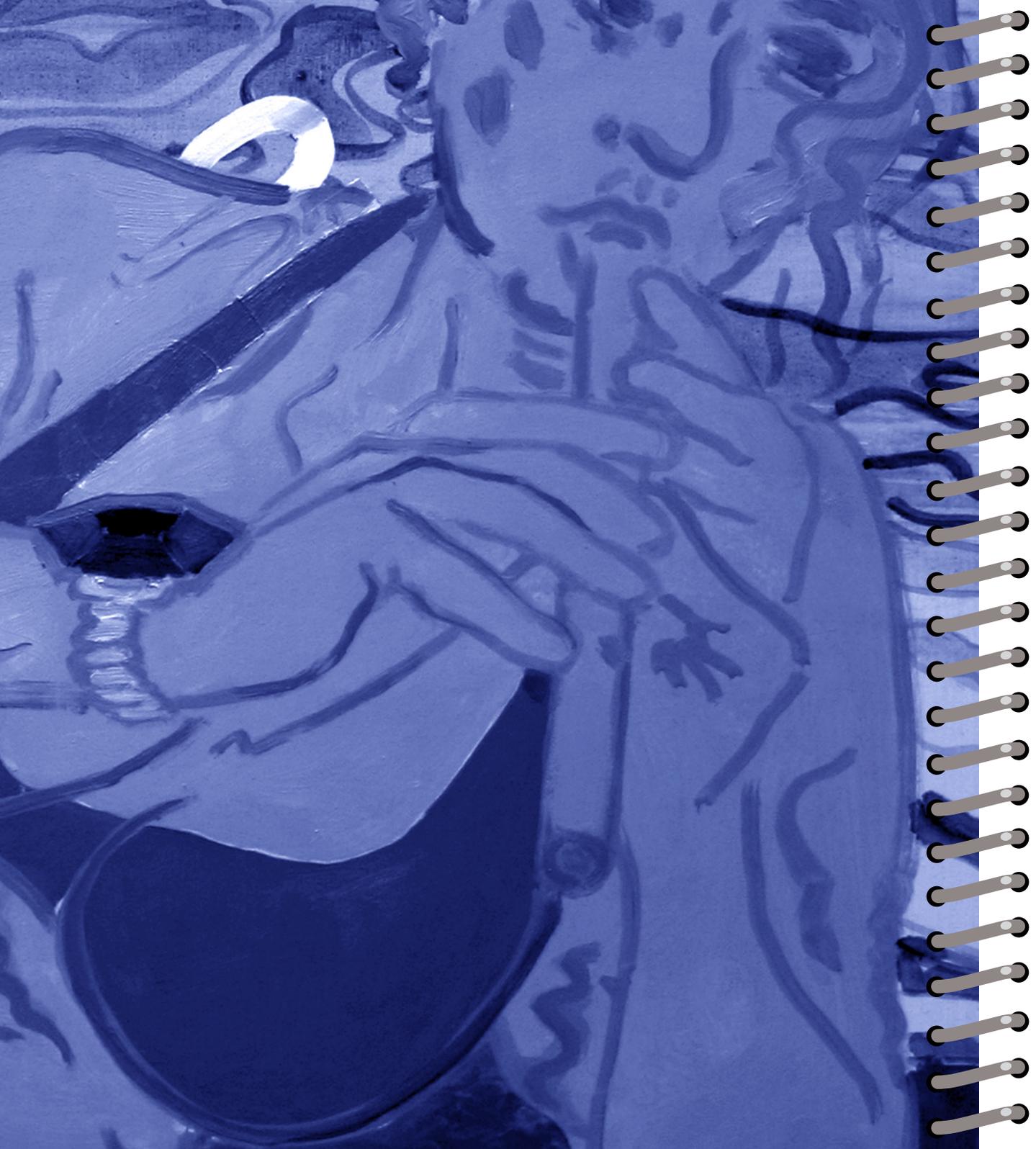




ÉVASION installation from right to left: Nicole Wermers, *Suite 2*, 2011, upholstery, painted steel, zinc coated polystyrene, lacquer, stainless steel chain, dimensions variable, ©Herald Street, London. Alison Jones, *Sensational Ruff 'Double Nude' in the Library*, 2012, watercolour on paper, 152 x 122cm. Alison Jones, *The last de Kooning 'Woman' in private hands/she enters in a dappled red dress which manages to be both attention-seeking, yet demure... casual even* (detail), 2011, watercolour on paper, 152 x 122cm. Alison Jones, *One of a series of paintings by the French artist Jean Dubuffet entitled 'Corps de dames' or 'Ladies' bodies'* (detail), 2011, watercolour on paper, 152 x 122cm. Alison Jones & Milly Thompson, *ÉVASIONISTA*, 2012, live sculpture and creation, glass table top, magazines, champagne cooler, bottle and glasses, Kristalia Plana chair, i-phone 4, MacBook Pro, duration exhibition length. Milly Thompson, *Les rêves sont déjà réaliés, (Romance Posters, Series II)*, 2011, digital print, wallpaper paste, hardboard, wood, 265 x 90cm



**the milky succulence of a grilled scallion,  
the silken elasticity of a skein of melted mozzarella,  
the jammy inside of a ripe fig,  
or exquisite softness of melting butter...**





# MAGAZINE VUOTO

*VUOTO* (Italian, meaning 'empty'):  
a publication of artists' projects for *ÉVASION*.  
Mirroring the luxury magazine, *VUOTO* embodies the essence of the show, being  
both a collection of critical artworks and high-end self-objectification.  
It considers the fields of Fashion-Art-Media-Entertainment,  
where opposition nestles in co-dependency.

Alison Jones, Josephine Meckseper, Martha Rosler,  
Milly Thompson, Nicole Wermers, editorial by Nina Power

Published by LGP, Paris, 2012  
ISBN 978-1-84600-0706 Full colour, 128pp  
<http://lanchestergalleryprojects.org.uk/project/vuoto>

### *VUOTO* features

Alison Jones' *Advertising Promotion* (2011) draws on advertisements (mainly *Artforum*)  
for exhibitions by female artists who use their own bodies or those of other women:  
Vanessa Beecroft, Lynda Benglis, Gillian Carnegie, Tracey Emin, Andrea Fraser, Yoko Ono  
and Hannah Wilke. *Art-House* (2011) is a feature on a private art collection.

Stills from Josephine Meckseper's video *Contaminator* (2010).

A transcript of Martha Rosler's video *Martha Rosler Reads Vogue* and photomontages  
*Cold Meat* and *Hot Meat* from *Beauty Knows No Pain* (1965 - 72), *Bowl Of Fruit* from  
*Beauty Knows No Pain, New Series* (2004), *Lounging Woman* and *Bathroom Surveillance*  
from *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series* (2004).

Milly Thompson's, *Romance Posters (Series III)*, *Beauty as isolating as genius; Tears,*  
*Alone - 9:30pm, She waited; it closed, Les rêves sont déjà réalités* and *Beautiful woman*  
*adventure* (2012).

Nicole Wermers' blank advertising pages, *Grey Pages Collection* (1996 - 2010).



*New light of a beautiful dawn*  
**NINA POWER**

Well, dear readers, the beginning of the year est arrivé. Time to shake off your dusty tail-feathers and emerge, bursting and luscious into the new light of a beautiful dawn in which you are the star of your own show. It's like the X Factor and an i-pod colliding in one glorious cat-walk of self-celebration. All this talk of austerity has frankly been getting me down – it's as if we're all depressed, disabled and cross that our libraries are closing down. Well, Britain may be broken, but there are plenty of shiny things to take your mind off the moaners: if the economy's depressed we should give it a cheery, helping hand and spend, spend, spend...

So treat yourself, you're special like everyone else. It may not be sunny outside, but this season there's no excuse for not wearing fur on the beach, in the bedroom, in the kitchen (not that you should be cooking, silly thing, when you could get him to take you out for dinner). Having slaughtered the world's last remaining furry ocelots, there's now a HUGE waiting list for delectable gilets by Versace: if you're not wearing one of these by mid-June (*suite page 39*)

you may as well stay indoors and stare out the window.

If you simply must pay attention to all this 'austerity chic', make sure your eyes are on the "chic" bit, not the dreary overalls of fun-deniers (what is this, Soviet Russia?). All those students getting upset and shouting at policemen – if only they spent more time thinking about what they wear to protests rather than coming up with oh-so-clever-slogans, the world would be a happier place. Anyhow, they seem cross about having to spend more on their education or something, which would certainly make me depressed, so perhaps they have a point. And the girls! With their sex-less bandanas, combat gear, smashing up police vans and running riot all over the city, they're hardly the best advertisement for our wonderful urban spaces, are they? London's supposed to be the fashion capital of the world, isn't it, especially now we don't really make anything anymore... So what's wrong with a little protest fashion? No doubt the killjoys sulking on the streets would sneer at little old me suggesting that it wouldn't be out of place to wear this season's splendid yellows (a little red star on a canary maxi-dress might even look quite cute). Don't they teach you anything at the schools you can no longer afford to go to these days?

Anyway, those of us who didn't bother wasting our money on unnecessary educations do indeed have some cash to splash... and WHAT a time to buy. Some boring old feminist once declared that we've all been turned into adverts for ourselves, or something, like it's a bad thing. I say bring it on, I can't think of anything more worth advertising. If I had my way, I'd employ a whole army of ad execs to work on my brand, who wouldn't, right? – put on some of those glitzy little Hiroshima earrings that are all the rage after whatever it was that happened in Japan, and some of those limited edition Manolo Blahniks made from freshly slaughtered calf-skin, bathed in mummy-cow tears for that exquisite, soft feeling of subtle maternal melancholy. He'll love it when you kick

*'MUD AND FEAR  
 COCKTAIL...'*

them off casually whilst sipping one of Heston Blumenthal's new 'mud and fear' cocktails.

Uh-oh, BAD-MOOD alert! Some grumpy protesters came to my office last month, whining that some of the clothes featured in the magazine had been made by children in horrible terrible dark factories for a couple of pence a day in some distant country or other. To them I say, good. I imagine these little tykes are employed precisely because they have such little hands, all the better for sewing some pretty detail on some bright and bouncy new outfit. They should be thanking us – the spending public, rather than those measly boring people who spend all their time rooting through the bins at Scope – if we weren't so happy to pay for these outfits, those little boys and girls would be out of job, wouldn't they?. And besides, I think it's rather lovely that little girls over here can wear up-to-the-minute outfits made by little girls over there – rather empowering, don't you think, and a nice little reminder that we're all, you know, connected. The world often seems to me to be a lovely place, all linked up and perky about itself.

As I'm sure you're all aware, nothing makes me happier than a nice weekend break away after a hard week's work writing and pondering all the latest trends so that you too may shine as brightly as moi. So imagine my disgust and horror when, at the usually (*suite page 40*)

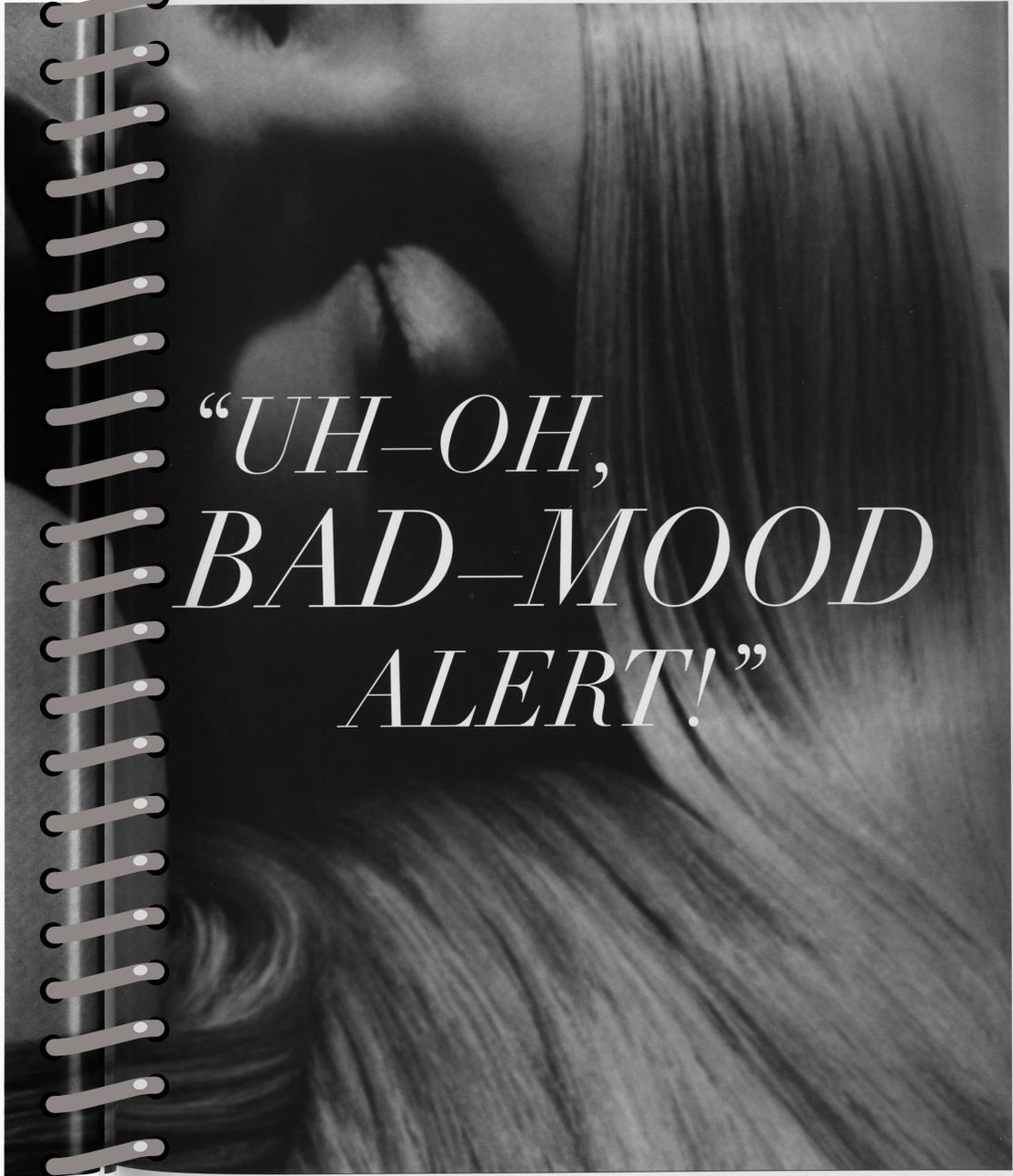
serene and relaxing Orpington Manor Hotel (real Llama-stuffed Egyptian cotton pillows.), a group of women, cleaners and maids who work there, I suppose, were protesting outside about what they were calling 'inappropriate sexual contact' by their male guests. Judging by the look of them, however, I can't think why anyone would bother. None of them appeared to have seen the inside of the luxury spa and gym complex at the Orpington, and not a single one of these ladies (who should have been busy preparing my Ethiopian pebble-bath, in my humble opinion) was wearing anything on their feet I would dignify with the noble and transcendent term "shoes".

Speaking of badly-dressed crones moaning about sex (not that they get any), what about this slut-walk business? We all know the pleasure that comes from being gently chastised by a very rich man on his third Viagra, his reddened face boring down at you from above as he uses what lesser mortals might deem 'insults' as a way of demonstrating his great desire for you (I fondly recall being chased round the Penthouse suite at the Toffington by one very drunk and excited millionaire art dealer as he tried to strangle me with a towel while screaming something about his mother - kinky!). But these so-called 'sluts' don't seem to understand these subtle and exciting games, do they? I don't think they're very smart at all, frankly, and don't understand anything about men as far as I can see. Besides, looking at the pictures, I would say they should count themselves lucky if any man bothered to talk to them at all, let alone used such special words.

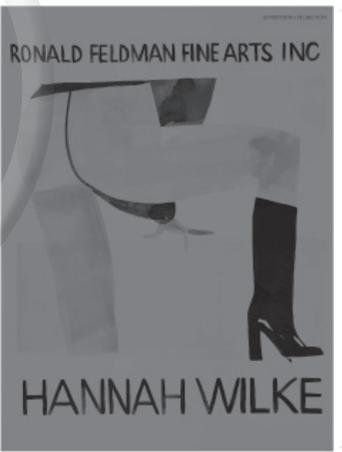
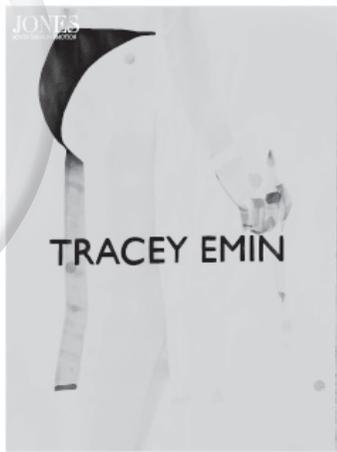
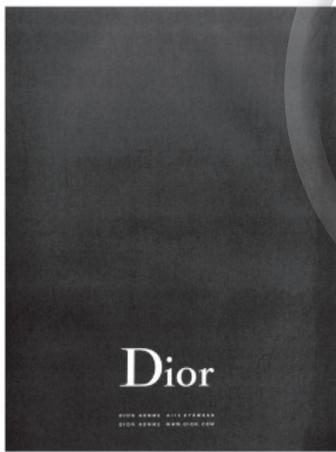
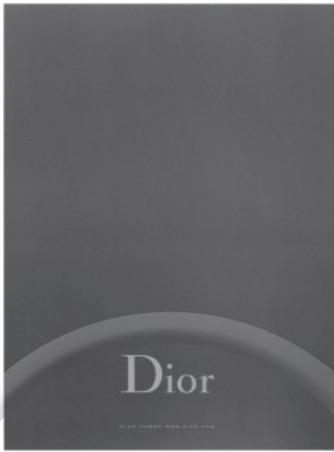
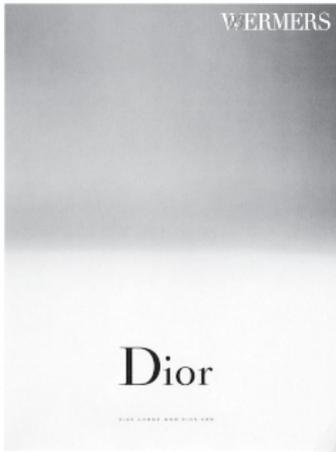
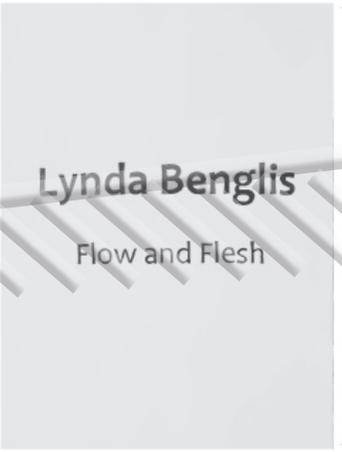
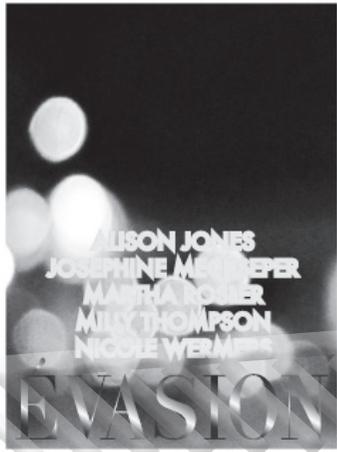
Which leads me on to something that really makes me cross, but not so cross that I forget not to frown (the moment a wrinkle turns up I shall book my place at Dignitas). Time was when women had little else to do but scrub their husband's dirty hessian work-underpants before grating a rock into some lukewarm water for dinner, or something. And that was only like five minutes ago. We've come a long way, baby, and there's no looking back. As my fave writer, Marinetti once said: 'Beauty exists only in struggle'. But we should feel very, very grateful that our struggles are no longer boring ones like getting the vote and getting jobs and other grey and dull and worthy things that make people old and cross and dreary, but fun things like working out whether to splash out on the 24-carat-gold plated tweezers or stick to the diamond-encrusted ones your mother got you for your last birthday. There's never been a better time to be a girl, and even if we haven't yet quite evolved into supreme beings with naturally hairless legs and an all-year-round honey-coloured hue (boo, hurry up evolution), we should be very grateful indeed to all those lovely men who spend so much time coming up with such splendid designs for us to wear (even if they don't want to sleep with us very often...)

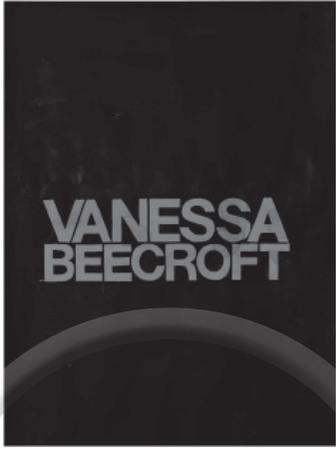
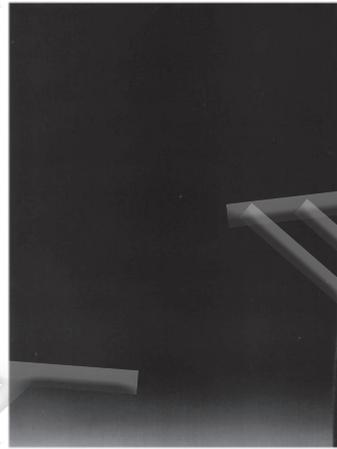
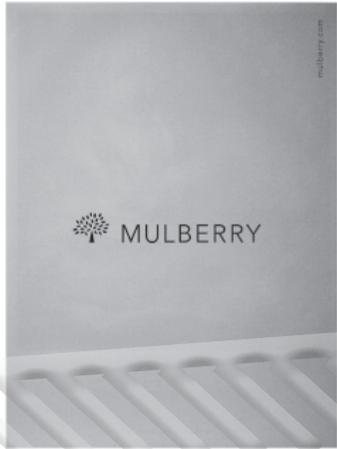
When the Berlin Wall came down and all those people with identikit mullets came rushing through in search of jeans, I felt, even as a very young person (and no, I'm not telling you my age) that this quest for fashion, however misguided those poor East Germans were, was something that unites us all. I, for one, was personally glad when the government decided to abolish languages and history at school, as both were clearly no longer relevant when everyone, simply everyone, could speak the language of fashion instead. And no more boring past to hold us back. I only wish these frumpy moaners would wake up and smell the coffee from wherever-it-is-that-coffee-comes-from - there is a new humanity on the horizon, and it's wearing this season's fashion with panache. Soon all the little girls who get to make all our clothes will be able to wear them too - unless we run out of material, of course, in which case, sorry sister, but I got here first, and plus I don't really want to look like everyone else now, do I? I mean, from where I'm sitting, the future looks very rosy indeed. Just remember not to think about all those draggy things like war and poverty and you'll be sure to look 21 till you die. ♦

*Nina Power*



*“UH-OH,  
BAD-MOOD  
ALERT!”*







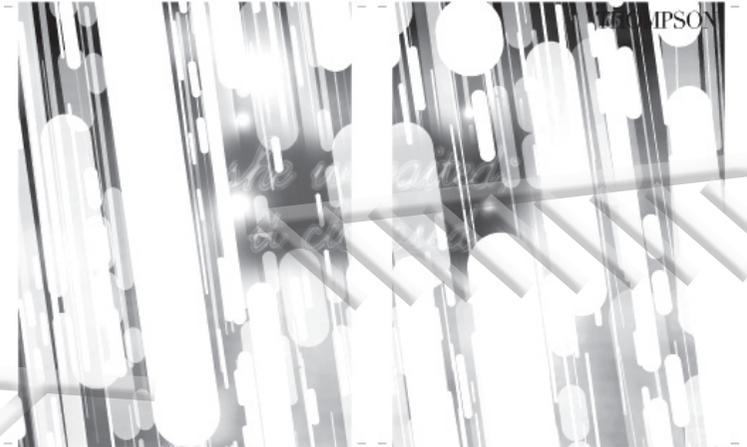
ROSLER

What is Vogue? It is photography, it is voyeurism, it is mystification, it is fascination, it is desire, it is identification... It's the look, the pose... The skin of luxury... It is money, it is luxury, it is having it all... all... all...

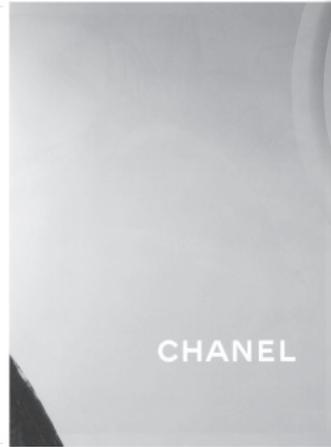
die young, stay pretty  
deteriorate in your own time  
tell you you're dead and will be away  
a dried up twig on your family tree?  
are you waiting for the reaper to arrive?  
or just to die in the hand of love?  
love for youth, love for youth  
so, die young and stay pretty

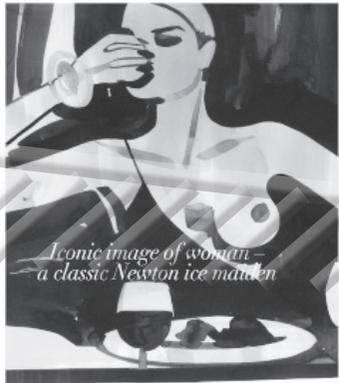
leave only the best behind  
slipping sensibilities  
tragedy in your own dream

Oh,  
you sit all alone in your rocking chair  
worrying about what you must your ear  
were you waiting  
at the bus stop all your life?  
Or just to die by the hand of love?  
Love for youth,  
Love for youth  
so live last because if you last  
die young, stay pretty



ROSLER  
In Haiti, workers making clothes for Sears and Roebuck make \$2.60 for 12 hours work. Models whose pictures are in Vogue make \$150-\$200 an hour





Iconic image of woman – a classic Newton ice maiden

Source: *Iconic image of woman – a classic Newton ice maiden*. The image is a black and white photograph of a woman in a classic Newton ice maiden dress, holding a glass and a plate of food. The image is a classic example of the 'ice maiden' motif, which is a recurring theme in the work of the artist.

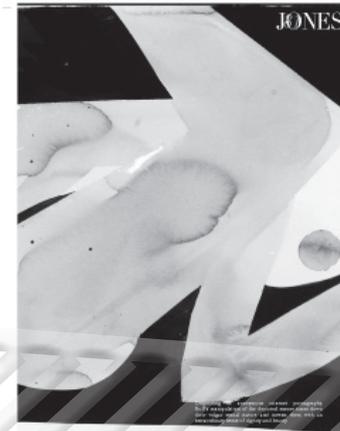


Iconic image of woman – a classic Newton ice maiden

JONES



Source: *Iconic image of woman – a classic Newton ice maiden*. The image is a black and white photograph of a woman in a classic Newton ice maiden dress, holding a glass and a plate of food. The image is a classic example of the 'ice maiden' motif, which is a recurring theme in the work of the artist.



JONES



YVES SAINT LAURENT

JONES



A SENSE OF DIGNITY AND BEAUTY



Source: *Iconic image of woman – a classic Newton ice maiden*. The image is a black and white photograph of a woman in a classic Newton ice maiden dress, holding a glass and a plate of food. The image is a classic example of the 'ice maiden' motif, which is a recurring theme in the work of the artist.

JONES



JONES

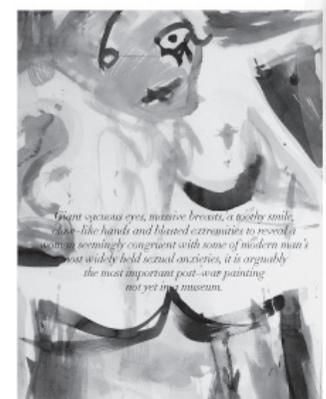
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YVES SAINT LAURENT



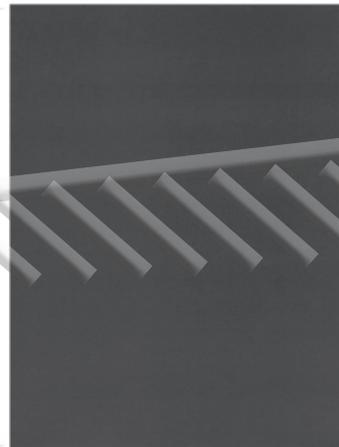
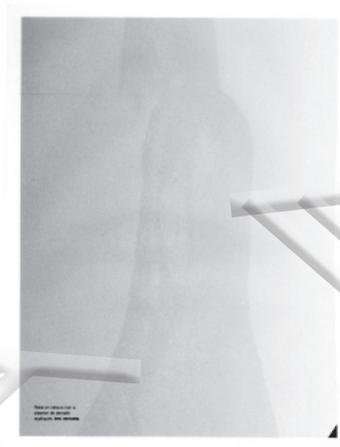
Iconic image of woman – a classic Newton ice maiden



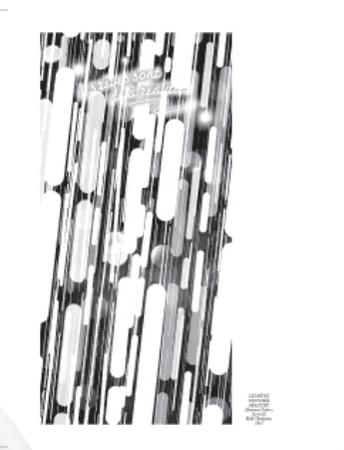
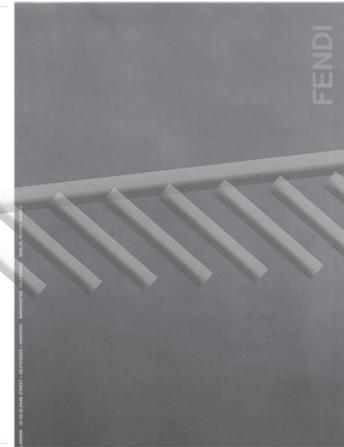
Both ripe and comic, rony, its mix of sacred and profane, double entendre and irony, is what creates its great sincerity



Both ripe and comic, rony, its mix of sacred and profane, double entendre and irony, is what creates its great sincerity

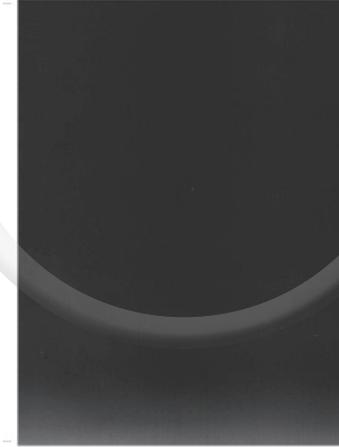


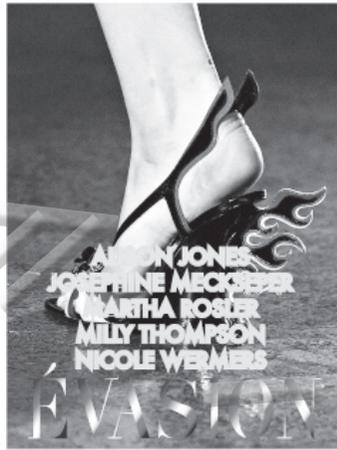
MECKSEPER



THOMPSON

*Les rêves  
Dreams  
are already  
réalités  
reality*

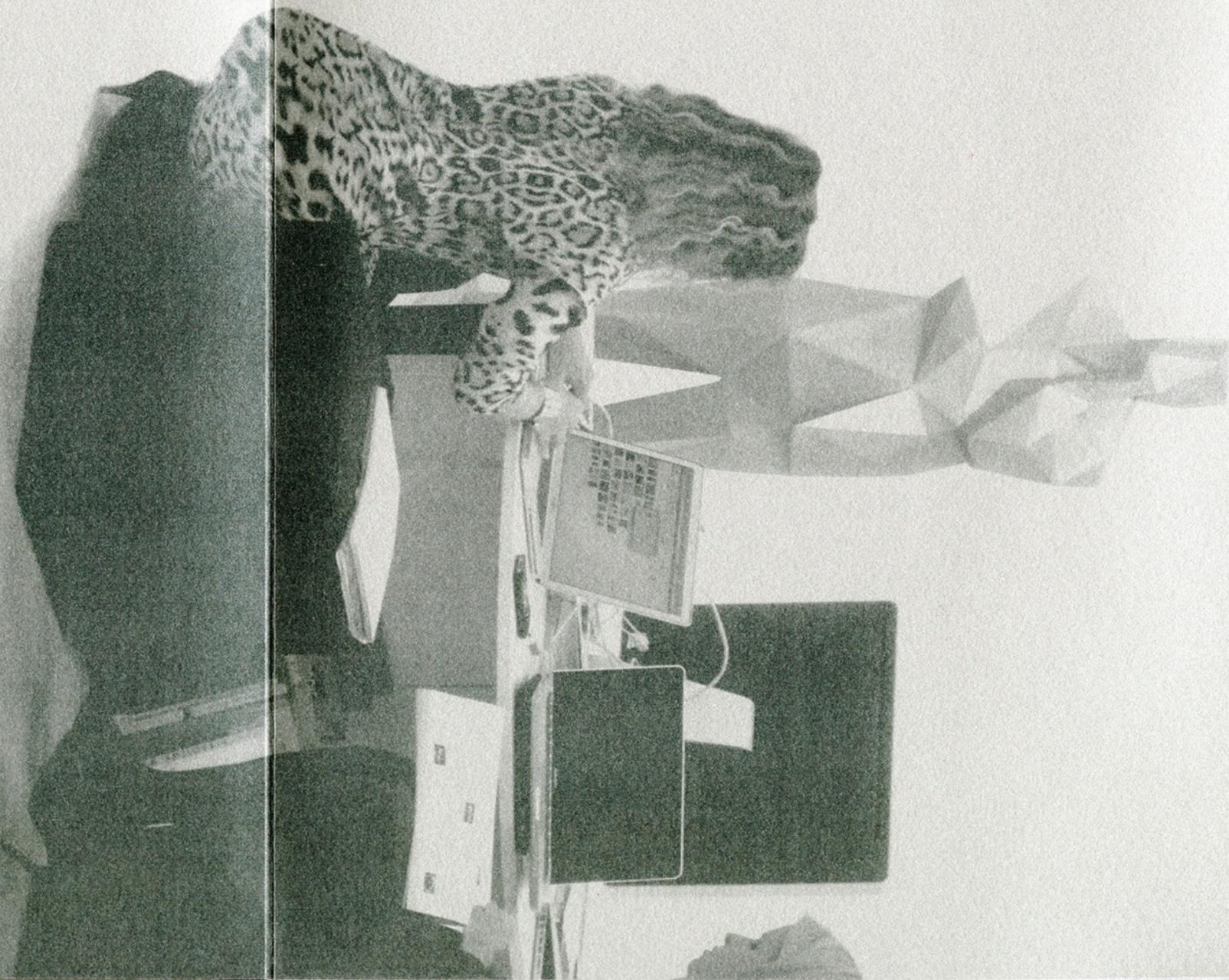






# ÉVASIONISTA

LIVE SCULPTURE AND CREATION  
ALISON JONES & MILLY THOMPSON



# LIVE SCULPTURE AND CREATION: ÉVASIONISTA

In the exhibition *ÉVASION* a young female gallery assistant sits on a Kristalia Plana chair at a desk. She performs her *fonction mystérieuse* activating the objects on display.

Alison Jones and Milly Thompson  
Live sculpture and creation, 2012, duration exhibition length

LGP Paris, 14 January - 19 February 2012  
<http://lanchestergalleryprojects.org.uk/project/evasion/>



Alison Jones & Milly Thompson, *ÉVASIONISTA*, 2012, live sculpture and creation, glass table top, magazines, champagne cooler, bottle and glasses, Kristalia Plana chair, i-phone 4, MacBook Pro, duration exhibition length



# TRANSCRIPTS: ÉVASION SYMPOSIUM

Where are artists in an increasingly neo-liberal art world, guiltily producing *recherché* commodities for the luxury market? What does feminism mean to its monstrous spawn, post-feminism?

Is it Cheryl Cole and her hard-bargained \$1m divorce settlement, pole-dancing classes at the gym, slut-walking?

Responses from:

Angela McRobbie, Monika Szewczyk,  
Nicholas Cullinan, Mark Harris, Ian Hunt

LGP Auditorium, Paris, 18/2/2012 13:30 - 17:30

<http://lanchestergalleryprojects.org.uk/project/evasion-panel-discussion/>



Angela McRobbie  
*Post Feminism and Beyond*

From the late 1990s, my attention, as a feminist sociologist, kept being drawn to media images which were intended to provoke some imagined group of (always humourless) feminists. These images appeared, in a celebratory fashion, to reverse the clock, turning it back to some earlier pre-feminist moment, while at the same time doing so in a rather tongue-in-cheek kind of way. The prevailing use of irony seemed to exonerate the culprits from the crime of offending against what was caricatured as a kind of extreme, and usually man-hating feminism, while at the same time acknowledging that other, more acceptable, forms of feminism, had by now entered into the realms of common sense and were broadly acceptable. The famous *Hello Boys* Wonderbra billboard advertisement was the most obvious example. The rhetoric of this image proposed the deviant pleasure of being 'politically incorrect' with force and energy. The old feminist was addressed implicitly, as a woman who sought to limit the pleasures of the 'rest of us'. Thank goodness, the image seemed to suggest, we can now, once again, enjoy looking at the bodies of beautiful women with impunity. So skilful with the use of postmodern irony was the image, that it also sought to produce a kind of generational divide, the younger female viewer is not made angry, unlike her older counterpart. She appreciates the multiple layers of meaning and she gets the joke. Since then this new kind of sophisticated anti-feminism has become a recurring feature across the landscape of both popular and also political culture. Its distinctive feature is that it upholds the principles of gender equality, while denigrating the figure of the feminist. From the gentle upbraiding of the feminist in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, to the rise of lap-dancing clubs, to the sexist-in-inverted-comma jokes of Ricky Gervais, Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross to hen parties, to proliferation of 'lads mags', to the sexualisation of small girls through the rise of fashion and beauty brands targeted at the under 5s, to the retro-styled garden barbeque event like that staged during the Obama visit to the UK in summer 2011, which had in the foreground the wives dressed for the part, and hence traditionally 'wifely', to the spectacular and unapologetic hate speech of Berlusconi, who nevertheless also claims to support the careers and ambitions of young glamorous women, while showering older women who challenge him with torrents of verbal abuse, we see something socially significant solidify under

the surface of contemporary cultural life.

I have referred to this phenomenon as a form of symbolic power which can be understood as post-feminist. There is a double entanglement, across the socio-political universe as feminism is taken into account, in order that it can be understood as having passed away. What once may have had some role to play on the historical stage, is now no longer needed. Feminism is associated with the past and with old and unglamorous women (Germaine Greer in the UK, Alice Schwarzer in Germany) and this encourages a dis-identification with feminism on the part of young women. Through the first decade of the 21st it was a mark of the cultural intelligibility of young women that they renounce or disavow the need for a new sexual politics. They were expected to refrain from gender critique and become both quiet and quiescent. This marks a complexification of the backlash referred to by Susan Faludi in her book, precisely because post-feminism registers, time and again, the seeming gains and successes of the second wave of the women's movement, the fact that things have changed and hence the irrelevance of a new feminism (Faludi 1996).

We might ponder how and why this has happened. Sociologists Boltanski and Chiapello have provided a wide-ranging analysis of the way in which contemporary capitalism has replenished itself, producing for itself a new 'spirit' which substitutes older bureaucratic modes with more flexible social relations in work and employment, by taking on board many of the criticisms levered by the left especially those associated with the student movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007). It would be possible to extend their argument to include some of the critiques provided by second-wave feminism. Indeed we find this being suggested recently by Nancy Fraser who states that there is a 'disturbing convergence' of feminism with the new brand of neoliberal capitalism (Fraser 2009 p1). Fraser sees unwitting collusion on the part of feminism here which, she argues, had by the time at which neoliberalism was in the ascendant, subordinated (or suspended?) the trenchant critique of economic injustice within capitalism for a more nebulous cultural critique more directed towards regimes of meaning and representation. Fraser posits a connection therefore between feminism at a moment when it had relinquished some of its hard-edged critical stance on economic



inequality, with the rise of neoliberalism which, pace Boltanski and Chiapello, was now reaping the rewards from its incorporation of what they call the 'artistic critique' proffered by the cultural wing of the counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like myself Fraser recognises that western feminism, in a popular vein, had entered into everyday life especially around a set of values which appeared to challenge and contest visible inequalities and injustices, but she underplays the way in which capitalism actively sought to undo feminism. There is nothing in her argument which documents the sustained undermining of feminism and feminists. She makes it sound as though there was simply a convergence, an unexpected liaison. In contrast I argued forcefully in *The Aftermath of Feminism* that a new gender regime comes into being which directly acts upon the bodies and capacities of young women. The world of media imagery and the politics of meaning are deeply and inextricably connected to and part of the wider political economy. It was through the intersections of popular and political culture that feminism was undone and, hey presto, was instead replaced by a prevailing, even triumphant, discourse of female individualism (informed by a veneer of feminist principles and buzz words such as choice, female empowerment and A1 girls etc) which could then quite easily be set to work as part of an emerging new neo-liberal agenda, this time directly addressed to, indeed customised for, young women.

The Italian neo-Marxists, who have recently garnered much attention in the wake of the success of Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, offer a different perspective which suggests that the left, in their case the workers' movement, won some key victories on the factory floor and forced capitalism to make a range of concessions (Hardt and Negri 2000). Fearful of losing key sectors of the workforce through what the Operaismo writers refer to as the 'refusal of work', this included permitting workers a new degree of autonomy and even self-expression within what had been until then the unremitting grind of labour discipline. It would be possible to extend this to suggest that through the sheer force of struggle the women's movement made some inroads in addressing the scale of gender inequalities which existed both inside and outside of the workplaces from the

late 1970s. The feminist movement did indeed force open the gates to employment and wage-earning capacity for women across the boundaries of class and ethnicity, as well as secure certain rights and entitlements for women in the workplace. But there is also a complicated dynamic here in that the male workforce became overtly critical of the dull repetitious nature of work and threatened to escape this fate at the very moment at which women sought to enter the workforce decisively. The concession capitalism makes from the mid 1970s on, regarding women, is to accept their presence now as workers and to accede, often with reluctance, to the new legislation. The extent to which employers took 'feminism into account' varied wildly across the sectors, and the positive endorsement of a gender agenda coupled with corporate responsibility programmes is something which has only emerged in the last decade (McRobbie 2010). Overall we need to look closely at the ways and means by which feminism came to be translated into female empowerment in the workplace (see Littler and Moor 2008).

Nevertheless the novelty in each of these influential arguments by Chiapello and Boltanski and also by Hardt and Negri is that some grounds are found for countering the relentless path of power which has produced so many variations of 'left pessimism'. In each case, though with different inflections, feminism could be seen as having forced some concessionary response on the part of the status quo and the dominant social groups in society (or the patriarchy). However I am already reading more gender dynamics into this work than are actually present. In both cases social changes are dictated by what happens where capital and labour confront each other, and this produces something of a re-run of the old debate in socialist-feminism whereby sexuality and everyday life were forced to defer to the politics of work and employment. I would prefer to re-cast this debate in terms of what Foucault famously calls day-to-day governmentality, rather than focus on the meta-categories of capital and labour. I would make the case that the re-contouring of contemporary young womanhood as having benefited from the struggle for gender equality marks out the horizon of a more profound hegemonic process. This granting of some degree of freedom or capacity to women, and with this the idea that western women are nowadays liberated from tradition, becomes, at the same time, the means and the measure of a new form of capture or control.

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#### *Political Culture, Popular Culture and Young Women*

The scale of this undertaking, a re-making of modern young womanhood so as to suggest that feminism has indeed been taken into account, required the active participation of the media and popular culture. Here we



run into the problem of how to avoid an analysis which simply focuses, in a rather mechanical way, on the power of the press and media and its obligations (or not) to government, including, in this case, the government of the Blair decade. This is merely to set one powerful apparatus alongside another, each with an agenda which may or may not coincide. It's altogether more instructive to examine the complex intersections and flows of media and political discourses which spread, sometimes intersecting, in unpredictable ways, far and wide across the whole social fabric. Looked at in this broadly Foucauldian manner we can see the emergence of similar mobilising vocabularies and clusters of expressions and ideas. Nikolas Rose subjected the whole grammar of New Labour to close examination seeing there a new focus on self-reliance, on the 'conduct of conduct' on individualisation and self-entrepreneurship, on talent and competition (Rose 1999). The argument I proposed in *The Aftermath of Feminism* was that within the passage to a new form of neo-liberal governmentality, young women came to occupy a key position, indeed they became exemplary subjects (McRobbie 2008). One reason for that is that within the realms of sex and power, women, in their subordinate or dependent status, have long been deemed particularly malleable or even 'docile subjects'. Those who are exceptions to this rule are somehow abnormal. There is nothing new about casting the feminist or indeed the lesbian as the arch-villain whose anger and hostility stems from some personal inadequacy. What changes in the new neo-liberal era as it was embarked upon

by the New Labour government was a joining of forces across the media and political life which had the effect of intervening in the space where previously feminism may have done its work, and substituting, in a pre-emptive manner, so that young women in particular become the object of intense attention. For example, on some occasions, concerned about young women's health and eating disorders, government sat down alongside the editors of the women's and girls magazines, as well as the famous feminist Susie Orbach, to try to establish a code of practice about discouraging the use of size zero models in fashion and beauty images.<sup>7</sup> While such an event may be interpreted as supportive and positive we need to dig deeper below the surface to understand what could be at stake in this kind of concern for young women and their body anxiety? Here we see 'help' including self-help made available, without however any penetrating analysis as to the underlying sexual politics of contemporary female pathologies. Apart from some so-called light touch proposals that the women's magazine industry self-regulate with new codes of practice, the widespread nature of serious illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia was denied a far-reaching social and environmental explanation, and within weeks the appearance of anorexic bodies (especially legs) re-appeared as normal on the pages of the glossy magazines.

Under this new gender regime the subjectivities of young women are defined and described in a repetitive manner in popular and political discourses along the lines of female individualisation. This permits a replacement for feminism

through stressing not collectivity or the concerns of women per se, but rather competition, ambition, the meritocracy, self-help, and the rise of the Alpha Girl (much loved by the *Daily Mail*). The young woman is addressed as a potential subject of great capacity. As Harris puts it she is a 'can do girl' (Harris 2004). In a proliferation of faux-feminist gestures girls are applauded and celebrated and supported for their potential and for what they 'can do' in the world. Across the field of corporate culture initiatives to support the global girl become a mark of compassion and concern as well as ethical responsibility. Underlying this spotlight of what Deleuze would call a 'luminosity'<sup>2</sup> is a subtle process of marketization wherein the potential of younger women comes to be harnessed to an idea of consumer citizenship, a term which was much bandied about during the New Labour years. This activity on the part of government, designed to give a bigger place to consumer culture in the politics of everyday life, marked out not just a recognition of the power of media and popular culture to forge a world of cohesive values but also a neo-liberal strategy of offloading the work of government into a more self-regulating terrain whereby the market is given more leeway to shape the needs of the population, in this case young women. Then, when things go a bit too far government will step back in to pull the free market forces back into line. (This could be seen in recent months on the public debate this time undertaken by David Cameron which tackled the subject of the sexualisation of childhood and the recent appearance of ranges of fashion and beauty products targeted specifically at small girls, indeed toddlers). My focus of interest in *The Aftermath of Feminism* was in what I termed a new sexual contract. This was a hegemonic process aiming at what Stuart Hall would call a kind of (gender) settlement regarding the status and identity of young women. They were to be encouraged to achieve in school, at university and in the world of work and in each of these spheres they could rightly expect norms of gender equality to prevail. Government would (at that time) provide supports and incentives to do well, to gain high qualifications and to aim for the financial independence of the monthly salary. This economic independence marked a shift away from dependence on the male breadwinner model and promised women greater freedom while also ideally taking the burden away from the state following marital breakdown or divorce. The young woman could also expect as a result of her enthusiasm for work and careers to gain some tangible sexual freedoms in the form of access to leisure culture, to a sex life which need not be tied to marriage and having children, and to a climate where the sexual double standard was to be lifted so that the young woman could heartily enjoy sexuality with impunity, indeed she could also now get drunk, and even behave badly within certain limits (as Bridget Jones tumbles out of taxis onto the street after a long night in the wine bar). As long as she

did not become a single mother who would be reliant on welfare she could gain access to sexual pleasures which in the past had always been the privilege of men (hence the new female market for soft pornography and the growth of so-called porn chic). The new sexual contract tied women to enjoying the freedom to consume, having earned her own wage (and so triggering the enormous expansion of the female fashion-and-beauty business corporations) while also offering them the entirely nebulous idea of 'consumer citizenship'. What was omitted was encouragement to a more active form of political participation. During the Blair years political life was increasingly linked with the pursuit of a narrow professional career in Westminster, best left to those few for whom this was a life-choice. Grass roots or community politics, and democratic participation in public life and civic society, was down-graded in a context where self-improvement and the need for constant make-overs were considered the best kind of extra-curricular activities for young women. Many commentators as well as social scientists at the time referred to the decline of politics and political engagement and my point here is that within this sphere of the new sexual contract the idea of a revived women's movement was also somehow unthinkable certainly not something which the so-called Blair babes could encourage given the distaste the PM was said to have for the f-word. This is what I meant by the de-democratising effect of feminism undone.

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*After Post-Feminism? UK Coalition Gender Politics*  
There is a double-edge and indeed a danger to the still-patriarchal status quo in the invoking (not to say unleashing) of young women's capacities, and this gives rise to a series of tensions or social anxieties, even as this is being professionally managed and contained, through these technologies of young womanhood. Tony Blair was haunted by the f-word because various forms of feminism were indeed within his orbit, from the inception of his involvement in the Labour Party, perhaps even in his marriage. One does not need to be a Derridean to know that in endlessly conjuring up a demon (in this case feminism) that must be extinguished, that demon demonstrates something of its lingering afterlife and its ghostly power. Women's power to contest the terms of global political power is substantial, as they become indeed more capacious, and for this reason it is constantly, and in a behind-the-scenes way, subjected to any number of interventions designed to limit this potential. It is in the nature of governmentality to be constantly vigilant. Patriarchal power is stealthily handed over to the self-punishing regime of the fashion-and-beauty complex which has the additional value that in that it permits the idea that women self-police and have become their own toughest judges and evaluators.



When this apparatus is combined with the cultural milieu which disparages the feminist as a man-hating specimen the wind is taken out of the sails of the young woman who wishes somehow to vent her anger. How is it possible in the public sphere of political discourse to speak out loudly and angrily as a woman objecting to, for example, the kind of hate speech which someone like Berlusconi is so adept with, without seeming to be anti-men? When the older feminist does, well that is because she is of 'that generation'.

With the Coalition government headed by David Cameron we witness something slightly different. Granted he has a modern wife, and his public image suggests that he is a hands-on father in an 'equal partnership' (now a recognised trope of modern coupledom) with his wife. But under the surface and taken unawares, he betrays his own total unfamiliarity, as a diehard Conservative, with what feminism has meant in political life, by referring in the House of Commons, to Labour MP Angela Eagle in a derogatory way as 'my dear'. Here he showed just how intact and unchanged sexual hierarchies are within the present government. Likewise Michael Gove in a recent BBC Newsnight discussion about the summer riots of 2011 found himself repeatedly referring to his opponent, the Labour Deputy Harriet Harman as 'Harriet' or 'dear Harriet' so many times that it became visible to all who were watching as an unmistakable and old school (Oxford Union) way of reducing a substantial female politician to (symbolically at least) the status of an over-enthusiastic schoolgirl. If we also acknowledge the statements of Justice Minister Kenneth Clarke regarding a seeming disparity between different levels of seriousness of rape, which he was reluctant to retract and only eventually apologised for, and if we consider the claim in David Willets book *The Pinch* that the lack of social mobility in contemporary Britain is partly accounted for because so-called middle class girls have taken advantage of the expansion of university places (feminism is to blame), then we see how much ground is lost to women when active feminism goes into abeyance, as it has done so in recent years for all the reasons I have described (Willets 2010). Without a strong and vocal women's movement (with all the factions and internal disputes which always are part of a popular movement) the clock does indeed turn backwards. I am reluctant to use this metaphor since it suggest a unilinear notion of feminist time, nevertheless there is a rise in the 'non-crime-ing' of rape and sexual violence, there are new permutations on domestic violence such as the rise of so-called boyfriend violence, and surprise surprise, there are attempts to undo the terms and conditions of women's reproductive freedoms. Concurrent with this, and within the frames of modern post-feminism, where feminism has been taken into account, there is an instrumentalism of sexual politics by many western governments in their addresses to less progressive regimes, that here in the West, women



have indeed won their freedom, they can dress as they please, they can enjoy pornography if that is their 'choice', they are now 'empowered' and can fall drunk out of taxis without repercussions. Muslim regimes are castigated for their treatment of women, while the hedonistic sexual freedoms proudly dispensed by western government, can also license figures like Berlusconi, in the name of harmless fun, to enjoy himself with sex workers and to 'consort with minors'.

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Let me conclude this update on the question of post-feminism with one final consideration. This again concerns the UK Coalition government. There are changes here which suggest the forging of a more explicit conjoining of neo-liberal policies, if not with feminism, then with an idea of modern womanhood wherein yet again everything hinges round the idea of personal choice. Here we see an avowal rather than disavowal of the successful high-achieving woman, (usually also a mother) who can rise to power within the Conservative Party and even on occasion, when pressed, call herself a feminist.<sup>3</sup> And unlike Mrs Thatcher she is no longer absolutely unique and exceptional. In this space we can find young women like the MP Louise Mensch, formerly a best-selling chick lit novelist, as well as a PR for the music industry, now a mother of three and a politician. This image of female success, (she is without doubt an Alpha Girl) indicates a break-through into the social and political elite for women who are by and large already extremely privileged. Interviews describe Mensch's wealthy family and her private education, as well as a very successful ex-husband and likewise equally wealthy current husband. She is not alone in the cohort of young women who have emerged within the Conservative Party whose upper middle-class background along with an Oxbridge education makes them exemplars of female capacity. The top girls celebrated and supported in the UK by New Labour in its years of government, have in fact found

political homes for themselves within the centre-right as elite women. Across the spectrum of European politics it is the small super-league of polished, professional women who gain prominence from their prestigious jobs. So far removed are they from ordinary women, especially those now losing their jobs across the public sector, that they may as well be film stars or celebrities. They function more as role models, issuing a clarion call to young women that 'you can do it'. In strict neo-liberal terms they act as benchmarks. These political high-flyers function as measuring devices against which young women can gauge their own performances and also confront their failings. They become a space of calculation, by proposing the question, what does it take to get from where you are to where I am?<sup>4</sup> To sum up I have argued here that the logic of post-feminism is to sustain and develop further a call to young women which would have them emulate the new female international elite, borrowing directly from the corporate language of the fashion and beauty complex and the whole apparatus of the commercial feminine media and adding to this a normatively middle-class idea of achievement, ambition and professionalism, at the cost, once again, of the category of the political.

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Angela McRobbie is Professor of Communications, Goldsmiths College, London

<sup>1</sup>. Body Image Summit, Cabinet Office 2000.

<sup>2</sup>. Gilles Deleuze talks about luminosities as intensifications of Foucault's idea of power as visibilities.

<sup>3</sup>. In being willing to self-describe as a feminist, these high-flying young Conservative women are also making a political bid for the female vote at election time. They detect a very recent change of outlook among women (doubtless thanks to focus groups, polls and surveys) that feminism is no longer such a wholly detestable thing. They can also exploit the fact that the Labour Party still cannot dare to risk such an endorsement leaving the Conservative party to be so bold. Similar strategies can be seen at work in Germany with the Christian Democrats making the same declaration (thanks to Paula Villa, University of Munich, for pointing this out to me).

<sup>4</sup>. The visible presence of role models and mentors also replaces a language which would address social inequality, politics and struggle. The well-intended gestures of Michelle Obama fit this mould. During the presidential visit of June 2011 Michelle Obama went back to Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School in London and this time brought some girls to Oxford for the day.

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# Ian Hunt

## *Possibilities for wit and irony in a relentlessly ironic culture*

Images for Ian's paper can be found at: [art.gold.ac.uk/docs/C21\\_Ian\\_Hunt\\_Appendix.pdf](http://art.gold.ac.uk/docs/C21_Ian_Hunt_Appendix.pdf)



A more private approach can be found in some of Milly Thompson's work.

**Image: Ian Hunt APPENDIX 1.1: Milly Thompson, *Energy Block (a curator's friend) nos 1-5* (2008). Peer, London**

This is one of a series of creations that were shown at Peer Gallery, London, in 2008, with the title *Energy Block (a curator's friend)*. They start, it seems to me, with a minimum demand of visual art: that it be visual, that it be an object, that it be something, that it appear. This demand is then given the character or costume of an apparently innocuous formalist sculpture: a curator's friend because its blankness can be easily spoken by others for any other critical purpose: it can be overwritten. The works were made of vulnerable balsawood, not anything more physically robust. But the exhibition did not rest with this teasing and furtive demonstration of objects that enact intelligent refusal, in the guise of being obliging, or an easy attack on the rise of the curating class. They was shown in pointed contrast with a video work, *Basking in the melodrama of my own self consciousness*

**Image: Ian Hunt APPENDIX 1.2: Milly Thompson, *Basking in the melodrama of my own self consciousness*, 2008, video still**

which explored, as I remember it, feeling and especially

It's a great pleasure to join this symposium for *ÉVASION* today, and I'd like to thank Alison Jones for inviting me to speak. I'm not an expert on the subjects I plan to talk about, and I will be, among other things, working through some quite basic definitions of wit, humour, and irony as a way of opening out some troublesome territory in contemporary culture. I might not get very near the serious subject of neoliberalism that was announced as one of the themes for today. The exhibition and the publication that accompanies it, do that very well, and also show the usefulness of irony, which will be my main area of worry and a strategy I'll be aiming to defend. Irony is something that has a bad reputation in art, in that its very structure works on being included or excluded, on knowing the signs. If you get an ironic remark, you're in with the in crowd, not the out crowd — though you may find this ability doesn't help to pay the bills. Irony, as a social resource and even a special kind of solidarity (it has functioned as this in totalitarian societies and can do so in the neoliberal set-up too), is particularly troublesome in visual art, which because of its history tends to be weirdly closer to and interested in power. Ironies in the visual arts are entrained in, mixed up with the wider question of how art mirrors, maps, flatters and challenges class prejudices, and vested interests.

Alison Jones's work is unusual in its determination to track these processes and name them. Women artists using nudity, of different generations, some feminist, some not, become brands of themselves and their galleries and get mashed together with old-style patriarchal artists into a wider cultural history of patronage in which Thomas Ruff's internet-sourced pornographic images, too, become a backdrop to ostentatious sumptuary display, and are written up by eager journalists as showing 'a sense of dignity and beauty'. Jones's approach is structurally ironic in that the work seems both fascinated and appalled by what it shows, but the pose is a kind of guileless simplicity, close to the cartoon. The paintings limpidly tell us things like they are, in black and white. This isn't a tidy, superior view on things but an unusually direct attempt to show some of the repeating loops of ideology and the trapped circuits of gender assumptions messily entangled with actual economic power. It's a kind of public service broadcast: showing what we know to be true but are usually too weary to think about. And it's desperately, painfully funny.



grief in relation to images but also music that carried a much wider emotional charge (*Wild as the Wind*). It was a work about the difficulties of truth-telling, and its presence in contrast with the, I have to say, cleverer, ironies of the *Energy Blocks* was effective. The video work used art as a social space for the consideration of other values than artistic ones, other social and human difficulties. That sounds vulnerable, and it is. But the vulnerability was enabled and made recognisable as a social, not simply personal issue by the wider strategy of the exhibition, which pointed, through its structural irony, to the difficulties of art as it tries to answer an institutional and cultural demand that it only speak in certain ways, about certain things. No: it doesn't have to do that. The programme can be challenged.

Irony like this – structural, self-conscious, strategic and enabling irony – is very far from the protective cleverness we adopt as a way of insulating ourselves from the actuality of what is now happening, as we do when we give an ironic twist to the latest management barbarism we encounter in workplaces or the latest cultural atrocity that we shrug and put up with, because it would be, well, frankly humourless to criticise it. No contemporary situation, work or leisure, can tolerate anyone without a sense of humour. When I talk about a relentlessly ironic culture, I hope you know what I mean. At the same time this cultural fix produces the half-hope that we could use the other kind of irony, the real devastating irony, to counter-attack. Friedrich Schlegel,

whose words I'm ripping from their context in 1800, wrote: 'What gods will rescue us from all these ironies? The only solution is to find an irony that might be able to swallow up all these big and little ironies and leave no trace of them at all. I must confess that at precisely this moment I feel that mine has a real urge to do just that. But even this would only be a short-term solution. I fear that if I understand correctly what destiny seems to be hinting at, then soon will arise a new generation of little ironies: for truly the stars augur the fantastic.' ['On Incomprehensibility', in Kathleen Wheeler ed. *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe* (CUP, 1984), p.37].

What irony would be big enough to swallow up all the other ironies? What might Schlegel have been thinking about here? I'm not quite sure I know, but there are points in history where a situation has seemed so devastating that to truly represent it, the resources of a truly devastating irony have been called on. Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* of 1729 was one such occasion. It tackled what was characterised in Swift's time as the problem of the Irish poor with the proposal that their babies be fattened and eaten. The title aped the management speak of its day, and in full reads: *A Modest Proposal For Preventing The Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being A Burden to Their Parents or Country, and For Making Them Beneficial to The Public*. It is the very reasonableness and logic of the proposal's language that is its most violently memorable quality. Infants' skins are recommended for tanning to make gloves for ladies and soft boots for fine gentlemen, and the speaker is keen to assure his readers that public benefit is his only concern: 'I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.'

This kind of devastating irony, which attempts to represent a situation by matching or exceeding its awfulness, has its point. But as a kind of limit case of ironic speech, it also demonstrates some of the traps that Schlegel anticipated in any version of an 'ultimate' irony. How do you move on from it, especially of the conditions

you are attacking with it don't improve? This kind of extreme rhetoric in art is nevertheless in the air again, right now, and this is not surprising given the extremity of our own times. Swift's *Modest Proposal* is on my mind as it was the inspiration for a performance last week at the Showroom, London, by Chicks on Speed, which was organised by the artists' book publisher Book Works. The three performers, in singlets showing the Chanel logo made by bones, promoted a new brand: Voodoo Chanel, over a backdrop of a Chanel fashion show in Paris. They proceeded to read out part of Swift's *Modest Proposal* and to eat food approximating the flesh of babies. The most affecting part of the performance, however was not the satire on fashion and consumers, but a more gentle section of comedy between the three performers, in which they bickered mildly about their friendships and one of them stated, more pointedly, 'I used to be a vegetarian. But I got bored,' as she ate a little more of the pretend baby. Another section consisted of aural and linguistic overload, as projected collages, slogans and music conjured up a more recognisable sense of living in confused and confusing neoliberal times. But some doubts remained in my mind. It was the gentle comedy, less obvious in its target, less grandiose perhaps, that had proved truly affecting, not the attempt to redeploy Swift's devastating irony. And as I was seeing the whole thing remembering the words of newspaper reports from Greece: 'Six inches from the riot policeman's shield outside the Greek parliament last Friday, a tall, pale boy was shouting at a man who could have been his uncle; "It's your generation that brought us to this point, but it's mine that has to pay for it. You have to take responsibility for what's happening here." Across the road, a middle-aged woman roared at the line of cops: "Traitors! Collaborators! We're Greeks. You're beating up your mothers and your sisters." Another, her head wrapped in a pink scarf, screamed at the parliament: "They've drunk our blood, we don't have anything to eat. They've sold us to the Germans. My child owes money, they're about to take her house. I hope they all get cancer." (Maria Margaronis, 'As Greece stares into the abyss, Europe must choose', *The Guardian*, 13.2.12, p.26)

Art's areas of competence can't match this, and perhaps there is reason for art to be reticent about the significance of its own role in such situations. No bunch of artists posing as zombies or vampires can compete with this

violently fragmented language produced in the heat of what is happening, politically, economically and socially, as you hear it here: this is neoliberal speech, or rather people violently spoken by neoliberalism, people violently turning on each other, even though they somewhere know the fault lies higher up in the technocratic arrangement that 'knows perfectly well how to run things'. It should be no surprise really, that art can't compete with this kind of reporting of what is actually happening, and I'm not saying it therefore has no role. But vampirism is, for these Greek citizens, a descriptive term not a metaphor or a fiction. The only artist I can imagine making some kind of account of phenomena such as these is that wasn't in some way an insult to those represented is the playwright Caryl Churchill, whose play *Far Away* from 2000

**Image: Ian Hunt APPENDIX 1.3: *Far Away*, Caryl Churchill, first performed at Royal Court Theatre, 2000**

follows the relationships between a girl, her aunt, and the man the girl finds herself working in what counts as a good job: which in the hypothetical country far away in which the play is set, is the job of making incredibly creative hats, for the weekly parade of prisoners to wear on the way to their execution. It ends with some of the most devastating writing in contemporary theatre, that conjures a world in which nature, as well as humans, has arrived at a state of total war: 'It was tiring because everything's been recruited, there were piles of bodies and if you stopped to find out, there was one killed by coffee or one killed by pins, they were killed by heroin, petrol, chainsaws, hairspray, bleach, foxgloves, the smell of smoke. was where we were burning the grass that wouldn't serve. The Bolivians are working with gravity, that's a secret so as not to spread alarm. But we're getting further with noise and there's thousands dead of light in Madagascar. Who's going to mobilise darkness and silence?'

Churchill's powerful use of structural irony in this play, which presents itself at first glance as being 'about' some exotic tyranny comfortably far away, like Guatemala or Congo, is also perhaps a kind of limit case of aesthetic daring and ethical investigation of its audience. What kind of solidarity can be preserved in such situations? What

kind of mastering distance can make it OK? As such it might seem far from the concerns

[.....]

There are nevertheless considerable resources in irony that should not be discounted. Denise Riley has argued, in her book *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* that it is a political necessity. This builds on her approach in her earlier work *Am I That Name?*, which examined the necessity for feminists to both affirm the category of 'women' in history to fight particular disadvantages and also to struggle against the category and to dissolve its power as a way of organising society. This approach to irony, based on the possibility of a nonidentitarian solidarity, does not sound like a rallying cry – what banner would ironists rally under? But her book is subtly attuned to real and material struggles that happen in language, and it does construct an account of irony that goes to places one does not expect. A section arguing for a political necessity for irony begins with the following exchange: 'Julius: I understand it. I even believe it. A joke can make a joke about everything; a joke is free and universal. But I'm against it. There are places in my being, the deepest ones in fact, where for that reason an ordinary hurt is unimaginable. And in these places a joke is intolerable to me.'

Lorenzo: So the seriousness of these places is probably not completely perfect yet. Otherwise there would be irony there by now. But for that very reason irony exists. You'll only have to wait awhile.'

Denise Riley explains that Lorenzo, a character in Schlegel's novel *Lucinde*, 'is implying that irony will arise spontaneously within that injury which has been compelled into self-contemplation. That irony is not an effect of any leisurely distance, but of the strongest and most serious engagement with hurt.' The point is subtle, and I can't fully explain here how Riley develops her defense of irony philosophically and socially, but the unexpected linking of irony not with protective distance but with hurt is clear enough. And this, in turn, is a precondition for something public: 'Irony, once achieved, will always sidle away from anyone's ownership. A public irony must flourish, for the sake of the political and ethical vigour of language . . .' This is a very different account of irony than the familiar one with which I started, emphasising its role in defining the in-crowd.

We have got this far, and into quite deep complications, without me attempting some much more basis distinctions between wit, irony and humour. And I need to do this because, although I've started political discussions I can't really finish, I want to introduce some more, by looking at more mainstream culture. I'm going to screen two examples of comedy that reveal very different dimensions of contemporary culture as it supports men being funny and does not support women being funny. This is not to repeat the lie that women 'aren't' funny, but to invite some attention to the overall cultural factors that mean men get to occupy the funny position, all too often, and women don't. My wife, Judith Williamson, pointed out to me as I was preparing this talk that for women comedians -- Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders, Joanna Lumley, Catherine Tate, or Miranda Hart -- the humour is frequently about their role as women, it depends on that for its effects. This is simply not the case for men, whose position is more assured, indeed, they don't even realise it is a position of dominance. All those men stand-up comedians who wanted us to buy their new live DVDs last Christmas compete with each other but the position they are aiming for is there in culture, in a way it isn't for women.

**Image: Ian Hunt APPENDIX 1.4: *The Priest and the Beast, Mighty Boosh series 2*, BBC2, 2005**

The first extract I want to show is from *The Mighty Boosh*, series 2. In this episode, The Priest and the Beast, Vince Noir and Howard Moon take the characters of Rudy and Spider, two musicians from some hallucinated memory of the 1970s, who have gone to the desert to look for what they think is 'the new sound'. This episode is incredibly funny. It's not my job to be, so I'll say it's based on homosocial feeling at a deep level: men hitting on men, men's secret societies and competitiveness, etc. It finds a strange cultural energy, beyond the knowingly sexist assumptions on which it is based, by keeping a pose of innocence: these two men are both children of different kinds, and the imagination that makes this whole thing so funny is that of children's television. But the irony with which the sexist set-up is viewed, through an apparent remove into an earlier sexist age also doesn't work: the dance sequence we saw there



is from our own sexist culture, not some past civilisation of the 1970s. And as someone in this sexist culture part of me is thinking, as I watch, god, I wish I were less like Rudy and more like Spider. Women feature in this scenario as fantasy objects that may as well be from another planet, however confidently they appear to conduct themselves for comic purposes. Another episode explores the lack of real women of any kind in the universe of *The Mighty Boosh* in a very disturbing way: when, stranded on a desert island, the duo develop a rivalry over their relationships with wives they make for themselves made of coconuts and straw. It's the men's angst and egos that count, the women don't really exist. I find this brilliantly funny, better than much contemporary art in its imagination, energy and care. But the only way, ultimately that it rocks any larger cultural categories is by its appeal to childhood fantasy as some kind of short circuiting device, a source of energy that the Booshes try to keep alive in place of adulthood, which is feared.

**Image: Ian Hunt APPENDIX 1.5: *My First Ever Stand-Up Comedy Gig, Ape and Apple pub, Manchester, 2011. Written by Internet (Sian Robinson Davies and Diego Chamy), performed by Sian Robinson Davies (as Sarah Rews)***

The second extract is a collaborative work by Siân Robinson Davies with Diego Chamy, who write under the unassuming name Internet. It's called *My First Ever Stand-Up Comedy Gig*. The name Sarah Rews was adopted for the occasion: an open-mic comedy night at the Ape and Apple pub, Manchester, in 2011. There were two audiences present: the regulars, who come for the comedy, and those who follow performance art, who knew that it had been commissioned as a public work. Neither audience was treated disrespectfully. This is a brilliant response to the sexist positioning of women in comedy, making a position of strength out of the impossible place of being a woman comedian who has sold her jokes to a man (and so leaves out the punch-lines). From there the performance makes a further and unexpected move, inaugurating what may be truth-telling, of an important kind.

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Ian Hunt is an art critic who teaches Critical Studies in the Department of Art, Goldsmiths.



## Mark Harris *Strategies for self-determination*

Images for Mark's paper can be found at:  
[art.gold.ac.uk/docs/C21\\_Mark\\_Harris\\_Appendix.pdf](http://art.gold.ac.uk/docs/C21_Mark_Harris_Appendix.pdf)

If the question to answer is "What strategies enable artists' (women artists') self-determination today?" I want to start my response with Marcia Hafif, an older New York artist who has mostly painted single-colour works, monochromes. In 2011 I wrote a catalogue essay on her work that she didn't like at all. I'm an advocate for Hafif's work and I've known her for almost thirty years, but my writing was an unpaid offer to the gallery and taken by me as an opportunity to experiment with different interpretative positions.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.1: Marcia Hafif, U-Turn Gallery, Cincinnati, 2011**

There wasn't time to give Marcia a chance to review the essay before publication and to be honest I didn't want to take that risk. Besides, I thought, is anyone really going to care about an essay coming out of a small artist-run gallery in the Midwest? But Marcia made a list of some of the figurative metaphors and literary references she found distasteful and wrote to me: "I think it is the pervasive irony and contempt for the work and the installation that disturbs me the most. I would try to respond to all the offensive phrases and sentences but there are too many and I don't have the time". I fought back pretty hard saying that she was wrong in her interpretation of my piece and that she was lucky to have someone bring new scholarship and ideas to the work. Since then we've had a lengthy and cordial email exchange and reached some kind of middle ground accepting our differences. The other week Hafif sent me a self-produced pamphlet called *The Inventory: Painting* which does what it says on its cover by methodically listing all the forms of painting that she has made from 1972 to the present.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.2 Marcia Hafif, *The Inventory: Painting***

**&  
Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.3: Marcia Hafif, *The Inventory: Painting***

Perhaps this is one example then of what a contemporary artist can do to preserve self-determination. There's the aspect of fighting for your art long after its been

made, if necessary arguing with writers who go out on a limb and appear to misrepresent your work. More specifically however, you might agree that Hafif gains self-determination by sticking with her method and ignoring other tempting procedural avenues and opportunities at self-commodification. Of course you might disagree, seeing this instead as forcibly induced consistency that preserves a sense of integrity at a cost of innovation and engagement with the world.

In 1976 somewhere between *Wall Painting* and *Neutral Mix*, Hafif made an aberrant untitled work for the inauguration of New York's PS1. She tells me she has no photos of this work, but it can be found reproduced in the PS1 catalogue as well as in Rosalind Krauss's early book *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.4: Marcia Hafif, *Untitled*, 1976. Paint and chalk on walls and blackboards**

In the installation Hafif painted some upper sections of the walls in brushy colour but used the blackboards for a hardcore text that her friends understood to be an account of sex with boyfriend Robert Morris; in effect a (feminist?) objection to his serial affairs. That's interesting, some of you might be thinking, if you remember Fiona Banner's porn text painting in the 2002 Turner prize. In view of our question regarding self-determination in what ways should we take this text, given Hafif's rather unforthcoming commentary on its status? "The installation too was not directly about sex though the text was quite explicit. Because of the wrecked and dilapidated nature of the room when I was given it I chose colors that might have been used at Pompei for the painted sections and the text seemed appropriate remembering that when I visited Pompei (1961) there were rooms women were not allowed into, and I had to ask myself, 'what was there?'"

On the one hand it's an instance of local interests (this narrative of one sex act with Robert Morris, someone known to Hafif's friends and colleagues) colliding with more global directives (reductive painting, color and facture, a PS1 commission, addressing the community of emerging international artists also commissioned to engage with the building). Looked at differently this narrative becomes a



fairly early occurrence of a woman taking possession of the discourse of pornography and redirecting it. In that sense a personal occurrence given political dimensions. Or am I wrong, and is it instead a political misstep with Hafif capitulating to narratives of sex over which she can never have control since that narrative form has invariably catered to male delectation rather than to women's pleasure? What kind of voice would Hafif have had to have used for us to agree that hers was a position of self-determination, one that turned a narrative genre around to show her perspective, her pleasure, her purpose? In a 'post-feminist' milieu, does that question impose a moral imperative on a woman's artwork that does not apply to a man doing the same thing? If we could read Hafif's text we might find it easier to decide. Or perhaps if we could interview some of the men and women who attended the exhibition we could draw conclusions based on their reactions at the time. Do the qualities of a work like this change over time? Would assessment of our reactions here today count as a judgement of its appropriateness or effectiveness?

Even though we can't read what Hafif wrote, we can judge the concept. It's unlikely that a male artist would have done something as explicit as this at the time without attracting a fair amount of concern. He will not have been found to have acted inappropriately for the sexual explicitness nor for the sexism of the work so much as for bringing personal narratives into an art context from which they had been effectively marginalized. He will have been judged to have betrayed an idiom. And yet it will have been acceptable

enough for men at the time to be open about their sexual relationships and to talk freely to other men about sex. I have a New York friend who in the 70s kept six girlfriends on the go at any one time and felt there was nothing unusual about that. There were other women artists who critically addressed this kind of sexual privilege. It seems that Hafif's concept is at least in part to work in this entitlement gap as a political gesture. There is another play of contexts going on here for Hafif had been a schoolteacher before becoming an artist. Underlying the aesthetic and narrative effrontery is a humorous transgression of responsible teaching. "Bad Teacher" indeed.

Back to Fiona Banner's Turner Prize for a moment. In November that year Guardian journalist Emma Brockes had the bright idea to take the porn star turned director, Ben Dover, to see Banner's show. He found Banner's large printed text work titled *Arsewoman In Wonderland* clever for the publicity (rather than libidinous thoughts) it might arouse, but ultimately it failed for him by remaining no more than a literal transcript of a typical porn film. Far better, he reflected, would have been for Banner to act in one of his films as a way to generate her artwork, or to have someone read her transcript over a replay of the original film—"It could be quite funny. Especially if you got someone like Jim Broadbent to do it. Or maybe Liz Hurley or Joanna Lumley could do it as a talking book. I'd listen to that", he said.

So while Banner's *Arsewoman In Wonderland* flaunts an indifference to its subject matter that is contemporarily savvy in a marketable fashion, what Ben Dover proposes would reconnect Banner's concept to Hafif's as a challenging advancement. Hafif's problematic act of self-objectification would now be viewed through the medium that both artists address, with Banner initiating what might have become a startling critique of art's engagement with pornography. It's worth mentioning that kr buxey had been here already in various ways with her replay of Warhol's *Blow Job*, and her 2001 video *negrophilia – A ROMANCE* which proposed ways that a woman's perspective on sexual pleasure might be adequately represented. buxey recited an erotic monologue over closeups of her and her boyfriend's intertwining bodies.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.5:  
k.r.buxey, *Blow Job*, video still**



At play in the self-objectification shown by Hafif and buxey (and Banner had she been an equal participant in Ben Dover's imagined porn movie) is the category of *instrumentality* where each treats herself as a tool or object for her own purposes, in these cases aesthetic and political. Sometimes they also refer to being treated as objects by another person (by Robert Morris, or by buxey's boyfriend). In a 1995 essay, called *Objectification*, that I've found helpful for thinking through some of these problems, Martha Nussbaum lists other categories of objectification like *denial of autonomy, violability, denial of subjectivity* that frequently characterize pornography while cautioning that where these are consensually enacted, and at no other person's expense, its unlikely harm will be done.

I've been puzzled by these issues since starting research into the visual languages of sexual imagery, something unfortunately, that I haven't had a chance to work on in the last five or so years. In 1999 I taught a seminar at Goldsmiths that was called *Images of Sex* (aka *Art and Pornography*). At that time the pro- and anti-censorship debates were still virulent. Diana Russell's critical collection of extreme porn images *Against Pornography* was in circulation, while civil rights lawyer Catharine MacKinnon was working, with significant success in Canada, to criminalize the distribution of certain kinds of sexual imagery that she classified as *de facto* discriminatory towards women. I remember concluding at the time, in light of other readings like Jane Juffer and Linda Williams that this pro-censorship activism was too draconian and simplistic. The manner in which porn was viewed varied so widely (including housewives taking a break from chores and straight couples viewing gay porn) that perhaps if porn wasn't exactly having a measurably beneficial effect on viewers, at the same time it certainly wasn't corrupting all of them. If Mackinnon argued that porn was emblematic of male treatment of women then the direct evidence of violence triggered by consumption of porn was fairly rare and not sufficient from which to extrapolate a general rule.

I've tended to view attempts to generalize about the impact of porn as shortsighted. I've lived seven years in Cincinnati, the conservative Ohio city where friendly parents at my son's school would talk to me about their participation in anti-porn family lobbies. Elsewhere in the same state, my interview for a job at a Cleveland university

was abruptly cut short by pro-MacKinnonites when I referred to BANK's work as celebrating inappropriateness, as a cultural rebuke of political correctness. Now I'm inclined to take MacKinnon's ideas as insightful and important, in the first place for their argument that the sex these images depict is the most blatant display of continuing practices repressive of women (the tip of the iceberg), and in the second place for showing that there exists a perpetual backdrop of abusive representations which, like a magician, the market works to obscure as it constantly advances in finding new ways to convince us that our sense of autonomy and entitlement is fulfilled as consumers of a totalizing sexualized life. Not just as consumers of pornography, but perhaps even in my case as an academic entrusted to teach a seminar on pornography that legitimizes itself by its objectivity and its relation to contemporary art. If we find this idea plausible we might say that one obvious part of this process is the continuing normalization of sexual images and narratives—think of Vincent Gallo's *Brown Bunny*, Michael Winterbottom's *9 Songs*, or more recently Steve McQueen's *Shame*, for example. If these are not so different from emerging sex narratives of the last few decades, perhaps they only refine in arthouse manner what was more baldly depicted in earlier examples. Perhaps this classy arthouse quality is itself a refined encroachment by commerce on our ability to think and feel independently, sexually or otherwise. The closest I've come to understanding *Évasion's* point is to imagine the prospect of an envelopment of sexualizing representations, so pervasive that it is mirrored in all our inflections, however opposing they may seem to us.

As soon as I start down this path however, I worry at overestimating representations that surely can have no lasting power over us when compared to our day-to-day concrete experiences of others in the world. Doesn't the claim to the potency of images underestimate our ability to avoid or subvert them? I find fascinating the Borgesian postmodern narrative of reality displaced by its representation (as in 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius'), or Jean Baudrillard's notion of the image as simulacrum that bears no relation to reality other than to supplant it totally. Yet aren't images really a second order of experience without the agency their makers would have us think they have? As a second order of experience aren't they primarily

ephemeral as a distraction, an entertainment, with no lasting impact on us? I suggest that in MacKinnon's attack on images of sex lies a capitulation to hyperreality, to the idea that images have utterly supplanted a reality of what are in fact subtly calibrated intuitions and judgements that ensure our ability to effectively evaluate and reconfigure these representations.

I've been away in the States a long time, and I sometimes wonder what has happened to the healthy irreverence that marked London art of the late 90s? That attitudinizing emerged and was acclaimed as an antidote to the political seriousness and responsibility of early 90s art—think of the Elizabeth Sussman Whitney Biennial that introduced Coco Fusco, Glenn Ligon, Janine Antoni, Byron Kim, Renée Green, etc. to a large public. When I came back in '95 after ten years in New York I couldn't believe how unusually trashy British TV had become (remember Davina McCall's *Stand By Your Man* and the program *So Graham Norton*) and I couldn't initially understand the art I was seeing in artist-run East End galleries. I started to write about it as an attempt to figure it out. Sometimes this yBa counter-reaction was seen as rejecting 'political correctness'. Where the right wing exaggerated (some might say created) the phenomenon of 'political correctness' as a way to ridicule liberalism, British artists (Tory and Labour supporters) found an opportunity to turn against a reflexive critique of the use of language, image and behaviour in a feverish, often sophomoric irreverence (not a bad thing). That reaction involved an ethical inversion where artistic responsibility was taken to lie in a form of transgression that took pointlessness, unlearning and wit as the best way to annihilate sanctioned academic practice. Perhaps the earlier responsibilities simply waited for the party to finish before resuming their place on the stage. If you compare the sensitivity shown towards building interiors by the installations that London group Space Explorations (Louis Nixon, Matthew Tickle, and others) made in the mid-90s with Simon Starling's carefully researched investigations into histories of nature and culture there does seem to be a return of the same.

I'll conclude with a quick look at some work involving representations of naked women recently shown in New York and for which I don't yet have a clear understanding or opinion. At WallSpace in September 2011 Kate Costello

showed small prints of naked models posing in front of large psychedelic paper paintings. I'm glad I asked first because Costello replied to my questions by saying that her work makes no reference to 1960-70s soft porn, that instead the poses reference early 20<sup>th</sup> century figurative paintings. She's interested, she explains, in exploring the intricacies of the relationship between artist and muse, as she puts it, and that these are not about desire but about aspects of the body in relation to the history of fine art representations. Emphatically, she says, they do not sexualize the models.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.6: Kate Costello**

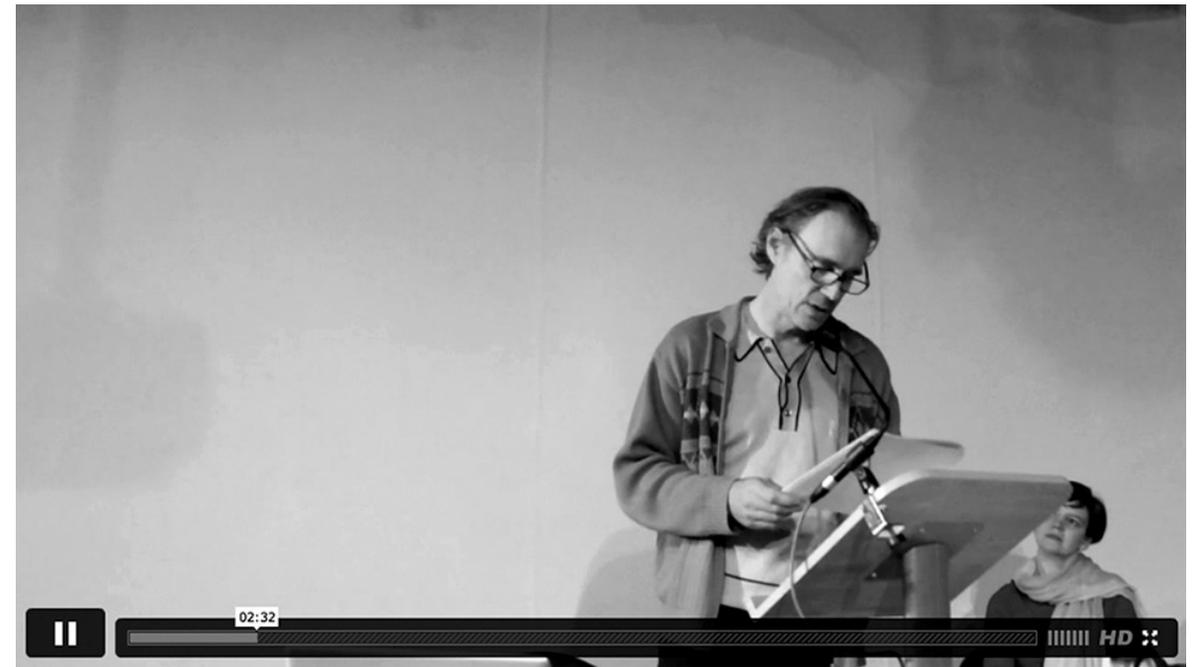
Lisa Yuskavage's show at David Zwirner, also in September 2011, certainly sexualized her female subjects, as we've been familiar with for years. Some of these were on an epic scale, and felt like history paintings of obscure, troubling desires translated into riveting kitsch of a Maxfield Parrish type. The fluid showy manner of paint handling was in this context erotically charged, in tune with the subject matter.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.7: Lisa Yuskavage**

I didn't see Laurel Nakadate's MoMA PS1 show that same year but there's enough material online to get a pretty good idea of what she achieved there. She is adamantly a feminist (not post-feminist) yet considers the early videos where she dances with lonely men as most successful the more their exploitation appears uncertain. Is she exploiting these men or being exploited by them?

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.8: Laurel Nakadate**

With these three artists, in spite of the clever image construction, the empowered models, the stare back at camera or spectator, the virtuoso paint handling, the risky encounters with desiring strangers, does the work really do more than continue a capitulation to an economy constantly requiring new representations of female nakedness offering



themselves for delectation?

As a reflection on the mutability of images across history, my final picture ends on a somewhat gloomy note. In the late 60s the commune movement radicalized thousands of young Americans who moved to the remote countryside as a way to escape conventional professional expectations and dependence on commodities. They set up new family structures, pioneered organic farming, experimented with living off the grid, and initiated open land policies. Recent scholarship has proposed that we consider communes like Drop City as artworks in their own right, the perfect sublation of art into life. You might have expected a radicalization of gender relations to emerge from this revolution, but by and large it did not. Some strong feminist writing and all-women establishments come out of the communes simply because women got such a rough deal. They felt obliged to take on a ridiculous share of housework and child-minding responsibilities while being expected to welcome multiple sexual partners. Photographs from the time that represent this loosening of conventional living structures appeared in alternative magazines as a celebration of the achievements of the counterculture.

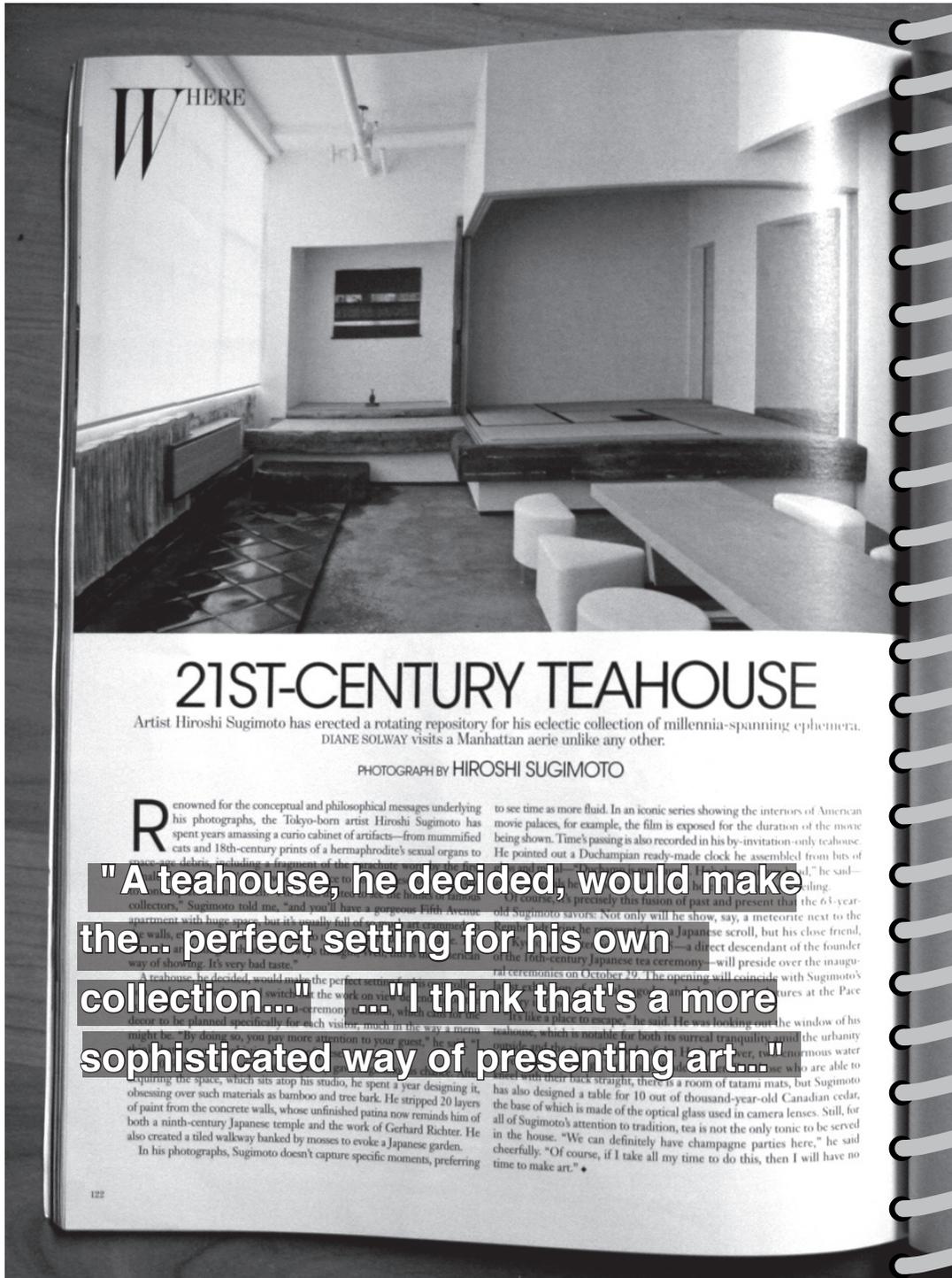
**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.9, *The Modern Utopian*, 1972, editor Dick Fairfield, photo by Robert Altman, San Francisco: Alternatives Foundation**

An image of a large number of hippies skinny dipping is perhaps relatively neutral, but you might agree with me that this second one showing topless women (and a man on the left) making bread that starts life as a representation of freedom has, over the intervening timespan, inverted to one that represents servitude and sexualized spectacle.

**Image: Mark Harris APPENDIX 1.10, *The Modern Utopian*, 1972, editor Dick Fairfield, San Francisco: Alternatives Foundation**

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Mark Harris is an artist, critic and curator



WHERE

## 21ST-CENTURY TEAHOUSE

Artist Hiroshi Sugimoto has erected a rotating repository for his eclectic collection of millennia-spanning ephemera. DIANE SOLWAY visits a Manhattan aerie unlike any other.

PHOTOGRAPH BY HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

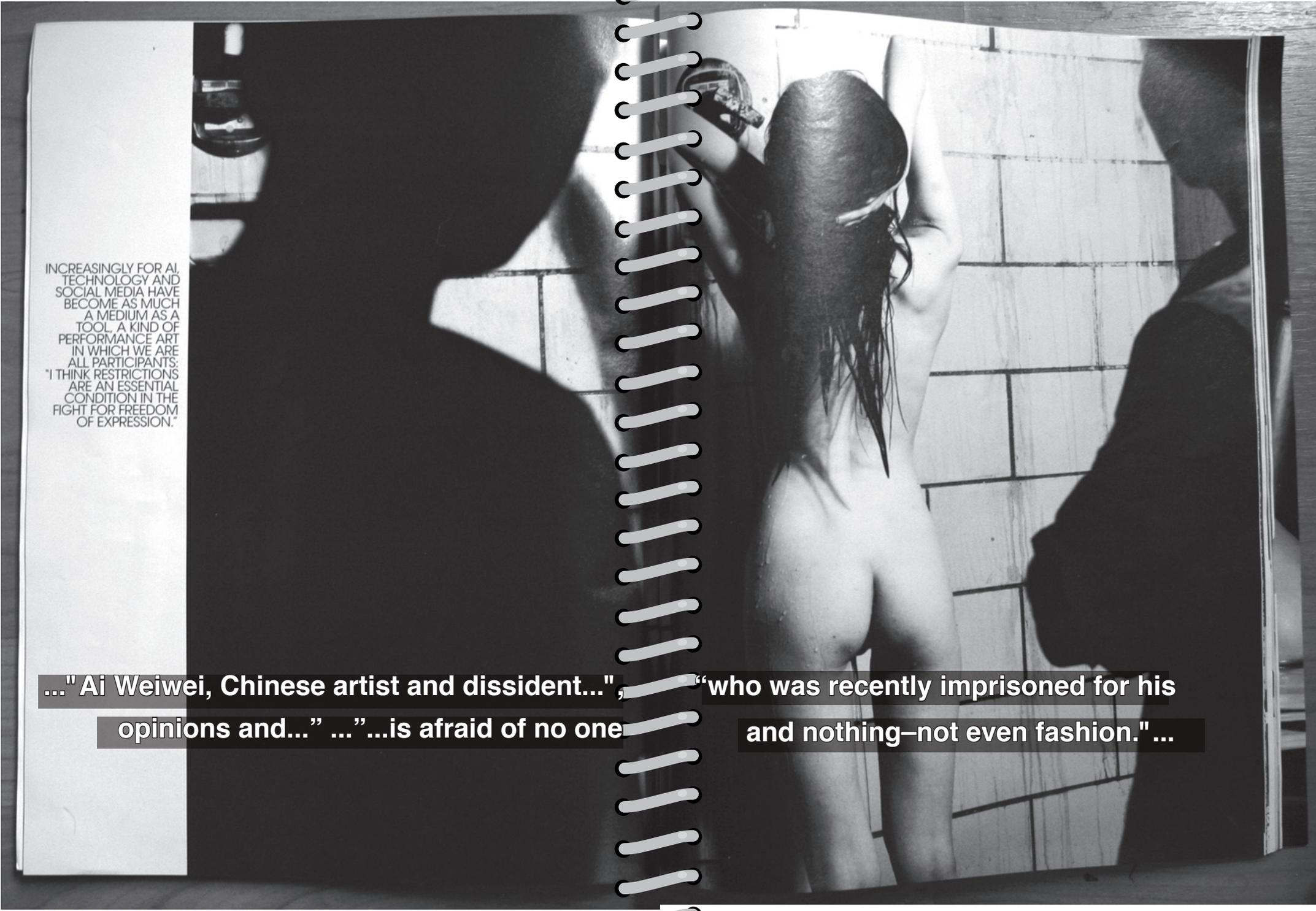
**R**enowned for the conceptual and philosophical messages underlying his photographs, the Tokyo-born artist Hiroshi Sugimoto has spent years amassing a curio cabinet of artifacts—from mummified cats and 18th-century prints of a hermaphrodite's sexual organs to space-age debris, including a fragment of the shuttle *Columbia*—for his Manhattan teahouse. "A teahouse, he decided, would make the... perfect setting for his own collection..." "I think that's a more sophisticated way of presenting art..."

to see time as more fluid. In an iconic series showing the interiors of American movie palaces, for example, the film is exposed for the duration of the movie being shown. Time's passing is also recorded in his by-invitation-only teahouse. He pointed out a Duchampian ready-made clock he assembled from bits of... "Of course," precisely this fusion of past and present that the 63-year-old Sugimoto savors: Not only will he show, say, a meteorite next to the... a Japanese scroll, but his close friend, a direct descendant of the founder of the 16th-century Japanese tea ceremony—will preside over the inaugural ceremonies on October 19. The opening will coincide with Sugimoto's... at the Pace... "I like a place that's..." He was looking out the window of his teahouse, which is notable for both its surreal tranquility and the urbanity... enormous water... who are able to... there is a room of tatami mats, but Sugimoto has also designed a table for 10 out of thousand-year-old Canadian cedar, the base of which is made of the optical glass used in camera lenses. Still, for all of Sugimoto's attention to tradition, tea is not the only tonic to be served in the house. "We can definitely have champagne parties here," he said cheerfully. "Of course, if I take all my time to do this, then I will have no time to make art."

Nicholas Cullinan  
*Nicholas Cullinan reads W*  
 A performance in the style of  
 'Martha Rosler Reads Vogue'



*Martha Rosler Reads Vogue*, Martha Rosler, 1982, colour video with sound. 25:45 min (ÉVASION, see p. 14)



INCREASINGLY FOR AI,  
TECHNOLOGY AND  
SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE  
BECOME AS MUCH  
A MEDIUM AS A  
TOOL. A KIND OF  
PERFORMANCE ART  
IN WHICH WE ARE  
ALL PARTICIPANTS;  
"I THINK RESTRICTIONS  
ARE AN ESSENTIAL  
CONDITION IN THE  
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM  
OF EXPRESSION."

..."Ai Weiwei, Chinese artist and dissident..."  
opinions and..." ... " ...is afraid of no one

"who was recently imprisoned for his  
and nothing—not even fashion." ...

# TARYN'S WORLD

TRAVELING FROM DEEP INSIDE THE C.I.A. TO THE OUTER REACHES OF CHECHNYA, TARYN SIMON HAS MADE A CAREER OUT OF PHOTOGRAPHING THE FAR-FETCHED. ON THE OCCASION OF TWO MAJOR MUSEUM SHOWS, JOAN JULIET BUCK TRACKS DOWN THE INTREPID 36-YEAR-OLD.



IN TARYN SIMON'S STUDIO there is a printer that can handle 64-inch-wide paper, a map of the world with pushpins stuck into places no one goes, a photograph of Simon's grandfather's family in Belarus, and a collection of other people's datebooks from the Seventies that her sister Shannon found in a junk shop. There is also an abundant supply of BioPure Protein powder, ProGreens "super food," baby wipes, hand sanitizer, and Clif Bars—as

Nationalgalerie, where the work will be on view through January 1, 2012, explains: "First you see the image, then you start to imagine what the image tells you, and then you have to read the text. It's the first time the words are as important as the pictures."

At Tate Modern, the 18 "chapters" fill five enormous rooms, their gigantic frames displaying multiple portraits aligned in grids as strict as the periodic table. The first

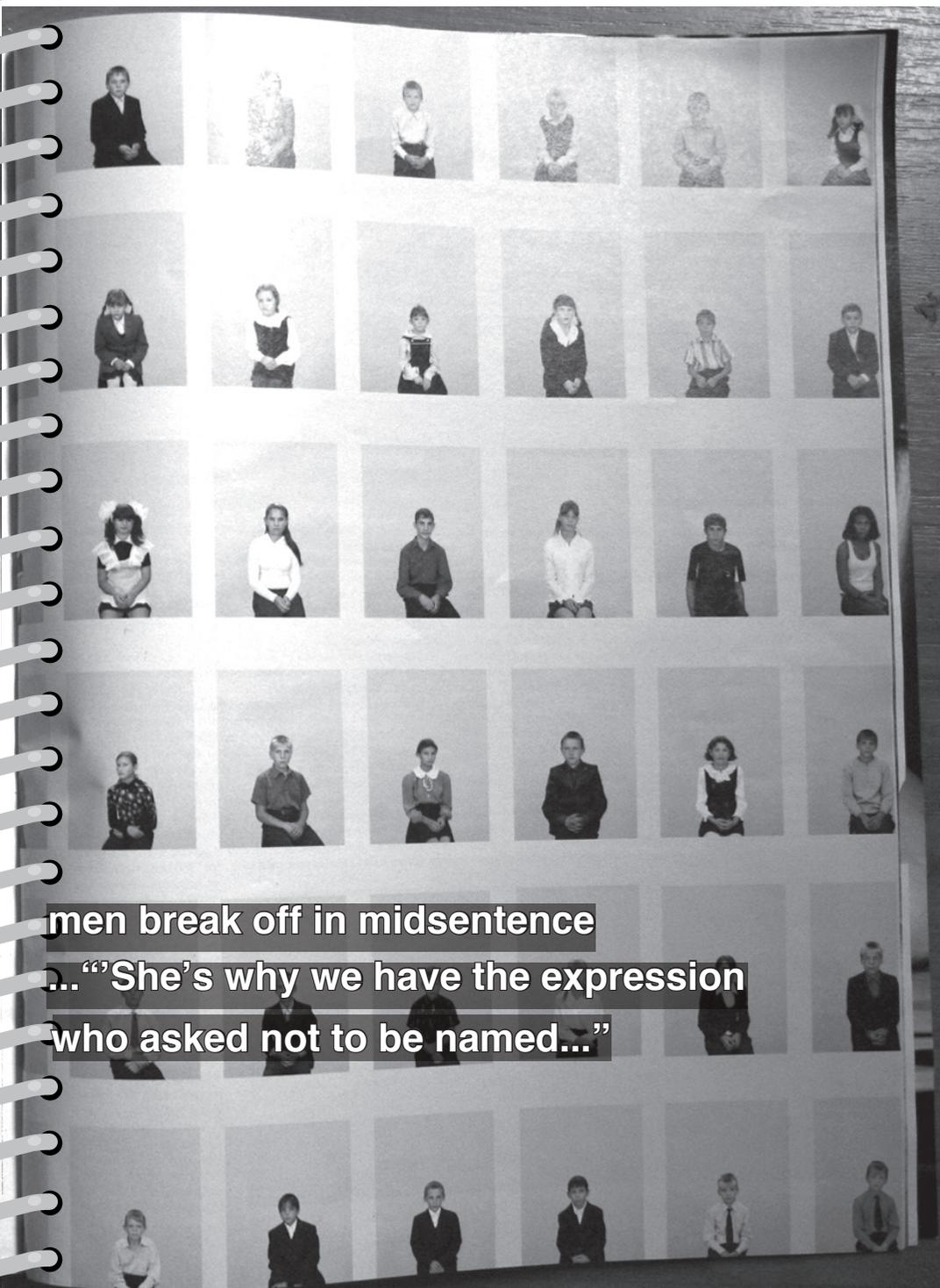
64 Despite Simon's efforts to deflect attention, when they catch a glimpse of her, "mind fuck," "...says one smitten male,

lets, two of which, taken after every meal, can reduce the chance of getting sick by 40 percent. The tablets are left in 18 countries with a 485 camera and 500 pounds of equipment to take the 922 portraits that went into her most recent show, *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters*. The exhibition confirms Simon's reputation as a unique, complex, and somewhat overwhelming figure in contemporary art. The Museum of Modern Art in New York will display a partial version of the show beginning next May. Says MoMA photography curator Roxana Marcoci: "The work that she has done—I believe it is her most ambitious and successful to date."

Although the show's ostensible subject is bloodlines—the direct connection from parent to child through blood—Simon's aggregations of small, formal portraits and precise, clinical text tell stories that raise questions about life, death, and fate. Udo Kittelmann, director of Berlin's

Opposite: Some of the 120 Ukrainian orphans depicted in "A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters," currently at London's Tate Modern and Berlin's Nationalgalerie.

OPPOSITE: PORTRAIT BY RINEKE DIJKSTRA



men break off in midsentence

... "She's why we have the expression

who asked not to be named..."

WHO



### THE SOUTH AMERICAN WAY

Brazil is known for its heavenly beaches and gorgeous women—not to mention its plastic surgeons. JANE LARKWORTHY chats with Dr. Carlos Fernando Gomes de Almeida, the country's go-to guru for cosmetic enhancements.



I've heard that facelifts are your favorite procedures. Why? It's a very special surgery—you need to make the person look better but not different. It's not a face change; it's a time change.

**"The line honors my family's refined sensibilities," she says, "but also breaks free a bit. That's basically been the theme of my life." (ariannarockefeller.com).**



### FAMILY TRADITION

Ariana Rockefeller's new fashion line takes artistic inspiration from her DNA.

WHEN YOU'RE THE GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER of Abby Alder Rockefeller—the socialite who helped establish New York's Museum of Modern Art in her nine-story midtown mansion—being surrounded by artistic masterpieces is a birthright. "I always associate the Picasso with my parents' dinner parties," says Ariana Rockefeller, of *Femme et Chien Sous un Arbre* (1961–62), the painting hung in the white loftlike living room of her family's home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Along with other Rockefeller-owned works, the piece (above right) has now become inspiration for the 29-year-old scion's first fashion collection, with the cobalt blue chevron print of the subject's housedress forming the basis for georgette halter gown, caftan, and collared silk blouse.

"A love for beautiful things runs in my family," says Rockefeller, who studied visual arts and political science at Columbia University before joining the pantheon of socially prominent women (Gloria Vanderbilt, Lilly Pulitzer, Carolina Herrera) who have launched fashion labels. Much like those predecessors, Rockefeller, who spent most of her wedding in Maine last year running around barefoot, sees her eponymous line as a reflection of her low-key lifestyle. As such, she's infused her spring collection—which also includes linen palazzo pants and dresses meant to be worn from day into night—with a good dose of ease. "The line honors my family's refined sensibilities," she says, "but also breaks free a bit. That's basically been the theme of my life" (ariannarockefeller.com). KARIN NELSON



Gareth Pugh for MAC Flight Lash (lower left) and Vacant Lipglass.

More than a year ago, British designer Gareth Pugh began constructing an elaborate world of runway show sets. He launched later this month. "I like to play with the natural world," he says. "For the silvery, fragile-looking side of the collection, I thought of the lightning in a storm, and the dark, deep purples are the black, hazy sky." Most intriguing is Pugh's take on eyelashes. "These are a lot more graphic, almost like horse blinders," he says of his winglike Flight Lashes. Other notable items from the collection include Hair Nail Polish—an iridescent blend of green and purple—along with a pearlescent gloss and an intense loose silver shadow. "I didn't want the collection to be all black—that's what people expected," Pugh says. "I wanted it to be both unexpected and beautiful." CHRISTINA HAN



WHO

# EARTH ANGELS

FOR ECO-FASHIONISTAS ELIZABETH VON GUTTMAN, ALEXIA NIEDZIELSKI, AND CHARLOTTE CASIRAGHI. GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK.

THE IDEA THAT having good hair and doing good works are mutually exclusive is a myth. The first issue, published as a newspaper in September 2009, was edited by *Vogue Italia*'s Franca Sozzani, sponsored by Loro Piana, and took good will from the fashion world. Take *EVER* with each issue aimed at capturing the fashion and design world changes with each issue aimed at capturing the fashion and design worlds into one magazine. Its founders—von Guttman, Niedzielski, and Casiraghi—were the winning bag up for sale online at select Greenpeace norm. And that's a good thing: unbeat and mouthy, *EVER*'s vernacular is like the *manifesto*'s quest for a better world.

"We're not just a magazine," says Casiraghi, who, along with von Guttman and Niedzielski, is based in London. "We're a platform for Fendi, and Vanessa Bruno, and the pair is on staff at the London-based indie magazine *Industrie*. Casiraghi, the daughter of Prince Caroline of Monaco, competes year-round as a show jumper on the Global Champions equestrian tour.

Taking an ecological career turn was not an obvious choice for the trio, but duty called. "The overconsumption and greed of our industry," is what they're going, von Guttman says. "And so we turned to what we knew best." Adds Casiraghi: "We want to show that you can change things. Maybe not the whole world—but things." ALEXANDRA MARSHALL

From left: Von Guttman wears Balenciaga by Nicolas Ghesquiere's black silk crêpe coat; Burello Cucinelli's white cotton blouse; Niedzielski wears Yves Saint Laurent's black grain-de-poudre cape; Prada's white cotton shirt; Casiraghi wears Yves Saint Laurent's black double-cashmere cape; Prada's white cotton shirt. Her own necklace. For stores, prices, and more, see Backstory, page 172.



02 PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLY VANDERPERHE. STYLED BY OLIVIER HUIZZO



"The idea that having good hair and doing good works are mutually exclusive died around the time Angelia Jolie became a United Nations goodwill ambassador. Let's face it: A shot of glamour really helps a cause."



Van Cleef & Arpels  
Haute Joaillerie, place Vendôme since 1906



Nicholas Cullinan is Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



## Monika Szewczyk *Flirting with Feminism*

One of the great doubts of today, and perhaps particularly for women of my generation, that is women born in that nacently neoliberal decade—the nineteen-seventies—concerns invoking what is often called said decade’s most revolutionizing concept, as this concept has more recently been minted into something of an f-word.<sup>1</sup> Especially when speaking of the achievements of other women, invoking this pesky, polarizing, proud, at one time liberating, yet now somehow sometimes also limiting word, FEMINISM (there I said it!), runs the risk of reductions. Women do not necessarily want to be seen through the feminist lens, not first and foremost. The attendant compulsion is to make too many qualifications—disqualifying the writing put to such apologetic uses from the ranks of pleasurable prose. What follows is written (admittedly quickly, recklessly) in an attempt to register this historical doubt as a space within which an artist might work and in which her work may be recognized.

Here, I already feel myself weaving a knot as I hear in my head the voices of certain friends. Among them are pioneers in the feminist revolution of the seventies and members of its punk persistence in the eighties and beyond, who see “doubts” about the feminist stance as a sign of selling-out (or of naïvely buying the “you’ve come a long way baby” marketing). At best they might attribute such doubts to a profound misunderstanding of the lessons of feminism, rather than to how I would consider it: a profound absorption of those lessons that allows us to proceed without naming what we do—a pause in the forging of weapons in order to use them.

Now, speaking of lessons, it must be recognized that we have reached a point when not only women but also men are learning. Feminism is no longer considered women’s work – indeed and increasingly I observe men quite consciously working with women, some by showing chiefly women artists, others by writing about women and others still by teaching classes on feminism. And these men are gaining great appreciation for their work...to the point where I begin to wonder about HOW and WHY we praise the men who support women, recognize their brilliance, but also want to work with women because they are women. Here a strange imbalance is perceptible, as we might still question women for teaching, writing about or

showing “mostly men”: Are they trying to get ahead in a man’s world? And today, more so than say two decades ago, we may be prone to see women who carry out programs similar to those of the above-mentioned “feminist men” as showing or teaching and writing about “too many women,” as if they were harping on “an old cause.”

Thinking of how the flag of feminism is not quite available to western women today, we might also note how often we hear of the “problems of women in the Arab World,” and deposit the desire to speak about the f-word eastwards. The oft-cited invisibility of Eastern Women—they are behind the veil, behind the walls of the Harem, but also (as a recent HSBC advert points out<sup>2</sup>) behind the lens of the camera—has of course also been used as a way to critique (Western?) voyeurism, snoopiness and the overall obsession with visibility as virtue. On the one hand, in meandering through this complex, we begin to see how the very terms of female empowerment are difficult to define. On the other, in layering one binary on top of another—Women vs. Men plus East vs. West—we see that feminism can be dismissed on the charges that it addresses only “part of the the problem.”

Perhaps the biggest problem, however, is a particular type of binary thinking that is a hangover from the Cold War and the Computer, where we get either East or West, zero or one and where there is little room for another kind of sensibility which has seduction, not war, at its center. How might such seduction work? Or how might it play out? One thought: we might proceed by putting into play inversions, deliriums, drunken re-visions or other con-fusions – and yes indeed evasions – especially of what’s powerful, what is high and what is low, who leads (who’s on top).<sup>3</sup> But also, we might just keep certain things quiet. After all, the moment you spell out to a potential lover that what you are involved in is indeed “a seduction,” is not the game over? On this point, and when it comes to playing out the politics of identity in a seductive manner, I always think of a small exhibition curated by David Hammons at the Christine Koenig Gallery in Vienna, which featured the abstract paintings of Ed Clark, Denyse Thomasos and Stanley Whitney. At issue was abstraction—as a concern for these African American (and African Canadian) artists—and the very fact that their concern with identity was veiled, painted



over, not as readable as it may have been in figurative paintings, where figures probably cannot help but speak to the identity of their maker. The exhibition had an apt and tempting title *Quiet as it's kept*.

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Another thought: If we want to be truly emancipated, truly powerful, genuinely fe-male even, might we want to keep this somewhat quiet?<sup>4</sup> If we want to persevere in feminism, I would venture that this silence could even be a non-traumatic kind. It might rather be a sign of flirting with a politics, flirting rather than foregrounding it, taking a long time to show the naked truth, like in strip-tease. Of course, flirting, like feminism, comes with its negative connotations – the flirt is seen as unserious, coquettish, even cheap. But flirting is also a great test of wits and it raises the temperature, reminding us we have minds and bodies. It is thus, perhaps, one way to awaken an often-overlooked (somewhat camp) approach, expressed well through an inversion, a dictum that is particularly dear to me, offered by Susan Sontag, as a means to conclude her essay, *Against Interpretation*: In place of a hermeneutics, we need an erotics of art.

I've almost said all I want to say on the topic of feminism and what I think could be the most cunning form of continuing it. Your eyes are beautiful, by the way. One last twist, something largely inspired by the invitation to speak at the *ÉVASION* symposium... and the circumstance of having to take up the invitation televisually. I've had to think a bit about what it is exactly that I am after. And have concluded that while I am advocating a certain seductive silence on the subject at hand, this does not mean an end to the broadcast – the broadcasting of the feminist cause even. [In a similar vein, the Sphinx may be said to keep mum while eternally advertising wisdom in the Egyptian desert.] There's more... in my own experience with two of the artists in the *ÉVASION* exhibition – the two with whom I've had the pleasure to work, that is Martha Rosler

and Josephine Meckseper – the key lies in the coupling of consumer critique with a certain dead pan humour. There is of course a lot to be said about the difference in their approach, but I'm more interested in what gives them the power to produce enough space for thought. I think it is that each woman in her own way – and this is not their official profile – is a little bit of a clown. Perhaps this ancient strategy is also at play in the oversized accessories chained together in Nicole Wermers sculpture and in Milly Thompson and Alison Jones' wicked way of having their *Vogue* and critiquing it too. Now humour, like flirting, is NOT something we can talk about at length without killing some essential spirit of the matter. So instead of speaking directly about this, let us humour Alison and Milly's provocation to confront neo-liberalism and its intersections with luxury, glamour, identification, aspiration, wealth, social superiority, luxury, distinction, etc. And let us remember, somewhere in the back of our minds, that we look really hot when we think.

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1. Recently, the exhibitions *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (which toured from The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, to the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., PS.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, N.Y. and the Vancouver Art Gallery in Vancouver, B.C. between 2007 and 2009), *Global Feminisms* (Brooklyn Museum, also 2007) and *POWER UP: Female Pop Art* (Kunsthalle Wien, 2010-2011) have brought feminism to the foreground of themes to be addressed, but have also tended to reinforce its status as a historical category rather than a present politics. It is interesting to note that *Global Feminisms* was rare in presenting works made since 1990, and *POWER UP* stopped short of comfortably claiming feminism for its artists and works; they are presented in the e-flux announcement as proto-feminist, in a show that emphatically "does not postulate some genuinely female art." The question remains if the return of the feminist frame in exhibition making. As I write, I also discover that in that nodal year of 2007, *ARTnews* published a special issue *Feminist Art: The Next Wave*, with an article by Jori Finkel entitled "The F-word: who says it?" which I have yet to read, but which seems to testify to the dilemma I am foregrounding.

2. The advert notes: "Only 4% of American films are made by women. In Iran it's 25%."

3. Or by fusing the Anatolian rug and the pub carpet, the goddess and the stripper, and by creating "the vertical expression of a horizontal desire," to quote George Bernard Shaw, by way of Shannon Bool.

4. Here, and also in reference to the desire to move beyond binaries, I recall a passage that has stuck in my mind as much as the exhibition curated by Hammons: "Become clandestine, make rhizome everywhere, for the wonder of a non-human life to be created. *Face, my love*, you have finally become a probe-head ... Year zen, year omega, year 0 ... Must we have it at that, three states, and no more: primitive heads, Christ-face, and probe-heads?" from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 211. A question that arises in thinking of Shannon Bool's work is the role of the super-human, super-natural woman as a kind of third term beyond the female and male binary, offering an archetypal identity without a unique face.

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Monika Szweczyk is a writer, editor and curator







# ÉVDΣIONISTD EST DЯЯIVÉE



She is ДМБІЄІСЄ,  
she is ДЯТ,  
she is FУЯИТУЯЄ...

She is ДЯЧИТЕСТУЯЄ,  
COSMETICS.

ALISON JONES MILLY THOMPSON

# С21ST ДЯТ-ШОЯКЄЯ

# RESIDENCY C21st ART-WORKER

A photomontage considering gendered labour  
against the backdrop of the contemporary art world.  
A large-format print displayed on a Paris city centre Clear Channel adboard and  
a stack of mass-produced riso prints available as a free carry-out from the  
gallery during the exhibition *Planches Volées de Sous la Phalange de Bourgeois*.

Alison Jones and Milly Thompson

Artists residency, LGR, 25 September - 20 October 2013  
<http://manchestergalleryprojects.org.uk/project/alison-jones-and-milly-thompson-c21st-art-worker%E2%80%A8/>

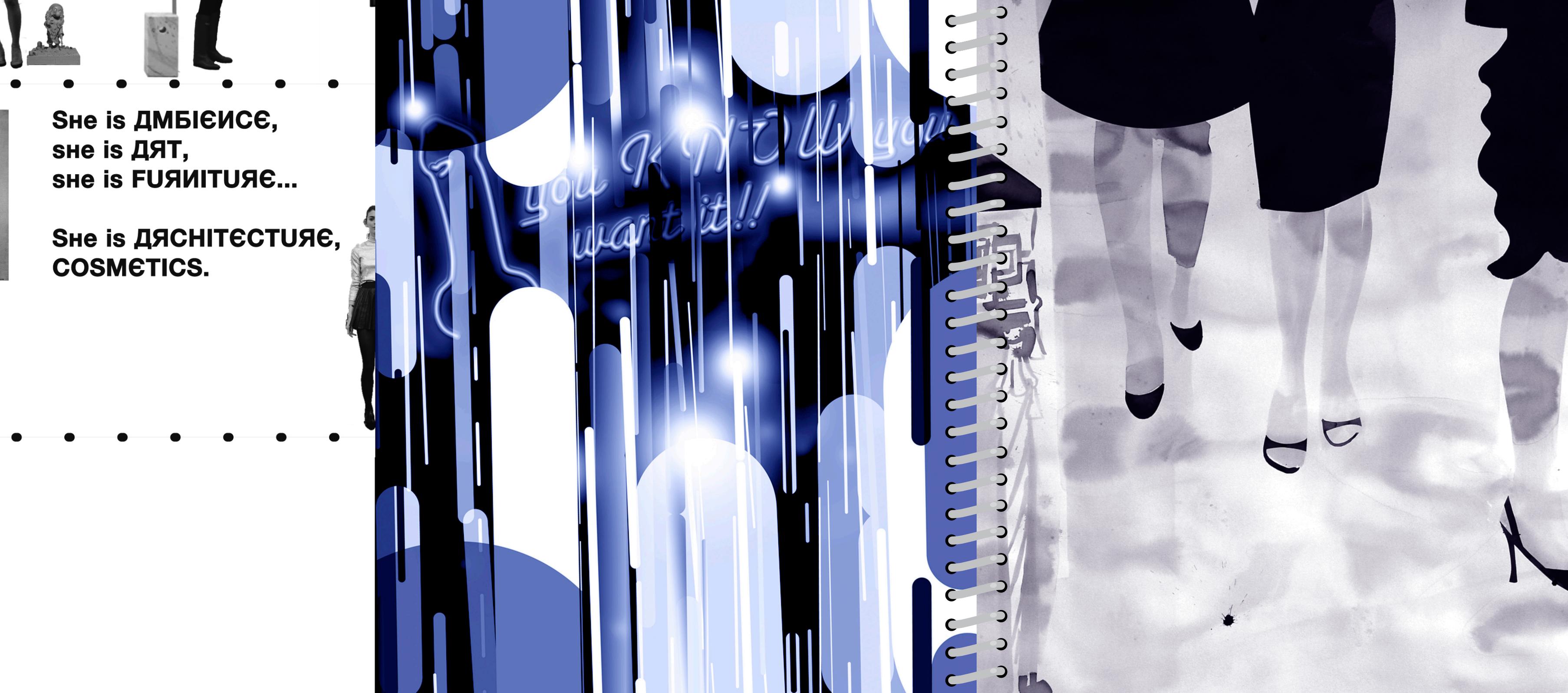
Overleaf: Alison Jones & Milly Thompson, C21st Art-Worker (detail), 2013, large-format digital print, 180 x 120cm

100



# ÉVÉNSIOI STD EST DÛYIVÉ





She is ДМБІЄИСЄ,  
she is ДЯТ,  
she is FУЯИТУЯЄ...

She is ДЯСНІЄСТУЯЄ,  
COSMETICS.



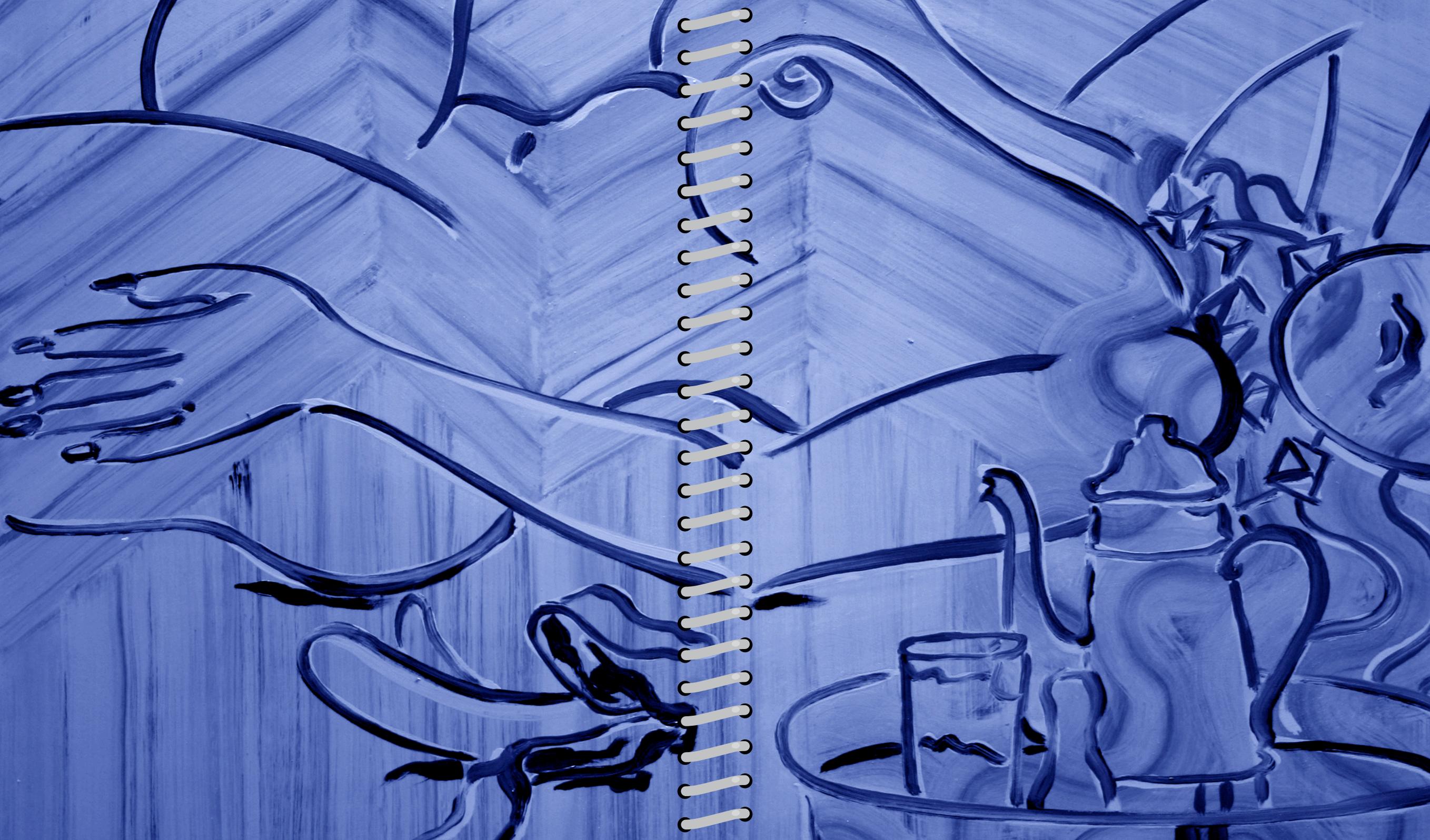


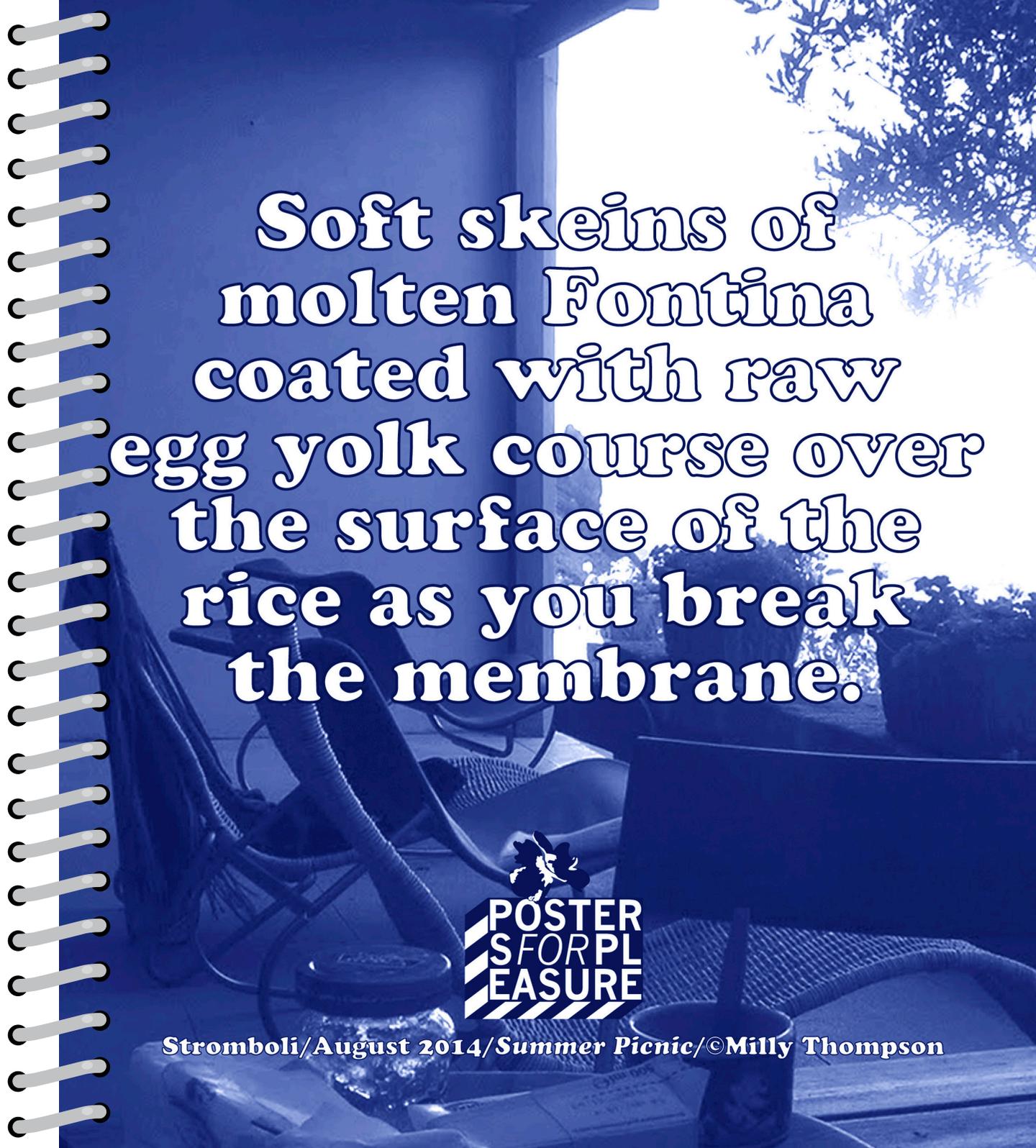
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**Soft skeins of  
molten Fontina  
coated with raw  
egg yolk course over  
the surface of the  
rice as you break  
the membrane.**

*C21<sup>st</sup> RECENT HISTORY*

An archive of six collaborative projects by  
Alison Jones & Milly Thompson

Thanks to Nicholas Cullinan, Mark Harris, Ian Hunt, Gareth Jones,  
Angela McRobbie, Josephine Meckseper, Nina Power,  
Martha Rosler, Monica Szewczyk, Nicole Wermers



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The Elephant Trust

**Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



**Stromboli/August 2014/Summer Picnic/©Milly Thompson**

