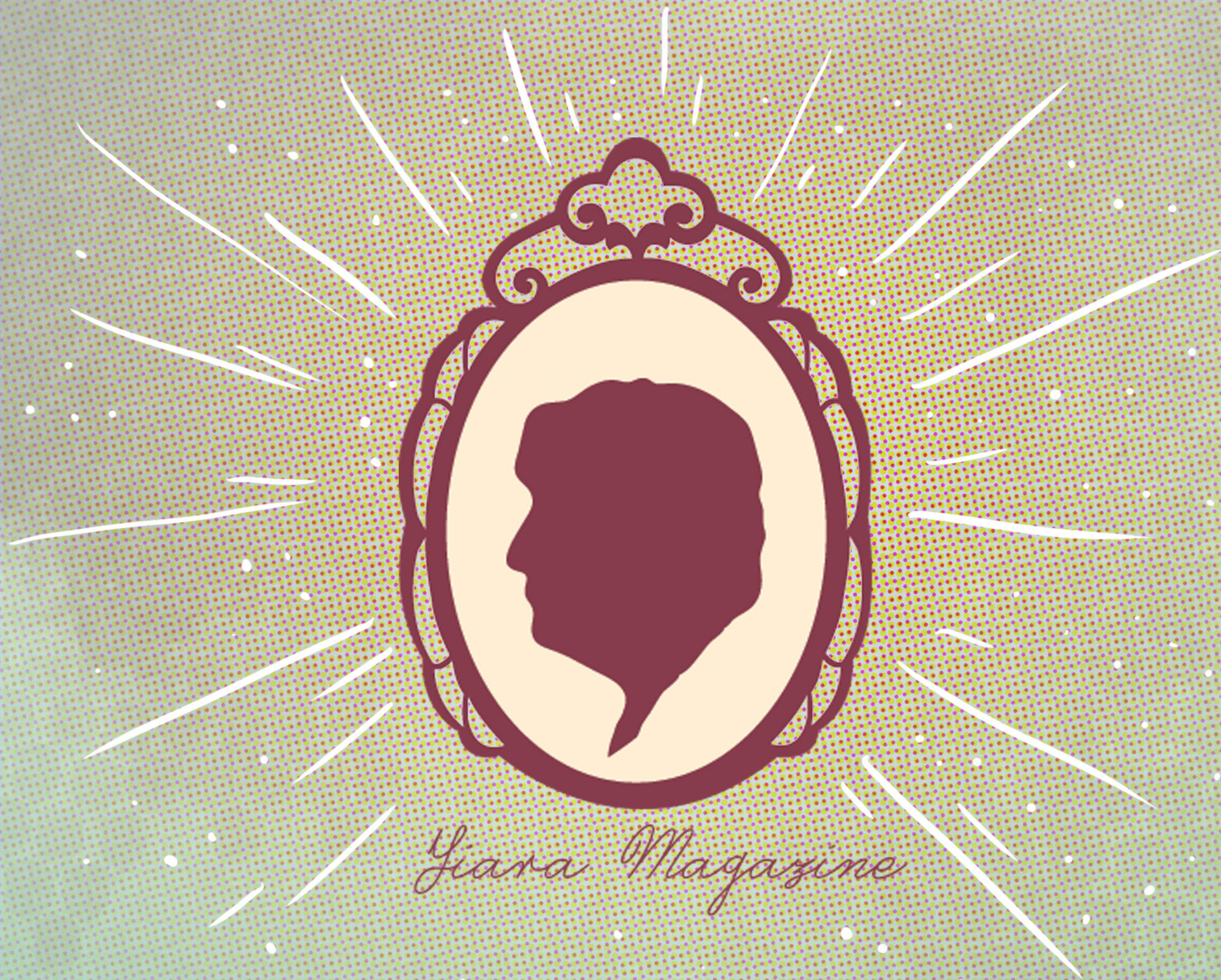

Featuring feminist works
of undergraduate students

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The Story Behind Yiara :

Name: Yiara was an indigenous mythological Brazilian queen, legendarily beautiful but also a mighty warrior. She thus embodies many different issues of interest to feminist art history: sexuality, power, exoticism, cultural identity etc.

Logo:

The choice of logo joins a recognizable art historical object, the cameo, with an image of a non-idealized woman. The profile image based on Grandma Iara contests the ideal beauty present in women's representation throughout the history of art and offers an image of a wise, elderly woman.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to Yiara's inaugural issue!

As young art historians we noticed the lack of attention and studies driven to the history of women in art early in our learning process and therefore the importance of feminist art history. We, as young feminist art historians, have the duty of reshaping and rewriting the history of women in art as well as addressing its meaning in contemporary visual culture. In response to the inquiries concerning the relevance of feminism nowadays we decided to create this magazine. It is through Yiara that we will bring to life, discuss, and continue to produce feminist art and art history.

Yiara is a young artist, an experienced painter, an art teacher, an amateur, a retired artist, a contemporary artist, a historical artist, a writer, a student, a warrior, a myth, a symbol, and a broken stereotype. She is the personification of the hands and minds that shaped and continue to shape the history of art. Yiara is a narrative that hasn't begun today nor will finish tomorrow; she is a process and a cause that speaks through a feminist art historical frame. Yiara is timeless.

Yiara is a woman, a girl, a man, a boy, a lesbian, a heterosexual, a homosexual, a transsexual, a bisexual - a person. Yiara is at the same time gendered and genderless.

With a creative and strong personality Yiara claims her space in the world and fights against inequality, patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, injustice, violence, misrepresentation and untold histories. She remodels and critically thinks about the importance of women in art. Yiara openly discusses feminism by proposing new ways of seeing and understanding the world visually. She is a full-hearted activist that believes in a better world.

Yiara also believes in the power of knowledge. She is academic feminism, which strives to change disciplines and the way knowledge is produced rather than dictating patterns. Yiara produces knowledge in order to rethink the way women shape and inhabit the world. She promotes women as knowledge producers rather than objects of knowledge.

Yiara aims to cross borders and portray the wide spectrum of feminism. She strives to use feminism as an eye-opener, as a key to a closed door rather than a retrograde thought. Yiara is label-less. Yiara is a critical thinker.

Yiara's stories are represented in her inaugural issue through painting, film, performance, photography, sculpture, installation, poetry and essay form produced by Montreal undergraduate students as well as guest professionals. Yiara is bilingual.

Yiara is feminist art. Yiara is equality. Yiara is just beginning.

- Raíssa Paes
Editor-in-Chief

BOOKS AND BRAVERY

by Julia Skelly

SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Art History, Concordia University

I would like to open this brief article with a dedication. Not my own, but one written by a feminist art historian whose book has been highly significant for me since I first read it as an undergraduate student in the early 2000s. It is now a 'talisman book', a term that refers to those books that have resonated with me and that continue to have a kind of aura about them. A talisman book is a very personal thing. These are the books that I must keep returning to, must have near me; I want to be able to turn around and see their covers when I'm writing. I don't own a Kindle or any such device, and this is partly because, not only do I love the feel of a book in my hand, I love the sight of books, their spines vertical or horizontal, piled or shelved. My talisman books are few (it's always quality over quantity for talisman books, as with friends and clothes), but they are precious both as material objects and as sources of information and inspiration, and I inevitably have an evolving relationship with them.

The 'Dedication' in Jo Anna Isaak's *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* (1996) reads in its entirety: 'My study window overlooks the St Stephen's School Playground. The school is a private Catholic school for children from kindergarten through grade school. It has separate entrances for girls and boys and the children daily line up outside the doors marked "Boys" or "Girls". One day I overheard a little boy tell a little girl she couldn't play on the swing because it was on "the boys' side". Clearly, there was something in the gender divide the school was underlining that the little boy understood as privileging his sex. The little girl turned to him and said, "This is the *playground*. There's no boys' side on the *playground*". It is to that five-year-old future feminist, who has such an unshakeable grasp of the fact that the playground is hers to enjoy, that I dedicate this book'.

Reading this passage again a decade after I first read it, I get goose bumps all over again. I even get a bit teary. Why is that? What is the resonance here? And would the impact have been different if I had been reading this on a screen rather than from a book that I held in my hands? I believe, in hindsight, that reading that dedication was the moment that I became a self-identified feminist, although I had long been aware that I saw the world 'differently' from most of the girls I knew; some of those girls suggested that I stop being so 'angry' because I was scaring the boys away. Isaak's dedication resonates because I used to be that future feminist in the playground.

As feminist art historians we study art objects. There is something about the materiality of things that we as art historians are drawn to – as well as the surface of things, touch or the possibilities inherent in touch – rather than privileging vision alone. The same could be said for my love of books. I am happiest when I am reading, and I am doubly happy when I am reading and look up and see piles of books – some of them my own, some of them from the library; some of them novels, some of them academic texts. Their presence gives me comfort, and I go back to certain books again and again; Rosemary Betterton's *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists, and the Body* (1996), for example, which I first read in an undergraduate course taught by my eventual PhD supervisor. In fact, I have one of my PhD supervisor's books (*British and Irish Home Arts and Industries 1880-1914: Marketing Craft, Making Fashion* by Janice Helland) in a pile immediately to the right of my desk. I see it every time I sit down to write. It might not help me to write when I'm struggling, but it can't hurt to have it there. I'm currently completing the finishing touches on my first book, which is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation. In this book, I examine addiction and British visual culture produced between 1751 and 1919 from a feminist perspective. Producing a book feels like a never-ending process, and the writing is only the tip of the iceberg. Don't get me started on how much it costs to publish a book when you're an art historian. Digital images! Permission to reproduce those images! But: *je ne regrette rien.*

Books by feminist art historians and about feminist artists are part of our lineage as feminist artists and feminist art historians. I like to have books by people I both respect and know around me. These books, as objects, as sources of inspiration, are integral for my past, present and future as a feminist art historian. I am horrified when people say that books will someday stop being produced. I need books not only for pleasure (novels, novels and more novels) but to keep me slogging along when I'm writing my own work on representations of women in historical art or on contemporary feminist artists, which will be the focus of my next book. I need to look at books, to flip through them, to feel them, to touch them. I need to be close to books when I'm writing. There is an erotics to my relationship to and with books; I can't deny it. And why would I want to? Being a feminist art historian, for me, means many things, but it means two things above all else: books and bravery.

UNE MAILLE À L'ENDROIT, UNE MAILLE À L'ENVERS: ZOOM SUR LE TRICOT GRAFFITI

Photo courtesy of Marilène Gaudet

Le tricot graffiti prend de plus en plus d'ampleur à Montréal et ailleurs. Cet art subversif, qui a pour but de réapproprier le mobilier urbain à fin de l'embellir, constitue d'emballer des objets de laine. De cette manière, le tricot graffiti rend l'espace public plus doux et libère le tricot—compris comme un art féminin—du milieu domestique. Pour en savoir plus, Stéphanie Hornstein de Yiara Magazine a rencontré Marilène Gaudet qui oeuvre à Montréal en tant que tricot pirate.

Stéphanie Hornstein: SH
Marilène Gaudet: MG

SH: Donc, juste pour commencer, est-ce que tu peux nous donner une description ou une définition du *yarn bombing?*

MG: Ouais, ben en Français on l'a traduit librement à *tricot graffiti*. C'est d'emmitoufler le mobilier urbain, des arbres, des statues, et des objets que d'habitude dans notre vie de tous les jours, on passe à côté si on les voit. C'est de leur donner une deuxième vie, une nouvelle voix, un nouveau sens en les emballant de laine.

SH: Est-ce qu'il y a un but en particulier? Ou est-ce que c'est juste visuel?

MG: Le but c'est de se réapproprié l'espace urbain. On l'a commencé en ville, mais c'est pareil à la campagne. De ce réapproprié l'espace public et de pouvoir aussi interagir non-directement avec les gens en faisant sourire, en mettant un peut de rêverie dans leur journée. C'est ludique, c'est pour faire réagir, d'interpeler les passants.

SH: Quand tu *tags* c'est quoi ta démarche?

MG: Quand je *tag* par moi-même, j'aime beaucoup beaucoup m'inspirer des statues et allé jouer soit avec le visuel de la statue ou la personne que la statue représente. Ça fait longtemps que j'ai pas eu l'occasion d'en faire.

SH: Comment trouves-tu que le *tricot graffiti* se différencie des autres types de graffiti? C'est quoi les grosses différences pour toi?

MG: Au plan technique, c'est sûr que le graffiti tricoté, ça emballe des trucs sans les briser, sans les délabrer. Versus le graffiti qui à la peinture qui est plus permanent. Mais ils viennent vraiment du même esprit de la rue anticapitaliste, qui veut réapproprier l'espace, qui veut laisser sa trace. Et des gens qui sont un peu écarté des galeries d'arts et du marché de l'art malgré que là on commence à se faire inviter dans des galeries. L'intention c'est de jouer sur le plan galerie/art de rue. Si quelqu'un veut acheter une œuvre comment ça va se passer? Souvent c'est sur la rue, donc ça se dégrade à cause des intempéries, la neige, ou même les travailleurs de la ville qui l'enlèvent.

SH: Comme tu le disais avant, le *tricot graffiti* c'est un peu plus éphémère que d'autres formes de graffiti dépendant de l'endroit et de l'environnement. Est-ce qu'il y a une durée de vie pour des tags tricottés?

MG: Des fois c'est 20 minutes, mais ça peut aller jusqu'à un an, un an et demi.

SH: Qu'est-ce que ça te fais quand tu passes quelque part où t'avais mis un *tag* et il est parti?

MG: Ah mais quand il est parti, je suis toujours un peu triste et je me demande vraiment qu'est-ce qui est arrivé, mais ça on le sait jamais. Je crois que c'est surtout les employés de la ville qui les enlèvent. Mais j'adore ça repasser à des endroits et qu'ils soient encore là ou des fois s'ils ont tombés et que quelqu'un les a repatchés.

SH: Pis toi, c'est quoi ta motivation pour faire du *tricot graf-*

***fiti*? Tu t'embarques dans un art qui est très éphémère évidemment ça serait différent si tu faisais de la peinture. Le *tricot graffiti* n'est pas nécessairement supposé survivre...**

MG: Ouais, mais je pense qu'il y a un côté qui m'attire dans l'éphémère, de pas ramasser plein de bagages d'art, mais d'avoir quelque chose qui a sa vie propre. Quand j'ai commencé, j'étais très occupée et j'avais pleins de cours. Je me demandais comment est-ce que je pourrais combiner le tricot avec les beaux arts afin d'élever le tricot au niveau des beaux arts. Donc j'ai commencé à faire des recherches sur les artistes de *tricot graffiti* et j'ai trouvé que c'était surtout des femmes qui faisaient du tricot. La personne qui m'a vraiment accroché le plus c'était une femme polonaise qui avait fait un tea cozy mais pour un tank en Pologne pour marquer le 50e anniversaire de la fin de la guerre. Ça tellement été puissant comme image parce que c'est un travail de femmes, c'était des fleurs au crochet, c'est le *peace and love*, le *flower power* mais c'est aussi super d'actualité et de voir quelqu'un qui avait amené le tricot à un autre niveau, une artiste activiste et qui prend quelque chose d'aussi banal et familier qu'un tricot et qui l'amène à être un grand symbole de paix rassembleur, ça m'a vraiment accroché.

SH: Est-ce que c'est à cause de cette œuvre que tu as commencé à faire du *tricot graffiti*?

MG: Ouais. C'a m'a accroché et de là j'ai trouvé d'autres gens qui en faisaient comme *Knitta Please* qui étaient les premiers à faire du yarn bombing. Ça m'a tellement accroché parce que j'étais habituée, surtout à Concordia, de travailler dans l'art conceptuel, mais moi je suis tellement une manuelle alors passer des heures et des heures à la bibliothèque à cogiter sur un concept ça me parle vraiment pas. Je suis tellement intuitive, viscérale et manuelle que ça me faisait tellement de bien de tricoter, d'aller dehors de pas avoir à demander la permission de personne et de juste le faire c'était vraiment libérateur comme art. C'était ma petite révolte du monde des arts. Je pense que c'est ça l'art de rue: une petite révolte de l'établissement.

SH: Je voulais que tu parles peut-être un peu plus de l'aspect féminin/féministe du *yarn bombing*. Qu'est-ce que tu trouves que le tricot graffiti apporte à ce dialogue?

MG: Dans ma famille, c'était ma grand-mère et ma grand-tante qui tricotaient tout le temps et elles faisaient toujours des pantoufles. Pendant 95 ans, elles ont tricoté des pantoufles! C'était le fun de prendre cette tradition-là et de la rendre ludique, de ne pas faire des objets usuels. De reprendre quelque chose de très familier qui appartient au domestique mais de le sortir dans l'espace publique, de le rendre politique, d'y redonner une deuxième vie. Le fait d'être une femme qui étudie à l'université, c'est déjà un geste féministe selon moi. J'ai rencontré une étudiante en journalisme qui se considérait pas du tout féministe. Je lui ai dit: «T'es à l'université dans un métier d'hommes, automatiquement ça fait de toi une rebelle.»

SH: Comme on le voit dans nos cours, dans l'histoire de l'art, t'as toujours le *craft* versus les beaux arts. Souvent l'art qui est considéré comme étant féminin —comme la couture et le tricot— est considéré de moindre importance.

MG: C'est vraiment intéressant d'observer qu'avant, il n'y avait pas d'artistes avec un grand "A" tout le monde était des artisans. Je ne sais pas pourquoi certains médiums ont été élevés à un autre sommet comme la peinture, la musique, la sculpture et pourtant même quand il y avait des femmes comme Camille Claudel elles n'étaient pas du tout reconnues, elles travaillaient dans des ateliers non-chauffés en plein hiver à Paris, en grosse misère.

SH: Même la description du *yarn bombing* que tu m'as donnée —que le but c'est vraiment d'envelopper et d'emmitoufler et de protéger— c'est des valeurs maternelles. Le tricot, c'est sûr qu'on associe ça aux valeurs maternelles parce que ça nous rappelle des images de maman qui met un gros pull sur son enfant.

MG: C'est sûr qu'on peut pas défaire une association aussi forte dans notre société Nord Américaine. Au Pérou, c'est les hommes qui tricotent, qui filent. Donc, c'est vraiment culturel. Pour notre *tricot graffiti* c'est sûr que c'est la culture Européenne/Nord Américaine qui nous influence.

SH: Vous, est-ce que vous cherchez à amplifier cette association-là ou à la changer?

MG: Je pense que présentement dans mon processus de création et de réflexion sur les Ville-Laines, le *tricot graffiti,* les performances, j'ai vraiment une vision supra-féminine. De jouer avec le visionnement et aussi dans l'action avec l'image des années 50 de la mère au foyer parfaite. Mais c'est plus la mère du foyer complètement hystérique, disjonctée.

SH: Toi, le futur du *yarn bombing*, tu penses que ça s'en va où? Qu'est-ce qui serait le but ultime pour cet art selon toi?

MG: Ça serait vraiment d'être reconnues comme des artistes à part entière. Des fois on se fait encore dire: «Ah, ouais c'est bon pour un fille...»

SH: Le monde trouve ça encore trop difficile de détacher l'aspect féminin du *yarn bombing*.

MG: Ouais c'est ça. Mais c'est un peu difficile. D'un côté je me dis qu'il y a de plus en plus de gens qui en font et qui se démarque et ça c'est le fun parce que ça nous donne un défi. Je sais qu'avec les Ville-Laines, on s'en va beaucoup dans la performance, dans des ateliers communautaires et on est un peu tannées de faire des poteaux de téléphone. On veut faire plus de performance, on a des projets en galerie. On veut passer des rues à la galerie et de voir si c'est bien accepté, bien respecté.

FAT RABBIT AND ALL HER GLORY

Porcelain and velvet cushion / 20” x 9” x 20”

This is Cookie, a fat, saggy rabbit who is not afraid of revealing her form. Her body language is an indication of her indifference towards the audience. She is not about to rearrange herself to look “presentable” even though she does not fall into standard categories of beauty. Through this character, the artist inspires women to live freely and not to be caught in stereotypical representations that are deemed correct by the media nowadays. This cute but secure bunny allows for critical thinking on women’s representation and women’s acceptance of their own body. In the artist’s words: “To love ones body as much as Cookie loves hers.”

Jessica Sallay-Carrington

Vancouver, Canada
Ceramics
Concordia University

NOSTALGIA, SHE

by Lucy Fandel

Concord, United States
Contemporary Dance and Sociology
Concordia University

No now be honest.
Here I am.
What resides?
Conscious thankfulness,
But also pestering hesitation.
In that history
Loaded and seemingly stable.
Teetering undercurrents threaten.
Yet, I cherish those times.

My grandmother's mind was miserable,
The psyche was secondary,
Choices weren't freedom
In these prescribed
Choreographed scenes.
Yet, I cherish her tension.

Sugar 'n' spice
Pretty as a picture
What a great gal
Such a stunning wife,
This attentive mother.
Mother of four.
Wife of one.
Individuality—perhaps some.

Waist of a WASP.
A cage that billowed so elegantly.
But wind never touched
Traditionalism in her pearly skin.
To me this would be
A frightened trembling reality
Yet, I cherish her lines.

I love her hurts,
Not her suffering.
In awe, I love her.

And all despite
Visceral dissociations.
Baseless projections,
Impossible inseams.
Yet, it seems it's true
Yes, I cherish her aesthetic.

Voluminous fabrics
Over fleeting soles.
Rubber gloves, glistening dishes
Such enthusiastic hoovering
Frilly patterned aprons.
I know!
She was the two dimensional
But my construct, my myth
Yes, her memory runs deep.

All determined we remained
Ignorant of the ugly.
My fantastical obsession
With elegance resurfaces.
This femininity is criminal.
Yes, she is beloved.

We need the context
Its suffocating embrace.
The road blocks dissolve
Only if you stop before them.
The modern tug-of-war:
Yes, I think I might I want I need
That crystal haze.
That guilty nostalgia, she and it.

Choice arriving,
They both dissipate.

À L'ENVERS

de Paloma Lopez Sierra

Montréal, Canada
Sociologie
L'Université de Montréal

Peur d'avoir tord tout le temps sans sort et avec ou sans ressort se joigne à ma pensée mon temps qui coule vers le reste que je ne connais pas que je tente de deviner,
peur de l'homme et de sa main du lendemain et des bandes en bosses dans la rue que je ne vois pas et qui font mal au dos quand je trébuche,
sur mon genou,
sur un poteau,
sur un mégot,
sur un tréteau.

Je ne suis pas à l'endroite je n'ai jamais été à l'endroite toujours à l'envers pour toujours le revers parce que je suis un vers,
un vers de femme et de con,
le recto de ce qui doit se faire.

Essaye de courber mon échine au temps de ressembler aux passants de fléchir encore et encore de sourire de ne pas mentir d'être gentille et courageuse et surtout ne jamais faiblir de toujours être patiente pour que mon envers de genre revienne et encore me refasse casser la gueule encore une fois je veux casser la gueule à cette route en pansement qui vient,
de stopper,
de laper,
de saigner en lambeaux: tu es petite route tu lames bottes mon cul tu me rases tu m'arases tu m'arrises sur cette marre de route de bois que je ne voyais plus qu'en lois et foi de bonheur et de droit droits droites,
tiens-toi droite,
tiens-toi droite,
tiens-toi droite,
t'y entre en froid tu te doigtes et tu boites.

N'ai jamais voulu me tenir droite n'ai jamais voulu tenir le stylo avec l'index et le syllex entre les doigts n'ai jamais voulu tenir la fourchette et le couteau et pourtant j'ai fait,
ai fait,
l'ai appris,
me tiens droite,
souris,
me courbe et mon échine assoiffée de liberté est toujours et sans cesse sevré de ce désert sans serve qui vole de ne pas pouvoir courir davantage de galoper les idées et les pieds en haut en diagonal rectangulaire et losange pour voir ce qu'il y a encore plus derrière au fond entre les plis de la terre ou là-bas, oui là-bas entre les sexes à l'envers: vers le chemin le plus grand celui qu'on dit grand sur une carte et qui quand tu danses dessus ne fait ni le bruit de la carte que tu as entre tes mains ni froissé ni plissé mais le puits de la terre pure de sexes humides et de langues vivantes où des plis racontent plus qu'un plissement,
content le mouvement irrémédiablement jamais fatigué ni arrimé toujours été mouvement qui embranche l'autre mouvement de nos bouches à tes poils qui frappent sur la brume le do et la du sol, du sol et de la terre qui frôle ma terre et de ma peau qui frôle encore ta terre mouillée pour de la matière pour aucun mystère ni aucun monde austère.

Mon oeil veut voir,
mes jambes veulent agripper,
grimper sur un poteau parce qu'il bande,
branler un arbre parce qu'il sent bon,
mon con parce qu'il est là et que je le veux dans mes bras.

Faut être modèle de gens et de normes faut être modèle d'habits modèle de paroles et de genres de coutumes en coutumes on modèle aux modes on se gèle aux règles qui changent meuvent dans le temps où rien ne fait peur aux gens où tout leurs font peur,
ils aiment et sèment à se ressembler à être comme l'autre pour mieux être ce qu'il est l'imiter pour ensuite le dépasser et ainsi suit des suintes de boucles et des boules d'eau de châteaux de cartes sans ceux d'Espagne et encore plus ceux d'Amérique qui s'écroulent pour se redresser recommencer à se ressembler et à se raconter.

Ne suis pas vous,
ne me suis pas je suis moi,
même si je m'absorbe de vos chairs de vos corps de vos pas pour tisser ma pensée,
plus je vous vois plus je suis en dedans du dehors plus je veux être libre me salir et me construire,
me salir me construire
me salir me construire
me salir me construire,
me détruire,
me reconstruire.

Et baiser dans les recoins et coins où on n'en pas encore eu l'occasion de penser.

Embrasser dessus,
sucer dessous,
enlacer devant,
emballer derrière,
enlacer arrière,
lécher en avant.

Danser dans une ruelle nue,
laper une pomme ronde,
courir à pied-joint.

Laissez-moi me vider pour apprendre.
Laissez-moi m'évider pour me comprendre.
Laissez-moi me libérer pour me rendre.

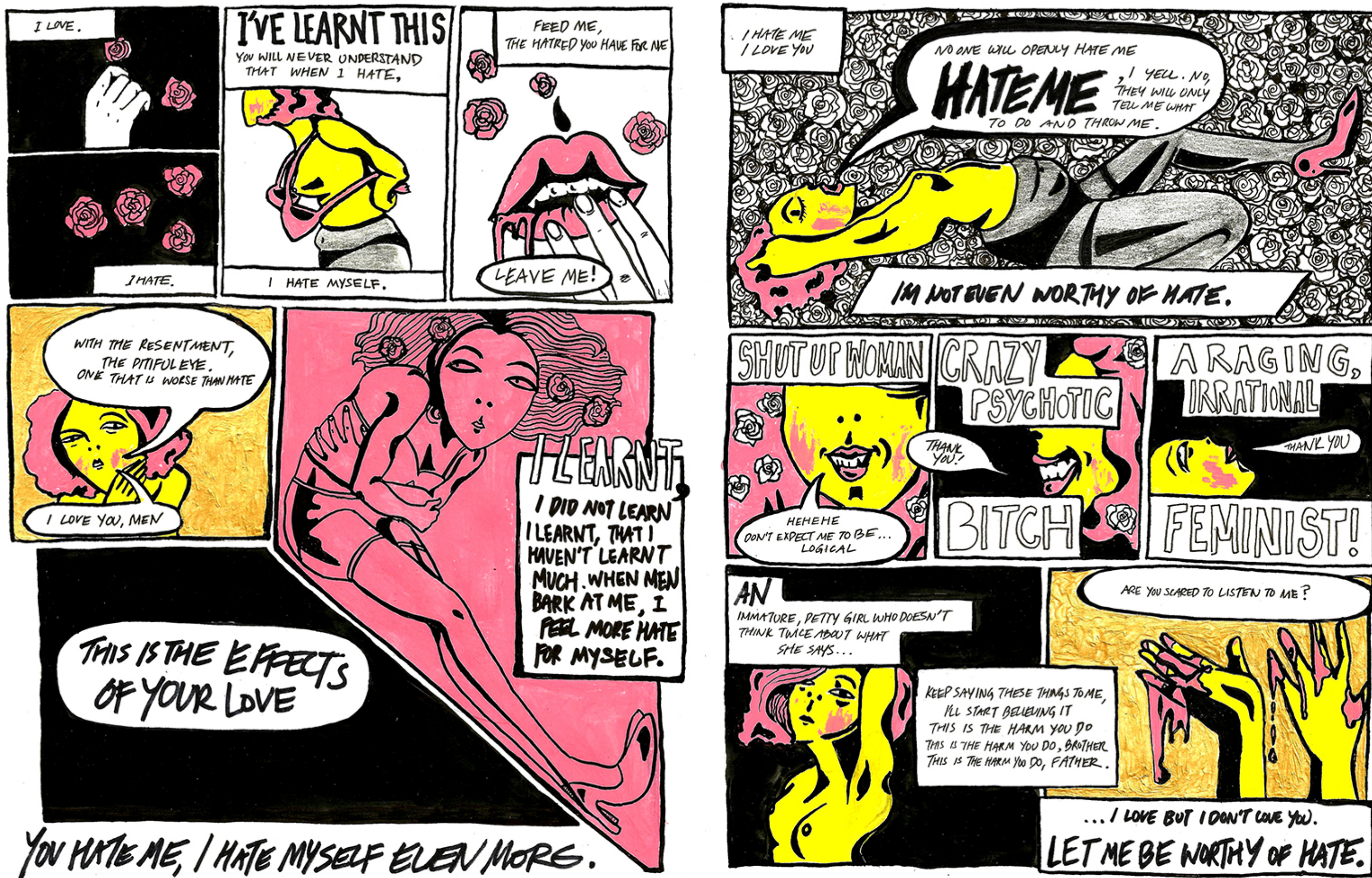
KNITTED COMPOSITION WITH PINK, GREY, BLUE AND GREEN (TRIBUTE TO MONDRIAN'S WIFE)

Bois, tricot et grillage métallique / 48" x 72"

Véronique Tremblay

Montréal, Canada
Art visuel et médiatique
UQÀM
Beaux-arts et fibres
Université Concordia

L'œuvre commente la relation historique entre un art abstrait élitiste, typiquement masculin, réservé au cercle muséal, et son opposé représenté par le patchwork de tradition féminine, fabriqué dans un but utilitaire selon un savoir-faire artisanal. Ironiquement, cet hommage à la femme de Mondrian se réfère à une femme fictive, étant donné que l'artiste n'a jamais été marié. L'œuvre peut aussi être considérée comme une réappropriation du canon de l'histoire de l'art par la femme. Le travail de l'artiste tire profit de différents médiums et s'intéresse aux processus de transformation, à l'expérience de l'ambiguïté, et à la tension générée entre des forces opposées.



AN EXCERPT OF "LET ME BE WORTHY OF HATE"

Ink and paint / 8.5" x 11" per page

The multiple layers of meaning within this work expose the nuances of carrying the title, "feminist." Love and hate are the simplified emotions that An focuses on throughout the two-page comic strip excerpt. Based on her own experiences of being subjected to misogynistic behavior from loved ones and men in general, she makes a point to show the emotional consequences of acting as a fearless feminist in the face of adversity. In a society where women are already expected to be emotionally weak, a feminist believes she must only show strength for fear of enforcing these harmful stereotypes. This belief leads to the disregard of the negative psychological impact that patriarchy and misogyny have on women who are brave enough to speak up.

Grace An

Toronto/Lindsay, Canada
Film Animation
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INKED GALS

Acrylic and modeling paste on canvas / 36” x 48” per panel

Frappier portrays Joy Tomkins and Paula Westoby as women who do not fit into the traditional sphere of feminine beauty due primarily to their age. It is important to point out that these elderly women are not attempting to fit into these conventions by any means. Instead, they proudly reveal their new tattoos that read, “P.T.O” (Please Turn Over) accompanied by an arrow and “Do Not Resuscitate.” The use of vibrant colors and bold brush strokes announces the liveliness of these equally spirited women. Skin is paid special attention in these works, seeing as it is an important factor denoting issues of aging, physical transformation (self-imposed or natural), beauty, and ownership of one’s body. These women chose to take control of the unknown by humoring their own deaths and having the last say—or laugh—in both cases.

Valérie Frappier

Aurora, Ontario
Art History and Studio Arts
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WOMAN HOLDING A FRUIT

by Jacqueline Hanna

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Where are you going
her eyes seem to suggest
the scent of suspicion
turning or not turning
to canvas. And I see
Gauguin in some simple
white fishing shorts

crouched behind an easel
of green bamboo. The
suggestion of a pipe
clutching his lips.

But more to the point
the pipe the nipple the fruit
the this woman holding
suddenly suggests we see
we can see, look and see.
Away or toward an easel.

One Tahitian expression
giving or not giving her
name, the scent of suggestion
one oblong papaya of heat
spilling over the orange flesh
of day. Splitting

or not splitting.
Milking or not milking
one breast, crowned white
and gold. Rolling in the eye
of sea again, bald formative dance.
Fruit so heavy, the gaze leaden.

Gauguin rounding the crown
of her head one brush, two
the planting of the hibiscus,
the sewing of admission.
She is.

Refocus. Just a mural,
glaring reproduction
splayed to the side
of a lotion shop
in the middle of a mall
a decade ago
in the middle of blue noise.

THE BODY AND EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITIES
IN THE 'MINOR' CINEMA OF CHANTAL AKERMAN

by Katerina Korola

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Art History and Film Studies
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Since the publication of Laura Mulvey's influential essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" the question of how to recuperate the female body from objectification has been of central concern to both female filmmakers and feminist theorists. Over the course of her career, Chantal Akerman has confronted this problem in a variety of ways. Her hyperrealist style, in many ways the product of a rigorous application of structural filmmaking to narrative cinema, deploys duration and desensationalized aesthetics of the ordinary to dissolve the frame that has traditionally isolated the female body in cinema. In her films of the 1970s, where her hyperrealism is at its most intense, Akerman's detailed description of the body in space becomes a means for her to free the female body from objectification and the cinematic gaze. This is especially true of *Jeanne Dielman* (1975) and *News from Home* (1977), two very different films that explore the everyday realities of the contemporary woman. In these films, Akerman's hyperrealist aesthetic directs the audience's attention through the physical body towards the phenomenological body. This phenomenological body becomes a site for the articulation of discrete female subjectivities, which reveal themselves as both embedded within and embodied in a specifically physical reality.

Akerman frequently describes her work as "minor" cinema, drawing on the theory of minor literature articulated by Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari. In *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari define minor literature as consisting of the use of a major language by a member of a minor or marginalized population.[1] This appropriation, which Deleuze and Guattari see as necessarily political, is apparent in the films of Chantal Akerman, whose work in the major language of narrative cinema consciously subverts its codes in order to voice the experiences of a marginalized group. As Ivonne Margulies notes in *Nothing Happens*, Akerman's relationship to narrative filmmaking bears certain similarities to that of Kafka and the German language. For Margulies, the two share a "dryness of language, lack of metaphoric association, composition in a series of discontinuous blocks [...] and [the use] of a reduced vocabulary at the service of a new intensity".[2] This last quality can refer not only to the awkward scripted dialogue that is typical of Akerman's films, but also to her reduction of cinematic conventions to the bare minimum. Akerman's fixed camera, long takes, and refusal to engage in the conventions of continuity editing allow her "to forge the means for [the expression of] another consciousness and another sensibility" within the space traditionally dominated by cinema's male gaze.[3]

During the 1970s, this other consciousness was for Akerman primarily a female consciousness, absent from mainstream cinematic representations of women. Filmed with an all-female crew, *Jeanne Dielman* is a monument in the history of feminist cinema. The film tells the story of a suburban widow and the banal rituals of her day-to-day existence as

a mother, housekeeper, and afternoon prostitute. In this film Akerman counteracts the traditional cinematic encapsulation of woman by adopting an approach to subjectivity informed by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, who discussed perception and indeed consciousness itself as intrinsically corporeal phenomenon. In *Jeanne Dielman*, the titular character's subjectivity is rendered visible through the "intermediary of the body."[4] It is through the body that the audience comes to understand Jeanne, who is defined by the sum of the quotidian rituals that she performs. Fixed camera shots of the real-time execution of these rituals occupy the majority of the film, emphasizing their complete physicality. Moreover, the absence of point-of-view and reverse-shot conventions effectively limits the audience's access to Jeanne except through the physical realm.

Akerman's phenomenological description extends beyond Jeanne's physical body to the domestic space that is the extension of her body. The relationship between Jeanne and her home is first established in the full title of the film, *Jeanne Dielman: 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, which marks Jeanne's address as an inseparable component of her identity. For all intents and purposes, 23 Quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles is the functional outer limit of Jeanne's 'body image,' which the contemporary philosopher Elizabeth Grosz defines as the "neurological mapping of the body, not in the terms provided by biology but in terms of psychical significance."[5] This relationship is further cemented by the film's mise-en-scene: there is a colour match between the pastels of Jeanne's wardrobe and the décor of her home, from which Jeanne is only rarely seen apart.

Following Mulvey's lead in deconstructing the mechanics of the male gaze, the feminist film scholar Claire Johnston notes that the cinematic facsimile of woman is "ahistoric and eternal."[6] Jeanne's embodiment in the space of her home stands in direct contrast to this ahistorical depiction of woman in mainstream narrative cinema. In this tidy middle-class home, Akerman reveals Jeanne as very much a product of her time and place in the socio-political history of twentieth century Europe. Duration plays a key role in the articulation of Jeanne's position in this history. Through the inclusion of often-elided everyday tasks, the audience can observe the rituals, values, recipes, and moral codes of Europe during the early 1970s. Discourses of class, gender, and economics haunt the space of Jeanne's home as much as they shape her actions, right up until her violent breakdown.

Significantly, it is in the physical space of the home that Jeanne's instability first manifests itself. After over an hour of watching Jeanne compulsively turn on and off her light switches each time she enters or leaves a room, the viewer can immediately sense that something is wrong as she forgets to turn on the light after a session with her second client. But even this breakdown can be linked to a specific historical moment: the moment in which the housewife was on the verge of becoming an economic anachronism. Jeanne, however, has by this time so thoroughly absorbed the codes of mid-twentieth century middle-class morality that she cannot exist beyond her domestic space. Mental breakdown is the only conceivable reaction left to her.

A very different kind of subjectivity is articulated in Akerman's next film, *News From Home*, which presents itself as an almost complete conceptual inversion of *Jeanne Dielman*. Whereas the earlier film unfolds primarily in the home, *News From Home* occurs entirely in the exterior space of New York and its transportation system. Fixed-camera long shots of the city streets capture the anonymous denizens of the one of the world's largest cities as they move in and out of view, for the most part completely uninterested in the fact that they have been caught in the act of their daily routine. As noted by Jennifer Barker, the project of the film bears many similarities to that of French philosopher Michel de Certeau's "Walking the City," an essay that sets out to challenge the idealized panoramic image of the city when gazed at from above or at a distance – views that ignore the innumerably plural realities that exist, intertwining, at street-level.[7] Akerman's film does not show the

New York of postcards, t-shirts, and skyscrapers, but rather the New York that exists beneath the spectacle of its image. Her emphasis on unremarkable street corners, the back loading bays of commercial buildings, dingy late-night diners, and of course, the subway system itself, demonstrates a specifically plebeian re-imagining of the city.

Like women in the cinematographic tradition, New York City is a victim of essentialism. In popular imagination, representations, and economic and political discourses it has been effectively replaced by its image. It is a city of opportunity, prosperity, and freedom—the cultural capital and beacon of the Western world. It is its silhouette printed on coffee cups, t-shirts, baseball caps, and magnets. Akerman troubles this image of New York by documenting the daily movements of its citizens. Over the course of the film, Akerman's fixed camera reveals New York as the site of innumerable singular and shifting narratives. It is a place of work (the rush hour subway), play (boys playing around a bursting fire hydrant), romance (a couple kissing in the subway station), and a whole number of other activities that defy categorization, epitomized by the old woman sitting beneath the 'Don't Walk' sign at the corner of a busy intersection. Akerman's non-judgemental hyperrealism confers visibility on the "chorus of idle footsteps" that gives shape to the city by walking through it.[8] Under Akerman's gaze, New York is transformed from a static concept to a mobile entity composed of the myriad individual journeys that occupy its space.

More importantly for our purposes here, Akerman positions herself as one of the many individuals occupying and actualizing this space; in the process, she actualizes her own identity. This extremely structural city film also contains autobiographical elements that allow a narrative to unfold. Layered over and sometimes under the soundscape of New York City, Akerman reads a heavily-accented English translation of the letters her mother sent to her when she first left home to live in New York. The words of Akerman's mother tell us of her constant changes of address, as well as her reluctance to return or even write home. Contrary to *Jeanne Dielman*, the female subjectivity expressed in *News From Home* is in search of itself outside the confines of the home and the traditional order that 'home' represents.

In an ultimate move to thwart the objectification of the female body, Akerman keeps herself invisible in this quasi-autobiographical film. It is only through the sound of her voice that the audience is made aware of the presence of a female subjectivity. In her discussion of the film, Jennifer Barker suggests that *News From Home*'s epistolary form renders the authorial voice "feminine, personal, and informal."[9] I would like to go further and suggest that it is not only the authorial voice but also the camera's gaze that becomes specifically female as a result of this epistolary address. To recall the language of Merleau-Ponty, the scenes of New York presented by the film are seen through the "intermediary" of the filmmaker's female body, whose perceptive faculties have been shifted onto the camera.

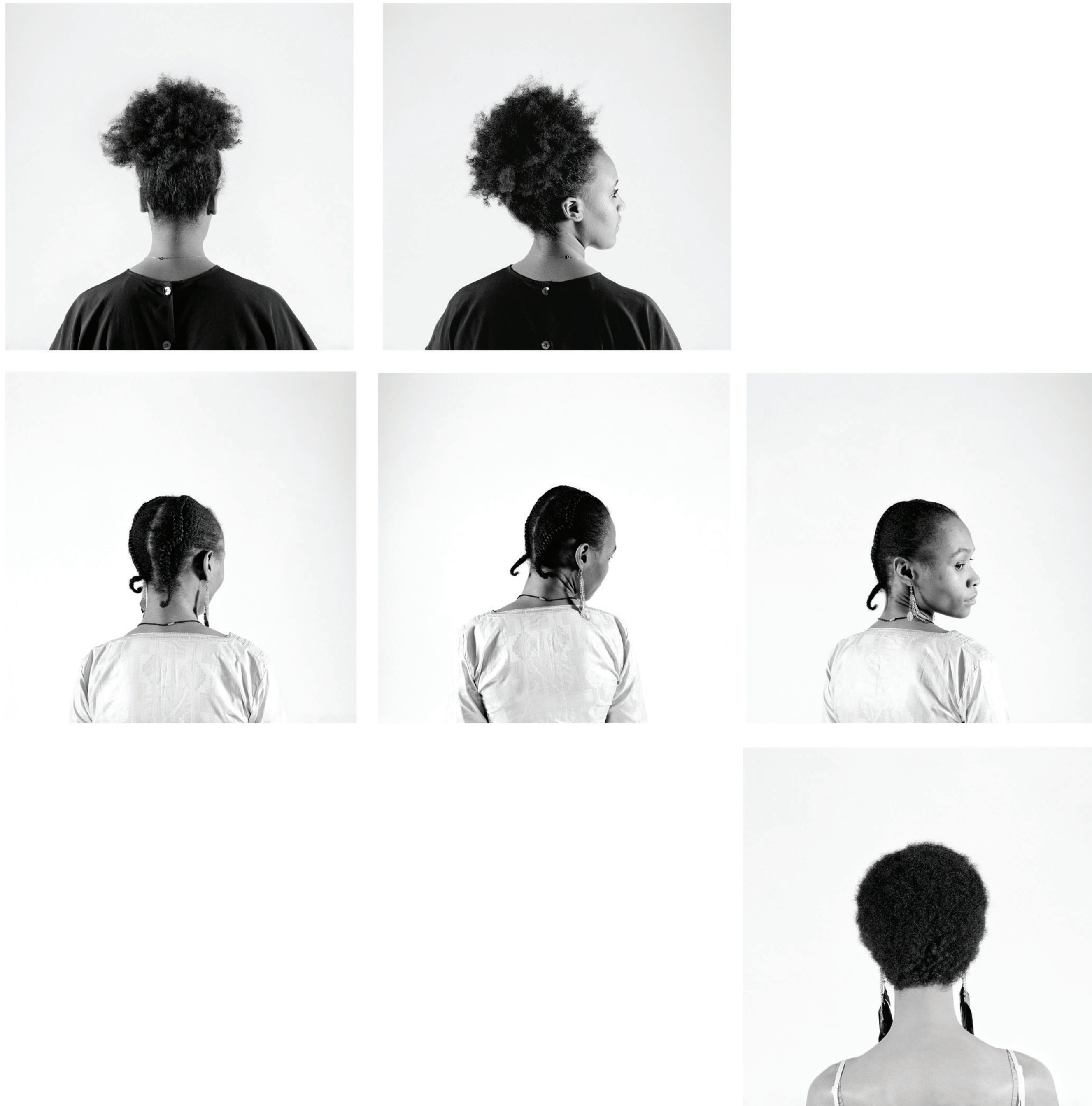
This invisible subjectivity exists within the spaces of New York City as much as within the family home in Brussels. These two environments are juxtaposed in the soundtrack of the film, where the words of the mother's letters and the white noise of the city wrestle for acoustic priority. The auditory merger of these two environments, combined with the invisibility of the speaker, force the audience to look beyond static conceptions of body and place to locate the subjectivity behind the film. Rather than existing in any physical single space, this nomadic female consciousness exists in the act of passing by. Whereas Jeanne Dielman is embodied in her home, the subjectivity expressed in *News From Home* is free-floating: on the one hand emancipated and on the other drifting. She is embodied not in any one place, but rather in the ephemeral path of her journey.

The two subjectivities expressed in *Jeanne Dielman* and *News From Home* stand in opposition to one another. It is a measure of Akerman's sophistication as a storyteller that neither subjectivity is condemned

or celebrated. On the contrary, Akerman's extremely formal observation of how these subjectivities inhabit their physical surroundings merely attests to their being-in-the-world. In fact, this attestation alone is revolutionary in its contradiction of the essentialist image of 'woman' that dominates cinema. In *Jeanne Dielman* and *News From Home,* we see two distinct forms of female consciousness that cannot be reduced to a single whole. These subjectivities are given form not through the body alone, but also through the ways in which they are embedded within the physical world around them. Akerman's hyperrealism is a judicious reduction of the 'major language' of cinema that gives corporeal weight to the women of her films, whether their bodies appear onscreen or not. For this reason alone, the cinema of Chantal Akerman constitutes a major step forward for not only feminist filmmaking, but for all 'minor' cinemas.

Endnotes ///

[1] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986),16.
[2] Ivonne Margulies, *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1996), 15.
[3] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *Kafka,* 17.
[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), 138.
[5] Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space.* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 32.
[6] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Malden, Massachusetts.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 120.
[7] Jennifer Barker, "The Feminine Side of New York: Travelogue, Autobiography, and Architecture in *News From Home*, in *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*, ed. Gwendolyn Foster (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 47.
[8] Michel De Certeau, *The Practise of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 97.
[9] Barker, 45.



UNTITLED #2 FROM THE SERIES "HARD SOFT ROUGH EASY"

Inkjet Print / 10" X 10" per print

Taylor's photographic study considers the aesthetics of natural black hair as it pertains to the daily lives of black women. The artist also confronts our society's estrangement not only from these aesthetics but also from natural black hair itself, where western ideals of beauty have influenced many women to alter their appearances to fit into the narrow judgment of racialized beauty norms. Through her sleek typological portraits, Taylor not only captures the details in the women's hair, but also their varying feelings pertaining to how they wear their hair: while some women seem shy, others stand bold in their composure.

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ROMAINE BROOKS, THE MODERN WOMAN AND THE DANDY

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Clothing is an extension of its wearer, and as such, has long performed as a marker of gender and sexual identity. What happens then when the role of clothing as an indicator of sex gets re-appropriated and its function redefined? What happens when clothing no longer reveals, but begins to obscure gender and sexuality? Such was the case for women's wear in Paris during the 1920s, as it was reworked and redefined by an emerging aristocratic lesbian subculture. Composed mainly of artists, authors and literary critics, these women espoused recent fashion trends that offered newly feminized versions of male fashions for women's wear. In their hands, however, modern fashion was imbued with a transgressive sensuality that set them apart.[1] The painter Romaine Brooks was particularly adept at representing the subtleties of her time, displaying – through her portraits of dandified women – the particularities that distinguished this emergent lesbian subculture of the 1920s. In her work, the fashionable image of the cross-dressing modern woman held deep implications that extended well beyond those of sartorial rebellion.[2] In this article, I will endeavor to explain why Romaine Brooks and her fellow modernist women adopted the look of the male, more specifically the dandy of the previous century, and how, by re-appropriating this style, Brooks reconfigured the image of the modern woman into a queer aesthetic. As such, Brooks did not merely record the fashion(s) of her time, whether sartorial or sexual, but introduced a lesbian modernity that emphasized the ambiguities inherent to normative gender binaries.

Across Europe and North America, cross-dressing had long been adopted by individual women seeking to broaden their sphere of action. However, it first manifested itself as a social trend in the context of women's involvement in the suffrage movement and, subsequently, the war effort. Eventually, however, what began as an adoption of an unconventional trend or a response to a practical need, soon became the distinguishing feature of the modern woman. Demonstrating a penchant for more masculine silhouettes, she became the archetypal boyette: the youthful and petite androgynous woman who, despite having embraced masculine clothing, never quite relinquished her feminine appeal.[3]

The masculine appearance of this new style appealed to the women of Paris, where twentieth-century urbanization had brought with it significant changes in gender relations. Indeed, there was widespread involvement in women's movements, an increase in employment among women of all social classes, as well as an increased mobility of women into male-dominated public spaces, as both workers and consumers. As witnesses to the increasing mobilization of women, French men began to feel threatened by such female displacement into their public domains. Such changes even

extended to the realm of women's fashion where unisex clothing became increasingly popular. Their new position within the predominantly male work-force and their status as commodity-consumers exposed women to male terrain and masculine work wear. It wasn't long before the fashion-forward women of Paris began parading in more comfortable, yet form-fitting, masculine outfits. This pervasive phenomenon of female masculinity was not merely an appropriation of male clothing, but a means of both usurping male supremacy and indulging in male privileges.[4] Accordingly, the new look was paired with an attitude of defiance, decadence and increased promiscuity, as women publicly divested themselves of their maternal and domestic qualities. . . As such, the new woman was effectively reduced to the likeness of a frail, effete boy—*the boyette*—nothing more than a boyish female whose objective was not to be mistaken for boy, but rather to adopt a masculine air by appropriating the male dress.[5] Ultimately, her male costumes reinforced the prevalent notion that to be human was to be a man. Moreover, the *boyette* still retained a certain heterosexual pull, arousing male physical attraction because her outfits were form-fitting, seductive versions of menswear. Essentially, despite her seemingly mannish attire and mannerisms, the image of the modern woman was still appealing to men and subjugated to the male gaze.[6]

It is important to note that although this androgynous trend was pervasive throughout Europe, it was notably present among the Parisian upper class. In fact, cross-dressing at the time was considered by many solely as a display of haute-bourgeoisie eccentricity. It was from the confines of this somewhat elitist and comfortable social position that lesbian artists such as Brooks were able to publicly associate themselves with this newly undisguised, overt and deviant sexuality.[7] It was under the veil of the sexually playful and rebellious Modern Girl that lesbians, mostly middle- to upper-class, discovered a space which allowed them to experiment and enabled them to establish a distinct lesbian style.[8]

The masculine look adopted by Romaine Brooks and her lesbian peers was that of the dandy of the 1800s. As an inherently subversive figure, the male dandy, apart from his affinity for the decadent, was recognized for his unconventionality. Epitomized by Charles Baudelaire's representation of Constantin Guys in, "The Painter of Modern Life" the dandy was defined by his mobility and evasiveness. The proverbial *flâneur* was a passive observer committed to roaming the city streets.[9] Entirely self-created, the dandy, though a constant spectator of his surroundings, was also aware of his role as recipient of the gaze. In other words, the *flâneur*'s identity was intrinsically performative and ever changing. He was constantly conscious of both how he was to be perceived and who was to see him. Most importantly, however, is the reality that the dandy was invariably a man. The woman, confined to the domestic sphere, lacked the independence crucial to the society dandy; the *flâneuse* was therefore made impossible by the normative gender restrictions of the nineteenth century.[10] Following Oscar Wilde's 1895 sodomy conviction, the image of the debonair dandy became associated with decadent male homosexuality and was thus perceived as morally questionable.[11] Baudelaire's *flâneur*, who had initially permeated late nineteenth-century European aristocracy, was repudiated/rejected/abandoned by aristocratic society, only to be resurrected years later by Romaine Brooks and her lesbian contemporaries.[12]

The appropriation of the dandified male by the lesbian subculture of the 1920s was, from a male perspective, unoriginal. By adopting his dress, the lesbians were not simply altering their clothing, they were also appropriating the dandy's freedom and insouciance, as well as associating themselves with a passé visual language of obscene decadence typified in the homosexual *lapidé* of the nineteenth-century—the indelible outsider.[13] The performative aspect of the male dandy was just as relevant to the female dandy. Much like her male counterpart, the female dandy was completely conscious of how her image was orchestrated and perceived. Thus,

by re-creating herself through performance, the cross-dressed woman was empowered through her knowledge of how she presented herself to others. She was no longer subjected to the male gaze, but was instead in complete control of how she was perceived by the spectator. Significantly, the allure of the female dandy—her sexual ambiguity—alluded to the idea that the better man was also a woman.[14] By parading as dandified modern women, these masculine females disrupted normative gender divisions, and usurped male control. The aforementioned notions, as diverse as they were, were ever present in Brooks' portraiture, not simply in her representations of female lesbian dandies, but through her subtle indication of the tensions inherent in heteronormative gender binaries.

Following the death of both members of her immediate family—her brother in 1901 and her mother ten months later—Brooks was left with a substantial fortune that allowed her to live lavishly for the remainder of her life. Having inherited a considerable sum, Brooks, once a destitute artist, now partook in the indulgences that the Parisian aristocracy enjoyed. Her involvement in high society afforded her the opportunity to connect with such prominent women as sculptor Una Troubridge, painter Hannah Gluckenstein—commonly referred to as Gluck—and author Natalie Barney, each of whom eventually figured in her work.[15] Brooks portrayed them as women that were firmly involved in Paris' modern cross-dressing lesbian subculture.

Although Romaine Brooks and her peers' appropriation of the male dandy is commonly understood as a celebration of female mobility and increasing liberty, what one gathers from her portraits and their sitters is that this freedom was only made accessible to the upper classes of twentieth-century society. Due to their composition, Brooks' portraits were seen to belong to a longstanding tradition of conservative and aristocratic portraiture, particularly in light of the increased interest and experimentation in Cubist and Fauves portraiture that was consuming Europe in the 1920s. She thus used the conventions of such portraiture in conjunction with the debonair dandy as a springboard for a new lesbian sensuality. Brooks' self-portrait as well as her paintings of Gluck and Una Troubridge are replete with visual signifiers that indicate the subject's elevated social status. Her painting *Una, Lady Troubridge* of 1924 (Fig. 1), embodies the image of the aristocratic dandy.[16] Posing with a dog in a tailored black jacket and a stiff-collared white shirt, Una's costume and aristocratic pretensions reflect her class position. Troubridge, whom Brooks depicted wearing a monocle—the most prominent sign of the male dandy— was clearly very much aware of the kind of high-society air that she projected. Brooks' *Self-Portrait* from 1923 (Fig. 2) bears similarities to the stark, somber and glamorous elements found in the Una painting. The figures in both paintings stand rigidly and occupy the entire composition while confidently staring ahead of them. In this, their stance closely resembles that of a conventional male society portrait.[17] The austerity of both paintings, the monochromatic colour palette as well as the severe gaze, rigid pose, and fine contemporary dress of the sitters give the overall impression of refinement and elegant aristocracy. In this way it became understood in Paris at the time that parading oneself as a male dandy was evidence of high social standing. As the epitome of decadence and subversion, the dandy was recognized by the Parisian lesbian aristocratic subculture as a figure worthy of imitation. However, while some members of society understood the lesbian significance of the dandified attire, others, particularly those of a different social class, might have misinterpreted the costume as a mere aristocratic antic of nonconformity.[18] As a result, lesbianism and cross-dressing eventually came to be associated with the upper class.

The increased social freedom that was enjoyed by (and restricted to) high-society women allowed Romaine Brooks and her lesbian contemporaries to openly partake in deviant sexuality. Class was a significant component in the visibility of lesbian sexuality in Paris of the 1920s. Indeed, upper-

class women enjoyed freedom from rigid bourgeois sexual norms and protection from social rebuke.[19] Although Romaine Brooks celebrated women's freedom and mobility, she did so from her secure position within the luxury and glamor of high society. It was Brooks' social standing that gave her the opportunity and the freedom to experiment artistically, sartorially, and sexually.

Fig. 1: Romaine Brooks, *Una, Lady Troubridge*, 1924, oil on canvas, 127.3 x 76.4 cm. Photo: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC.

Despite the diversity within Brooks' body of work, a certain tension permeates her portraiture. In her *Self-Portrait*, for instance, Brooks' dandified figure assumes an air of glamour and dignity, communicated by the confidence and composure of the frontal pose, and her shaded yet piercing stare. Brooks' portrait of Una Troubridge, on the other hand, seems to unravel like a performance: the sitter exhibits simultaneously the most extreme sartorial characteristics of the aristocratic male dandy (the monocle and tailored coat) and ostensible visual markers of femininity (earrings, lipstick, and cropped, fashionable hair). In her superfluity, Una takes on a burlesque quality, one of "double drag:" seemingly, a woman dressed as a man dressing as a woman.[20] In Brooks' portrait of Gluck, *Peter (A Young English Girl)* (Fig. 3), the sitter is depicted as reclusive and austere: she is turned away from the viewer as if ignoring his or her gaze. Despite her seeming detachment and severity, there is nevertheless something quite alluring in the discretion of the boyish Gluck.[21] These three compositions display a shared sense of self-restraint. Juxtaposed with the exhibitionism

Fig 2: Romaine Brooks, *Self-Portrait,* 1923, oil on canvas, 117.5 x 68.3 cm. Photo: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC.

Fig. 3: Romaine Brooks, *Peter (A Young English Girl)*, 1923-24, oil on canvas, 91.9 x 62.3 cm. Photo: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC.

inherent to the dandy, these portraits are connotative of a visual dissonance that frequently reappears in Brooks' work. Another area of tension can be found in the relationship between Romaine Brooks' paintings and their titles. Brooks' *Peter (A Young English Girl)* is the ideal example since the title of the work itself is indicative of the sitter's sexual ambiguity. Had the portrait been untitled, the viewer would have been compelled to assume that the figure was male. Divested of any feminine traits and depicted in sombre tones, Peter, with her short hair and severe features, resembles a man; the title, however, indicates otherwise. As a result, the viewer is left in a state of ambivalence regarding the sexual identity of the sitter. By injecting her paintings with such elements of visual dissonance, Brooks emphasizes the ambiguities of gender identity; the same ambiguities which compel the viewer to look again and to look differently.[22] Moreover, in making the viewer aware of the disparity between what is shown and what the title describes—what the painter pushes the viewer to see—Brooks puts forward her belief that socially constructed notions of gender normativity should be revisited and questioned.[23] In essence, by destabilizing spectators through the use of visual dissonance, Brooks not only sensitizes them to the ambiguities of normative gender binaries, but she also displaces, and thus, controls, the viewer's gaze. She is both proposing an ambiguous transgendered sexuality, and asserting herself as a female artist.

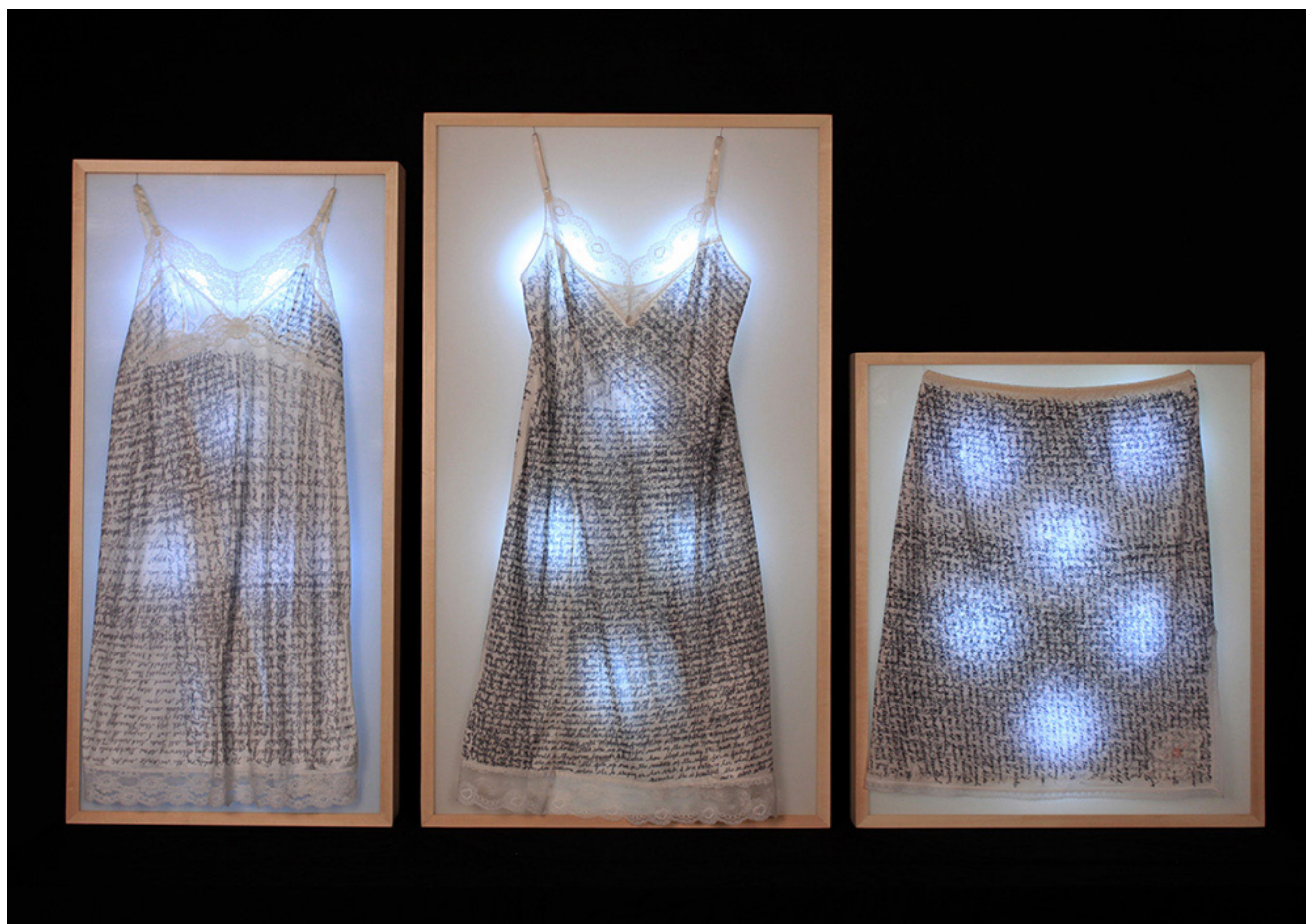
As an artist of the 1920s, working at a time when parading in male dress was considered fashionable, how did Brooks translate the image of the modern woman into one of a lesbian aesthetic? While Brooks and her sitters entertain the visual rhetoric of the modern woman, her portraits do not correspond to the European reality of *la femme moderne*. As previously mentioned, the tailored clothing adopted by women in the early twentieth century was significantly more seductive on account of its form-fitting design. Thus, rather than suggesting female sexuality through ruffles and extravagant proportions, fashion in the '20s employed a form-fitting masculine shape to emphasize the contours of the female figure.[24] Though this new trend was appreciated by certain men for its stylish sensuality, many criticized the concealed breasts and hips. Nevertheless, the figure of the modern woman still retained a quality of womanliness. Real concern was shown, however, when all female signifiers were expunged as in Brooks' portraits.[25] The three aforementioned paintings refuse to read the aesthetic of the modern woman as necessarily appealing to the heterosexual male. Neither of the three portraits, in their androgynous quality, draw attention to any particular female silhouette despite the sitters' adoption of the form-fitting gent's suit. For example, the crisp contouring of Una Troubridge's figure exaggerates the tight tailoring of her suit and draws attention to her thinness, exposing her lack of breasts, hips and other feminine physical traits. Brooks' *Peter*, on the other hand, entirely undermines the presence of the male spectator in her refusal to return the gaze. Due to the sitters' subversive

self-confidence and their lack of femininity, both portraits, though far from the conventional imaginings of the typical enticing female, possess a sexual allure that distinguishes their sitters from the contemporary modern woman. In other words, by divesting her figures of any feminine, heteroerotic quality, Brooks succeeded in acknowledging a transgressive sexual identity via the modern woman.[26]

Most notable in Baudelaire's decadent *flâneur,* the male dandy of the nineteenth century became the symbol of Paris' modern lesbian woman. As a prominent figure and portrait painter, Romaine Brooks did not simply depict the dandified lesbian subculture of her time, but also succeeded in redefining the image of the modern woman through a gender-ambiguous aesthetic that transformed the male connotations of the dandy into signifiers of lesbian sensuality.

Endnotes ///

[1] Melanie Taylor, "Peter (A Young English Girl): Visualizing Transgender Masculinities," *Camera Obscura* 56 (2004): 3, accessed March, 24, 2012, doi: 10.1215/02705346192561.
[2] Bridget Elliot and Jo-Ann Walters, "Fleurs du Mal or Second-Hand Roses?: Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, and the 'Originality of the Avant-Garde,'"*Feminist Review* 40 (1992): 13, accessed March 24, 2012, *jstor.org/stable/1395274.*
[3] Bridget Elliot, "Performing the picture or painting the Other: Romaine Brooks, Gluck and the question of decadence in 1923," in *Women Artists and Modernism,* ed. Katy Deepwell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 73.
[4] Laura Doan, "Passing Fashions: Reading Female Masculinities in the 1920s," *Feminist Studies* 24 (1998): 670, accessed March 24, 2012, *jstor.org/stable/3178585.*
[5] Ibid.,674-75.
[6] Joe Lucchesi, '"The Dandy in Me": Romaine Brooks's 1923 Portraits," *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, ed. Susan Fillin-Yen (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 171.
[7] Elliot and Walters, "Fleurs du Mal or Second-Hand Roses?" Natalie Barney, Romaine Brooks, and the 'Originality of the Avant-Garde,'" *Feminist Review 40* (1992): 24, accessed March 24, 2012, *jstor.org/stable/1395274.*
[8] Laura Doan, "Passing Fashions: Reading Female Masculinities in the 1920s," *Feminist Studies* 24 (1998): 693, accessed March 24, 2012, *jstor.org/stable/3178585.*
[9] Susan Fillin-Yen, *Introduction to Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 9-10.
[10] Ibid., 20-21.
[11] Lucchesi, "The Dandy in Me," 163.
[12] Ibid., 163.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Fillin-Yen, *Introduction to Dandies*, 15.
[15] Catherine McNickle Chastain, "Romaine Brooks: A New Look at Her Drawings," *Woman's Art Journal* 17 (1996-1997): 9, accessed March 24, 2012, *jstor.org/stable/1358461.*
[16] Lucchesi, "The Dandy in Me," 166.
[17] Cassandra Langer, "Reframing Romaine Brooks' Heroic Queer Modernism," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 14 (2010): 150, accessed March 24, 2012, doi: 10.1080/10894160903196525.
[18] Lucchesi, "The Dandy in Me," 166.
[19] Ibid, 166.
[20] Taylor, "Peter (A Young English Girl)," 13.
[21] Ibid., 13.
[22] Ibid.,18.
[23] Ibid.,19.
[24] Doan, "Passing Fashions," 693.
[25] Lucchesi, "The Dandy in Me," 166, 171.
[26] Ibid.,176.



SLIP OF MEMORY

Woman's slip, fabric marker and plexi-glass light box / 19" x 38"

Theresa Passarello

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Personal memories of the artist are inscribed on slips and then gradually washed away in an ongoing process that speaks to women's work, memory and history. By writing on and then washing the garments, the artist allows layers of symbolism to be constructed. The slips become a metaphor for the "feminine" object and the missing histories of women in inhabited slips. The washing of the slips comments on the washing of clothing in general as historically women's work. Memory is referenced in its fragility and anonymity as layers of faded histories compose the meaning of the piece. The intimate pieces of lingerie open ground to a discussion about personal and public as it provokes viewers to think critically about the missing history of women.

WILL, REASON AND CHARACTER:

ELIZABETH'S FEMINISM IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

by Rudrapriya Rathore

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Elizabeth Bennet occupies a distinctive space in Jane Austen's celebrated *Pride and Prejudice*. This is the case not only because it is through her perceptions that the reader absorbs the narrative, but also because she is a critical observer of her context and—more importantly—herself. The shifting opinions and perspectives that drive the relationships in this story, whether they are between women and society or between women and men, invite the reader to evaluate the novel's feminism. Elizabeth's marriage in particular is at odds with the influence of progressive feminist ideology as well as the differing values of emotional, intellectual, and moral judgments. While marriage allows women to move upwards in the social hierarchy, it is first and foremost Elizabeth's investment in her own improvement that brings her to marry Mr. Darcy, regardless of the fact that he also provides her with that social mobility. Her pursuit of her interest in her own character and female identity is what makes her relevant to a feminist exploration of the novel.

Eighteenth century British philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism hinges on the idea that "to become respectable, the exercise of [women's] understanding is necessary, there is no other foundation for independence of character…they must only bow down to the authority of reason, instead of being the modest slaves of opinion."[1] It is this concern with one's "understanding" and rational engagement with the world that she identifies as central to "respectability" and "independence." The process through which Elizabeth decides to marry Darcy is one in which she makes mistakes due to emotional motives that cloud her rational judgment; ultimately, however, these help her come to a better understanding of her own character. Her will to better herself is not a means to an end (the end being marriage); this is evident by her rejections of Collins and, initially, Darcy. She is not willing to compromise her happiness for either man, despite their offerings of elevated familial social status and good fortunes. Elizabeth's desire for self-improvement distinguishes her as someone who is not ultimately a "slave" to society's or her own opinions but rather as someone who wishes to rationally further her independence and respectability in ways that her society does not actively encourage her to do.

While at Netherfield, visiting Jane after she has fallen sick, Elizabeth identifies herself as an observer of other people.[2] Her wit and self-assurance influence the reader to align with her judgments of other characters; while Jane cannot be made to think badly of others, Elizabeth's skepticism towards people such as Darcy appears objective and well founded. Much of Elizabeth's charm comes from the fact that she is not concerned with what others may think of her blatant transgressions from what Miss Bingley calls "decorum." In fact, the outraged

reactions to her arrival at Netherfield, punctuated by remarks on her muddy petticoats, do nothing to distress her. She is comfortable in the position from which she judges others: "[Miss Bingley's and Mrs. Hurst's] indifference to Jane when not immediately before them restored Elizabeth to the enjoyment of all her original dislike."[3] She "enjoys" the fact that the behavior of the sisters reinforces her first impression of them. Her mistake is that she allows herself to believe that her judgments about others are always *right*. There exists a dissonance between what she says and believes but does not apply to her judgments: that "people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever".[4] She does not apply this natural understanding that people are always changing in her negative evaluations of others, though it proves to be a reality not only in Darcy's emotional development but also her own. Her observation and interest in others parallel the interest she develops for her own character. Darcy is the only person who displays the same tendency towards introspective analysis that she possesses, and is able to admit to his own "resentful temper" while suggesting a "defect" of Elizabeth's: "Yours is wilfully [sic.] to misunderstand [others.]."[5] Though addressed playfully, it becomes apparent that this is exactly her folly—that her emotional gratification demands a selective blindness with which to view others.

Elizabeth's favorable first impression of Wickham is broken down by a genuine realization of her prejudice as she reads Darcy's letter. While she inspects all the indicators of her inaccuracy, from Wickham's first lack of "scruples in sinking Mr. Darcy's character" to Mr. Bingley's and Colonel Fitzwilliam's unquestionable support of their friend and cousin, she is struck by the blindness of her vanity.[6]

> "Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself. "[7]

The idea that her "prided discernment"[8] could so easily be affected by the short-lived and superficial attentions of Wickham on one hand and the Darcy's "neglect" on the other humiliates her. Her shame is rooted in the fact that she has "driven reason away," bringing to mind Wollstonecraft's crucial prerequisite for female independence. This reconfiguration of her self-perception would not have been possible had she not already been deeply invested in her own self-improvement. The impact of the letter in bringing her to examine herself would not be as forceful did Elizabeth not identify rationality and independence as the predominant concern of her personal integrity. Moreover, Elizabeth would not have been able to recognize the extent of her mistake had she not acknowledged that Darcy's lack of knowledge of Jane's affection for Bingley was genuine –"How could she deny that credit to his assertions in one instance, which she had been obliged to give in the other?"[9] She reconciles herself to the painful understanding that in fact she has nothing to justifiably blame him for, and the humility gained from this is what allows her to grow.

Whereas her skeptical judgments of others previously seemed to be detached and neutral, they begin to appear to the reader as overly cynical, conceited and unreasonable. Her opinion of Charlotte Lucas's marriage to Mr. Collins as "unaccountable! in every view it is unaccountable!"[10] is harsh and definitive before Elizabeth goes to stay with them and sees that in their view the union is not at all unaccountable. Similarly, her attribution of Bingley's sudden absence to "thoughtlessness, want of attention to other people's feelings, and want of resolution" also ends up being incorrect and biased.[11] Jane counters both these opinions: "You do not make allowance enough for difference of situation and temper…We must not be so ready to fancy ourselves intentionally injured."[12] It is self-involvement that does not allow Elizabeth to include her own possible ignorance of events in her judgment. It is easier to place oneself at the center of things, to believe oneself "intentionally injured" and to "confirm [one's] belief of the inconsistency of all human characters," as Elizabeth does, than

to reasonably allow for the possibility of misunderstandings and detach oneself from their import.[13] This tendency to see the worst in others is mitigated by her relationship with Darcy because his unforeseen amiability and kindness represent a rational detachment from her harsh rejection; he does not harbor resentment towards her, and because of this she is able to accept rather than condemn him for what she believes is the final blow to their possible connection: his learning of Lydia's elopement. "She could neither wonder nor condemn, but the belief of his self-conquest brought nothing consolatory to her bosom…Never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be in vain."[14] Though given an opportunity to think him more proud than ever, she cannot resent or think badly of him for his supposed "self-conquest," his final, degraded judgment of her family and herself; instead of hatred she feels understanding, love, and forgiveness based on what she believes to be his thoughts.

Darcy aligns himself with Elizabeth's interest in self-improvement as he gives her an opportunity to reevaluate the role emotions play in her judgment. More importantly, however, his own behavior transforms so fully that she is able to "look up to him as a superior," as her father knows she must do in order to be happy in marriage.[15] The shift is first evident after her visit to Pemberley:

> "There was a motive within her of…gratitude, not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough, to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner….He who, she had been persuaded, would avoid her as his greatest enemy…. Such a change in a man of so much pride excited astonishment."[16]

Suggested in her feeling of gratitude is the idea that perhaps she herself might not have been able to forgive her own "petulance and acrimony" had their places been reversed. Darcy does not have any logical reason to treat her friends and family with so much regard, to eagerly "preserve the acquaintance;"[17] in fact he has every reason, Elizabeth feels, to treat her like his "greatest enemy." It is all the more surprising then, that he has not only changed but that he has changed so drastically that Elizabeth cannot help but feel grateful to receive a graciousness that she does not feel she would have been capable of. Secondly, his monetary exertion to secure Wickham's marriage to Lydia serves to display a moral and emotional growth of character that is wholly unexpected: "For she herself was humbled; but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself."[18] Elizabeth recognizes that their internal struggles have not been so different, and that he has more concretely than ever shown a character that matches and perhaps surpasses hers. In a mark of Austen's characteristic generosity, the qualities that exemplify Darcy's "superiority" are none other than the ability to discern what is right, to learn from others and to be humbled by them. "You shewed [sic.] me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased."[19] Elizabeth's manner of falling in love with him is rooted in these ideas of good will, strength of character, honesty and rationality, making her marriage a catalyst in her improvement as an independent and respectable woman.

The feminism Austen makes available to her readers is not one of blatant rebellion, as Lydia, in her elopement, only manages to prove her selfishness while ensuring a lifelong partnership unlikely to provide genuine happiness; nor is it a feminism based only on virtuously cultivating the female intellect. Elizabeth's self respect, her faithfulness to her own happiness and her ability to acknowledge her faults and grow because of them lead her to love someone who teaches her about her own character while developing his own. Her feminism is one that encourages the freedom to fall in love with and marry a man with the social status and wealth of her mother's dreams as long as it is in her own interest as a rational and independent being. In a striking moment at Pemberley, as she looks up at Darcy's portrait and "[fixes] his eyes upon herself," she sees herself from the perspective of someone

who understands her with a deep clarity.[20] It is a glimpse in which she may see that the marriage is right because he will want for her only what she wants for herself: a fulfillment of her character, of her individual being.

Endnotes ///

[1] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 119.
[2] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. James Kinsley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 31.
[3] Ibid., 27.
[4] Ibid., 31.
[5] Ibid., 43.
[6] Ibid., 158.
[7] Ibid., 159.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 104.
[11] Ibid., 105.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 104.
[14] Ibid., 210.
[15] Ibid., 288.
[16] Ibid., 201.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 248.
[19] Ibid., 282.
[20] Ibid., 189.

SANS TITRE

Forton / 24” x 20” 18”

Pour l’artiste, ce projet se veut une mise en évidence des contradictions présentes dans un objet (le talon haut), l’emblème de la féminité contemporaine. À travers cette œuvre, Limoges souligne et critique la construction d’une telle idéologie. L’apparence hyperréaliste de la sculpture (moule de ses propres jambes), pousse le spectateur à s’interroger sur ces propres conceptions de la féminité. Est-ce la femme qui fait l’escarpin; ou l’escarpin qui fait la femme?

Audrey Limoges

Montreal, Canada
Studio Arts
Université Concordia

JEANNE

16mm black and white film

Through the feminist lens with which Marinova creates all of her work, Jeanne is a fiction following the daily struggle and personal torments of a Montréal metro musician who uses her music as a means of escape. Driven by the feeling that there were not enough women voices in her life, the artist used this work as an opportunity to create her own. Based on real events in the life of a male metro musician, the story was adapted to a female point of view, allowing Marinova's perspective to shine through the character as well. Finding inspiration in the neo-realistic style of Italian post-World War II directors, a documentary approach is used to help Marinova create what she believes to be an honest, human perspective and a reflection on what feminism was and is today.

Léa Radoslava Marinova

Montreal, Canada
Film Production and Anthropology
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REINVENTING RITUAL: KERIAH, TAILS, TEFFILIN, SIDDUR

Digital Inkjet Prints / 17" x 22"

This work explores Jewish tradition and identity through a series of self-portraits, focusing on traditional prayer shawls, phylacteries, prayer books, and other objects associated with the practice of Orthodox ritual. Nearly all the ancient rituals and related objects depicted in these images are within the male domain–the role of women in synagogue and traditional practice being considerably limited. By positioning herself, a Jewish female, interacting with these religious objects that belonged to her grandfather, the artist seeks to challenge the traditional gender roles found not only in Judaism, but also within the foundations of nearly every ancient religion. *Reinventing Rituals* explores the symbolic weight of the religious object, as a means of identification with one's own spiritual beliefs and religious community, while simultaneously questioning the gender exclusivity that is imposed on these sacred objects.

Rachel Woroner

Toronto, Canada
Photography
Concordia University

THE MYTH OF THE GRAFFITI WHORE: WOMEN'S BODIES IN A MASCULINIST SUBCULTURE

by Éliane Gélinas

Montreal, Canada
Women's Studies
Concordia University

As the practice of graffiti has become more mainstream and documented, graffiti art and its derived products are becoming pop culture artifacts that are consumed on a daily basis. The rise in popularity of this subculture has also encouraged academics to look into the dynamics of graffiti practice outside the discourse of criminology. Among these studies, a limited number touch upon the issue of gender or offer a feminist perspective on the subject.[1] Informed by my own involvement as a woman graffiti writer[2] and by literature documenting the experience of female graffiti artists, I will explore how the myth of the *graffiti whore,* a popular label attributed to women and girls in the field, is used to control female participation in this milieu. I will begin by providing a brief introduction to the graffiti subculture and expose the fact that sexism and homophobia are implicitly part of the unwritten rules of the practice of graffiti. Building on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory of myth, I will explain how such an image is constructed in order to benefit the men of this subculture.[3] I will then explore how the policing of women's bodies and sexuality is a tool that male graffiti writers use to control the female access to recognition. This tendency is perpetuated by unrealistic representations of women in commercial products associated with graffiti, like books and magazines.[4] Finally, I will attempt to highlight women's resistance to the patriarchal norms imposed on them by relating some of the tactics used and by demonstrating how some of them engage with feminism through this form of art.

The practice of graffiti (and to some extend street art) is built on a complex set of rules and ideals, which are often unknown to anyone unfamiliar with this practice. Although many graffiti writers don't follow these unwritten rules, it is important to take a brief look at them.[5] The main goals of graffiti writing can be summed up as "getting up." and attempting to gain fame by being as visible as possible across the city.[6] "Getting up" is a slang expression referring to the practice of writing one's name on walls and trains illegally. This practice is referred as "tagging," but is often associated with more elaborated pieces as well, such as "throw-ups."[7] It is worth noting that the practice of "getting up," which started mainly in New York and Philadelphia in the 60s and the 70s, comes directly from marginalized groups (such as black and Puerto Rican youth) and could be directly linked with notions of civil rights, identity politics and community.[9] Although the critique of gentrification and political resistance were grounded in the birth of graffiti,

the subculture rapidly became a trend which rapidly spread to different areas around the world. It therefore lost its political significance while conserving its counter-cultural image. Because of the issues linked to the illegality of graffiti, media and academics usually position themselves on one side of the vandalism versus art divide.[10] To properly discuss the topic of this paper, it is important to acknowledge that such a division is unproductive as graffiti is always nuanced between these two dichotomies.[11]

Studies have shown that more men than women practice graffiti, although women have been part of the subculture since its very beginning.[12] This gender imbalance may be caused by the risks implicated in practicing illegal graffiti, but it may also be linked to the hostility directed at women by male graffiti writers.[13] It is obvious that the creation of illegal graffiti may be dangerous and women face more dangers than men as the city is more hostile toward women than men. The gendered city, as Gentry puts it, was created by men to serve their own interests, and was designed in ways that made it unsafe for women to participate in public life.[14] Girls are socialized to fear the city, especially at night when they might be attacked or raped.[15] Many women graffiti writers consider these risks to be purely constructed, manufactured in order to scare them and limit their involvement outside of the private sphere.[16] Others admit to having encountered street harassment, but still manage to practice graffiti by joining friends and forming crews.[17] Nancy MacDonald, in her groundbreaking work on the graffiti subculture, affirms that graffiti writing is a method used by males to develop their masculine identity, and that female graffiti writers are typically rejected or dismissed because they are perceived as a threat to the construction of this identity.[18] MacDonald further analyses the difficulties faced by women who do practice graffiti. Often, they are perceived as sexual objects and are targeted by numerous sexual rumors.[19] MacDonald's study confirms that these gender inequalities and assumptions about women are common to the two geographical areas in which she conducted her field work, London and New York.[20] Recent research has shown that these dynamics are also present in Montreal as well.[21] It is also interesting to note that in both the subculture and much academic literature on the subject, gender as a concept impacting the practice of graffiti is dismissed.[22]

Moreover, the specific vocabulary used in the graffiti subculture is centered on the male experience, which reinforces misogyny and homophobia. A graffiti writer who is perceived as lacking skills will quickly be feminized, or labeled as "gay."[23] Such qualifiers are also attributed to artists who produce murals with spray paint legally, which is viewed as a weakness and does not count as "real" graffiti.[24] The male appeal to graffiti resides in the art form's illegality, and in order to receive the ultimate title of "King" one needs to paint graffiti illegally all over the city.[25] The vocabulary used in the subculture is highly gendered, which consequently discourage women's involvement.

The fact that the female participation in graffiti is relegated to women's sexuality leads me to question the popular label of *graffiti whore*. In her research on female graffiti artists in Montreal, Couvrette acknowledges that some of the women she interviewed were continually labeled as *graff whore* by male graffiti writers, to such point that their sense of worthiness as artists was affected.[26] Gentry also observe the double standards at plays, noting that female writers are more likely to be labeled as "hoes" than "toys", the term commonly use to describe a novice or untalented graffiti writer.[27] My contention is that the graffiti whore doesn't really exist. She is rather a constructed image that limits women's involvement in a sphere where male dominance remains relatively unchallenged. To begin with, it is useful to use Barthes' definition of myth in order to understand how the illustration of the graffiti whore influences women's representation and consequently the reception of their participation in the subculture. According to Barthes, a myth can be any cultural object which upon

closer analysis shows the ideological purpose of its meaning.[28] Revealing the nature of the myth is necessary to divulge the identity of the power structures benefitting from such a disguise. [29] The myth is a type of speech that uses specific imagery to serve the interests of a dominant group: in this case, the interests of male graffiti writers.[30] If in *Mythologies* Barthes refers to the myth as constructed by the bourgeoisie, it is also possible to apply his process of *mythologisation* to today's political context and the promotion of subcultural ideas. For Barthes, this process occurs when a dominant group (or class) creates a narrative privileging their status; such narratives are elevated to the status of *myth* when they pass unchallenged, thus appearing to become mere common sense.[31] When we apply this to the graffiti subculture, it becomes evident that the idea of the slutty woman graffiti writer is so prevalent within the subculture that it has become accepted as a form of truth, to the point where we can consider it a myth."

The expression *graffiti whore* is part of the graffiti writers' vocabulary. According to Urban Dictionary, a *graff whore* is "a person who likes to engage in sexual behavior specifically with graffiti writers".[32] Although one of the female graffiti writers interviewed by Couvrette explains that this expression relates to "a girl who will be fanatic about a writer" and will try to have sex with him, this label is often attributed to female graffiti writers as well, especially if they are new to the subculture.[33] When graffiti writers are not experienced and lack skills, they are also often qualified as "toys" by other writers. Women are subjugated due to their gender and see their pieces dissed with gendered terms such as "cunt" or "hoe."[34] When a woman enters the subculture, she becomes hyper visible simply because she is female.[35] Consequently, women become the center of the attention whether they like it or not. They are constantly subjected to the male gaze, sometimes to the point of harassment by men seeking sexual encounter with them. They are victims of sexual rumors even if they are not interested in the male writer.[36] The simple fact of being a woman becomes reason enough for a female graffiti writer to be immediately qualified as a *graffiti whore*.

Interestingly enough, the definition of *graff whore* on Urban Dictionary is followed by: "A graffiti writer usually tags up this type of whore with a marker."[37] This remark is relevant because it allows us to understand the crucial role that body painting plays in the diffusion of the *graffiti whore* mythology. Graffiti magazines and popular website encourage graffiti writers to use attractive women's bodies as canvases on which to display their *tags*. This reinforces the image of the submissive promiscuous woman who is only interested in graffiti for sexual reasons. The pictures displayed on such websites are basically pornographic photography; the only difference being that a form of graffiti art is painted on the model's body. Although it is important not to dismiss the creative aspect and artistic potential of body painting, it is also necessary to question the staged representation of women on such platforms. Not only does it reinforce the standard ideals of western beauty, it also creates a hegemonic portrait of the woman inclined towards graffiti: a heterosexual, promiscuous and vapid sexual object. Moreover, the lack of physical diversity present on graffiti websites and magazines reflects the commercialist values present in graffiti art nowadays. The commodification of graffiti and women's bodies happen simultaneously, reflecting what many graffiti writer qualifies as the "selling-out" of the subculture.[38] As graffiti is becoming a product, it is no surprise that the *graffiti whore* discourse parallels it. The implication is that within a capitalist society it is in women's interests to represent themselves in sexualized ways.

As the graffiti subculture grows bigger, the number of women (as well as queer identified people) practicing graffiti is increasing. However, their strategies of resistance are not often documented by academics. Coping methods, such as the formation of all-female crews and the development of alternative methods or techniques providing more safety are briefly discussed by scholars such as Gentry and

Couvrette, but the implication of feminist values remains relatively untouched.[39] Considering gendered discourse within the field as well as the real physical danger that illegal graffiti poses, a woman practicing graffiti, as Jessica N. Pabon argues, is indeed performing a feminist act.[40] But writing on walls as a strategy to resist patriarchy is not a new concept; it has in fact been used since the second-wave of feminism. Besides their illegality and the notion of reclaiming public space, these types of graffiti have little to do with the graffiti subculture I am referring to in this essay. However, it is still useful to consider their impact as Angela Johnson (1990) does when she mentions two radical feminist graffiti— "Dead men don't rape" and "Women fight back!"— which appeared in her neighborhood.[41] Even if she later questions the inherent violence of such messages, women's words on public property is inspiring to her and makes her feel safer in the public space. As women were conditioned to stay in the realm of the domestic sphere, it can be argued that reclaiming the public space by practicing graffiti is a powerful way to show political opposition and challenge gender oppression.[42] Basing herself on the work of the French street artist Mis.Tic, Rebecca Pursley claims that feminist graffiti blurs the line between the feminine/private sphere and the masculine/public sphere.[43] Moreover, the feminist transformation of the public space achieves what Hélène Cixous described as "shaking the law", which signifies disrupting the patriarchal law which is prevalent in society.[44]

The feminist response to "traditional" graffiti is yet to be documented, but as explored in the current research surrounding the gendered dynamics of the practice of graffiti, the themes of coping and resisting are predominant interests for women graffiti writers.[45] Even if they face more obstacles than men, the women interviewed by these researchers have no intention to stop producing street art, which underlines the fact that patriarchal control won't stop women's participation in the field of their choice. Gentry sums up how graffiti gives women the skills to stand up to patriarchy and how its practice also positively influences women in the subculture:

> "Graffiti is a microcosm of society, and it reflects the ideas that are present in the larger culture. Though it mirrors many of the same masculinist values, graffiti offers women the opportunity to step outside of the "sociality of norms" and create new identities that they are able to challenge those standards. Graffiti's identity forming opportunities are not lost during daylight hours, when graffiti artists are not painting graffiti. The women who participate in graffiti are able to use the lessons that they learn from graffiti about standing up to a culture that fetishizes and objectifies them in the dominant society, lessons that are valuable for their entire lifetimes.[46]"

This paper's aim was to fill the gap in the literature concerning women in relationship to the practice of graffiti as well as their representations within the subculture. I am personally involved in this area and have unfortunately witnessed homophobia and sexism limit the practice of talented graffiti artists. The denial of the implications of gendered dynamics is very common in both the subculture and the literature I encountered in the research process. Moreover, the erasure of women who are not exposing their body is striking. Many questions are still unresolved, and hopefully more research on graffiti will be realized from a feminist standpoint. Notions of intersectionality,[47] privileges and access need to be addressed in further research. The myth of the graffiti whore is likely to stay prevalent, at least until graffiti as a trend loses its popularity. But a great number of women, despite their lack of visibility, contribute to render the fascinating practice of illegal graffiti more accessible to other women.

Endnotes ///

[1] N. Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York* (New York: Palgraves Macmillan, 2002), 94-150; E. Gentry, "Girls' night out: Female Graffiti Artist in a Gendered City" (Master diss., Bowling Green State University, 2008), 28-47, available at *etd.ohiolink.edu/send- pdf.cgi/ Gentry%20Erin.pdf?bgsu1206212108.*; K. Couvrette, "Le Graffiti à Montréal: Pratique Machiste et Stratégies Féminines (Master diss., Université de Montréal, 2012), 60-83.
[2] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture*, xiii.
I will use the term graffiti writer as an umbrella term to describe people practicing graffiti. It is the term that is the most popular within people practicing graffiti and is commonly used in academic research about graffiti.
[3] R. Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 109-159.
[4] Gentry, "Girls' night out."
Such example is brought up by Gentry, commenting the representation of the graffiti artist TRIBE, who display her body in front of her graffiti piece by posing in bikini and high heels.
[5] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture.*
For a more elaborate discussion of these rules, see Glossary (xi-xiii) and the chapter Going underground: A journey
into the graffiti subculture(63-93).
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., xi-xiii.
[8] T. Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (London: University Press of New England, 1994), page.; J. Austin, "More to see than a white cube: For an art in the streets," City 14(2010), 22-27, 44-45.
[9] Austin, "More to see than a white cube," 36.
[10] C. McAuliffe. and K. Iveson , "Art and crimes (and other things beside...): Conceptualising graffiti in the city," Geography Compass 5(2011), 128-129.
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[16] Gentry, "Girls' night out," 21.
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[18] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture*, 127-128.
[19] Ibid., 128,135.
[20] Ibid., 127-128.
[21] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture*, 128, 135.; Couvrette, "Le Graffiti à Montréal," 80-83.
[22] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture*, 234-240; Austin, "More to see than a white cube," 13.
[23] Gentry, "Girls' night out," 36.
[24] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture*, 126; Gentry, "Girls' night out," 36, 67-68.
[25] Macdonald, *The Graffiti Subculture*, 77-79.
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[44] H. Cixous, *The Portable Cixous* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 24.; R. Pursley, "Shake off the Law: Graffiti and Feminism," The McNair Scholarly Review, 18(2012), 61.
[45] Pabón, "Fillin' with Feminism.;" Gentry, "Girls' night out," 32-47.; Couvrette, "Le Graffiti à Montréal," 74.
[46] Gentry, "Girls' night out," 67-68.
[47] This term was coined by critical race feminist Kimberly Crenshaw to describe the interlocking relationship of socio-cultural factors such as race, gender and class in the impact of oppression. She originally uses the term to describe black women experiences of discrimination in work application. K. Crenshaw *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. (University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989),139.

PERFORMANCE BLEU

Peinture, toile, Humains

À travers cette performance, l'artiste rétablie l'équilibre entre le corps de la femme, trop souvent utilisé comme objets dans l'histoire de l'art, en se réappropriant une célèbre performance par l'artiste français Yves Klein. Ici, deux choses se manifestent, l'expression de la volonté féminine ainsi que l'émancipation du corps nu masculin, souvent sous-dévoilé dans les siècles derniers. Vue sous l'angle de la réappropriation artistique, l'œuvre devient également une critique du canon esthétique de l'histoire de l'art. Dans un climat de respect et de compréhension, c'est au 21e siècle que les deux sexes s'échangent les rôles préétablis, les transforment et les mélangent.

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GUSTAV KLIMT AND ADOLF LOOS:
THE WOMAN IN THEIR INTERIOR SPACES

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Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) and Adolf Loos (1870-1933) were born into a time of rich artistic creativity in Vienna.[1] They worked during the fin-du-siècle period, a period of grandeur, and into the turn of the century pre-war period, which was seen as a time of reconciliation between nature and artifice.[2] Klimt is best known for his decorative paintings of women with golden accents. In contrast, Loos has been made popular because of his functionalist architecture, which advocated for the home as part of the "modern lifestyle." Klimt's works are ornamental, while Loos opposed decoration. Klimt championed equality between fine and decorative art, a position that Loos opposed.[3] Both artist and architect were highly controversial in society: the former for his pornographic subjects, and the latter for his minimalism. Though they had inherently different aesthetics, the theme of "the female" played significant roles in their interior works. Gustav Klimt and Adolf Loos both utilized ideas about the female —one through his blatant, sexual friezes; the other less directly, through his use of space in the home. This essay will focus on the artists' differences and discuss the potential for similarities by examining their shared interest in women in relation to their work.

Gustav Klimt is one of the most memorable Art Nouveau decorative painters of the 20th century. He is known for his erotic art, which was imbued with an eclecticism that bordered on the fantastical. Klimt's style draws on Egyptian, Minoan, Classical Greek, Japanese, and Byzantine art forms and was inspired by other Art Nouveau artists such as Aubrey Beardsley.[4] Klimt celebrated all kinds of beauty, and his subjects varied from wealthy Jewish women to prostitutes. Overall, Klimt depicted women in a romanticist style, and his sitters often embodied the role of the *femme fatale*—an intense, strong woman in command of her sexuality.[5] Klimt's work conveys psychological symbolism—using artistic freedom to break from traditional portrayals of sexuality.[6] In fact, he utilized allegory to thinly camouflage a highly erotic tendency of his. An example of these ideas may be studied through his 1894 interior commission for the University of Vienna. Klimt was commissioned to execute paintings which would adorn the ceiling of their Great Hall. His paintings, *Philosophy, Jurisprudence,* and *Medicine* were deemed overtly pornographic. The public was shocked by his transformation of allegory into sexual symbolism. They were never displayed.[7] After the scandal, Klimt abandoned historical painting and realism, veering towards ornamental, mythological painting instead.[8] He co-founded the Vienna Secession group with a number of great Viennese artists. The group aimed to provide an alternative exhibition space for upcoming young artists.[9] They strove to raise the status of crafts to the same level as art, advocating for the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the total work of art.[10]

Klimt soon began working in his own style, which

portrayed strong women, in terms of space and sexuality. A first example can be seen in his 1902 *Beethoven Frieze* (Fig. 1). The frieze was intended for the 14th Vienna Secessionist exhibition, which celebrated Beethoven.[11] The Vienna Secessionists considered this exhibition an opportunity to unite their talents and to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The exhibition featured a monumental sculpture by Max Klinger, along with Mahler's musical performances. [12]

Fig 1: Gustav Klimt, Detail from *The Beethoven Frieze*, *The Kiss to the Whole World*, 1902. Photo: Klimt Museum Vienna.

Klimt's frieze fills an entire room, overwhelming the viewer with visual subject matter. The artwork depicts people's yearnings for happiness and freedom. It contains mostly nude subjects, which were offensive to the conservative Viennese. *Beethoven Frieze* can be read as a statement of Klimt's subjects' desires for sexual freedom, which can be considered in the stylized mythological females of *Lust, Unchastity and Gluttony*. In the frieze, these characters all have long, gorgeous hair, a typical Art Nouveau symbol of sexuality and attractiveness.[13] Klimt's work fearlessly showcases woman within the interior space, in full erotic sexual wanting and thus, in full control.

Klimt's interior commissions continued in 1905, when he began work on Adolphe Stoclet's *Palais Stoclet* in Brussels.[14] Klimt worked on the Palais' dining room, which he said was "probably the ultimate stage of my development of ornament," the culmination of his role as artist and craftsman.[15] The *Stoclet Frieze* (Fig. 2) is a total work of art, combining painting and architecture.[16] For the frieze, Klimt used shape, form and colour to create curvilinear, organically-formed trees typical of Art Nouveau, which allude to the female body. The work also contains one of his *femme fatales*: the powerful, beautiful woman, seen in *Expectation*.[17] The mosaic displays Klimt's tendency to use the female figure in his work, which creates a total work of art in its combination of psychology, the senses, and space.

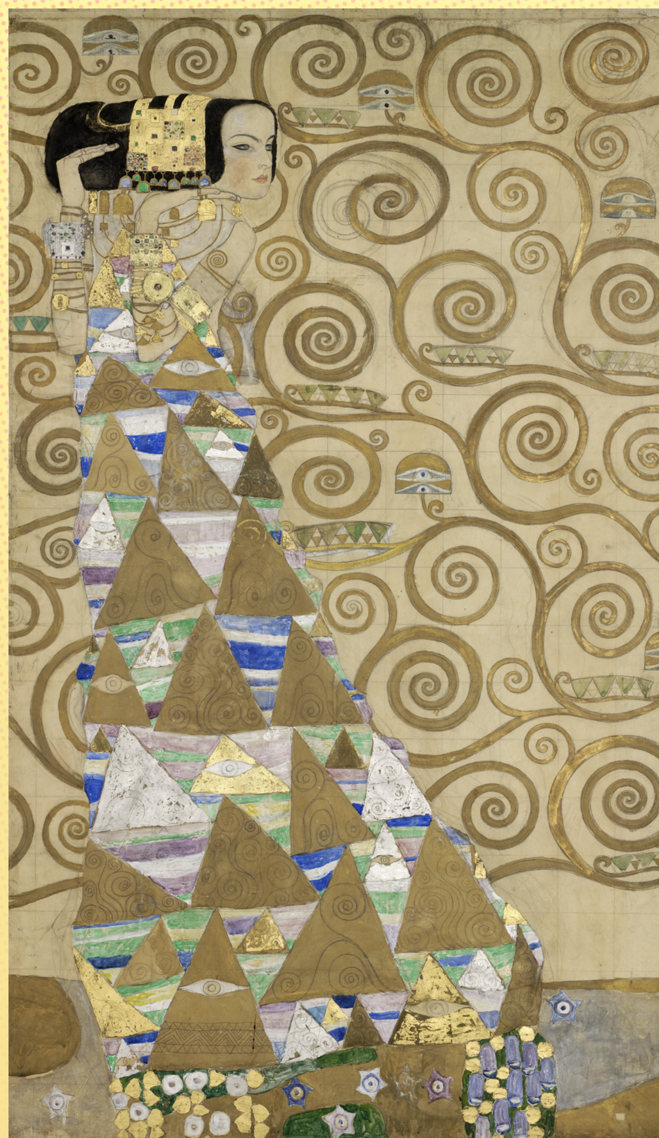

Fig 2: Gustav Klimt, Part of *The Stoclet Frieze, The Tree of Life*, 1909. Photo: ©MAK/Georg Mayer.

For his part, Adolf Loos was a pioneer of modern architecture, influential in his controversial essays and interior design.[18] From 1893-1896, Loos lived in the United States where he developed his modernist taste, influenced by American buildings,

clothing, and furniture. [19] Upon his return to Vienna, he became a catalyst for functionalism by publishing his writings on architecture and design. In his most radical piece of writing, the 1908 manifesto *Ornament and Crime*, Loos critiques and derides the Secessionists for their use of ornament, specifically the architect Josef Hoffmann.[20] He agreed, however, with the Secessionists' desire for art to go beyond traditional boundaries. What is more, Loos did not fully reject decoration.[21] This can be seen in his *Café Museum* which merged ornament and function. For example, he applied ornamental functionality to the design of the chairs of this museum: two wooden curving pieces meet each leg, acting as extra support.[22]

Loos believed that architecture should provide a means for a modern lifestyle, and he placed the individual's needs at the centre of his architectural plans.[23] This is how he created the *Raumplan*,[24] a spatial plan which he used for many of his designs. It has been said that "Loos acted not just as an architect, but also as a psychologist."[25] His work has been considered a precursor to Constructivism, due to its industrial aesthetic.[26] In the midst of this cold, modern approach to architecture, one may assume that the female was forgotten in the home and replaced by the male. However, Loos was adamant about the fact that the woman's place was in the private sphere, and he designed spaces in accordance with this belief. [27]

The *Looshaus*, one of the architect's early works, distinguishes the public space from the private one. There is a clear separation on the building's exterior façade between the ground level store and the second level apartments. This delineates the public store from the private apartments.[28] Another example of such division can be found in the later *Haus Müller* (Fig. 3). Situated in Prague, the Haus Müller's ceiling heights were adjusted by Loos to divide the public and the private spheres. Besides the separation between the public and the private, Loos had created a division between the man's space and the woman's in *Haus Müller*. In fact, a public staircase from the living room leads to the study—a typically male space—and a private staircase in the kitchen—typically seen as the "woman's domain"—leads to the bedroom.[29]

Fig 3: Adolf Loos, Façade and plan of *Haus Müller*, 1929-1930.
Photo: *kotonogo.blogspot.ca/2011/05/adolf-loos.html*

In 1927, Loos began planning designs for the Parisian house of Josephine Baker, the famous African American dancer. Though the house itself was never built, its plan (Fig. 4), follows Loos' previous division between the private and the public. The private living space was situated at the back of the home, while the public space was at the front. The house was meant to have two staircases: one for Baker's guests, the second for her personal use. This created a boundary between the different sections of the house.[30] Similarly to *Haus Müller*, Loos designed specific rooms with gender in mind.[31] An indoor swimming pool was planned, which would enable Baker to "dance" in the water, and be seen by viewers, who were often male, watching her from the level above.[32] It is interesting to consider the private and public in relation to Loos' belief that the home should function for its owners. Baker, for example, was an exotic woman, the "other." She was likely seen as sexually desirable privately, but was also prosperous and successful in public.[33] The *Baker House* can then be appreciated as a unification of Josephine as a whole—designed for her public needs, as well as her private needs.

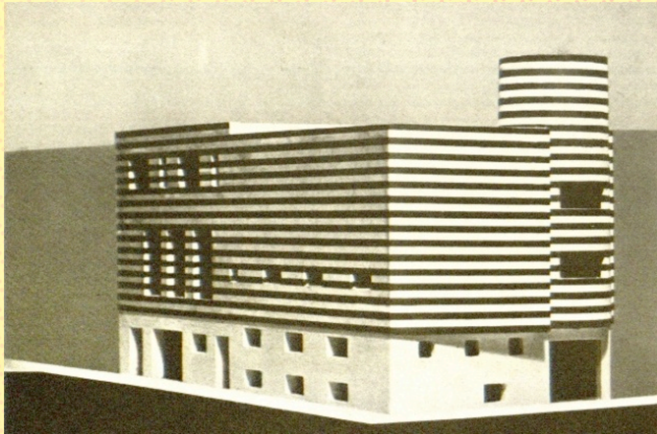

Fig 4: Adolf Loos, Potential façade of *Baker House*, 1928.
Photo: *cargocollective.com/adolfloos/Josephine-Baker-House-Unbuilt*

While Klimt may have been considered less "modern" due to his position within the Art Nouveau movement (a style which faded in popularity after the turn of the century), his depictions of women were of the avant-garde. He was fond of commanding, seductive *femmes fatales*, and as such, often included them in his work. On the other hand, although Loos' plans were more aesthetically modern, he had antiquated ideals of the woman's place in the home. This is evidenced through his architectural design, which confined women to the domestic, private part of the home—a notion which several feminist scholars, including Beatriz Colomina, Karen Burns and Christine Threuter argue.[34] Though erotic, Klimt's women are not demeaned by the artist, nor are they submissive to the viewer or in the subject matter. Klimt created interior spaces where the sexuality of his female figures overpowers the viewer. While the woman has not been removed physically from Loos' architecture, she is relegated to the back of the home, confined to a position quite unlike the freedom exhibited in Klimt's friezes. Conversely, in the concept of the indoor swim ming pool in *Baker House*, she is fully on display sexually, with the viewer watching her from above.

Evidently, Gustav Klimt and Adolf Loos' designs were at odds with each other. Klimt's artworks put his women displaying their sexuality powerfully, while Loos' homes pushed the female to the background, allowing the male to be the dominating force. Through a functional aesthetic, Loos' spaces separated women from the public space, placing her in a place of weakness. On the other hand, Klimt's ornamental friezes speak of sexual liberation. Both artist and architect were avant-garde in what they attempted to create, though each had very different aesthetics and, ultimately, different visions of the woman's role in the interior space.

Endnotes ///

[1]Rachel Barnes, *Gustav Klimt* (London: Quercus Publishing Plc, 2008), 8.
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[4] "Gustav Klimt Biography: Life and Work," Klimt Gallery, accessed November 27, 2012, *klimtgallery.org/biography.html*; Wolf, "Gustav Klimt."
[5] Barnes, *Gustav Klimt*, 7, 8, 56.
[6] Gustav Klimt Biography: Life and Work.;" Barnes, *Gustav Klimt*, 7.
[7] "Gustav Klimt Biography: Life and Work," Klimt Gallery.; Wolf, "Gustav Klimt."
[8] Wolf, "Gustav Klimt."
[9] "Gustav Klimt," The Art Story, last modified 2012, accessed November 27, 2012, the *artstory.org/artist-klimt-gustav.html*; "Gustav Klimt Biography: Life and Work," Klimt Gallery.
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[12] Beethoven Fries," *Klimt.com.*; Barnes, *Gustav Klimt*, 20.
[13] Barnes, *Gustav Klimt*, 10, 23, 26, 31.
[14] Ibid., 45.; "Gustav Klimt Biography: Life and Work," Klimt Gallery.
[15] "Gustav Klimt Biography: Life and Work," Klimt Gallery.; Barnes, *Gustav Klimt*, 48.
[16]Ibid., 44.
[17]Ibid., 45, 48.
[18]"The Villa: History of the Villa," Mullerova Vila – Muzeum Hlavniho Mésta Prahy (archives), accessed November 27, 2012, *mullerovavila.cz/english/historie-e.html*;"Architecture: Adolf Loos, 1870-1933," National Gallery of Victoria, last modified 2011, Accessed November 27, 2012, *ngv.vic.gov.au/vienna/architecture/adolf-loos.*
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[22] Avnee Jetley, Susan Nugraha and Georgia Read, "Adolf Loos: Individual Works, Cargo Collective, Accessed November 27, 2012, *cargocollective.com/adolfloos/Individual-Works.*; Karolinsky, "Adolf Loos."

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[25]"The Villa: History of the Villa," Mullerova Vila – Muzeum Hlavniho Mésta Prahy (archives), accessed November 27, 2012, *mullerovavila.cz/english/historie-e.html.*

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[27]Janet Stewart, Fashioning Vienna: Adolf Loo's Cultural Criticism, (London: Routledge, 2000), 129. Google e-book. *books.google.ca/books?id=k7Qfkmf2g-QC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.* Adolf Loos believed that notion is especially true for the German and Asutrian woman, not so much with her American counterpart.

[28] Karolinsky, "Adolf Loos."

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[30]Shapira, Elana, "Adolf Loos's House for Josephine Baker," Studies in the Decorative Arts, The Bard Graduate Center and the University of Chicago, 11, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2004): 2-24, *jstor.org/stable/40663079.*

[31] Jetley, Nugraha and Read, "Adolf Loos: Individual Works."

[32]Avnee Jetley, Susan Nugraha and Georgia Read, "Josephine Baker House, Unbuilt," Cargo Collective, accessed November 27, 2012, *cargocollective.com/adolfloos/Josephine-Baker-House-Unbuilt* "[Aldolf Loos] designed the swimming pool so that Baker's guests could watch her swim in the pool, a quality in Baker that he saw deserved an architectural glorification. Loos saw in Baker a chance to express his view of her modernity through the language of architecture. The house was never built and there has never been any solid information to prove that Baker asked Loos to design a house for her, or if they have ever met." *placesinfrance.com/la_piscine_josephine_baker_paris.html.* What is really interesting about this is that there is actually a swimming pool in Paris named after Josephine Baker: "The Piscine Josephine Baker is more of a swimming pool barge that is situated on the bank of the River Seine and was named after the actress and French resistance heroine, who became the first American-born woman to receive the highest French military honour called the Croix de Guerre."

[33]Shapira, Elana, "Adolf Loos's House for Josephine Baker," Studies in the Decorative Arts, The Bard Graduate Center and the University of Chicago, 11, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2004): 2-24, *jstor.org/stable/40663079.*

[34] Jetley, Nugraha and Read, "Adolf Loos: Individual Works." These Feminist theorists have written of the clear gender discrimination in Loos' design, arguing that the swimming pool was an invitation for "male" visitors to watch Josephine's body, and that the façade's white and black stripes expressed Loos' condemnation of ornamental women's clothing, and could even further be seen as racial discrimination.

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Raíssa Paes, from Brazil, is in her final year of completing a BFA in Art History. She is interested in feminist art and art history. Understanding the role of feminist art, recuperating forgotten female artists and criticizing traditional notions of art through contemporary and historical practices are among her strongest interests. She is a feature writer for CUJAH, and has published her writing in the Combine 2012 exhibition catalogue. Raíssa will begin her masters in visual arts administration in the Fall of 2013. She is the Editor-in-Chief and founder of Yiara Magazine.

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