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Yiara Magazine is an undergraduate feminist art and art history publication. Based in Montreal and run by students from across the city, Yiara publishes an annual print issue of curated student writing and artwork, organizes a variety of workshops, discussions and lectures, and hosts an end-of-year vernissage and magazine launch.

By encouraging feminist dialogue within the field of art, we hope to raise critical questions on the art historical canon, study feminist representation, pay tribute to women and figures of the past, explore ideas of gender and the self and give voice to students concerned with these themes in their work and practice.

Université Concordia University
FACULTY OF FINE ARTS
Department of Art History

Concordia Council on Student Life

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And a special thank you to Yiara's team members for their time, participation, and hard work!

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Yiara Magazine is based out of Concordia University, which is located on unceded Indigenous lands belonging to the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

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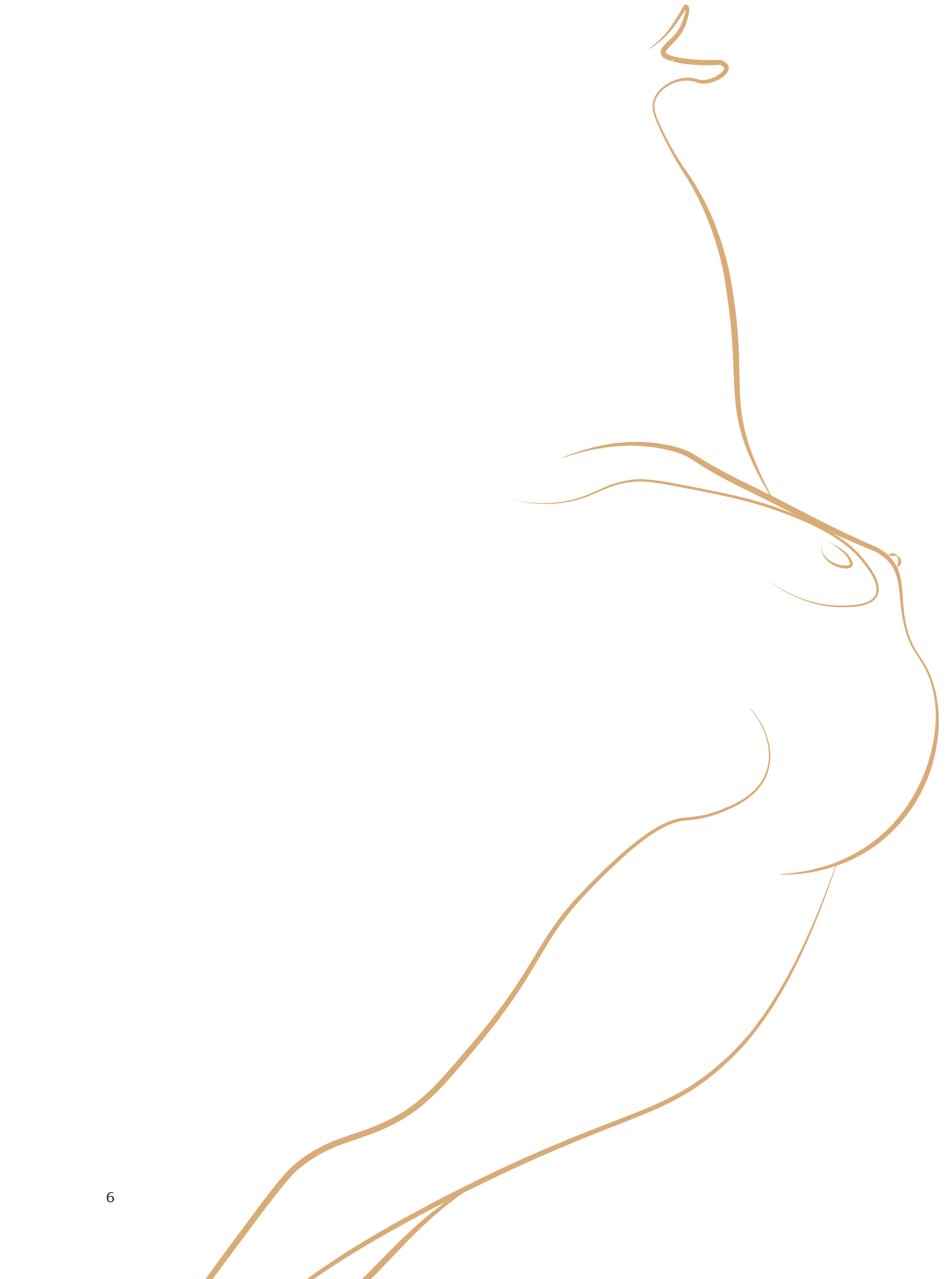


LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

How do we learn how to "be"?

That needlessly esoteric question fell into place as our team worked on volume 7 of Yiara. As the issue developed and our graphic designers took a look at this year's crop, we noticed a recurring reference or emphasis on "the body" in our contributors' pieces. Womanity;in vitro (34) speaks to the experience of being a trans woman; Photography is the New Painting (06), to the politicization of fatness; and the essay on Kara Walker's exhibit After the Deluge (40), to that of Black bodies. Many others address the question of agency and the self.

To accidentally curate an entire issue around this topic is telling. What space does the body, the self, occupy in our histories and feminisms? Can the body be apolitical? Can our bodies just be?

As this year's run of Yiara came together, so did a lot of fears: fear of being wrong and "be"-ing wrong, of doing wrong, of letting something or someone down.

There are entire anthologies dedicated to feminist perspectives on the body and the self, and we won't pretend that this is a comprehensive and conclusive discussion of those theories.

But in conversation with these works, we can start to see the body as a story, body as a history—body as a beautiful mess where our fears and anxiety of "be"-ing wrong and doing "self" wrong can be mediated by community, empathy and art. We hope that this volume allows contributors, editors and readers alike to reckon with this complex relationship on their own time, in their own way.

With all my heart, thank you for picking up this issue of Yiara. We welcome you to pass it on once you're done and make its contents—its body—your own.

Julie Brown
Editor-in-Chief, vol. 07

PHOTOGRAPHY IS THE NEW PAINTING

Mycoze
Concordia University
Photography; Interdisciplinary in Sexuality

As the title suggests, *Photography is the New Painting* possesses as painterly quality, as layers of drapery lay like gestural brush strokes in space, captured through a grainy, canvas-like filter. Flooded in a soft, matte, wintery light, the model lays draped among a *mise-en-scène* of objects which recalls Renaissance paintings or vanitas still lives about mortality. Indeed, the harvested winter fruits, the cut flowers, the human body, and the medium of film photography all share an ephemeral quality.

The chosen objects hint at a decidedly anti-phallic eroticism, particularly the flaccid wilted flowers and fingers resting delicately on the open-lipped vase. The model's nail polish and artificially -coloured water create a harmonious contrast between natural and synthetic, as well as traditional and contemporary elements.

The photographs aestheticize the body as material object, while the model's written reflection on her body and her experience of Fat Shaming breathes life and power back into the vessel. Presenting the photographs and text as one piece, Mycoze deconstructs the traditional objectification of model-painting by assuming authority as an artist, while also stepping aside and creating space for the model to voice her marginalized experience.

The Beauty That You'll Never Touch

Since very young, I've bundled up your disgust
very deep in the furrow of my beads.
Bury.
Beautiful face, you say. A crappy body, but a
beautiful face. Beautiful for a big one. My brain
stores your words and then regurgitates them.
Always something to say about my body. Circus
freak.
Fuck.
I put on this little bikini to let the sun caress
my body. Your viper's eyes indifferent me. I
apply a thin layer of sunscreen. My tiny hands
on the immensity of the whiteness of my
thighs. Everything moves. My body terrifies and
fascinates you at the same time. You're listening
to TVA News, sensationalism, you quite like that.
My body is sensational. My hand gets lost and
vogue in the bead of my back and belly. The white
of the cream on my red stretch marks. Show.
There is all this body that I should hide under
gray jogging and a beige t-shirt. All this body that
I should never show lying on a swimming pool
towel. I am the queen of camping.
I'm free.
Your eyes are still piercing, but they don't hurt
my skin anymore.
I enter the water.
The warm liquid tenderly envelops my flesh.
I go far into the small artificial lake. Far from
everything, far from you.

Words of M

La beauté que tu ne toucheras jamais

Depuis toute petite, j'ai emmitouflé votre dégout bien profond dans le sillon de mes bourrelets.
Enfouir.
Beau visage, vous dites. Un corps de marde, mais un beau visage. Belle pour une grosse.
Mon cerveau emmagasine vos paroles pour les régurgiter ensuite. Toujours quelque chose à dire sur mon corps. Bête de foire.
Fuck.
J'enfile ce tout petit mini bikini pour laisser le soleil caresser mon corps. Vos regards vipères m'indiffèrent. J'applique une fine couche de crème solaire. Mes mains minuscules sur l'immensité de la blancheur de mes cuisses.
Tout bouge. Mon corps vous terrifie et vous fascine à la fois. Vous écoutez TVA Nouvelles, le sensationnalisme, vous aimez pas pire ça. Mon corps est sensationnel. Ma main se perd et vogue dans les bourrelets de mon dos et mon ventre. Le blanc de la crème sur le rouge des vergetures.
Spectacle. Il y a tout ce corps que je devrais cacher sous des joggings gris et un t-shirt beige. Tout ce corps que je ne devrais jamais montrer étendu sur une serviette club piscine. Je suis la reine du camping.
Je suis libre.
Vos regards percent encore, mais ils ne font plus mal à ma peau.
J'entre dans l'eau.
Le liquide tiède enveloppe tendrement ma chair. J'avance loin dans le petit lac artificiel. Loin de tout, loin de vous.

Mots de M

DUCKING AND DODGING

Simone Sinclair-Veillette
Concordia University
Studio Arts

Ducking and Dodging illustrates an all-too-familiar scenario, a fun night out interrupted by a sudden invasion of personal space, through the playful metaphor of male ducks' violent mating habits and female ducks' evasive strategies.

The expressive patterns and colours paint a psycho-sensory landscape of the moment when heightened senses and primal instincts of fight, flight, or freeze take over. Pink and blue filters on the two characters highlight the perceived and performed gender split in nightlife environments — environments that seem almost designed to allow predatory behaviour to be unseen in the immersive sensory stimulation. The red-eyed mallard becomes a symbol of someone possessed by toxic masculinity or entitlement, operating under the excuse of intoxication or reproductive instincts.

While the surreal characters might seem funny at first, this piece provokes a conversation around the opportunistic ways in which people use biology to back their ideologies. Cherry-picked examples of other species' mating practices are frequently used to justify what one considers "natural" sexuality or what human sex is "supposed" to be— from whether humans are meant to mate for life, to the evolutionary arguments for sexist gender stereotypes and sexual predation. *Ducking and Dodging* addresses this discomforting manipulation of biological facts, through the hybridization of species, as the characters' minds momentarily turn animalistic, while their bodies still occupy a complex, human realm.

Dance Reflections

A conversation about mimesis and agency

Caitlin Stever
Concordia University
Theatre and Development

My name is Caitlin Stever and I am first and foremost a theatre maker. All of my creations and practices engage in togetherness and connection. Through my work and studies I have encountered a lot of tension surrounding ideas of ownership, as I'm sure many other artists do. This has lead me to explore ideas of mimesis and agency through the examination of the works of Francoise Sullivan and Luis Jacob. This will be done by connecting a variety of sources to their work and my analysis of it as an interdisciplinary performance artist. One can never truly know or understand the process or intentions behind creations like these, therefore it's worth noting that I wield a heavy lens of superimposed assumptions about the work and can only try to debunk those ideas through this research. My first-hand experience is through Francoise Sullivan's exhibit at the Musee d'Art Contemporain (MAC). Sullivan is an artist who is known as a pioneer of her time, not only as a French Canadian woman but as a revolutionary of transdisciplinary practices.

Part One: Pioneer Woman

Born in 1923, Sullivan attended the École des beaux-arts de Montréal in the 40s and soon after moved to New York to study modern dance. Most notably, she has worked with Paul-Emile Borduas and Jean-Paul Riopelle, having co-signed *Le Refus global* in the 1948. In the 1960s, she moved on to explore plexiglass and steel sculpture and then later dove back into more performative and immaterial approaches. In the 1980s, her painting career began and she moved into the realm of abstract painting in the 90s while she was also teaching in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University. The MAC exhibit highlights Sullivan's canonical works beginning with her earliest dance creations. It celebrates the anniversary of *Le Refus global*, which details an enlightening social and cultural history of Quebec and its people. *Le Refus global* talks about how the rise of rebellious academic publications created a more tangible culture of hope, solidarity and generally higher expectations of life. It seems to me to be subtly suggesting that the emergence of freedom arose out of the ashes of religion and catholicism. It describes fear as a chain that has been binding and oppressing us for centuries. One can observe the relationship between the emergence of interdisciplinary artists such as Sullivan and the publication of *Refus global*, which served as a momentous call for action, identity and liberation in French-Canadian society.

The exhibit begins with two of Sullivan's dance works — *Encore! Encore! Reconstruction Project* and *Danse dans la neige*. The first is a collection of videos that shows the evolution of the same choreography through altered contexts. Danse dans la neige is part of a collection of

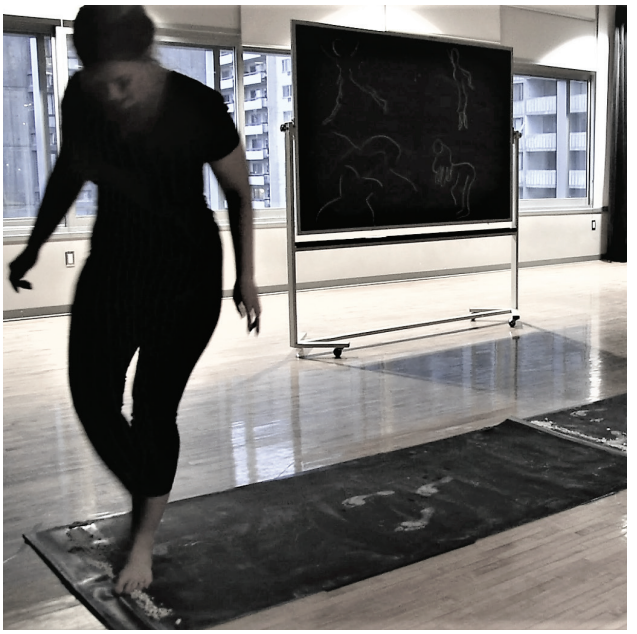


Fig 1. — Prints and Plans performance by Caitlin Stever. Video still by Shauna Janssen.

dances Francoise Sullivan created with Jean Paul Riopelle celebrating all four seasons in Quebec — specifically seven still photographs of the winter episode created in 1948. Sullivan is seen dancing in a skirt, hat and boots, beginning at the top of a small snow-covered hill and travels downward. One of the most fascinating things about Sullivan's *Danse dans la neige* is that there was at one point the existence of a video recording. For reasons unbeknownst to me, the video no longer exists. Thus, the only remnants of this live performance are in hard copy — photographs and corresponding drawings on score paper (fig 2). I can assume as well that remnants remain for Sullivan, Riopelle and other artists that participated/collaborated.

One can wonder how this process of generating and losing important documentation shifts the meaning and lens of the artwork itself. For instance, countless ancient Greek and Roman works are lost entirely while others are perfectly preserved. This leads me to wonder how the significance of pieces like *Danse dans la neige* and the traces of it that remain, are either entirely fleeting and ephemeral or timeless and monumental based on our collective recollection of their relevance. Rebecca Schneider, performance studies and feminist theorist wonders about how collective memories can be altered by questioning and collecting how and what repeated gestures "document."[1] In this sense, Schneider is speaking broadly when using the word gesture. The passing of time is intrinsically pivotal in her work *Reenactment and relative pain*, as it is similarly in Michael Taussig's work;

"My way of traversing this two-way street takes me into and eccentric history which begins with the curious and striking recharging of the mimetic faculty caused by the invention of mimetically capacious machines such as the camera, in the second half of the 19th century."[2]

Taussig prefaces his thinking about new constructions with this note. Similarly the development of technology has clearly progressed between the time frames of Sullivan's video dance installation and Luis Jacob's reactionary installation.

"The significance of pieces like *Danse Dans La Neige* and the traces of it that remain, are either entirely fleeting and ephemeral or timeless and monumental based on our collective recollection of their relevance."

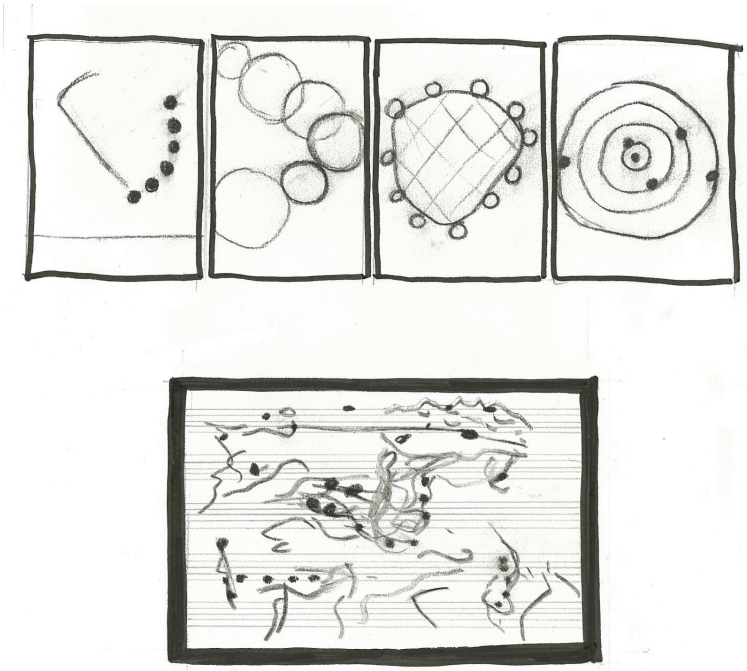


Fig. 2 — Drawing of Sullivan and Riopelle's choreography sketches

Part Two: Parody versus homage

Many years later in 2007, Luis Jacob, an interdisciplinary artist from Peru, creates *A dance for those of us whose hearts have turned to ice* based on the choreography of Francoise Sullivan and sculptures of Barbara Hepworth (fig 3). This piece is a video installation that first premiered in Germany in 2007, as part of the Documenta festival. His work is intrinsically accessible, simply due to its relation to pop culture. The piece consists of a video of a mostly naked man dancing in the winter forest and interacting with various clothes like props, sometimes accompanied by adjacent screens with corresponding sign language (fig 4).

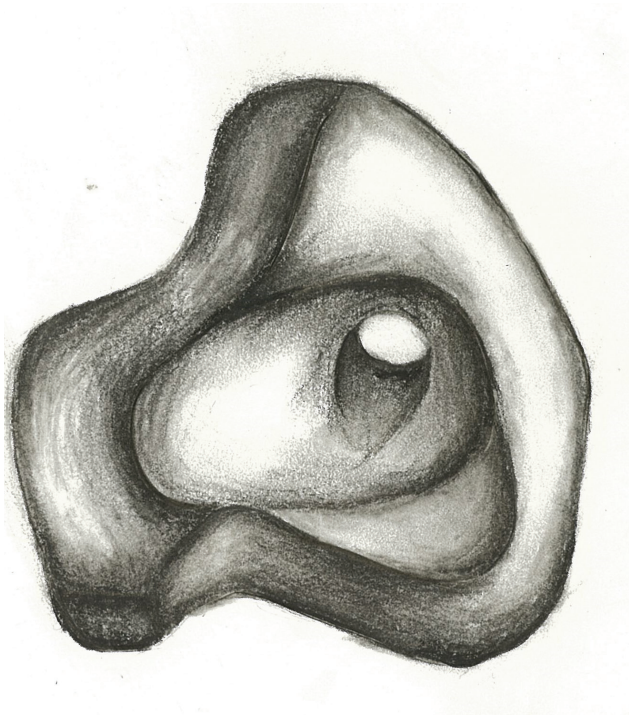


Fig 3. — Drawing of Barbara Hepworth's sculpture at Tate Modern

The first consideration that arose for me in studying the connected work of both these artists is the straddling of parody and homage — the latter being what Jacob's work claims to be, despite what one can only assume is the intentionally comedic effect of male nudity. Aside from the lengthy and relevant discussion of gendered nude bodies in contemporary art, I concluded that intentionality plays a huge part in the creation of many reactionary or mimetic works such as these

— though Jacob's thinking cannot be known. To further articulate my qualm—the difference between parody and homage in this case is positionality and research. It's clear to me as the viewer that Jacob doesn't dispute the integrity of Sullivan's work, as is evidenced by Jacob's established reputation and elaboration of the initially proposed ideas. In Schneider's work, she cites Vanessa Agnew's argument that reenactment is "eclipsing the past with its own theatricality."[3] There is clearly an added layer of theatricality to Jacob's video. There is also another unknown layer; Jacob's work does not claim to be a strict recreation of Sullivan's, but rather what I can assume is a conversational approach between hers and the sculptures of Barbara Hepworth (fig 3).

"Rather, we must suppose that the gift of producing similarities - in dances, whose oldest function this was - and therefore also the gift of recognizing them, have changed with historical development."[4]

Walter Benjamin delves into the ideas of nonsensuous mimicry, specifically examining language and onomatopoeic similarities, though I question how this concept can be translated into visual representations in dance. I've begun to wonder what sort of translations and processes of mimesis exist between live dance and video recording

> "Just as two words in different languages can have the same meaning but sound and be spelled entirely differently begs the question of whether or not they must intrinsically have the same meaning."

as well most literally between dance choreography and photographs of such or sketches of such. One can assume there is hierarchy of this mimesis since, as Benjamin states, it inevitably develops and changes overtime. Consequently, Sullivan's process would have begun with symbolic mark-making sketches as seen in figure 2, progressing to rehearsal and performance and then to video and photography. Just as two words in different languages can have the same meaning but sound and be spelled differently begs the question of whether or not they must intrinsically have the same meaning. This is how Benjamin's theory of nonsensuous mimicry can apply to works on dance, both in the case of Jacob and Sullivan. As many divine ideas about the mimetic faculty derived from the cosmos, I can suppose that there are ancient origins to language and dance as well. With different origins, different manifestations of objects and meanings occur though they can still be objectively the same things. While empirically Jacob can be said to still be doing a dance about winter out in the snow, just like Sullivan did, what changes the works' essence most notably is the superimposed agency of the new creator.

Fig 4. — Drawing from video of Jacob's a Dance for Those of us Whose Hearts have Turned to Ice

Part Three: Prints and Plans

As a follow up to this revelation, I'm wondering about how changing the form or manifestations of something, the same word in a different language, the same dance but in video, changes its core meaning. In an effort for transparency and the undeniable truth that one cannot remove their own positionality from such personal inquiries, I will divulge some personal revelations as they relate to the subject. As I am interested in Sullivan's work and process as a whole being, I explored her work through an entirely different method and setting—my background as a theatre maker and actor. Wondering about dramaturgical processes in solo performance creation, mark-making and embodiments of mimesis I created a performance experiment entitled *Prints and Plans*. I curated four central movements of Sullivan from *Encore! Encore! Reconstruction Project* and *Danse dans la neige* which I drew on the chalkboard. Then, dressed all in black, I attempted to emulate those movements, referencing the chalkboard drawings and a mirror, dipping my feet in and interacting with scattered piles of chalk dust to generate marks on the black mats I had fixed to the floor. Having little skill and no prior training as a classical dancer, but some experience in drawing and body art, my positionality and perspective was very different than Sullivan's at the time of conception. I use this an example or personal connection to just how vast and layered approaches can be to reactionary work.

Andre Lipecki philosophizes about notions of errancy in the practices of creative creation as well as notions of ownership in the arts, specifically dance.[5] Lipecki theorizes that there is an interesting hierarchy of knowledge and agency in creation—the director, or central artist controls everything and all other components such as mu-

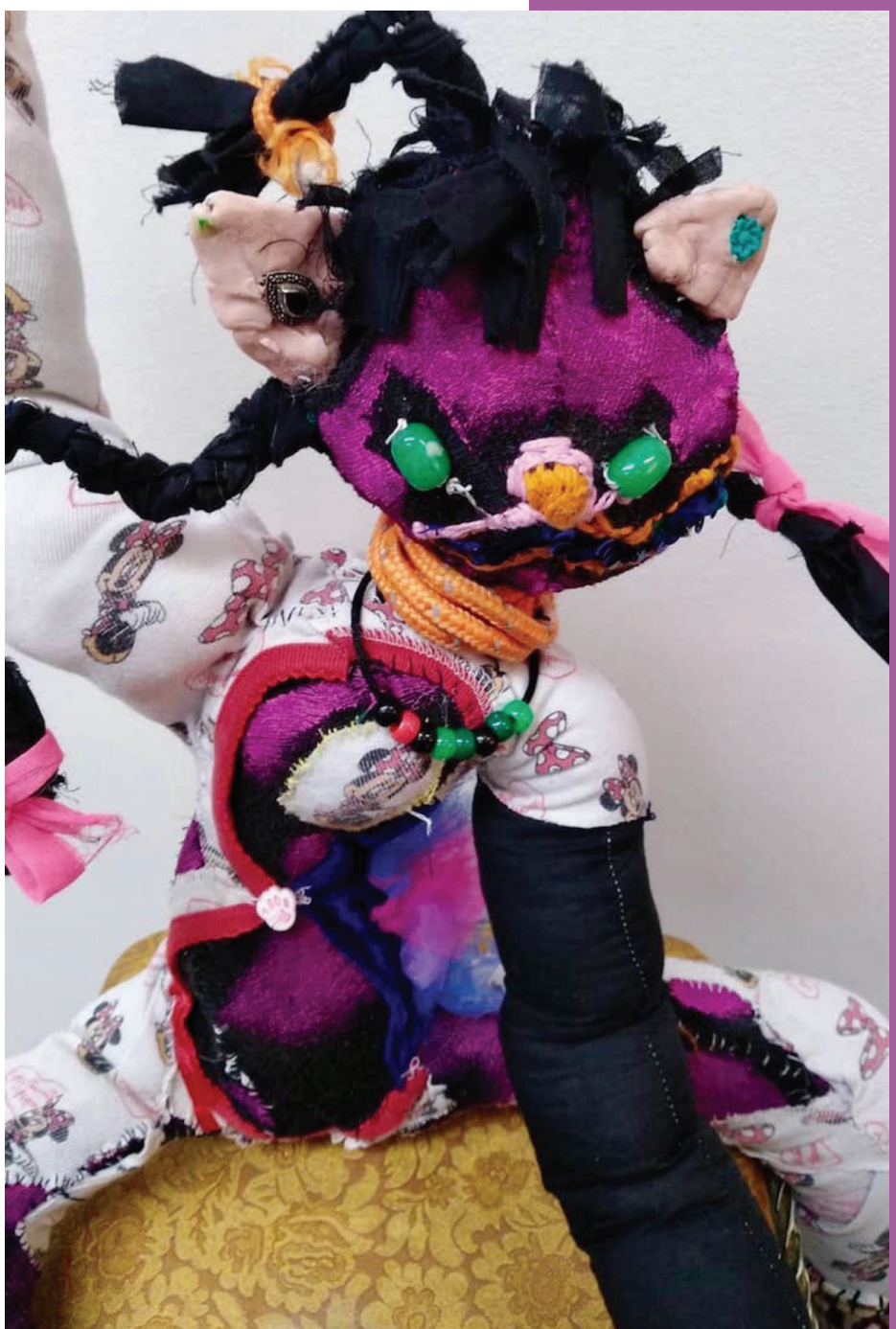
sic, technology, design and other artists always come second to the central figure. Based on this idea, Sullivan would hold the largest share of agency in her work. In contrast, what Lipecki advocates for is actually expansion of shared agency and different ways of knowing.
"What is the relationship between the physical presence of the dramaturg in the studio and the tensions this presence may create in relation to those who are supposed to hold knowledge over the work being created (i.e., the author, the choreographer, the dancers)? Who actually knows what the work-to-come truly is, what the work to-come wants, and therefore what the work-to-come needs? It seems to me that to solve these questions is to dissolve the usually unproblematized equivalence between knowing what the work is/wants/ needs, and owning (the authorship of) the work."[6]

By extension, this idea can be applied to shared agency in Sullivan's dance and Hepworth's sculptures alike, extending their autonomy to be used in later works like Jacob's. The moves Sullivan conceived and their sequencing become an independent creation that wields its own power and meaning, outside of her. Based on this, Sullivan may not 'own' her work, but rather can be thought to have deposited her creations in a collective artistic sphere, to be shared by and inspire others.

Ultimately, I think the conversations that occur between the practices of older artists and present artists are more interesting than alienating sensitivity about agency. Those hesitancies about copying and stealing are valid, though meaningful academic and artistic conversations can be forfeited in choosing to disengage entirely. Through studying a canon of performance studies theorists and interdisciplinary artists alike, I have gleaned that the conversations and critiques we have of one another bring about fruitful realisation and ultimately more profound and provocative work. The conversations we have with an open and giving attitude, whether face to face, through performance or writing, are invaluable and enriching. As Jeanette Winterson writes, "love is reciprocity and so is art."[7]

Special Thanks to Professors Shauna Janssen and Mark Sussman.

Fig 5. — Documentation photograph from Caitlin Stever's Plans and Prints performance



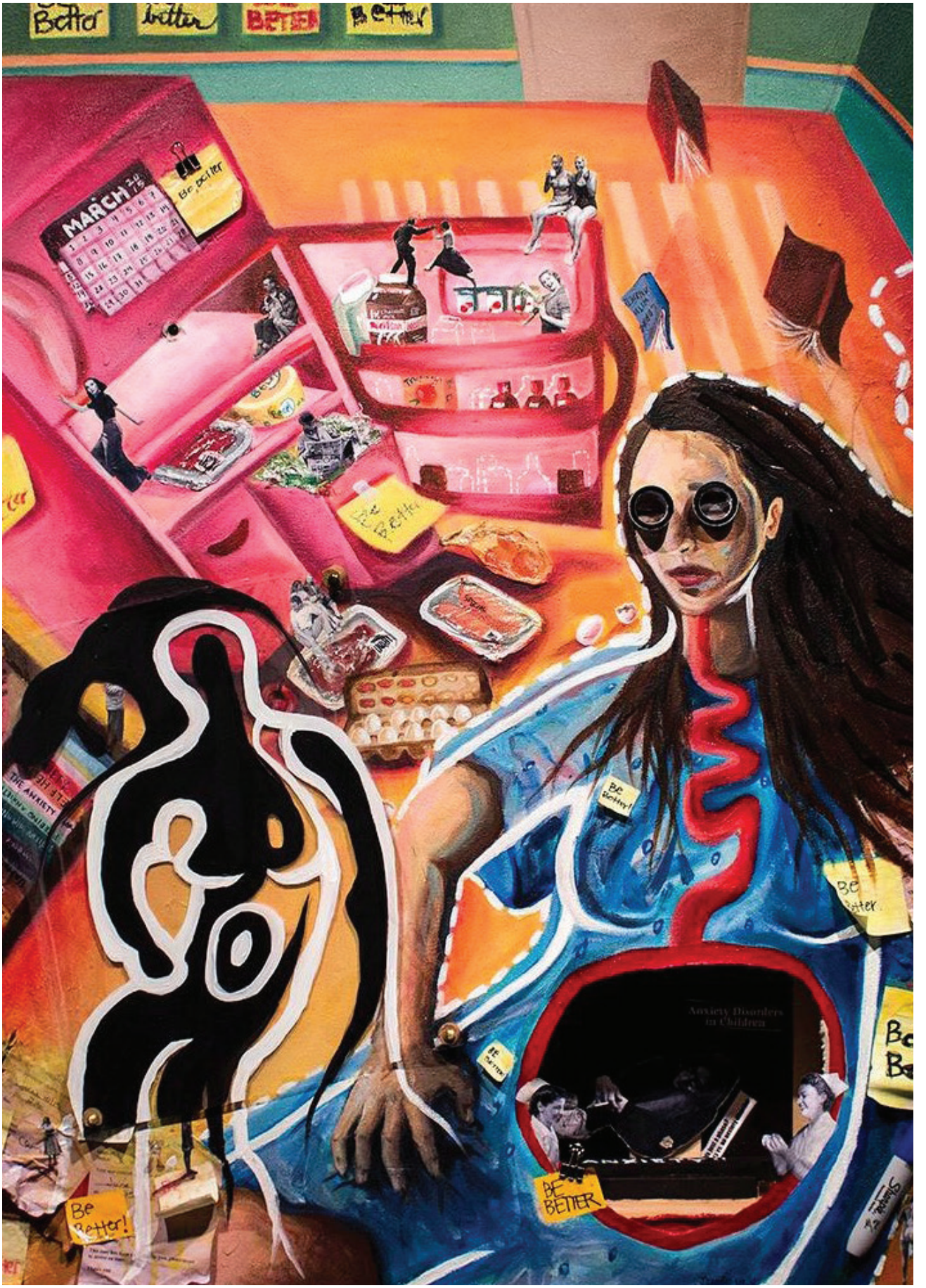
DESPEINADA, DESMECHUZADA, Y ERIZADA HASTA LA RAIZ

Alejandra Zamudo Dias
Concordia University
Studio Arts

The two sculptures that comprise *Despeinada, desmechuzada, y erizada hasta la raíz* act as multiple windows onto the same character, or memorials to different times of life. Like a shape-shifting "exquisite -corpse," this character embodies the assemblage and hybridity that is integral to the ongoing process of becoming.

Zamudo Diaz weaves a narrative using found textiles and "haunted" objects that have been used, worn, or lived in. The different textiles' imagery and materiality provide meaning and glimpses of the personal narrative behind each piece. Patterns of Dora the Explorer and bedtime symbols depict a naive safety in the comfort of home, while Minnie Mouse acts as the cat's skin of cat, embodying a hybridization of perceived opposites.

Drawing on infantilized and feminized material culture, these sculptures mimic a quilt and a doudou. The artist seeks to create a toy that comforts, not through its passivity, but through our identification with its incompleteness and hybridity. This active state is highlighted by the title, which translates to "disheveled, dismembered, and bristling to the root." The soft sculptures innocently invite viewers to take comfort in their own hybridity and mutability, never to reach stasis or completion.


Better
better
BETTER
MARCH
Be better
Be Better!
BE BETTER
Anxiety Disorders in Children

A RAMBUNCTIOUS ODE TO MY PLAGUE

Jennifer Lee
Concordia University
Studio Arts

An intimate psychological self-portrait, *A Rambunctious Ode to My Plague* sheds light on the private struggles of anxiety, depression, and anorexia, allowing people with similar experiences to feel heard. In an enclosed, isolated, institutionalized space, the presence of a closed door leaves viewers to question whether it is locked from the inside or outside.

Constructing a scene using mixed-media collage, Lee illustrates the consumption and internalization of information, from cultural standards around gender and body image, to books and articles on mental illness. A shadow box in the figure's stomach—gaping, empty, and sterile—represents anorexia's relationship between this consumption of information and consumption of food. Images of ideal housewives creep up around the open refrigerator, while the repetition of "Be Better" acts as both an overwhelming pressure to conform and an encouraging reminder of one's potential.

Lee's surreal scene recalls past female Surrealists, including Leonora Carrington's powerful but constricted female characters, informed by her own experience of institutionalization, or Frida Kahlo's use of her body as a site of pain and struggle. In contrast, the disembodied black and white figure poses as an antagonizing personification of mental illness, extension of self, or filtered self-image. The more one investigates the rich details of this visually articulate piece, the more individuals might feel heard and less isolated by similar psychological experiences.

La question de l'auteur et le rapport de pouvoir entre le compositeur et l'interprète musicale : Du Bel Canto à Om Kalthoum

Jad Orphée Chami
Concordia University
Music

Dans la définition de l'auteur, on retrouve le plus souvent cette idée d'exercer une autorité sur quelque chose, souvent un objet d'art. L'autorité comme étant la mainmise sur une création et encore plus loin l'autorité comme une marque que l'on garde sur l'œuvre et sur la façon dont elle dégage certains sentiments. Or, il n'est pas tout à fait cohérent de parler d'autorité dans le rapport entre l'artiste et l'œuvre car cette dernière n'implique pas nécessairement le rapport intime à la création. Parler de créateur, c'est parler d'un individu qui par sa création devient l'auteur de son œuvre. La création s'empreint donc de l'auteur puisqu'elle émane d'une part de lui. Elle est donc à son image. Néanmoins, l'autorité est bien présente, toutefois elle n'est non pas exercée sur l'œuvre mais sur le messager de la création : l'interprète.

De la suprématie du son et de sa perfection sur l'expression personnelle de la soprano dans cadre de la tradition du Bel Canto, à Om Kalthoum qui d'une levée de main détient le contrôle de l'orchestre masculin tout le long du spectacle. L'interprète et précisément l'interprète féminine et son rapport au compositeur nous apprennent beaucoup de choses sur le rapport de pouvoir entre l'auteur et l'interprète à l'image d'une société où le rapport de pouvoir entre l'homme et la femme reste bien d'actualité.

AUTORITÉ, AUTEUR ET ÉMOTION DANS LA CONDITION DE L'INTERPRÈTE

L'interprète est celle ou celui qui transmet ce grand lyrisme mentionné précédemment au public. Or l'interprète et plus précisément l'interprète musicale ne peut se passer de l'expression subjective de l'émotion et de l'acte de s'approprier l'œuvre jouée ou chantée afin qu'elle puisse émaner une vérité intérieure. Si Beethoven et le romantisme nous apprennent quelque chose c'est précisément la grande part d'auteur entre un musicien et l'œuvre interprétée. Or, l'histoire de la musique est incompatible avec l'idée de l'interprète comme étant également un auteur au même titre que le compositeur. Cette part de liberté qu'on trouvait chez l'interprète avant l'apparition de la partition vers la fin du IXe siècle était présente dans les variations faites sur les mélodies transmises par voie orale. Lorsque l'église prend le contrôle de la pratique de transcription, elle tente donc d'imposer une seule et unique façon d'interpréter les chants. En effet, l'invention de la partition a un réel impact sur le rapport entre l'homme et la pratique du chant. Il était donc demandé aux individus de sacrifier la flexibilité et la fluidité de la voix afin d'arriver à des notes de musiques précises et exactes. Il était donc question de sacrifier en quelque sorte la fantaisie derrière l'interprétation pour une histoire universelle de la musique occidentale. D'ailleurs, nous remarquons que c'est par le rapport stricte aux notes de musiques (distinction entre le do, le ré, le mi) et puis plus tard dans la restriction des intervalles (l'unisson et la quinte comme étant les plus licites) que la richesse des subtilités au niveau des notes disparait dans la occidentale mais sont maintenus dans la musique orientale qui jusqu'à nos jours implique toujours l'utilisation du quart de ton par exemple (qui demeure une forte caractéristique dans la musique de l'orient). Bien que le romantisme rende plus tard cette part d'auteur à l'interprète, il est évident que le rapport de force entre le compositeur et l'interprète fut toujours d'une grande complexité avec le compositeur comme maître de sa musique, de ses notes précises qu'il compose et l'interprète, musicien et chanteur soumis au créateur.

Peut-on faire un parallèle entre l'interprète et condition de la femme?

Onfray définit le peuple comme ceux sur qui s'exerce le pouvoir. La musique connaît également ce rapport de force. Bien qu'il soit facile de faire l'amalgame entre le peuple et le publique du spectacle musical, le rapport de force commence bien avant le lever des rideaux, il débute par la rencontre du compositeur et de l'interprète.

> **Depuis l'éloge des muses en Grèce antique, la femme est celle dont émane l'inspiration. La fascination des muses, c'est la fascination du sublime. Il est donc impossible de ne pas penser, lorsqu'on parle d'interprètes en musique, aux femmes.**

La musique commence à perdre son caractère bourgeois que très tard. Même au sein de la haute société, il n'est pas très commun de s'attendre à un réel encouragement envers les femmes dans le milieu de la musique. D'ailleurs, des exemples comme Fanny Mendelssohn nous montre précisément la réticence à ce qu'une musicienne puisse exercer son art professionnellement en dehors du cadre du loisir. Il est certain que de cet aspect, il y'a un véritable questionnement à avoir au niveau de l'accessibilité de la musique et la condition de la femme. Ce qui nous intéresse ici est un peu plus complexe. Au-delà de la question de l'accessibilité, il y'a aussi la question de la condition. Or, comme il fut argumenté dans la première partie, un musicien est auteur non seulement par sa création concrète sous forme de partition musicale mais aussi par son rapport subjectif et émotionnel à l'art. Si la question du rapport de pouvoir nous intéresse c'est précisément car l'interprète a une part d'auteur par son rapport personnel à l'œuvre. Depuis l'éloge des muses en Grèce antique, la femme est celle dont émane l'inspiration. La fascination des muses, c'est la fascination du sublime. Il est impossible de ne pas penser lorsqu'on parle d'interprètes en musique aux femmes. L'obsession avec la perfection héritée de la philosophie d'esthétique de l'antiquité fait qu'il est difficile de ne pas reconnaître la place centrale des grandes sopranos dans l'histoire de la musique. Ces sopranos sont néanmoins au service d'une œuvre. S'il y'a certainement un rapport de pouvoir entre le compositeur et l'interprète, derrière les titres de musiciens il y'a le plus souvent un homme et une femme. Un homme de son temps, compositeur qui tente d'atteindre la perfection et l'immortalité en écrivant son nom dans l'histoire. Et une femme de son temps, interprète, soprano mais aussi auteur dotée de grande sensibilité mais qui devient dans cette quête du sublime une soldate musicale du compositeur. La question de l'auteur et le rapport de pouvoir entre le compositeur et l'interprète musicale féminin, c'est la question de la musique et du rapport de pouvoir entre l'homme et la femme.

BEL CANTO ET MOZART: LA SOPRANO COMME SOLDATE MUSICALE

Le Bel Canto ("Beau Chant") est une tradition musicale reflétant une technique de chant qui d'une part cherche la projection de la voix dans le cadre opératique, mais surtout la primordialité de la rondeur et de la perfection du son plutôt que l'expression de l'interprète.

Le Bel Canto domine le 18e et le début du 19e siècle. La Renaissance a laissé derrière elle l'intérêt profond de la recherche du beau et de l'attirance esthétique et c'est à travers elle, la femme, ou

> **Une femme de son temps, interprète, soprano mais aussi auteur dotée d'une grande sensibilité qui devient néanmoins dans cette quête du sublime une soldate musicale du compositeur.**

plutôt la soprano que la quête s'entame. Il est également important de noter que du 17e au 18e siècle, les principales figures du Bel Canto étaient les castras et c'est avec leur disparition graduelle que les sopranos interviennent dans le mouvement. L'interprète féminine devient donc la toile blanche de l'auteur, or cette toile bien qu'elle soit vierge est accompagnée de pinceaux et de la peinture des plus raffinés qui soient. C'est à dire que l'interprète féminine est dotée d'un don physique et émotif à transmettre la création de l'auteur. L'obsession du compositeur vers la perfection se traduit par la transgression des limites de la voix afin d'atteindre le sublime. Cependant, le Bel Canto pose un réel problème au concept de l'interprète féminine comme auteur car dans la volonté de s'attarder sur la perfection du son, le Bel Canto renonce à l'expression de l'émotion dans laquelle la chanteuse puisait sa liberté artistique. Le Bel Canto, en quelque sorte, demande à la soprano de renoncer à une certaine sensibilité artistique et personnelle et de consacrer son attention au perfectionnement du chant. Comment rester indifférent à la soprano colorature Joséphia Hofer à qui Mozart confie des prouesses vocales phénoménales dans la flûte enchantée ? Le Bel Canto voulait dire que la femme devenait la soldate musicale de l'homme. Dans une des arias les plus réputées et complexes de la musique, nous retrouvons un Mozart ivre de perfection et de renouvellement. Le concept même de la soprano colorature est surprenant car il indique une supériorité dans l'interprétation à travers une agilité vocale, un registre vocal plus étendu et surtout une possibilité de chanter des œuvres qui auparavant étaient beaucoup trop compliquées. L'air de la reine de la nuit est un parfait exemple de l'idée de la soldate musicale. Telle une armée qui se livre à l'attaque, la pièce ouvre sur un grand fortissimo suivit par un tempo rapide et engagé. La soprano reste dans son registre aigu presque tout au long de la pièce et se livre à l'exercice des staccatos qui demande une grande souplesse et justesse vocale, sans oublier la longue phrase en triolet de croches qui est un véritable exercice d'endurance physique. Le Bel Canto, c'est la primordialité du son et de la perfection vocale plutôt qu'à l'expression musicale. Le Bel Canto est donc un renoncement à la liberté de l'interprète féminine et donc à la possibilité qu'elle soit éventuellement auteur.

Mise en scène et Offenbach : Soldate musicale ou poupée de cire poupée de son

Le rôle d'Olympia dans les contes d'Hoffmann d'Offenbach pousse encore plus loin l'idée de la soprano comme soldate musicale. Si le Bel Canto montre bien le rapport de pouvoir entre le

compositeur et l'interprète féminine d'un aspect musical, il ne faut pas oublier que la mise en scène est également un milieu où ce rapport se concrétise dans le visuel. Le fameux aria Les oiseaux dans la Charmille est un très bon exemple de la dualité de ce rapport de force ou les restrictions du Bel Canto sont également présent dans la manière dont la soprano est présentée sur scène. La recherche de l'esthétique c'est aussi la recherche du sublime, de la perfection et de la beauté humaine. L'idée même d'Olympia, c'est de dire que la recherche du sublime doit se faire au rang supérieur de la beauté surhumaine. Olympia représente cette obsession de la perfection musicale imposée par le Bel Canto. L'interprétation de l'aria par Patricia Janečková est surprenante car malgré le fait que l'interprétation se fait dans le cadre d'un concert et donc non d'une représentation d'opéra, la mise en scène d'Olympia habillé en poupée qui fait son entrée portée par un grand homme musclé et mise en marche par lui est déjà fortement symbolique en soi. Dans une chorégraphie saccadée qui tente d'imiter les mouvements mécaniques d'une poupée, elle se livre à une performance vocale d'une grande complexité et nous "parle d'amour" dans une parfaite dualité entre ses mouvements et les prouesses vocales qu'elle entame. L'aria est si bien construit que le moment où il faut redémarrer la poupée est ancrée dans la composition musicale par le grand glissando que la soprano entame pour donner l'effet d'une machine qui arrête de fonctionner. Bien qu'il soit évidemment important de noter que cet exemple ne cherche pas à criminaliser Offenbach car cela se situe au sein d'une création artistique, il est intéressant de voir comment cette idée de poupée de cire poupée de son, faisant bien évidemment écho à la chanson que chantera France Gall à l'eurovision en 1965, montre que la question de la condition de la femme est bien présente dans le cadre de la création. Et si tout cela demeure bien une analyse symbolique, le Bel Canto fait certainement écho à une attente envers la femme à maintenir son rôle de muse plutôt que d'exprimer sa part d'auteur, la part qui lui donne une liberté musicale et surtout une identité artistique propre à elle.

> **Le fait d'immortaliser le corps de l'interprète, c'est lui rendre le pouvoir de devenir l'auteur de son œuvre.**

LE XXE SIÈCLE ET LA NAISSANCE DE L'IMAGE

Arrive le 20e siècle, et plus précisément la photographie qui donna à l'interprète un visage, le cinéma qui lui donna un mouvement et la télévision et plus tard l'internet qui la présentent au grand public. Le fait d'immortaliser le corps de l'interprète, c'est lui rendre le pouvoir de devenir l'auteur de son art. Comment rester indifférent aux concerts d'Oum Kalthoum qui passent chaque matin à la télévision et dans lesquels elle se tient à l'avant-scène et lève le bras pour dire aux musiciens de commencer à jouer la musique ? Ou encore la soprano et chef d'orchestre Barbara Hannigan qui avec une grande fureur interprète Ligeti vêtue de cuir tout en dirigeant les musiciens de l'orchestre. Le 20e siècle à travers la visibilité qu'il donne à l'interprète musicale féminine lui permets de trouver de nouvelles façons d'exprimer sa part d'auteur et d'éventuellement renverser le pouvoir entre elle et le compositeur.

La musique et l'occident à travers le renversement de pouvoir : Barbara Hannigan et *Lulu*

Accompagnée de l'orchestre symphonique de la Monnaie, la soprano Canadienne Barbara Hannigan se livre dans une performance d'une

grande intensité qui a tout pour nous ramener à l'idée de la soldate musicale ou celle de la poupée de cire poupée de son argumentées dans la deuxième partie de l'essai. Le rôle de Lulu demande non seulement une virtuosité presque inatteignable, un changement de registre brusque de lyrisme, au colorature aigu et même au registre de la parole. Tout cela est accompagné d'un rôle énigmatique et complexe qui fait beaucoup réagir notamment dans les analyses féministes de l'histoire de la musique. Malgré cela, dans un échange portant sur le rôle de Lulu, elle explique pourquoi ce rôle lui tient tant à cœur. À la grande surprise de l'opinion populaire, elle exprime son désir à défendre l'idée que Lulu n'est pas une femme oppressée mais plutôt une véritable architecte de son futur. Par sa forte volonté, Barbara Hannigan s'approprie ce rôle qui dans le passé ne pouvait qu'être synonyme d'oppression et d'autorité vis-à-vis de l'interprète et l'utilise en puisant dans sa complexité pour s'élever en tant qu'interprète mais surtout en tant qu'auteur. Hannigan va même jusqu'à interpréter la suite Lulu tout en dirigeant les musiciens de l'orchestre. Aujourd'hui avec les avancements de la technologie et l'internet, toute personne ayant accès à un ordinateur peut assister à cette prise de pouvoir de l'interprète féminine qui reprend sa liberté et redevient l'auteur de son art.

La musique et l'orient à travers le renversement de pouvoir : Om Kalthoum et *Alf Leil wa Leila*

Dans une société Égyptienne où la femme souffre du manque de droits et de protection vis-à-vis de la personne. Le paradoxe du rôle que Om Kalthoum joua dans le patrimoine culturel nationale est surprenant. Se tenant devant l'orchestre face à un public immense, elle levait son bras pour annoncer à l'orchestre que la pièce débutait et après une longue introduction musicale elle se livre à une performance expressive, lyrique et poétique dans laquelle l'improvisation en est le centre. Alors que la musique occidentale par l'apparition de la partition laisse tomber l'improvisation et les quarts de ton pour la justesse et la rigueur, Om Kalthoum se livre à une performance libre dans laquelle la flexibilité du ton et la façon dont les mots sont chantés sont entièrement en sa maitrise. Elle s'approprie les contes arabes des Milles et une nuit et comme le fait plus tard Barbara Hannigan, s'approprie le récit de Schéhérazade dans une volonté de présenter une véritable femme fatale qui au-delà de son statut de muse, est également une auteure (avec un "e") de son œuvre.

Le futur de l'interprète féminine dans la musique, c'est donc la destruction des barrières entre le créateur et le transmetteur de l'œuvre. L'interprète musicale féminine est aussi maître de son destin en s'appropriant ce qui l'empêchait d'exprimer sa part d'auteure et de liberté artistique dans le passé. Que ce soit dans la musique classique avec la reprise du pouvoir de l'héritage du Bel Canto ou avec la grande place qu'offre le 21e siècle pour la médiatisation visuelle et sonore de la performance artistique, l'interprète féminine est une auteure à part entière.

Accompagnement audiovisuel de l'essai (en libre accès en ligne)

L'air de la reine de la nuit, *La flûte enchantée*, MOZART, Ana DURLOVSKI (soprano), Bregenz, Autriche, 2014

Les oiseaux dans la charmille, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, OFFENBACH, Patricia JANEČKOVÁ (soprano), Ostrava, République Tchèque, 2016

Mysteries of the Macabre, LIGETI, Barbara HANNIGAN (soprano et chef d'orchestre), Gothenburg, Suède, 2013

Hob Eih, HAMDI, OM KALTHOUM (interprète), Le Caire, Egypte, 1963

CERAMIC WITCH & ALTAR

Jane Reväe McWhirter
Concordia University
Studio Arts

Emerging from the shadows, the ceramic witch captivates and confronts viewers with her commanding presence and fierce expression. Her intense gaze refuses her torso to be objectified as a classical bust, or a fragmented object of feminine beauty.

Throughout history, the term “witch” has been used to demonize and suppress childless, husbandless, elderly, or educated women. McWhirter, however, defines “witch” as a woman in touch with herself and the universe. Indeed, the materiality of these ceramic objects evokes an intimate manipulation of earth, water, and fire to create a strong and long-lasting object.

A skull protrudes from the witch’s chest, the antithesis to the gentle, fertile image of femininity. The aging female body is seen as grotesque, monstrous, and obsolete. This embracing of mortality interrupts the viewer’s gaze as it travels over her body. The skull acts as a form of armour for navigating social power dynamics, similar to some women’s use of makeup or other performances of femininity.

An archaeological display of ceramic teeth speaks to a repetitive hand-making process, resulting in peculiar objects with unique, expressive characters. Teeth not only symbolize mortality, but also markers of wealth and class, referencing the economic history of witch hunts as a method of suppressing women as a social class.

McWhirter reclaims occult imagery and its associations with the body, death, darkness, sensual pleasure, powerful women, and the grotesque. Her altar creates a serene, isolating space of focus and intimate confrontation with the material and symbolic weight of these powerful objects.

WOMANITY; IN VITRO

Jacqueline Beaumont
Concordia University
Fibers & Material Practices

In this series of photographs, a specimen containment bag represents the artificial barrier between the trans body and nature, questioning the differences between what we call "natural," "biological," and "medical." Beaumont illustrates the liminal position of trans women undergoing medical intervention, growing in contained isolation, forever separated from conceptions of "real" or "natural" (cis) womanhood.

womanity; in vitro engages with the longstanding history of "hygienic" control of queer bodies and of corrective "therapies" meant to eradicate queerness. The manifesto-like label satirizes language used to frame the trans body as a social contaminant or danger to public health and safety, while owning the power of trans-ness to infect, mutate, or corrode dominant ideals. With the handling instructions, "Be gentle and avoid contact," Beaumont reveals how even those with good intentions keep their distance. Like the surrounding plants, the encased body is cared for, but controlled and isolated. Protected yet vulnerable, Beaumont returns the viewer's gaze through the synthetic barrier.

The surrounding greenhouse, like the definition of womanhood, is perceived to be natural but is actually artificial and continuously constructed. The motif of constant growth gives the piece hope that, through our growth and evolution as a society, these barriers might not always exist.


Contains:
Warning:
Composition
Handling:
Disposal:

Human specimen.

Release of specimen could result in: viral infection of patriarchal dominance, mutations of idealized "womanhood", and erosion of systemic violence and oppression against minorities.

oxygen - 0.65
carbon - 0.18
hydrogen - 0.10
nitrogen - 0.03
calcium - 0.014
phosphorus - 0. 11
potassium - 2.0 x 10-3
sulphur - 2.5 x 10-3
sodium - 1.5 x 10-3
chlorine - 1.5 x 0-3

Be gentle and avoid contact.

Government protocol allows for the disposal of specimen in most convenient manner

Black Bodies in the Water

After the Deluge of Hurricane Katrina and the Middle Passage

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In the year following Hurricane Katrina, contemporary African American artist Kara Walker curated an exhibition titled *After the Deluge* for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Walker was struck by the controversial media coverage of the disaster and the circulation of images reducing hurricane victims to bodies and nothing more.[1] The exhibition, in addition to the accompanying print book, is a self-described "rumination" on Hurricane Katrina, structured in the form of a "visual essay."[2] Walker juxtaposes her own work with selected historical pieces from the nineteenth century to create a "narrative of fluid symbols," comprised of images and objects connected to water, storms, trauma, and Blackness.[3] Among the works included in *After the Deluge* are J.M.W. Turner's *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On*, 1840)) (fig 1), Walker's own *Middle Passages* series (2004) (fig 2 and 3), and a photograph taken in New Orleans during the flood. With these three representations of Black bodies in water, Walker puts the Black experience of Hurricane Katrina in conversation with the Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trade.

In this essay, I will trace the way artists represent trauma through images of Black bodies in water. The enslaved Africans who crossed the Middle Passage and the victims of Katrina are connected not only through racial identity, but also through their shared experience of waterborne suffering and death. While water often symbolizes rebirth, renewal, purity and cleanliness, in the contexts of the flooding in New Orleans and the Middle Passage, water is a cause of death and destruction. I will analyze three works in *After the Deluge* that specifically show Black bodies in the water, namely Turner's *Slave Ship*, Walker's *Middle Passages*, and Bill Haber's photograph of the flooding in New Orleans. I will read each image in context of the Middle Passage or Hurricane Katrina and explore the interconnectedness of *Deluge*, race, and trauma. I will conclude with a discussion of Walker's idea of "muck" as the central image in *After the Deluge* and connect the Middle Passage and Hurricane Katrina as historical events.

News media coverage of Katrina and its aftermath focused on images of suffering and abandoned Black bodies in the city's floodwaters.[4] A 2006 study of post-Katrina news coverage detected a

Fig. 1 — Joseph Mallord William Turner, Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On) (1840). Oil on canvas, 90.8 x 122.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

typical, negative depictions of the survivors over positive or generous ones.[5] "It was black people in a state of life-or-death desperation, and everything corporeal was coming to the surface—water, excrement, sewage," recalls Walker. "It was a re-inscription of all the stereotypes about the black body."[6] However, Walker insists that *After the Deluge* is "not simply about New Orleans or Katrina or waterborne disaster," rather, "it is an attempt to understand the subconscious narratives at work when we talk about such an event." [7] Walker looks unflinchingly at the racial inequality in the United States and graphically portrays scenes from the antebellum South to explore politics of slavery, race, gender, and trauma. [8] Walker installed her own life-size, cut-paper silhouettes directly on the Met's gallery walls, mounted in the round to suggest a diorama. [9] The arrangement of the pieces within the gallery space, and their order in the accompanying book, elicit an irreverence and humor often at the core of Walker's work. [10] The ambitious size of the silhouettes not only asserts the exhibition's authority within the space of the museum, but their human scale causes spectators to feel engulfed by the scene, and physically positions them within the historical narrative. Art historian and curator Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw writes that "each spectator

Walker looks unflinchingly at the racial inequality in the United States and graphically portrays scenes from the antebellum South to explore politics of slavery, race, gender, and trauma.

Fig. 2 — Kara Walker, Middle Passages, (2004), Gouache, cut paper, and collage on board. One from a series of 5. 38.1 x 38.1 cm. Collection of Marc and Lisa Mills.

is prompted to face his or her own potentially traumatic relationship to history and acknowledge whatever repressed guilt and sadomasochistic feelings one might have about one's personal relationship to slavery."[11]

In assembling the works for *After the Deluge*, Walker sought out James Mallord William Turner's *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Placed directly after

Fig. 3 — Kara Walker, Middle Passages, (2004), Gouache, cut paper, and collage on board. One from a series of 5. 38.1 x 38.1 cm. Collection of Marc and Lisa Mills.

the prologue of the exhibition book and under the section titled "Deep-Rooted Traditions," *Slave Ship* contextualizes the narrative of *After the Deluge* as historically connected to slavery. Walker locates the transatlantic slave trade "as the beginning point for a bad relationship with water, a bad relationship with inundation."[12] *Slave Ship* is set in the Atlantic Ocean along the Middle Passage—the part of the transatlantic slave trade whereby enslaved Africans were expropriated by the millions and brought on tightly packed slave ships from the west coast of Africa to the Americas. On board the ship, the white captain and crew members turned enslaved people into commodities. Thus, the violent process of creolization began, and the racial condition of Blackness was constructed.[13] Conditions on the ship were hellish: Africans were held below deck without sufficient oxygen or sunlight, disease spread rapidly, and the dead and dying human cargo were tossed overboard. Professor of Art History Charmaine Nelson identifies the Atlantic Ocean as a "siteless and sightless" mass unmarked grave[14] for the estimated 1.8 million people who died along the Middle Passage.[15]

Painted in 1840,[16] Turner's *Slave Ship* offers one attempt at representing the atrocities of the Middle passage through careful depictions of the water, the storm, and the bodies in between (Figure 1). In his essay "The Irrecoverable: Representing the 'Middle Passage'" (2000), Marcus Wood, a leading scholar of the visual culture of slavery, analyzes representations of the Middle Passage and raises questions relating to the depiction of trauma and cultural guilt. Turner's formalist oil painting shows enslaved human cargo thrown overboard and drowning among the turbulent ocean waves. Turner uses forces of nature, such as a fiery sky, looming storm clouds, ocean spray and tempestuous waves, to represent the suffering of the enslaved. Only flailing, shackled and bloody limbs are visible above the water. "In concentrating upon the physical processes of drowning and dismemberment," Wood writes, "Turner shows that the slaves are to be dissolved in the waters of the ocean, forever inextricably mixed with the element of their destruction."[17] However, the threat of death comes not only from the water but also from the danger that lurks below: fish crowd at the bottom right corner of the canvas, ready to devour a woman's disembodied leg. In Wood's interpretation, the fish recast the narrative of death by drowning, instead becoming a metaphor for the destructive energy of the slave power.[18] Ultimately, it is the stormy sky and turbulent waters

> **The sea is not only the agent of death, but it 'suffers with those who it makes suffer' as witness, executioner, victim, and tomb.**

that constitute the core of the picture and metaphorically commemorate the drowning bodies. In Wood's analysis of Turner's painting, the ocean water is multiple and contradictory in its representation of trauma in relation to the drowning Black bodies. The sea is not only the agent of death, but also "suffers with those who it makes suffer" as witness, executioner, victim, and tomb.[19]

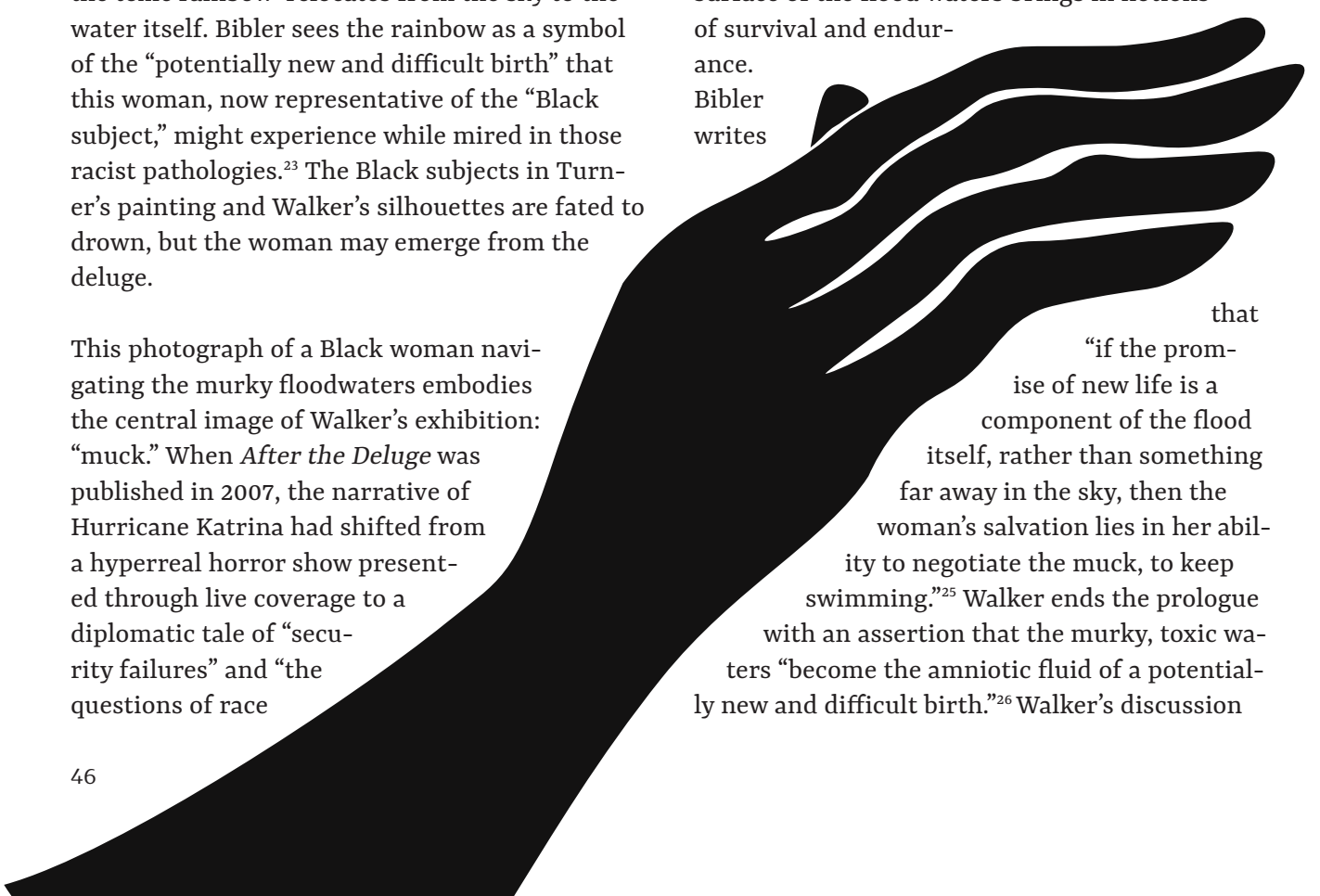
Placed chronologically in the middle of the *After the Deluge* book, Walker's *Middle Passages* series comprises five gouache and cut paper collages of the enslaved on their treacherous journey across the Atlantic. Among the pieces are two images filling a two-page spread: a slave ship sails away to the left, tipping heavily to one side (fig 2), and a woman sits atop the trunk of an unexplained palm tree, watching the slave ship recede into the horizon (fig 3). None of the figures in Walker's *Middle Passages* series are submerged or drowning in the water. Though their condition is helpless, and there is no possibility of rescue or survival, the figures are alive and free from the gruesome conditions of the slave ship. Their black silhouetted profiles exaggerate stereotypically Black features, such as full lips and natural hair, but their chins are raised and their gazes reach forward. Compared to Walker's other black and white silhouettes, which embrace a certain "familiar faux-nostalgic whimsy" of the antebellum South,[20] these images are somber, muddled, and stripped of the racially coded mayhem typical of her other works. The *Middle Passages* series again establishes an explicit connection to the history of the Middle Passage and uses water as a site of trauma.

The only direct reference to Hurricane Katrina in *After the Deluge*, beyond what Walker writes in the preface, arrives on page eight of the book. Taken by photographer Bill Haber during the flooding of New Orleans, a picture of a Black woman wading through the water fills the page. Her shoulders and head are the only parts of her body visible above the murky water, which is covered in an incandescent sheen of oil. She clutches a duffle bag in one hand, clearly too small to hold the possessions she had to leave behind, and in the other, a twelve pack of bottled drinking water. Her movements disrupt the eerie stillness on the surface of the water and ripples the rainbow in her wake. The oil-slicked floodwaters stretch to every corner of the page, giving no evidence of refuge or safety and concealing what dangers lie underneath. The water is a polluted, poisonous "toxic soup" which inundates the subject and

soaks her body and belongings.[21]
Instead of choosing one of the abundant images of bloated corpses floating in the floodwaters which were circulated so liberally in the disaster's news media coverage, Walker chose this image to stand as reference to Hurricane Katrina in *After the Deluge*. The picture, like Turner's *Slave Ship* and Walker's *Middle Passages,* emphasizes the horrendous, indecent and racially-charged suffering of Black people in water, but does not do so at the expense of the dignity of the subject. The woman is stranded, alone, and submerged in toxic water; however, she is alive and clothed, and her face is hidden from the camera. Walker represents the flooding of Katrina and its traumatic effects on New Orleans' poor and Black population without compromising the subject's dignity. Moreover, the image leaves room for a productive interpretation. In an essay about Walker's rumination on Katrina, Michael Bibler posits that the woman moves slowly through the polluted waters as she no doubt did through the racist pathologies of everyday American life. "And yet," writes Bibler, "splayed across the entire surface of the water is [a] beautiful rainbow."[22] Disaster and promise collapse into a single frame as the toxic rainbow relocates from the sky to the water itself. Bibler sees the rainbow as a symbol of the "potentially new and difficult birth" that this woman, now representative of the "Black subject," might experience while mired in those racist pathologies.[23] The Black subjects in Turner's painting and Walker's silhouettes are fated to drown, but the woman may emerge from the deluge.

This photograph of a Black woman navigating the murky floodwaters embodies the central image of Walker's exhibition: "muck." When *After the Deluge* was published in 2007, the narrative of Hurricane Katrina had shifted from a hyperreal horror show presented through live coverage to a diplomatic tale of "security failures" and "the questions of race and poverty."[24] In the prologue, titled "Murky," Walker explains that she is particularly interested in the "puddle" that is always left at the end of these narratives, "a murky, unnavigable space that is overcrowded with intangibles: shame, remorse, vanity, morbidity, silence." In the flood photograph, the toxic water is the "muck," which symbolizes the racist pathologies that the woman must wade through. The rainbow captured on the surface of the flood waters brings in notions of survival and endurance. Bibler writes that "if the promise of new life is a component of the flood itself, rather than something far away in the sky, then the woman's salvation lies in her ability to negotiate the muck, to keep swimming."[25] Walker ends the prologue with an assertion that the murky, toxic waters "become the amniotic fluid of a potentially new and difficult birth."[26] Walker's discussion

Disaster and promise are collapsed into a single frame as the toxic rainbow is relocated from the sky to the water itself.



of the muck's fertile possibilities repaints this colorful sludge as a potential source of transformation, maybe even salvation.[27] Katrina stirred the racial "muck" that is a problem in America, even 140 years after emancipation and 40 years after the Civil Rights movement. Black Americans are still fatally subject to the racist pathologies of the nation, drowned in it as their ancestors drowned in the Atlantic ocean.[28] However, instead of "sitting very still, 'staying Black,' and waiting to die" amongst the toxic, murky waters, Walker asks the figures in *After the Deluge* "to take a step beyond [their] borders to connect a series of thoughts together related to fluidity and the failure of containment."[29]

There are clear parallels between images of the enslaved Africans thrown from slave ships to die along the Middle Passage and the images of the bodies left to sink or swim in the mostly poor and Black neighborhoods of New Orleans. However, to argue that Walker's inclusion of Turner's *Slave Ship* in *After the Deluge* presents the horrors that occurred during and after Katrina as just like the horrors of the Middle Passage and slavery would be a clumsy comparison. The juxtaposition of the Middle Passage and Hurricane Katrina highlights Walker's observation that "despite all the advances in civil rights in the United States, the same pathologies of racism and violence that are most clearly encapsulated in the Middle Passage continue to shape twenty-first-century life."[30] As stated by Michael P. Bibler:

"As we recognize how the dead bodies in New Orleans resemble and are historically linked to the bodies thrown overboard during the Middle Passage, we should also quickly recognize that such a comparison diminishes the unspeakable atrocities of African slavery and ignores the specificity of twenty-first-century racism and poverty."[31]

Walker's inclusion of Turner's *Slave Ship* and her own *Middle Passages* series, alongside an image from Katrina and in the political context of *After the Deluge*, prompts viewers to ponder what is familiar and what is new about Katrina. Walker situates Katrina within a longer lineage of representation of Black life and death extending back to slavery, and prompts a wider debate about the ways in which Black trauma is represented and mediated through the "muck."

THE DRILL

Julie Leblanc
Concordia University
Painting & Drawing

Through the political medium of collage, Leblanc reclaims the domestic, feminine craft of scrapbooking. Rather than drawing from personal memorabilia, however, she draws from Canada's collective memory, reconstructing existing visual material into new narratives. Through this parallel between scrapbooking and collage, the national becomes synonymous with the domestic, and a site for negotiating gender dynamics.

In *The Drill*, Leblanc pulls her material from Canadian photographer Roloff Beny's collection as source material. The post pointing to different cities responds to the #MeToo movement, as a way of saying "it happens everywhere." Leblanc represents two opposing types of masculinity: one lifting women up, the other threatening to violate women's bodies and rights.

The invasive drill also recalls pipelines' violent penetration and contamination of the land. The raised female figure alludes to the erotic idealization of the nation's beauty in the public imagination, especially in the wake of Canada 150. She similarly evokes the gendered eroticization of "Mother Nature" as the fertile, submissive, virginal counterpart to the strong, destructive, dominating "masculinity" of industrialism. However, Leblanc's harmonious blending of femininity and industrialism in the breast-like architecture challenges these binaries and asserts feminine strength and stability.

Even though the female figure is faceless, her subjectivity is activated by dynamic abstraction. A burst of starfish creates a whimsical aura about her, while spots of red perhaps hint at something more violent.

In this conceptually layered collage, Leblanc frames the nation as domestic, as eroticized, and as the stage on which everyone must choose their position in the collective narrative.


2446 HALIFAX
1403
2175
2187
2547 ST. JOHNS

SMOKE & MIRRORS

The Photographic Practices of Claude Cahun and Tamara de Lempicka

Oona Ostrowski
Concordia University
Art History

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and Tamara de Lempicka (1898–1980) are two artists who, besides working in Paris during the interwar period, seem to have little in common. However, they are more similar than history would make them out to be. Both resurfacing into public popularity in the 1990s, they were artists whose representations of the queer body are often analyzed today as unique for their milieu and ahead of their time. While de Lempicka was a portrait painter and Cahun a writer, both harnessed the growing power of modern photography in their representations of the self by producing photographic portraits that were supplementary to their respective public artistic practices. Collaborating with her partner Marcel Moore, Cahun took many personal photographs, some of which appear as fragments in photomontages that were published in her books. In de Lempicka's case, she commissioned well-known photographers to take her portraits: glamour shots in which the painter exudes a stylish feminine persona. Put in parallel, these two artists' engagement with photography reveals how they navigated between the possibilities and limitations for women in the tumultuous landscape of 1920s Paris. Their shared staging of the body and sense of theatricality lends their portraits power as spaces where gender can be performed and questioned.

> **These actress-style glamour shots, which she commissioned herself and autographed for her admirers, show her interest in presenting an idealized, recognizable, film star femininity.**

Cahun and de Lempicka were both born at the turn of the century, grew up through the First World War, and came of age in the 1920s. Born Maria Górska in Moscow, Tamara de Lempicka would maintain throughout her life that she was born in Warsaw to highlight her Polish identity. Along with the negation of her Jewish heritage on her father's side, this was one of many modifications she would make to her life story.[1] On the other hand, Claude Cahun, born Lucy Renee Mathilde Schwob, was part of a prominent Jewish family on her father's side and highlighted this identity by taking on the last name of her great-uncle Léon Cahun. Both artists were wealthy and pursued educations in what most interested them: de Lempicka studied at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, and Cahun developed extensive knowledge of classical literature both at Parsons Mead School in Surrey and in the library of her father's newspaper, *Le Phare de la Loire*.[2] Political unrest, war and mental illness troubled both artists' lives. Relocation due to the war and Bolshevik revolution impacted de Lempicka's family's wealth and status, which motivated her to become one of the premier portrait painters of Paris's *haute bourgeoisie*.[3] In Cahun's youth, the institutionalization of her mentally ill mother resulted in her being bounced between relatives, and after coming out of her own depressive period, Cahun would also find herself in Paris in the 20s, living in Montparnasse with her life-long partner and collaborator Marcel Moore.

Cahun and de Lempicka's practices flourished in a modern literary and artistic hub where gender dynamics were in flux: 1920s Paris. A post-war *rappel à l'ordre* encouraged women to move back into their pre-war, domestic, maternal roles to counter the figure of the modern new woman. Old and new, modern and traditional "sat side by side on the streets of Paris," offering "a world of possibility, but also showcas[ing] traditional mores and the cultural retrenchment of conservative values."[4] This exciting time set the stage for de Lempicka and Cahun's artistic practices, and it is in their own context that they can begin to be fully understood. In 1922, Victor Margueritte's controversial novel *La Garçonne* presented sexual liberation, short hair, creativity, experimentation with drugs, and bisexuality as key components of the new woman. In 1929, Joan Riviere's psychological essay *Womanliness as a Masquerade* explored a woman who outwardly presents femininity as a mask to hide rivalry with men and protect her from retribution. Significantly, she is also not heterosexual. The increasing visibility of a lesbian subculture that was fashionable, intellectual, professional and artistic linked the gender-blurring style of the new woman to homosexuality, which added homophobic paranoia to the pro-reproduction message of the *rappel à l'ordre*. Women questioned sexual destiny and showed a desire to participate in culture as equals to men by donning masculine dress; in lesbian subculture, clothing was also used to signify same-sex desire, as

women wore full tailored suits with dandy accessories (walking sticks and monocles), childlike androgynous garb, or opted for (hyper-)feminine elegance.[5] These influences are legible in the work of de Lempicka and Cahun, who were both active in the Paris art scene.

Garçonnes with cropped hair and fashionable women with masculine features are prominent in de Lempicka's paintings, many of which depict or are inspired by same-sex desire. But in terms of her own appearance, Tag Gronberg observes that "[s]he promoted… a highly feminised image" by cultivating "a chic appearance and pos[ing] for many glamorous portrait photographs, encouraging comparisons between herself and film stars, such as Greta Garbo."[6] She spent hours posing for these photographs, emulating models and film stars.[7] A series taken by prominent fashion and portrait photographer Madame d'Ora shows de Lempicka with cropped but coiffed hair, wearing luxurious furs, gowns and jewels. Her lips darkly painted, she poses with dramatic elegance. In one, she looks directly into the camera from under the brim of a hat in three-quarter profile. The left side of her face struck with bright light, one long-lashed eye becomes the image's powerful focal point in a display of alluring femininity. These actress-style glamour shots, which she commissioned herself and autographed for her admirers,[8] show her interest in presenting an idealized, recognizable, film star femininity. This arguably extended to every aspect of her life. Laura Claridge notes that de Lempicka was "determined above all to narrate her own story… [by] fabricat[ing] almost everything, even her country of birth."[9] Crafting the persona of a celebrity, she worked on her ultra-feminine appearance in these images. She is as fashionable and carefully posed as the *garçonnes* on her canvases, but with a conspicuously elevated air of femininity. The interplay between her public image and the subjects of her portraits reveals her navigation between the gender-blurring possibilities of the Parisian new woman and the pressure to maintain conventional femininity.

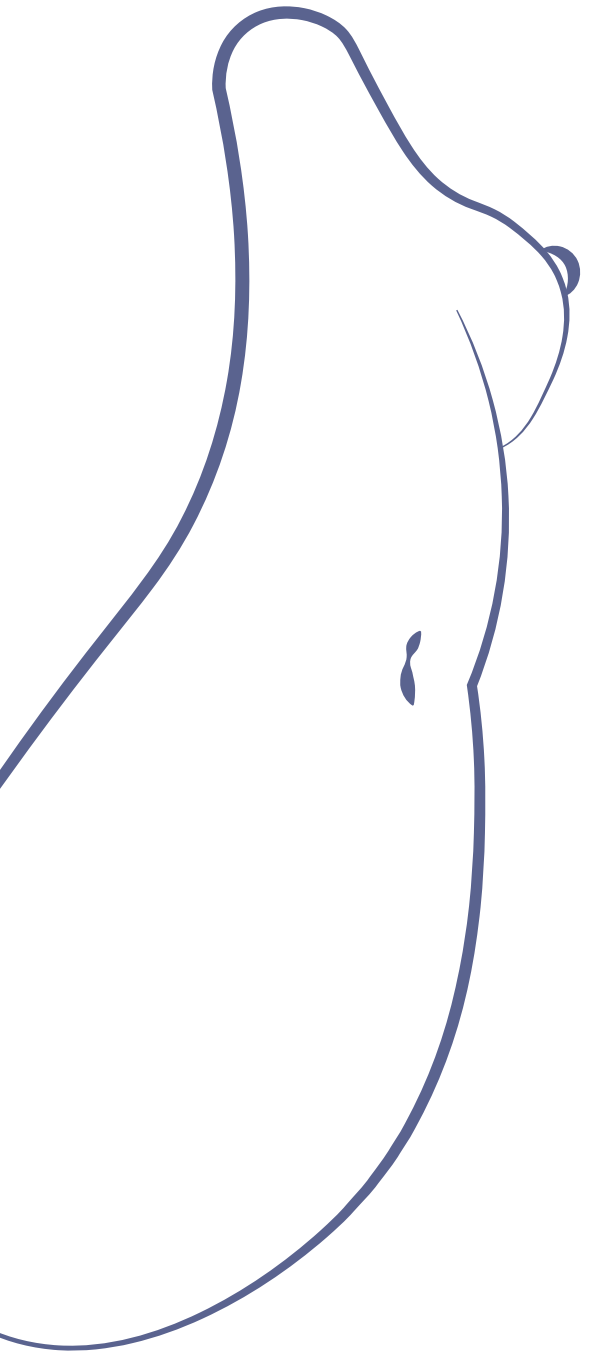
> "She wished to portray a professional female artist's space that was fashionable, theatrical, and modern, into which she fit as its centerpiece."

De Lempicka also used photographs of her home interiors to stage a professional femininity that

navigated between traditional and modern gender roles. Her Paris apartments were stylishly decorated and she used them to display and promote her art to invited guests. Gronberg argues that de Lempicka knew photography's "promotional potential," that photos of her and her home are "undoubtedly as much the product of her careful stagings as they are of the photographers' compositions."[10] Coupled with her autobiographical fabrications and her crafted public persona, the fact that she used her home as an exhibition space and invited photographers into her interiors points to this staging. She wished to portray a professional female artist's space that was fashionable, theatrical and modern, into which she fit as its centerpiece. In a photograph of her bedroom in her first apartment, paintings in progress are hung on the walls and a headboard designed by the artist depicts two nude women embracing. Here, her queer sexuality and professional artistic practice intermingle in a balanced display. Her second apartment in Paris, designed by well-known modern architect Robert Mallet-Stevens, was also photographed to carefully stage de Lempicka's persona. As Mallet-Stevens' buildings were known for their photogenic quality,[11] often used in fashion photoshoots and as locations for films, the space suited de Lempicka perfectly. In these photographs, the apartment's personal and specifically feminine qualities are highlighted, and de Lempicka herself is featured in her bedroom, wearing a long gown with glittering bracelets, next to a vase of flowers. Again, the private is put on display, staged to be nonchalantly glamorous. To pull together modern female queerness and professionalism with conventional femininity, de Lempicka shows off her modern apartment as the home of a working artist while maintaining her alluring feminine persona.

De Lempicka's artistic practice was exceptional in her depictions of the female nude. At this time, a woman painting other women was read as understandably narcissistic, or perverse because of a presumed sexual desire for the model.[12] Interestingly, de Lempicka did have relationships or at least infatuations with many of the women featured on her canvases, such as Ira Perrot in *Portrait of a Young Lady in a Blue Dress* (1922) and *Portrait of Ira P.* (1930), *Rafaela* (various paintings, 1927), and lesbian nightclub owner Suzy Solidor (1933). Her portraits, as well as her own self-portrait (1929), use tight framing and an attention to clothing and cosmetics that borrows from photography and advertising. The paintings themselves have a glossy, high finish that is the result of varnishing, a traditional method used on Old Master paintings. With a style reminiscent of Florentine Mannerists and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, de Lempicka spun these high-art references into compositions that resemble fashion photography, a style that is echoed in her own glamour shot portraits. While a liberated sexuality led to new possibilities for women at the time, her performance of luxurious femininity undoubtedly was an effort to distance herself from bohemian connotations, opting for alignment with a fashionable, queer female elite, which bolstered the acceptability of her professional practice.

Unlike de Lempicka, photographs of Claude Cahun were unmotivated by the creation of a highly visual public persona. Spending the summer in Jersey and the rest of the year in Paris, Cahun's most iconic photographs were produced in the 1920s in her and Moore's Montparnasse apartment. These were unaltered, developed by photography labs, and seemed to be for entirely personal use. Some were seen by a selected public, as fragments in photomontages introduce the chapters of Cahun's book *Aveux non avenus* (1930). Cahun wrote prolifically from the 1910s onwards, publishing *Vues et Visions* (1914), *Les Jeux Uraniens* (1917), *Heroines* (1925), as well as translating the work of Havelock Ellis (who theorized the "third sex") and reporting on the 1918 Billing trial. The remarkable photographic practice she is known for today was "an adjunct"[13] to her primary creative output: writing. These photographs, labelled as self-portraits, were likely taken by Moore. However, Cahun's posing, styling, and expressive gaze stem from her artistic intent, making her the author of the image regardless of who operated the camera.[14] Her variety of compositions, in which she



colours her shaved hair, dresses up, dons masks and paints her face, show her engagement with photography as "an arena in which to act," refiguring portraiture and photography as a theatrical activity, a stage where "the notion of 'self' that the portrait genre has historically upheld" can be destabilized.[15] Taking representation of the deviant female body into her own hands, Cahun uses the medium of photographic portraiture to tackle and question categorization of gender and sexuality.

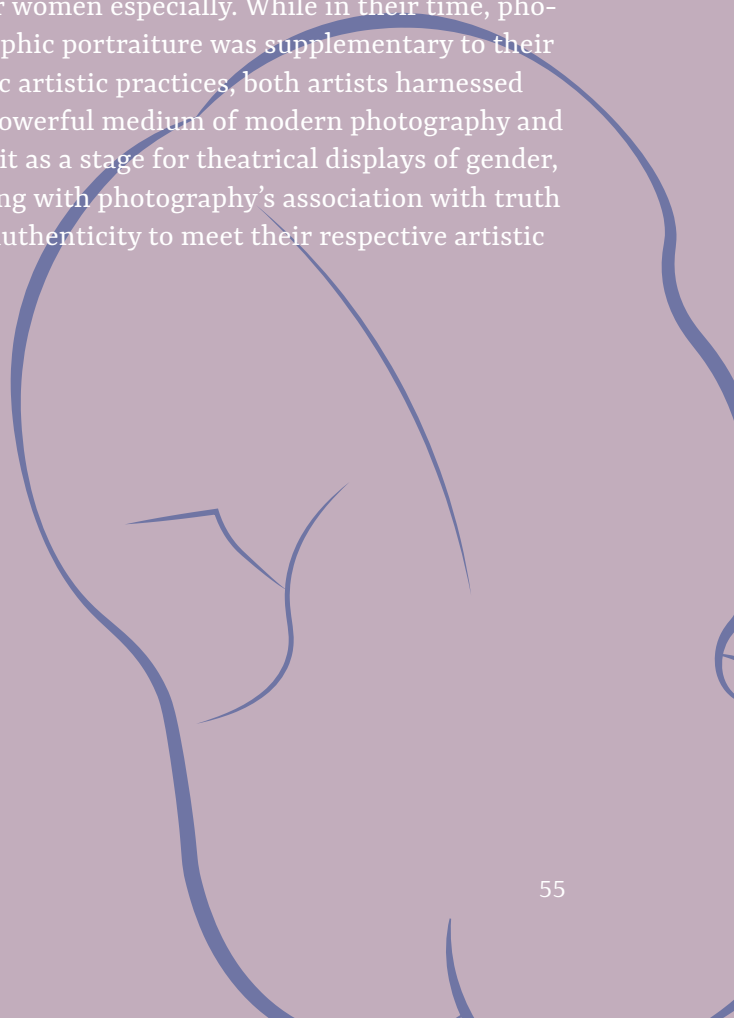
Cahun moved in Surrealist circles, but unlike the surrealist photographic work of her contemporaries, she did not use solarization or other manipulations in her most evocative images. Abigail Solomon-Godeau remarks, "their electrifying, unsettling effects are largely a consequence of Cahun's particular staging of herself—that, and the Medusa-like ferocity of her face and gaze."[16] Solomon-Godeau refers to an early portrait of Cahun, taken from above, where she stares into the camera with her wavy hair arranged like a halo. Considering Cahun's interest in subverting female cultural icons in *Heroines*, and the alterations to the image in *Aveux non avenus* which further define the tendril-like locks of hair, likening

> **"She presents the self, and its designated gender, as malleable, wholly staged."**

her to this archetype is appropriate; Cahun offers an alternative to male imaginings of the femme fatale Medusa. As opposed to being ultra-feminine and dangerously seductive, she "entice[s], fascinate[s] and interest[s] a potential female other" in Moore, who takes the photo, thereby reworking an image "of women for women."[17]

In her portraits from the 1920s, Cahun ventures further from rigid codes of femininity or masculinity to deal more broadly with the concept of gender. She does so by presenting a blend of strange visual elements, putting the central focus on her face and shaved head, which cannot comfortably fit into either gender. In her most iconic portrait (1928), she wears a long checkered coat and stares sideways into the camera, the other side of her face reflected in a mirror. Her hair is cropped extremely close to her head, much shorter than a *garçonne* or even a man would cut it, and has a silvery, metallic sheen. In a 1927 portrait, her painted lips and coquettish pout are paired with short hair, a painted barbell weight, and stuck on, out-of-place nipples to render a gender-ambiguous body. A similar strategy is used in a high-contrast portrait from the same year, where dark nipples against a white chest make it unclear whether she is wearing a shirt, and a scarf separates her cocked head from her body in an unnatural, mask-like pose. In a 1928 portrait, Cahun poses nude on a quilt with a design that sensually puffs and swirls around her. With her arms pressed against her chest and her legs drawn together, she hides any biological indicators of assigned gender. Again, she sports extremely short hair and wears a mask that obscures her face and eyes. In these unisex, gender-ambiguous and completely inventive physical attributes, Cahun uses the medium of an unaltered snapshot to play with its supposed truth and authenticity. She presents the self, and its designated gender, as malleable and wholly staged.

Cahun and de Lempicka's portraits were shot by other artists, but they can nonetheless be read as self-portraits. Their artistic intent prompted the images and continues to emanate from the photographic subject. Both artists carefully pose their bodies, styling their clothing and appearance to achieve different gendered effects: ultra-femininity for de Lempicka and gender ambiguity for Cahun. De Lempicka's commissioned glamour shots as well as the altered photographs of Cahun in *Aveux non avenus* mediate and navigate social mores. The photographic portraits studied in this paper were produced around the same time, and the influences of their shared context can be read in both. The gender-blurring possibilities of the new woman gave new visibility to female queerness, allowing Cahun and Moore to live and work together to produce these portraits, which echo the feminist and queer content of Cahun's writing. The pressures on women to return to order explain why this more subversive visual material was kept hidden from the public. In de Lempicka's case, these competing discourses allowed the same-sex relationships that inspire her paintings to coexist with her chic, feminine appearance. The two artists' choice of the photographic portrait as a medium show their desire to take self-representation into their own hands[18] and to shape their own story in the face of pressures on women and queer women especially. While in their time, photographic portraiture was supplementary to their public artistic practices, both artists harnessed the powerful medium of modern photography and used it as a stage for theatrical displays of gender, playing with photography's association with truth and authenticity to meet their respective artistic ends.



STILL LIFE, NINETEEN

Alison Moule
Concordia University
Art History and Studio Art; Classical Archaeology

In a domestic interior, an avalanche of drapery spills onto a careful composition of household objects, each carrying a personal history. An amalgam of childhood memorabilia, present-day material culture, and seasonal ephemera construct a geographically and temporally specific self portrait. By painting disposable objects as precious, Moule blurs the lines between the historically gendered practices of consumption, collection, and curation.[1]

Sitting among ripe clementines, the nineteen birthday candles, sitting among ripe clementines, place time, age, and girlhood at the centre of this still life. Given the tradition of still life painting as a means for women to critique gender roles, a feminist reading of the visual culture assembled in *Still-Life, Nineteen* suggests a tongue-in-cheek narrative about women's bodies and coming of age. The grinning flower and smiling character seem to gesture towards the dismembered figure's exposed buttocks, saying "Welcome." Moule associates the commonly fetishized image of a partial, penetrable, female body with the young age of nineteen, a time when one's relationship to home and domesticity is renegotiated, and a woman's body is exposed to a public arena of objectifying, fetishizing gazes.


Welcome
Hello!
19

BOUFFON & OTHER ANTIDOTES FOR GUARDED HEARTS

Interview with Joy Ross-Jones
by Celine Cardineau

Joy Ross-Jones is a Venezuelan-Canadian playwright, actor, improvisor, and theatre educator. She studied Theatre, Theatre for Social Change, and Art Education. She worked as Artistic and Administrative Associate for the feminist company Imago Theatre (2013-2016), where she co-created ARTISTA, a free theatre mentorship program for young women.

Ross-Jones is also the playwright and performer for Elsewhere, a one-woman show using mask, movement, and monologue to address the current economic and political crisis in Venezuela. The play is told through the eyes of six characters: a Venezuelan-Canadian woman, a Protestor fighting in riots, a Beauty Queen, a Homeless Man, a Grandmother, and a Cop. Elsewhere is an Odd Stumble production, recently presented in association with Imago Theatre and directed by Cristina Cugliandro.

CC: Let's talk about *Elsewhere*. How do you feel it went?

JRJ: It was great. Performing *Elsewhere* is always a really wild experience because it opens up a space for conversation that's really important. There were certain nights of the show where people who came and had a really hard time [in Venezuela] shared a lot [in the talkback], and that's not the type of conversation you can just have. Even with a friend who understands where you're coming from, you won't necessarily be able to open up about it. I think the storytelling that happens in the play creates a space for conversation that is honest and vulnerable. So that went phenomenally well.

[Working on the show] is intense and hard and scary. I don't really like talking about what's happening in the country because it's really hard, but then I put myself on this journey of forcing myself

to talk about it. So in terms of my own personal growth, of acknowledging really difficult things that are happening to my family members and my country, I'm ultimately really grateful for the experience.

CC: I wanted to thank you for all of the work that you did in creating this piece. I'm sure it was emotionally arduous and has elicited some emotional responses. What was your approach in making your personal experience and the impersonal facts and statistics accessible to an audience?

JRJ: It started with just a conversation about identity. When I had the idea of "I'm gonna do a play about Venezuela," it was stemming from a need to understand who I was in the context of this new cultural, national identity. What is the identity of Venezuela right now, and how do I fit into it? How Venezuelan am I, if I've been here for a long time? Even when I was living there, it felt like I was a little on the outside of the dominant culture, and it caused some insecurity. [I was] always wanting to be even more latin, but [it was] just not who I was, and it's not my linguistic upbringing. So that's weird. How can I be Venezuelan but have my mother tongue be English? So those were the questions that brought me into it, and then my collaborator Cristina (the dramaturg, director and co-creator on the project) and I knew that my identity would be a part of it. We started building around it.

It was really abstract in the beginning. We thought maybe it could be an abstract movement piece, where I was physically improvising on different themes that

were hitting the country right now, like dictatorship, hunger, as well as the beauty of the culture, the beauty of the place, and the strengths of the country. So that physical exploration was part of our research process. We brought in stories from my family, stories that were coming out of the news and videos that we were watching, and then these six characters emerged. I kind of knew from the beginning that I wanted it to be a multi-character mask show, but we had to go through this journey of departing from the idea and then coming back to it. We asked a mask designer to make the faces, and we built the masks off clay models. We started improvising in the characters, and then we had to search for the question again. It's not "Who am I in the context of this crisis?" That's one small part of it, but what question are all the other characters asking? We figured it out maybe seven months into the process: it was "How do I survive my changing world?" So once we found that question, we were able to hone in on aspects of it [all of the improvisation that I was doing] that answered that question.

CC: Yeah, starting with physical improvisation is an interesting way of exploring politics. Makes me think of clown as activism—

JRJ: Yesss!

CC: How do you see physical theatre as a form of political activism?

JRJ: I love it. I'm so into it. I easily, in terms of my performance style, fall into physical, heightened worlds, so I love clown, I love mask. I am part of a project called *Don't Read the Comments*. It's a bouffon clown show. It was a Fringe show that Sarah Segal-Lazar conceptualized. She wanted to create a conversation around the #MeToo Movement and consent. She did a whole bunch of research, read hundreds of articles, compiled them into folders, and gave them to the cast. We all have a bit of bouffon background, and bouffon is grotesque clown. Clown generally is welcoming the audience to laugh at the clown; bouffon switches the gaze and is laughing at the audience, and highlighting "ugly" things so that we can talk about them. It's a super political kind of form. So we internalized all this research and then improvised it out of the characters that we had chosen for ourselves. I play a right-wing Republican wanna-be senator, and there's a young, feminist, hot trot—he just takes up way too much space and is espousing feminist values—we all know that guy. And then there's a super left-wing feminist, who is advocating for all the right things but is coming at it really aggressively. So throughout the piece, we all say things that many people can get behind, in terms of inclusion and values that empower many, but we also contradict ourselves, and as an audience member, you have to be super active and tracking, "I agree with that, and I don't agree with that." In that piece, it's about putting the values out there, talking about politics, but bringing in humour, and then making it ugly. That whole experience, the journey that it [having to be active and engaged] takes you on is super useful for this conversation. I don't think this is true for all physical theatre. Like when the mask comes off in *Elsewhere*. When it breaks the character illusion and you are reminded that there is a narrator, it's that Brechtian thing where you are alienated or distanced from the piece and reminded, "This is a piece of theatre, I can't just be swept into the storytelling, because I have a role to play in it." So there are so many wonderful conventions in heightened physical theatre forms that can collaborate with theatre forms to engage the intellect of the audience while massaging their viscera.

CC: Because it's a live theatre piece, there's always the opportunity to update and adapt the show. What would you hope to add or change in the next iteration?

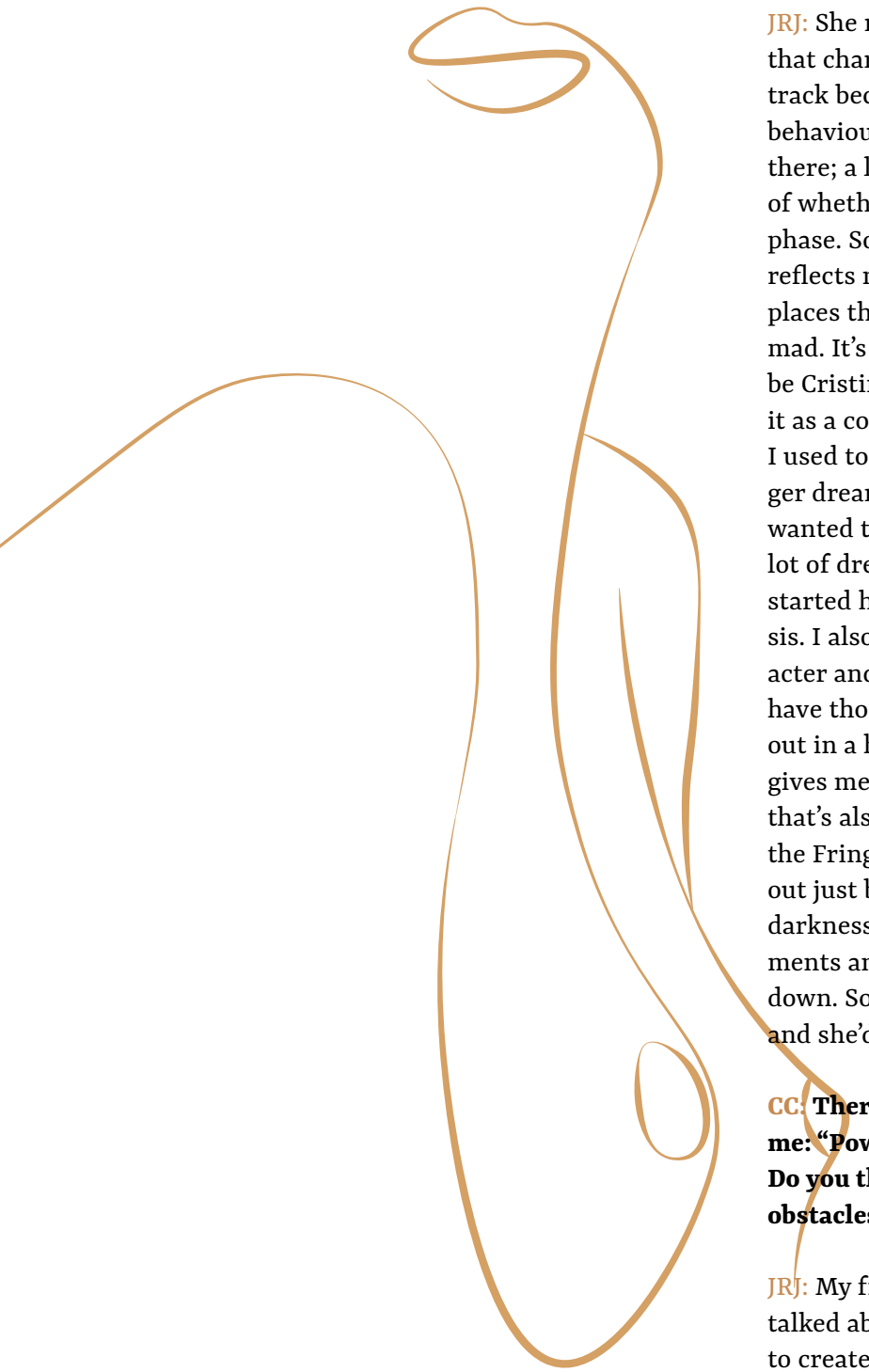
JRJ: Well, on a *me* side, I'm hoping that the country is gonna be turning around, and there is really some movement there, I don't know what's gonna happen. It's possible that we won't have a dictator soon. I don't wanna get too hopeful, but it's possible. So that would have to be reflected in the piece insofar as the characters. If the characters' lived experiences would be different, then some pret-

ty drastic things would have to change. If the lived experience stays the same, and food shortage and everything is just as bad, then actually we don't have to do that much work, but I think we still need to acknowledge the fact that there's a different pattern being born in the government.

This production and the talkbacks made it clear to me that what's missing from this piece is the perspective of someone who's working in health care. I think that the play and the situation are asking for it. It's super subtle, but we have seven lights and six characters, so I feel like there's sort of a spiritual calling for that seventh character. Francisco Toro is a journalist who writes for the Caracas Chronicles, and that question was asked of him, "Who would you add to this piece?" He said someone in health care, and went on to say that health practitioners used to be working in clinics and hospitals of over 600 people. Now, they're reduced to 60. At a different talkback, there was a South Korean man who was talking about being a manager in this car plant, and people actually weren't showing up because they didn't get their meds and had passed away. So being any kind of health care practitioner in that, not only having to work in the conditions of being so short-staffed and so short on all medical supplies and medicine, and then having to tell people on top of that, "I can't help you." What is *that*? Who is that person?

> "I think the storytelling that happens in the play creates a space for conversation that is honest and vulnerable."

And it always comes up, "Why is there no pro-government perspective in the mix?" I'm not into it. I think it might end up forcing me to share a perspective that is an exception to the rule. I would want to create a human being that is very nuanced and complex, as all of us are, even those who are doing really nasty things. But I would feel pressed towards stories of someone who's doing the government's work because their family is under duress, someone's being held hostage in the family— that's where my mind would go to immediately—and that might be a common enough story, but I think there's still a lot of people who are doing it because of how it benefits them. So ultimately, I'm just not interested in giving that side of it a platform.



CC: In the talkback, you mentioned that the punky Venezuelan-Canadian character was a grittier, grungier version of yourself. I'm sure that this allowed you to explore certain thoughts or emotions that you don't normally allow yourself to. Were there also parts of your experience that didn't fit with the character that you would have liked to include?

JRJ: She really took it all. In the development of that character, half the time we were on the wrong track because we had her very close in identity and behaviour to me. But a lot of that improv happened there; a lot of the storytelling came out, regardless of whether the character was dropped in, in that phase. So I got me in there. She's angry, but she also reflects my sadness. She definitely allows me to go places that I don't go, because I don't let myself get mad. It's a funny thing. I think part of it is—maybe Cristina won't like me saying this, but I mean it as a compliment—Cristina can get really mad. I used to get a lot of angry dreams, like Hulk-anger dreams, where the madder I got, the angrier I wanted to become, and it became delicious. I had a lot of dreams like that until I met Cristina, and she started helping me get my anger out on a daily basis. I also think that getting to perform this character and channel my anger has helped me. I don't have those dreams anymore because it's coming out in a healthy way. So yeah, she [the character] gives me that conduit that I really need, but I mean, that's also been part of her growth. When we did the Fringe production two years ago, she started out just being angry, without the vulnerability and darkness and sadness, and then found those moments and musicality of her piece where she comes down. So I feel like I could add anything into her and she'd be able to handle it. She could take it.

CC: There's one line that stood out in the play for me: "Power is the ability to remove all obstacles." Do you think that your show has power, and what obstacles would you hope to remove with it?

JRJ: My first thought goes back to something I talked about earlier, about the power of art spaces to create conversation. I'll talk to my uncle back

> It's kind of scary and reassuring to be constantly reminded of the fact that we're all still working on it, that you don't just get there.

home, and he won't tell me how he feels. He'll tell me what's going on, and then he'll make a joke. And that's honest. That's what he has to do; that's how he's feeling. So *good*, but it doesn't hit you in the gut, and I think that sometimes we need to be hit in the gut. On the Friday night talkback, this young woman said that she had walked across the border with her mom to Columbia so she could fly out to go with her foster family here in Cornwall. Hearing her talk about it, in tears, and demonstrating a profound sadness, everybody felt that. I think everybody was changed by that. So that's an obstacle, these boundaries that we put up around our heart to protect ourselves. They have to be there on a day-to-day, because we can't go through the world as squishy, open conduits, but we need to be able to have moments where we do break them down, so that we can feel the pain that is circulating the world, and [we need to] be able to engage with those topics if we want to do something. To be active agents on any social movement, we can't always have guarded hearts. We have to have felt the impact of the poison. (I say poison because in Artista this session, our theme is "antidote," so we've been talking about poisons and antidotes.) That's not just the power of *Elsewhere*, but the power of art in general— to create that unguarded space for conversation.

CC: On the subject of Artista, do you want to talk a little bit about the kind of workshops or mentoring that you provide?

JRJ: Artista takes the shape of a fifteen-week program. We meet Monday nights from mid-January to mid-May. During that time, we see shows and bring the conversations about what we saw back into the room, so that we can develop an artistic vocabulary and just practice talking because talking can be really scary. Gaining confidence in bringing your voice into a room is a good skill for the outside world—for all of us—just because that's the game that this world plays. This world is very verbal. If you're loud, if you can express yourself, if you can articulate yourself rationally, then you're gonna be listened to. It's a challenging thing because so many people are able to express themselves in so many different ways, but those aren't necessarily the ones that get you the same amount of points. So we create the space for that kind of practice, but we also acknowledge the body and impulse and poetry and different kinds of communication as well, all through different theatre practices.

The two goals of Artista are empowerment and community-building, and we achieve both through a theatre practice. We bring in invited

guests who are women professionals in various fields, so that they can talk about their journeys and who they are, and just be human beings with these young folks, most of whom are wondering, "What is my next step? How do I do it?" and the older folks are there to say, "I don't know. [*Laughs.*] Just keep at it. It's hard, but just keep at it." It's kind of scary and reassuring to be constantly reminded of the fact that we're all still working on it, that you don't just get there.

This session, we've been working with the theme of "antidote," and we've been talking about it on a personal level. We asked participants to consider, "What poisons do I face on a daily basis?" Sometimes it's huge stuff that affects you on a daily basis, but what is that really close-to-the-skin impact? So looking at poisons, and then asking "What are some potential antidotes?" Which is the harder question to answer, but we're just gonna try. We might not find the right answer, or the perfect answer, but we're gonna try. So we've been writing, we've been moving in those themes, and we've been creating a visual manifestation of them. My collaborator Lorena Trigos has worked a lot with refugees, building masks to provide a safe layer between their stories and the outside world, but to ultimately tell those stories with a protective boundary. She has this exercise, where she asks them to draw their body's silhouette, and then represent different things on the inside and on the outside of the body. So on the outside, we're drawing the poisons, and on the inside, we're talking about the antidotes. So we have these body maps, and they keep on coming back in different ways. Last time, we did a gesture exercise where you embody three different aspects of what you're encountering. I hope that we'll be able to do a mask workshop. I have Dayane Ntibarikure, who was my collaborator last year, and she's an amazing many things, as well as an amazing vocalist. She's gonna work with the group to create an original melodic soundscape, also around the theme of antidote.

The idea is that all of this stuff is building works towards an outcome, which is a public presentation. But it's still part of the process, it's not just like "We're here! We did it!" This is part of our process, and we're gonna keep on working in the future, but we have opened the doors to the public to let them in on the learning that's happening. That's basically what we do with the program.

CC: Has anything surprised you about the kind of work that comes out of it?

JRJ: Totally, because everyone wants to work in different ways. It's a space that we try to make safe and brave. Because just safe on its own can get protective and self-censoring. We try to create a space that acknowledges the room, an inclusive space for people to not feel like they're being tread upon, invisibilized, but at the same time, encouraging. We say "If you are gonna make a mistake, make it here. Do speak your mind, and if anyone needs to talk to you about it, we'll create a context for that." So it's a pretty self-revelatory space, but I'm always really impressed when people choose to speak those very personal self-revelations at the outcome. I think it's incredibly brave. Because it's scary to talk about something that you've never shared with anybody else, and then you choose to do it there because clearly there's a need. So I love that aspect of the journey, and in terms of the media that people choose to use, it really varies. We've had people work with shadow and projection, we've had people work with building a body as an installation piece and covering it in poetry. So yeah the creativity of various minds in the room is always really beautiful. I'm always surprised.

CC: In your experience as a teacher to children, university students, medical actors... what do you find most important in the act of teaching, or what do you try to instill, while still giving that space to explore their own processes?

JRJ: I think maybe two things. Pleasure and fun is one that spans all ages. I think that's always been part of my thing—getting in touch with how much fun I can have in my own body. I started dancing in my apartment in the mornings. I start off my

day on the right foot, and it has changed everything. It's given me a lot of body-positivity. Like, if I hear music, I'm just gonna start jigging to it because that's what feels good. So trying to break down that boundary of social norms that are really lame, by using body-pleasure, fun, and body-love, as one mushy category.

The other thing: when I work with little ones, I try to remind them that they can do anything. If they're working with particular stories, I'm always reminding them that the gender doesn't matter. Just because the protagonist is a guy, it doesn't mean that we're gonna use that, and that's not to say that is the only kind of person or identification that will be able to achieve that story. So working with that concept of "You can do anything. Let's strive for our dreams here," I think is the through-line across the ages of folks that I work with.

For Artista, I've worked on a definition of what it means to be brave, and it includes, "Have the courage to say 'I don't know'," "Make space for quieter voices," and "Have the courage to take the lead." The last one is "Follow our dreams." Micheline Chevrier, the Artistic Director of Imago, always talks about Habitat for Humanity's mandate to end homelessness, which is enormous, impossible, but it doesn't mean that shouldn't be the mandate. I feel like we should be striving for something that's always bigger, instead of placing limitations that are really realistic on ourselves. That comes back to—you know when you see an amazing work of art, or sat through an amazing film, and you end that experience and you're like, "My god! I can do anything!" What's that movie, *Billy Elliot*? About the dancer? And then you're leaping in your living room, and you are aware of the fact that you do not look anything like him, but you think you could one day. I think *that's* the feeling. That's a little jewel that I wish I could just make into a pill that we could all swallow and we could all walk around feeling like that all the time. It'd be a crazy world to live in. You can, you know, believe in yourself to do anything.

CC: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk.

JRJ: Oh my pleasure, thanks for asking.

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