

**SHE
PERFORMS**

SHE PERFORMS

LONDON GALLERY WEST PROJECT SPACE, JUNE 2018

Nasty Women, Female Gaze - exhibition titles rendered contentious and problematic. In the last few years, we have seen a development towards a strengthening of women's voices and their representation in the art world. With in-your-face exhibitions screaming feminism and gender inequality came a lot of criticism: the world screamed back. 'Jealous', 'confrontational' and 'frustrated' have now become words associated with female artists. "Are all-female exhibitions problematic?" asked eflux's Karen Archey in 2016. Gosh, we hope not!

This exhibition is a project that is extremely close to our hearts with us both being women in the arts. But there is no screaming, no accusations. *She Performs* is us exploring our own strengths and possibilities. It is about us in our own rights - as women, as curators and as artists.

It is about our inherent womanhood, not our supposed femininity, girlishness or womanliness.

It is for everyone who knows a woman, loves a woman, is a woman.

The twelve amazing artists that are part of this inaugural exhibition of *She Performs* are powerful and expressive in their artistic work, and their lives. The exploration of curatorial questions such as 'Who owns the body - physically and linguistically?' and 'How do we perform the body?' are articulated in mediums ranging from painting, to sculpture, video, performance, photography, and installation. Nothing screams feminism, but you will know it is there.

She Performs is an ambitious examination of current feminist issues that will reach beyond the exhibition with ongoing investigations into art. We are not going to stop asking questions - the first of which you can find from page 40, where we interview four of our brilliant artists.

HOLLY DAIZY BROUGHTON &
LYNN SERAINA BATTAGLIA

INTERPRETING SHE PERFORMS - THE MATRYOSHKKA APPROACH

In their book, *Art as Therapy*, Alain de Botton and John Armstrong suggest that “our encounters with art do not always go as well as they might. We are likely to leave...exhibitions feeling underwhelmed, or even bewildered and inadequate”, possibly blaming ourselves for not knowing enough to ‘get’ the work. Writing for the companion exhibition, *Art is Therapy*, the authors posed the question:

But maybe we don't, in fact, need to know all that much [about it] to get something out of art... What if it were about more obvious and direct things, like asking yourself what you intuitively feel when you look at something...?

It is this idea – of encouraging visitors to respond emotionally to the works without worrying about whether what they feel is ‘right’ (or worse, ‘allowed’) – that provided the starting point for interpreting *She Performs*.

To this end, we have limited the information available in the gallery space about each work to a ‘tombstone’ – a label with only the artist’s name, the title of the work, the year it was created and the material(s) from which it is made. This catalogue offers a little more information about the artists and their work and visitors can hear from some of the artists themselves via their written contributions and interviews (from page 32).

Our programme of events (particularly, but not exclusively, the Artists’ Talks - see page 6) has been designed to further enhance the audience’s understanding of the exhibition and visitors are invited to contribute their own thoughts about *She Performs* in a dedicated space within the gallery. Finally, for anybody who would like to learn more or continue the conversation started by the exhibition, join us online at www.sheperforms.com.

We call this the Matryoshka approach – a metaphorical Russian doll for each visitor to unpack whenever they’re ready and at a pace to suit themselves.

NICOLA WATERMAN

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

NICOLA WATERMAN

Whilst writing our artists’ biographies for the exhibition catalogue, I got to thinking about the convention of referring to artists by their surname. As a woman writing about women for a feminist (whatever their gender) audience, referring to the *She Performs* artists by their surname felt somewhat inauthentic – not something a woman would instinctively do. This train of thought led me to a post on *Girling*, in which blogger Ashley Gerling called herself out on her own ‘accidental sexism’ when she found herself referring to a female artist by her forename, concluding that:

If we want female artists to be acknowledged as Artists, we need to redefine the way we speak about artists in general or at least start referring to women in the same way we refer to male artists.

As Gerling suggests latterly, perhaps it is easiest to refer to all artists by their surname whatever their gender, but are we serving equality well by observing a convention that in all likelihood came about in the first place because the traditional canon of Western history of art was largely written by (public school educated) men, about men, for men? As Mary Beard wrote in her manifesto, *Women & Power*:

Putting it bluntly, having women pretend to be men may be a quick fix, but it doesn't get to the heart of the problem.

So, what’s to be done? Well, the suggestion Gerling led with won’t happen overnight, but as there is much to be said for being the change you want to see, we contacted our artists and asked them: use surnames, or in the spirit of changing “the art world itself to best accommodate its artists” (as one of them so eloquently put it), exercise our absolute right to use our forenames, very deliberately, with intent and without diminishing the seriousness of our purpose?

As you will see, the answer was emphatically the latter, and so it only remains for us to introduce you to Pauline, Henna, Holly Daizy, Emily, Yvonne, Madelynn Mae, Minjoo, Jocelyn, Clare, Susanne, Flavia, and Rosamund – the artists of this inaugural *She Performs*.

EVENTS

ARTISTS' TALKS

15 June, 7pm

An opportunity for you to hear from some of the artists participating in the exhibition. Join us at the gallery, where a selection of *She Performs* artists will be talking about their work.

PERFORMANCE

15 June, 8pm

Artist Rosamund Yip will perform her work, *Separation of Consciousness* (see opposite page for details).

SHE SPEAKS

16 June, 2pm

Facilitated by our Curator of Interpretation, this panel-led round table discussion is an opportunity to further explore the exhibition's themes and consider the current and historical challenges faced by women in the art world and across the wider creative industries. Panel members include Val Woodgate - lecturer and guide at London's Tate galleries.

SHE HEARS

17 June, 2pm

Inspired by Sheherazade - who each night, for one thousand and one Arabian nights, spun a yarn to save her life - *She Hears* is a story party: a safe, friendly space for participating women to tell a true story on the theme of 'her body'.

PARTICIPATORY INTERPRETATION

14 - 17 June

Throughout *She Performs*, visitors will have the opportunity to share their thoughts on the exhibition, its themes and the works on display.

SEPARATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PERFORMANCE - ROSAMUND YIP

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration.

FOUCAULT AND F. BOUCHARD, 1977

In this performance the mind dominates, allowing the body to become a secondary motion that follows. The sounds, shapes and written words are a direct articulation of the artist's immediate state of mind; her movements becoming less rigid and more animalistic. Lexis strays further from the 'boundaries' of language, which demonstrates an immediate reflection of the mind. It's about the 'beyond' that only consciousness can reach and knowing the mind and its lack of limitations.

Poetics is about hearing and feeling as well as crafting and shaping.

Z. DANIELEWSKI QUOTED IN BACHELARD ET AL., 1964



PAULINE BATISTA

Pauline Batista's practice questions the impulse to render transparent information, bodies and what the artist calls, the quantified self. Through her work, Pauline examines the implications of the blurred lines between artificial and organic; virtual and physical; inert and animate; and humankind's misguided aim at perfection and immortality. The concept of transparency is a recurring theme in the artist's work because it is increasingly used as a societal aim: to be able to see through layers; past institutional frameworks; past the surface, the skin.

Technological advances allow unprecedented access to the inner workings of the flesh, but also open the door to trans-humanist hopes of a convergence between technology and the body. As sci-fi dreams and nightmares become a reality, those who are granted access to mediate the information that transparency overwhelms us with will hold the new currency of power and determine the social, economic and genetic casts of the future, raising

the urgent question: to whom are they accountable?

THE ALGORITHM WILL SEE YOU NOW (2017)

This series is a way to imagine and forewarn a future. With technological advancements - in particular Artificial Intelligence (AI) and deep learning algorithms - expert medical machines could soon examine us, exposing the fragility of the human body as one with limitations, prone to diseases, in need of medical help and ultimately with a relatively short expiration date. A human can only work so many hours and is constantly ageing, but a machine can be configured to work non-stop.

WWW.PAULINEBATISTA.COM

Pauline speaks to our curator about her work on page 40.



Silver gelatin print mounted on di-bond,
120 x 90 cm



HENNA BRADBURY

Working in a variety of medium including performance, sculpture, and video, Henna Bradbury's practice is always rooted in self-exploration. This self-portraiture allows the artist to experiment and question not only her own identity, but also her position within personal, confessional, and sometimes difficult topics.

Taking her inspiration from American photographer and filmmaker Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), Henna utilises herself and her own body as the main subject of her work, using video and performance to authentically capture her ongoing exploration of self.

FRACTURED IDENTITY (2017)

Fractured Identity explores the ways in which young girls/women like the artist are influenced by history, because as Henna notes it is easy to feel intimidated by the endless examples of empowering females who have tackled sexism throughout history and are still doing so now:

It's sometimes daunting being a young female artist in a society so loaded with empowering movements, and sometimes I feel like a passive outsider looking in. Where do I fit into this society? Where do I position myself as a young woman in today's world? And ultimately - what do I need to do to feel fulfilled and empowered through my art practice?

WWW.SHEPERFORMS.COM/HENNABRAD-BURY



Video projection
Dimensions variable



HOLLY DAIZY BROUGHTON

She Performs artist-curator Holly Daizy Broughton's work is deeply autobiographical, presenting her own issues surrounding sleep, identity, isolation and discomfort while simultaneously allowing the audience the space to project their own.

Holly Daizy's early training as a dancer also informs her work, particularly performance pieces such as *Uncomfort* (2016), which sits within the same ongoing body of work as *Spasm* (2017/2018), exhibited at *She Performs*.

SPASM (2017/2018)

With this work - a purpose-made bed, tailored precisely to the artist's dimensions - Holly Daizy re-creates and re-experiences the discomfort felt during an extended period of illness and fatigue, but crucially she dictates the administering and duration of her discomfort, thereby regaining control over her body and herself.

With *Spasm*, the artist also explores issues concerning the objectification and sexualisation of the female body, asking, "Can a person's body be objectified, in the sense that the bed is an object, without being sexualised? Or does objectification equal sexualisation?"

WWW.HOLLYDAIZY.CO.UK

Holly Daizy explores *The Reflectivity and Reflexivity of Art* on page 32.



Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable



EMILY DURTNALL

Emily Durtnall's practice reflects her fascination with the body – her own and other people's.

Subverting the norms of presenting photography, the artist uses large scale photographs sculpturally and long strips of printed Camera Roll scrolls. Free standing, running down walls and spreading across the floor, Emily's photographic sculptures give physical form to the splintered self she describes in language as raw and honest as her work:

...feet, hands, creases and folds of flesh, sweaty - pressing together and bulging...the sweat and the frown and the squint. The nipples, the crotch and the double chins.

BODY CAMERA ROLL (FACT OR FICTION) (2018)

This installation, built from fragmented close-ups of the body, nonetheless goes beyond the physical to focus on emotional states and explore the vulnerability and power of self-documentation.

WWW.EMILYDURTNALL.COM

Emily's writing, *The Opening / An Invitation* is on page 39.



Sculptural photographic installation/placement
Dimensions variable



YVONNE FENG

Yvonne Feng's practice uses painting as a medium for representing memory, events, and history. Using her own and others' narratives about entrapment, marginalisation, and displacement, Yvonne's work attempts to share personal and social psychological experiences that would otherwise be incommunicable.

Through her work, Yvonne explores how the painting process can undo preconceived ideas of an event and clear a path for emotional and meaningful engagements. She seeks new representations of existence in times of great political and cultural changes, reflecting on conflicts both within the self and between the self and the world.

CLIMAX A VICTORY (2017)

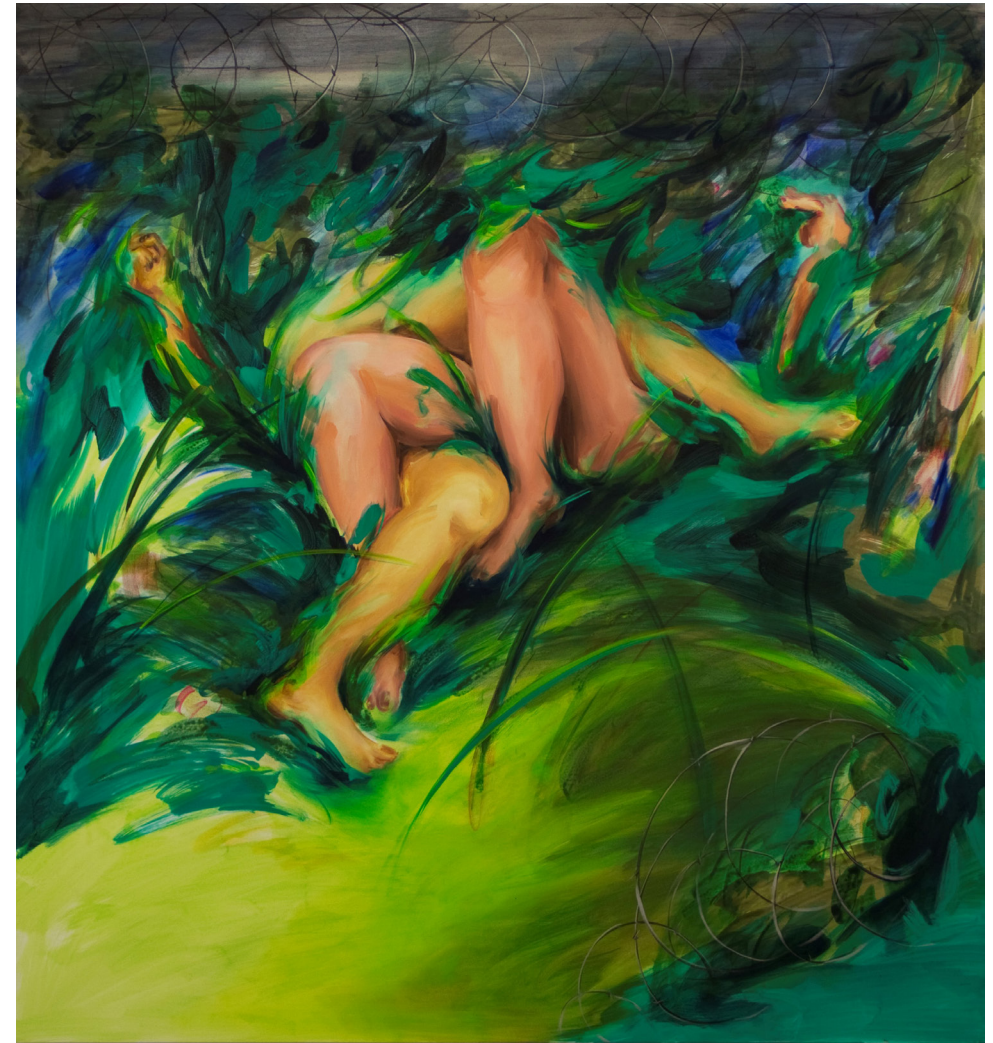
Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act.

George Orwell, 1984

Inspired by Orwell's 1984, *Climax a Victory* aims to capture this violent but sensual moment of feeling alive, the moment of rebellion through intense bodily sensations. The painting explores how the body moves within narratives and vice versa. The body includes the figurative body, the artist's body, and the body of the paint. The brush strokes are not only something material and visible in themselves, but also make visible a force, a scene, and a world.

WWW.YVONNE-YIWEN-FENG.COM

Yvonne speaks to our curator about her work on page 42.



Pastel, acrylic and oil on canvas
170 x 160 cm



MADELYNN MAE GREEN

Feminism and the artist's background as an African-American woman both inform Madelynn Mae Green's practice. She aims to create work that paradoxically adheres to definitions of traditional femininity (using exaggeratedly feminine motifs and themes to critique conventional ideas about what contemporary art should be); reclaims the male gaze; and subverts the traditionally male canon of art.

THE KITCHEN (2018)

Based on a photograph that the artist took of her siblings, this ambiguous narrative painting, explores themes of memory, family and the sentimental value of a home. With this work Madelynn Mae challenges the traditional view of the kitchen as the woman's domain - here it functions as a safe haven, space for familial intimacy and the crux of the household.

GIRL (2017)

This painting of the artist's body is inspired by a photograph of her taken at age 5. In reproducing the image in her painting, Madelynn Mae focused on the patterns in this part of the original photo because they evoked immense nostalgia for a home she no longer inhabits.

This work explores the changing nature of the artist's relationship with her body - her evident comfort with it aged 5 leaves her wondering how and when this confidence in her body changed. The painting reminds us that society imparts insecurity on women as they grow from child to adult, but by subverting the traditional male gaze and depicting her own body, Madelynn Mae reclaims both her body and her power.

WWW.MADELYNNGREEN.COM



Oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm



Acrylic on paper, 52 x 72 cm



MINJOO KIM

Minjoo Kim's early work focused on exploring her own identity based on personal experiences within conservative Korean society. The artist's move to London and life in a new culture led to the discovery of different perspectives, which resulted in an expansion of her focus to include a more general examination of issues surrounding women's identity, particularly East Asian women.

Minjoo's work depicts real women (including herself) in an imagined story or, as she describes them, virtual narratives. The subjects of her paintings deliver the uncomfortable feelings generated by their circumstances to the viewer, and Minjoo is interested in the emotional result generated by her work more than what she calls the root and process of them. Rather than attempt to define her subject's feelings, she focuses on simply observing them in the present moment and producing "little points of contact for empathy with women like her."

DRRESSCODE (2018)

This painting was inspired by Moi Tran's *The Circuit*, a non-verbal performance that presents a group of South Asian female dancers who are releasing their emotions and desires. What interested Minjoo was that despite the uniformity of the dancers' outfits, their individual characters still break through and this is what she aims to share with the audience: that even though certain groups are labeled - with specific race or gender - it is impossible to define their individual characters in this way.

WWW.MINJOOKIM.NET



Acrylic on canvas
163 x 198 cm



JOCELYN MCGREGOR

Jocelyn McGregor seeks the point of transition between internal and external; between the real and imagined worlds. Using her own body as a starting point, Jocelyn explores the inside/outside topography of the female form, looking to folklore, surrealism, and supernatural fiction to investigate the identification of women with the earth, the home, and the machine.

The materials that Jocelyn uses (domestic fabrics, beauty products, earth pigments, industrial materials) represent for her this point of transition, the moment the body meets the organic or manufactured world. By combining these elements in her sculptures, the artist blurs the boundaries between the natural world and the manufactured one, resulting in a super-natural hybrid of the two.

JENNIFER (2016-17)

This sculpture of the artist's legs are cast in plaster and hematite powder from Florence Mine in her native Cumbria. Taking its name from the Greek word for blood ('hema'), hematite is traditionally associated with both the sustainment of life, and death. It was once used to coat bodies prior to burial, reflecting what the artist describes as "the uncanny relationship between grave and womb".

Jennifer – meaning 'pure' and 'enchantress' – takes its name from *Jennifer's Body*, a song by Hole that inspired the horror movie of the same name, directed by Karen Kusama.

WWW.JOCELYNMCGREGOR.COM

Jocelyn speaks to our curator about her work on page 46.



Plaster, hematite pigment (from Florence Mine, Egremont; courtesy of the Florence Paintmakers)
120 x 40 x 40 cm



CLARE PRICE

Flesh is the reason oil painting was invented.

Jeffrey De Kooning

Clare Price's work explores ideas around the bodily materiality of paint. In her paintings, voluptuous gestural elements are set against translucent geometric planes. These shapes, drawn from modernist forms and digital tools, 'pin' spilled wet vistas, thereby creating ambiguous spaces. Sometimes, stains and goo poured on to raw canvas are untethered, leaving performative traces of the body.

Clare's paintings investigate the sensuousness of making; the palpable 'stuff' of paint that freezes the hidden performance – the interaction with the artist's body and the materials in the studio – capturing residues of moments like photographic exposures. Her canvasses harness the chaos of the studio to create small universes within the frame. The forces on the canvas are heightened by their containment

within the stretcher, the edges of which themselves hold sensations. The titles chosen by the artist are encrypted autobiographical references that allude to the body, sex, containment, and the moments in which the works were made.

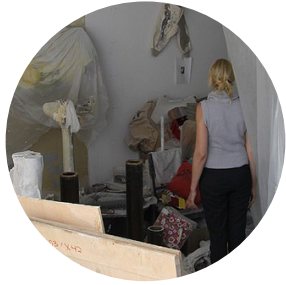
I.s.t.h. (2018)

The ultimate intention of this work is to probe Mark Leckey's idea that "art comes through the body", while seeking to maintain a conversation with the history of painting. Through paint, Clare seeks to explore the vitality of matter and the agency of 'stuff'.

WWW.CLAREPRICE.COM



Oil and acrylic on canvas
178 x 153 cm



SUSANNE ROEWER

Susanne Roewer develops her pieces from stories, always triggered by a poetic part of human life and society - absurd or romantic; heroic or stupid; political or stand-alone. Through research and teaching, Susanne always presents contemporary sculpture as the necessary outcome of - firstly - the development and the skills, as well as the trial and error, of mankind during some thousand years of walking, and - secondly, hand-in-hand with this - men's will to give material expression to immaterial things: power, transcendence, reason, freedom, or love.

ARENA (2017)

With a degree in material sciences, together with her art studies and the nimble ability of her fingers to sketch out ideas and thoughts on paper, walls or material, Susanne conceived the form of this work and selected the most fitting material for its three-dimensional design.

WWW.SUSANNE-ROEWER.COM

Susanne speaks to our curator about her work on page 44.



Aluminium, glass
35 x 40 x 40 cm



FLAVIA TRITTO

Flavia Tritto chooses to express herself artistically because she considers art to be the only socio-cultural practice that allows for the co-existence of revealing and concealing, which is essential for conveying ideas while at the same time allowing the viewer freedom in how they receive – and re-articulate – the message.

Flavia's practice is rooted in the necessity of responding to life's stimuli. She uses different media, incorporating photography, video, sculpture, performance, and participatory art in her work. In choosing her media, Flavia looks to everyday objects and materials and tries to build on the contrasts and connections between them in order to reflect on the possibility for change, growth, and dynamism at the personal and social level. The media used by the artist are simultaneously conceptual tools and physical devices for exploring the mechanisms she is interested in.

HOLD ME GENTLY (2017)

Always starting from her own experience, Flavia's work attempts to gauge the relationship between the individual and the socio-cultural structures in which he/she is embedded; it is concerned with identity and the social mechanisms that enable and constrain it; (self-) perception; communication; and what the artist calls, "their margins of change".

WWW.SHEPERFORMS.COM/FLAVIATRITTO



Metal bars, sweater, yarn
89 x 83.5 x 79 cm



ROSAMUND YIP

With her poetic performances, Rosamund Yip seeks to explore the idea of a higher mind. Through a series of movements and sounds she travels cognitively between the physical and mental states of being. While the physicality of her body doesn't alter, the artist's consciousness travels between the two dimensions. Rosamund describes performing her work live as, "the most thrilling and terrifying experience".

Earlier works by the artist such as *Bound Books* (2015) and *Moving Sound* (2016) reflect the work of the French writer and philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, by whom Rosamund is deeply inspired.

Rosamund's work is often imaginative with a sensitive, emotional style of expression.

The artist will be performing her work *Separation of Consciousness* live at *She Performs* on Friday 15 June 2018 - see page 7.

WWW.ROSAMUNDYIP.COM

Rosamund's poems, *Interactions* begin on page 34.



Performance
1 x 10 m

THE REFLECTIVITY AND REFLEXIVITY OF ART

HOLLY DAIZY BROUGHTON

The body acts as a mirror for reflection, or canvas for projection, and when the distance between artist and viewer is collapsed - as it is in a performance - the spectator becomes active in their role, attaching their own connection and experiences to the work. So even when holding the most passive of roles, the audience interacts with the meaning through their own emotional response and societal connotations.

Marina Abramović's work for her 2010 retrospective at MOMA, *The Artist Is Present*, saw her sit silently for a period of three months opposite members of the public inside a large square, lit up in all directions with stage lighting, surrounded by an audience, where she stipulated "open-ended commitment from the viewer" (Abramović and Biesenbach, 2010). The audience was vital to this work, some people cried, many smiled, and a few attempted to create their own performances out of it, showing just how powerful an encounter with the audience can be. This plethora of reactions shows that for each person this piece was different, it held an individual meaning. Abramović became a mirror of them, allowing them to project their own emotions and experiences onto her.

When an artist presents their own body, as Abramović does, the audience is engulfed into the piece; Catherine Elwes speaks of the artist as "both signifier and that which is signified. Nothing stands between spectator and performer" (1985, quoted in Jones, 1998). The viewer sees both the conceptual and physical aspects amalgamated, seemingly dissolving any distance then between audience and artist. The mind of the performer and viewer is where it is possible for that complete unity.

However, the viewer interacts with the body of the artist even if not physically, the integration is interfered with by the individual, and so the work becomes separate and exclusive for each body, spectator or participant – the audience experiences their own art. This interference relies not only on the interpretation of the individual viewer, but also on that of the combined and general contextualisation of the work.

"The viewer is the co-creator of every work of art" (Graham, 2002) and although many artists do not ask the audience to directly participate as Abramović does, they ask them to gaze upon the work and share an experience.

Although the actual emotions felt by the artist cannot be shared directly, its effects can be felt by others, there are mutual emotions and the work calls for empathy; to be able to understand and share the feelings with the artist, to feel a certain amount of what they felt.

That encounter is so important to the success of many artworks.

*"when
the distance
between artist
and viewer
is collapsed...
the spectator
becomes active
in their role"*

INTERACTIONS

ROSAMUND YIP

I grew a temporary hard shell
Zipped up whenever you were near
It threatened you.
You stole it
Washed it
And shrunk it
It no longer fits.

If you came back now
Would you be happy?
Would you take my side or his?

Would I lose you all over again?

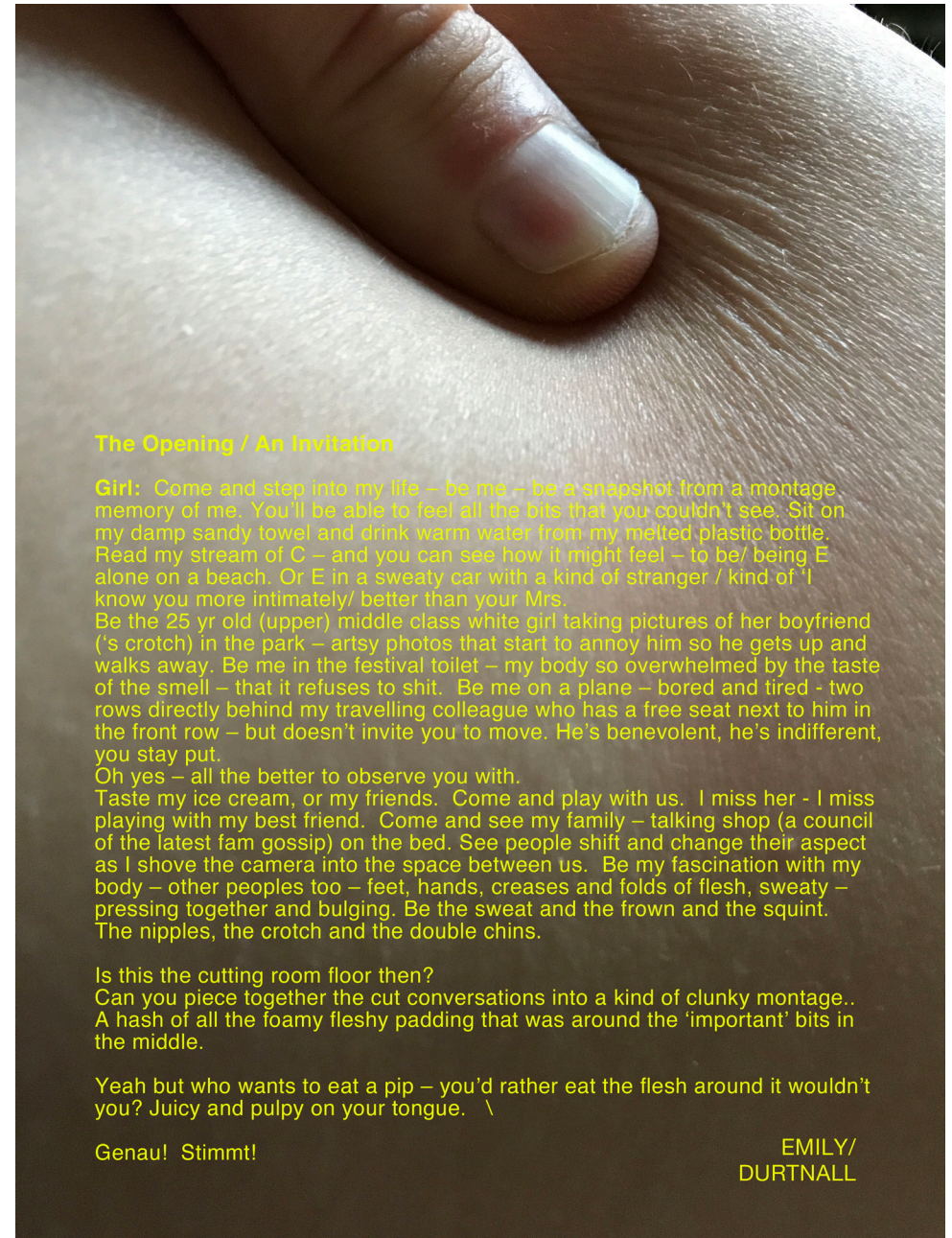
"I can't help thinking that if I had been around more,
I would have seen,
I could have helped,
it wouldn't have been like this"

"but it's too late, it's just too late."

I'm sorry they let you down, they let me down too.

You sink into my skin
cold and empty
but read to me
when everything is falling apart
It's the sound of your voice
that keeps me alive

“You’re just like her, you move just like her”



The Opening / An Invitation

Girl: Come and step into my life – be me – be a snapshot from a montage memory of me. You’ll be able to feel all the bits that you couldn’t see. Sit on my damp sandy towel and drink warm water from my melted plastic bottle. Read my stream of C – and you can see how it might feel – to be/ being E alone on a beach. Or E in a sweaty car with a kind of stranger / kind of ‘I know you more intimately/ better than your Mrs.

Be the 25 yr old (upper) middle class white girl taking pictures of her boyfriend (‘s crotch) in the park – artsy photos that start to annoy him so he gets up and walks away. Be me in the festival toilet – my body so overwhelmed by the taste of the smell – that it refuses to shit. Be me on a plane – bored and tired - two rows directly behind my travelling colleague who has a free seat next to him in the front row – but doesn’t invite you to move. He’s benevolent, he’s indifferent, you stay put.

Oh yes – all the better to observe you with.

Taste my ice cream, or my friends. Come and play with us. I miss her - I miss playing with my best friend. Come and see my family – talking shop (a council of the latest fam gossip) on the bed. See people shift and change their aspect as I shove the camera into the space between us. Be my fascination with my body – other peoples too – feet, hands, creases and folds of flesh, sweaty – pressing together and bulging. Be the sweat and the frown and the squint. The nipples, the crotch and the double chins.

Is this the cutting room floor then?

Can you piece together the cut conversations into a kind of clunky montage.. A hash of all the foamy fleshy padding that was around the ‘important’ bits in the middle.

Yeah but who wants to eat a pip – you’d rather eat the flesh around it wouldn’t you? Juicy and pulpy on your tongue. \

Genau! Stimmt!

EMILY/
DURTNALL

PAULINE BATISTA (THE ALGORITHM WILL SEE YOU NOW)

SPOKE TO OUR CURATOR OF INTERPRETATION, NICOLA WATERMAN VIA SKYPE.

NW: As a participating artist, what does *She Performs* mean to you?

PB: When [curators] Holly and Lynn approached me about participating in *She Performs*, my first thought was, "Oh, this is very interesting", because my work is not primarily female performative, but on another level it very much includes it. Holly and Lynn's invitation allowed me to go back to the work and look at it in that way, which I hadn't before – and it's such a big part of it! My work deals with AI (artificial intelligence), and whether in reality or fiction most of the time it's a female body performing the AI role and it's usually seductive and very acquiescent: the woman as servant performed by a robot. Or think of Siri, or Alexa, even the first robot citizen – they're all female!

When I first began the series *The Algorithm Will See You Now*, I only photographed women and I got questioned about this a lot: why not photograph men? My instinct was, "no, shooting men doesn't make sense", but I didn't really know why until I started to think about the project more and then it emerged that it had to be women, because AI technology is very much

about the woman's body, which is interesting when we think about why we're making AI robots – it's always to serve us. I think that our wanting to make robots human is problematic in the first place, but to then gender them – which isn't inherent to a robot or algorithm, but something we need to do in order to understand it, to interact with it – that's quite disturbing. Why is it made in our image?

NW: As an artist, as a woman, how do you perform 'yourself'?

PB: I think we do it in many ways. As an artist, I think we perform because we have to be more careful than other [male] artists in the way we carry ourselves, which is driven by our need to be aware, because somehow it's on us [women] if we send the wrong message or find ourselves in certain situations. If you think about the art world in general, it's so much about personal relationships and interacting with people and in that environment, as a woman, you are aware of not wanting certain lines to be crossed or even allow things to get to that point – you avoid 'that point' as much as possible – and in terms of performativity, it does effect it.

And then there's the issue of being called a 'woman artist', when you just want to be viewed as an artist. It's not because you want to reject your womanhood – not at all – it's just that

you want to be at that point in history where it doesn't need to be said or stressed. We're not there yet – sometimes you feel that there is that distinction and you have to fight harder. There are so many women in art schools and yet when you look at galleries, that's not really reflected there and that's why I think that shows like *She Performs* are great, because they're needed.

NW: How does 'the body' inform your work?

PB: I guess in my case it IS the work, right? Having been in a not great-functioning physical body for so long [Pauline has a condition that it took doctors many years to diagnose], I think it was inevitable that would inform my work, but I'm also thinking about what's happening to the body in general and how technological developments – like AI – are affecting our perceptions of our bodies. We talk a lot about the mind – how the mind affects the body, and is this all-powerful thing – but I think that the physical body and the experiences and knowledge that you gain from it are very, very important, and I want to honour that, because you can't separate the mind and the body – it's not just a brain driving an empty marionette. There are so many elements to what we are and what affects us and those things to me are very pertinent. How are our collective lives and bodies changing? How do we feel about that?

I think that as a society we have a lot to think about in terms of how we want things to develop in a way that we will be able to live with in the future. Technological developments can be great – in helping to eradicate diseases, for example – but then you really have to think about how else it's used, and how we can safeguard our society from its potential misuse. There's a lot to happen in terms of the female body – it's a big bone of contention because the notions of it are being iterated into the future – oh yeah, remember that devious machine [in the film *Ex Machina*]? Oh yes, now she can be your maid at home – and that is quite odd.

"And then there's the issue of being called a 'woman artist', when you just want to be viewed as an artist."

YVONNE FENG (CLIMAX A VICTORY)

SPOKE TO OUR CURATOR,
LYNN SERAINA BATTAGLIA.

LSB: As a participating artist, what does *She Performs* mean to you?

YF: When I first saw the title *She Performs*, I think what caught my eye is "She." Because in a way it identifies the gender, as woman [sic]. So then for me I think about myself as a woman, about how I perform my work. And then it made me think about how I use female body a lot in my work. That's kind of how the female body performs for me. But now, when I think about it, it's the integration of both. In a way it's through painting and it's through how I use the body - the body is not only the figuration of a female body, it's also the body of paint, my own body when I paint, and the sensation of both the figuration and the paints that arise through the process of painting. For me, I think they also work as a reflection back to me and make me think about my situation in the real world, like how I perform myself. Like in specific events or situation, the bodies in the works sort of reflect back to me in relation to my own.

LSB: As an artist, as a woman, how do you perform 'yourself'?

YF: I guess for a lot of situations it might be difficult to say "oh, this is

how I would behave". I guess, what I'm trying to do through the expression using the medium of painting is thinking about how painting conveys meaning through a kind of ambiguity of imagery. And it's through the kind of sensation that the painting is able to evolve.

So, it's how a painting can open up emotional and meaningful engagement to make you think about - it's not really directly making a statement about a particular event or situation in the real world, but it's through this kind of fictional construction and through the emotional engagement in the painting - like when I paint or a viewer engages in the painting. And then reflect back on the body or the situation.

LSB: How does 'the body' inform your work?

YF: I think, for me it's the way I inhabit the narrative - because I mostly work from narrative. So the way I relate my body with the work, it's through inhabiting this kind of fictional scenario. It's not just an illustration of narrative, so in a way, it's not only inhabiting this kind of figurative body. I also, through my body, feel the movement of the grass, which is a different sensation to the kind of interwoven, you know, movement of the body, and also I feel the sensation of the barbed wires, which I guess suggests the suppressed or vio-

lent aspect of it, but then also the body itself in juxtaposition to all these elements, which brings out the complex relation among all these elements. It's not just a direct illustration of the body doing this kind of gesture. So in a way, it's through the body of paint that I feel or I construct the scenario through the feeling of it.

*"I also,
through my body,
feel the movement
of the grass...
the sensation
of the barbed
wire"*

SUSANNE ROEWER (ARENA)

SPOKE TO OUR CURATOR,
LYNN SERAINA BATTAGLIA VIA EMAIL.

LSB: As a participating artist, what does *She Performs* mean to you?

SR: We live in times of an increasing number of 100 percent women shows to examine and somehow compensate the long-term under-recognition of female artists. *She Performs* refers to that topic but by combining the fact that female artists have been in the job all the time (she performs already) and a common term of mostly male automotive talk (a good car performs) all that gets an intelligent light footed drive. Up and out to new horizons!

LSB: As an artist, as a woman, how do you perform 'yourself'?

SR: I think there is still a big gap between intention and recognition, be it in the personal, the market or the art world. So – even in my 'most authentic' moments – my performance is a dynamic transaction between triggering action and receptive reaction.

LSB: How does 'the body' inform your work?

SR: In sculpture the very first connection between body and work is an elemental one – in both directions.

But this has nothing to do with gender, a male sculptor acts in the same field of possibilities and limitations as a female or transgender person. For my body of work in particular 'the body' is defining the playground or the arena for content and discourse – as shown in the glass part of my work *Arena*.

*"...female artists
have been
in the job
all the time
(she performs
already)"*

JOCELYN MCGREGOR (JENNIFER)

SPOKE TO OUR CURATOR OF
INTERPRETATION, NICOLA WATERMAN
VIA EMAIL.

NW: As a participating artist, what does *She Performs* mean to you?

JM: Hmm. It's funny because I'm the least performative person I think anyone could ever meet; I hate being centre of attention, I get stage fright, I don't even like celebrating my birthday – ha, ha – so having my work linked to performance, albeit just through the exhibition title, is so obviously completely new to me but makes a lot of sense too... because the more personal, intimate reason behind making *Jennifer* (the sculpture in the show) is that fear or critique of being put on display, meanwhile I've quite literally done it to myself – as in I've cast my body, my knees – they even look like they're doing some sort of morbid cancer – I've used pigment from the area I come from imbuing it with a personal narrative, and I've laid them all out on the rack as it were – the wooden plinth – for everyone to look at.

Sometimes I feel like being a woman does that kind of thing to you too, as in I think most women and non-binary people will be familiar with the situation where you're just doing something mundane, just trying to get by, get your shopping in, walk down

the street, have a drink – and yet you feel like you're on display, your body, your outfit, your age, whatever is being scrutinised. And you end up feeling more embarrassed than the people gawping at you!

That's a long answer...sorry. Perhaps in short I mean [that] I, like a lot of people – like a lot of women – am or started out as a reluctant performer, and perhaps moulding my own body like I do is a way of taking back ownership of my parts, taking back control.

NW: As an artist, as a woman, how do you perform 'yourself'?

JM: I think I tend to bring humour in, whether that is when I 'perform' in person - e.g. giving an artist talk, speaking in a crit, teaching – or in the artwork itself. Quite a few of the artists I feel a particular affinity with do that too I think in one way or another, like Robert Gober or Alina Szapocznikow; and I'm a big horror movie fan, where humour often plays a large part – Hammer being a prime example. I get more expressive too, again both in person and in my work. Bizarrely, together those reactions can sometimes make it worse, because when you suddenly shift the tone to serious or personal I think it probably makes people feel uneasy, and [makes] me come across as a bit of wild card... the scary thing is I'm not sure if I wouldn't act like that alone ha, ha.

NW: I've noticed that horror movie directors often 'fragment' the body and I wonder if that's a way of creating enough distance for us to feel safe.

JM: Yes, that's really interesting! Yes, that fragmenting of the body makes it less human, it resembles the 'consumer/audience less, and gives a scary insight in to the fragmentation of the female body in terms of the male gaze - "are you a leg or a breast man?" - it becomes meat. And in surrealism too, that fragmenting of the female form as seen in Hans Bellmer's dolls. But I think what really interests is when women do it to themselves - in terms of horror movies there is a particularly good example in *In My Skin* (or *Dans Ma Peau*) directed by and starring Marina de Van, in short she starts to self-cannibalise, but in the run up there's a wonderful sequence in Chinese restaurant! Gotta watch it. In terms of dream theory, losing one's limbs is usually symbolic of undergoing some sort of change, like shedding a skin; and legs symbolise something holding you back.

NW: Your work is strongly informed by 'the body' and, specifically, your body. When you cast yourself, does it come from a place of love (for your body)?

JM: Oh, I'm not sure. Yes, maybe there's a bit of my body is a temple going on...

I certainly don't hate it. I think rather than love it's more familiarity, and comfort. The fact that it's constantly changing and growing, and stuff has happened to it but it hasn't failed me. It's my vessel, and a strong one.

NW: That's a really empowering note to end on! Thank you Jocelyn.

*"It's
my vessel,
and a strong
one."*

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