BROADZINE OF THE CENTURY

The Equal Standard

BROADZINE

SPECIAL ISSUE #4 // 2016 // FREE // theequalstandard.wordpress.com

SEALED SECTION INSIDE!

A DIRTY WORD

welcome to issue #4

Welcome to this special edition of The Equal Standard! In this issue we bring you a collaboration between us and the crew from the crosseXions exhibition, and spend some time together exploring new territory. What makes feminism, or eco-feminism such dirty words in contemporary culture? I think the images we associate with feminists no longer apply. It's time to reinvigorate what it means in 2016, and what it might mean to be a feminist with an ecological agenda (do you keep visualising hairy armpits?!) Maybe some of the contributions in this issue may help replace those outdated, unhelpful stereotypes.

I don't have hairy armpits, but I am a feminist, proud to be one. And I'm proud of my fellow sister-hood for all the progress we have made towards some sense of equality. I spend so much of my time not even noticing what I (as a woman) have the ability to achieve or simply be, because of the brave women (and men) who came before me. In some ways that's sad - all that hard work needs acknowledgment, but on the other hand, its pretty cool that I don't have to think about or struggle with the same issues, or in the same way. I can make the choice to have hairy armpits (or not), get married (or not), still be a feminist, and passionate about the environment as well as my place in it. Maybe its progress towards acceptance of one another thats really key here... that we come in many different shades, and we are evolving to make space for it all.

I hope this issue helps you consider your relationship to your environment, and what steps you can take to be a little kinder and a more accepting human being. As I sit here with my swollen belly and feet, panicking about the imminent birth of our first little one, and feeling my girl kick the crap out of me, I can only hope that we as her parents, can help her be the most loving and accepting human being she can be.

EDITORS: Gabriella & Brent Wilson
DESIGN: The goons who edit!
PUBLISHER: Provoked - www.provoked.com.au

crosseXions has received financial assistance from the Queensland Government through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments.

Front Cover: Clark Beaumont, *Typecast* 2016, digital image

Back Cover: James Barth, *Cover Girl Front Page* 2016, digital image

Image Below: Lynden Stone, *Angelica & Kim Nightclub* 2016, didigtal image

crosseXions

Shayna Wells and I have had a friendship for some years now. She suggested that I curate an exhibition, based on her observations of fellow artists whose current practices involve similar underlying concerns to her own, namely the expression of feminist and environmental perspectives. I felt similarly, and moreover, I saw an opportunity to widen our friendship circle. I mean this quite specifically with feminist intent. The arts sector is quite exploitative. Both artists and artsworkers work far too hard for far too little, at the mercy of relentlessly shifting governmental agendas, and so regularly suffer burn out. It feels like we're a bunch of true believers tithing ourselves to church-like institutions and a religion we can't question. I'm aware that makes me part of the curatorial priesthood. The only way I know to 'survive' is to retreat. In retreat I return to the place of important things, of basic principles and core values, which always seem to reveal that art and life are inseparable. Looking at clouds, cooking and gardening, making the bed, watching the news, I am profoundly aware of the aesthetic dimension of experience, and what propels artists to make that manifest. One of the serious problems with art is the tendency to focus aesthetic attention on the artwork outcome, and (often deliberately) disguise the artmaking process and institutional relations that frame it – inevitably separating and wounding the art-life nexus like a spectre of original sin. Among other things, it allows curators to wear cloaks of invisibility. Of course it may be extreme and distasteful to draw an analogy to the Catholic Church and the recent Inquiry into child sex abuse – but I do think that the Catholic Church is an institution not-so-different from others and that the extreme abuse they were/are able to conceal and deny was/is undertaken through quite common and standard mechanisms in organisational operations, such as structural inequality, hierarchical relations, representational mediation, codes of secrecy and conformity, obscurantist specialist language, and others. The resulting cultures of self-censorship are pervasive.

Both feminist and environmental movements, the wider social movements and the art movements, have sought to expose the operations of power and to reveal and honour the entire work continuum and processes of labour (paid and unpaid). These 'grass roots' movements, as they are rather patronisingly referred to, have ethical implications for us all at every level. To effectively respond to the scale of the environmental challenges we currently face, thinkers like Naomi Klein are calling for a complete dismantling of global capitalist relations, reminding us that the fight for a just world is also a fight for a liveable world.

The *crosseXions* project is driven by my personal attempt to understand these implications for my profession and to be what I will term a 'weak' curator. I am far less interested in exercising an authority (selecting artists, wrangling venues, directing artwork outcomes, bringing definition, meeting other definitions) than I am in creating a context for collaboration and conversation, for supporting peer review and feedback, for allowing things to evolve and change and for ideas to grow. This may seem obvious – I'm sure it's what any good educator, mentor or curator would do - but it's getting harder as we live in an increasingly time-poor world of precarious labour-relations, under ever-mounting pressure to find and deliver the 'next thing'. A world in ecological emergency where the stress fractures are multiplying exponentially.

The 'weak' curator is one who can acknowledge her own wounded partiality, and who then allows co-existence with as many other lame beings as possible. In gathering these artists for conversation, we did not challenge each other's feminist and ecological credentials or seek to define what that politic might look or feel like as a uniform. Rather feminist and ecological concerns are agreed tools for affirmation and speculation. We are only too aware of our own complicity within a world order that is deadlocked inside a (hyper)militarised-(post)industrial-(late)capitalist machine which perpetuates the construction of Nature as separate and Other. And indeed within a postmodern mediascape that sells us all things Natural through impenetrable layers of mediation, much of which is indistinguishable from spam and scam. Ironically it seems to be not so much the mass extinction of species, or the ecological disasters of the mining industry, or the growing rate of natural disasters, but rather the objects that obscenely outlive their makers - a styrofoam cup, plutonium, global warming, a plastic bag - that have most traction in social confrontation. These persistent posthuman phenomena are the evidence that force us to see the vast, ungainly objects, real and discursive, in which and with which we have our vexed being. Careful not to choke.

crosseXions is about the power of intimacy, putting pay to the Lie that creativity does not abide within but between. The myth of the ultra-individual heroic male genius of modernism is well and truly dead regardless of the ongoing life-support of zombie institutions and bureaucracies. Art never did travel from the empty mind to the blank page to the white box. Within the uncertain mess and melange of scattered partial objects and subjects, complexity is. The many precedes the one, and art comes from the flux of the interpersonal.

This intimacy, forged through cooperative investment, is far far away from violence, and from experiences of loss and trauma, alienation and abuse, poison and exploitation that the artists and their artworks reflect upon and recover from.

Beth Jackson

JAMES BARTH **CLARK BEAUMONT** KATINA DAVIDSON
DANA LAWRIE JULIE-ANNE MILINSKI **CLARE POPPI**
MERRI RANDELL **LEENA RIETHMULLER** CAMILLE SERISIER
LYNDEN STONE SHAYNA WELLS **CURATOR** BETH JACKSON

27 APRIL - 14 MAY 2016
Metro Arts
Gallery, Level 2
109 Edward Street, Brisbane
Opening 27 April, 6pm

30 JULY - 27 AUGUST 2016
(across two venues)
The Cross Art Projects
8 Llankelly Place, Kings Cross &
ALASKA PROJECTS
Kings Cross Carpark, Level 2
9A Elizabth Bay Road, Sydney
Opening 30 July, 3pm

TO FIND OUT MORE: https://www.facebook.com/CrosseXions-237547979933187/

Image: Shayna Wells, *Intent-Response5* 2016, digital photograph

Image Above: Lynden Stone, *Sacred Gaia Healing*™ 2016, digital image

Environmentalism, Feminism & Public Relations

Llewellyn Millhouse

Both feminism and environmentalism are social movements seeking to influence the political process through engagement in and critique of public culture. In the mid to late 20th century the two were closely related as a part of general countercultural movements, linking patriarchy with the excessive domination of industrialised culture over the natural world at the expense of biodiversity and sustainable ecologies. This conceptual link was underpinned by a critique of Western imperialist capitalism as instrumentalising people, animals and the earth into resources exploited for the purpose of maximising profit and perpetuating hierarchical power structures.

Whilst from the 1970s to the turn of the century the political agenda of feminism often aligned with that of environmentalism, in contemporary cultural politics this connection has become problematic. An aesthetic and cultural split between feminism and environmentalism has been led by the popularisation of critiques of essentialist and biological determinist views of gender. The connection that early environmentalism made between "Nature", "femininity", female value and identity were delegitimised by queer theory, post-humanism and gender studies discussing the performative and ideologically determined basis of gender. In light of these compelling critiques of the intersection between feminism and environmentalism, the question to be asked in regards to the exhibition *crosseXions* is why should these social movements be considered together, what do they have in common, and particularly for those invested in their progressive agendas, what could they learn from each other?

Within the discipline of contemporary art practice the problems of equating feminism with environmentalism are well known. It has been a serious taboo of contemporary arts practice to represent female identity as singular and fixed, and even more so to equate female identity with Nature, reproduction, virginal purity or compassionate passivity. Feminism's progression away from associations with Nature and the political priorities and aesthetics associated with a "liberated-all-natural woman" or "spiritual-earth-mother" female identity is evident throughout contemporary public culture. This essay will attempt to outline the relationship between three artist's work in the *crosseXions* exhibition through considering how "femininity" continues to be equated with "Nature" across public culture, activism and arts practice.

Lynden Stone's ongoing project *Sacred Gaia Healing*™ (2016) responds to the contemporary failings of early counterculture ecofeminism, exploring how the aesthetics of an environmentalist and new-age spiritual counterculture are commoditised and recuperated back into the hegemonic economic and social structures of consumer capitalism. Consisting of an online retail store accompanied by both URL and social media advertising, Stone's *Sacred Gaia Healing* appropriates the clichés and aesthetic conventions of the niche sub-cultural market of "hippie" e-commerce. Fetishised to the point of a complete lack of use-value and logical continuity, Stone's products along with the parodic guru identities of her sales team become comedic in their wholesale failure. In the example of the *SAVE THE TREES! TOTE BAG* (Fig.1), an "alternative" shopping bag is marketed through its boycotting of natural materials and an empty promise of the product's spiritual activation. The idea of the tote bag as an instrument of symbolic resistance against "the man" and "the system" is made absurd by this exaggerated marketing jargon and Stones' encouragement to buy-more-and-save. Through restaging the hypocrisy and ethical naivety of this particularly problematic niche market, Stone points to the self-indulgence of socio-political movements centred around an aesthetic appearance of oppositionality.

Figure 1.

The success of *Sacred Gaia Healing*™ lies in the self-reflexivity of Stone's critical methodology. Despite the widespread parody and de-legitimisation of "hippie" socio-political agendas and identities within contemporary popular culture (exemplified by the 2005 *South Park* episode "Die Hippie, Die" or the YouTube comedian JP Sears' 2013-2016 series "AwakenWithJP"), the aesthetic surface of this sub-culture retains a strong association with Stone's particular demographic. Rather than parodying the Other from an external position of authority, Stone utilises the predisposition of her own demographic (white, middle class, middle aged, creative industries worker) towards the "hippie" product / identity. Whilst the inflated failure of the highly distinguishable hippie aesthetic makes its humour very accessible, Stone's reflective parody manages a sustained and specific critical tension.

Just like recent trends against "hippie" environmentalism, waves of momentum and enthusiasm for feminist concerns come and go within public discourse. When I was in primary school, a "girl power" feminism was a major aspect of my youth culture, epitomised by the music of the *Spice Girls* and female action heroes like *Zena the Warrior Princess*. Although this feminist momentum waned somewhat in the early 2000s, feminist concerns have re-emerged in recent years as a central issue within public discourse. The work of musicians like Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj and Taylor Swift, the televisual narratives of Lena Dunham's *Girls* or Llana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson's comedy series *Broad City*, as well as the public commentary of Hollywood stars like Emma Watson and Jennifer Lawrence have all helped to re-popularise and advocate varying types of feminism.

These multiple, popular and hugely influential feminist positions address topics such as equal gender representation and pay in industry and major institutions, issues of disproportionate violence and sexual assault perpetrated on women, and female independence and sexual empowerment. Operating from within the very centre of the culture industry, this pop feminism has a history of embracing the use of the sexualised or idolised female body as a site of socio-political resistance, utilising patriarchal conventions of "feminine value" and the male gaze to undermine, shift or subvert the patriarchal sexual power dynamic. Unlike earlier countercultural movements attempting to boycott or directly oppose dominant economic and cultural systems and their objectification and demarcation of female value, this approach strives for greater equality, power and freedom within existing socio-cultural structures and industries.
Whilst environmentalism is a primary issue for the progressive-left of politics, the loudest feminist voices in contemporary popular culture have largely separated their socio-political agenda from an intersectional solidarity with both Marxist critiques of socio-political economy and environmentalist critiques of consumer capitalism. This specified focus of feminism is often seen in terms of a split of a singular feminism into variable socio-culturally specific feminisms (54 official variants of feminism are listed on its Wikipedia page). By abandoning a singular and rigid feminist aesthetic and code of practice, feminisms have effectively maximised their reach and effect on public discourse, both diversifying and delineating feminist agendas in an effort to appeal to and avoid alienating communities or cultural groups.

Here feminism as a social movement can be seen as conducting a kind of public relations campaign, informing and influencing public opinion through focused target audiences and a hyper-pragmatic understanding of the interests and concerns of its varying publics. This approach appears to stem from an acceptance that the arena of activism exists within a marketplace of competing spectacle narratives, with the success of an activist campaign largely dependent upon its effective commodification as an appealing or compelling image. In a late-capitalist information culture the narrative appeal of activism must contend with opposing or indifferent cultural narratives to effectively sell their socio-political agenda to particular demographics. This is especially true in the contemporary sphere of social media and online journalism, wherein politics and cultural criticism coexist with entertainment, advertising and social interaction on the homogenising plane of the timeline.

In looking to the recent success of feminisms, in particular those contemporary pop feminisms, it seems historically appropriate for environmentalism to adopt a similar public relations methodology. By reconnecting environmentalism with this contemporary mode of activism, environmentalism may increase its

appeal and influence, establishing environmental concerns as a central political issue. Whilst connecting environmentalism with "femaleness" has been theoretically problematic, an example of its practical success as a public relations campaign can be seen in the theatrical protests made by Australian activist performance group *Climate Guardians* (Fig.2).

Figure 2.

The *Climate Guardians* are a group of female activists using modern Christian angel iconography in public visual spectacles to advocate against fossil fuel mining and to promote legislative action on climate change. Posing as both divine guardians and symbolic representations of a "feminine" Nature, these performances rely on the male gaze's reverence for a virginal, innocent and delicate feminine beauty. The *Climate Guardians* narrative of angelic femininity in service of Nature appropriates pop culture mythology trickling down from Christian representations of the Garden of Eden. Consciously utilising a patriarchal valuation of female bodies, the *Climate Guardians* reclaim this narrative for their own purposes, instrumentalising the cliché associations of Nature with feminine beauty to advocate for political change.

By engaging with the dominant value systems of their target audience the *Climate Guardians* maximise the appeal of their political agenda, selling an idea of Nature and environmentalism that fits comfortably within conservative popular culture. The sophistication of this public relations campaign is demonstrated in the subtle distance maintained between their angelic femininity and a more distinctly Christian mythology. The appeal of the *Climate Guardians'* performances share more in common with the beer product *Pure Blonde*'s advertisement series "From A Place Much More Pure Than Yours" (2007, Fig.3) than they do with sincere religious sentiment. In this advertisement series, the *Pure Blonde* product is ironically depicted as being manufactured in a Garden-of-Eden-like setting, produced by idyllic models living harmoniously with Nature in a lush and bountiful environment.

Figure 3.

Like the *Climate Guardians*, the absurdly all-white, delicate and passive *Pure Blonde* workers are positioned as representing a fun, light and appealing counterpoint to industrialised consumer capitalism. By staging a correlation between the purity of the virginal female object and the virginal Eden landscape, *Pure Blonde* advertises an idea of the value of purity as associated with their product. It is the appeal of this feminised purity that lies at the basis of the *Climate Guardians* narrative. Although these representations of youthful purity are immediately recognisable as being complicit with patriarchal traditions of female value, the *Climate Guardians* pander to these traditions precisely to put spin on popular mythology regarding environmental activists and the environmentalist agenda. By recuperating conservative mythology the *Climate Guardians* are able to effectively sell environmentalism as a narrative product to communities not already invested in the environmentalist socio-political agenda.

The problematic of associating "feminine" beauty with Nature demonstrated within the *Climate Guardians* activist practice plays out through *crosseXions* artist Shayna Wells' project *Intent Response* (2016, Fig.4 - page 3). Documenting participant's first response to the site of Lake Ainsworth in northern NSW, this photographic series presents the body absorbed by Nature, participants exhibiting a bodily vulnerability through intimate interaction with a semi-wilderness natural environment. Through a submission to the power, beauty and historical depth of the site, the represented body loses its distinction from Nature, the body taking on connotations of authenticity, exotic fragility, and an ethereal seductiveness. In turn the value of the natural environment is affected by the body, the appeal of the archetypal Australian watering hole heightened by the drama of exposed flesh. In this way, *Intent Response* utilises the female body to aestheticise Nature as an object of value.

The association of a vulnerable, youthful and passive beauty (typically gendered female) with Nature has a significant history in Western art and culture. Epitomised by John Everett Millais' canonical pre-Raphaelite painting *Ophelia* (1851-2, Fig.5), a conception of Nature as a sublime vessel for delicate female beauty has been a prevalent discourse throughout modernity. A *Google* image search of the words nature, fashion and photography together demonstrates the persistence of this mythology in contemporary visual culture. This patriarchal valuation of women's bodies as a harmonious ornament to landscape has been heavily criticised by feminist critical theory of the 20th Century. However, the practice of inserting "femaleness" and "feminine beauty" into narrative representations of the natural world changes its socio-political significance when utilised by female practitioners as a public relations campaign for environmentalism. Instead of didactically opposing dominant aesthetic systems and values, activists like the *Climate Guardians* and artists like Shayna Wells work from within popular mythology to maximise the appeal of their political agenda to a targeted audience.

Camille Serisier's practice takes up this methodology of engagement with the persistent and underlying patriarchal assumptions and meta-narratives of Western culture. By revisiting and re-imagining aspects of the traditional canon of Western cultural knowledge through the lens of a feminist stage production, Serisier warps and undermines patriarchal values through the insertion of her direct personal experience and the contemporary identities and inter-personal relationships of participants in her work.

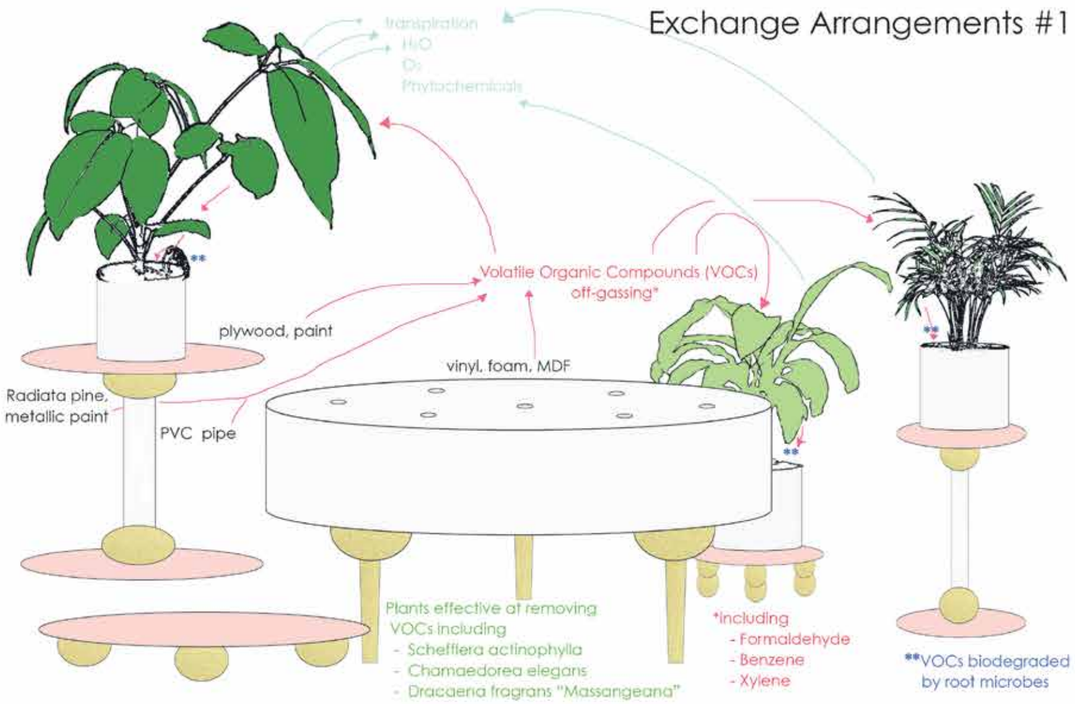
In the series *Venus of Brisbane* (2016, Fig.6 - page 12) exhibited as part of *crosseXions*, Serisier responds to an art-historical debate concerning the origin of the statuette artefact known as the *Venus of Willendorf* (28000 – 25000 BC). Since the discovery of the *Venus of Willendorf* and similar archaeological finds it has been widely assumed that these figurative sculptures are a product of male artists depicting the female body. However, recent revisionist art history has put forward the possibility that the *Venus of Willendorf* represents an example of early self-portraiture, specifically a self-portraiture documenting the physical transformation of the body during pregnancy. This revisionist proposal has been met with a disproportionate amount of criticism from academics, reflecting the self-maintenance mechanisms embodied within the ideological structure of conservative art history.

Figure 5.

Responding to this blinkered vision of art history, Serisier has constructed her own wearable self-portraits, props and stage-sets documenting her bodily and emotional experience during a recent pregnancy. Rather than positioning herself in defiant opposition to the patriarchal canon of art history, Serisier insists on the simple act of inserting her own identity and experience within it. By avoiding an aesthetic of direct oppositionality, Serisier's work maintains an accessible, fun and light-hearted appeal. Participants and viewers of Serisier's work identify with the canonical narratives and archetypes that Serisier appropriates without having a distinct socio-political agenda dictated upon them. Instead, the costumes, props and stage sets become tools that encourage participants to re-imagine the canon of Western culture and constructions of gender, giving voice to contemporary identities and experiences. This inclusive and humble process allows its audience to bypass preconceptions of feminist agendas while retaining the structure of Serisier's rigorous feminist methodology.

Fig. 1 Lynden Stone, *SAVE THE TREES! TOTE BAG* - excerpt from Sacred Gaia Healing (2016), screenshot from website
Fig.2 ABC News, *Angels at Melbourne Rally* (2014), Photograph by Melissa Davis
Fig.3 Paul Middleditch, *Pure Blonde advertisement* - "From A Place Much More Pure Than Yours" 2007, Screenshots from YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml3ybCxxMRk
Fig.4 Shayna Wells, *Intent Response* – excerpt (2016), photographic print
Fig.5 John Everett Millais, *Ophelia* (1851-2), oil painting
Fig.6 Camille Serisier, *Venus of Brisbane* – progress documentation excerpt (2016), digital photographs

Image Right: Dana Lawrie, *Nothing* 2016, frottage charcoal




Julie-Anne Milinski *Work in Progress, Sniff Test (The Elegant Miss Candy Vale and Edgar Albert)* 2016

Where We Are Going

Graeme Auchterlonie

"Beyond the ear there is a sound, at the farthest reaches of sight a shape, at fingertip's end an object - and that's where I'm going. At the tip of the pencil a line…. At my own edge is me. It is to myself that I'm going. And I leave myself in order to see. To see what? To see what there is. After death it's reality I'll go. For the time being it's a dream. A fateful dream." - Clarice Lispector[1]

In this hypermodern time, responses to the foreboding economic, ecological, and egalitarian crises are at the forefront of many artistic endeavours. It is difficult to see the power structures of political and economic bodies without feeling much of the populous is under some type of illusion. Where synthetic is natural and nature is hyper-technologised, contemporary society is further mediated and distanced from the natural world. Feminine perspectives are often used as methods for critiquing contemporary ontologies, despite being stereotyped as a return to the natural. Exploring local iterations of artistic practices that express ideas about 'what is natural' in both the self and the external environment, this essay surveys critical feminist perspectives on the notion of the natural and the feminine.

Katina Davidson *Presence/Absence* [Page 15]

The need to challenge Australian historical narratives, exclusionist-privileged-white tales of horseback conquests and the modernisation of an untamed land - is continual. Colonisation is a process ingrained in the anglo-Australian psyche. Through an internalising of the environment at the Purga Mission, Katina Davidson's self-portraits bring together histories that were both forced upon her family, elements of political activism her grandparents began, and a perspective of how young Indigenous women see Australia today. These works assert a cultural identity that is often misconstrued and isolated to the periphery of society. Katina's work pays homage to Indigenous Australia's cultural resistance and the ongoing fight for sovereignty.

A series of handmade clay flowers, those of local native species form a rectangular outline. The arranged wildflowers represent the huts that Katina's and other families would have lived at the Deebing Creek and the Purga Missions where her grandfather's family was taken by force in the early 1900's. The floral partition cites a movement between the present and past, the home and its occupants, and the external and internal components of an identity. Taking inspiration from fellow Indigenous artists especially the group proppaNOW her work makes a statement about current plans to develop the heritage-listed Deebing Creek Mission where her family has strong connections. The partitions have a small break in the rectangle that symbolise an entry; one the audience is left to ponder if it is appropriate to enter. Queensland's history of genocide and the dehumanisation of its first peoples continues to be a silence in its history and its present news; however, Katina continues a story that is personal but not alone in its implications. Inside this flowered partition is a space for contemplation, a place for acceptance and a story to sustain the cultural legacy of Indigenous family and community.

Masculine and feminine ideology have been historically juxtaposed, all the while the feminine has been holistically suppressed. The emergence of women's rights movements in 19th century Modern societies gave feminine perspectives stronger visibility in society and sought to elevate feminism above its oppositional value. Past feminist movements, at times, have been wrought into a privileged white neo-liberalism as well as being taken to a purist Naturalism, which resides within a theological realm. Nature is often seen as a primary source material upon which rationalism is composed. Rationalism propre, however, is steeped in masculinist imperialism: given the colonial history of the Enlightenment and its intolerances of cultural difference and the genocide of first peoples. To fight against eurocentric, patriarchal and capitalist dispositifs that thrive on prejudiced caste structures: a suspension of gender is crucial for the construction of an oppositional ontology.[2] In the creation of objects that are not 'naturally existing' the artist renders new ontologies and epistemes through visual representation. Sexless, the art object inherently suspends gender: as the object has no inherent sex, but only that which the spectator projects upon it. Art (as object or artifice) is implicit in presupposing a suspension of gender, as the spectator of art.

Julie Anne-Milinski *Exchange Arrangements* [Page 8]

Providing examples of the exchange between hand-made object and plants, Julie-Anne Milinski incorporates elements of design, resolve and positivity into her artworks. Julie-Anne's most recent project was inspired by the "gossip seat"—a style of all-in-one seat and occasional table popular when telephones first became commonplace in the home. Her intention for the construction is to have its 'off-gas' negated by an installation of plants specifically chosen for their ability to removing compounds emitted by plywood, paints and glues etc. At the beginning of Julie-Anne's trajectory is a NASA report, 'A Study for Interior Landscape Plants for Indoor Air Pollution Abatement'[3] which tells a story that we are likely to understand, plants clean the air we breathe. Her installation is a reflection on the dichotomy of living and nonliving: embodied by her arrangement we are witness to the invisible exchange between the natural and human worlds.

The desire for interior decor, furniture and homewares is no longer one of necessity nor does one 'save money for the dining table'. Mass produced goods, shops like IKEA and KMart as well as the television programs funded by homeware stores excite the average person into believing that a home makeover will guarantee new successes in life and happiness. The newly purchased flat pack, or bedroom suite delivered and assembled by friendly store experts is silently oozing chemical compounds and carcinogens into the gleaming, stylish rooms of your home. The furniture constructions and plant arrangement could be stereotyped as being feminine arrangements as the home decor and interior design are frequently relegated from the masculine domain. However, the couch, television, the poolroom and the study all contain manufactured objects that present the same problem as Julie-Anne's white retro seat and tailored pink side tables. This work makes explicit the silent exchange between flora and furniture, organic and inorganic as well as the masculine/ feminine divide that is slowly taking its toll on the consumer.

The understanding of feminist perspectives that incorporate environmental concerns is a way of departing from cyclical inequality. This is a task not only for artists, not only for female artists, but all those who have hope for the future. Climate change is scientifically proven, the world has changed, and will do so at an unprecedented rate of acceleration if action isn't taken. It is obvious that those people that are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are the poor, and millions if not billions of people will die as a result. Positing these ideas demonstrating methods of resistance embodied in their practice, the artists in CrosseXions are exemplary in subverting the eurocentric misogynist capitalist culture that refuses to take responsibility for the future of the world.

Merri Randall *Gash* [Page 11]

Projected onto the curved wall of the gallery space, Merri Randall's work is a living, breathing representation of Australia's often mythologized and brutalised landscape. The animated photograph features a throbbing, pulsating shot of a landscape, a visceral embodiment of nature struggling to live in a concrete capitalist world. It is immersive, as the moans and groans sound out what the manipulated tree suggests, the suffering of nature due to the development and consumption of the natural world. This image situates the natural in a very real space where we as spectators are witness to an oppressed nature.

The would-be still trees, branches and leaves make 'typically hidden respiratory, digestive and reproductive botanical' gestures that distort the reality of a landscape, and embody nature's fight against the change in climate which the capitalist industrialised world brings with it. Merri's work 'Gash' features an anthropomorphised Australian nature that is at times grotesque, at times mesmerising and constantly struggling. Through the bodily bulging and throbbing that presents nature as subject to the impact of the bodies of the billions of humans we are witness to nature personified by a tree.

Tree's are historically the biggest target and living proof of property development, human consumption and waste, especially that of paper. Australia's trees have been romanticised explicitly by colonial poets, painters and politicians alike. This alternative depiction of nature shows a tangible, distasteful and surreal characterisation so to subvert this notion, and displace an anachronistic perception of Australian flora. It has been a long time since there was equilibrium between humanity and nature, Merri here shows nature on the losing side of the ensuing battle. Playing on non-indigenous mythologies and fetishisation of the Australian landscape, 'Gash' features abrupt visual elements of the abject body as a part of nature. Merri's projection works

are explicit and use direct imagery, showing violence perpetrated upon nature, they critique the compulsion of capitalist society and its false constructions of reality.

The project of mastery references the negative connotations of the ongoing desire for humans to master nature, to be bigger than the planet itself. This sort of belief extends from european mythologies where Gods rule above in the heavens, and nature is supposed to be feminine. No surprises the goddess Venus is posited as having been the master of sex, love, beauty, enticement, seduction, and persuasive female charm. It is not a feminine trait to believe in love, to be beautiful, to want to entice others, nor to use seduction as a device for persuasion. This is a two and a half thousand-year-old myth. In our highly complex and ever changing organic machine called Earth, it is evident that Venus will be not swooping down from above to save us from the dispositifs of masculinity. In the manifesto of Laboria Cuboniks, they suggest all that can be sought in the future to allow a positive change is a social shift where "technoscientific innovation must be linked to a collective theoretical and political thinking in which women, queers, and the gender non-conforming play an unparalleled role."[4] The finiteness of the human world is key in understanding the natural world, in turn, understanding the natural world is crucial for having an appreciation of the beauty that exists outside the corrupt mechanisms of humanity.

Clare Poppi *147 Grams 3 Carats* [Page 20]

Clare Poppi's work began as an undesignated lump of silver: lustrous, unpolished, malleable metal. 147 Grams and 3 Carats is an ongoing project that sees the fluid artifice being made for a person to wear over the period of a week. Each iteration is intimately designed and personalized, the work is then taken back and melted down, and redesigned again. Beginning with a design for fellow artist Camille Serisier, Clare's first piece had two large pieces of silver, both unpolished, moulded by hand and it is visible the finger marks in the silver are slightly present. The first segment shaped like a heart or bodily organ, the second piece moved up and down along the chain so that Camille's son could play with the necklace without fear of swallowing it.

The second design, for Beth Jackson, curator of CrosseXions also responds to her relation with her children. This is on the other end of the spectrum though, this piece a nest-like broach symbolises Beth's youngest child leaving home. The small removable pins that can be worn inside or outside the nest compartment are a metaphor for her family. The characterisation of the jewellery is personalized and clearly intended for the end user, this juxtaposes the wasteful throwaway culture associate with fashion, accessories and trends. This depersonalisation takes place not only on the part of the wearer, as the products have no intention of suiting the wearer. In fast fashion the depersonalisation of a product's making and its origins is a theme that Poppi isolates and opposes in her practice. The depersonalised consumerism that supports capitalism is well entrenched in contemporary digital society, as the mediation from nature extends further and further into the psyche of the shopper.

A desire for the emancipation of global inequality sees the repeated return to notions of the feminine in lieu of dismantling current socio-political systems. The dominant patriarchal-capitalist system, in its process of retaining power, however, exploits not only gender and sexuality but also the "inequalities of race, ability, economic standing and geographic locations."[5] Mass consumption and industrialisation fund our bustling metropolis and towering glass monuments that evidence the reign of financial imperialism. Toxic political parties and government institutions that are equivocal to the most pernicious chemical waste solidify this culture of contemporary hyper-consumption. Artists Clare Poppi, Merri Randall, Julie-Anne Milinski, Katina Davidson, and the other artists in the CrosseXions (Metro Arts, 2016) exhibition have creative practices that construct resolutions to the ethical questioning of established social and political institutions.

[1] Clarice Lispector, "That's Where I'm Going" Soulstream, New Directions Publishing, New York, 1989 p. 147
[2] *Dispositif* - variously as device, apparatus and deployment in English. Here is an excerpt from "The Confession of the Flesh" (1977) interview. In Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings (ed Colin Gordon), 1980: pp. 194-228
The dispositif is "Firstly...a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions...The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements…Secondly... between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely…Thirdly...the term "apparatus"is a sort of–shall we say–formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment, that of responding to an urgent need...The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function."
[3] Wolverton, B. C.; Douglas, Willard L; Bounds, Keit. 'A Study for Interior Landscape Plants for Indoor Air Pollution Abatement', (Report). NASA. July, 1989
[4] Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism Manifesto* (2015)
[5] Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism Manifesto* (2015)

Image Opposite: Merri Randell, *Gash* 2016, HD Video/projection

BLANKETS ON THE WALLS AND CEILING

Katherine Botten

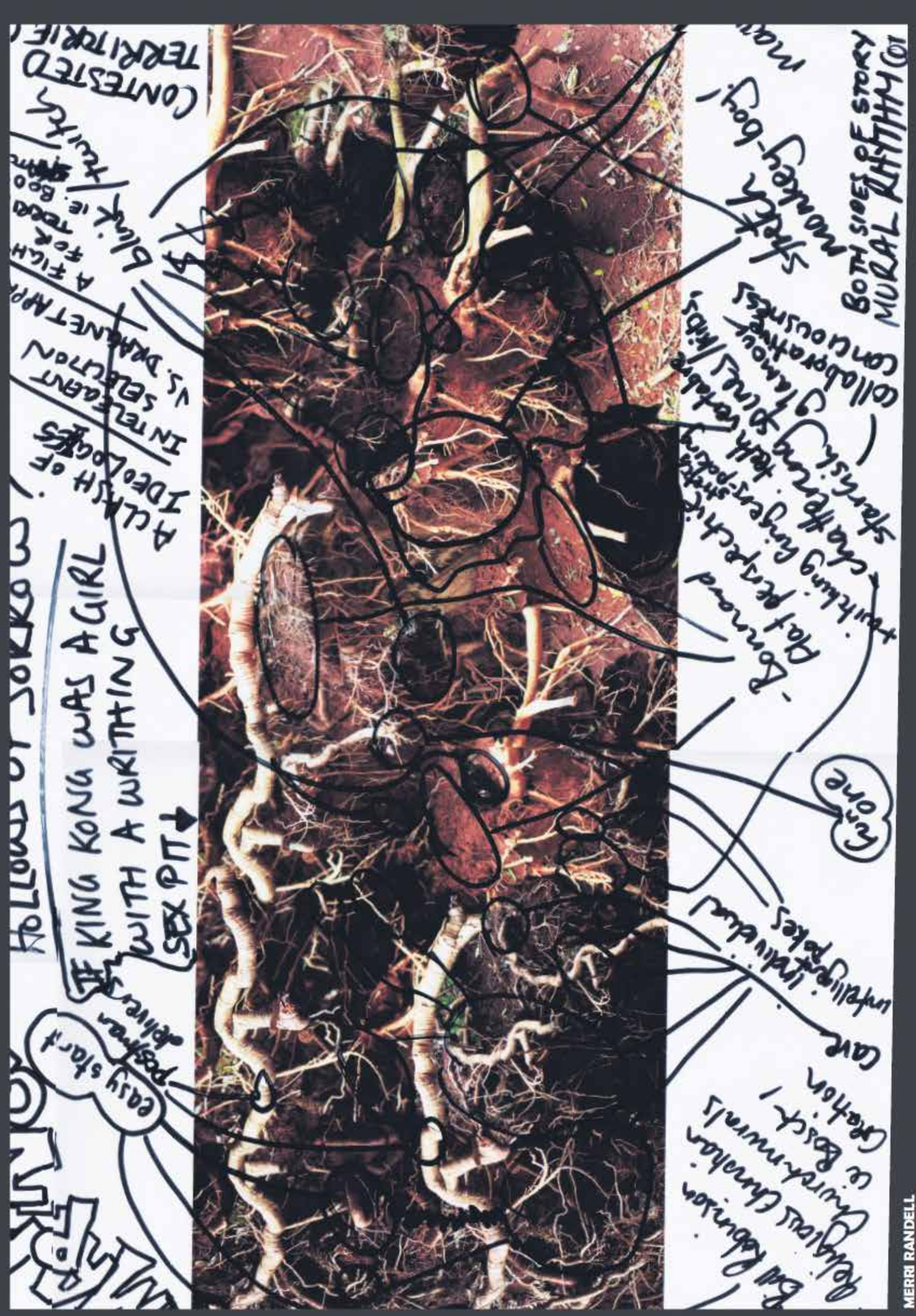
The sky is a dusty pink, the sun is setting and streaks of orange stream across the above. Im at my grandmas house, near Zuma Beach, in LA, on an island, it's almost night time. It's cooling down, the sea breeze is drifting in and you can smell the sea salt in the air. I inhale and exhale, taking a moment to really be present. I try and be present with every breathe I take. It's 27 degrees outside and there's still some soft clouds in the sky, only visible now for a few more minutes before the sky turns black. I'm lying on the ground outside on the lawn, my head on cushions.

It's been a hot summer, sitting about, not getting up to much. I went away and then came back again. That is how I ended up here, it's just a 45 minute drive. I lie back and stare into black. I think of all the places I've visited for the last time and drag on a cigarette.

It's morning now, and most mornings I go on sunrise beach runs but today I stay home to help prepare for a big luncheon event we are throwing in the backyard greenhouse. I'm blending up my breakfast smoothie when I hear my grandma call my name. She says I've received the letter. She knows I've been waiting all summer, I've forwarded on my mail from my previous address. The letterhead is embossed and set on pastel coloured marble effect paper. The paper is porous and has soaked up the ink, I can't read what it says. I think it says I've been accepted but I'm no longer interested. It's just toooooo nice living on a private island.

I'm sharing my studio on the island with Petra Cortright. I spend my time getting paid to make work. Sometimes Katharina Grosse visits and we drink black tea. We don't need to worry about the fat in the milk. After I make the red Russian potato salad for the luncheon I'll visit the studio and collaborate with Petra on some drawings. We are using a beautiful thick cartilage paper. I might stick on the acceptance letter and we can doodle over the top. The drawings will be sold at Mathew Gallery in NYC and I'll use the profit to buy makeup from Mecca Cosmetica or some preventative Botox. My psychiatrist has been bulk billing me lately which is great news.

We have so many spare rooms at my grandmas house, I have a winter room and a summer room but mostly I just sleep in my bed in the studio. I have heated blankets and a cute pink radio. There's blankets on the walls and ceiling which make it really cosy. I drink soda water and mineral water and get full off caffeine, I watch the Real Housewives of Beverly Hills all day and do nothing. It's so nice having no commitments. There's glow in the dark star stickers on the roof, adhered to the ceiling blankets. They keep me up at night and I wish they weren't there so I jump on my indoor trampoline and fish them down. Nothing much happens.




THE TWENTY YEARS' CRISIS, 1919-1939
by Edward Hallett Carr

Down to Earth: Ecofeminism's Fraught History

Courtney Pedersen

While the publication of Rachael Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962 is considered by many to be the genesis point of modern environmentalism (Gaard 2011, 28), the deliberate melding of feminism with environmental politics didn't occur until the late 1970s and early 1980s. Ecofeminism equates the exploitation of the natural world with the oppressive operations of patriarchal society. As a child of the 1980s, my vision of ecofeminism was inextricably linked with the anti-nuclear movement of that period. For me, ecofeminists were the political radicals of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, and groups such as the Feminist Anti-Nuclear Group (FANG) and Women's Action Against Global Violence here in Australia, but the term also felt haunted by earlier images of 'Earth Mother' stereotypes.

Many women of my generation were passionately hostile toward that earlier characterization of an unquestionable correlation between women and the natural world. The essentialist notion that women were 'naturally' more caring or more compassionate felt like a prison. We were drawn to approaches that offered an escape from women's fixed biological destiny, and ecofeminism became implicated in that escape. As Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens note in the introductory chapter of their recent reader on contemporary ecofeminism, "ecofeminism has a chequered history in terms of its popularity and its perceived value in conceptualizing the relationship between gender and nature" (2015, 1). As a philosophical position that sounded suspiciously essentialist, ecofeminism became a hotly debated topic in the 1990s, before effectively fading from view in the early twenty-first century.

Niamh Moore and Greta Gaard have discussed the dilemma that faced many thinkers and activists during this time as they struggled with the perception of ecofeminism as an essentialist and possibly also a neo-colonial school of thought: "By the late 1990s talking about eco/feminism (in an academic context at least) had become difficult, unless one also addressed, and clearly rejected, the inevitable question/accusation of essentialism" (Moore 2015, 20). Even though ecofeminism seemed to offer radical approaches to working across disciplines to identify and tackle systemic abuses of power, critics chose to focus "on the celebration of goddess spirituality and the critique of patriarchy advanced in cultural ecofeminism", causing "poststructuralist and other third-wave feminisms [to portray] all ecofeminisms as an exclusively essentialist equation of women with nature, discrediting ecofeminism's diversity of arguments and standpoints" (Gaard 2011, 31).

Moore contends that this policing of the terms of feminist engagement was largely based on an inaccurate characterization of ecofeminism as a single evolutionary strand of political thought in the first place, rather than the very heterogeneous patchwork of approaches and beliefs that eventually made up the field. As Virginia Scharff pointed out in her 1995 review of a number of books tackling what she referred to as 'environmental history', approaches to the topic of feminist environmental politics were sometimes bewilderingly diverse (Scharff 2015, 164-175).

Artists responded energetically to these diverse provocations raised by ecofeminism. In Australia, Jill Orr's photographic performance series *Bleeding Trees* (1979) drew explicit parallels between the visual consumption of the female body by the male gaze and the literal consumption of the earth's resources. Orr's body appears as a broken branch in the landscape in a series of visceral photographs shot on location throughout Victoria. Bonita Ely's conceptual work, *Murray River Punch* (1980) used the context of the cooking demonstration, then seen as a strategy of policing normative feminine behaviour, to discuss the chemical contamination of Australia's iconic waterway. Elsewhere, Agnes Denes planted a field of wheat in a valuable landfill site two blocks from Wall Street in New York in *Wheatfield - A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan* (1982) and Dominique Mazeaud undertook her epic work, *The Great Cleansing of the Rio Grande* from 1987 to 1994, where she collected rubbish from the river bed and banks in what would now be described as a social practice artwork. The craft practiced at the Greenham Common Peace Camp in the United Kingdom, including versions of yarn bombing and the large textile *Rainbow Dragon* (1983), could be considered one ancestor for today's craftivists.

Just as much of this work feels relevant once again, the fundamental principles of ecofeminism have struck a chord with a new generation. The notion that the degradation of our natural environment is symptomatic of a broader abuse of power that similarly subjugates women rings true to a generation who have benefited from the recent resurgence in feminist consciousness – and who also recognise that climate change, ocean acidification, rising salinity, and food security will impact them in ways that are impossible to either predict or ignore. It is not too great a jump from the identification of 'rape culture' (the social assumption that women's bodies are an exploitable resource) to eco-rape culture, where the earth's natural resources are treated in a similar manner. Recent high profile events, such as the lead contamination of drinking water in Flint, Michigan in the United States, and the anti-fracking activism of groups like 'Lock the Gate' in this country echo the environmental disasters of Love Canal in New York State or the commercial forest development in the Himalayas in the 1970s that galvanised the original ecofeminist movements (Fontaine).

Greta Gaard has suggested that a recuperation of ecofeminism's legacy is essential "both for the intellectual lineage it provides and for the feminist force it gives to contemporary theory" (Gaard 2011, 43). As she points out, there is no shortage of environmental justice issues to be tackled in the shadow of the impending Anthropocene, a new epoch where human beings have altered the fundamental bio-systems of the planet. Assuming an ecofeminist position would mean that "humanity no longer positions itself and its needs as transcending 'nature' but regards itself as being immanent within an ecological system on which it depends" (Phillips and Rumens 2015, 2). Just as there has been a revival in feminist art practice, there have been significant attempts to consider what the Anthropocene means for the practice of art. It seems inevitable that these two streams of urgent activity meet once again to reveal a contemporary ecofeminist art making.

Sources:
Fontaine, Darcie S. n.d. *Ecofeminism*. Oxford University Press. //www.oxfordreference.com/10.1093/acref/9780195148909.001.0001/acref-9780195148909-e-284.

Gaard, Greta. 2011. "Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism." *Feminist Formations* 23 (2): 26–53.

Phillips, Mary, and Nick Rumens. 2015. "Introducing Contemporary Ecofeminism." In *Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism*, edited by Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens, 1–16. Oxon; New York: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315778686.

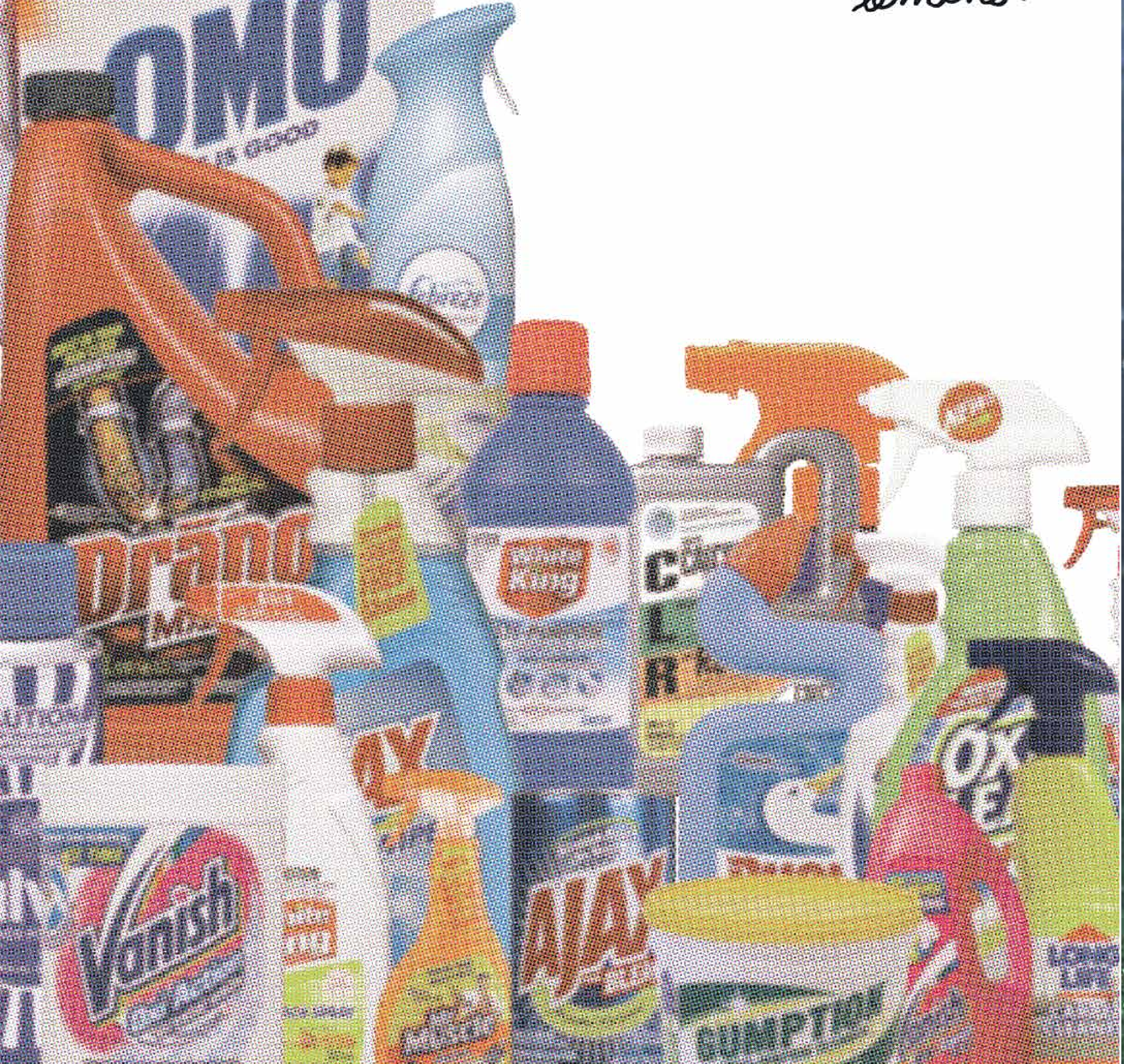
Moore, Niamh. 2015. "Eco/feminist genealogies: renewing promises and new possibilities." In *Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism*, edited by Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens, 19–37. Oxon; New York: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315778686.

Scharff, Virginia. 1995. "Are Earth Girls Easy? Ecofeminism, Women's History and Environmental History -- Ecofeminism Edited by Greta Gaard / Earth Muse by Carol Bigwood / Earth Follies by Joni Seager / Ecological Revolutions by Carolyn Merchant / and Others." *Journal of Women's History* 7 (2): 164–75.

Image Previous Page: Camille Serisier, *Reclining Venus #3* 2016, digital photograph

Image Opposite: Katina Davidson, *Study: denoting location at Purga Mission for installation* 2016, watercolour, ink and pen on incised Arches paper, 30 x 41cm


VINEGA
lemons


OMO
Vanish
AJAX

The Body is a Person

Amy-Clare McCarthy

As Dorian Gray laments[1], a portrait captures a moment in time, a glance or an expression stay forever in the work, while its real life subject continues living, feeling, aging. The portrait is traditionally identity supporting and reinforcing, giving aesthetic and symbolic weight to one's appearance, perhaps even capturing an inner self – hence Dorian's cursed portrait becoming so hideous through his misdeeds. For artists who work with self-portraiture, their practice can end up chronicling their life.

Representations of self can be seen as a connecting factor between the works of Dana Lawrie, James Barth and Clark Beaumont; who while working across different mediums such as painting, media and performance, consistently work with their own image. I'd hesitate though in discussing their works as self-portraits that affirm identity; through self-representation these artists disrupt this sense of self. While their practices at large have quite different interests and concerns, within *crosseXions* each of their works seems to speak to a sense of interpersonal alienation or as an attempt at connection or disconnection with the body.

Floating listlessly in a pool, Nicole Beaumont and Sarah Clark (the members of duo Clark Beaumont) appear estranged from each other within *Now and Then*. The relationship between the two has long been a driving factor of their practice of largely performance and video works. In their most well-known work, *Coexisting,* presented as part *13 Rooms* in 2013, the two shared a plinth that was only comfortably able to fit one for 8 hours a day over the 11 day exhibition. The strength of the work was the intimacy and vulnerability created by the situation, they physically and mentally had to rely on the other to stay atop the plinth and the strength of their connection in this work was palpable. Leading up to the exhibition I had heard a lot about the work, but nothing really prepared me for being in the room, watching them shift position, holding each other's limbs as they moved carefully to stay balanced, giving each other subtle but comforting squeezes, it was incredibly moving sharing the space with them. I found myself concerned for their welfare and silently wishing that time would speed up so they could leave their confines sooner. There was a certain rawness and honesty in the work, of being there with them. One of the strengths of their practice generally is that this sense of honesty of experience translates even into their recorded works, like *Now and Then*. In *Now and Then* we see them as two people, drifting towards each other and also separating, conjuring feelings of loneliness and isolation, they also look like two contemporary Ophelias, somewhat lifeless in the water. These feelings are heightened by the surrealness of the pool setting, which is disconnected from any larger context and feels isolated in and of itself.

While Clark Beaumont present two people cast adrift in alienation from each other, Dana Lawrie and James Barth seem to show themselves as disconnected form their physical selves; their bodies are analysed and reconstructed in their works[2]. For Barth, self-portraiture presents a way to re-imagine the self and to reflect on their own gender identity, as well as investigate "problems of the feminized body, queer theory and transgender representations in technosexual imagery."[3] Their previous works have been both paintings and digital images, in both processes the artist begins by photographing themself to use as source material for the work. This means posing and photographing until the body is framed just right, then constructing and rendering a whole new version of the self in 3d modelling programs. The final images in the *crosseXions* exhibition are reminiscent of a magazine photoshoot, exuding a casual glamour (which is further enforced by the nostalgic and romantic black and white finish) that we know in actuality took hours to model then construct.

In these images the artist challenges expectations of the feminised body as Barth presents a self that is posed in a way we expect from popular culture but without the overt and exaggerated features; tiny waists, impossibly large breasts and hips, features we'd expect of women touched up in Photoshop or wholly created in programming. The artist has mentioned magazine imagery as a reference point, through tabloid journalism and magazines often focus on the sensationalising (even demonising) of transgender bodies, turning the body into spectacle considered in isolation from the self. For Barth, creating these self-portraits is a small way to de-sensationalise, to give viewers a chance to become accustomed to viewing these bodies.[4]

Lawrie, who also works from photographs, recreates the self in a painted image, embellishing or vanishing details, even multiplying herself across the work. In *Mine is forever* body parts appear disembodied and contorted, together across the canvas. Body parts are missing or excluded from the work - there are no faces here - while others appear many times. For Lawrie, self-portraiture acts as a "conduit for my questioning how the painted 'self' can be seen to both affirm and destabilize identity construction through the act of conscious withholding/embellishing and unconscious revealing."[5] Covering the painting work is a thin veil with floral imagery echoing the shapes of the body parts, painted with inks made from flowers. The inks will age and decay throughout the life of the work – fading to make the canvas behind more visible. Squished fists of clay hold the veil in place, but depending on the tension and movement of the veil, will change what's visible to the viewer.

Rather than a fixed, permanent piece, her work becomes a mediation on impermanence and transition, rupturing the portrait as a static, captured moment in time. The nature of a changing portrait is what had first turned my thoughts to Dorian Gray, of course this is not so sinister, but like Lawrie herself, her work will age and change, it will be ruined but revealed by time. The veil, by fading and changing is a reminder of the vulnerability of the body.
In the works of Barth and Lawrie the body is recreated but also erased and hidden. It's interesting when we speak in terms like 'the body' or 'bodies', they can become quite abstracted, I think of final lines from a poem by Morgan Parker, which was born from the frustration in the way in art history often we often talk about 'the body', whose body?-

The body is a person.[6]

It's important to remember when we discuss 'bodies' that they don't exist without a consciousness. "(To contextualise the poem as a whole deals with the reduction of black women from people to an anonymous black, female body, but I think it's an important reminder when thinking about any body that is in some way othered)."

When I was visiting *coexisting*, I remember standing back, speaking in hushed tones, looking at Clark Beaumont as art, until one of them acknowledged me and I remembered they were people, not just bodies on a plinth or as here, not just bodies in a pool. Looking at art it's easy to study the details and forget who we're looking at, to have a disconnect between the work and the lived experience. Barth recalled to me discussing their work with someone who while considering an image insistently referred to 'the body', Barth found themselves disconcerted by that person's inability or reluctance to acknowledge it as Barth's body[7].

These works are the bodies but also the selves of Lawrie, Barth, Clark and Beaumont, re-imagined and represented to us, showing them isolated in moments they have lived, felt or as they wish to be. While we remember the body is a self, we can also hold that these selves are more than their body.

---

1. For anyone unfamiliar, in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on viewing a beautiful portrait of himself Dorian curses that while the painting will always be beautiful, he will one day not have his youth and good looks, Dorian wishes the portrait could show the process of aging in order that he stay beautiful instead. Dorian gets his wish and while acting in a morally reprehensible way throughout the book continues to look beautiful, while his portrait becomes twisted and deformed.
2. Jenna Baldock, *Dirty Blonde* exhibition catalogue, 2016.
3. James Barth in artist statement on work supplied to Beth Jackson, 2016.
4. In conversation with James Barth, 30 March 2016.
5. Dana Lawrie biography on BNE Art http://bneart.com/artists/dana-lawrie/
6. Morgan Parker, *Magical Negro #84: The Black Body,* 2015. Published on http://www.pen.org/poetry/two-poems-morgan-parker - The title of this article is taken from her poem. I'd encourage you all to read it.
7. In conversation with James Barth, 30 March 2016.

Get to know yourself better.
Try these activities.

Fit into yourself.
Feel which parts of your body fit nicely into other parts. You could weave your fingers in between your toes or put your chin over your knee. You could try something else. You might notice areas of your body with similar or contrasting widths, textures or shapes that feel or look interesting together. You might notice that parts of your body are different temperatures.

Listen to a conversation that is happening around you.
It might be someone that you know or a stranger. Think about the particular topic they are discussing. Consider their tone of voice and body language. Notice the words or gestures they are using to describe things. Reflect on why a person might speak in this way.

Experiment with your body.
Consume something that will colour your feces. You could drink a synthetic dye or eat something that will colour it naturally. See how long it takes for your body to digest the colour. You can measure the time it takes by assessing the colour of your shit. It may take a day or two of monitoring your bowel movements attentively. Notice if you encountered any challenges or enjoyments when doing this activity.

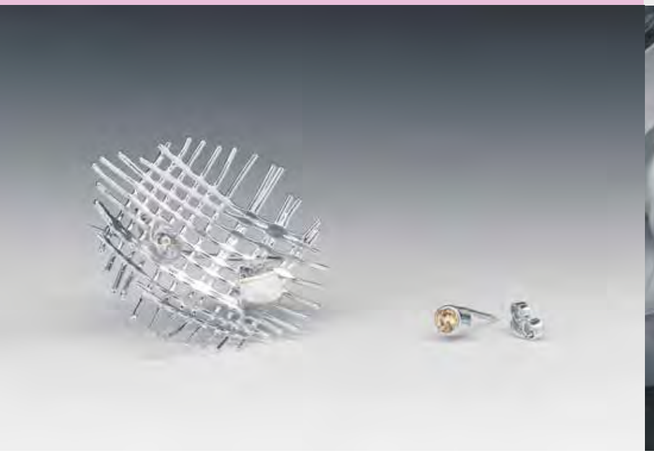
Find a friend. Brush each other's teeth at the same time.
You will be brushing their mouth with their toothbrush and they will be brushing your mouth with your toothbrush. Remember to keep your mouth open! Be gentle with your friend. Be attentive. Ask them if you have cleaned all of their teeth. Ask them if they need their tongue brushed. Maybe you would like to spit, rinse, and then do a rinse brush as well.

Gesture your heart beat.
Place one hand over your heart and hold your other hand out in front of you. Use the hand over your heart to feel for your heart beat. Notice the timing of the beat and the strong and gentle parts. Imagine what shape your heart might be. Use your other hand to gesture the timing and intensity of your heart. Think about the way your fingers move with the palm of your hand, and the way your arm moves. Continue observing your heart while experimenting with the gesture.

By Leena Riethmuller

CALL OUT
PARICIPANTS WANTED

Volunteer for an interactive jewellery project, as an extension of Clare Poppi's '147grams, 3 carats' artwork. No costs involved, men & women invited to take part. Contact: 147grams@gmail.com for more information.



Jewellery is a Woman Thing

Clare Poppi

Jewellery is a woman thing. I'm not saying men don't wear it, full-stop. There are definitely guys out there who wear a heap more jewellery than I do – I'm thinking bad stereotype of an Italian mobster wearing a fat stack of Italian gold chains around his neck, mafia style. I'm just saying that generally, in our society, women choose it more, wear it more and consume it more. According to International Diamond Exchange Online 95% of jewellery is made and purchased for women. As we slowly become awakened to the idea that our fashion choices have a massive impact on the environment and our global society, we also need be aware that recycled gold and ethically sourced gemstones are as important as organic fibres and fairtrade sneakers.

We could begin by contemplating our addiction to the tacky horror world of cheap, mass-produced fast fashion jewellery which is made from plastics and base metal, chemically plated or chromed for metallic effect and glued with sparkly faux gems (vomit). Designed to be worn for a night out, most likely to quickly break and be chucked out – but don't worry people, twenties-style metallic head bands will be out of style by then and we can all go buy our crossover body chains to replace the loss. Fast fashion encourages a throw-away society, where jewellery is not made to last but to be consumed and turned over in short seasonal cycles.

At the rate of change in fashion styles, Grandma's solitaire engagement ring is getting turned into Chloe's vag piercing ("but mum, this is how I'm expressing my eternal and undying love for Brad, and he's had his Prince Albert done with Uncle Charlie's onyx cufflinks, it's all very sentimental!"). Must say though, kudos to Chloe & Brad for going down the recycling path.

At the other end of the scale we have high end chain jewellery stores offering credit cards, which are incentivised to promote a higher consumption of goods. What we don't educate ourselves about are the high interest rates and poor terms offered by such schemes. But hey! I hear you say, these products are actually valuable, they are made of gold and diamonds and such and will retain their worth, right? Wrong. That $500 9ct gold chain around your neck weighs 3.4gms and will get you around $65 dollars traded for scrap.

But let's look at the hidden costs of that chain. There is the arsenic used to extract the gold ore from the rock and the health impacts when the tailings dam leaks and enters the water supply of nearby villages. The cultural devastation when multi-national miners get government leases on traditionally owned lands. How do we even begin to put a price on that?

Jewellery is a woman thing. We all need to take a bit of ownership of our consumption. We need to think about how and why we consume jewellery the way we do. And maybe I just want to say that instead of the most important piece of jewellery a woman receives being the ring which binds her to a patriarchal notion of ownership, how about we embrace the South Indian tradition of a girl receiving jewellery and other gifts when she gets her first period and enters the beginning of her womanhood. Because it's a woman thing.

Images starting top right clockwise: 1. Clare Poppi, *147grams, 3 carats* 2016, Recycled sterling silver, Photo: Faun Photography 2. Katie Stormonth, *Clare Poppi Melting the Recycled Silver* 2016, Photo: courtesy of the artist 3. Clare Poppi, *Beth 147grams, 3 carats* 2016, Recycled sterling silver, 9ct gold, ethically sourced QLD zircon, Photo: Faun Photography

An Edited/Curated Conversation from Around my Lounge Table on Concepts of Feminism and 'Experience' in Process-based Art, with crosseXions Artists Shayna Wells, Clare Poppi and Leena Riethmuller (via skype)

Marisa Georgiou

All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that's more social, more collaborative, and more real than art.
Dan Graham

Letting go of control, and associated power, has been inserted into these artist's practices through various mechanisms. It seems to be the crux of their personal politics and their resulting inclusion in a feminist show. Whether or not a conscious decision has been made to engage with feminist methods of practice, feminist ideologies are inherent in their processes, results, and beyond gallery display.

Leena has no visual works in the crosseXions exhibition, only headphones which play recordings of people describing a positive feeling. It's a simple but fascinating concept: that's the whole premise really; the idea is to not be too prescriptive, so that people can really own it and make it theirs. Where does the interest lie in making work with an unknown outcome?

There are a lot of interesting conversations surrounding the task itself, so it's not just the positive feeling but also what constitutes a positive feeling, what constitutes positivity as a concept, and how that manifests differently for people… The recordings are an example of variations within the idea of what a positive feeling might be.

Having gone through the activity with Leena myself last year, I observe how much the process has changed, given the small time-frame.

Leena: *Yes, when [you and I] did it we wrote it down first. Since then the process has been modified, because there is something really beautiful about all the "ums" and "ah"s, and the pauses and people trying to work out how to say what they're feeling or how they felt, and so I decided to get participants to just go for it, because it captures a thought progression which is quite lovely. I just let them speak until they naturally come to an end.*

Marisa: Do you think it's important that the people are in the room with you, as opposed to collecting recordings online, or getting them sent to you by request?

Leena: *The thing that I like about doing the workshops is that I am giving time and energy to the person who is experiencing the work; as much time and energy as the person experiencing the work is giving to me. In my workshops and participatory work, it's a mutual and consenting experience between the artist and participant; I can see that the participants appreciate it. When making work for this show, I am experimenting with doing recordings without a "workshop" environment or gallery space. Instead, I arrange a time, perhaps at their home or at some other location, and the location changes the dynamic of our relationship. When I go to the participant's space, I find that I am not leading them as much. The conversation around the task may take a different direction compared to if we were in an art space where I, as the artist, would be considered to be in charge. It is nice to allow someone else to unfold in their own time. The most special part of the process for me is witnessing them make the task their own and exploring the relationship between me and the other person.*

Marisa: Do you have a specific/ethical/feminist interest in the process being non-hierarchal?

Leena: *Yes. It is important to me to create opportunities for people to participate or contribute in the way that they want to, that gives them autonomy. When I initially started including others in my practice, it was challenging to not have any expectations about what might happen. Now I am more than happy to hand over control and see where things might go, even if that might risk changing the work altogether. If I am going to invite someone to do something with their bodies, I want them to feel comfortable and in control of the experience.*

Marisa: *Shayna's work is a series of images recording people's first responses to Lake Ainsworth on the north-west coast of New South Wales. It is a place of great personal and historical significance being an Indigenous women's site and a place that, without any sense of ownership, Shayna calls 'home'.*

Shayna: *When I got back from Iceland I started making video works in the landscape, and that process of going out and experiencing it changed my practice and my way relating to the environment. Because the landscape was constantly changing I didn't have time to make labour some works, and so when I got back I was in a strange predicament because a lot of my ideas about what I was doing had changed, as well as my life circumstance. I started going back to the lake where I had been going for years and has a lot of personal significance to me, and tried videoing and photographing myself in the landscape. Similar to Leena, after a time it became less about me and I wanted to start sharing this experience with other people and seeing what their initial response would be. It is about how people respond to the landscape itself but also how people are connected to direct experience, and that experience of the natural environment. It's a basic human instinct to be connected, but also conflicting because, as it is a Tea Tree lake, the water is black, you can't see the depth, and so there is also an element of fear involved. However, the water is also very soft, all algae on the bottom, and unexpectedly salt water. So many different sensations occur.*

Marisa: Did you make a conscious decision to direct subjects fairly minimally?

Shayna: *I don't direct them at all, I don't tell them to get in the water… I don't get them to do anything. When we get there, we find a spot where we are comfortable, I say if you want to get in the water you can but if not it's fine. We don't discuss when, where or how any of those things are going to occur. I also don't do any editing to the photos. No cropping or changing colour saturation. It is interesting because over a short period of time, when the subject forgets where they are or that they're being recorded, or when their bodies start becoming immersed in the water that is actually quite shallow, the really nice moments emerge. I guess that can be a little confronting, when the bodies are half immersed or you can only see certain parts, or when the faces have certain expressions or when you can't see them at all. The other part is that I'm taking the work and hand processing them into cyanotypes and washing them back into the water of the lake, the idea being that the process comes full circle. The photographs themselves become artefacts or objects physically relating to the physicality of the lake itself. Photographs become a memory, and some of the cyanotypes the images have almost completely disappeared. Those images will also eventually fade, they are not archival; they will become blank paper again. [On reflection, this is one of the reasons I was specifically interested in these artist's practices. Nothing about the process or final product seems 'fixed'. They are not quite ephemeral, it wasn't done with that intention at least, but there is no concern for creating any sort of 'artefact', just facilitation of experience and sharing it with the audience in whatever medium naturally results.]*

Marisa: Clare's work is a single chunk of silver, cast into forms specific to who is going to wear it when it is 'loaned' to them. It then gets re-made for the next participant. However, there may not even be any silver in the gallery itself.

Clare: *Before I melt down and deconstruct the piece to make the next one, I'm taking a rubber mould, which I'm going to inject wax into. It is a typical jewellery practice, but instead of taking that mould and making it into a cast, I think only the waxes are going to be displayed… just some kind of 'presence' so that people can get a feeling about what was there but is no longer. I keep wanting to tie it back to jewellery processes, but I'm really torn between how to display the metal, whether to just have it in an in-between state, like a chunk, or not. Because I don't intend for this to be the end of the project, I want to keep it as whatever it's currently at. It's also about the commodification of art and jewellery, looking at a way to completely reject that. I get so frustrated with the art world and its concern with archival quality.*

Shayna: *It's only a small group of people interacting with the work before it goes into the gallery environment, and so it's good to document it, but I don't think anyone else will get the same level of impact. It's more about the trace. I'm really interested in the idea of transience. It's the same with photographs, everyone is so concerned with it being archival quality, however photography can now be presented in a digital format anyway, or it can be a hand-process format, or printed again archivally. It's about how the experience transcribes best.*

Marisa: I ask Clare about her experience of making each jewellery piece tailored to a specific person.

Clare: *It was a very vague process: it's about a dialogue, about what's happening in their life, what events are occurring. People have been so forthcoming and willing to share personal details that I can start pulling themes out of. It's definitely very different to the way a jeweller is given a commission, where they generally make what they are told to make. Here I go "Ok I really like that one particular idea of something you've said" and I'll make it according to that.*

Marisa: In my experience, most feminist art seems to lie on a spectrum with protest art at one end and really empathetic art at the other (with many lying somewhere in between). I am wondering whether the artists have any thoughts about what approach they prefer, or what they think is more effective: "why do you use the methods that you do?"

Clare: *I guess I'm trying to make a loop out of your spectrum and tie it in a nice bow, because in one way I'm making activist art with a social ethical dilemma with jewellery making; how it's bad for the environment, the negative social impacts within the capitalist nature of its production; and I want to highlight those issues and explain that and talk to the general public. In that sense it is activist art. However, it's only through having those one-on-one conversations where you're making this piece of jewellery for someone and they get invested in it, that you can explain the way metal is mined and the impacts it has on community and the social ramifications there.*

Leena: *To me the personal is political, and the personal can be really potent and be used in art as a form of activism. My work is not overtly political. However, my politics are in the process and choices made when I make the work, how, as Clare was saying, the practice is political. It is a very conscious choice.*

Marisa: Do you think being a female artist and talking about experience with other women, there is no possibility of escaping a feminist reading? Is that ever a source of frustration for you?

Clare: *Making jewellery there is no way to escape a feminist reading, because it's so rare that men are comfortable wearing pieces of jewellery, and so it is not even that I'm a woman, it's that I'm using a medium that is perceived to be inherently female… not to say that there isn't a place for men within that, but that's how it's perceived by 99% of the population. Do you think that has changed your practice? It is honestly so ingrained in my own perceptions of what it is that I don't find it useful to analyse it. It was so interesting when [curator Beth Jackson] was saying my work is feminist, because I started thinking about what I do and realising "of course it is! It's for women, it's them taking part in the activity, and I know it will be near impossible to get a man to participate in this experience."*

Marisa: What about you Leena?

Leena: *I accept the reading and I'm glad for it. There was some time, when I first started making work with my body, when I got the feeling that being a woman and using my body as material and subject wasn't worthy of artistic merit. I think what I experienced was a form of social conditioning – to see my experience and my body as not relevant. Reflecting on that experience, I can see it has been a motivator for my current projects. I am privileged to be in the position now; where I can speak for myself, and also give my energy to supporting others to promote the relevancy of their bodies and experiences. Though I'd like to have my work read in other ways in addition to 'feminist', I don't feel like it's something to escape from. I am a feminist and that influences what I do.*

Shayna: *I was once in a show that Lisa Bryan-Brown curated and it was only in the artist talks that she called my work feminist, which I had never considered. She said the colours and the way I respond to landscape are very different from a male-orientated, grandiose reading of the landscape. I'm not trying to conquer the landscape; there's a very personal reading of it. This show came out of a discussion I had with Beth, because I see many female artists in Brisbane who it would be interesting to see how they respond to these themes… not necessarily placing the label on themselves, but hearing their thoughts about what it meant to them and how they would respond to work from that premise. I'm not sure if feminism is such a big issue in terms of a label being placed ON to my work, I think my work can be read in many different ways, so it doesn't bother me if someone said it was feminist because I see it as a positive association and it also allows people to have a channel to be able to filter and read the work.*

Marisa: So a feminist reading is more of a lens or an approach rather than a label? (It's a great point).

Shayna: *If [the feminist label] allows any avenue for anyone to understand or interact with the work, whatever way they choose to frame it is fine with me… however people choose to interact with the work is out of my control.*

Leena: *Shayna, do you find that, saying you've been curated into many different shows for many different readings, you don't want any control over that?*

Shayna: *No. I think it also stems from my experience of having work stolen from a gallery! It happened so many years ago but I found it really confronting. I eventually thought "beyond making the work, everything else is out of my control".*

Image Below: Marisa Georgiou, *Skpeshot from Round Table Conversation featuring Leena Reithmuller*, Shayna Wells & Clare Poppi 2016, digital photograph
Image Opposite: Courtesy of Shayna Wells