FRAMEWORK

Arc UNSW Student Life @ ART : DESIGN

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

(Basically) The September Issue

Anna Wintour

Hello, Anna Wintour here, finally sitting down to write this editorial (Starbucks in hand) since the cab was late fetching me from my morning tennis. I'm filling in for Audrey today - and before you ask, no, it's not because she spent the whole night procrastinating, watching The September Issue. Instead, her fatal flaw is incompetence. She lacks the skilled artistic eye, that is, one needed to produce a world-class publication like Framework... or Vogue (obvs). That's just the rules of the game.

Now, for transparency's sake, let me tell you a thing or two about 'disguise'. I believe the idea of a disguise is predicated on the idea that one is to be seen or sensed. Ladies, oh do I know what that feels like. People and their silly cameras follow me like I'm some sort of rare and exotic wildlife; ready to capture me in my ever changing iridescent arrangement of feather or furs. I'm watched every day. The sound of camera shutters is like white noise to me. Cameras and their dark brooding lens eyes are just daily scenery. My image is produced and reproduced and multiplied and circulated. Google it. You can hold my image in your hands - on your mobile device, in a trashy celebrity magazine, and of course in any one of the classier publications.

Knowing that we're being watched may motivate us to conceal. As I've mentioned before when asked about my trademark sunglasses: *"They are seriously useful. I can sit in a show and if I am bored out of my mind, nobody will*

♪ Destroy everything you touch today ♪

- [Interviewer] These are all the September issues--

- September is the January in fashion, you know?

This is when I change.

340 × 255 - Images may be subject to copyright Find out more

notice ... At this point, they have become, really, armour."[1] If anything we wield our own tools to disguise, and for our various reasons. We're constantly being tested on our rights to privacy, on our representation, our visibility and invisibility. It's a turbulent landscape to navigate; *being seen*.

We disguise ourselves, yes – but what about the things that disguise themselves from us? While I've had more than my fair share of sneaky hidden paparazzi I'm talking about things a little bigger than that. I'm talking about the matrix of information gathering programs where everything is tracked, observed, categorised, and examined. Or so they tell me. We know we're being tracked, but we're encouraged not to worry about it. And I encourage you not to worry about it my dear readers. (See our privacy policies.)

However, Bell's piece on page 50 suggests when we construct our online indentities through these platforms that watch us 'we simultaneously manufacture our own data doubles that can become separated from ourselves and that maybe these 'data doubles' are their own form of fabricated cloak. Should I start to expect pitches like 'The Eight Ultimate Scandinavian Data Cloak Labels To Add To Your Wardrobe Rotation.'?

And what about to disguise through excess noise? You might accuse or confuse the vogue twitter as being a twitter spam bot, with its constant twitter twatter. While on page 28 contributor Lev describes a world in which "*we have watched state funded bot-armies composed of empty escorts and soulless celebrities being used to spam activist Twitter hashtags.*" While spam is being used as a tool for obfuscation and coercive persuasion, we prefer to keep it tasteful – seductive. The paradox between the hyper visible and the barely perceptible – now that's something to chew on.

We're all figuring out how to best walk our LV heels through these messy landscapes (cyber or not), in which we're constantly visible (or not). Take Nguyen's text on page 6 for example, it gives us a sense of how online infrastructure and oppressive social behaviours disassemble and disconnect bodies. Humans form into ever-newer constellations and shape (or have shaped for them) ever newer disguises. Or Mora's piece on page 54 which poses 'If our identities are essentially structures created by white/settler/hetero-normativity then why not repurpose the existing material to create alternate structures – shelters, paths, night-clubs and community halls.'

Now, this is all just the first bite of pâté on the impeccably crafted round of delictible canapés that is this issue of Framework. So I encourage you the feast on our fine array of contributions following. After all this is basically the September issue of Framework after all, sitting at 86 pages, it's our biggest yet.[2]

———————

1   https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/celebrity-life/royals/queen-elizabeth-visits-london-fashion-week-for-first-time-sits-next-to-anna-wintour-who-keeps-her-sunglasses-on/news-story/c7867814d879b5ebe14e0ca68520bf33

2   Unconfirmed, but an educated guess.
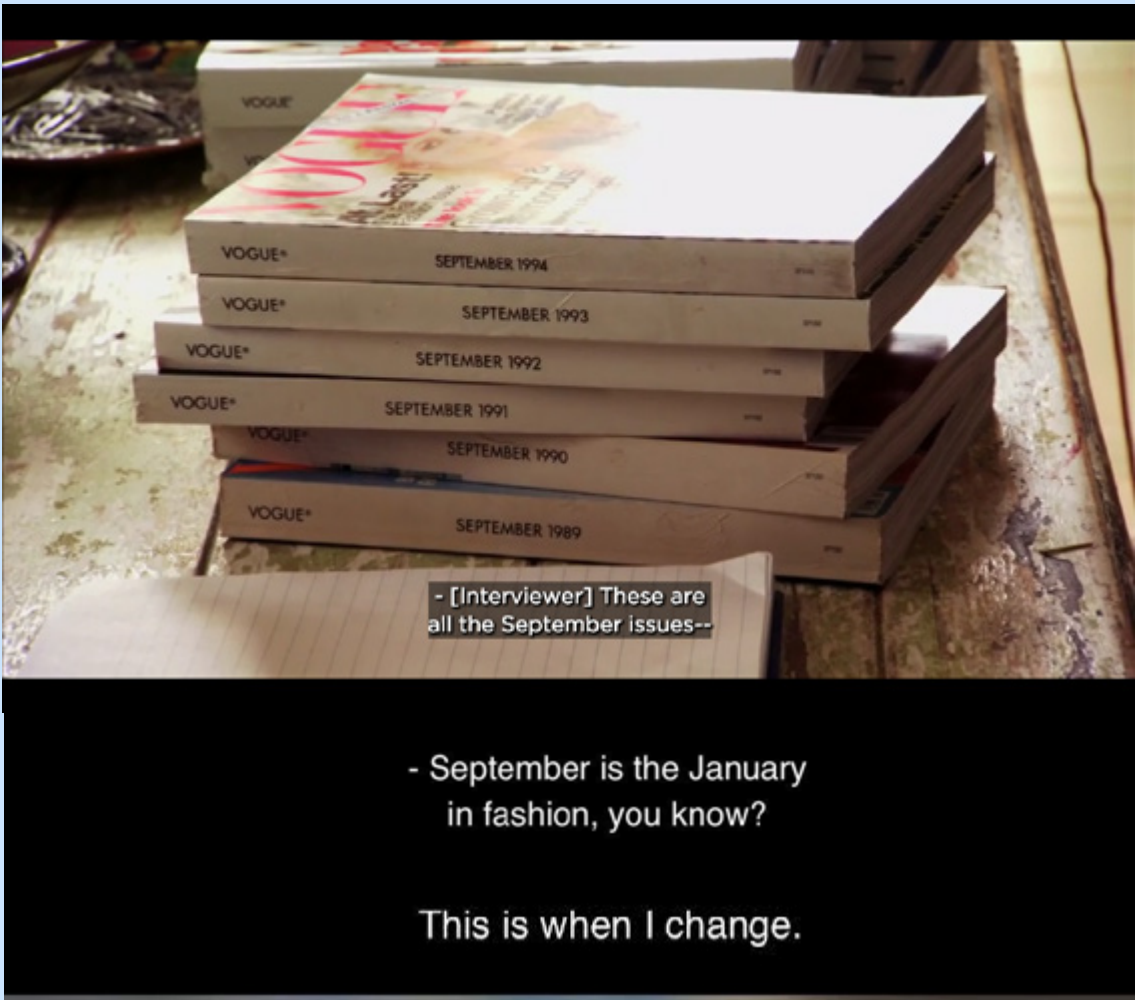
Pornographic Desire and Virtual Beats:
Fragmenting Queer Asian Male Bodies

Loc Nguyen

Pornographic Desire and Virtual Beats:Fragmenting Queer Asian Male Bodies The Internet has become an integral element of today's gay male sociality and a tool in shaping erotic gay culture. Online pornography, cruising applications, smartphones and mobile internet access work together to circulate the mediated gay male body. Broken and isolated. Faceless profiles, headless torsos, dick pics and hole pics. Fragmented body parts pertaining to gay male sexuality pile on top of one another in one huge orgy.

"What's your nationality?"
"Australian"

Beat culture within the history of gay male sociality has long been associated with anonymous sex. The darkness and shadows of spaces such as clubs, parks, public toilets and saunas become masks for strangers to discretely engage with other bodies. Glory holes dissolve away the entire body, leaving behind one's cock to enter another's mouth. Homoeroticism fetishises the body in its broken and fragmented parts. Perhaps this is why gay male social relations have tended to latch onto media technology and the Internet where bodies and identities become compartmentalised. Grindr, chatrooms and online pornography adopt the role of the virtual beat. Sexualised bodies are made public while identities remain hidden.1

But what does 'gay male sexuality' even mean? Mainstream culture has continually only allowed the

representation of one gay man. He is white, masculine, able-bodied and goes to the gym six days a week and Arq on the seventh. Homo as in homosexual or homo as in homogenous? How do queer Asian male bodies then negotiate their positions alongside hostile environments where the white gay male body is considered the centre? What happens to their identity when they begin to mould themselves to fit within the realms of pornographic desire?

"Where are you from?"
"Sydney"

The undesirability of Asian male sexuality has been manifested through the interpolation of pornography and the everyday, reflecting back onto one another. Profiles on intimate Internet spaces spit out words

I KEEP HIDDEN FROM MY FRIEND BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM KEEP AWAY FROM ME

I USE TO WANT TO FIND THE ASIAN GUY TO COME SHOW UP IN THE GAY PORN
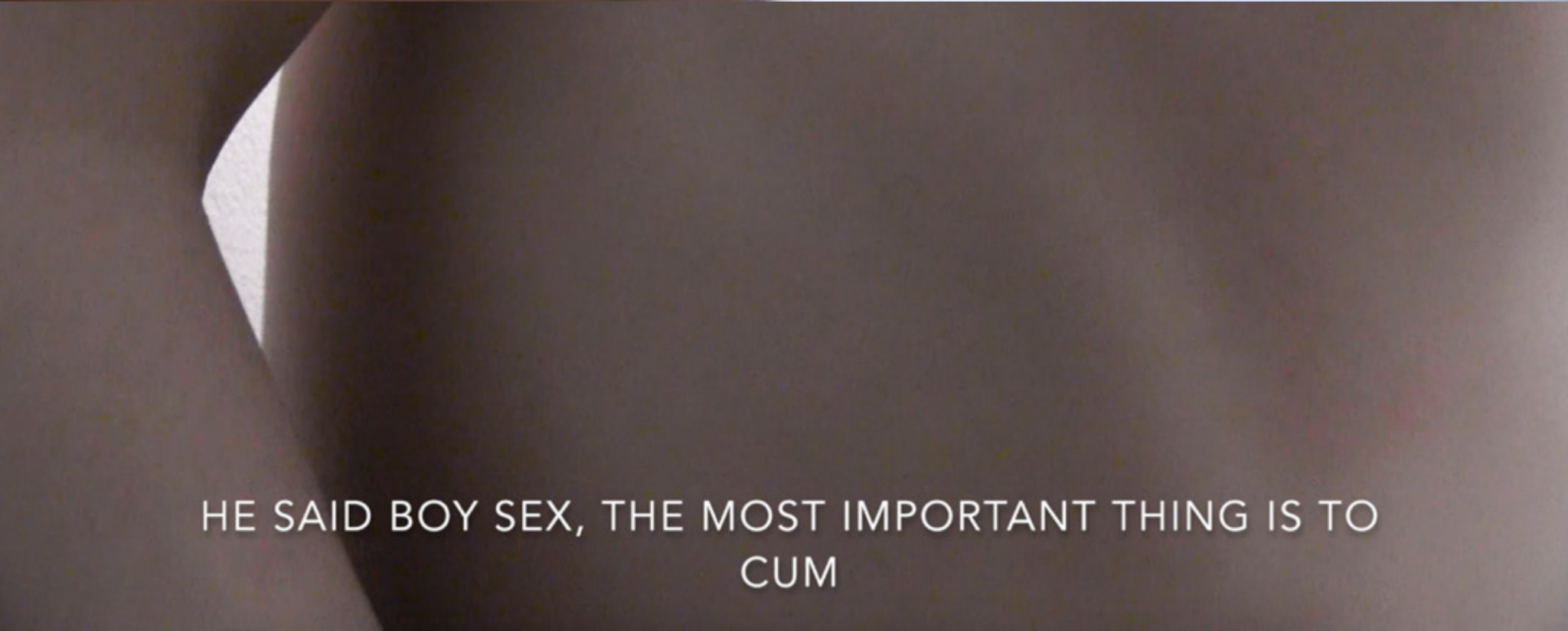
HE SAID BOY SEX, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO CUM

Today

You remind me of a guy named ter chi chin.
9:20pm

He is a Malaysian chinese boy. Very nice.
9:20pm

Say something...

Aa

which oppress those who do not fall within the boundaries of white gay masculinity and sexuality - 'no rice', 'no Asians'.

The displacement of queer Asian men has led them to finding different modes of constructing their own representation within a culture dominated by white bodies and white supremacy. Some Asian men share images of their headless bodies as a way to gain desirability before revealing their racialised faces. The "ethnicity" section on their online profiles are left blank to bypass the filtering function built into cruising apps, which allow men seeking sex with other men to exclude and erase potential sex partners based entirely on race, age and body types. "The face is a limitation. It is a site for others to project and delimit sexuality".2

"What is your background?"
"Vietnamese"

Along with being violently erased, the queer Asian male body can also be subjected to the gaze of white male fetishists. "Polite, smooth and submissive", the queer Asian male body undergoes interrogation, dissection, reduction and racialisation. Racism and fetishism become opposite ends of one problematic spectrum, that is, racialisation. The en masse whitewashing of the gay male libido and the neocolonial project of continually reinscribing gay Asian men as submissive become acts of violence, which reduce an entire group of people. Under the weight of white supremacy, queer Asian men reshape and construct their desirability through different processes of cyber-whitewashing via the representation of their bodies and fracturing of identity. The shadows of the virtual beat fragments, isolates and masks queer Asian bodies, no longer as a kink for anonymous sex, but as a means to exist publicly amongst the homoerotic desires of white hegemonic powers.

1. Ruberg, B. 2014, 'Cruising dystopia: the messy optimism of digital connection in Shaka McGlotten's Virtual 1Intimacies', Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 275-286
2. Shimizu, C.P. 2016, 'Screening shirtless AZN men: the full frontal power of intimate internet industries', Positions: East 2Asia Cultural Critique, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 231-252
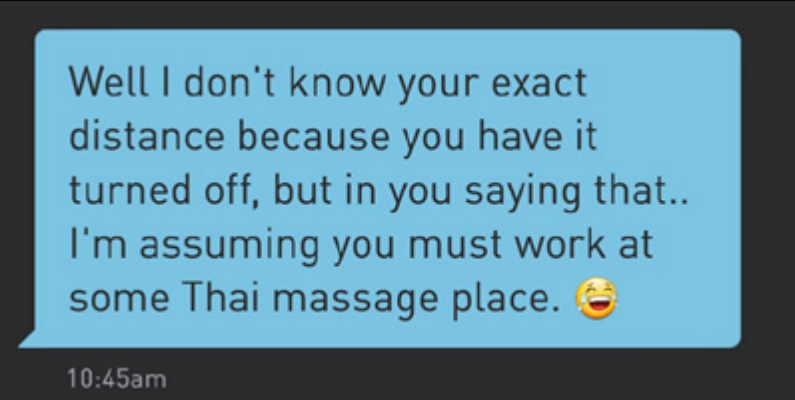
Well I don't know your exact distance because you have it turned off, but in you saying that.. I'm assuming you must work at some Thai massage place. 😂

10:45am

Magic Dyke XXL: an interview with Em Size

Em Size and Stella Maynard chat about male stripping, the erotics of trans*masculinity and butchness, and the politics of queer visibility. Interview has been edited for clarity and length.

ES [FLIPS THE SCRIPT AND DECIDES THEY ARE INTERVIEWING STELLA]: Why do you want to interview me? Why? Why why why? Why me, why now?

SM: I wanted to talk to you about your video work Magic Dyke XXL, and unpack what it's doing with questions of gender, sexuality, performance and masculinity. Mainly, for narcissistic reasons, because you and I share a lot of experiences and feelings about gender, specifically trans*masculinity and butchness. Maybe we can start with you introducing Magic Dyke XXL, for anyone who hasn't seen it?

ES: Yeah, I mean, I'm not going to be very good at doing a synopsis because I'm not good at shutting up or knowing when to say when - and even though it's so gross to say this about your own work as an artist, in my head I feel like there's a lot going on in the work and I never know where to begin explaining it. But in a nutshell, Magic Dyke XXL is a 'queering' [said jokingly, with a heavy dose of quotation marks] of Magic Mike XXL, the iconic, semi-fictionalised second film about Channing Tatum's life in male stripping before being an actor. It's not really about that movie but I riff off that title because it's a very prominent artefact/cultural product of male stripping that connotes hen's nights, girls nights out, and just... male stripping and the idea of men being subjects of a 'female' → male erotic gaze. I think we find this gaze only in a few pockets of society - alongside male stripping, I see it in the production and consumption of boy bands. So my video is a video of me stripping and lipsyncing in front of my webcam at home, merging the aesthetics and movements of male stripping, boy bands, and different queer archetypes to parody and probe the idea of masculine (particularly, butch or transmasculine) subjects finding ways into being viewed erotically (which is to say, publicly desired).

SM: Did something in particular draw you to the genre of male stripping?

ES: Well the work was commissioned for Les Misérables '18, an exhibition at Kudos Gallery curated by Luke Létourneau,

Heidi Lefebvre and Katy B Plummer. The show was meant to be referring to musicals and the telling of history through theatre and camp. So my way into that exhibition was thinking about male stripping and boy bands as relational sites of theatre and performance where sexualities and genders are produced and re-produced, and where a gaze that looks at men as erotic subjects is 'fleshed out' - so to speak [winks]. I find it interesting how male strippers and boy bands have developed their specific vocabularies of movement - in some ways it reminds me of how the archetype of the 'butch dyke' is partly formed by a coherent collection of 'common' gestures - a kind of gait, sometimes ways of sitting, like manspreading... in general, there's a set of postures and ways of articulating a body that make butch dyke-ness a recognisable and erotic thing. The song I'm lip-syncing to is 'I want it that way' by the Backstreet Boys, which is in 'Magic Mike XXL' when the guy is in the gas station, and he's trying to imagine himself as a stripper. Obviously this video has a resonance with that scene since it's really about me (semi-humorously) imagining myself as this male stripper/queer sex symbol.

SM: What I love about the work is there's a blurring between, on the one hand, its humour, irony and critiques of masculinity, and then on the other hand, there's also a layer of sincerity – a sincere expression of transmasc embodiment?

ES: Partly I think it's a negotiation of that, and those fractured things. It speaks to how I see an experience of gender and

sexuality to be inherently contradictory and competing, in the sense that you feel it so sincerely but you're also really suspicious of that entire framework that you feel orientating you through the world. I'm often like, "this is all just such a joke".

Partly Magic Dyke XXL is a critique of masculinity and the spectacles of desire at large. But yes, it's also a negotiation of the archetypes of male stripping and boy bands for an erotic purpose - since, I guess, we're always having to negotiate, subvert and resignify pre-existing codes, vocabularies and practices when it comes to gender and desire. In that way, I guess I'd say the work has two key aims: on the one hand, it was genuinely coming from a place of questioning why my body and bodies like mine aren't eroticised – it came from a desire to live in an erotic space, to publicise this body as an erotic body, not a political body. And I did that through occupying this highly erotic practice of performance. Then on the other hand, I had this (entangled) desire to critique the archetypes and caricatures that bind our bodies into social coherence within queerness and within het-culture - I'm talking about figures like the dyke or the gay male. I really wanted to think critically about how we look at masculine people as the subjects or objects of desire, and what maps for eroticism we're forced to use as tools that orient us in desire and in relation to one another, whether we want to or not. Like, even if I don't identity as a dyke, for people who might desire me, what framework do they have for understanding their desire to f**k me outside of that archetype (and ones like it)?

SM: You know, the other night I had a go at choreographing a male strip routine in my bedroom after seeing your work. It was funny, because male stripping is so much a part of static narratives of cis-desire: they're usually the cis-woman's final hurrah at the 'hen's night' before she passes into a life of non-eroticism in marriage. But when I was trying it, it kind of felt like I was courting my own body? Like, I was both the strip performer, and the person sitting on the chair, being seduced...

ES: Yeah, totally. When I was going to film Magic Dyke XXL, I was just like "fuck, I don't know if I can do this." It's hard to get into the zone – to psych yourself into presenting yourself as a sex symbol, which was the project of this. It was meant to be comical, for sure, and I let it be awkward in other parts (because, it's awkward when you're 24 years old and dancing and stripping in your parents' bathroom like a fourteen year old). But afterwards I was looking at some of the footage and was like, "nah, fuck, this is hot". It sounds like such a ridiculous thing to say, but it's just that the kinds of bodies that 'we' have don't have a lot of blueprints for eroticisation. I don't think we have a lot of ways into seeing our bodies as desirable. I don't know if you would agree, but I think for some people like us, you have to spend so much time just learning to find your body not so repulsive that you yourself are such a turnoff – like being in your body is the ultimate a turnoff, and one that can make it hard to just 'get lost' in an erotic encounter. This work isn't really about the audience desiring me, so much as I would love for the audience to desire this kind of body and this kind of queerness. I would love for the audience to have an erotic, fun and critical (not just hyper-sexualised or hyper-politicised) engagement with this kind of body. And yeah I'd just like to celebrate this body and make people feel confronted with their desire for this kind of gender variance.

Part of the celebration, and part of the investment in this project, for me, also comes from the fact that it's not just about my 'identity'. It's also about eroticising the bodies/identities/subjects/people who I feel attracted to. But I guess, maybe, there's something weird going on there since I am attracted to people who have similar gender expressions/identities as me in a very homoerotic way... I would say that I vacillate uneasily between butchness and trans*masculinity and many of the people who I have been and am attracted to are in that same... zone. Maybe someone else can think about the ways in which that makes desire and admiration for others merge with a personal project of self-actualisation... I don't know if I can articulate the relationship between my 'identity' and desires yet.

And I guess, also, from my personal experience, I feel like I was in denial and slightly repressed, and half-in half-out of the closet and my own libido for so long, that I'm suspicious

of most people who think they're straight. I'm like, "you might not even know what you could or could not desire". Since, I mean, I feel incredibly gay at this point in time [laughs] and I genuinely thought I was super straight and narrow for a long time.

SM: So Magic Dyke XXL is an invitation?

ES: Yeah, maybe? Like, I don't even know who could see this, and it could be part of their ten-year trajectory into thinking "maybe I find that attractive". The only way that I've really come into understanding what I want to look like, and who I want to look at, is from encounters with people - just seeing what's possible. As much as I think visibility is a problem in its articulation and the moralistic rhetoric around it — I don't want to represent myself, and representation is so hard, and it's not fair to ever act like anyone is morally obligated to contribute to 'visibility' for the sake of others — I also wonder, where would I be now if I hadn't been privileged to other people's visibility?

SM: I guess that brings us to the audience and who Magic Dyke XXL is made for. So often transmasc bodies are represented as either pathologised, medicalised, de-eroticised or hyper-spectacualised by cis-people. Obviously you've had control over the process of making the work, but how do you navigate who looks? And who has the right to look at it?
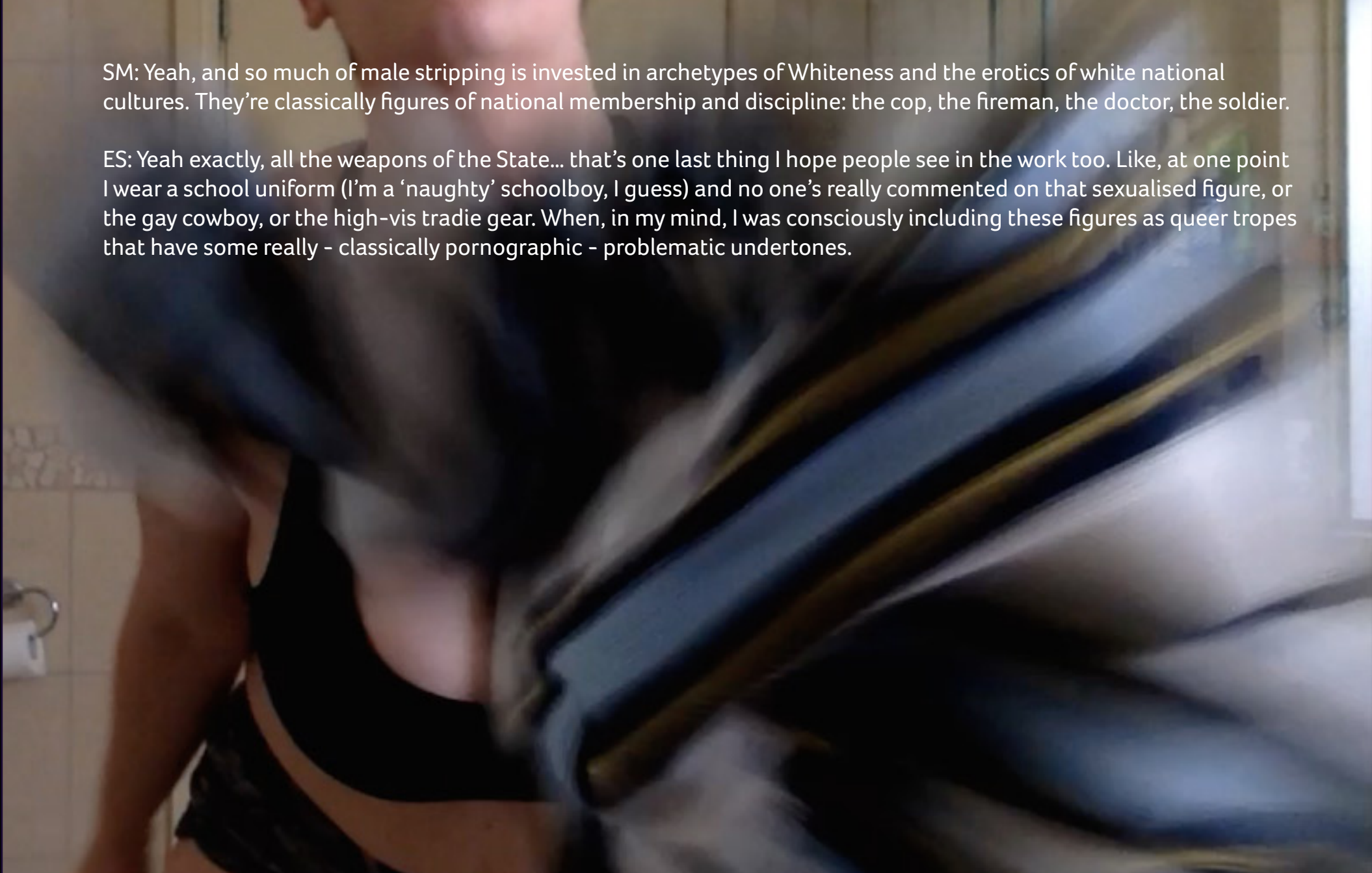
EM: Great question. That's definitely something I've been thinking about heaps since it screened, partly because I haven't really done anything like this before with my body and I wasn't really prepared for the audience engagement with it. I definitely made it for a pretty specific but heterogenous group of queer people who I feel I both identify with and am attracted to, which includes trans*masc ID-ing people, butches, lesbians, and everyone adjacent to, and circling in that drain... But then actually screening it was like "ohhhhh...most of the people who are seeing this are not at all the people I had intended to see it or made it for". It was quite odd to see how different people, like cis-men who mainly sleep with women, responded to the work. In a lot of ways I think I felt uncomfortable with

how the work was received because within an audience of people who identify similarly or feel attraction to similar kinds of bodies/people, the response was like 'that's dark', 'it turned me on', 'it made me laugh and turned me on' - which all make 'sense' to me. But outside of that audience, the response I got from a lot of people (not all) was as if what I had presented was being read, singularly, as a joke. And at that point I had to wonder what the punchline was. Was it my body? Or the idea that people who look like me might be read as erotic subjects (autonomous, humorous and sexually viable subjects)? Or was it the aesthetic of a (so-called) 'cis-woman's body' in 'male' attire? Aside from any of my personal discomfort about these readings, I also feel uncomfortable about how my body in this context is being read as a placeholder or stand-in for a whole group of people - and I feel the burden of representation, pretty hard. I don't want to - even unintentionally - make a whole group of people the butt of a really violent joke. That's the opposite of what I'm trying to do in this work.

SM: The theme of this FRAMEWORK is disguise, and one of the prompts was Hito Steyerl's How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File, which is an exploration of invisibility. I've also been thinking about this work in relation to Berlant and Warner's Sex in Public, and the ways in which sex is mediated by publics. That article outlines the ways in which heterosexual culture is so normalised in national cultures that hetero-sex is afforded the right to privacy. On the other hand, queer sex, bodies and erotics are at once non-consensually made-public, while remaining representationally invisible. Have you given much thought to those questions of visibility, invisibility, and what it means to occupy a 'public' body?

ES: In a lot of ways Magic Dyke XXL was just an experiment in re-claiming the spectacle, and the circus. I had autonomy over all of it, but from the experience of screening it, you just really feel how hard and violent peoples' audienceship and gazing can be. How impossible it can be to speak back to that. After this work, I've really been thinking about what it would mean to radically privatise my body: to say, "no, none of this is available for other people to engage with". I write from my life and my body, as well as creating from/with it, as well as living in it. And after this experience, I've definitely been thinking about how on a personal level I need to not feel like this is a public body. So that might start to affect the kind of work that I do as an 'artist' more.

In terms of public/private as an idea/reality that frames and orients and makes available/unavailable all bodies (those that are queered, gendered, racialised - so, all bodies but in different ways), there's a great book called decolonising trans/gender 101 by b. binaohan. There's this section in it talking about the ethics of public and private bodies, largely in terms of colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy, which makes me think more broadly about what bodies are public and private. I think gender variant bodies are incredibly public, and everyone feels like they have the right to know what someone's genitals are, in such a wild, wild way. When you move through the world as gender variant, I think you often start to metabolise this sense that you don't have autonomy or agency over/in your body in the same way that cis people do...

SM: Yeah, and so much of male stripping is invested in archetypes of Whiteness and the erotics of white national cultures. They're classically figures of national membership and discipline: the cop, the fireman, the doctor, the soldier.

ES: Yeah exactly, all the weapons of the State... that's one last thing I hope people see in the work too. Like, at one point I wear a school uniform (I'm a 'naughty' schoolboy, I guess) and no one's really commented on that sexualised figure, or the gay cowboy, or the high-vis tradie gear. When, in my mind, I was consciously including these figures as queer tropes that have some really - classically pornographic - problematic undertones.

Magic Dyke XXL, 2018 , Em Size
Video, the labour of letting your body be read as a joke
Dimensions variable

MALLEABLE GESTURES

Review: Kudos Live Volume Three: Dual Existence

By June Miskell

A trio of women donning hot pink wings, embellished overalls and shiny accessories command the entrance to the exhibition Kudos Live Volume Three: Dual Existence. An autograph signing table complete with photographs and markers sits to my immediate left, whilst a tripod facing two photo booths fringed with translucent fabric is installed to my right. These objects are yet to be used, but they prepare me for when I meet the gaze of an assistant who reaches out to me, clipboard in hand, asking: "Are you willing to be a participant?". In this immersive performance, audience members are guided to pose for a photo with life-size cardboard cut-outs of the artist Amy Claire Isabelle dressed as 'The Avon Lady,' who assumes the role of a celebrity for the evening. Despite my initial hesitancy, I agree to have my photograph taken with a cut-out. Yet this simple gesture changes everything, as I move from being a passive spectator to becoming an active participant. I can no longer standby waiting for something to happen, instead I have become a functional part of the work's existence. As 'The Avon Lady', Claire appears as both artist and subject, simultaneously moving amongst us, through the gallery, and as a figure on display. And now It seems, I too have assumed dual identities, becoming both an onlooker and a participant. The performance has begun.

Kudos Live Volume Three: Dual Existence is an event with intersecting dynamics: it is a group exhibition, a night-time event, and a product of the tensions that arise out of creating, documenting and reading performance art. In recognising the ephemerality and affect of performative acts, the theme of 'Dual Existence' asks artists to consider how forms of documentation (before, during, and after) are central to how work is created and re-contextualised. And it is through the lens of this curatorial premise that I inevitably view the performances. I have read curator Kate Stodart's brief; I have knowledge of the artists' works; and I have expectations. Equally, I view Kudos Live through my personal and interpersonal relationships with Stodart and many of the artists. Such familiarity disarms any prospect of surprise and urges me to assume the exhibition's success as I, like many others here tonight, cannot help but experience it through this network of relations. In a sense, the performance has paradoxically begun before I ever arrive. The critical question that remains is whether Stodart's curatorial intent will align with my lived experience.

Interrupting the upbeat music and conversational chatter, Stodart's announcement of Loc Nguyen's performance draws the audience's attention to the centre of the gallery. Embodying an intersection of the human and the cyborg, he walks into the centre of the room, bare skinned, wearing white-out contact lenses, pale underwear and a medical tube that wraps around his neck and travels down to his waist. Crouched on the cold floor, Nguyen awaits as a slimy corn-starch mixture is poured over his head. As the goo descends over his body and seeps onto the floor, a soundtrack of phonetic gargling gradually builds before he

Photographs: Dominique Berns-Blackwell

emerges from the wet placenta. Here, we watch the artist being born – a process that sees Nguyen stretching and crawling, contorting his arms and commanding the space, in a simultaneously fluid yet fragmented motion.

The body is an inherently readable, coded subject in performative acts whereby dress, movements and skin are signals of racial and sexual identity. In a state of becoming and forming, Nguyen works with this readability in queering his movements through a subtle nod to Vogue dance – performing as much for himself as he is for us. For me, this signals an experimentation with queerness; a tense mediation on body politics; and an employing of cyborg aesthetics as a way to realise queer potentialities. The climax of the performance doubles as the finish, as his movements collapse and he rushes to remove the medical tube from his body. What once appeared to give him life, now suffocates him. The only physical traces of the performance that remain is the torn tube, wet sheet carcass and a single cautionary wet floor sign. I feel the slimy residue on the floor to find that it has hardened; yet it remains malleable – leaving a seductive trace of the previous movements.

It is here that the tension behind the exhibition reveals itself. As performances are inherently live acts, they always require a consideration of duration, embodiment, space, and audience. As a product of these gestures, the work can only truly ever be experienced in the present moment. In this context, documentation serves as a tool of the work's afterlife and futurity as it manifests through traces that lack completeness. This is echoed through the photographic aspect of Isabelle's work which creates a visual record of the audience's participation, as well as in the remaining corn-starch ashes from Nguyen's performance. However, these documents are treated entirely different as the former is framed and put on a wall, whilst the latter is simply mopped up. In this way, documentation is not only a record, marker or trace of what happened, but also an active continuation of the work itself. 'Dual Existence' approaches performative works in this way, ushering an investigation into how documentation and memory are contestable sites within themselves. No longer is documentation merely a mnemonic device or product of performance, it has become symbiotic with the performative act.

As the momentary chatter leftover from Nguyen's performance comes to a halt, the sound of Aaliyah's 'Rock the Boat' signals the beginning of another performance. I watch as Eugene Choi warms up her body, firstly moving between controlled, rehearsed, repetitive movements, before interjecting this calmness with an uncontrolled fastness, before abruptly switching back again. There is a fluidity throughout the choreography, mediating her movements in relation to the space she occupies, and the objects and the people which surround her. We are made a part of the performance as much as we are watching it unfold. After a few minutes, her movements come to a pause – holding a lumber pose for a brief moment leading everyone, including myself, to think that the performance has ended. However, before the audience's applause becomes too loud, Choi breaks the fourth wall and declares to the crowd "I'm going for two hours". Though many people initially laugh, there is an awkwardness that accompanies returning back to conversational chatter and reinstating normalcy into the space.

Throughout the evening, Choi continues to make use of the entire gallery space: running, crawling and interacting directly with audience members. These actions, though appearing at times unrelated and improvised due to their fragmented physicality, seem second nature to Choi. A singular sheet of paper blending into the wall details a list of every performance Choi can remember performing (off the top of her head). Though the list is dense, it remains incomplete and serves as the reference point for her actions. In a process of constructing and deconstructing her movements, Choi creates a live assemblage of all these performances, remixing and combining them through memory. The performance is in fact multiple (re) performances that results in Choi embodying a living document, where memory is both the source and thread that produces the live act.

At any given moment during 'Dual Existence', multiple things compete for both my attention and the gallery space. As corn-starch lies drying across the floor, Choi travels through the gallery whilst Isabelle and her assistants sign autographs at the front table and photos are taken with the Avon Lady. Amongst these overlapping performances, Get to Work (Georgia Taia, Tracy Quan, and Paris Taia) enter onto the green-lit stage, each member taking a seat on top of circular plinths. Elevated above us, GTW occupies the most assertive focal point of the evening, as they sit stationary and composed with their hands resting on their knees. And, in a space that is over-activated, their stillness demands my attention. Pivoting every few minutes counter-clockwise, they maintain their "picture perfect" composure within the postcard-like framing of the gallery stage. In this rehearsed stillness, GTW confront the history of colonial documentation by making explicit its affiliation with racial profiling and stereotyping. Referencing the style of ethnographic portraits taken in the Pacific, GTW appropriates the photographic process as a way of reclaiming space. Here, their autonomy is paramount. Only now, at this stage of the night do I feel like an important dialogue around documentation, performance and identity can begin as these aspects ironically become more potent when being subverted and interrogated.

Soon after GTW vacates the stage, Ella Byrne faces a tripod installed on top of the dispersed corn-starch remains. I watch Byrne as she watches her digital image form on the wall in front of her, simultaneously creating and filming herself as she gently moves in front of the camera. Pairing these visuals with the robotic

soundtrack overlay that resembles a friendly text to speech convertor, Byrne dives into a real-time digital landscape where the self is pluralised. Byrne exists in a liminal in-between state, occupying past, present and future modes of being all at once. This cross-section allows for several modes of viewing as her digital-self renders and duplicates, building a sea of pixels and digital fragments. As my focus switches between her physical and digital presence, the distance between performance and documentation increasingly blurs as they become inseparable.

By chance, I exit the event similarly to how I entered it, with another pink-wigged assistant taking my hand and leading me to have my photograph taken again. The night has come full circle, however, I cannot not help but feel as though something is missing. 'Dual Existence' has undoubtedly presented a wide ranging

exploration of performance and documentation, but perhaps not in the way that curator Kate Stodart intended, as the conceptual scope of the exhibition proves at times to be competitive and convoluted. Perhaps it is due to the ephemerality of performance that this sense of something missing is inherent – one last testament to the malleable nature of memory and documentation at large.

I never imagined that my mother would become my stylist. Though weeks before I departed for Turkey, she warned me that it wouldn't be safe to dress the way I usually do. What she really meant was that my orange pants, retro print shirts, aesthetically coordinated tube socks, and colour-blocked fabulosity had to go, to make space for a drab beige toned collection of linen shirts and uncomfortably long shorts from the normcore one-stop-shop Uniqlo. The new look she curated for me was strangely refreshing and ultimately a necessity for the latter half of my trip in which we would explore the cities, towns, and villages, folded between steep cliff faces and mountains, blanketed by lush forests, of the conservative East Black Sea region of Turkey. This is the region my mother grew up in before leaving to pursue a tertiary education, before marrying my father, before migrating to Australia, before raising two sons, and before living a life distant from a messy but magical; disorganised but functional; and chaotic but oh so charming world that hurts to watch from afar.

The last 14 years of Turkish political history have seen the persistent re-election of the AK Party (The Justice and Development Party or referred to as the AKP from here on out) and the transition of, initially prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan into president. Alongside this transition we have watched state funded bot-armies composed of empty escorts and soulless celebrities being used to spam activist Twitter hashtags.1 We have watched the constant ban and un-ban of Facebook, Twitter, Whattsapp, and Wikipedia, at the convenience of party interests.2 We have watched President Erdoğan's reactionary fragile sensitivity in the face of opposition criticism creating a cycle of sore-authoritarian-loser thought policing.3 Under a 'secular' state, public schools are being appointed and raising Imams.4 Evolution is cut from the curriculum.5 The 'real meaning of jihad is loving your nation.'6 Apparently, 'God is with you' when voting for the AKP.7 Kurds and Turks are displaced by violent warfare on countless fronts.8 The Kurdish opposition party leader is

Disguising political critique - On Çağdaş Erdoğan and Turkey

By Lev

jailed.9 The word 'Kurdistan' is banned.10 Overnight 1 Turkish Lira buys 0.17 Euros.11 A sultan is on the cusp of being reborn. The magic of Turkey's existence as a geographic and cultural bridge between the East and West has been cursed by the impending authoritarian politics of the AKP.

South of my mothers hometown is the heart of Eastern Turkey, historically Kurdish land that, throughout the last decade, has been torn apart by an imperial proxy war and the ongoing violent conflict between the Turkish government and Kurdish Separatists. This is the land journalistic photographer Cağdaş Erdoğan comes from. For the sake of not confusing this young artistic vanguard with Turkey's fascist President whom he shares a common surname with, I will refer to him as Cağdaş. In 2017, whilst taking photographs in one of Istanbul's few green spaces, Yogurtçu Park, Cağdaş was approached by a policeman who claimed that within the frame of his photograph was the Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı building, the National Intelligence Organisation building (equivalent to the MI5). Taking photographs of this building is illegal, though Cağdaş claims against taking any, and says he even deleted the photograph the policeman claimed included the building, though typical of this regime, another progressive civilian was arrested, and taken to prison, to face trial.12

Cağdaş's gritty photographic style couples low shutter speeds with high flash to create eerily blurred and unfocused images of transgressive subjects that become aggressive illustrations of the Turkish narrative. His series Control depicts violent dog fights, one photograph in particular situates the viewer beneath the subject; the dogs face is obscured, leaving merely its body, and lower in the image, its penis visible, evoking both a sexual and violent submission to the

brutish animal above. High contrast between darkness and lightness in muscles heighten the subjects dominative power. A chain that disappears into the dark background suggests aggression that has escaped control. A blurred hand attempts to defend itself. The beast will inevitably win. Disguised in Cağdaş's photograph is an illustration of the common narrative of persecution and submission under the sadistic power structure of Turkish 'democracy'.
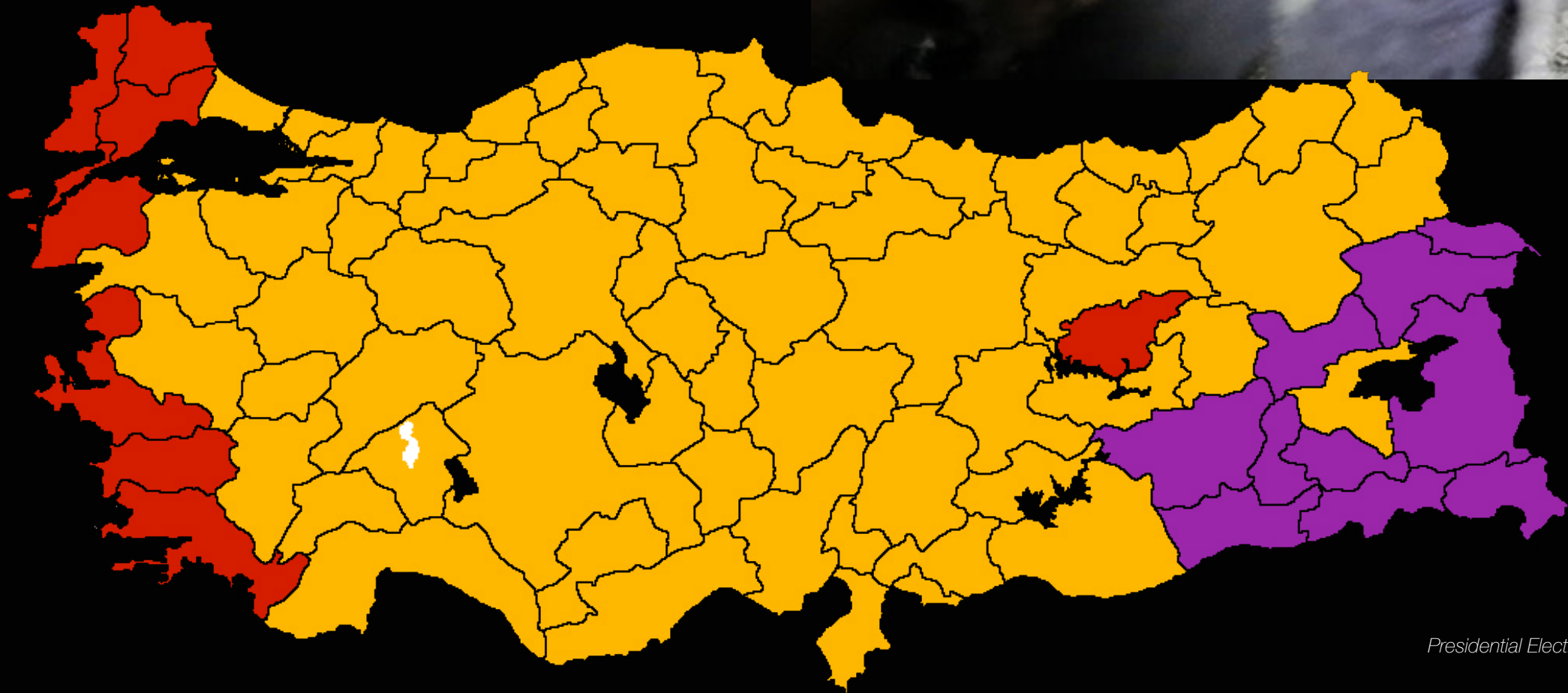
In his trial, Cağdaş came to find out that his arrest was unrelated to his day in Yogurtçu park but rather was the states militant response to Cağdaş's inclination to Kurdish subjects and a revelation of the racist affiliations made by the court between Cağdaş's Kurdish background and terrorism. In 2016, Cağdaş documented the frontline of warfare between the Turkish Military and the PKK13, the Kurdish Workers' Party, recognised as a terrorist organisation in Turkey and largely recognised as such internationally.14 His series Control photographed the explicit underground cultures of the heavily Kurdish populated and impoverished Gazi suburb of Istanbul; abrasive black and white photographs of dog fights, sex work, molotov cocktails, and hooded figures15 are images that unveil the brutalities of contemporary Turkish life. Ultimately, according to a message sent to Cağdaş's friends from his lawyer, the young photojournalist was accused, in his interrogation, of "insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Turkish flag, and state institutions", as well as "spreading propaganda in favour of the PKK terrorist organisation."16

These volatile conditions have resulted in the suppression of political commentary into the implicit from the explicit— it has adopted a disguise. In his journalistic photographs of post-election celebrations from June 2018, a huddle of black hijab wearing women stand facing away from the camera. In their hands they wave the Turkish flag. When

Image credits: Çağdaş Erdoğan

contextualised, the narrative of the image is obvious—supporters of the Turkish government and President express their nationalistic pride upon the re-election of the AKP. Though, Cağdaş re-contextualises the photograph through the omission of their faces, characterising a resistance to the camera. Centred in the image, is a gentle arm around a shoulder, appearing like a gesture of condolence. Inundating the image is blackness from the gloomy curtained veils of the subjects. Celebration is subverted by Cağdaş to be mourning. Central to the next photograph, is an idle police officer, he is the only stability within the fast and frenzied scene behind. Once again there is celebration in the form of happy photo taking, firecracker waving, and hands-held-high-dancing. The photographs abrasive high flash and chaotic motion blur turns acts of celebration into a war scene. In a context where phones are the tools of state funded terror documentation, a tableau of a man, having his photo taken, who is waving an explosive, whilst a bystander raises her hands, as the state remains stagnant, can only be read in one, unfortunately, tragic way. Knowing this, Çağdaş appeals to the violent war images that are cemented into our minds, superimposes them onto images of celebration, to visually equate the AKP's and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's victory with brutal oppression and mass bloodshed.

Disguising political critique is, unfortunately, what Turkish pseudo-democracy has forced upon the public. Despite my disappointment and fierce disagreement, a simple map shows that Erdoğan and the AKP is ultimately what the Turkish population wants. This increase in conservatism has resulted in the strengthening of small yet alive pockets of liberation in the main cities of Turkey. Universities, in major cities, protected by large campuses, painted with progressive graffiti; clubs and bars; cafes; and bookshops, are the urban spaces that these pockets of liberation exist. These are the spaces where alcohol, cigarettes, and

Çağdaş Erdoğan, 'An armed YDG-H member gets ready to attack Turkish security forces in the south-eastern Turkish city of Nusaybin'. Source: International Business Time

weed provide escape, where romance can be a public display, and where radical ideas can be discussed. It hurt leaving Turkey this year. I recalled the countless conversations I had, in these spaces that represent what Turkey could have been, with a resounding common theme: how to escape. This question, that I spoke about with almost every single person (within my social and familial circle), was a question that was being desperately answered. My privilege was highlighted with extreme clarity; ultimately, I was merely a viewer in the complex equation of politics, religion, and Machiavellian power over citizens. My actions exist in a space of privilege, beneath an institution that cultivates thought—in fact, it is these conditions that even permitted my writing this. In Turkish, 'çağdaş' means contemporary. Unfortunately, Çağdaş Erdoğan's story is a tragic metaphor.

Presidential Election results by province. Yellow areas are provinces won by AKP candidate Recep Tayip Erdoğan. Red areas are provinces won by CHP candidate Muharrem Ince. Purple areas won by HDP candidate Selahattin Demirtaş. Source: Graphic from Wikipedia, 'Turkish general election, 2018'.

Women and Visibility in 52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS

Jessica Fogarty

'52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS', Artspace's ambitious year-long project, is revealing pressing issues within the Asia-Pacific region and allowing us to see contemporary cultural dialogues taking place beyond national or institutional borders. Using Instagram as its platform, as @52artists52actions, this project documents an action from a different artist in the region each week. Actions in this sense are critically and socially engaged works which have been developed specifically for the project. These take a variety of forms, such as exhibitions, performances, protests, gifs, illustrations and video works. What is interesting about this project is that as it unfolds context specific concerns within the region as well as conversations happening on a broader, international, scale are revealed and further deepened in complexity. By exploring the individual actions of artists Anida Yoeu Ali, Echo Morgan and Nasim Nasr, we can identify a crucial contemporary conversation taking place among women regarding visibility. In the first of her posts American/Cambodian artist Anida Yoeu Ali writes on Instagram that 'The Red Chador has become a highly visible leader in an era of heightened Islamophobia.'1 The artist constructed the persona of 'The Red Chador' in 2015; wearing the bright red sequin chador she performed powerful silent protests in countries such as France, the United States and Hong Kong.2 Her action for '52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS' memorializes 'The Red Chador', which, a testament to the importance of her protest, was 'lost' by airline authorities on departure from Tel Aviv.3 Her protests as 'The Red Chador' and her actions for this project centre on heightened visibility, which she uses as a methodology for confronting islamophobia on a local and international scale.

Similar to Ali, Echo Morgan, a London based Chinese artist, deploys a method of heightened visibility to discuss constructions of gender in her action 'Bone China Born China'.4 Taking her father's words "women are like beautiful vase, decorative, expensive but empty inside"5, Morgan constructs a performance in which she paints herself as a vase, white all over with blue cherry blossom and bamboo patterns and asks the audience to throw water balloons to destroy the paint.6 Morgan's action, like Ali's, uses the highly visible, in this case body-paint, to reveal cultural and gender-specific tensions. While different, these artists' actions connect across contexts on @52artists52actions to form a complex dialogue that

calls attention to an international need for visibility and protest against violently reductive constructions of identity. They also illuminate how these stereotypical or reductive constructions of identity, based on race, gender, sexuality and class, affect women differently. In doing so, they highlight the importance of cultural context and problematise a universal notion of 'women' and their experiences.

In light of women's vast difference of experiences, Australian/Iranian artist Nasim Nasr identifies 'the same pattern and experience of hiding and revealing'7 in her action 'Women in Shadow II'.8 This behind the scenes documentation of

a performance staged in the form of a fashion show, explores both visibility and concealment in relation to women's experiences as 'Other'.9 The artist presents different representations of femininity in her work; the performers model both the chador and uniform sets of black underwear. Using these garments in this commercial format, the artist explores the interplay between the highly visible female body as 'Other' and the simultaneous eradication of personal identity through the process of othering.10 Nasr reflects, 'How can we be visible without being seen?

آیا میتوانیم دیده شویم بدون دیده شدن؟'[1]

By operating beyond national and institutional boundaries, '52 ARTISTS 52 ACTIONS' brings contemporary artists such as Anida Yoeu Ali, Echo Morgan and Nasim Nasr, into close conversation with one another. In doing so, the project allows us to identify contemporary dialogues taking place across contexts such as this crucial contemporary conversation among women regarding visibility and identity. Informed by these artists' specific contexts and perspectives, this conversation is complex and nuanced; a point which is further highlighted by this project as it continues to unfold.

Footnotes:

1. 52artists52actions, Anida Yoeu Ali / Cambodia, Anida Yoeu Ali and Artspace, 9 July 2018,
2. Ibid.
3. 52artists52actions, The Red Chador: Threshold, 2015, Anida Yoeu Ali and Artspace, 12 July 2018
4. 52artists52actions, Bone China Born China by Echo Morgan, Echo Morgan and Artspace, 13 June 2018
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. 52artists52actions, BTS 'Women in Shadow II', Nasim Nasr and Artspace, 20 April 2018,
8. 52artists52actions, Nasim Nasr / Iran/Australia, Nasim Nasr and Artspace, 16 April 2018
9. Ibid.
10. 52artists52actions, BTS 'Women in Shadow II', Nasim Nasr and Artspace, 20 April 2018

'Terraformed' by Louise Morgan – Environmental activism in disguise

Alexandra Mitchell

Climate change, global warming and the Anthropocene are issues and concepts that artists frequently seek to comprehend through their work. However, it is quite rare to find work that has environmentally political overtones that is not overly didactic. Louise Morgan's solo exhibition Terraformed, recently shown from the 20th – 29th July 2018 at 220 Creative Space and Gallery in Woolloomooloo utilised experimental and intricate approaches to art making to create work that maps humanity's impact upon the earth in a sensitive and thoughtful way. In fact, it almost disguises it.

One of the works in the exhibition, Consensus, 2017, uses graphs that map climate change statistics that have been transformed into delicate laser cut black paper works and then scrunched into organic, undulating forms to be displayed on the stark white wall of the gallery in a grid formation. At first glance you do not notice the graphs, the markers on the grid, the ups and downs and dramatic inclines, however upon closer inspection they become apparent. Morgan stated that these works were 'the most political' (Morgan, 2018) in the show. With Consensus she sought to make commentary on the current approach to climate change data by Australian politicians. She feels that this data is routinely scrunched up and thrown away. This dismissive approach compelled her to create this work of quiet protest. She titled the works Consensus to highlight the overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change is a real threat to life on Earth that needs affirmative action.

Another series in the show that could be interpreted as political commentary is Melt. In the series Morgan has used sheets of ice and carbon to create organic forms on paper reminiscent of tectonic plates, land masses or topographical maps, with the contours of grey and black floating in the centre

Installation shot including Terraformed (Earthscapes), Laser cut paper, 2017, dimensions variable and part of the Melt series, Carbon and graphite on paper, 2018, 85 x 60 cm per work.

of the paper. To create the works Morgan laid sheets of ice onto paper with carbon sitting on top of the ice. As the ice melted and combined with the carbon the forms took their shape. The use of carbon speaks directly to our continued use of coal and the impact of coal mining on the natural environment. The overuse of fossil fuels such as coal has directly impacted on the polar ice caps that are melting at a rate never before seen. Mining transforms biodiverse landscapes and prime agricultural land into virtual wastelands. The proposed Adani coal mine in Queensland and its promise of jobs for the state are a direct threat to Australia's largest natural tourist attraction, the Great Barrier Reef, that supports many Queenslanders through employment in the tourism and fishing industries. The Australia Institute (2018) states that 'the expansion of mining causes a contraction in non-mining industries, particularly manufacturing, tourism, agriculture and education. This results in business closures and job losses.' The dismissal by the Australian Government of the impacts of mining in favour of short term interests is a topic that Morgan has so eloquently sought to grapple with in Terraformed.

An artist who could be considered in relation to Morgan is Latai Taumoepeau. Taumoepeau creates ephemeral performative works that address the impacts of climate change on the Pacific Islands. Taumoepeau 'Sydney (Eora) by birth and Tongan by ancestry, has been making works that address climate change in the Pacific for some years now' (Mcgregor, 2016). Her work Repatriate: Ocean Island...Mine! (2015) can specifically be seen in relation to Morgans' Melt series. The work was performed as part of the Performance Space Liveworks program in 2015 at Carriageworks from the 22-24th October. Taumoepeau, dressed in a white disposable jumpsuit, chipped away at a large block of ice with a metal shovel to create shards of ice. Once she had created a small pile of shard Taumoepeau shovelled it up and transported it slowly to a mound opposite the block of ice. 'Back and forth, she work(ed) the open-cut mines of the past into the future of climate change; excavating the solid white rock into invisibility' (Performance Space, 2015). The use of ice in both Taumoepeau's and Morgan's work is significant. Both artists utilise its capacity to melt to create works of art that speak directly to climate change and its impacts. One artist used the process of ice melting to create an image on paper and the other moved it from one point to another, albeit in a different form, so that it could melt, dripping into the drain, somewhat repatriated with another body of water.

The showstopper of Morgan's exhibition is Terraformed (Earthscapes), 2017. Its delicate lace like structure draws the viewer in. Fine lines and curves are brought to life by spotlight, shadows frame work to create a large scale intricately patterned web. It is not until you focus in on the small square panels that Morgan has secured together in a patchwork that you begin to see the multitude of images that make up the work. The sheer beauty and subtle nature of the piece disguises its content. The aerial view Google map images that Morgan has rendered through digital drawings and then printed out as laser cut white paper panels display coal mines, urban grids and landscapes that are suffering from the impacts of climate change. Earthscapes I, 2017 and Earthscapes II, 2017 are directly related to this work. Both pigment prints on paper illustrate the intricate digital drawings that form the structure of Terraformed (Earthscapes), 2017. However, the fine line work is displayed on black and white backgrounds to bring focus to the drawing. The intensity of the black background in Earthscapes II makes the white lines of the drawing dance in front of your eyes in a way that is reminiscent of how the heat of a desert makes the horizon line flicker and dance in front of your eyes.

Threading through all the works in Morgan's show is a quiet protest against Australia's current lack of action on climate change. The delicate forms disguise the pressing nature of the content that inspired the them to ensure that the viewer is drawn before they contemplate the issues that have informed them. Morgan's careful use of materials reminds you of the fragility of the Earth's environment, her disguising of the content a useful tool in making the viewer reflect upon humanity's impact on the world around us.

References

McGregor, F 2016, 'Ice, art & urgency - Fiona McGregor: Latai Taumoepeau, Repatriate I & II', RealTime, vol. 130, issue Dec-Jan 2016, pp. 17. Accessed 17/08/18 <http://www.realtimearts.net/article/issue130/12104>

Morgan, L 2018, Louise Morgan and Alexandra Mitchell in conversation, 220 Creative Space Gallery 21st July 2018, Sydney, Australia

Performance Space, 2015, Liveworks: Repatriate, Performance Space, Sydney, Australia, accessed 17/08/18, <http://performancespace.com.au/events/liveworks-repatriate/>

The Australia Institute, 2018, The economic impacts of Australia's mining expansion, The Australia Institute, ACT, Australia, accessed 17/08/18, <http://www.tai.org.au/sites/defualt/files/TAI%20Economics%20of%20Mining%20 Quick%20Links_Final_4.pdf>

On camouflage and Liu Bolin

Bingjie Liu

The super power of camouflage is extremely used in nature. Some animals and plants are naturally similar in colour to their growing environment, and some hide themselves in different environments through changing their skin color. They disguise themselves for mainly two purposes: to hide from predators and to confuse their prey. In other words, to protect themselves and not be found. There is an artist who also successfully practices camouflage to conceal himself in various environments, but what is his purpose?

An artist who is good at camouflage
Liu Bolin is a Chinese performing artist who was born in Shandong Province in 1973. He graduated from the Fine Arts Department of Shandong College of Arts in 1995. His work is famous for disguising himself as an invisible man. Each picture of him takes a long time to prepare, even up to ten hours. He uses himself as a blank canvas, his assistants paint the pigment on his body to make him fit with the background and hide himself in the context of the environment perfectly. It is even difficult to find his existence from a background if people do not look at his photo carefully. It seems that he is a chameleon, an artist who hides deeper than the chameleon.

Camouflage is not for hiding, but for getting attention.
Why did Liu Bolin hide himself in the background? Is he trying to protect himself or avoid the attention of others? His concealment is actually a kind of silent protest, a silent shout. His inspiration is related to his experience.

Liu Bolin wanted to be an art teacher before taking up a career as an artist. After he graduated from the Graduate School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1999 he could not find a suitable job, he has no family, no care and no income. In the past few years, he felt like he was being abandoned by society, and he even felt that he is superfluous man in this world.

Finally, in March 2005, Liu Bolin came to Beijing SJC International Art Camp and he found a place to live and work. But not for long as later that year in November, the SJC International Art Camp was forcibly dismantled because of massive urbanization and development. The government removed the house, he and more than 100 artists lost their homes and workplace.

Laid Off, 2006, Liu Bolin

When he stood on the demolished ruins of the studio, looking at the walls filled with   he suddenly felt that he could not control himself and suppress his indignation. He had to speak up for those artists who lost their homes, and speak up for the art of China. Liu Bolin asked two painters to paint his body and make him look exactly like the ruins. In this way, his friends began to paint on him with the colors of red bricks, cement and building reinforcements. 8 hours later and people could not see Liu Bolin but only the pieces of ruins. He turned the work into a photo named 'City Camouflage No.1'.

     is a Chinese character - which means demolition. Such character written on any building meant the sure demolition of it and often tragedy of its owners.

A week later, three artists organized an exhibition of art works to protest against barbarous demolition in Beijing. Liu Bolin's 'City Camouflage No. 1' was selected as the poster of the exhibition. As a result, newspapers, television stations and radio stations were frequently responsible for the barbaric demolition and the appeal to the demolition law. 'City camouflage No. 1' strongly shook the people's mind.

After that, Liu Bolin realized that his 'invisible works' had not been invisible, but the problems he paid attention have resonated and got the attention of the government and the community. Therefore, he decided to use this art expression method to speak up for more insignificant 'invisible man' in society.

In May 2006, Liu Bolin visited an abandoned factory called 706 which had been in ruins for years. He thought of the laid-off workers, so he decided to interview them, and found six laid-off workers to get in touch with. They were laid off in the 1990s, and most of them were fifty years old. These laid-off workers were old, and the level of education is low, so it is very hard for them to find a new jobs. They needed to take care of their old parents, but also have to support their own children. These laid-off workers were under extreme economic pressure to support their family.

The Lagoon City of Venice, Liu Bolin

The artist's conscience urged Liu Bolin to speak up for these people. He hoped that the laid-off workers would be able to attract the attention of the society and the government. He hoped the laid-off workers would not have a difficult life, and there would no more 'invisible man' in society. Bolin explained his intention to these six laid-off workers and persuade them to participate in his paintings. Three hours later, the six workers disappeared. All that was left was a wall with dark blue and white, the slogan on 90s is clearly visible on the wall: 'The core of our cause is the Chinese Communist Party'. Liu Bolin named this photo 'laid-off', which attracted many visitors in the exhibition. Afew months later, the six workers told him that Beijing authorities had begun to solve the problem of laid-off workers in 706 factory because of his art work. His works interfered with the society and promote social progress - making Bolin feel his happiest.

The responsibility of the artist
The reason why the works of Liu Bolin can be paid attention to is not only the clever artistic articulation in creating the work, but also the way he integrates Chinese social issues into his work. He has shouldered the responsibility of maintaining the rights of the people at the bottom. If the background and pigment in Liu Bolin's works are a pair of bodies, the core problem reflected in his works is the soul.

I was born and grow in China, and the education I received from my childhood taught us to contribute and dedicate ourselves to our society. In this Chinese vein of thought, it is not appropriate to highlight the individual excessively. We have learned humility, unobtrusive and conformity, and even sometimes we can be afraid of self expression. I came to Sydney to study, I found that most of Chinese students rarely initiative to speak or ask questions in lectures. That is not because we do not have ideas or are without questions, but perhaps because we're afraid of attention from others.

I admire the artist Liu Bolin because he uses hidden artistic expression to appeal to people not to hide. We are not a small figure in the society, we need to stand out, we need to be noticed, we shouldn't completely sacrifice ourselves for the development of the society. I hope everyone will stop feeling unimportant. We are important. I am important.

Sleeping Lion, Liu Bolin, 2012
No.1, Liu Bolin, 2005

Online/Offline – Atoms to Bits to Atoms Again

By Lachlan Bell

Online/Offline - https://youtu.be/IOUTZHF6oA8

In Conversation With 45076a6f21 - https://youtu.be/SWe9KpsRJDI

In Conversation With d685c99e65 - https://youtu.be/jh13M7KWimM

In Conversation With fc74cbda00 - https://youtu.be/m4iUrpOgNCo

The conflation of the online and offline self within digital media has brought into question the nature of individual agency and authority over one's own image and identity. With digital technology playing an increasing role as mediary between individuals online, it is important to question the affordances of computer-mediated communication in providing ways of cultivating and forming new interpersonal relationships. Moreover, in our attempts of representing the self both online and offline, to what extent do our plural 'selves' or faces that we offer belong wholly to the individuals (acting as a deliberate public performance) or belonging to that of a group of outsiders, a self or plural 'selves' manufactured and amalgamated through active participation and collaboration. My video work 'Online/Offline' looks at ways in which our sense of individuality relies on the co-construction of self through online and offline social interactions and to what extent these external factors simultaneously reaffirm and challenge an individual's notion of selfhood, individual agency and authenticity.

'Online/Offline' and 'In Conversation With' examines ways in which self-representation occurs through text using the private communications between three of my closest friends through Facebook Messenger. The video examines the roles they play in both actively shaping my own sense of self and how their words simultaneously manufacture their own identity in both deliberate and unintended ways. The multiple 'faces' we perform through media is seen through disconnected, nonsensical dialogue that removes context and isolates the viewer observing the mundanity of the ordinary and the everyday. Their words act as a timeline of private emotions, events and silence with each sentence representing one day's worth of conversation (or complete silence, indicated by a darkened image). As the meaning of these individual dialogues is removed and isolated into snippets of information, language is transformed into new forms of information. Jose van Djick's notion of 'Dataism' as "the common assumption that people and behaviours can be adequately represented by quantitative means and 'big data'" (van Dijck 2014) drives home the importance of recognising the insights such mundane data can afford us and how readily available it is to large companies. When we construct our identity online, we simultaneously manufacture our own 'data doubles' that can become separated from ourselves, ethereal bodies within the cyberspace that form "an artefact that is separate from us and can be viewed at a distance. At the same time, these doppelgängers represent us, or a part of our lives, reflecting both our best and worst sides. (p. 68) (Rettberg, JW 2014) These twins or consciously constructed clones not only represent our quantified selves, removed of context and agency, but highlight the roles in which others can shape and influence the formation of these digital doppelgängers. By analysing this raw data, removed of context, behavioural streams that guide these fragmented representations of self within the digital realm and the flow on effects collaborative into the real 'offline' world can be understood further.

This relationship between our online and offline personas is ever more important in defining the self in a digital age as we constantly find ourselves navigating and managing identities between worlds consisting of atoms and bits.

Images: Lachlan Bell

Context, conversations and relationships can carry and distort between the two realms of physical and ethereal, and the disjuncture between these online and offline voices in which we communicate to others can reflect our internal struggle in defining a 'true' core self.

Sociologist Erving Goffman's theory of symbolic interactionism examines how "self-performance distinguishes between signs given naively, unconsciously, and signs given off consciously, deliberately" and Michel Foucault's proposition of an individual's self being cultivated partly "with the help of others" (Belk, RW 2013), reject the notion of a singular, centralised 'true self'. They instead emphasise the multitude of internal and external elements that coalesce into both an individual and shared identity, an accumulation of selfhood reliant upon both conscious action and the co-construction of self through participatory actors.

Continuing this line of inquiry, Russel W. Belk talks about the act of publishing oneself online has never been easier thanks to the affordances of the Internet, however the creation of self still partly relies on others to affirm our 'narratives'. Belk writes that "The shared exchange can be seen as truly collaborative writing that brings the participants closer together. As such strings of short messages... accrue digital patina, they become less an expression of one person and more a joint expression and possession of the couple or group that has composed them (Baym 2007; Odom et al. 2011, ref. Belk, RW 2013). There is a notion that our sense of self relies heavily on those around us forming an aggregate self through friends, as the conversations we have and the back-and-forth dialogue creates a pastiche identity formed by a "rich collection that reflects who you are and what you think" (Carroll and Romano 2011, p. 3, ref. Belk, RW 2013). Jonathan Cook writes "our identities are not singular, but are comprised of an array of different versions of ourselves." (Cook, J. Leberecht, T 2017) Who we are varies between contexts, as the experiences others have with us shapes their understanding of our own attempts of self-representation.

In Kenneth J. Gergen's book, The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life, the notion of pastiche personality is examined as Zizi Papacharissi writes about "media that provoke a form of performative incoherence by populating the self with multiple, disparate, and even competing potentials for being...with each self contains an ever-increasing multiplicity of others, or voices, which do not inherently harmonize, presented as they are in contexts that frequently lack situational definition (Meyrowitz, 1985 ref. Papacharissi, Z 2012) Online/Offline examines the notion of self through three participants, each unified through a common thread, myself. Through a process of curating and selection, snippets of dialogue become isolated from context, representing incoherent

and disjointed ramblings connected to each through conversations of varied length and content that shifts between one to the other. The notion of an aggregated, extended and assembled self, experienced through others, is the key to this work that is formed upon a disparate and incongruent sense of self that stands as the connecting point of a myriad of relationships.

From all of this we can gather that our self-representation is neither ours entirely nor is it passive in its formation. We may have control the words we write, however what we respond to, the way our responses are disseminated and the way our messages are understood remain completely out of our hands. Continuously we attempt to shape other people's experiences and understandings of who we are and what we do, a paradigm which notably operates vice versa upon our own perceptions of self. Whether through visual, textual or quantitative frames, our sense of identity and self is actively constructed consciously and subconsciously and it's important to acknowledge the ways in which outside participants can collaboratively shape our own sense of self particularly within a digital context.

References

Belk, RW (2013), Extended Self in a Digital World, Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 477-500, The University of Chicago Press

Cook, J, Leberecht, T (2017), Our Exponential Selves: Identity in the Digital Romantic Age, Medium.com

Goffman, E (2005), Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour, Routledge, New York

Jagoe, EL (2016), Depersonalized Intimacy: The Cases of Sherry Turkle and Spike Jonze, English Studies in Canada Vol. 42, No. 1-2

Meyrowitz, J (1985), No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behaviour. New York: Oxford University Press.

Papacharissi, Z (2012), Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community, International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Book Review 834–837

Rettberg, JW (2014), Written, visual and quantitative self-representations in Seeing ourselves through technology, London: Palgrave, 1-17.

Turkle, S (2010), The Tethered Self: Technology Reinvents Intimacy and Solitude, Harvard Extension School Alumni Bulletin

Image and text by Laura Peacock

Cellulose wilted in warm water

Transparent

Lift the page to the sun

What is the light source behind?
that makes it so obvious

Even if backward
and you can't read

Have you noticed
right before the seep of blood
a clear dew precedes

Dress the wound a little more politely

She doesn't want to be seen

To drip

To stream

To be viscous and heavy with opaqueness

You can go through me
inside me;
does it feel like swimming in cream?

Slow like glass is liquid
thick like hot air

Draw close the white sheet
around a body that cannot be

If you cannot see,
take shape
take shape

I might be see-through, but

I still take space.

Re: Identity: tbc

Aneshka Mora and Em Size

*It's the afternoon of August 6th and I've just opened my email in hopes of reinvigorating a 2.30pm serotonin-drop. I go through my unreads and re-discover the invitation for Framework - Disguise. It's a stretch but **I've been thinking a lot lately about the tension between subjectivities and identities.***

What starts as a heated, thesis-blurred, irl discussion with Em on campus moves to a bus stop and then continues over imessage... before something in that discussion becomes my pitch for Framework. Then, a couple of days later, the dialogue is revived at Morris and then continued in this collaborative google-doc discussion. We do not propose answers or ground-breaking philosophy but rather attempt to explore some thoughts and grievances about how we might navigate, synthesise, customise, weaponise, transform and refine identities to nurture rather than restrain our subjectivities.

Em

Just before you go away and nut out a considered opening provocation, I wanted to add (from our cafe convo that pre-empted this), that I've been thinking about subjectivity in terms of my writing practice as well. Ie. how to write not as/with my 'identity' but as a subject - or should I say, as someone trying to elaborate an experience of subjectivity over an experience of identity. Part of what I'm wary of in doing auto-theory, is reinscribing myself as queer or gendered (and in doing so, inevitably reinscribing both my marginality and the hegemony it's situated against), through a writing practice that is identity-based/affiliated... and I'm wary of turning myself into a spectacle reduced to 'queer' (particularly if my writing is focusing on that area of my life) - or claiming to have a poetics or aesthetics that might belong to/or be the domain of a huge, heterogeneous group of people.

Something that has been really important to me in forming my writing practice/attitude recently is thinking about New Narrative and Bruce Boone, a writer who I guess in some ways operates in this proto-gay-auto-theory vibe but it's more socially-minded than what contemporary auto-theory seems to be? Idk. But here is a quote from Rob Halpern in an article that discusses what Bruce is doing in the book *Century of Clouds* which was written late seventies about gay friends at a Marxist camp:

Subjectivity thus emerges in New Narrative not as stable fact, but as a

volatile social process full of transformational energies, and narrative becomes one mode of stimulating and organizing such energies.

How great is that quote! ^^^ and I think relates to something we are both hoping to move towards, which is an understanding of subjectivity (over identity) for ourselves which affords... the space of nuance and complexity that identity seems to, in some ways, push back against? Idk? That might seem out of left field, since I know that auto-theory and that kind of writing is a niche that you're not in. Maybe not enough context... but yeah

Aneshka
Opening provocation:

I've been told more than once that I probably suffer from imposter syndrome. The feeling is usually associated with academia, but since looking into critical race theory and reading about the oppressions experienced by people of colour (and more specific to me, queer women of colour), these fraudulent feelings have permeated my identity. However, to be honest, I've never critically thought about what (and who) constitutes my identity. Following a few conversations with Em I started to wonder whether the problem is not so much with me feeling like an imposter as opposed to the identities I seemingly fit into and feel some sort of obligation toward.

While self-locating is an important practice in order to assess our axes of privilege, as has been pointed out before, identity "... has the potential to position marginalized peoples as the essentialized 'Other' or victim while reinforcing the settler obsession with

authenticity"(1).The fact that we live in a world with various overlapping oppressions for Indigenous people, people of colour, queer, trans, female, lower-class, neuro-diverse, differently abled people is not new information and has been articulated through a number of disciplines – most famously, perhaps, through Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality. However these intersections still refer to an omni-present and, in the context of these stubborn identity borders, invisible centre. It has been this line of thought that has led to a new breed of criticism that asks – "how can we think about the intersectionality of our own lives – our various privileges and oppressions – without reducing the potential for everything to be linked in a network of ambiguities"(2)? Rosi Braidotti proposes in her book of the same title ~the posthuman~. In a brutal summation that doesn't do credit to her nuanced and complex exploration, Braidotti approaches critical post-humanism from a distinctly anti-humanism perspective tracing lower-case humanism to it's upper-case epistemology; Humanism - the notorious era of Western 'enlightenment' visually epitomized by the Vitruvian man. Citing feminist, post-colonial, queer, Indigenous theories she calls for the total abandonment of the human (and the anhroposcene) and proposes instead a zoe-centric (zoe – referring to all life) future in which humans are not Identities but rather subjectivities - still politically/socially/historically archival beings but optimistically moving away from identity categories in order to partake in the world as a whole.

While Braidotti's theories feel like a warm comforting blanket in what can often be a dark and dismal world, a recent book club has forced me to take off my ros(i)e coloured glasses and question the location of Braidotti herself. While it's lovely to imagine a world full of posthumans the fight to reclaim identity categories, in the reality of a world where being othered can still be fatal, is still as important as ever. Similarly, Em (and excuse the length of the above rant, and the way that I will now not respond to you but rather completely cock-block your line of thought), while I find the proposition of New Narrative exciting and optimistic and I love the fluidity that it presents, the way that Halpern talks about 'energies' makes me wonder how he, and the people he is referencing, has been afforded these energies. Braidotti comes from a world of privilege – academia, as do I, as do you. And perhaps this contributes a large part of the urge shed our identities in our lives and practice. I too would like to write as a subject and not a set of identities which, as you so eloquently put 'affords... the space of nuance and complexity that identity seems to, in some ways, push back against', but I can't help but question

1. Will the move toward subjectivity in the privileged only further the gap between those who have access to such a luxury and those who don't and

2. To reel it back our theme, if the art and academic world has the opportunity to move toward subjectivities why do we see identity categories reproduced and reinstated? How do they function in a space where we could do away with them and where they perhaps erase the extremities in which they can be experienced?

References:

1. Anne A.Garner, 2015. "Visualizing Decolonization in Contemporary Indigenous Art." Order No. 3714594, State University of New York at Buffalo. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1700219270?accountid=12763. 6

2. Dylan Miner. 2015. "Gaagegoo Dabakaanan miiniwaa Debenjigejig (No Borders, Indigenous Sovereignty)." Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society October (1).

Em

I think we have to be clear about what we're really talking about here, which is not the abolition of identity or identity politics. Or at least, that's not something that I'm interested in talking about and I don't think you are either. I think we're interested in talking about the ways in which we approach these vernaculars and practices with dexterity, so that these frames of reference are working (as much as they can) in service of 'us' ('us' being those who experience marginalisation and use identity terminology to access community and political imagining/practice). I think language - particularly when it's being used in an explicitly political sense, although all language is used in a political sense, I know - should work for us, not the other way around. We want to 'use' identity models of understanding our movements through the world, as tools that serve us and aren't co-opted by the systems of power that we're hoping to collectivise against.

I know this is so cliche and white queer trash but I do think about what Judith Butler said about this kind of thing in that interview with Liz Kotz from the 90's. Obviously dated (and we should bring Jose Muñoz's critiques of identitarian politics/experiences of subjectivity into this discussion as well), but I think it's a soft entry point into thinking about this kind of stuff. Butler talks about being dissatisfied with identity politics in (lesbian-)feminism, while also arguing with the interviewer that it is important to have identity terminology, action and understanding - not for tokenism or 'political correctness' but to really think through what it means (for individuals and heterogeneous groups of individuals) to live in a world composed of power relations. She says, referencing thinkers like Kobena Mercer and Kimberle Crenshaw, "I don't believe that gender, race, or sexuality have to be identities, I think that they're vectors of power." And I think (or hope) that what's implicit in this kind of statement is the awareness that sometimes identities are used to mobilise understandings of vectors of power (and their immediate production and compression of bodies).

I think the concerns that we have with identity at large as a tool/mode/vocabulary, really take shape in our minds through our experiences in, and impressions of, 'the art world'. I think this other Butler quote from that interview will resonate with you, in terms of being fatigued with or feeling uncomfortable about reinscribing yourself as marginalised (against an invisible centre):

> I think a lot of people find themselves in very paradoxical positions. I'm a little tired of being queer. Somebody called me the other day and asked me to go to a conference: and I said, "Well. I'm not queer anymore," and of course I am totally queer, as it were: and have been since I was 16, but I want to deconstitute myself as queer. I mean, it's hard being queer 100 percent of the time [...] It's painful for me that I wrote a whole book calling into question identity politics, only then to be constituted as a token of lesbian identity. Either people didn't really read the book, or the commodification of identity politics is so strong that whatever you write, even when it's explicitly opposed to that politics, gets taken up by that machinery.

I think this commodification of identity politics hits hard because that's something 'we' (many of us, in different ways) have to negotiate while we're still militantly invested in using the language and action of identity politics to address systemic inequity. Particularly in the art world, there is an anxiety about having the infrastructures that make up this industry (curators, editors, audiences, etc.) commodify (capitalise on and reduce) identities. But this often feels irreconcilable with our desire for a 'new' economy of images, 'visibility' and representation that addresses the need for redistributions of power and reparations. A contemporary case that comes to mind is this year's Primavera show at the MCA, which has been subtitled 'Eight artists explore the politics of identity, visibility and representation'. If you look at the website, you'll notice that all of the artists are exceptional practitioners but there's something uncomfortable in the framing of this exhibition. The text, speaking about identity and representation of identity, feels uncomfortable as a framing device for the reading of a group of artists composed of mostly poc and a trans artist. It feels really gross describing that group of artists in those terms, but the framing of the exhibition strikes me as uncomfortably close to reinscribing marginality and reducing the work of these artists to being for diversity shows/ the current 'trend' around identity politics... I mean, why can't the show just be framed as Young Australian Artists? Why can't we just say these are an exceptional group of artists, not an interesting group of identities looking at representation?

Reference:

Judith Butler, "The Body You Want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler," Artforum 31, no. 3 (November 1992): 82-89.

A

Em, I think you've really hit the nail on the head with how you've articulated my discomfort at (specifically) the art world's 'commodification of identity politics'. And Primavera this year is such a good example. You're right, the only thing that ties these artists together - in terms of how it's been curatorially framed - is how they are all 'othered' - a freak show in disguise, really. It's such a double-bind, though, because as we have both been saying, it's great that these artists are getting exposure in such a public institution (I mean, it's horrible that we still have to work within the institution in order to have some chance of dismantling it and then does the rubble of our efforts just bolster it anyway?). I guess this how I interpret what you mean when you say that our anxiety over our identities being commodified is 'irreconcilable with our desire for a 'new' economy of images, 'visibility' and representation that addresses the need for redistributions of power and reparations'. So how do you propose we do both - create the new economy and tolerate the reinscription and commodification of our identities while also working on the dexterity with how we use the language of identity?


Judith Butler.
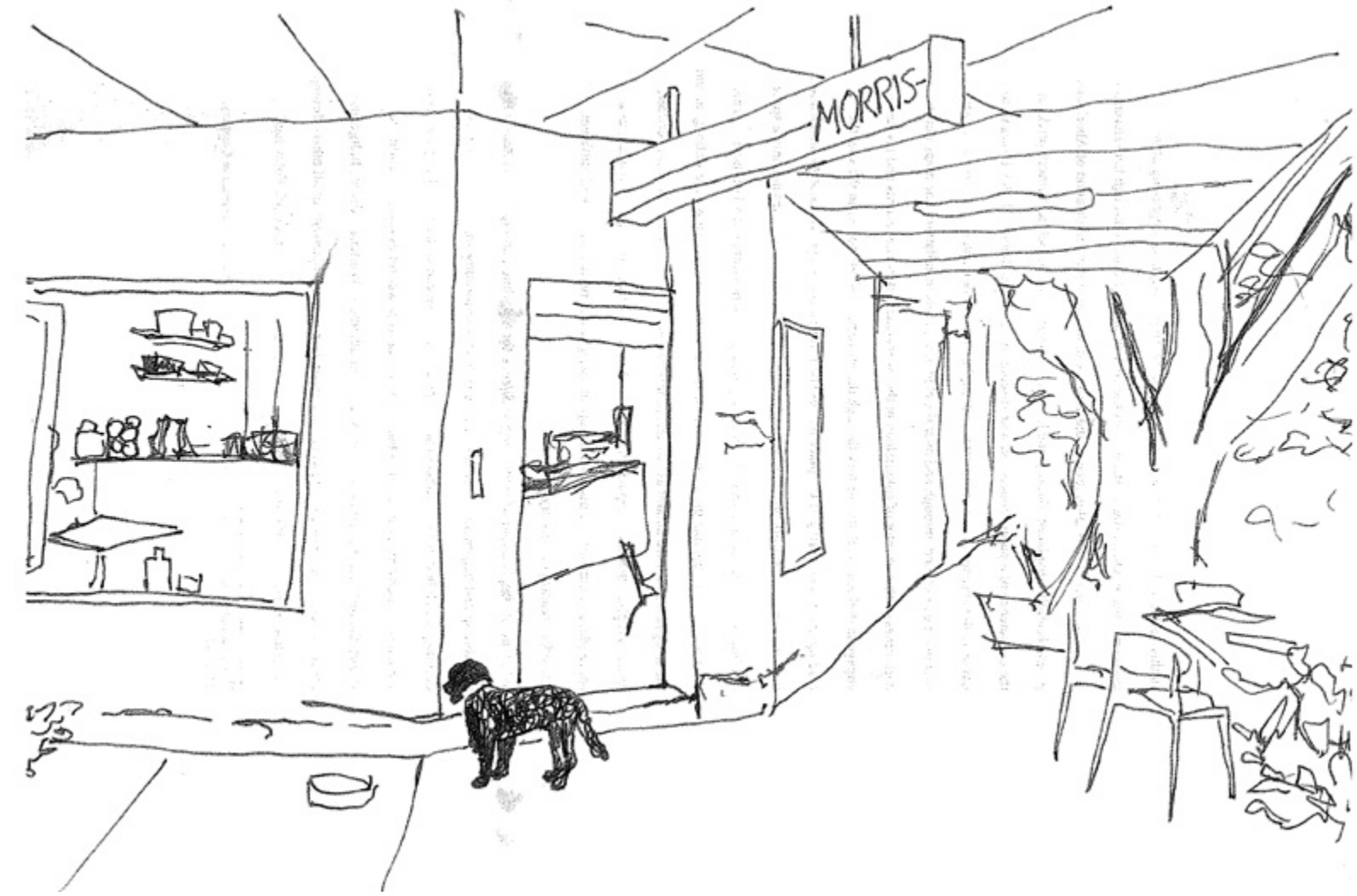
Do you remember that time we went to a whisky bar and my drink was being set on fire by a bro behind the bar? We didn't want to give him the attention so while we waited I complained to you about being asked at work that day where I was from. You recounted a strategy another Desi friend of yours used in such a situation:

Middle-aged white person: Where are you from
Desi friend: Malta

This response functions in a similar way to Butler disarming her caller by saying 'I'm not queer anymore'. It disarms in a way that relates to your reference of Muñoz's disidentification. I have only just started to read Disidentifications but in the preface Muñoz talks about a queer performer of colour, Jack Smith, who, through playing with "over-the-top images of 'exotic' Third World ethnoscapes" disrupts and inverts "Hollywood's fantasies of the other" (1). In the same way your friend, by answering 'Malta' manages to 1. Keep her cultural identity for herself, preventing it from being re-colonised and commodified 2. Stop the line of enquiry that would just lead to being further culturally mined by the (white) questioner positioning the questioner in the position of power within the mini information economy that occurs between two people in a conversation 3. Reflect / Deflect the questioners 'fantasy of the other' by giving them an answer they weren't expecting and utilising a humour that excludes the questioner 4. Give an answer of specific a cultural identity that, within the context of Australia's white supremacist colonial history, teeters on the edge of exotic but is white/European enough 5. Highlight the eugenicist, racist epistemology of the question by invoking the reality of diaspora and globalisation wherein she really could be from Malta.

I recount and break this down because I think it is a good example of someone using their identity as a 'vector of power' (however sceptical I was when I first read that). But I also wonder how we might be able to incorporate such a strategy in our lives and practice both in and outside the art world in multiple situations. How, like Muñoz, Butler and your friend, can we create the 'jolt' that occurs between the collision of what Muñoz describes as 'essentialist' and 'constructivist' identity processes and suspend that dislodgement so that others don't have to keep labouring? I am now feeling backed into a corner, confronted with a task so large it scares me. So maybe these small rhizomatic, hopefully ripple-like jolts are enough? Returning to the line of enquiry I emailed Audrey, if we do use our identities as a disguise for our subjectivities perhaps it's not a deconstructive or negative thing. Perhaps it lends us the ability to weaponize our identities in order to protect our subjectivities. If our identities are essentially structures created by white/settler/ hetero-normativity then why not repurpose the existing material to create alternate structures - shelters, paths, night-clubs and community halls.

- Ceylon Blend
- Dileepa Dayananda

PYREX
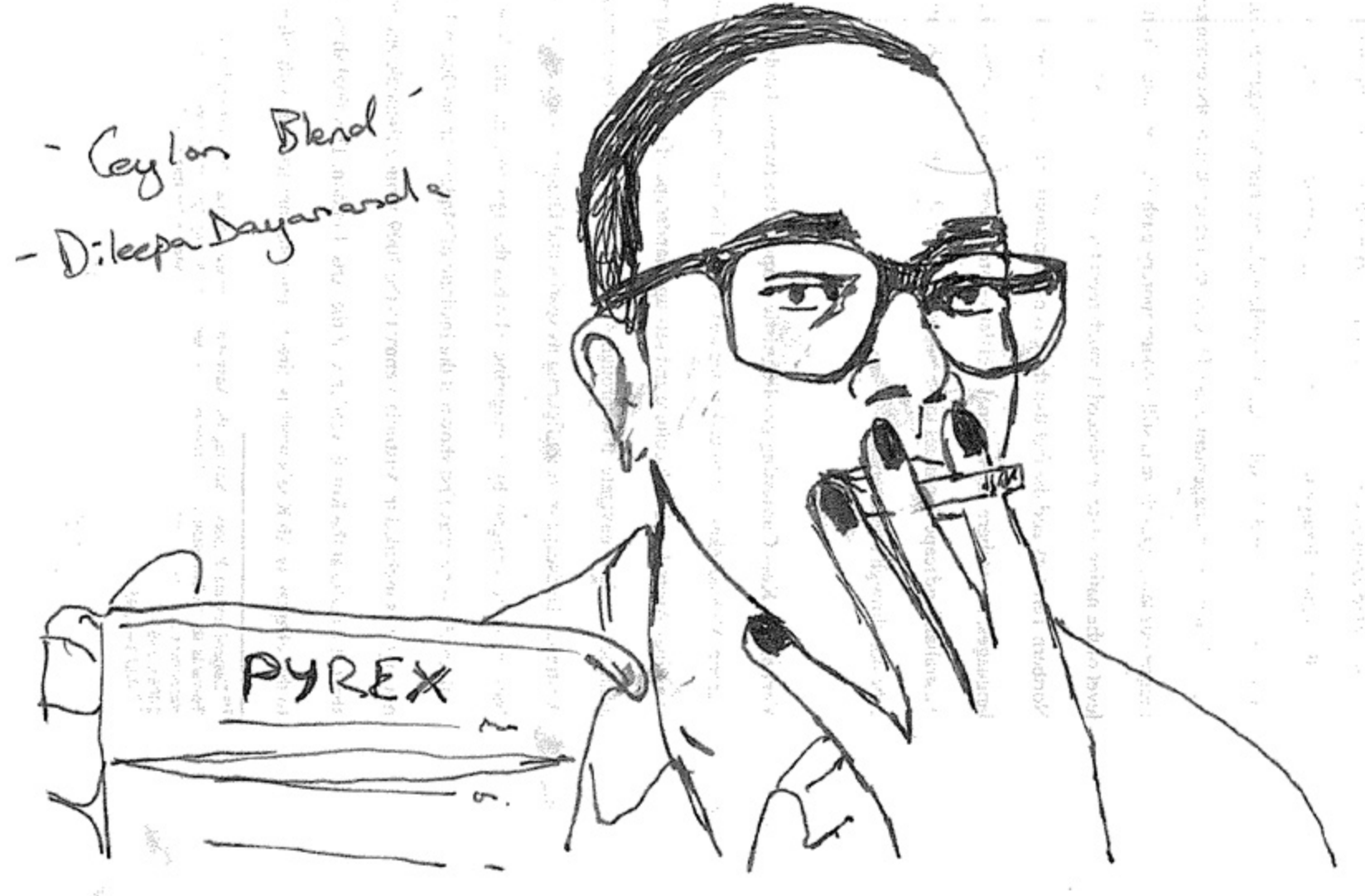
References:

José Esteban Muñoz. Disidentifications : Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics, 1999. X

E

I'm so glad we got to this place lol - thank you for taking us here! It's really funny what you say about wanting to find/articulate a strategy of approaching identity that can work across "our lives and practice both in and outside the art world in multiple situations". I feel like that's one of my big projects as well - one that cuts through my writing and creative practice, my experiences in 'public' and even my experiences in the 'public' space of the 'private' (ie. in moments of intimate/sexual encounter with just one other). Would love to go into all of these but I know that we can't!

I'll try and address what you've brought up, in order:

1. I don't necessarily agree with you on how Primavera is a double-bind because we want 'diversity' in the institution. To me, the answer here is simple: keep this roster of artists but don't frame them in this way. Just let it be that the best eight young Australian artists aren't a group of cis-het white men. Don't reduce their work to being topical and/or responding to the representation of identity. Or is it too radical to let the idea and reality of poc and queer supremacy exist? People who 'represent' marginalised groups can be, and are in, the institution without 'playing' the game of being commodified and reinscribed as their (marginalised) identities - but I think this requires the institution's (reluctant or forced) co-operation in letting these artists exist and be marketed as artists, not identities.

2. This feeds into my first response to your question of how we might produce our politics within colonial-capitalism (and entangled projects of power, like white supremacy and patriarchy). One way is by being really vigilant, I think, about how the rhetorics of identity and marginality are used, by whom, in which contexts, and for whose profit and whose ongoing subjugation. This is definitely a conversation that I'm seeing on Instagram at the moment; people like Claudia Roosen (@crispybitch_69) and Leila El Rayes (@dingbatbabe) immediately come to mind as arts professionals who are using their stories and posts to actively discuss the profit/loss realities of working with, for and off the backs of marginalised people in the art world. They're certainly not the only people having these conversations but they're two really articulate and politically engaged people in my immediate orbit.

3. I just want to quickly address what seems like a slight misreading of what I/Butler was trying to say in my earlier response - I (and I don't think Butler either) didn't mean to say that our identities are for us to mobilise as vectors of power (against others) with total agency. I meant to say that it can be useful to think of race, gender and class as vectors of power rather than identities - I think this helps us think about the movement and dynamism of power, the trajectories and magnitudes of violence and privilege, and how

political projects like colonialism and het-patriarchy arrange and address bodies (individuals and groups of people) in time and space. I think it can be helpful to think in these terms instead of always in terms like 'identity', as relying on terms like identity can imply a false fixity or a false naturalisation of identity - as if identity is predisursive, inevitable or unchangeable when, of course, 'identity' is actually just one way of describing the (violent) political arrangement/economies of the world and how that affects individuals and collectives on micro and macro levels. Does that make sense?

4. I really think the anecdote you've fleshed out here illustrates something very important in this discussion, to do with the agency and agility of individuals. From my experience, and from looking 'back' into history and looking at our current political moment, I think that people who are continually fucked over by pervasive, violent ideologies (to the extent that their material realities are in some part determined by direct and indirect violence) become/are/can be incredibly adept at addressing those violences in a variety of ways. The people being fucked over by systems/institutions are those who really know the powers of these machines - and who develop ways of navigating that power. Not to make it about me, but to stick on this train of personal, anecdotal evidence... I was once articulating to a friend, at length, some of the challenges that I have to routinely navigate being in queer relationships that are always implicated in het-patriarchy. And he just responded with "wow, young people are so savvy these days." I think this was meant to be in reference to the vocab that I was nonchalantly using, but I just thought what the fuck are you talking about? I'm not savvy, I'm just trying to live my life and being able to talk about and move through this shitshow is just a literal necessity. If I couldn't talk about this stuff and address it I don't know how I could engage in sustained intimacy with the kinds of people I become close to.

5. I guess, all of this is a big lead up to saying: yes, it is daunting to imagine moving through the systems that we're in, with the politics that we have (or want to have). Sometimes it really feels like impossible labour. But at the same time, it's not daunting at all. We're already doing it. We know the ways in which we are being hurt - and when it comes to addressing the way that the system hurts others, we know that our place is to listen and support without seeking personal gain and without reinforcing the historical and ongoing, current, exploitation of others. And I guess my stance on navigating terms like 'identity' comes down to understanding these facts. I don't think that many particular words or political tactics are universally useful or unhelpful (with some clear exceptions, of course) - I think it's often about who is using what words and actions, how, and for what purpose. If we are making sure that these tools - like the rhetoric of 'identity' - are being weaponised by those who should have the autonomy to wield them, then we're working towards what we want to work towards. And if we make sure that people who are in the position to profit off of 'identity', 'diversity' and the inclusion of marginalised people, are being constantly scrutinised (and are letting words like 'identity' mobilise marginalised people into collectivity with each other, rather than have those people be reinscribed as the Other by those in the false centre), then we're working towards what we want to work towards. And I guess above all, I think we really just have to remember that our positions are really erratic and in flux; within a two-minute span in one conversation we can shift from being in the line of violence to being the violence. Not to

sound too utopian, but since we have been reading Munoz.... I think our obligation to ourselves and to others is to know our own violent and liberatory potentiality, as deeply as intimately as we can, and to use whatever tactics we feel comfortable with and have within our reach, to just f**king do the right thing.
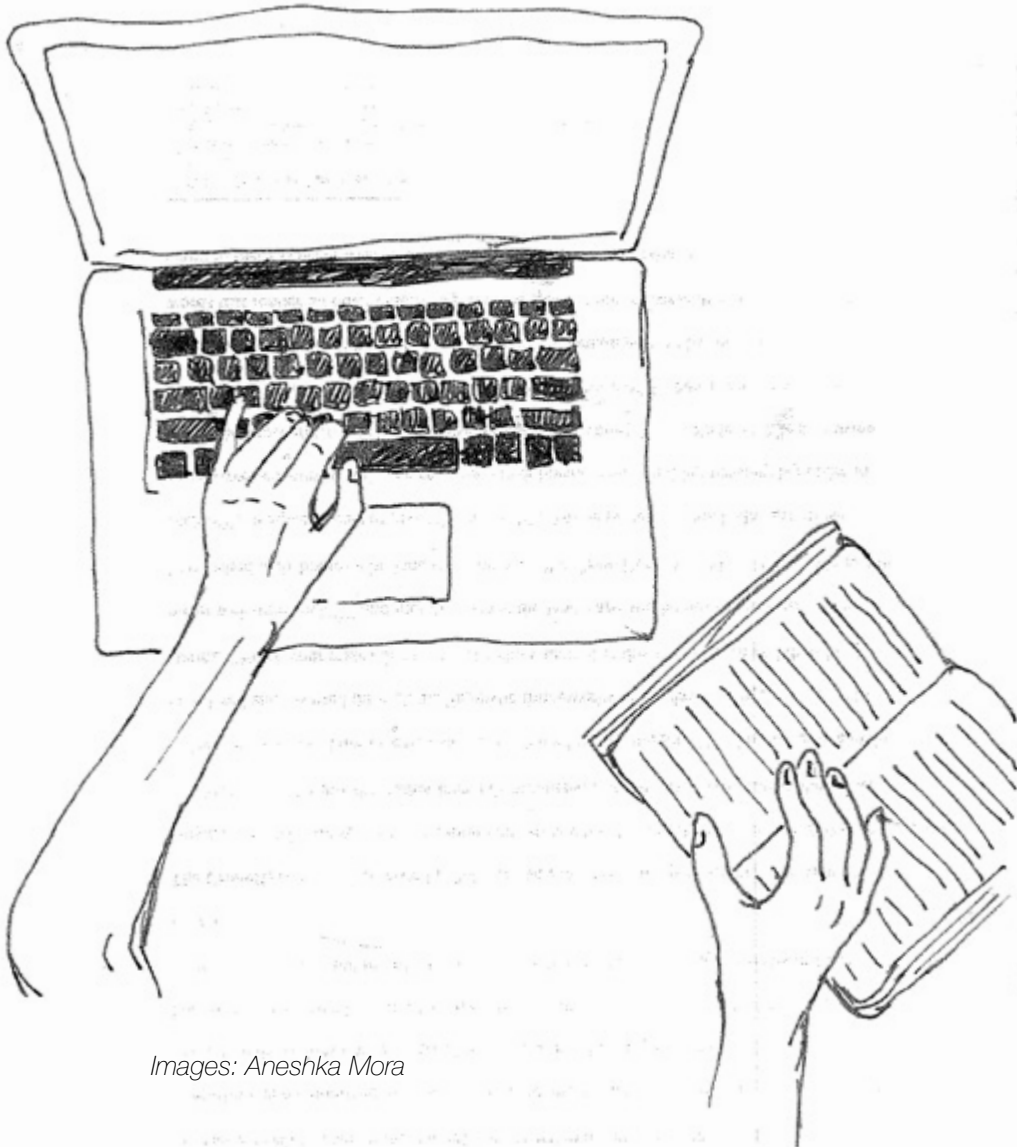
Images: Aneshka Mora

When a Chinese-Australian finds The Peach Blossom Spring

By Naomi Segal

Note: Here, Dao refers to the Chinese philosophical principle, while Tao is the surname of ancient poet Tao Yuanming.

This short piece is an effort to articulate how the classical legend of the Peach Blossom Spring has deepened the way I engage with Chinese literature, history and Daoist philosophy. Having Chinese heritage, I previously believed that I could access some innate or automatic insight into Chinese cultures, but in my diasporic position – where my interiority has been largely Westernised – this essentialist mindset is limiting. I came to this realisation through reading (in translation) Tao Yuanming's (365–427) original story of the secluded agrarian utopia, as well as the Orientalising adaptation 'The Peach Blossom Forest and other Chinese Legends' (1951) by Robert Gittings and Jo Manton. In this iteration, Gittings and Manton gentrify Tao's "working-class agricultural haven"1 – rich with Daoist thought and Imperialistic critique – into a leisurely paradise replete with servants, princesses and a lord. I reflected on my initial preference for Gittings and Manton's gentrified story, concluding that the easy familiarity of stereotypical Oriental imagery flattered my shallow knowledge of Chinese tradition. But I am now recognising that I must set aside this complacent approach for a more rigorous engagement with the unknown. This, I hope, will be a more productive means of cultural reconnection.

To summarise Tao's original prose and poetry for The Peach Blossom Spring, a fisherman sails upstream and encounters blossoming peach trees leading to the riverspring, symbolising the Daoist "primordial source", the ultimate origin of energy, possibility and creativity. 2 Here, the fisherman enters a mountain cave, finding a farming paradise where the people work peacefully and know no suffering. The fisherman leaves and tries to return – but the utopia was never found again.

In Tao's rejection of Imperialism and the scholarly upper-class, his utopic vision is an egalitarian, agrarian society – uncorrupted by hierarchy and materialism. Compare the villagers in Tao's story, "attired in the same manner as the people living outside" (p. 163), with the materialistic indulgence of Gittings and Manton's princesses wearing "jade combs" and "silk robes embroidered with golden suns" (pp. 12-13).3 On my first reading, I had a visceral recognition of the simple Oriental imagery, and this became a comforting affirmation that I possessed some automatic Chinese 'instinct'.

Another salient point of contrast in the utopias is the population's awareness of their seclusion from wider China. The community in the Peach Blossom Spring are conscious that their ancestors fled the tyrannical Qin Dynasty, aligning with the idea that "Daoist harmony...could be found only in an uncorrupted social fabric".4 But the people in Gittings and Manton's 'Peach Blossom Forest' are presided by a lord who conceals the existence of the outside world. The people are consequently naïve, as indicated when the fisherman explains his home and the confused princesses say "A town?...We do not know any town" (p. 13). Naturally, legends are adaptable, but it is an insult that the authors adopt a Chinese perspective with a premise of authenticity while ignoring the philosophical and contextual nuances underpinning the original story.5

Both stories conclude with the paradise never being found again. While the original has the government, army and intellectual elite failing to find the spring – denoting Tao's contempt for the "manic turmoil of ambition and hierarchy and empire"6 – Gittings and Manton streamline this plurality of meaning into a single line:

"The peach blossom forest had vanished" (p. 15).

Granted the fisherman is still accompanied by politicians, retaining a semblance of institutional critique – but I think the complete evaporation of the paradise points to the depletion of meaning in this legend's Westernised iteration.

Despite this, when I first read these texts I felt more drawn to the gentrified Peach Blossom Forest. I was comforted by its recognisability, written like a European fairy tale but also studded with Oriental signifiers of jade, silk, dragons and princesses. And perhaps, in my cultural insecurity, I was clinging to some idea that a Chinese perspective can be available to someone who is 'not really Chinese', myself included. But the more research I did, the more I realised that the 1951 adaptation is fixated on the possibility of material wealth, corrupting the Daoist ideals that were upheld by Tao.

My mother expects Chineseness to come naturally to me as it has come so naturally to her – so it's difficult and embarrassing to admit there is much I don't know. But reading The Peach Blossom Spring has reminded me to concede to my diasporic position, in which my interiority is quite Westernised, while Chineseness often feels far away. For this reason, my cultural recovery cannot be achieved easily or comfortably. It is work.

I'm recalling the princesses in the Peach Blossom Forest whose existence was comfortable but oblivious; they had no idea who they really were. However in Tao's original, the villagers not only worked hard, but they also understood themselves and their ancestors. I am striving to adopt a similarly conscientious approach – to confront the meaningful work of understanding histories and philosophies that I was never taught.

Bibliography

Chang, C., Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art & Poetry, New York, Harper & Row, 1970.

Chiang, S., 'Visions of Happiness: Daoist Utopias and Grotto Paradises in Early and Medieval Chinese Tales', Utopian Studies, vol, 20, no. 1, 2009, pp. 97-120.

Gittings, R. & Manton, J., The Peach Blossom Forest and other Chinese Legends, Oxford University Press, 1951.

Nelson, S., 'On through to the beyond: The Peach Blossom Spring as Paradise', Archives of Asian Art, vol. 39, 1986, pp. 23-47.

Walker, N., 'Reforming the Way: The Palace and Village in Daoist Paradise', Utopian Studies, vol. 24, no. 1, 2013, pp. 6-22.

Tao, Y., 'Peach-Blossom Springs', translated by Wang, R. in The Complete Works of Tao Yuanming, Hunan People's Press, 2003.

Images:

Qiu Ying, 'Peach Orchard Paradise' (detail), Ink and colour on silk, 66.7x175cm, Tianjin Museum of Arts, Middle Ming Dynasty

http://www.tjbwg.com/cn/collectionInfo.aspx?Id=2572

Naomi Segal, 'Untitled', 2018, Heat transfer, oil pastel and lacquer on paper 13x19cm

By Jack Poppert

I wake to the sound of lamentation. God, another lapse in waking. What the fuck is that anyway? An older-lady – that is to say an elderly woman, yelling out on the street. The sound of it travels up through the window, light with the breeze. Her yelling is casual - only insofar as it is common, in this part of the city at least. But she trails off, resolves the whole thing quite suddenly. In a way it seems a rip off to have been woken by it. I guess she wasn't close to death or in immediate trouble; the sort of trouble whose immediacy can be remedied anyway. Maybe the lady was lamenting something a little more solid LIKE THE SYSTEM (it is a good idea to whisper this line as conventional radical politics are quite unfashionable nowadays1).

Anyway, I have no time to care for her, and I can't offer anything in the way of a description; she's waaaay around the corner now and far from the window that looks down onto the street. But nonetheless it is true that her hollering, as it were, is not unusual and that on top of this she does not seem to be in imminent danger – in a way. But this woman is taking up too great a part of this. I was going to speak about this comedian I know and how he fell out of favour and I think that I am going to take a walk also, so forgive me if things get muddled.

I keep falling asleep in mid-thought, and I'm never sure if it's a justified fatigue or a justified boredom that does it. Come to think of it, they are both the same anyway.

'Angela, wake up darling, come on'. Was this a dream or a memory from my childhood? It just shot through the fog of a premature waking, so I don't know if the neighbours – those ephemeral figures whose existence I have presumed and not known – said it or if it was indeed a dream. I swear the voices were true but I can't know. There is always trouble understanding what is behind the wall. They are the perfect family of collapse, because they are silent, barely present when I press my ear to the wall. Of course, the whole thing is receding rapidly, now. The thought gets all slimy when pursued, like some silly child running from a parent.

Did I have a friend named Angela when I was younger, perhaps young enough to have forgotten her completely? I run this past Doris in the kitchen. She doesn't care for these sorts of questions. 'Don't ask me about memory okay?', she drawls in her muddled accent of American/Australian. 'And while you're at it, don't ask me about free will, God, democracy OR socialism, anarchy, or Heidegger. And under no circumstances should you ask me about Trump', she said lifting a spoon of steaming porridge to her mouth. 'Or the cave', she added definitively, spitting the scent of yellow from between her wissened teeth.

I look around and remember that I hate this place. The corridors are so quiet, so white and dirty. I dislike its familiarity, so draining.

I can't remember now which department Doris actually works in. 'I don't work darling, I operate and I don't operate, I practice'. Oh yes practice, now there's a piece of jargon. But where in the humanities? Best not to ask. She'd just strike me with a jagged response. So why am I talking to her? Jesus. Do I even have any friends? Is she my friend? Oh, man now there is a thought in need of philosophical explication.

'Have you seen what has happened -------.', I ask Doris in earnest. 'Well, he really had it coming. You just can't piss everyone off your whole life without losing your edge. You know.', she says. 'But I don't think its going to be a big story. I mean a REALLY big story. He's kind of over it', she says letting all of the essence of her New York intellectual out to twang around the room. And by it she means his edge and in this she means either that he has nothing of any relevance to say or that what he had said was a little less compelling and a little more offensive than his old jokes had been; and to that extent that they had lost some justification. With this she gives a toss of the hand so conventional it suffers from the absence of a cigarette. 'You romantic beast', I think, glad, as I hear the echo of my voice, that I hadn't said this aloud. Fuck, maybe she is my only friend.

'Anyone who dresses up in cabaret and plays with theatrics is wearing a mask. You can't say that the character represents the author but nine times out of ten they god-damn-well do', Doris says smoke rising from her imaginary cigarette. 'So you are saying that the satire was all autobiographical?' 'No. No, I wouldn't say that, I'd say it much better than that', she says, smoke filling the room. 'But yes'.

From the fine black line between her teeth, in her chic, wide lipped smile, a generous condescension urges itself across the table. Now I feel the significance of the cigarette as a potential weapon. It is a tool, an extension of her utterance, which in truth has more I will end you! in it than so that's my opinion, what do you think?

An incomprehensive guide to erotic lesbian dream interpretation

Anonymous

They say dreams are sometimes expressions of our subconscious desires. They also say dreams are not necessarily expressions of our subconscious desires. They say you sleep in 3-hour cycles, and that if you wake at just the right moment, this is when you are most likely able to remember your dreams. In my late teens, I used to set double alarms to start and stop sleep cycles in an attempt to wake at this exact moment—hoping to retain flashes of slumbery images. I'd then stumble out of bed, bleary-eyed, and furiously search keywords on Dreammoods.com in an arguably narcissistic attempt to extract hidden meanings and uncover my ~deepest ~darkest ~desires.

About a year ago I started having sex dreams about women. One was about a bespectacled woman I used to work with. Another was about a woman I shared a studio with. Another was about my supervisor. I don't want to tell you too much about these women in case any of them read this and are able to recognise themselves in the patchy descriptions of my erotic fantasies. I will tell you though that I am also a woman, and that at this point of my life, I was identifying as straight.

After a number of these increasingly homoerotic dreams occurred in a relatively short space of time, I decided to revisit my teen hobby of dream interpretation. Dreammoods.com has entries for lesbian, gay (please see homosexual), homosexual, and sex. I am on the third page of H – holy child to hysterectomy. Homosexual, it seemed, fell somewhere in between. The entry reads, "if you are heterosexual and you dream that you are having sex with someone of the same sex, then it represents an expression of greater selflove and acceptance… the dream does not necessarily imply homosexual desire".i

The dream does not necessarily imply homosexual desire. Now whether or not you believe dream interpretation is useful, there is a stark difference here in how Dreammoods talks about queerness in relation to basically anything else. Dreaming about brownies, for example, "symbolizes self-indulgence. You feel that you are deserving of a small gift and are treating yourself to a little sweet reward".ii To dream you are in a rage "is symbolic of your bad temper, negative outbursts, and suppressed anger. You need to express your inner strengths and desires".iii Interpretations of symbols apparently unrelated to queerness are specific, unequivocal, and often accompanied by imperatives. Comparatively, entries dealing with queerness are at best vague (at worst effacing) and refuse to make any sort of definitive assertions about the underlying significance of these dreams. It may mean… it might be that…. perhaps… not necessarily…

There is a part of me that wants to read Dreammoods' refusal to pin down queerness as precisely queer—as recognition of queer's infinite potential, that it resists any static definition, that it is too fluid, and like water slipping through your hands, it cannot be captured. However, it seems that most often these entries about queerness are designed not keep the nature of queerness elusive, but rather to efface it altogether. They seem to provide explanations for queer dreams that are intended to reaffirm heterosexuality at all costs—while dreaming of brownies means you should treat yourself, a lesbian sex dream is just #selflove! It probably means you're straight—in fact it probably means you're so straight, you're having lesbian sex dreams because that's how straight you know you are! On the other hand, if a queer person has a queer sex dream "then the dream is simply a reflection of [their] own self".iv No mention of selflove—that interpretation is apparently only applicable to straight people.

Now I'm not saying that having queer sex dreams indisputably means you're queer. In fact, whether you're queer or not is actually beside the point. The same can be said for the practice of dream interpretation–whether or not you think there is anything substantive in this practice is also irrelevant. What is important is that the question of queerness is rarely even addressed because it is often so hastily dismissed.

Maybe you think this doesn't matter because you never remember your dreams anyway, or because dream interpretation is a load of shit, or because sexuality is fluid so what's the issue? But this tendency to efface queerness is deeply rooted in homophobia and is symptomatic of wider cultural discourses surrounding queerness and how we value it. It demonstrates the dominant collective attitude towards queer sexuality—that it should not be seen.

Reaffirming heterosexuality in the face of queerness does not only occur in dreams, but also plays out in sexual practices—that is, who and how we fuck. 'Heteroflexible' is an identifier for people who participate in queer sex but identify as straight. While simply having queer sex does not in itself make you queer, labelling queer acts as heterosexual continues this tradition of queer erasure. It is driven by an intense investment in the privileges of heteronormativity, because it essentially allows straight people to fuck whoever they want without engaging in the politics of what it means to be queer.v It draws distinctions between 'true' queerness and 'pretend' queerness, where true queerness is centred around discourses of love, the couple, and biological determinism—a.k.a. the 'born this way' narrative. vi Queer sex, on the other hand, is just fucking— doesn't necessarily mean anything. The reassertion of heterosexuality, of drawing distinctions between 'real' and 'pretend', of qualifying and explaining queer sexual encounters, limits the radical disruptive power of queer sex acts. This de-radicalisation of queer sex is characteristic of how heteronormativity has paradoxically managed to co-opt a lot of what it means to be queer. Where sexual fluidity and mutable desire have been defining characteristics of queerness, we see this now becoming enfolded into normative heterosexuality.vii And as we see heteronorms begin to loosen, we also see queerness becoming increasingly regulated.

'True' queers are required to know and prove their queerness. It is ironic that unwavering certainty is the standard by which queerness is deemed valid, when really it is about movement, changeability, potentiality, and possibility. It is ironic that we are expected to be so sure, when it can be so hard to see in the first place. When I told one of my gay friends about the first date I ever went on with a woman, he asked "how long have you known?" I said I didn't know. He said you always know. We are required, even by our fellow queers, to be able to defend this queerness with such ferocity, as proof that we have never been, could never be, any other

way. I understand the importance of the 'born this way' narrative—it has been one of the central underpinning tenets of queer liberation—but we must not bind queerness up in so many regulatory measures that we no longer have room to move and grow and learn and discover. I do not know if I was born with my queerness or not—in any case, I was not born knowing it. But I also don't think it really matters—it does not diminish the fire with which it burns through me now.

This tradition of erasing queerness, of explaining it away, not only serves to uphold and bolster heterosexism, but also makes it increasingly difficult for queers to recognise their own queerness. When queer desires, queer acts, queer thoughts, and queer feelings are charaded as heterosexual, we are robbed of our ability to see ourselves. How can you see something that is constantly being erased? You cannot see yourself reflected in a void.

I had another sex dream last night—I didn't know the woman this time. I didn't search keywords in Dreammoods. I no longer feel so consumed. I am not certain what this article is supposed to leave you with, but certainty is overrated. I guess the most important thing to remember is that brownies can be queer, and so can rage. Queerness is wherever you can see it, but even hindsight isn't 20/20. I feel like I've spent a lot of time sifting back through conversations, relationships, thoughts, and feelings, looking for clues pointing to my queerness. How did it take me so long to see? We are far more familiar with the story of how we come to let others see us for who we are, than we are with the story of how we come to see ourselves. I read once:
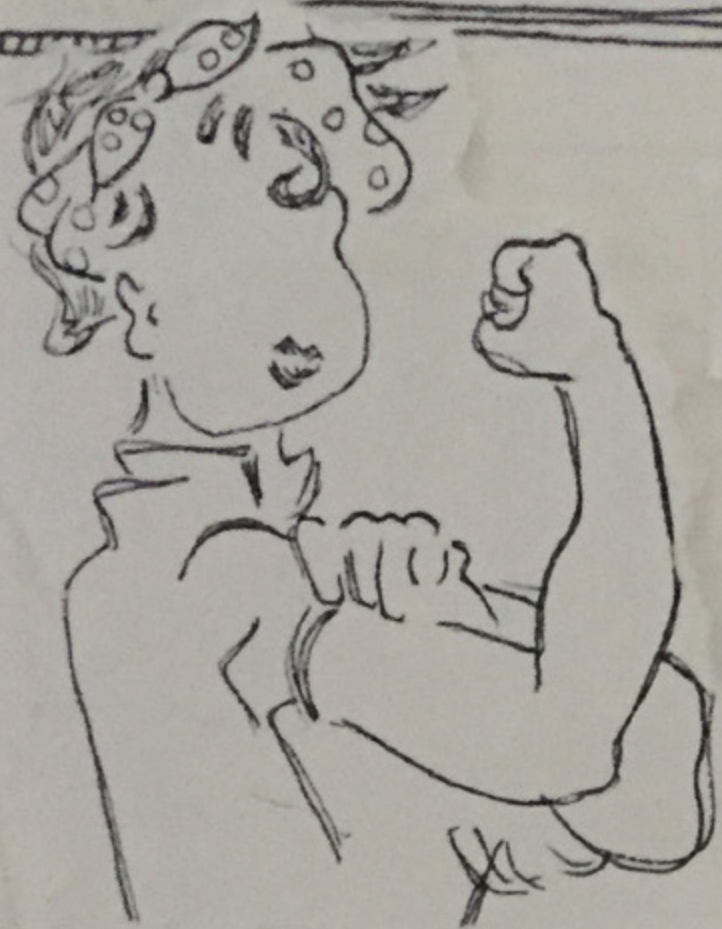
"I'm shaking so hard, and I feel I'm shaking exactly against the rhythm of the universe".viii

When I finally saw my queerness, it felt like I shifted just a little to the left, and suddenly, I was shaking in time with the world. Or maybe, it was the world that was finally shaking in time with me.
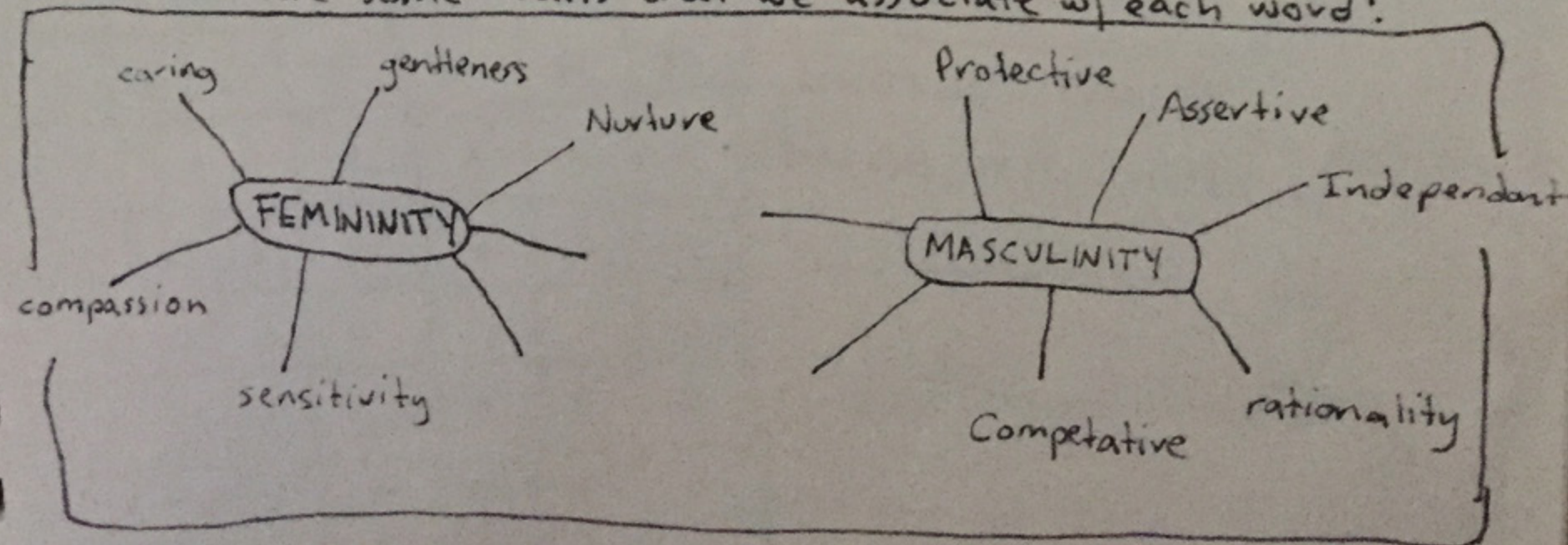
CHAPTER ONE | GENTLE HERO'S AND DEEP LOSERS;
A generalised reframing of the basics.

By Mahn Lion

Patriarchy is not limited to unequal treatment between the genders.

I'd like to suggest that it has an unfortunate allergy to femininity.

All I want to do in this article is to Highlight a cultural reluctance to see feminine traits as profound.

* Here are some traits that we associate w/ each word!

FEMININITY — caring, gentleness, Nurture, compassion, sensitivity

MASCULINITY — Protective, Assertive, Independant, rationality, Competative

ACTIVITY 1: Add some words of your own!

NOW.... Lets take a moment to distinguish Gender and Gender Expression....

GENDER IDENTITY — BOTH, ME, MALE, FEMALE, NEITHER

GENDER EXPRESSION + TRAITS. — MASCULINE, ME, FEMININE
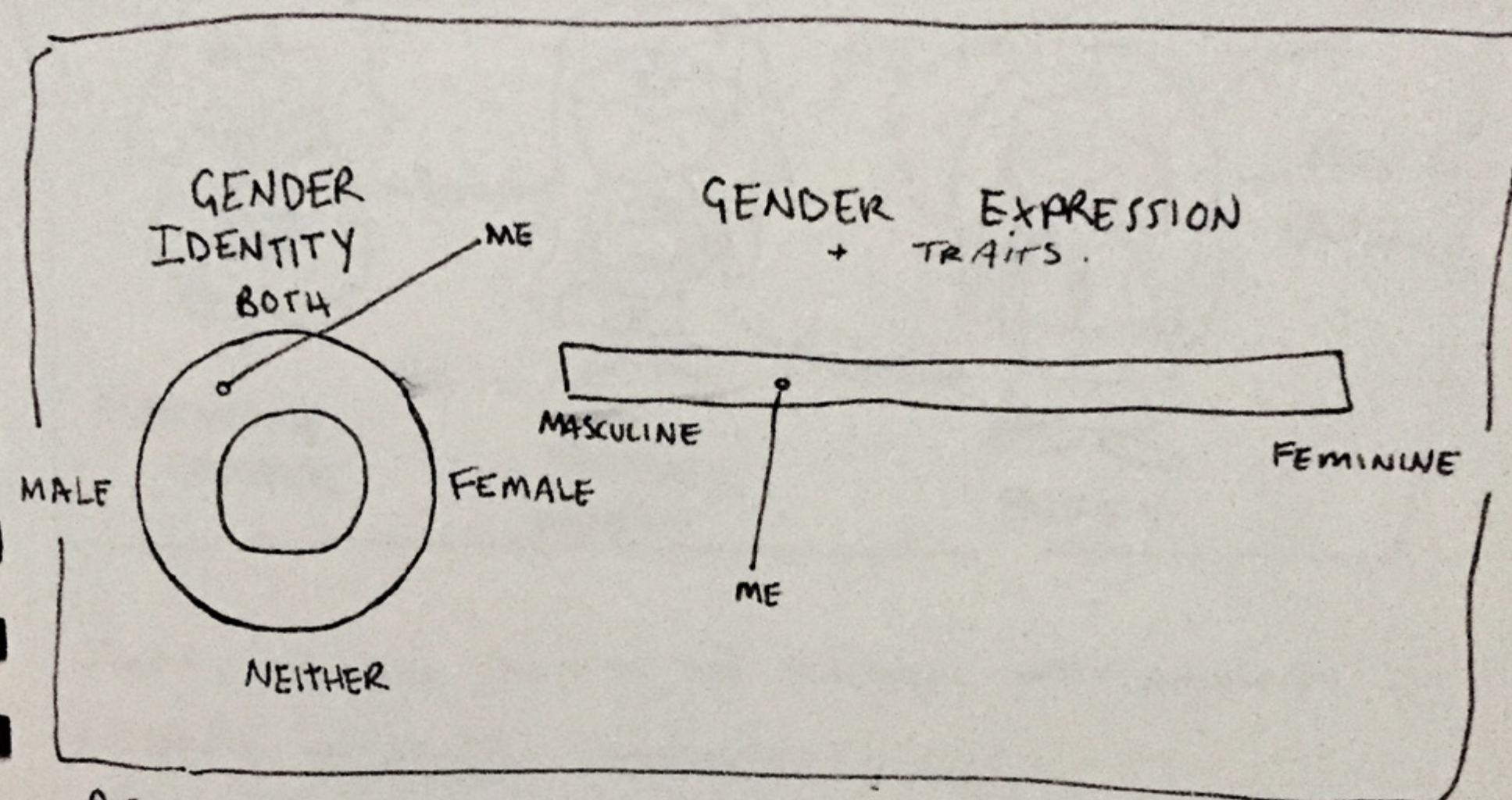
ACTIVITY 2: MARK YOURSELF ON THE GENDER WHEELS!

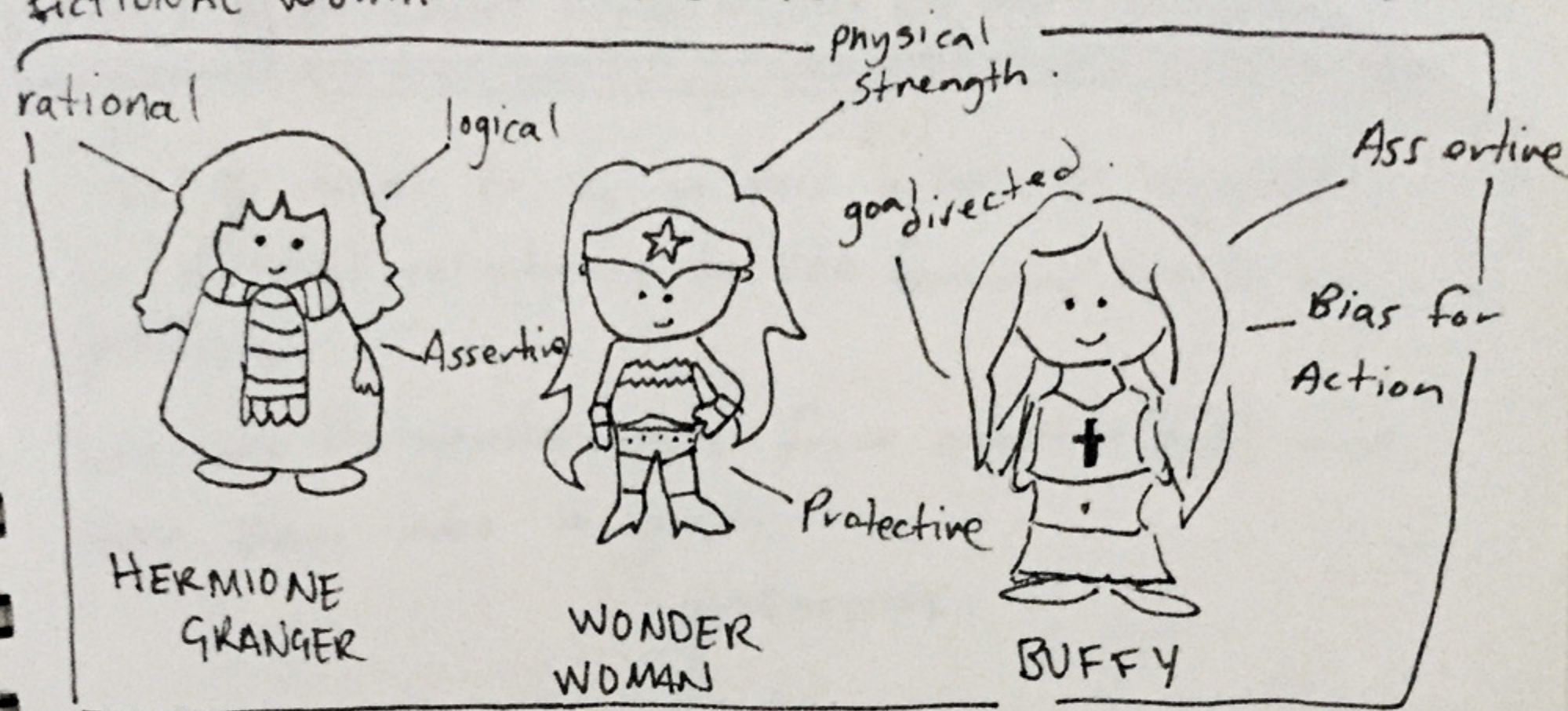## BONUS ACTIVITY! FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS TO COMPLETE THE SENTENCE!

EVOLOUTION is ENABLING WHILE ...

_____ !
_____

I USED THE WORLD WIDE WEB TO FIND A POPULAR
FICTIONAL WOMAN FROM EACH OF THE LAST 3 DECADES;

rational

logical

physical
strength

goal directed

Assertive

Protective

Assertive

Bias for
Action

HERMIONE
GRANGER

WONDER
WOMAN

BUFFY

Here, we are looking at women who emulate or
embody masculine elements.
They are celebrated as 'strong Female charachters'.

Although this is fine — there is generally a huge
reluctance to celebrate femininity (of all genders)
both in the media and in the wild.

ACTIVITY 3: GIVE JANE GOODALL A FRIEND! THINK OF
SOME ONE CELEBRATED FOR THEIR FEMININITY AND
DRAW THEM HERE!

intuitive

Patient

compassion-
ate

JANE GOODALL

ALL I want to do in this article, is highlight
a cultural reluctance to see feminine traits as
profound.

let's take the gender wheels from chapter [one] and
turn them into a graph!

FEMININE.

4 "THE
FEMME
DUDE"

"THE BOSS
BITCH"

5 "THE
FLUID"

MALE

FEMALE

2 "A
WITCH"

3 "MALE"

MASCULINE
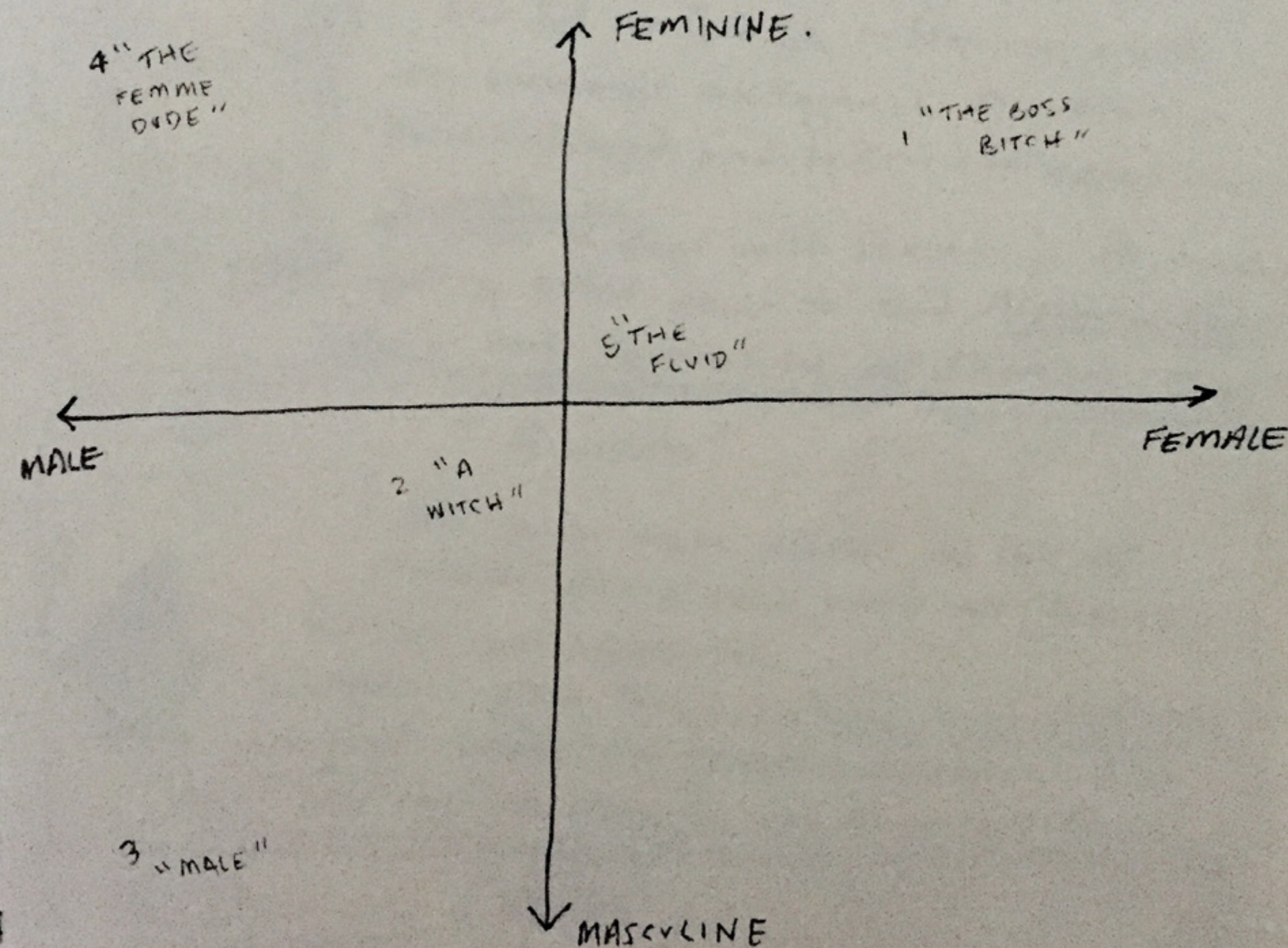
ACTIVITY 4: PLOT YOURSELF ON THE GRAPH!
Look! Some Monsters Already HAVE!!!!

CHECK OUT THESE MONSTERS FROM THE GRAPH!
THERE ALL (BASED ON) REAL PEOPLE'S RESPONCES.
LET'S SEE WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE
BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS FROM THEIR PLACE ON
THE GRID!!!! ....

1. HI! I'M.... "THE BOSS BITCH"

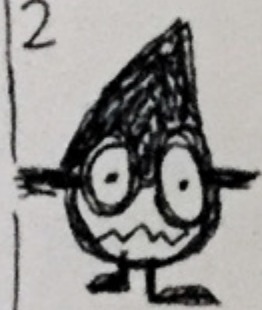"i get freedrinks, multiple orgasms and feel comfortable in feminine clothes.
my emotional intelligence has always been embraced and taken seriously! YAY!"

"however....
I have to deal with sexism in the media, getting talked down to and Assumptions about my sexuality and intrests. Boo!"

2 HI I'm.... "A witch"

"passing as male allows me lots of privileges. Also I have bomb-ass [femme] fashion and acessories.
"however... I've been verbally and physically assulted due to my gender expression. I've also lost my job Due to my bomb ass fashion."

3 Hi I'm ... "MALE"
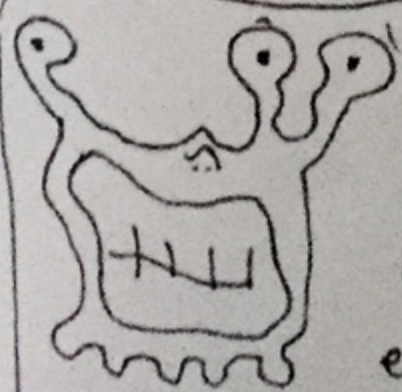
"i don't fear walking home alone! Assholes take me more seriously.
however... My emotional side is not encouraged."

4. Hi I'm.... "The Femme Dude"

"male priveledge! it's easy to look proffesional at work!
however....
i get overlooked in my industry — i'm often seen as "not-masc" enough to be legitamately male (wth?) I've been openly and discreetly harrased".

5. HI, I'm... "The Fluid"

"looking Queer/masc has encouraged aggression. I used to get sexuallally harrased (when I was femme), but now it's agression. sometimes i get taken more seriously than others in a female body."

6. WHO ARE YOU?

* ACTIVITY 5 DRAW YOUR SELF AND WRITE ABOUT THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS FROM THE GRID!

In conversation: Fork Project and artistic duo Lilly Lai and Rattus Ratt.

In a garage basement in Marrickville, the three sat together and chatted. Fork put together some questions for the artists after a quick coffee. Rather than a typical interviewer - interviewee back and forth dialogue, the artists began by asking themselves the questions put forward by Fork. This structure quickly unraveled as the artists began to ask their own questions.

This is an edited excerpt of a larger transcription that will be published on www.forkproject.com

L: One thing that we have in common is that we've both immigrated to Sydney from somewhere else. So we aren't born and bred here. You come from Canberra, I've come from scattered places. But I think it's pretty obvious in our conversations, when we talk about the different places that we've lived in, almost as if they were past lives. And this idea of home and nostalgia ...

R: What home really means now and how that might apply to our lives. I think both of us then just find home with community or places that foster who we are ... and I think that goes for a lot of people. I think it's important to figure that out eventually.

F: Does that ever get transmitted through the practices that you both do together ... like do you find community through art, so through art you find home?

R: Yeah well the art world is kinda home for people ...

L: Totally for me. Even before I decided I wanted to start practicing ... I think the reason why I've loved working in the arts is mainly
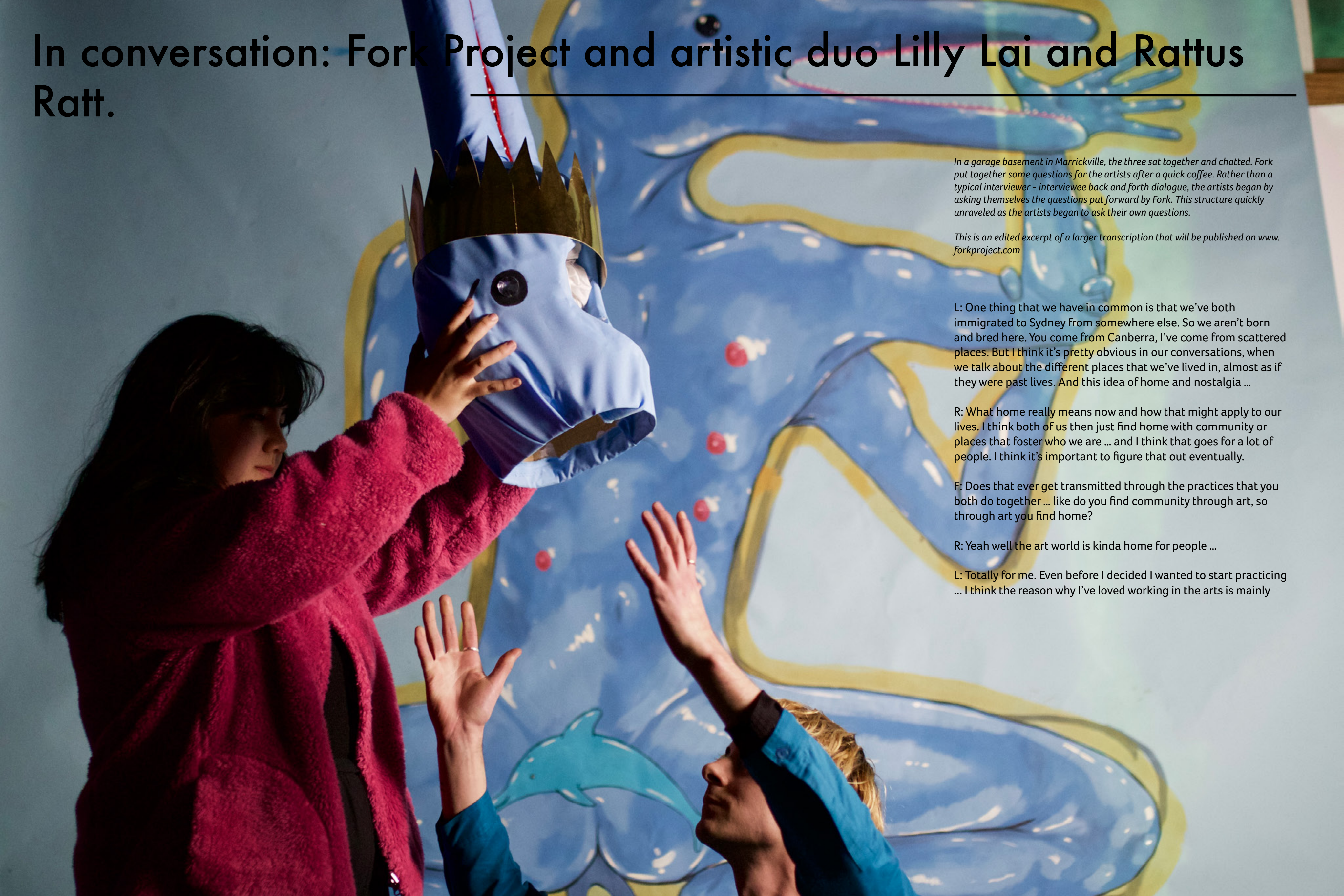
because of the people and the connections you create and the community that's harboured there... I think for me it's the people even before the actual art.

R: I think it's a bit of both ... I think that the community is home but it doesn't necessarily influence the art more than like ... conceptual ideas maybe ...

L: Also talking about ideas of home in our practice. With a lot of your paintings Ratt, in the past and the stuff you're creating right now, we've talked a lot about this idea of creating Personal Utopias. Would you think of these Personal Utopias as a home? Or a fantasy space that could be homely? Or is it more kind of foreign?

R: No I think it's a physcological space. It's nowhere. It's not even a space it's an outlook or an image. A Personal Utopia ... I think, when I'm trying to summon one ... it's just like a moment.

L: I feel like we have these ideas of what you and I think of as home, which is through people and community. Or alternatively a more physical thing like a house that you were born and grew up in. Do you think either of these concepts have affected your practice?

R: Yeah of course. But in the same way that it sort of places every artist in their practice ... where home is. I wouldn't say my work is about home ever. I separate my practice from my life in a way. Obviously everyone will work and their work will reflect their lives but I don't live as an artwork so to speak. What about you?

L: For me I think my personal practice, outside of what we do collaboratively, is very personal and very heavily linked to experiences and my life. It's more about reflecting and investigating the past empty spaces within it. Lately I've been looking back on to my childhood and at this idea of me living in different spaces in the world and how that's impacted my lived experience and my connection to my identity and my security to that. So a lot of it is about being bi-racial and growing up in different cultural spaces and the spaces they create when they dissect ... Another thing that is interesting about this question about home is, actually the first show I was in was about concepts of home and my work was relating home to cultural practices. I don't know how I feel about it now, but for me home is security and I feel secure when I'm connected to my heritage or the cultural spaces I grew up in. I don't think I lived in a house for longer than two years. I never really felt connection to a physical space ... but the idea of embroidery, which my grandmother taught me, which was passed down through the women in my family generation after generation in the UK, and the food that I'd eat with my father or the prayers that we would do at Chinese New Year ... the dancing that I learnt growing up in Thailand ... stuff like that is another thing I would associate with home alongside the idea of people and community too.

R: I think how that processing of your identity feeds into your artworks is really interesting. For me that's like the primordial mess that is my gender identity and like other things that I don't even know how to navigate becomes ... my art ... because art is also an indescribable mess of things ...

F: I was going to say, thinking about cultural narratives ...

R: ... Well obviously I'm Queer as fuck and that cultural narrative is a huge part of my work and there's a community there as well ... it's like the home thing. The community is a home to every Queer person in it whether they like it or not (laughs) ... and that's pretty much a lot of my work.

L: That work that I did for Firstdraft kind of addressed ...

F: What was that work? Can you describe it?

L: Yeah it was a half hour long video performance work where I do three iterations of a performance in different attire. And I cover myself in white paint and just roll around in it. It's called rinse and I got a different person to shoot it off my phone each time. Ratt shot one of the sequences. That work was starting to explore the space I'm in with my relationship to my gender. Cause basically the first one I'm in a suit, the second one I'm in this orchid bikini thing and then the third one I'm just naked. If we're thinking about cultural practices too ... for me even developing a practice in the first place came from being more involved in the arts scene and industry and that's what made me decide that I wanted to do it ... by going to these shows and exhibitions and just being like

I wanna do that! (laughs). I sometimes think what would the scene be like for us if the government didn't scrap all that money to Australia Council …

R: It would be so good …

L: But I also don't think there would be as many DIY, punk, anarchist spaces that have popped up.

R: And it brings people out of the woodwork … people who wouldn't necessarily be artists …

L: But then again with all that being said, the one thing that I struggle with is that, on one hand the Sydney art scene is incredibly diverse in many many different ways, but it's still extremely patriarchal and it's really hard to break away from that …

R: Yeah it's still an art 'scene' in a white country …

L: Yeah! In post-colonial Australia it's still pretty cooked and I think that has a big influence on my practice as well … like going back to that 'Around the Outside' Firstdraft work, like another aspect of it was with the white paint that I was washing myself in. I wanted it to reference the white cube gallery space. I think at the very end I was trying to do body prints on the white wall with the paint and it was kind of a questioning of what these spaces have to offer artists of colour.

F: What do you both think of intellectual elitism and class privilege in the Sydney art scene?

L: It's so evident …

R: It goes into the White Cube thing … people see themselves as high priests of art sitting in their white cube gallery. Maybe they've seen your work and they feel like they have an authority on you that is absolute... and I think that's a huge problem when people are thinking about art who aren't one of those people, because that attitude gets adopted by everyone. You go into a white cube

gallery, even if it's a small fancy ARI and people are trying to keep that pyramid ball rolling … I think it's hard it let go of that elitist sphere if everyone thinks it's the best way to be an artists. I want art to be fun and safe … the elitism and the white cube stuff is really relevant to this snippet … I was sitting in this chair just like laughing at these performances which would've been taken really seriously in a gallery. I think that's what it should be like sometimes. Art is fun, it's fun before it's serious business I think. And if you can't just sit there and laugh at a performance, which no one feels comfortable doing, and the artist … who takes themselves too seriously, always wouldn't like that to happen. But I am fine with that. I want to see a day when everyone can just laugh at each other!

Night

By Jacqui O'Bryan

The **darkness** of the **night** is alluring. Completely hidden. Nothing but a shadow.

A reflection –

        of your former self?

            Or your true self?

I know some are scared. Of what - the truth? Children cower at **night**, searching for the light

to shine, to recognise what lurks. Under beds, in the wardrobe-

              Only monsters come out at **night**.

       Our unrecognisable selves.

Summer   Winter

The night is crisp,   A sharp stab

an escape   the chill

from the eternal summer heat   felt deep within your bones

     You hear more at **night**.

      Possums fighting - over the scraps left in the daytime

      A lone car - slowly rolling around a corner

      Glass shattering - against concrete

      A scream - heard from three blocks away

      A laugh - from right next to you

      A breath - felt against your cheek.

I always walk home in the **dark**. Through the park. No one has ever hurt me.

I feel just as safe, walking at **night**, the same as in daylight.

Maybe it is exposure. Growing up far away from anything.

Where the street lights do not extend.

Where your neighbours are too far to be seen.

Where the roads wind towards nothingness, too dangerous for **nightly** roams.

There is nothing to hide when no one can see. In the day, just as in the **night**.

The **darkness** the **night** brings there is natural. Just another ending -

                    no more

                    no less.

It is never **black** in the city.

There is always –

       A street light.

        A car.

         A bike.

          A runner who fears the cracks on the ground.

Illuminating the path ahead – blinding those who hide from it – an unavoidable flash –

unveiling the mask – so easily shed in the **darkness** – unrecognisable – anonymous.

Those in the city have grown accustom to hiding

                In the eternal twilight.

Those in the city don't know what it is like not to care

            When there is nothing left to hide.

The lights in the city dazzle your eyes – creating shadows of things that are not there,

things that you should not see,

truths that you should not,

that you have no right to,

know.

Adding to the illusions that the **darkness** brings forth.

Illuminating shapes much similar to your own.

A truth you buried deep.

When you thought you were alone.

Shrinking from the shadows you so delicately put in place.

Or hiding from the light.

What was always there.

It is an instinctual thing. To hide in the **dark**.

We are all but helpless creatures -

Blind in the **night**.

Blind to the **night**.

Forever hearing the whispers of past lives.

Fighting for their lives.

Hunted at **night**.

And those that are still -

hunted at **night**.

Summoning the truth, we try so hard to hide in the **darkness**.

But there is nothing to hide, when there is no light to see.

Cyber Haunting

Four small excerpts from a work-in-progress piece created for Circle Square 'Ghost Stories' reading series at Frontyard by Audrey Pfister

Ghosts

The double that is made of bits. A double that's made of data, of code, of information, of traces, of morsels. The double is written in languages I cannot read, or have not yet learnt to read. It circulates through hands like children passing notes; hands maybe sticky, preoccupied, mischievous, or dexterous.

A ghost is a double, or a slight trace, or maybe a copy.

You are the sum total of your data traces

If the internet doesn't ever forget, then maybe it haunts

The double is made by me:

- Information given up
- Fitting an infrastructure
- Representing oneself
- Correcting oneself

And the double is made for me
- To be read
- To be disassembled
- To be captured
- To be sieved
- To arrange status

The double is made through inhabiting different cyber-structures. I grow up teaching myself how to make profiles, and how to inhabit new infrastructures.

To declare. To obscure. To re-mould.

Give up information. Trade.

Early on – Learning to mine on Runescape. Learning how to be a man on Runescape. Learning how to wield a pickaxe.

But movement now, whether consciously making a profile or not, will build this duplicate, this ghost data body.

Image: Runescape avatar

Invisible

That which haunts will also move multi-directionally. To sense your own data double is perhaps to sense only one kind of ghost.

Another kind of haunting is that of a surveillant gaze. Spectre giants.

Google's undeniable governance. Watching Netflix but it's watching you. Purchasing clothing, and having your data profiles /bodies sold and distributed too.

Aggregate Net surveillance that can track movements, or mines data, leads to blossoming paranoia and imposed idleness. To graze on structured territories.

To be tracked on what I'm eating, when I'm eating, where I'm walking, what I'm perusing, when I pause.

Attempts to predict desire. Zuckerberg flak. Societal indexes. North Korean conspiracies. Algorithmic companions. Panoptic camming in real time. Producing the thing and the thing producing us.

Ghost story no. 3

Instagram discovery page 14th of June 3pm:
Picture of a Sydney art collective
Picture of a plastic bag, being inflated, cords and tubes, connected to a white wall, probably a gallery
Image of a Sydney guitar band taken on an analogue film camera
Image of food shaped to look like Snoopy's head
Image of a smoothie, possibly berry
Image of a hairdresser in Tokyo
Image of Kevin Abstract
Image of a phallic-looking pink flower

Filters

Being captured -

Mapping the eyes and mouth
Remove yourself from frame
Re-enter frame
Raise your eyebrows
Open your mouth
Tilt your head back
Tap your eyes
Smile

Swipe
Try with a friend

Being captured again -

Replying to emails
Following a vegan recipe
Browsing an online store
Streaming Queer Eye
Dissociating on Facebook

Surveillant technologies first: monitor, capture, then run the data through a series of algorithmic filtering
Sieving data
Ready to brew, and trade

Ghost story no.4
Purchasing a crumpler backpack IRL
Crumpler advertisements fixed to my Facebook for the months following

Too bad, I probably can't afford a second backpack, nor need one.

The cloud

Partial vision. Cloudly-ness. To materialise in. The cloud as a host, and as a ghost. Intangible storage of ephemera. The divine housed in an industrial data farm, and distributed like weather.