
Marie-Pascale Lafrenière
Repeating Lies
Repeating Truths

Repeating Lies, Repeating Truths

By

Marie-Pascale Lafrenière

BA, Visual Arts, Université du Québec en Outaouais 2017

A THESIS SUPPORT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLEMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

2019

Figure 1 – It Becomes Nonsense/It Becomes the Truth (stills), 2018

Abstract

This support paper seeks to analyze the potential of a new media arts practice in relationship to Second to Fourth Wave feminism discourse. Based on the works produced during my MFA studies at Emily Carr University, I investigate how a humanized representation of feminine subjectivity in media arts can operate a mind shift in the audience. I intend my work to participate in the neutralization of the internalized objectification of women's bodies, providing a counterfoil to the images of the beauty myth at the benefit of a broader and more inclusive mode of femininity. Drawing from feminist photography, video and performance art from the 1970's to present day, I explore how abjection, repetition, and autoethnography in media art act as key strategies in my research. Just as my artworks, this support paper is both a manifesto and a love letter; a protest and a celebration.

Résumé

Ce document de soutien vise à analyser le potentiel d'une pratique artistique médiatique dans le cadre de la Seconde à la Quatrième Vague de féminisme. Se basant sur les œuvres produites durant mes études de MFA à Emily Carr University, je questionne comment une représentation humanisée de la subjectivité féminine dans les arts médiatiques peut exercer un changement de mentalité chez l'audience. Mes œuvres ont pour but de participer dans la neutralisation de l'objectification internalisée des corps féminins, offrant un contrepoids aux images du mythe de beauté au profit d'un mode de féminínité plus large et plus inclusif. Citant la photographie, l'art vidéo et la performance féministe des années 1970 à aujourd'hui, j'explore comment l'abjection, la répétition et l'auto-ethnographie dans les arts médiatiques agissent comme stratégies clés dans ma recherche. Tout comme mes œuvres, ce document de soutient est à la fois un manifeste et une lettre d'amour; une protestation et une célébration.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

This essay was written on the stolen traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwuu7mesh (Squamish), and sə̓lílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) nations. I wish to express my gratitude to them for the care and protection of these lands for thousands of years. It is with unease as a descendent of settlers that I live, learn and grow on this territory.

I also want to take space to express my privilege writing this essay in a body that gave me a head start from birth. As a Canadian-born, francophone and anglophone, white, cisgender, able-bodied, thin, educated, middle-class woman, I acknowledge the immense labor of the humans who helped directly and indirectly building the knowledge used in my creative research, especially members of the queer community, women of color, and disabled folks. I am forever grateful and eager to keep learning.

The words “girl” and “woman” are used in this essay for reasons of brevity and style, with both a desire to encompass all feminine gender identities – transwomen, ciswomen, masculine women, femme queers, two-spirited women, feminine gender non-conforming people, and more – and an awareness of the impossibility to do so. I believe that feminism should have intersectionality as a standard, and I intend to do my best in being inclusive and respectful.

Finally, I would like to thank my advisor Kyla Mallett for knowing when and where to push me, and for always seeing the bright side. I thank the Dean of the MFA program Trish Kelly, and faculty members Birthe Piontek, Lorelei Pepi, Susan Stewart and Randy Lee Cutler for their continuous support and generosity. I also want to thank my friends: Jesseca Paquette for believing in me even when I don’t, Karyne Montgomery for inspiring me to live up to my ideals, Fadwa Bouziane for making me feel like home wherever we go; and, of course, my life partner Yannick Tremblay for making every small adventure epic. I love you.

Introduction and Context

In March 2011, I was sent to the emergency room of the Hospital of Gatineau by my psychotherapist. She told my mother I was a danger to myself. After several hours of waiting in the emergency room, the doctor was ready to welcome me. He asked two questions: "Do you have good grades? Do you have a boyfriend?" Apparently, these are the two things a teenage girl should want the most in the world. These are the only two things a teenage girl should need to enjoy life. These are the two things that should have been keeping me alive. I said yes. Only a few hours later, I tried to kill myself.

I am not alone. Since the 1990's, teenage girls' mental health has been degrading exponentially (Hendrick; Anderson; Davis). What is problematic is that our society doesn't know how to deal with it. What is even worse is that it doesn't take it seriously. That doctor in the emergency room was probably doing his very best. However, he did not understand how deep the pain of a visibly healthy seventeen-year-old girl could be. Girls just want to have fun, to be in a relationship, and to succeed at school. Some want to be popular. Some want to please their parents. But some girls also have an increasingly bad relationship with their body image[1]. They have more and more learning disabilities[2]. They have a growing tendency toward self-destructive behaviors[3]. And girls consume images of other girls more than ever[4].

When you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes a truth.

My release from the Pierre-Janet hospital in April 2011 coincided with my choosing to pursue a post-secondary education, as I was just about to graduate from high school. Unaware that it would become a career, I chose what was at that time my only healthy coping mechanism: visual arts. Seven years on, as

[1] See Appendix I – Statistics on the Feminine Youth.
[2] See Appendix I.
[3] See Appendix I.
[4] See Appendix I.

a young western woman living with mental illness, I am developing a new media practice based on feminist theory and autoethnography[5]. Now sitting at my desk in an apartment 4,440 km away from that psychiatric facility, the key concern of my research is: How can the repetition of an abject representation of feminine subjectivity in media arts participate in the neutralization of the internalized objectification of women's bodies for the viewer? I write this question knowing art alone won't reverse the patriarchy, knowing it won't trigger the revolution from capitalism, and knowing too well the damage done by this system cannot be reversed. But I also believe that every little action counts, that it is okay if I can only help a few people, and that there is still hope.

When you repeat a truth often enough, it becomes nonsense.

Body Image

In 1990, Naomi Wolf published *The Beauty Myth*. This ground-breaking book not only put her on the map as a fantastic writer, it also shook the western world for its thorough study of how the modern representation of women in media is a leading cause of mental and physical health issues for women. Wolf brought forward the concept of the "Iron Maiden": a metal cabinet with the shape of a body with interior metal spikes used for torture in the Middle Ages, as a metaphor for the societal expectations imposed on feminine bodies and the acts of physical and psychological violence that they entail (17). She explains how the repetition of the same beauty ideal through advertisements and pop culture in general become engrained in most women's psyches (155). The ubiquitous representation of the thin, white, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual woman repetitively shown in the media leaving no room for alternatives, Wolf argues that people of all genders internalize this ideal as the only good way of being feminine. In her book *Feminism and Pop Culture*, Andi Zeisler links this phenomenon to the "male gaze" (7), a concept cleverly explained by John

[5] Throughout the text, autoethnography is used following this definition: "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes 21).

Berger in *Ways of Seeing*: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object" (Berger). This objectification of women is linked to their oversexualization by the reduction of their bodies to functional objects for heterosexual men to consume, and to an oversimplification of feminine subjectivity.

In other words, women in pop culture are represented in a strongly stereotyped way. Conventionally attractive women are often depicted as sexy and simple-minded; unconventionally attractive women may be represented as smart, but at the cost of being either fat, old, prudish, crazy, or flawed in some other way. Not that any of these qualities are inherently unattractive, but this belief is essential to the current economic model under capitalist patriarchy. Indeed, Wolf reports that most urban professional American women consider the improvement and maintenance of their appearance an investment (52). The Iron Maiden becomes a serious trap as heterosexual women need to look good to get a job and a life partner, both usually assuring financial security, but they need money in order to get to and maintain that look. This would lead any adult to madness. Imagine what it does to children[6].

When you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes a truth.

Gender Identity

Because of its overwhelming presence in western societies, the beauty myth is believed to participate in the formation of gender identity. According to neuroscientist Lise Eliot, interviewed by Peggy Orenstein for her book *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, all babies are very similar until the acquisition of language. Regardless of gender, some are more emotional, others are more adventurous, some smile a lot, and others cry all the time. They all have similar preferences in terms of toys, games, and needs (59). When they reach the age of two or three, they start recognizing gender by physical features – long hair equals female, deep

[6] See Appendix I – Statistics on the Feminine Youth

voice equals male, etc. – and to separate toys in term of gender – dolls for girls, trucks for boys (59). By the time they reach elementary school, most of them prefer playing with children of the same gender, and some come to antagonize children of other genders (60). In his book *Girls on the Edge*, practicing pediatrist Leonard Sax points out that the more time is spent in gender-exclusive groups, the more stereotyped behaviors are developed (175). In other words, the more girls spend time with other girls, the more girly they become. The exposition to feminine role models displaying the same conventional values around femininity in the media reinforces girly behaviors in a similar way.

In the 1990's, American philosopher Judith Butler theorized this belief in *Gender Trouble*, where she describes gender as a mere "stylized repetition of acts, and imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of gender" (45), a performance. She argues that, by being continuously exposed to gendered behaviors and receiving reinforcement for complying to them[7], humans come to internalize these behaviors and adopt them as integral parts of their personality (Butler 45). Over a decade later, Sax explains gender as a spectrum in which feminine and masculine are not opposites, but complementary (186). Then, every human has a different amount of femininity and masculinity in them, existing somewhere between the extremities of gender-neutrality, androgenicity, femininity, and masculinity. This can be reconciled with Butler's theory with the understanding of gender as something inherently free and fluid, but unfortunately performed as bidimensional and rigid. The acceptance of such concepts would be beneficial for gender equality, but also for the safety and mental well-being of gender non-conforming, trans*, and gender queer individuals. However, it seems unrealistic for now to imagine a completely genderless – or genderful – society.

When Peggy Orenstein wrote *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* in 2011, she was discouraged with the impossibility of sheltering her daughter from the beauty myth. She was under the impression that, even if

[7] I have observed this kind of reinforcement in many instances as a cousin, an aunt, a sister, a babysitter and an educator. A lot of adults will praise little girls for their beauty, calm, creativity and servitude. At the opposite, littles boys will be celebrated for their physical strength, humour, free-spirit and leadership. I have even seen this happen with children with unconventional traits in relation to their sex. For example, I know many girls with leadership skills who would get reprimanded for being "bossy" and some boys who will be laughed at by their own family for being caring and sensitive.

she monitored her child's exposure to problematic images at home, it was impossible to stop her daughter from absorbing the false ideas of the beauty myth when she stepped out the door. Indeed, the beauty myth is also in children's books, in advertising, on billboards, in every shopping mall, etc. Orenstein references a research carried out by the Advertising Educational Foundation in the United States, stating that at the early age of twelve to eighteen months, children can recognize certain commercial brands, and she describes these toddlers as being heavily influenced by media and advertising (38). This means that by the time they reach adolescence, most girls already have a fixed idea of what a woman should be and are conditioned to fit in with the values of patriarchal capitalism. That is, they have been conditioned to perform the "right" way to be feminine.

This realization, occurring at an ever-younger age, comes in pair with a phenomenon named by marketers "Kids Getting Older Younger (KGOY)". Orenstein describes it as the process by which "toys and trends start with older children, but younger ones, trying to be like their big brothers and sisters, quickly adopt them. That immediately taints them for the original audience. And so the cycle goes." (84). For example, when crop-tops are trendy for thirteen-year-old girls, the ten-year-old see it and, wanting to be like their big sisters or their cool friends, begin wearing them as well. And then the same happens to the eight-year-old girls, and so on and so forth. Around the same time, a lot of young girls start having more access to the internet – the legal age for enrolling on Instagram and Facebook being thirteen. They simultaneously start to feel a growing pressure to display an overt sexuality – after all, isn't that what their older sisters do?

Mental Health

The internalization of the harmful messages of the beauty myth is made evident is young women's use of social media. There, the emphasis is put on "being my best self" and "living my best life", those two things being measured in terms of numbers of "likes" and followers. As philosopher Byung-Chul Han suggests in *Topology of Violence*, self-absorption is very different than self-care (26). When putting the image first,

and the person second, one can easily build an identity based on appearance. This is especially true for young girls, whose value is already too often put on their beauty rather than their legitimate skills and qualities. This construction of self blurs the line between woman and representation further. In 2017, the Royal Society for Public Health led the survey #StatusOfMind in the United Kingdom and found that Instagram is the worst mobile app for the mental health for these reasons. People from 14 to 24 years-old reported to feel more anxiety, loneliness and despair when using this app than any other social media platform (8).

Even before the rise of social media, French feminist Lucy Irigaray was exploring the commoditization of the female body. In her book *This Sex Which Is Not One*, she suggests that because women internalize their body as an object to be sold and exchanged amongst men, they can only relate to each other as competitive commoditized entities (177). It becomes a contest of whose value will grow the highest. This value, then calculated in phalluses, is now correlated to "likes" and followers. Social media is pervasive as it blurs the line between woman and image even more than conventional media. Because regular people share the platforms with influencers and celebrities who have marketing teams and professional photo editing software, it is now almost impossible to dissociate reality from fiction. Therefore, it is increasingly harder to make the difference between realistic and superhuman expectations towards one's body. Simultaneously, sharing these platforms with professionals raises the bar for self-advertisement and pushes young people to commoditize themselves in a way that was unattainable with traditional media. That is why girls put so much importance of self-representation, even if this importance is misplaced.

That will to please and conform is unmistakably strong, pushing over 40 000 Americans under 18 to surgically alter their appearance in 2008, most of them female-identified (Orenstein 139). This might allow some girls to stay close to the constructed beauty ideal for a longer time. But every girl, at some point, fails to meet the beauty ideal. At what ever age this fall happens, the consequences can be devastating. Indeed, from the youngest age, most girls are taught that their worth is directly correlated to their beauty. Consequently, when their skin starts breaking out, or when their bodies become heavier, or when the first white hair appears, it can feel like an incommensurable defeat (Sax 68). All self-worth is lost. Remaining

are the social skills if any, and the coping mechanisms. Some are healthy: engaging in creative or physical activities, spending time with friends and family, practicing mindful meditation, etc. Some are devastating: gaining back control through eating disorders and self-harm, engaging in unprotected or mindless sexual activities, abusing substances.

It has also been argued that these behaviors, or coping systems, are not to be seen as consequential, but rather as reactionary. Indeed, girls affected by such issues are not merely passive objects bending under too much pressure or breaking into illness. Instead, Susan Bordo, in her essay "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity", speaks of psychiatric disorders in women as "embodied protest" (175). Similarly, Naomi Wolf writes "It is a sign of mental health to try to control something that is trying to control you, especially if you are a lone young woman and it is a massive industry fueled by the needs of an entire determined world order. Self-defense is the right plea when it comes to eating disasters; not insanity" (198). In this sense, putting issues of mental health and representation in settings of victim-oppressor is not fair or productive. It seems more effective to act against the systemic structures allowing these kinds of harmful images to be continuously elevated, and to teach young people to recognize unhealthy thoughts and behaviors in themselves before falling into pathology.

When you repeat a truth often enough, it becomes nonsense.

Material Practice

Abjection

In my material practice, abjection operates as a tool to counterbalance the ridiculous amount of image of so-called beauty to which western audiences are subjected every day. According to the Oxford online dictionary, abject is the quality of something bad being experienced or present to the maximum degree (Oxford). Now, under the beauty myth, bad can apply to anything which does not comply to its rules. Most natural needs, functions and particularities of the human body are to be hidden. This definition aligns with

Figure 2 – Skinned, 2018

that of Julia Kristeva, a prominent Bulgarian-French author, psychanalyst, critic and philosopher. In *The Powers of Horror*, she defines abjection as which "lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rule of the game" (2). Therefore, using abjection in my work is a way for me to normalize feminine bodies as living entities rather than commodities. I believe that repetitively showing what is considered to be their malfunctions, defects and absurdities can ultimately humanize and concretize them, as much to the eyes of outsiders – cis men, as to the eyes of insiders – cis and trans* women.

For example, in my series of photographs *Skinned*, 2018 (figure 2), I took very close shots of my skin over several months and printed them in large format on glossy paper. Following a tradition set by feminist photographers from the 1970's to the 2000's such as Geneviève Cadieux, Hannah Wilke and Lisa Steele, I emphasized on the aspects of the body usually hidden in the media: stretch marks, break-outs, eczema, wrinkles, creases, and tattoos. This celebration of the abject beauty is a direct response to alleged positive images that are emblematic of the beauty myth. In that sense, a lot of my artworks act as anti-selfies. They embrace to some extent the standards set by advertisement and social media – in this case following the square format of Instagram, while breaking the expectation by being purposely abject.

On a personal level, this kind of artistic research was beneficial for my relationship to my own body. In the past, I was often ashamed or disappointed with the appearance of my skin "issues". However, while executing this project I was excited to find them every day and curious to discover what these "imperfections" looked like reproduced and on a large scale. What was shameful then became precious; what was disgusting became beautiful. This is where abjection meets celebration: a meeting point acting as

a refusal of patriarchal capitalism, whose many industries rely on women's shame of their bodies to generate profit[8].

In a similar way, American artist Lisa Steele's early solo work highlighted the "defects" on women's bodies with a desire to participate in the conversation around power relations, self-love, and self-doubt (National Gallery of Canada). Her piece *Birthday Suit: with Scars and Defects*, produced in 1974, is a twelve minutes video in which she filmed every outstanding detail of her body[9] while explaining the origin of each. Steele's work as a counselor for abused women motivated her to make that piece (MoMA). Without it being the main intent, this artwork was striking in its contrast with the usual representation of feminine bodies in the media. My work operates similarly. However, I choose not to give any context on the "flawed" details exposed in *Skinned*. In my opinion, they don't need to be explained in order to have their existence accepted and celebrated.

As Naomi Wolf writes at the end of *The Beauty Myth,* "while we cannot directly affect the images, we can drain them of their power" (277). She suggests that images depicting alternative modes of beauty can change the way we see images of the beauty ideal. In other words, while right now girls see themselves as lesser versions of the women in the magazines, a counterculture might reverse the gaze (Wolf 278). That way, the images of the beauty myth would finally become exactly what they are: mere representations of the women holding the magazine, or cellphone, in their hands. Consequently, by having my images participate in this counterculture, I contribute to the reversal of the gaze by questioning the current beauty standards and its consequences. It is not so much about the power of a single image, but rather about being part of a movement to slowly dismantle the harmful ideas that being pretty is the most important thing a girl can be, and that there is only one way to be it. When these myths start fading, the images of the so-called ideal also begin to lose their power.

Now, it is yet to be determined what beauty actually is. In *Saving Beauty,* cultural theorist and philosopher Byung-Chul Han describes contemporary beauty as being positivity, smoothness, sleek

[8] See Appendix I – Statistics on the Feminine Youth.
[9] Scars, beauty marks, bruises, et cetera.

perfection, citing the iPhone and Jeff Koon's sculptures as the epitome of positive beauty (2). These characteristics also correspond to images of the beauty myth: the pornographic ideal of hairless, pore-less, ageless skin; the surreal silk of the hair; the plump smoothness of the lips; the long sleekness of the nails; the disturbing evenness of the smile.

Han also refers to a negative mode of beauty, one that pushed the viewer down, knocks them over: a beauty that can be experienced rather than seen or liked (6). This concept brings me back to *The Powers of Horror* by Julia Kristeva, as she writes that abject beauty "disturbs identity, system, order" (4). Abjection lives outside of the economy of desire - which Kristeva sees as being always towards an object – being based on exclusion and opposition (6). Abject rather than object; enjoyed rather than desired (9).

Abjection comes into play with the beauty ideal at the moment of the failure to conform. The constructed beauty ideal is desired both by the girls who want to embody it and by the heterosexual men who want to own it. The feminine abject is avoided, hidden, controlled, to the point of excess, to the point of illness. It disturbs the identity one tries to build for oneself through the body. But it always resurfaces. Abjection only lives in opposition to the flawless ideal, otherwise the abject would only be the natural, the normal living human body. Also, once embraced, the abject is even more enjoyable than so-called perfect beauty. Contrarily to the beauty myth, abject beauty requires no labor, no sacrifices, only being. It is the ultimate freedom from the gaze. The gesture of showing my imperfections, as in *Skinned*, is a much-needed liberation for myself as for the audience. When the image of my skin is seen by the viewer, it operates beyond being liked or disliked, this piece calls to enjoyment on both parts. It has to be fully experienced by the viewer because I didn't pose as an object for it. I experienced it with agency as image-maker and model, a double-agent. Because the audience is not familiar with visual representations of the abject parts of the feminine body the experience can trigger an affective response.

In the making of *I Got a Hole Where My Heart Should Be* (figure 3), a two-channel 22:16 minutes video installation produced in the fall of 2018, I was aiming for a mode of abjection doubling as a sensorial trigger. In one channel, my eye comes in and out of focus in a central close-up. Repetitively, my hand with a mascara wand applies makeup on my lashes. By the end, my eye cannot stay open for long enough for me to apply mascara, and I flinch and start to cry thick black tears. The second channel first appears as a static image of my hand over a white textured cloth. Every couple of seconds though, my other hand comes into the frame in fast forward to apply a layer of nail polish. At the end of the video, the layers have piled up into thick leaning blobs on each nail. The installation is also made of a sound element: my voice singing over and over the phrase "I got a hole where my heart should be", pulled from the song of the same name by The Sheepdogs. As the piece unfolds, my voice gets distorted, inverted and layered into a rather anxiogenic sound. As a whole, this artwork starts as calming and ritualistic, but as all elements get more abject, it turns on the viewer. The expectations set by advertisement and online beauty tutorials are subverted. The excess becomes uncomfortable and disturbing, in a way that the viewers who use makeup have reported not being able to stop thinking about it the next time they applied mascara or nail polish.

Figure 3 – I Got a Hole Where My Heart Should Be (stills), 2018

Audience members also reported wanting to look away because of the anxiety conveyed by the image. However, as the projection was very big and the sound omnipresent, it was impossible to avoid.

For myself, working with seemingly "flawed" parts of my body is an effective tool to recall my past and current pain fed by the beauty myth. For the viewer, abjection operates as an affective trigger and I am interested in the affective experience of images. In her book *Empathic Vision*, Australian professor Jill Bennett describes affect as the sensorial response felt by the viewer when seeing art related to trauma. More than a simple "mechanistic trigger", affect "thrusts us involuntarily into a mode of critical inquiry" (Bennett 11). She also sees it the best strategy to grasp the audience through an emotive response rather than illustrating trauma. Referencing Deleuze, she describes affect as the "encountered sign", "the sign that is felt rather than recognized or perceived through cognition" (Bennett 7). In that sense, the affective response in the face of abjection forces the audience members to engage because it is harder to dismiss or ignore than an artwork displaying more didactic strategies. Then, it stays with the viewer even after the experience of it, forcing them into critical inquiry: Why does this make them uncomfortable? Why would an artist – a female artist – choose to make art that way?

This type of abjection has been used by several feminist artists since the seventies. Carolee Schneemann did it effectively for years, *Interior Scroll* (1975) being her most well-known work. In this performance, she unravels a scroll of paper coming out of her vagina and reads a fictive dialogue written on it. The abjection of female bodily fluids added weight to this otherwise simple piece. Tracey Emin also used it in a powerful manner in the nineties when she exhibited *My Bed* (1998): a disgusting yet emotional and tender installation of her so-called bed, covered in diverse kinds of filth and garbage. To continue using these strategies in 2019, traditional to feminist practices, might sound cliché. However, I believe there is value in repeating the same thing very often.

Repetition

In History

Repetition is not a concept to be ignored when looking at the objectification of the feminine body and its behavioral implications. As mentioned earlier, psychological distress in girls often comes from an exaggeration of the expected performance of femininity. This slippage is carried by endless repetitions – that of images of the Iron Maiden, of performed gestures of gender, and of pressure from family and peers. Repetition also comes into play when reviewing the history of feminism and the artistic movements born from it. At first glance, my artworks are not different from that of the feminist artists from the seventies and eighties: I, too, am reclaiming the autonomy of feminine bodies and minds through abjection, repetition and self-representation. The question should not be "Why does she still want to do this kind of art in 2019?" but rather "Why does she still have to do this kind of art in 2019?"

It is important to understand that the feminist movement evolved considerably during the past century. After thousands of years, the patriarchy has infiltrated most aspects of western life, from politics to education, religion, economy, professional life, media, and people's relationships with themselves and others. In the beginning of the feminist movement, known as the First Wave, it was logical to go for the most concrete aspects of society: politics, educations, and ownership (Phillips & Cree 10-11). It is only during the Second Wave that this slogan came to light: "The personal is political". During that same period, a lot of my personal favorite artists began their career including Carolee Schneemann, Mary Kelly and Marina Abramović. All inspired by their personal experiences, they created ground-breaking work with messages that were political at different levels. This is something that I still carry in my work to this day. However, the essentialism and lack of intersectional considerations led to a Third Wave of feminism that began in the 1980's (Phillips & Cree 12). Carrying the same baggage but with a more inclusive understanding of gender-based issues, artists like Tracey Emin, Marilyn Minters and Geneviève Cadieux started working during this period. Multiple backlashes also occurred during the Third Wave, which made issues of representation and agency regress in many ways for women (Phillips & Cree 13). This brings me

to the Fourth Wave, happening today with shared concerns with the past two Waves, but also with a renewed awareness of intersectionality and gender performativity. The ubiquitous presence of the internet as a tool of both patriarchal capitalism and feminist activism is also particular to the Fourth Wave. It brings to light a new generation of artists such as Chun Hua Catherine Dong, Juno Calypso, Signe Pierce and Cassils, who all draw on the aforementioned artists and in return influence me in various ways. Art history repeats itself along with the history of feminism by means of growth and transformation. By inscribing my work in these discourses, I carry a message to be heard by an increasing amount of people and that simultaneously gains clarity, awareness and strength. The repetition then allows for a greater understanding of gender-based issues through time as well as an adaptation of feminist ideals to the current era.

In Art-Making

As much as art-making is my contribution to the repetition of art history, I also use repetition in a more literal sense in my material practice. I am interested in the escalating quality of repetition and its long- term effects on the psyche, be it in language, behavior, movement or images. Concretely, repetition manifest

Figure 4 – It Becomes Nonsense/It Becomes the Truth (stills), 2018

itself in my artworks through the repetition of gestures. In *It Becomes Nonsense / It Becomes the Truth* (figure 4), a two-channel video installation where two projections face one another, two actions are repeated. On the right, I use a tweezer on my eyebrows until no hair is left. On the left, I rub my hands against each other continually with lotion, adding more of it every time it is absorbed by my skin. Both gestures are banal in the everyday life, but become intolerable for the viewer when escalated to excess. They operate in quite different ways: the eyebrow tweezing coming to a natural end; the hand lotion having an endless potential. The tension in their difference call to both the incapacity to stop and the unbearable lack of fulfillment; both coming from the pressures of the beauty myth. This installation is also composed of the sound of my hands repetitively rubbing on lotion. This sound enhances the abjection of the already disturbing content. When this piece was shown in a gallery space, it was in a small room with the two channels each filling the length of their projection wall. Because a lot of viewers came to see the work at the same time, the affective response was amplified by an overwhelming claustrophobia in parts of the audience. Some even had to exit the room. Rather than the gestures themselves, it was the repetitive action that conveyed emotion and critical inquiry.

In my earlier works such as *#NoFilter* (figure 7) produced in the fall of 2017, the repetition was operating in the objects. In this case, it was as the collection of my used makeup wipes, on which confessions about myself were embroidered in the form of sentences and pictograms. The accumulation of daily wipes called to attention the continuous process of trying to conform to the beauty ideal and its effects on the body and the mind. Hung in three columns of square wipes, this piece was also a reference to social media. The trace of my body along with the confessions acted as anti-selfies, but of the feminine abject rather than of the feminine object.

In *Bad Feminist*, Roxane Gay says in relation to acts of oppression towards women: “The problem is not that one of these things is happening, it’s that they are all happening, concurrently and constantly” (189). In the same way, the gestures, images or objects utilized in my work often seem innocuous by themselves. It is their accumulation to the point of excess that make them unbearable. My use of this strategy is influenced by the work of Marina Abramović. Her endurance pieces sometimes take the form of life

performance, or photographic and video records of the initial gesture, as she deals with issues of feminism, failed communication, and the difficulties of human relations. In a way similar to my works, she makes seemingly inoffensive gestures that transform into heavily charged artworks. For example, in her 1975 video *Art Must Be Beautiful Artist Must Be Beautiful*, Abramović brushes her hair in front of a mirror. This rather banal gesture takes exaggerated proportions as she brings in a second brush, and continues with more and more energy and frustration for over fifty minutes (LIMA). Some of her performances are intense from beginning to end, the repetition only making it stronger by her persistence and insistence. It is the case with *Balkan Baroque* (1997), an elaborate installation including Abramović's four-day performance in which she scrubbed 1,500 fresh beef bones as she sang and wept in mourning of fallen Yugoslavia (Pereira). Her work as a performance artist has an important influence on my practice because it links together repetition, endurance and abjection. However, my artworks tend to fall more under the label of media art rather than live performance.

Media Art

The shift from art objects, such as *#NoFilter* (2017), to a more media-based practice occurred in the winter of 2018. The main reason was that I had torn a ligament in my right wrist. Being right handed, this forced me out of an object-based practice, leaving me with limited options. As I had enjoyed working with video and photography during my undergraduate studies, I turned to those mediums for what I expected to be a short period of time. It ended up redefining my practice.

In *Until Your Nose Bleeds* (2018) (figure 5), a 4:19 minutes video, I used the large-scale projection as an affective[10] strategy. The image is composed of moving black shadows on a bright red background. Slowly, it becomes clearer that the moving shadows are actually those of my tongue, licking a red substance, candy, off the lens or seemingly the projection wall when the work is installed. Throughout the video, the voice of Cortana, the artificial intelligence on recent PC computers, reads an abusive love letter composed

[10] Affective is used here following the definition of Jill Bennett. See Abjection for that definition.

of pop song lyrics from the past decade. Here, the large-scale projection operates in two ways: 1. it abstracts the image more than if it was on a small screen, emphasizing the ambiguity also conveyed by the spoken words; 2. it overwhelms the viewer in the affect first caused by the bright red cast, then by the abjection of the gigantic mouth licking the screen/lens/projection wall. Progressively, the ambiguity disappears as the image becomes clearer and the lyrics form an increasingly violent message. At the same time, an exorcism from the possession of sexually disturbed pop songs occurs, involving the audience in a kind of awakening.

In his contribution to *Art of Projection*, David Joselit offers a fascinating point of view on the political potential of video art. The essay, titled "Touching Pictures: Toward a Political Science of Video", references the Bernadette Corporation as Joselit describes the art of video as an exorcism from the "'satanic possession' of television" (115). This dispossession occurs in the alienation of the audience from the image. When a viewer consumes popular media, the level of identification is so normalized that, after a couple of hours, it becomes hard to dissociate it from reality, thus the possession. On the other hand, when a viewer sees a work in which the level of identification is dramatized – either giving too much or too little, there is a feeling of alienation: an exorcism from the mediatized image. It is particularly interesting to think about this dispossession in relation to the beauty myth. The constant pressure coming from all sorts of popular media influences some young women in a very powerful way, at times to the point of pushing them towards psychological distress and self-destructive behaviors (Royal Society for Public Health & Young Health Movement.8). Then, maybe a representation with which they can identify in a completely different way, but still keeping a similar medium as in my practice, can act as an exorcism. Consequently, Joselit argues that:

> In exploring the struggles around the *possession* of one's own image (which are as firmly rooted in politics and economics as they are in psychology), the self's *appearance* in video is not narcissistic, but rather, following (Hannah) Arendt, the initial moment in constituting a *genuine public.* In other words, rather than narcissism, it is the public – or *publics* – that is the medium of video.

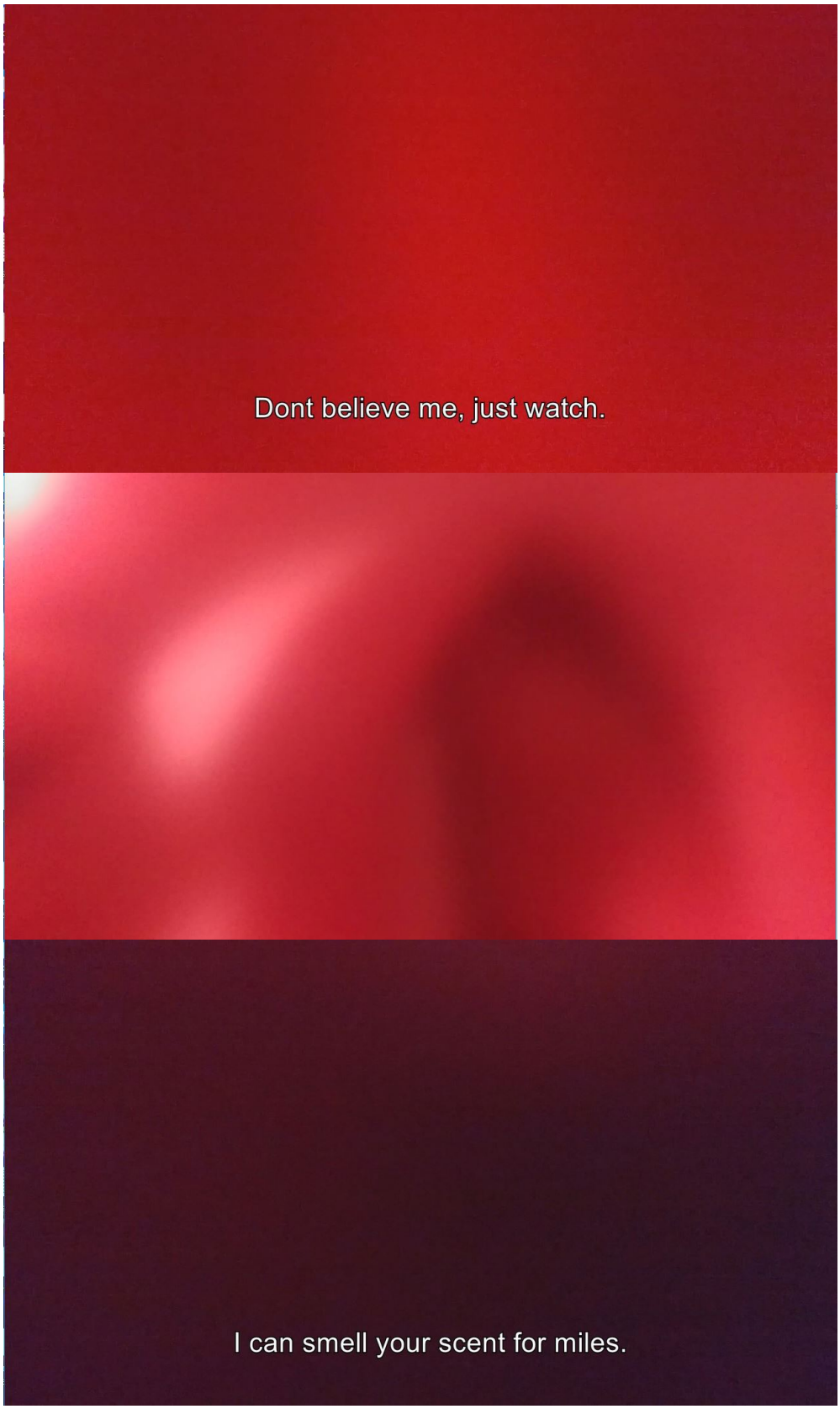

Figure 5 – Until Your Nose Bleeds (stills), 2018

Contrary to mass media, where the message unidirectional from constructed image to viewer, video art allows an interpersonal dynamic from body to body and from human to representation of human. This bring me back to Jane Bennett's *Empathic Vision*, as she speaks of the embodiment of pain in art as orchestrating a "set of transactions between bodies" (50). This applies perfectly to my practice. When confronted by my work, the dispossession of the viewer occurs through the alienation from its usual constructed representation, and its replacement by a presentation of the struggling human body. The image is then felt, experienced in its immediacy rather than only seen or desired. Video therefore permits an effective transmission of affect, especially with the use of abjection. It is also true for myself as both artist and model of the artworks. Seeing my body and my truth being projected in my videos releases me from the haunting of the beauty myth by allowing me to experience myself on the screen in a very different way than that of the mirror or pictures. This alienation from my own body facilitates a reconciliation with it: by being the image I do not need to become it. I am at peace, and I am healing.

In my work, the affective response is also amplified by the close-up of the image. According to Mary Ann Doane's contribution to *Art of Projection*, "Location of the Image: Cinematic Projection and Scale in Modernity", the close-up has the effect of reducing the face and body to a surface, as "the face itself becomes the screen" (162). She calls this extreme mode of affect a "literal cinematic disfigurement" (162). In the case of *Until Your Nose Bleeds*, the disfigurement contributes in the abjection also conveyed by the other elements.

The importance of the immediacy of video is also argued by Mary Ann Doane, who considers projection as an abstract virtual space allowing itself to be inhabited by the audience. Therefore, "not only light in its transience and quasi-immateriality, but something of the self is thrown out at the screen." (160). This relation allows a greater identification by the viewer as the line between internal and external, subject and object, image and self, is blurred in a way that never occurs with popular media. This is amplified by the scale of the installation, which doesn't depend on a material object. Rather, it is the projection of the video that re-organizes the space, maximizing the potential of its architecture (Doane 155). In that sense,

as *Until Your Nose Bleeds*, most of my video installations are projected on the whole wall of the gallery space. It overpowers the viewer, overwhelms them, and implicate their body in the scene. If the projected image was a window, the whole audience could jump out at once.

These are strategies that I often favor when showing my video works. As most of them are diptychs, I project them on opposite walls, forcing the audience members to choose a side while not leaving any rest to their gaze. To achieve this inescapable effect, the projections have to be really big, taking up the whole length of the wall. Sometimes, a bench is provided, but never comfortable enough to make the viewer at ease - just like I am never entirely at ease as a woman. The unease is also amplified by the sound coming from two different sides of the room with its abject haptic quality. Then, as aforementioned, repetition is another important factor of my installation. The videos are set in a loop, which contributes to the impossibility to escape. A lot is asked from my viewers, the works being uncomfortable and quite long – most of them around 22:30 minutes[11], but staying for more than a few minutes is rewarding. Not only is it necessary to let the work grow from a didactic critique of the beauty myth to an affective launch into critical inquiry of everyday gestures, some viewers also have reported a strange satisfaction in seeing the end result of some of these performances. This calls to more reflection on the reasons why we continue to conform to what patriarchal capitalism asks of us, and on our role as both victims and perpetrators.

Process

I use the same process for most of my video works. In my washroom, I set up my camera[12] on a tripod or on an object to hold it in the right position. A lot of times, as for *I Got a Hole Where My Heart Should Be* (figure 3), *It Becomes Nonsense/It Becomes the Truth* (figure 4), and *Mask* (figure 8), the camera is pointing at the mirror so that I can see myself perform the gesture while I make it. I use the lighting from the room, sometimes with help from flashlights and lamps if important parts of the image are too dark. Also, I always

[11] The average time western women spend on hair and makeup everyday (Kelley).
[12] I use a Canon EOS Rebel SL2.

prepare every prop necessary for the gesture in advance. I make sure to have enough of each item and to put them close enough to be able to take them without exiting the image. The most important thing is to record the gesture without ever stopping the video until my body is exhausted by the performance. Sometimes, my body has obvious signs of exhaustion, for example in *I Got a Hole Where My Heart Should Be* (figure 3), when my eye starts tearing up. Other times, it is subtler, as in *It Becomes Nonsense/It Becomes the Truth* (figure 1) with the swelling of my formerly injured wrist. Editing the film is also an important aspect of my work.[13]. Because I want this series of videos to conform to the 22:30 minutes duration I set for myself, I sometimes edit the duration of the clips. For works where the gesture is quick and requires a specific prop, like *I Got a Hole Where My Heart Should Be* (figure 3), I edit out the times when the prop is out of the picture. This amplifies the overwhelming effect of the restless repetition and helps me control the duration of the video. For videos with a more continuous gesture, I simply manipulate the speed of the gesture, as long as it remains reasonable. For example, I slowed down a little bit the sequence for *Mask* (figure 8) to reach the 22:30 minutes. This manipulation amplifies the abjection coming from the sound and the haptic quality of the serum in the sheet masks.

For my photographic works, the process is more flexible. If the photograph can be taken at home, I do everything by myself, sometimes contorting my body to be able to get the right angles. Otherwise, if the work has to be done in a public space, I ask for the help of another person. This helps me save time and prevent my equipment from being stolen. For example, for my most recent series *Ghost* (figure 6), I have the help of undergraduate student Jae Lew to take the photographs. Every time we meet, I bring reference images to show them the kind of composition and light I would like to have for the artwork. I also direct them and teach them how to use effectively the DSLR camera. It is important for me to make sure that this is an exchange of services in the form of a mentorship rather than just an artist-assistant relationship.

[13] I use Adobe Premiere Pro.

Figure 6 – Ghost, 2019

Self-Representation

After my wrist injury, media art was a way for me to work with performance without showing my cast, which would have carried a lot of misplaced visual and conceptual weight. Self-representation has always been an important aspect of my work. As my research is mostly autoethnographic and based on my own embodiment of social issues, it is logical to work with my own body. By doing both of these things, my body becomes a tool to measure the world: one that is controlled by patriarchy and capitalism. As a woman living with mental illness, I use my symptoms and emotions to assess the influence of the beauty myth on a somewhat vulnerable feminine body. Then, I use theoretical research to discriminate what is a manifestation of a larger societal problem from what is simply an unrelated effect of my illness. This is where my creative research is rooted. Similarly, I use myself as a tool for embodied research in the very making of my work. The reactions of my body to different performances and gestures are integral parts of

Figure 7 - #NoFilter (detail), 2017

my investigation in better understanding the impact of repeated acts of beautification on a feminine psyche. This is transmitted to the audience visually and becomes an inspiration for further works.

As Joselit argues in "Touching Pictures", referring to Vito Acconci's recurring presence in his video work, appearance "must be understood not merely as an individual's act of self-representation but the primary – even primal – act of politics" (116). In agreement with Joselit, I like to think of my physical presence in my work as a political action. Indeed, when I put my body into my work, I do so in opposition to the culture of self-representation initiated by social media. By using it in my work, my goal is not to increase my value as a commodifiable body. Rather, as in *#NoFilter* (2017 figure 6), the series of makeup wipes on which I embroidered confessions, I represent myself while staying the furthest away possible from the "best self, best life" trope. This choice serves three purposes. First, it participates in shifting the male gaze by showing a feminine body in abject, allegedly undesirable, conditions. My agency as an artist and as a woman are essential here. It is easy to find unflattering images of women. However, it is much harder to find women who willingly showcase this side of themselves. Consequently, I see it as an act of resistance to own these sides of myself and to use them to make art. Second, it is a way to re-appropriate my own body as a living thing rather than an object of representation. When I produce an artwork using my body as a tool, I exorcise myself. This is a form of dispossession, from self-absorption to self-care. My body becomes worthy of attention, worthy of care, worthy of being on the screen. It is an affirmation of it in all of its majesty: acne, eczema, cellulite, and all. It is a repossession of it, despite the illness telling me to refuse it. In other words, putting my body in my work, especially going through all of these gestures, facilitates an analysis that eliminates very slowly my own internalized misogyny.

Thirdly, in this Fourth Wave of feminism, using my body rather than anyone else's keeps me away from instrumentalizing others. Even if the issues approached in my work touch a lot of people, I could not pretend that my understanding and ensuing representation of it applies universally. In that sense, I would not want to impose my interpretation on another woman's body. Self-representation allows me with more freedom without the ethical worries of consent and appropriation. It also has an important precedent in feminist art history. From the 1970's to her death in 1993, Hannah Wilke used herself as a model in most of her performance and photographic work, being both the subject and the artist. Moreover, she came up with the term "performalist self-portrait": photography created by the artist and in which she appeared, but that was taken by another person whom she directed (Hannah Wilke Website). Among her most influential work in regards to my practice is her series *Brushstrokes*, drawings she made of her fallen hair as results of the treatment for her lymphoma, a year prior to her death (MoMA). Its simplicity and strength in regards to the failures of the female body and the loss of femininity is particularly relevant to my work. In a similar way, my photographic series *Forecast*, started in February 2018, shows in abject close-ups my colored hair fallen in the shower. In this case, the line between normal and worrying, healthy and sick, is blurred. "To exist as a woman, even as an adolescent girl, is to be damaged" (Wolf 96). By taking these pictures, I reassert my normality and that of other feminine bodies. By willingly showing what society has adjected, I gain back control.

Art in the Time of Patriarchal Capitalism

There is a continuous debate among the feminist activism community since the Second Wave concerning the use of the tools and languages of patriarchal capitalism. While some have been advocating for a place within the men-dominated world, others are fighting for the destruction of this world at the benefit of a new one (Phillips & Cree 11). A fresh, clean start. Meanwhile, feminists following Luce Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together" advocate for an idiom specific to women (205), completely refusing patriarchal colonialist languages and spaces. Not only is this problematic in its essentialism, it is also incredibly naïve.

In my opinion, feminist activism should aim for a genderful society, not for segregated spaces and languages. I believe the only way to achieve this is to reach out to the people in power, or to empower the less privileged to do so. Therefore, at this point, my response to the dilemma is these questions: Would the people in power even notice if we don't speak the same language? If we don't use the same tools?

It is a conscious choice for me to use traditionally patriarchal mediums and exhibition spaces. I acknowledge that the media that have popularized the objectification of the female body use video and photography, just as I do. I also acknowledge that traditional exhibition spaces such as the art gallery and the museum have an history of prioritizing male artists, whom I am not. But I also believe that by making these choices, my work operates in spaces where breaking the expectation is productive, and where the audience is receptive.

In my experience as a feminist, I noticed one thing: issues concerning young girls don't matter. In a patriarchal society, they are often trivialized, dismissed, and ignored. As result, it is in my experience that most cis men do not care. They do not need to. Some pretend to care to gain social capital – being a feminist is trendy (Peretz); some do so to extend their collection of women - being a feminist is sexy (Moore); some just to keep the peace in their private and professional relationships – being a feminist is good (Spratt). Others are completely plain about their hatred, from dismissal (Wesley), to hate speech (Valizadeh), to hate crimes (Kohn). Every day, many cis men choose to risk their reputation, their family, their jobs, just to keep objectifying women. A great example is Jan Singer, former-CEO of the multinational underwear company Victoria's Secret, who preferred resigning from the prestigious job rather than hiring models with bodies outside of the beauty ideal (Lang). It is easy for cis men to do this sort of things in a patriarchal society. Not only is the view of women as second-class citizen – or even objects - internalized[14], it is also institutionalized. It is so much easier for men to be forgiven for their actions when they are in control and supported by the justice system, the educational system, the government, and seen as the leading member of all heterosexual nuclear families. And so far, the privilege gets passed from fathers to sons without much

[14] Not only by men, but by people of all genders. Women carry internalize misogyny in many ways, from shaming other women, to being anti-feminist, to being accomplice of hate crimes based on gender.

trouble[15]. As result, the people in power are cis men. Men rule our country; twelve of our thirteen provinces and territories; and 22 of the 23 countries on our continent. Men also make up all of the top ten richest people in the world. In order to make real change happen, we need to speak to them, and we need to do it in ways they will understand. These ways are the ones they know and trust.

I also choose these spaces, theses audiences and art itself because I believe that art has a power that other mediums do not. I have had the chance to contribute to the feminist movement by writing and speaking. For example, my essay "Empathy, Hope and Instafeminists" was published last year in the online magazine *Femme Art Review*, where several other Canadian feminists have been able to read and reflect on my ideas. However, this is an audience that most likely already knows and feels the ideas fueling my research. I had a similar experience when I spoke at the 2018 TedxECUAD event. There is a didacticism in disciplines such as non-fiction writing and speaking that is hard to avoid. This unfortunately alienates more ambivalent members of the audience and often fails in conveying an affect that words cannot express. On the other hand, art allows me to play with different levels of abstractions. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Herbert Marcuse speaks of "the aesthetic form which gives the familiar content and the familiar experience the power of estrangement" (41). I agree with his statement that this is how art can reach "the radical, transcendent goals of change" (xiii). By alienating the viewers and drawing them back again, by blurring the line between didacticism and affective experience, I hope to be an agent of this type of social change. If we believe the world can change – and it is necessary to do so – it is not so naïve to believe that art will have a role to play in its transformation.

The house may be haunted, but that won't keep me from trying to exorcise it. Every possessed entity has a way of being dispossessed, even if it may be at the peril of both the entity and the exorcist. I am willing to take that risk.

[15] Based on traditional gender roles of men being allegedly better with finances and having higher leadership skills, and on the gender pay gap still present in Canada in 2019 (Press).

Conclusion

When I started the MFA program at Emily Carr University, in September 2017, the most often repeated feedback was that I was putting myself in danger too much. I was told it was risky to disclose so much information about my past and my health, as well as to be so upfront about my feminist political beliefs in a professional or academic environment. I wanted to, and should have said that, in art, I never put myself in danger as much as I do when I walk out my door in the morning, when I go on public transit, when I go to parties, when I drive by myself at night, when I lose my friends in a bar[16]. Having my body and my gender identity puts me in danger, not doing auto-ethnographical research, not working with self-representation. In *How to Write an Auto-Biographical Novel*, Alexander Chee gives the advice: "You write the novel because you have to write it. You do it because it is easier to do than not to do. You can't write a novel you don't have to write." (136). I have this creative practice because it is the practice I need to have.

It is nonsense. It is the truth.

[16] See Appendix I – Statistics on the Feminine Youth

Figure 8 – Mask (stills), 2019

Works Cited

Abramović, Marina. *Art Must Be Beautiful Artist Must Be Beautiful.* 1975. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Abramović, Marina & Ulay. *AAA-AAA*. 1978. Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

American Academy of Pediatrics. "Children, Adolescents, and Advertising." *Organizational Principles to Guide and Define the Child Health Car System and/or Improve the Health of All Children.* Vol. 118, No. 6. Itasca, American Academy of Pediatrics: 06 Dec. 2006.

Anderson, Jenny. "Decades of Failing to Recognize ADHD in Girls Has Created a 'Lost Generation' of Women." *Quartz*. 19 Jan. 2016. www.qz.com/592364/decades-of-failing-to-recognize-adhd-in-girls-has-created-a-lost-generation-of-women/ Accessed 09 Dec. 2108.

Bennett, Jill. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art.* Redwood City, Stanford University Press: 18 Jan. 2005.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing: Part Two*. Writ/Prod. John Berger and Mike Dibb. BBC Two, London. 15 Jan. 1972.

Bordo, Susan. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity." *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body. 2nd ed.* Berkeley, University of California Press: 2004. 165-184.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London, Routledge: 2006.

Chee, Alexander. *How to Write an Auto-Biographical Novel.* New York, Mariner Books: 17 Apr. 2018.

Chocano, Carina. *You Play the Girl: On Playboy Bunnies, Stepford Wives, Train Wrecks, & Other Mixed Messages*. New York, Mariner Books: 08 Aug. 2017.

Conroy, Shana & Adam Cotter. "Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014." *Statistics Canada.* Ottawa, Government of Canada: 2017. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm Accessed 26 Jan. 2019.

Davis, Nicola. “Self-Harm among Girls Aged 13 to 16 Rose by 68% in Three Years, UK Study Finds.” *The Guardian*. 18 Oct. 2017. www.theguardian.com/society/2017/oct/18/self-harm-girls-aged-13-to-16-rose-68pc-three-years Accessed 09 Dec. 2018.

Doane, Mary Ann. “The Location of the Image: Cinematic Projection and Scale in Modernity.” *Art of Projection*. Ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon. Berlin, Hatje Cantz Publishers: 31 Aug. 2009.

Emin, Tracey. *My Bed*. 1998. Tate, London.

Gay, Roxane. *Bad Feminist*. New York, Harper Perennial: 05 Aug. 2014.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Saving Beauty*. Cambridge, MIT Press: 2018.

---. ed. *Topology of Violence*. Cambridge, Polity: 2017.

Hannah Wilke Website. “Photographic Work.” *Hannah Wilke*. Los Angeles, Hannah Wilke Collection & Archive: 2019. www.hannahwilke.com/id5.html Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

Hendrick, Bill. “Eating Disorders on the Rise in Children.” *WebMD*. 29 Nov 2010. www.webmd.com/mental-health/eating-disorders/news/20101128/eating-disorders-on-the-rise-in-children Accessed 09 Dec. 2018.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One.* New York, Cornell University Press: 1977.

Joselit, David. “Touching Pictures: Toward a Political Science of Video.” *Art of Projection*. Ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon. Berlin, Hatje Cantz Publishers: 31 Aug. 2009.

Kelley, Devon. “This Is How Much Time the Average Person Spends Getting Ready in a Year.” *Yahoo Lifestyle*. 26 Jan. 2016. www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/this-is-how-much-time-the-average-person-spends-214856853.html Accessed 11 Feb. 2019.

Kohn, Sally. “Sexual Harassment Should Be Treated as a Hate Crime.” *The Washington Post*. Washington: 11 Dec. 2017. www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/12/11/sexual-harassment-should-be-treated-as-a-hate-crime/?utm_term=.82dbc7e7c4e7 Accessed 08 Mar. 2019.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection.* New York, Columbia University Press: 1984.

Lang, Cady. “Victoria’s Secret CEO Jan Singer Resigns After Two Years with Company.” *Time.* 14 Nov. 2018. www.time.com/5454534/victorias-secret-ceo-jan-singer-resigns/ Accessed 09 Dec. 2018.

LIMA. “Art must be Beautiful, Artist must be Beautiful.” *Catalogue.* Amsterdam. LIMA: 2019. www.lima.nl/lima/catalogue/art/marina-abramovic/art-must-be-beautiful-artist-must-be-beautiful/4454 Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

Marcuse, Herbert. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Boston, Beacon Press: 1977.

Moore, Lane. *Male Feminists of Tinder*. Tumblr: 2019. www.malefeministsoftinder.tumblr.com Accessed 08 Mar. 2019.

Museum of Modern Art. “Birthday Suit: with scars and defects.” *Lisa Steele*. New York, Museum of Modern Art: 2019. www.moma.org/collection/works/107744 Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

---, ed. “Brushstrokes No. 7.” *Hannah Wilke*. New York, Museum of Modern Art: 2019. www.moma.org/collection/works/97769 Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

National Gallery of Canada. *Lisa Steele*. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada: 2019. www.gallery.ca/collection/artist/lisa-steele Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

Orenstein, Peggy. *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture.* New York, Harper Paperbacks: 2012.

Oxford Dictionaries. *Abject*. Don Mills, Oxford University Press: 2019. www.en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/abject Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

Pereira, Lorenzo. “Marina Abramovic Art Pieces You Should Know.” *Widewalls.* London: 2015. www.widewalls.ch/marina-abramovic-art/ Accessed 25 Jan. 2019.

Peretz, Tal H. *The Pedestal Effect: Problems and Potentiality for Feminist Men.* Los Angeles, UCLA Center for the Study of Women: 2008. www.escholarship.org/uc/item/1hr6f62t Accessed 08 Mar. 2019.

Phillips, Ruth & Viviene E. Cree. "What does the 'Fourth Wave' mean for teaching feminism in 21st century social work?' *Social Work Education International Journal*, vol. 33, no. 7. Edinburgh, The University of Edinburgh: 2014. 1-14.

Press, Jordan. "Canada's Gender Pay Gap Means Male Execs Make Almost $1M More Than Women in Similar Jobs: Study." *The Huffington Post*. New York, Verizon Media: 02 Jan. 2019. www.huffingtonpost.ca/2019/01/02/canada-gender-pay-gap-executives_a_23631843/ Accessed 08 Mar. 2019.

Royal Society for Public Health & Young Health Movement. *#StatusOfMind: Social Media and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing*. London, Royal Society for Public Health: 2017.

Sax, Leonard. *Girls on the Edge: The Four Factors Driving the New Crisis for Girls*. New York, Basic Books: 2011.

Schneemann, Carolee. *Interior Scroll*. 1975. London, Tate Modern.

Sexual Assault Center Hamilton and Area. "Statistics." *SACHA*. Ministry of the Attorney General Ontario Victim Services Secretariat. Hamilton: 2018. www.sacha.ca/resources/statistics Accessed 09 Dec. 2018.

Sparkes, Andrew C. "Autoethnography and Narratives of Self: Reflections in Criteria in Action." Sociology of Sport Journal. Vol. 17, No. 1. Birmingham, Human Kinetics Journals: 2000.

Spratt, Vicky. "How to Spot a Faux Male Feminist." *Grazia Daily*. Peterborough, Bauer Consumer Media Ltd: 20 Dec. 2017. www.graziadaily.co.uk/life/opinion/spot-faux-male-feminist/ Accessed 08 Mar. 2019.

Valizadeh, Roosh. "The 9 Ugliest Feminists in America." *Return of the Kings*. 15 Jan. 2013. www.returnofkings.com/2099/the-9-ugliest-american-feminists Accessed 09 Dec. 2018.

Wesley, Connor. "Feminists Don't Want to Admit It, But It's Actually Biological Gender Differences That Keep Women from Succeeding in my Meticulously Engineered Mega-Labyrinth." *Voices*. 08 Nov. 2017. www.voices.clickhole.com/feminists-don-t-want-to-admit-it-but-it-s-actually-bio-1825124231 Accessed 09 Dec. 2018.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth.* Toronto, Vintage Books: 1990.

Zeisler, Andi. *Feminism and Pop Culture*. Berkeley, Seal Press: 14 Oct. 2008.

Works Consulted

Adam, David. *The Man Who Couldn't Stop: OCD, and the True Story of a Life Lost is Thought*. London, Picador: 2014.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *We Should All Be Feminists.* New York, Anchor: 2015.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Toronto, Vintage Books: 2011.

Butler, Cornelia & Lisa Gabrielle Mark. *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*. Cambridge, MIT Press: 2007.

Doane, Mary Ann. "Close-up." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. Vol.14, no.3. Fall 2003. 89-111.

Fateman, Johanna. "Fully Loaded Power and Sexual Violence." *Artforum*. Vol.56, no.5. January 2018. www.artforum.com/print/201801/fully-loaded-power-and-sexual-violence-73188 Accessed 28 Jan. 2019.

Foster, Hal. "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic." *October*. Vol.78. Autumn 1996. 106-124.

Fraser, Andrea. "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique." *Artforum*. Vol.44, no.1. September 2005. 32-39.

Gay, Roxane. *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*. New York, HarperCollins Publishers: 2017.

Gill, Rosalind. "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. Vol.10, no.2. May 2007. 147-166.

Henderson, Gretchen E. *Ugliness: A Cultural History*. London, Reaktion Books: 2005.

Jansen, Charlotte. *Girl on Girl: Art and Photography in the Age of the Female Gaze.* London, Laurence King Publishing: 2017.

Jones, Amelia. *Body Art: Performing the Subject*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 1998.

Neumaier, Diane. *Reframings: New American Feminist Photographies*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press: 1995.

Ross, Christine. *The Aesthetics of Disengagement: Contemporary Art and Depression*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 2006.

Soutter, Lucy. "Dial P for Panties Narrative Photography in the 1990's." *Girls! Girls! Girls! In Contemporary Art*. Ed. Catherine Grant & Lori Waxman. Bristol, Intellect Ltd: 2011.

Tiqqun. "The Young-Girl as Technique of the Self." *Raw Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*. Paris, Éditions Mille et Une Nuits: 2011.

Wark, Jayne. *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America*. Montreal, Mc-Gill-Queen's University Press: 2006.

Weiss, Gail. *Body Image: Embodiment as Intercorporality.* New York, Routledge: 1999.

Appendix I – Statistics on the Feminine Youth

- 199%: the rise of hospitalisations due to eating disorders between 1999 and 2006 in the United States (Hendrick).
- 55%: the rise of ADHD diagnostics in girls, compared to 40% in boys, observed between 2003 and 2011 in the United States (Anderson).
- 68%: the rise of incidences of self-harm in girls aged 13 to 16 between 2001 and 2014 in the United Kingdom (Davis).
- 3,000: the approximate number of ads seen by American teenagers on all sources of media every day (American Academy of Pediatrics 2563).
- 15%-25%: the number of Canadian girls who will be sexually assaulted during their college or university years (Sexual Assault Center Hamilton and Area).
- 94%: the proportion of self-reported sexual assault committed by a man in Canada in 2014 (Conroy & Cotter).
- 87%: the proportion of self-reported sexual assault committed against women in Canada in 2014 (Conroy & Cotter).
- $40 millions: the approximate amount American tween girls spend on beauty products every month (Orenstein 82).
- 40 000: the number of Americans under 18 who surgically altered their appearance in 2008, most of them female-identified (Orenstein 139).
- 1/3 of their income: the amount urban professional American women are willing to put on improving and maintaining their appearance (Wolf 52).

Appendix II – Letter to the #MeToo Movement

Vancouver, January 25th 2019.

Dear #MeToo[17],

You were born thirteen years ago now, but it took almost a decade for you to be noticed. Yet, when you were finally seen, oh how incredibly visible did you become. For a brief instant, you were hope. You were light. You made me come forward. Not to the police, not to my family, and not to my friends. You made me come forward to myself. By putting the hashtag on my Facebook feed, I was being honest and, for the very first time, I was compassionate to myself. "Things are finally changing", I thought, because you were hope.

But then, they started spitting on you. The pendulum had gone a little bit too far, a tiny tiny bit too far. And maybe it didn't even go that far, but it was too far for so many people. And maybe it was not that many, but enough. And they are loud. And they are mean. And they are everywhere. They wrote comments on social media, fine. They made bad jokes at family dinners, fine. They made remarks on the bus, fine. I am used to it. But then, they made the same comments on national television. And on the radio. And in universities. And in court. And in congress. The pendulum is falling so fast, and me too.

#MeToo, I know what you think. Men[18] are going to prison. Men are being held accountable. Men are paying for what they did to us. Except these men are celebrities, public figures, icons. They don't represent hope, they represent fear. And men are scared. And their moms are scared. And their wives are scared. And "Blurred Lines" is playing on the radio, and me too, I'm scared.

I'm scared because #MeToo is not for me. It is not for us, the nobodies, the unknown. If we come forward against a rich man, we will be gold diggers. If we come forward against a poor man, who will listen?

I'm scared because over a decade after your birth, they still think they have a right to my body. And I'm scared because when I say I'm scared, they laugh. And then "What Do You Mean?" plays on the radio, and I don't laugh at all.

Sincerely,

Marie-Pascale

---

[17] I am not addressing Tarana Burke here, but the #MeToo movement as an abstract entity. I have eternal admiration and gratefulness for Mrs. Burke, who has the purest of intentions and the most beautiful strength.

[18] I acknowledge that not all sexual harassment and assault comes from men, and that not all of their victims are women. See Appendix I – Statistics on the Female Youth for the most recent estimation.