



Pornocracy

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Pornocracy

- (1860): "the dominating influence of harlots," used specifically by the government of Rome during the first half of the 10th century by Theodora and her daughters.
- (2008): the dominating influence of the graphic and the explicit; the aesthetic rule of unambiguous bodiliness.

WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE A WHORE for hire, little more than meat for a choreographer to beat? How have you had to forgo being yourself on stage to fulfill someone else's fantasy—the choreographer or audience's? What illicit fantasies do we carry about our own bodies and what they can do? When are bodies too explicit? How do we understand the graphic in the choreographic? Can bodies truly be desexualized on the chaste stage of modernism? Which bodies, couplings and practices aren't seen, or seen as erotic? Conversely, which are considered "inherently" passionate, exotic, etc.? And what about the crotch? When is a body part just a body part and when do we want audiences to zoom in? What are audiences looking for? At?

Like porn, dance stages bodies for other's pleasure. Like porn, dancing has been maligned for the moral dangers it purportedly poses to the individual and society. Porn and dance similarly deal with: issues of propriety and obscenity, public censure, voyeurism, the multiple layers of meaning and fantasy, and the power relations of who gets to call the shots.

In this issue, our contributors get emotionally and sometimes physically naked as they take an up-close and unabashed look at the line between choreography and pornography; the metaphorical capacity of dancing bodies vs. the explicitness of actual flesh; moral valuations and intercessions of/in bodiliness; and the politically efficacious and tactical use of the particular, the graphic, and the carnal.

ENJOY!

team itch

Taisha Paggett | Sara Wolf | Meg Wolfe

doran george

VALENTINE FLOWER

"Holy, holy, holy, holy" is how Allen Ginsberg begins his famous Footnote to Howl. Then, before he pens another word, again he writes "holy" yet another eleven times. From my cultural location, a rational, liberal critique of the proscriptive morality of the body I grew up with is not hard to come by. "The world is holy," Ginsberg goes on to say, "The soul is holy! The skin holy! The nose holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!" Yet experiencing my gender, my sexuality, my corporeality, my pleasure, as a site of divinity rather than censure remains something I have to practice. A discipline, if you will. The threat of damnation still lurks in the tingling of the God-given nerve endings. "The typewriter is holy, the poem is holy, the voice is holy, the ecstasy is holy!" The post-modern promise is democracy of doctrine. Here is an action, a ritual, a momentary doctrine, tracing the broadest possible, symbolic polarity of sexual archetypes for this particular body in a particular moment. "Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul." A temporal corporeality, a divine erotic.



Doran George photo by E. Keane

Doran George is best known for being encased in bricks and mortar in a south London shopping mall. He researches the significance of the body in object based, durational, relational, and movement work and is currently investigating bereavement and cultural constructions of mortality in his PhD research at UCLA. He's been funded, commissioned, and presented in Britain, Continental Europe, and the U.S.; regularly curates cutting-edge performance and events; and has danced for a diversity of choreographers. He is published in several print- and web-based publications and has taught at major universities, art colleges, and dance centers in the U.K., U.S., the Netherlands, and Portugal.

simone forti

PLUOTS

I hadn't realized
I'd already felt it
thought it

And there we were
the check-out woman and me
feeling the pluots
through the plastic membrane

New hybrid plum and apricots
"What do you think they feel like?"
she asked.
"Balls." I answer.

We hover
a moment more
feeling the pluots



Simone Forti shops at Vons in West L.A. and is the recipient of a 2005 Guggenheim Fellowship in dance.

jordana toback

last week i saw a film i made ten years ago. after all this time the director, dj, decided to dig it up, finish it, and post it on his website. being both vain and curious, i went online and had a look—have a look for yourself. its at: www.startherefilms.com

my part in the film, aptly titled Happy Birthday Miss America, goes a little something like this: first, i fake pee on dj. then i fake blow him. i lie there with my breast exposed and say "i'll see your wife in church." i lounge around drinking with him and then say, "i gotta take a shower before we fuck."

back then, i was a do-er. i had been dancing for mark morris for seven years and i "did" what he said. or at least i tried. and when dj said "i want you to play the other woman," i was flattered so i said ok.

now i am older and married and my husband looked at djs film and went, "wow."

and i said "wow." and there it is, up on the internet for all to peruse. we thought out loud, "our kids might see this one day!" and then we both said "wow."

this film got me thinking about my sexuality now vs then and how i was so much freer in a way when i was less conscious. i nude modeled for artists, no problem. i danced naked on stage in my own work once (ok twice), no problem.

and now i feel differently about my body and who i would share it with. i am much more present in my body now and so the thought of getting on stage naked seems impossible.

but my choreography is way more direct and way more sensual now. its also very conscious and very deliberate whereas before i had no idea who i was turning on or even that someone might be turned by me. this was dangerous for me and caused me much confusion over the years.

part of it had to do with doing too much and feeling nothing. i felt no satisfaction, no confidence, and there seemed to be no end to what i needed to do to get somewhere. i was acting in plays (and apparently some films), working full time as a pilates instructor, working part time as an artist model, dancing for 2 or 3 choreographers at once, dancing my own dances and producing my own shows—you name it, i got up at 5 am and did it. no matter how successful i was or how good i was, i always felt dejected afterwards.

i was numb and miserable but sex was easy. i had numbed myself to a degree because i felt so unappreciated in every way. sex was a way to connect and also to prove i was ok. i didnt care about taking my clothes off in front of complete strangers. i would change my clothes in front of straight male friends to show "hey i am a dancer. i am cool with everything." that would be a beautiful thing if it had actually been true that i was cool with everything!

i had no feeling whatsoever about exposing myself during one (ok two) of my solos. my co workers who came to see my shows had re named me the nudist. i thought that was funny and it was. but it also wasnt because i couldnt feel anything but the power it gave me. the power a naked woman has over her audience. we all objectify—its part of our strange culture—and here i was putting myself in that position to be objectified in order to feel included in that culture.

numbness is not being cool. numbness is not being down with whatever. numbness is being frozen at the hearts core. its being alone in a group with the only objective to control. its being split at the waist so your heart doesnt know what your sex wants and your sex only wants to control.

eric kupers

somewhere in there i contracted chronic fatigue which is a mysterious ailment that basically entails a person completely cutting themselves off from their life force and the basic pleasure of receiving... anything. if that isnt sexual i dont know what is. i was devoid of feeling between my heart and my sex. i had sex but only was attracted to relationships where i had given up my power. anytime i felt my heart, i was pretty scared to commit and i would run leaving many a good thing behind. or they would run and i would feel justified yet again not to commit to anyone or anything.

as this dis ease began to take over, i had no energy for anything. because it got so bad that i couldn't walk up subway stairs, i went to healing school so i could get my life back. so i could dance again.

i disappeared from the dance scene and slowly, as i focused on being ruthlessly gentle with myself, i got better. i began to see how my lack of energy was due to me draining myself on every level. i saw how my relationships suffered because i was overly emotional but felt little of my hearts desire. i saw how i tortured people because i gave too much and took too little. i was the queen of self sabotage and if you dont know this for yourself, let me tell you nothing feels worse. (and can i just say, good for you if you have no idea what i am referring to here!)

as i come back to dancing i have a new understanding of myself. the old dances i used to enjoy watching have nothing for me anymore. everything at BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) seems holier-than-thou and includes little or no sexuality whatsoever. presently i can only watch and create dances that have a sexual bent or expression or come from the heart or if i am lucky, both! in fact my goal is to create what i dont see out there. the intellectual stuff, while i find it well crafted even genius at times, leaves me feeling empty. i may as well watch Friends on youtube. empty. the way i see it, empty is as empty does. if there is no feeling invested in a piece, if there is no heart or sex in a show or a film, then to me it is empty of meaning.



jordana toback

i would go so far as to say that numbness to our own sexual power is irresponsible and therefore part of the problem (mine anyways) and the bigger problem as well. the bigger problem being we live in a culture where most women's sex and sensuality are disconnected from the heart. a culture that seems only to explore or depict sex when it is attached to exploitation and destruction.

when i look at the art i made, the paintings made of my naked body, the films where i pee on dj, the dances where i take my clothes off while singing cat power or pj harvey, i am proud. no doubt good things came out of this phase. of every phase.

but as a healer i know below the "performance" i was coming from a place of numbness; a disconnected freedom, a need to prove myself that was ungrounded and was also a mask for the pain below the surface. empty is as empty does. if what we put onstage is not filled with our hearts desire and our creative fire, what we put onstage will be empty of us. and then what we attract from that performance will be devoid of meaning or will leave us feeling empty in its aftermath.

if, on the other hand, we imbue our performance with our true longing, our passion and our own language, unique to only us, then our voice can be heard. we are felt and what people draw from that voice is their own inspiration, their own true longing because they vibrate with us on that frequency. what we attract to us is more of the same, more heartfelt passion and nothing you do here can be wrong. because its your truth. it was how i had been naked, not the fact that i was naked, that made what i experienced as a nudist so telling.

Jordana Che Toback hails from Los Angeles, California and her background includes dancing for Mark Morris Dance Group for many years, then becoming the original choreographer dancer @ stage director behind Fischerspooner at the height of their Art World @ Pop music success. She has choreographed dances for alternative bands, fashion shows and the theatre as well as for every type of venue (Rock club, Night Club, Theatre, Concert Hall, Art Gallery, Museum) commissioned by a wide variety of clients. She has worked in every genre of performance from Opera to Avant Garde Theatre, Ballet and Concert Dance to Film and Television Commercials to Music Videos and Photo Shoots. For details go to: www.jordanachetoback.com

eric kupers

THE IDEA THAT THE NAKED BODY in performance could ever be inherently obscene, inappropriate, adult-only or out of place is ridiculous to me. There is nothing more appropriate than a naked body onstage. One of the core reasons to engage in live performance is to allow for witnesses to experience visually and viscerally the multifarious strains of human existence—in a body. Naked bodies get right to the point.

Of course there are always dangerous possibilities for objectification, prejudice, disrespect in the presence of someone revealing their bodies, but that is all about context and intention. The negative reverberations of pornography, media objectification and the like usually have more to do with strategic covering and uncovering of certain parts of the body, the fueling of desire systems that have been built out of years of exposure to TV, advertising, peer pressure and internalizing self-hatred. Once bodies are really naked onstage, we have the opportunity to examine the nature of existence at unfolding levels of intimacy and honesty.

I have been surprised to find that in my seven-year Undressed Project, nudity is often one of the most non-sexual and neutral ways to be together. We become acutely aware of both the wondrous beauty and the disturbing awkwardness of bodies. We are confronted with pimples, blemishes, genitals, smells, scars, proportions, hair, lack of hair, menstruation, erections, uneven testicles or breasts, sags, stretches, attraction, repulsion and aging. Sexual desire tends to be elicited more from partial nudity, from hiding one thing and displaying another, from the mystery of what lies beneath and behind. Once it's all completely out in the open, a whole lot of pretension and anxiety drops away.





And I've been surprised to see, especially since we've actively cultivated significant body diversity in our ensemble, that no matter how different we all seem to be (men/women/trans, old/young, fat/thin, hairy/smooth, of all colors and abilities), when we get naked the most salient experience is that of our sameness. All those categories that seemed to distinguish us from each other start to melt into a wonderfully confusing continuum. We are all completely and undeniably different, and yet from just a slight expansion of our perspective, we can see that we are all just human--just complex sculptures of flesh, fluid, bone and consciousness that have been labeled with genders and races and identities.

It is the vulnerability of nudity that is most challenging to mainstream culture. The vulnerability to our sameness, to our interconnection, to the groundlessness of identity. All labels of inappropriateness miss the point. Appropriate responses to our experience have to do with presence and intention--responding with as much authenticity and integrity that we can muster, to every situation we encounter.

Eric Kupers has directed, choreographed and performed with Dandelion Dancetheater since its inception, creating numerous works that have been presented throughout California, nationally and internationally. Eric is a professor of dance at Cal State East Bay, and is the director of the CSUEB "Dance for All Bodies and Abilities" program. Dandelion's work is grounded in a fascination with the intersections of bold risk-taking and accessibility. Committed to the individual and intersecting artistic visions of Kimiko Guthrie and Eric Kupers, we teach and create with people of diverse sizes, shapes, ages, cultures and abilities, so that viewers of all walks of life can find themselves reflected in the work. We view the bodily exploration of human vulnerability, strength and paradox as a potent means for personal and collective growth. danieliondancetheater@gmail.com

LITTLE BOY BLUE

Little boy blue cum blow your horn.
Do do do do do do do.
Little boy blue cum blow some more.
Do do do do do do do.

Little boy blue likes to blow on horns.
Little boy blue likes to watch some porn
And sultry boys as they perform.
It's easy to find says little boy blue.
He just types words into Google
And waits for the pictures to come through.
There are plenty of things to ogle
And see says our lad little boy blue.

Sometimes little boy blue likes to go out to see "sexy" things.
He drives his car to the theatre and he sings.
I love horns!
I love ass!
I love to watch them while I smoke grass.
I love horns!
I love ass!
I love to watch them while I smoke grass.

Oh look I'm here, he screams with a shout
And hopes these shows will never sell out
Because he's all riled up on Saturday night
And wants to see an orifice stretch and a man moan with delight.

He gets aroused
He gets turned on
He loves when boys wear hot thongs
And expose themselves for all to see.
He's so glad he brought with him some ecstasy.



It's shock
 It's hot
 It's right in his face.
 He likes to feel something hard
 At the right time and place.

Little boy blue cums back week after week
 To see the boys is oh such a treat.
 They turn, they spin, they expose their meat.
 But as time goes on it's the same old thing
 An ass, a cock and a cock ring.

Sigh, sigh, sigh
 Little boy blue exclaims.
 He wants to feel hot but it's all just the same.
 An ass is an ass
 A cock a cock

Oh geeze
 Oh shit
 Oh fuck
 Oh art
 Oh slut
 Oh cunt
 Oh mom
 Oh shucks
 Oh my, my, my

How are we ever going to survive?

Is this art? little boy blue proclaims
 Because it's a cabaret done on a post modern stage?
 Is it considered higher art?
 But all they did was twirl and fart.

He thinks maybe they want to push the envelope
 To make people feel something intense that envelops
 Their souls and makes them think?
 Maybe it will all just be gone in a blink
 Of an eye
 Transfixed between someone's thighs.

Sex sells
 And perhaps we will all break out of our shells
 To be exposed to the softer side
 Of our existence that everyone hides?

Or maybe it's edgy or avant-garde?
 Sure it is but most things are
 When looked at from a different perspective.
 Its execution is very effective
 In a form fit for some
 Where others are appalled and want to run
 Away and hide from that certain something,
 But again it's just the same old thing.
 An ass is an ass
 A cock a cock.
 An ass, a cock and a cock ring.

Little boy blue sees the same old thing and feels
 That it's no longer such a big deal
 And the taboo subject loses its mass appeal.
 It still may make him hard
 But nowadays it's not too hard
 To find something that will get you off
 In the end he still goes soft.

You know it will never go away
 As long as people are willing to put themselves on display
 For all to see their naughty bits
 Dangle and bounce as they do the splits.

Little boy blue cum blow your horn
 Little boy blue cum blow some more.
 But little boy blue's chest now heaves and falls
 And he now just calls himself Little boy blue balls.

Jeremy Hahn is working to cultivate the idea of the "informed being," in himself. He spends his daily life as a creative creature based in Los Angeles, honing the mind, body and soul through process and reverence. Currently he performs dance and fire in the visible and invisible areas of the city and has had the greatest pleasure to work with many beautiful artists including: Michelle "Starburst" LaVon, Lucent Dossier Vaudeville Cirque, Meg Wolfe, Kalima Satori and many others throughout his life as a performer. He ignites his heart daily with the passion of the universal fire of life while creating for all that is seen, unseen and all the energy in between and finds peace where he can which gives him hope. www.myspace.com/jeremyhahnperformance

keith hennessy

PERFORMING MAN HOLES AND SCROLLS

I'm always referencing Carolee Schneeman's Interior Scroll (1975).

At Highways Performance Space I once climbed to the rafters wearing only a jock strap and climbing harness, rigged myself to hang above the audience, ass exposed, and pulled a scroll from my butt to read. This was part of an event around 1992 designed to bring together performance artists and ritualists from queer clubs, art spaces, and S&M communities.

In Heat (1993) my naked assistant pulled a scroll from my hole. It was during the AIDS time so he wore gloves and the scroll was in a condom. Responding to the 1992 LA riots, this section of the performance questioned if it was possible for the queer white male body to speak directly, bypassing filters that usually prevent white people from speaking about race and racism. Texts were pulled from mouth, nose, ear and ass holes.

I created AN US (2005), a performance-essay-video installation-public site action series as a response to feminist theory & performance. Quoting Annie Sprinkle's Public Cervix Announcement, I made ten-minute videos of close up, interior views of my mouth and ass hole, held open by a speculum and lit up by a red laser—it's surprising how much their pink fleshy worlds resemble each other. On a third monitor there was a playfully edited movie of the public action, in which four of my UC Davis undergrad students pulled streams of pink and black fabric from a hole in my pants as I lay in an intersection on my back, legs over my head. Then they rode their bikes in circles around me to create an endless May Hole dance.

In American Tweaker (2006) I made a repetitive choreography of mindless fucking, recalling the middle-aged guy who went on a wack meth binge and allegedly got fucked by 100 different guys in three months. He ended up as a national media sensation screaming about fantasy super viruses and queer decadence. I repeat the choreography a second time with no 'partner' and pants dangling from one ankle. I've had friends tell me they had to turn away, that three minutes of staring at my rear hole was too much information.

Last year, at the Ponderosa Dance/Land Fest in Stolzenhagen, Germany, I had the audience pull a fabric scroll attached by string to a ceiling pulley from my butt. The scroll said something like "the perfect concept" in German, a Josef Beuys' reference. This piece has become Crotch, which I'll perform at DTW (NYC) and Tout Nouveau Théâtre (Bordeaux, France) in 2009, but it no longer includes the butt scroll.

Keith Hennessy was born in a mining town in Northern Ontario, lives in San Francisco, and works regularly in Europe. Alone and with others, Hennessy makes politically engaged, soul touching performance for humans. He was a member of the collaborative performance companies Contraband (85-94), CORE (95-98), and Cahin-caha, cirque bâtard (98-02) and is a co-founder of 848 Community Space/CounterPULSE. Director of Circo/Zero/Performance and PhD student at UC Davis, Hennessy improvises in the swampy, fertile borderlands of performance, ritual, theory, history and action. www.circozero.org

flora wiegmann

SCREAMING BRAS AND OTHER STORIES

I was recently at a performance that, unfortunately, reminded me of the problematic of bare breasts—both in a field where there is a history of baring it all, and also evident in the everyday. For some odd reason, there seems to be a sense of shame in the air regarding the well-covered subject these days.

What are our breasts up against as women in an age that's post-all the many posts and after the neos, when rules are unclear and attitudes are as individual as our breast size and shape? Of course, there is both an historical and a legal precedence for how we treat a part of our bodies that, really, isn't that different from a man's counterpart except the superhero-like ability to produce milk and sometimes hold more fat. Breastfeeding in public is okay; sunbathing without a top is not (unless you live in the state of New York where it's legal in every park and beach, but is not a generally accepted practice).

You can be topless in a performance unless there is alcohol on the premises and then you're no longer an artist but a stripper. In the end, we as women need to take into consideration the history of our breasts, how the law controls them, and how we can maintain command of the power enveloped in our bosoms.

Since the 1960s the social and legal rules regarding breasts have been transitory to say the least. In the '60s and '70s, public exposure of the breast started to take place in both the public and performance arena. An image from Yvonne Rainer's 1963 Love Duet comes to mind, where both the male and female bodies (Steve Paxton and Rainer) were dressed in g-strings, but Rainer's nipples were demurely hidden behind pasties. The nipple, apparently, was the grand offender and had to be covered unless you didn't mind risking harassment from the police, or worse yet, a warrant for your arrest for indecency. Some artists chose to attack this standard head-on, harnessing a new sexual power while defying both the legal and social expectations. Other ways of asserting feminine authority evolved: the pantsuit, the anti-porn movement, and neo-feminism, to name a few, reacted and countered each other's focus. The main issues at stake—then and now—are dignity, power, equality (or lack thereof), and authority over one's body. Today, as a more conservative stronghold has tightened its fist over much of the American lifestyle, we once again have to find our own set of tactics.





I would argue that women artists now have a very complicated job of sifting through the rules, both legal and social, to understand what our breasts connote. Let me return to the performance I mentioned at the beginning of this submission. My recent experience as an audience member witnessed a dancer performing as a tough-girl accompanied by girl-punk music and a hard stare. At one point, she takes off her puff-sleeved shirt to do a section that faced the back. I began to take interest in watching her back move, which to me, was the focus as the movement was familiar. I then shook my head in disbelief; she was wearing a nude sports bra. Granted, it had a sort of bandage-like appearance from the back, which might allude to the strapping down of breasts, but if that was the goal, I assume it would have been an actual Ace Bandage. Instead of trusting that her movement allowed minimal, if any, potential for a frontal view of her breasts, she guaranteed it by covering herself and highlighted her hesitation. The surprising humility of the flesh-colored coverage contradicted the action of taking her shirt off.

My reading, then, was that this strong woman just gave up all of her potential power by emanating a sense of shame about her breasts. That bra was not invisible, in fact it made a very loud statement, at least to my generation and the ones before me who are familiar with the long line of performance artists who took the brunt of a lot of criticism to point out the inequality of representation through exposure. Valie Export allowed people on the street to touch the real female breast hidden behind a mini theater in her Tap and Touch Cinema. Karen Finley smeared her breasts with chocolate and honey while delivering intelligent and biting political monologues. Lynda Benglis produced a responsive nude ad in ArtForum that was heavily critiqued even though only a month earlier a similar ad by Robert Morris was not questioned. A younger audience, one that has grown up in these conservative times, may not hear the bra screaming, but I do. When trying to make a statement about taking your shirt off, you either do it or you don't.

Flora Wiegmann attempts to broaden the platform for dance by making works on film, site-specific dances, endurance performance pieces, and collaborations with visual artists. Recently, she has performed in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, Alan Kaprow's 18 Happenings in 6 Parts at L.A.C.E., An Evening With Cinema Zero at The Kitchen, and her latest curatorial/performative project, Pleiades, at Highways Performance Space.

angeline shaka



Aloha From Hawaii

BECOMING A HULA GIRL

Hula dancer: two words, over a century of conflict. An emblem of Pacific seduction and desire, the hula dancer's body and her dancing were characterized as "savage," "lewd," and "lascivious" by the nineteenth century Christian missionaries who landed in Hawai'i in 1820. Molded by a nascent national tourist industry's mobilization of early twentieth century discourses of race and gender, by the 1930s she had been cast as a nubile brown-skinned 'gal' surrounded by fulsome island landscapes. Reclaimed in the mid-1970s by sovereignty movements in Hawai'i, she has since been recast as the "keeper of tradition." Now when she dances she often shares the stage with the male hula dancer in an on-going effort at re-membling Hawai'i's past onto the present moment and into a future of Hawaiian culture. So what are the stakes of being looked at? Of looking? Is it possible for the hula girl to dance without also participating in the fantasy that she (and by extension the entire Hawaiian Island chain) is ready and available to be consumed by our desire for a seductive and novel experience? And would she want to?

As someone who researches hula I am interested in complicating how we (especially those of us who are not Hawaiian) watch the hula girls and boys dance. How we take in the scent of the flowers they wear in their hair and around their necks as they dance. How we watch their hand gestures and bodies glide across the stage while letting the music wash over us without understanding the poetry in the unfamiliar lyrics. How we participate in Pacific exoticism and how we are seduced by it every time the hula girl dances. I also dance hula with a halau (hula troupe) dedicated to performing the "Hawaiian Standards" from the 1940s and 1950s, a selection of largely witty flirtatious songs that deliver a strong dose of nostalgia for mid-century Hawaiian tropical fantasy. I find myself dancing as surrogate for my kumu hula (hula teacher) who entertained in floorshows at the famed pink Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu, and who danced hula in Asia and throughout the Pacific as well as the U.S. mainland.





A few weeks ago my halau performed at a Hawaiian Cultural Festival in a L.A. county park. Two days of Hawaiian music, Polynesian dance, food booths, crafts, and plants. I put on the traditional Hawaiian pa'u skirt (gathered skirt) with blouse with bloomers underneath that I had just finished sewing. I attached my hair extensions, applied my makeup and joined my hula sisters and brothers on stage. At the end of August we will compete in Southern California's hula competition in Long Beach. I still need to buy my bun so I can look like I have the long hair worn by every other female hula dancer from all fourteen of the competing halau. Several times a week at practice my kumu urges us to smile, and flirt with our invisible audience. She declares that while there isn't a single ugly girl in the bunch, we certainly aren't actresses and we need to start practicing seducing the audience. We are entertainers. Thinking of this upcoming show, I am wondering: what is this role that we play? Is our performance a faithful and sincere embodiment of the hula girl? And does an audience consciously perform the consumption of her exoticism?

A video-performance I have been examining, *The Natives Are Restless* (1999), places this question of the hula girl front and center. Choreographed by San Francisco-based kumu hula Patrick Makuakane, it is a classic scenario of conversion dramatizing the epic conflict between Hawaiians and American missionaries. Before the curtain opens, the audience hears a booming voice reading text written by the Reverend Hiram Bingham citing the "half-naked" hula as conclusive evidence of the Hawaiian people's lack of humanity. This text establishes the grounds on which Hawaiian culture, and especially hula, became an embattled practice in the nineteenth century—with missionaries prohibiting its performance and underground hula halau trying to keep it alive.

The curtain rises and I can barely make out a company of women in the dim light. As the lights become brighter, twenty or more women become visible. They chant while dancing a noho, or sitting hula, in the kahiko (ancient) hula tradition. The women move in unison. They are a corps of tattooed dancers naked from the waist up with red and yellow fabrics elaborately wrapped around their hips. Their chant is both stately and celebratory and the women, gesturing toward the mountain's high peaks and then tracing the smooth valleys created by the ever-blowing wind, present a powerful force—far from the damning images of depravity described by Reverend Bingham.

In these first moments Makuakane juxtaposes traditional hula with Christian morality. Bingham's suggestion of depravity is incommensurate with the breathtaking power in these "savage" women's performance—and so is the popular image of the hula girl incommensurate here. These dancers are making a performative claim to a pre-colonial hula girl, before she's been covered up by Christian morals and lightened through her contact with America's ideals of whiteness in order to be recast as the tourist industry's visual promise of rest and relaxation for the leisure classes. Before she becomes a part of the fantasy of Hawai'i as "edenic playground," to borrow a phrase from anthropologist Jane Desmond. Later in the show Makuakane reconfigures the hula girl yet again in an over-the-top performance set to Cyndi Lauper's 1980's hit "True Colors." A gaggle of gals in shockingly blue cellophane skirts surround a man in drag wearing a mu'umu'u while the audience laughs uproariously.

As an "out" gay man and former dj, Makuakane consciously inserts a gay music sensibility into his hula choreographies alongside, beneath, or in place of Hawaiian mele (songs). The techno, house, or progressive trance music detached from its usual warehouse/club environment gesture towards a culturally coded signification of community and presence for gay identification, the dance club. The dance club, and the music mixed by djs in these clubs creates a space of bodily freedom, a kinesthetic zone where queers playfully construct identities on the dance floor in response to the rhythms, bass, and driving beats of the music. Tactically, these types

"It's through the body that we experience... about through reproduction. For an image... bodily relation—someone took that photo."

Seeing = Traveling = Fucking = Musing



Angeline Shaka is a dancer and Ph.D. student in UCLA's department of World Arts and Cultures. Her research examines intersections between contemporary hula performances and the sovereignty movement for re-membling indigenous identity and nation in Hawai'i—intersections that sometimes affirm while other times challenge identities of "Hawaiianess." Her dissertation will expand upon the archive of the hula girl as one mode through which contemporary hula choreographers are negotiating the body, gender, indigeneity, tradition, and innovation.

of music, placed into a hula performance, mark potential spaces for alternate readings of the hula bodies on stage. If the early 20th-century commodification of the hula-ing body depended on an ambiguously racialized feminine body, it also depended on a heterosexual normativity. Likewise, commercial hula and especially "traditional" hula depends on the interdependent relationship of lyric to gesture. In contrast, a hula choreographed to synthetic beats instead of poetry or to layers of narrative set into multiple electronic tracks encodes heterosexual ambiguity into the dance, opening a gap for alternate readings of the hula girl.

A playful provocation of the trope of the beguilingly feminine hula beauty, Makuakane's choreography challenges the audience to contextualize their looking and to confront their fantasy of the hula girl, whomever "she" may be. And so, with reverence, I will don my gown, slick my short hair around a chignon, and join my hula sisters to dance our hula about the passion and desire aroused from the scent of a "flower" (metaphor is key in hula). And with irreverence I will make myself into a hula girl to be judged on how entertaining and "traditional" my hula sisters and I have become.



ashley hunt

A BODY IS NOT ONLY A BODY

"People come into my space and ask me, 'Young, how do you live with all these cocks on your walls?' And I ask them, 'What cocks? Show me the cocks you see.' And silence. They can't locate one, they can't be specific, they can't point to any cocks on the walls, but they see cocks EVERYWHERE. What is on the wall are landscapes, sunsets, airplanes and silhouettes . . . For instance, I have a spine that is cut into the shape of a cock, but it's an image of someone's back, it's not a cock." —Young Chung

In a recent lecture, artist Ulrike Müller described the process of queering as, "doing away with the essence of things and opening them up to curiosity and desire," and similarly, "to invade meaning." This is an excellent place to begin a discussion of Young Chung's cutout pieces, a discussion that can extend from magazines, collecting and cutting, to pornography, Romanticism, the self, degeneracy and the politics of bodies in a time of war.

Young has made a studio of his living room, and across its walls one can read a history of his recent years' work: the multiple stages of his practice of cutouts, which are elegant two- and sometimes three-dimensional montages made from the pages of commercial magazines. Calling up Dada and Surrealist traditions of photomontage, Asian and Latin American traditions of paper cutting, the works of Richard Prince, Romare Beardon and Hannah Hoch, they are part cultural critique and part Romantic poetry. Each is a recombination of mass culture photography, from gay porn to nature photography and pop-ethnography—images that sell magazines and, in turn, deliver consumers to the advertisers for whom each magazine exists.

To describe what one sees across Young's walls is to speak of bodies—bodies displayed, silhouetted, cropped and reconfigured; bodies that collide, bisect, dissect, extend and disrupt, merge, become and cease to be. There is the real body, a human body, one or many, suggested but never fully delivered, which structures the visual logic of each cutout. But then there is another body, a body of meaning: one that forms at the interruption of this physical body by images of things that are not human at all, but are landscapes, skies, airplanes, water, travel destinations and religious objects. It is this body of meaning, one which forms at the intersection of these photographic discourses that "does away with the essence" of their typical meanings and invades their status as images.

"It's through the body that we experience the places and things that we know about through reproductions. For an image to exist as knowledge there is a bodily relation—someone took that photograph."

Seeing = Traveling = Fucking = Praying

Young's earliest cutouts began from the point of view of a photographer. Wanting to indicate the body present outside the frame of a photograph (that person behind the camera or, later, standing before an image as a viewer), he imposed a new body onto it—literally conforming a landscape's image to a human body's contours. As the bodies he used to pattern his cuts were drawn from gay porn however, they took on playful, tongue-in-cheek meanings, reaching into one's own relationship to pornography and summoning Romantic metaphors of the body and nature unraveling into the power, terror or erotics of one another. This began a progression of ideas and formal experiments, asking complex questions of photographic and mass-media convention, the politics of images, subjectivity and desire. Exquisite in their construction, each is meticulously cut and reassembled into a formal simplicity with scissors and glue (never turning to digital manipulation). The cuts follow different formal logics, typically as silhouette or gestalt, or as fragment. In the space of this essay, I will focus only on his earlier silhouette works.

In his first series of cutouts, bodies and body parts are used as an outline for cutting other images. In *Mountain and Stream (Wrestling)*, the shapes of two men—one on his back with his feet in the air and the other squatting above him, perhaps sucking on his toes—are filled with geology. The top's silhouette reshapes the image of a rugged, iced-over mountain, peaking beneath blue sky and a low cloud; the bottom's silhouette frames a rocky gully, cut through with a white-capped stream that splits in half the space of his torso, his head and shoulders dissolved into larger, circular shapes that no longer correspond to his body, but to a pooling of liquid, suggesting he is himself liquefying, as the snowcaps of the top have melted into the water rushing through him and splitting him in two.

Add to these silhouette works the repeating figure of airplanes. Airplanes can be traced back to Young's earlier work, to a Korean Airlines model that becomes an ironic symbol of

diasporic return in one work, and in others, an American Airlines model crashed in a wreckage of assimilation in the orifices of non-white bodies. In the cutouts, airplanes penetrate bodies with longing, nostalgia, and the ironic power of a disembodied hard-on.

Political connotations like those attributed playfully to the airplanes can also be located in Chung's presentation of landscape. In a 1985 essay, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men," Deborah Bright writes, "Landscape art is the last preserve of American myths about Nature, Culture, and Beauty. It is no accident that its resurgence . . . is taking place during a right-wing political period in which big business has virtually free reign over the social and physical environment." As Bright was writing this at the beginnings of today's post-60s, right-wing resurgence, we can assume that the steadfast mountains, cleansing waters and illuminating sun-rays that compose landscape's lexicon continue to connote the timelessness and divine providence of arch-conservative values and its Culture Wars today—chiefly homophobic social regulation and xenophobic policings of difference. Conforming landscapes to the silhouettes of same-sex iconography intermixed with symbols of cultural alienation offers a resignification of landscape; recasting signs claimed for conservative meanings into the very shape of their contradiction.

While we can see this resignification in the contradictory juxtaposition of subject matter, Young's cutouts operate beyond this, through the dimensions of aesthetic experience involved in signification. While negotiating the disagreement of image and outline and their pollution of one another's meaning, formal relations of scale, figure and ground, the materiality of the paper and cuts, and the sense of one's proximity to the image in a space, all call upon the presence of our own subjectivity and body. The experience of looking at an image, apprehending and oscillating between meanings,





not only demands the presence of our physical body, standing, sitting or reclining before it, but calls our sense of our body into question, as we know it through a specular image.

The idea of a specular image, as offered in psychoanalytic theory, names a kind of gestalt, or a sense of a whole thing made up of parts; in this case it is the sense of our own unified physical self as we see it reflected back to us by the world, in a mirror reflection or in the imitative gestures of others around us. Most importantly, it is an image from which we, beginning as infants, construct our ego. Jacques Lacan refers to it as an image that completely captivates us, such that we continually project an image of our body onto other objects in the world, seeking to locate our own form within things and images, and in part, accounting for our ability to infer the form of a body from fragments or an outline.

The cutouts therefore reflect our image back to us as plurality: as a sexual body; as a body composed of, or continuous with, elements of the non-human; as a body that is both penetrating and penetrable; as a body filled with atmospheres and material of affect, emotion and sentiment; as a body that is socially and politically defined. Similarly, they suggest that looking is a subjective function in that our experience of an artwork engages our ongoing ego maintenance—seeking confirmation, identification with and differentiation from what surrounds us, and potentially intervening in the organization of our self.

It is on this level of aesthetic experience that a dialectic of expectation/destabilization operates in Young's cutouts. As we are pulled into this image of bodies hollowed out and opened up, we, as viewers, participate in constructing a new body—a discursive body, a text—within each cutout and across them

Ashley Hunt is an artist living in Los Angeles who also writes, teaches, likes to grow vegetables and play tug-o-war with Izzy. Other writing can be found in *Art Journal* ('07), the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* ('07), and *Re-Thinking Marxism* ('06). www.ashleyhuntwork.net

as a body of work. Throughout them, the erotic charge of their sexuality remains intact, while it is simultaneously reduced to one mundane texture among many along a horizon of signifying fields: nature, adventure, exoticism, the sublime, culture, sexuality and politics. As a photographer's framing of a nude body or a blowjob shares the same photographic syntax that delivers a mountainside or a bug on a leaf, the cutouts are not about porn per se, but about signifying regimes born of photographic and mass media convention, conventions bound up with our production as subjects. Overlapping and inhabiting one another, they intrude upon us so that we find ourselves already positioned, already oriented in our desires. Whether used to sell porn, travel, nature or yoga pants, to induce patriotism or advertise war-making, the conventions of images organize not only our vision but attempt to organize us — our interest, identification and curiosity.

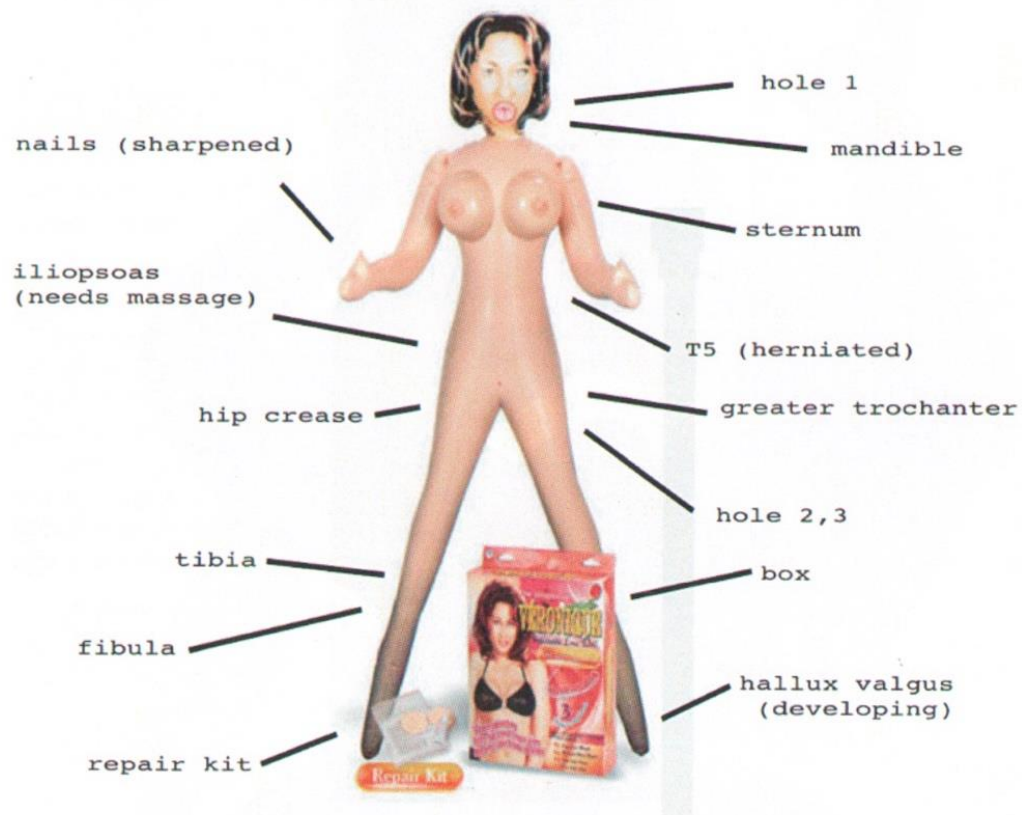
If Young's cutouts are themselves pornographic, it is not because they speak explicitly of sex, but because they speak of things that are not to be spoken in our cultural moment: queering, in Ulrike Müller's terms, the classifications that make our categories of knowledge stable and safe; liberating the mess of our erotic desires from mechanisms that contemporary pornography, moralist-politics, normative gender and sexual codes attempt to conform, prohibit and channel—offering us instead a body unfolded into geology or a cosmos, a mountain, ocean or a mess of leaves, a horny airplane, a rock to get fucked by and to fuck.



Young Chung, Mountain and Stream (Wrestling)



the indexical (3-holed) veronique



Taisha Paggett does performance. Taisha does raw foods. Taisha does gardening. Taisha does yoga. Taisha does itch.



Dirty Martini shot at the Menlo Park mall photo studio in New Jersey

Miss Dirty Martini, Miss Exotic World 2004, is one of the most recognized names in new burlesque. In her native Manhattan, Miss Martini spearheaded the new burlesque revolution with her bawdy humor, over the top physique and classical dance training in cabaret venues such as The Slipper Room, the critically acclaimed VaVaVoom Room, The Supper Club, and Joe's Pub. She has been featured in venues as diverse as Carnegie Hall and Broadway Bares to infamous New York City drag clubs where she has been awarded a Glammy for her performances. Visit her online at MissDirtyMartini.com



I care more about how gesture/movement is influenced by an embodied presence, action and fixation on the gut and cunt of a person.



Julie Tolentino, Being the Disco Ball performance at The Cock, NYC

Since 1998, **Julie Tolentino** has created intimate movement-based installations including her solo time-based performances and endurance events integrating audio soundscapes. She has also performed with David Rousseve/REALITY, Ron Athey, Ibrahim Quarishi, Helen Paris and Leslie Hill, Margarita Guergue, Amy Pivar, Ori Flomin, Rob Roth and others. Julie appeared in Red Hot and Blue's "Safe Sex is Hot Sex" poster, Gran Fury's national bus campaign "Kissing Doesn't Kill", Madonna's SEX Book, and numerous other films and music videos. She was original founder and creator of the NY Clit Club. Julie is certified in Thai Medical Massage and is a Watsu® practitioner. She and Athey co-created PRAXIS MOHAVE BOOTCAMP for Performance Artists in 2008. She lives between Joshua Tree, CA and New York City.



Gregory Barnett photo by Mathu Andersen



Keith Hennessy contemplating choreographic possibilities

Worrying Over One Little Crotch Shot photo by Sara Wookey



OUT WITH IT!

CHOREOCRACY: Rule of choreographers and producers of dance, establishing and institutionalizing social roles, and illuminating race and class structures through various cultural techniques of the body.

Entangled in the history of Western concert and commercial dance is a bureaucracy that governs bodies, and establishes other bodily-ness that reflects overt hetero-normative representations of both women and men. Frequently/Chronically, men and women are taught different choreography that illuminates social differences between them. The women tend to be the subjects/objects of the male gaze whereas the men dancers are often choreographed to physically dominate the women through various supports, lifts and tight grips. This gendered choreography keeps control of the women while simultaneously showing them off: marginal positioning that exploits women and their various bodily assets. Though the producer/director/choreographer may be man or woman, gay or straight, a heterosexist agenda is mandatory in order for the dancing to remain accessible to a mainstream audience; one that fears weak men, which is both sexist and homophobic. This normalization of heterosexual representation within dance pins women further into their already marginalized role in society while submerging/repressing queer representation.

As a gay man, a participant/creator of experimental dance theater, and former film and television dancer, I feel it necessary to share my experiences on this most important topic. Never in my career have I been asked by a producer, director or choreographer to be my gay self on stage or for the camera. Rarely have I ever partnered a man that wasn't about strength or competition. Rarely have I partnered a woman that didn't involve a sexual subtext. I have been asked to "butch it up" in almost every production I have participated in, with the exception of my own academic and choreographic projects. I don't consider myself to be the most flamboyant gay, but I definitely do not censor my behavior to conform to oppressive macho-masculine codes. I came out of the closet a long time ago,

joel smith

and I detest being asked to step back in. I abhor the thought of the countless gay youth who are constantly forced to closet themselves for mainstream dance productions. Many people ask me if I watch the television show, *So You Think You Can Dance*, and I quickly respond, "Yes, but I hate it." The show claims to be looking to crown "America's Favorite Dancer"—the most well rounded technician of dance styles. And yes, these dancers are extraordinary. Unfortunately, contrary to popular opinion, the show promotes an unhealthy representation of what constitutes appropriate technique and acceptable social behavior. From "expert" judges with seemingly diverse identities and backgrounds, the mass population learns about "successful dancing" through an onslaught of jumbled theory, malapropisms and biased opinions. Viewers at home learn how to be a masculine, butch and take-charge man, a sexy, objectified and emotionally vulnerable woman, and an exotic, authentic and ghettoized person of color. Viewers also learn that modern dance is weird and indescribable, that Latin dance is sexy, Ballroom is elegant and classy, Hip Hop is a man's sport, and that ballet is the epitome of all dance forms, and the measure of "good technique." We also learn that if you want to make it in the commercial dance industry you have to keep your mouth shut and not question authority.

What irks me the most about this show is that the male dancers are criticized when being too passive, feminine, detached or flamboyant, which we all know is code for gay, gay, gay and more gay. Because these men are always partnering women, they are asked/told (how) to be the man in the relationship ... which is accompanied by words like, strong, aggressive, power, dominate and control. So what does this make the woman?



She is often praised for being beautiful and sexy, held to a higher standard of "technique" than the men, and she is inevitably criticized for being too dominant when not properly taking her male partner's lead. She must be passive, powerless and nothing more than an object for a male spectator's gaze. The bottom line is there's a definite social role that men and women are always required to play when on stage together in this type of mainstream production, even when they are gay in real life. The woman can never appear to be in control and the man can never appear to be submissive or passive. This is institutionalized homophobia and sexism at its best.

We might expect all of this from Hollywood and its commercial dance productions, however this type of bureaucratic nah nah exists in concert dance as well. My expectations are much higher though, and therefore my critiques much stronger, when viewing concerts of a contemporary milieu. To represent men and women in a smart, provocative and democratic way, the choreographer has to incorporate the following: the dancers must be equal in their expressive potential, equal in their power plays, and equal in their explicitness. Without this critical consciousness, the dance falls short of being responsible. This type of misstep in dance making is extraordinarily prevalent in collegiate dance departments. I have been a college professor in southern California for the last seven years. With this privilege comes the invitation to participate in the American College Dance Festival, held annually in several locations across the country. College dance programs are invited to bring a handful of their students to learn from master teachers, both in the dance studio and on stage. For four days, festival participants witness over one hundred dance pieces hand crafted for adjudication by a select group of prominent artists in the field. Some of these dances are quite smart, but the majority of them fall victim to what I have described about SYTYCD. From contact partnering to ways of looking, women and men are often directed into unwarranted sexually suggestive and explicit positions, conjuring notions of desire and ultimately displays of gendered differentials in power. Arms outreaching, mouths cooing and pelvises scoopin' and swayin', bodies cavort and contort into awkward and unnecessary romantic representations that normally end in a dramatic exit, lift, drop or embrace that signifies love, loss, sadness and if you're lucky, penetration. This type of choreographic penetration

illuminates the real life sexual roles between men and women that inevitably establish/indoctrinate/perpetuate gender inequities. These performances chronically exhibit dishonest and unwarranted representations of straightness or heterosexual attraction. This dishonesty becomes very clear when gay men attempt to be more masculine than they practice in their everyday lives—they often fail quite miserably. The dancer's performances are so clearly contrived, I wonder why it's being made in the first place.

Given my experience as a teacher, my own sexual orientation, and my interest in queer and gender studies, my ability to identify queer dancers is quite astute. By the time most of them get to college they are already out or are contemplating the process of coming out. I can say with confidence that the majority of the male dancers in these college programs are gay. So you can imagine my irreverent behavior and often physically contorted responses to their performances on stage as straight-acting men, when not a few hours earlier they were sashaying and hitting it like no other fierce queen could in the dance studio. This type of uncensored flamboyant expression typically exists in my jazz classes, and sometimes in my modern classes. The classroom is a safe haven for students to be able to express fully their own identities and desires, yet the stage becomes a place to pack all of that away so as not to threaten the audience with unacceptable gay behavior. I think it's fine to be able to play multiple facets of one's self, from masculine to feminine, character to abstract, however when the work always constructs a heterosexual relationship for the sake of playing it safe for consumer satisfaction, I have to put my foot down.

I recently attended (unspecified dance concert) in (unspecified southern California city) and was pleasantly surprised to see the young teenage male dancers used in a manner that highlighted their dancing abilities, rather than what was in their pants. With the boys being outnumbered by girls 15-to-1, I expected they would have been asked to partner all of the women in a way that would identify them, or code them, as THE MEN in the concert. I was impressed with the choreographer's choice, for the most part, to stay away from the aforementioned heterosexist agenda. I was so excited after the piece had ended I felt compelled to share my response with the person sitting next to me ... whom I happen to know from the LA dance community. I turned to (unspecified prominent dance maker from LA who also happens to be on faculty at a very prominent college) and said, "Gosh, I am so excited these boys were used well ..." and before I had a chance to finish my thought, (unspecified prominent dance maker from LA who also happens to be on faculty at a very prominent college) said, "Yeah, it's great that they were real men. They were masculine. They were strong. I'm glad they weren't...."

Just when the excitement of witnessing a dance with responsible choreographic representations was beginning to sink in, I was reminded that the problem is larger than just the choreographers. This person sitting next to me happened to be a woman. My throat swelled in that moment and a sigh of sadness and steam streamed out of my nose. This is a woman and college professor vomiting oppressive language and I would bet my life that she was completely unaware of what she was saying. It turns out she too needs her men to be straight in order for them to be powerful. She too enjoys looking at masculine men. She too actively views men and women through the male gaze. She too, is the problem.

The multi racial/ethnic/gendered/queer judges on "So You Think You Can Dance" are the problem. The college professors/choreographers who are teaching thousands of students across the country how to be men and women are the problem. All of us in the dance world are responsible for perpetuating the hegemony of heteronormativity. Yet why are we not aware of these problematic modes of production? What are we doing? What values are we teaching?

Open your eyes people. It's right in front of your face.

Joel Smith received an MFA for Experimental Choreography from UC Riverside in 2004 and a BA in Studio Art and Theater Design from UC Davis in 2000. He is co-Artistic director of casebolt and smith with partner Liz Casebolt and has presented choreography around the country including The Joyce Soho in New York City, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, CounterPulse in San Francisco, Saint Joseph Ballet in Santa Ana, Tempe Center for the Arts and the Mesa Arts Complex in Arizona. He was named one of LA's "Finest" contemporary male dancers by Dance Spirit Magazine in 2005. He is on faculty at Scripps College in Claremont and was recently appointed a full time, visiting Assistant Professor at Scripps for the 2008-2009 school year. Please visit caseboltandsmith.com for more info.



meg wolfe

HELLO. MY NAME IS LOLA ANA VALDEZ.

I've decided to change my name. Because I'm going to be wearing a unitard in a video project. So "Lola," in honor of the YouTube-circulating, pubescent Lola Perazzo, seen circa 1985 dancing her heart out to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" in a red unitard, white jazz shoes and full metal headgear. "Ana Valdez" I found on an empty manila folder in a dusty old file cabinet I used in a recent video.

I am assuming names, from real people, in fictional circumstances. I am disappearing myself.

I decided to dance in this video because I'm getting paid well to do so. The artist doing this project is a man of stature in the conceptual art world, stature enough to hire me and several of my friends, all talented dancers/artists in our own right, none of whom would don a unitard if our own art depended on it.

We joked about it, how kitsch it is. Then, on the first day of rehearsals, we found out that instead of a unitard, we will be wearing a "flesh-tone" leotard. And one of our moves is a crotch-flashing leg split on our backs. Eight women in a circle, with a wide-angle camera overhead.

I voted myself group spokesperson to ask if we can adjust this particular move. I've never had a bikini wax in my life and don't intend to start now. I have a lot of pubic hair. This is why my career as a go-go dancer never took off.... And here I am in a modern-dance video project worrying over one little crotch shot. If this were a porn video, that's what I'd be getting paid for; if it were a feminist critique of the visibility of female crotches in dance, I wouldn't really care. I'd flash away. But I'm feeling belligerent that my need to make a little money has put me in the position of contemplating a bikini wax for this man's work.

On the flip side, I'm having fun with this smart group of women, doing a Busby Berkeley-style dance, all floating arms and loop-de-loop fluff. We're taking a break from our own work to do this project, so we can pay our rent. We're dancing. We're laughing a lot. I'm wafting around the room with a bunch of beautiful chiffon-winged women. It almost makes me forget the price of gas, wars, the election. I feel like a six-year old being a butterfly.

Except for my hairy bush.

Independent agitator **Meg Wolfe** is the founder/curator of the Anatomy Riot performance series, co-editor of *itch* journal, and founder of the DANCEbank master-class series. She has presented her own choreography on the west coast since 2003; NYC and internationally since 1990. www.myspace.com/dancemegwolfe

maria laws karen bernard

jess curtis

REMOVED EXPOSURE

Removed Exposure invites audiences to question their perceptions of aging women. Essentially a meditation on looking, it incorporates the audience's active gaze. With my back toward the audience I hold a small mirror and expose parts of my body: a calf muscle, a shoulder, a hip. The audience can see all of my body on stage, yet "I"/my eyes can be seen only by reflection. Through a calculated series of studied poses and manipulation of the mirror, audience members join my image in the mirror, thus dissolving the performer-spectator binary. The mirror becomes a dressed down version of a time machine through which I speak to a thinner self, a younger self and a childless self. Using seemingly disembodied bytes of text, dry wit and sparse commentary on motherhood, artistry and sensuality, I embody a reminiscing mother and an ageless, erotic dancer. Movement choices polarize and parody popular culture notions of female beauty by juxtaposing these against the aging, usually invisible, female body that performs them.



Removed Exposure photo by Sheilagh O'Leary

Karen Bernard is an eclectic creator and solo performer who has appeared in such diverse settings as Captain Beefheart's Magical Band British tour at the Royal Albert Hall and in conceptual live performance with artist David Tremlett at the Tate Gallery. She has been produced at numerous venues in New York City including several full-length concerts of her work at Dia Center for the Arts and at The Kitchen, Danspace at St. Mark's Church and Dance Theater Workshop. She has performed, taught and lectured throughout the United States, Canada and abroad. In 2005 she co-published a handmade book *Removed Exposure*, in collaboration with Montréal book artist Gray Fraser/Production Gray. She was a Movement Research Resident Artist and received a BAX10 award for the founding and development of New Dance Alliance's Performance Mix Festival. www.newdancealliance.org



eva yaa asantewaa

IN GOOD KILTER

I've admired Janessa Clark and Courtney Jo Drasner's vibrant and smart performances with Gina Gibney Dance but had never seen Clark's own choreography prior to last night's presentation by Janessa Clark/KILTERBOX (www.kilterbox.org/company.html), part of the queer-forward HOT! Festival (www.hot.dixonplace.org) at Dixon Place.

Clark and Drasner—two stunningly beautiful women—performed part of a 2006 duet called (inner)views I-IV, in which they prowled DP's living room space dressed and preening like go-go girls, wriggling their tongues at us, toying with themselves and each other, and embodying the straight-male fantasy of what it means to be a lesbian. Why, they were close enough for a lap dance and, at one point, Clark bent down and gave one woman in a front seat a lingering smooch.

With bodies expressly for display, the two supercharged Barbie dolls engaged in rapid fire sensual interactions that were the rough equivalent of stuffing your mouth with as much candy as possible and downing it in one gulp. While they were at it, a video showed real-life dykes talking about their real lives. (One of them so real, I know her—an old friend I haven't seen in what must be years.) Their remarks about experiences of coming out or being targeted by homophobes, of self-determined identity and assured self-regard are intimate and reveal humanity and vulnerability. Clark's on to something, I think, since she diverts our attention from the hotties with this video and, often—at least for me—the video won.

Ask yourself: What would you rather watch? Yes, the dancers are hot. (And how often does most contemporary dance let itself get away with that without politely covering up the fact that watching any dancer express him/herself via the body is... um... inherently voyeuristic?) But the women in the video are appealing. They're probably more like yourself, even if you're not female. Maybe even if you're a straight male... honest one. So that's where your eyes go. Funny, isn't it?

Since 1976, **Eva Yaa Asantewaa** has worked as a critic and journalist specializing in dance and performance, appearing in *Dance Magazine*, *Soho News*, *The Village Voice*, and *Gay City News*, among other publications. Her creative writing has been published in various journals and anthologies, including *An Eye for An Eye Makes the Whole World Blind: Poets on 9/11* (Regent Press), *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity* (Redbone Press), and *Voices Rising: Celebrating 20 Years of Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writing* (Redbone Press). Eva blogs about dance at InfiniteBody.com, from which this review is reprinted.

maria francesca scaroni & jess curtis

THE SYMMETRY PROJECT

Si notre corps magnifie la vie et ses possibilités infinies, il proclame en même temps et avec la même intensité, notre mort future et notre finitude essentielle.

(If our body magnifies life and its infinite possibilities, it proclaims at the the same time and with the same intensity, our future death and our essential finiteness.) — Philosopher Michel Bernard

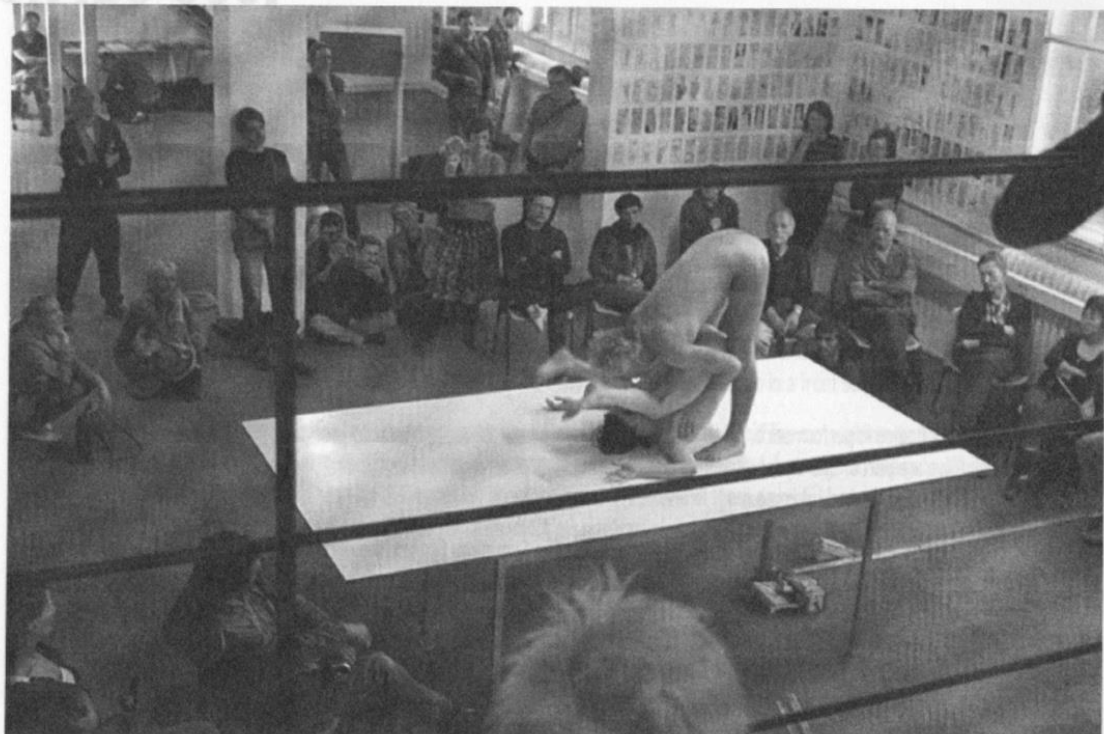
As bodies in performance, either the everyday performance of social interactions or performance on a stage, we are part of this discourse on the body: dealing with its strength and its vulnerability, we approach the same metaphysical issue.

Over the last three years we have been developing The Symmetry Project, a mutable performance/installation/media project based in a symmetrical (left/right homologous) movement practice that becomes a lens whose distortion, and/or focus, yields insight into a variety of physical, aesthetic, social, and ethical realities.

The Symmetry Project is a journey through perception. Two naked bodies interact through a highly structured improvisational score, that of moving symmetrically, relative to themselves or to each other. Situated in a constricted site, a space of temporary "habitus," the two bodies are constantly tuning, reformulating the perception of the self and of the other. In the sharing of a central axis, spine, mouth, genitals, face, and anus reveal their interconnectedness and centrality in embodied experience. Limbs entangle and intertwine creating an inter-corporeal kaleidoscope of flesh. A kind of über-intimacy develops, going far beyond sexuality into a kind of communal biology, a symbiotic sensory field. Blending, merging, and then again differentiating, the two become "unfinished entities"—as Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault refer to the body—improvising new habits, "perceiving the possible." Exploring and manipulating our own and the viewer's perception, we reveal the body's awkwardness, its monstrosity, its potential failure and finiteness at the same time as we create space for the possibility of the unknown, the wondrous, the ecstatic, the infinite.

In this project we force the dislocation of our physical investigations from a traditional dance/theatrical context into a variety of presentational contexts, including photo and video media, "live art" performance installations in galleries, the Internet, public sites and performance in theatrical contexts, thereby reframing the work and affording viewers the possibility to see the body, and its metaphorical possibilities, through different filters, with different types of attention, expectation and association.





Maria Francesca Scaroni and Jess Curtis performing *The Symmetry Project (Study #6)* as part of the exhibition *liebe usw* at tmp.deluxe temporary space for art & media in Berlin. Table installation and photo by Ricarda Mieth

Maria Francesca Scaroni and Jess Curtis have worked together since 2004, creating movement-based performances with *Gravity* in Berlin and San Francisco. They bring together information from diverse practices including contemporary dance, contact improvisation, performance art, somatics and critical/practical theory. Collaborating with a variety of other artists including composer/contrabassist Klaus Janek, composer Sheldon B. Smith, video artists Regina Teichs, and Kwame Braun, installation artist Ricarda Mieth and photographer Sven Hagolani they have presented a variety of *Symmetry Studies* in the last three years in Berlin, San Francisco, Budapest, Cluj Romania, Copenhagen, and Stolzenhagen, Germany. They are continuing to develop and present *The Symmetry Project* and will present three culminating events in San Francisco in Spring 2009. www.jesscurtisgravity.org

gregory barnett

STRIPPING

WHAT COLOR ARE MY EYES!!?
(SCREAMED WHILE SHAKING MY PENIS AT YOU)

Where do I even start?

PENIS

PENIS

PENIS

VAGINA

VAGINA

VAGINA

ASSHOLE, TIT, CUM ON MY FACE.

...ok, I said it, now let's move on together.

I'm naked. A lot.

I perform sex stuff. A lot (this is an intentionally and necessarily vague statement).

I am a whore in many respects. (notice my lack of shame)

Contrary to popular belief, I am not totally fixated on actual "sex." I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm incredibly open about wanting a good fuck or choking/spanking/blowjob/the list goes on ... the same way I am open about craving Indian food or worrying about my constantly shifting waistline. I've never been good at filtering information from my brain to my mouth. I'm going to go ahead and believe this is a good thing.

Our bodies were literally made to fuck, so we can't desexualize ourselves ... but we can get past, or look at, sex as a metaphor and not take it so literally/seriously when it's presented to us onstage or otherwise.

My mom told me when I was young that God itself made us horny, God gave us these urges because people are lazy. If we didn't get hungry ... we wouldn't eat. If we didn't get randy ... we wouldn't fuck, and there goes humanity in one generation.

I like to feel that when I sit on your lap and my dick's on your thigh, and you realize we can both be ok with this, it might loosen you up a little. When I stick a candle up my ass, or drink a goblet full of audience spit, or have my company and myself crawl across all of you jokingly screaming cliché love-isms ... it might just calm you the fuck down.





I'm not trying to turn you on. I'm not trying to shock you. I'm not even necessarily trying to get you thinking about sex itself. I'm trying to get you over your apprehension so we can laugh a little more and move on together.

I'm not stupid. When a 26 year-old naked boy is on all fours with his bare asshole in the air and is fucking the floor ... a couple of you are going to go home and jerk off about I don't even know what. I can't control this, and it doesn't bother me. But what really makes me happy—what really makes me feel like maybe I'm doing something good and helpful and not just lying to myself about all this universal acceptance/unbearable-lightness-of-being bullshit I repeat to myself as a mantra—is when I'm naked and vulnerable and spread across the stage, editing nothing, and the adorable 80 year-old grandmother in the front row is looking back at me with an informed smile while nodding her head. What gets me giddy is when I watch Cricket or Kate straddle an audience member while naked, and they are so honest and giving and open while doing so that this person can't objectify them because they're too busy listening to whatever else the girls' hearts have to say.

I like when your shoulders relax a little more, I like when you get past your inhibitions, I like when you smile and accept a little more of both yourself and me. Let's try to agree to love our (and each other's) dicks and cunts and assholes the same way we appreciate our (and each other's) hearts, voices, and minds. Stop dividing shit up.

So in closing, and let's be honest about this ... who wants to fuck?

Gregory Barnett founded DANCEGOOD.DAMNIT!!! in 2006 as part of an ongoing performing experiment. He is a grower not a show-er, likes being choked or spit on during sex sometimes, is working to overcome his gag reflex, and reads to children. Gregory tries not to overlook the inherent beauty and grace that exists in everything (kali ma).

STRIPPING

It seems to me that, by definition, stripping is about getting to bare essentials determined by your need—or someone else's. There is stripping for money, stripping for pleasure, stripping for sex. There are also strip-searches, stripping down, and being stripped of identity, property, civic life, sentiency. Being watched as a dancer or performer in a market economy evokes a confluence of these possibilities, across a continuum of meanings. Stripping. For pleasure. For cash.

Dancing-for-money (and here I am referencing Tina Turner's song) is part of the erotic trap of ontology, epistemology, and that sticky project of commodifying oneself (supply, demand)—or said a little differently, being in the world. Roland Barthes has written eloquently about the complexities of performance and image in Camera Lucida, in the testimony of loss he offers when looking at a photograph of his mother. Barthes considers what it means to be photographed, and more generally about the photograph in relation to the constitution of the subject and subjectivity. Barthes sets the stage for understanding the kinds of negotiations we inhabit as performers, audience members, writers, and other consumer-participants in erotic dance practices: we are images; we think in images; we produce images to feel sexually charged.

It is all a matter of layers, exchanges, balancing tender (in both senses of the word) with philosophies about love, personal rights, and the State.

Let's see if I can do that statement any justice.

I stripped for the first time at a small birthday party for a vivacious femme who was adored by her butch and gender-queer friends. It was 1999 or 2000, queer Bay Area. The San Francisco cartoonist Kris Kovick, also known as "the unofficial mayor of Bernal Heights," had arranged the line-up of butch erotic acts that were selected to perform surprise numbers throughout the night. I was told to arrive to the private entrance of the house, knock and wait for an escort. When the timing was right, I would be brought into party central and would fall into action. Kovick offered \$100 for my participation, which I accepted happily. Being paid for what often was unpaid work—the trade-off of being interested in an art form, but not yet

committing a full-time artistic career to it—hanging out with new queer friends, and doing my best strip to the Tom Jones song I had selected sounded like a fine alternative for the sleepy bicycle town in which I lived.

"None of the butches I know will do it," said this friend of mine who had invited me to participate. This was true. There were plenty of femme women in the radical sex community then who worked at the Lusty Lady, at Osento, or did any number of sex work practices to earn money. And then there were the immigrant and poor women who worked in the sex industry because they had limited choices for employment. Their conditions were hardly similar to those of the artists I knew. Though I have no idea, I doubt that they were able to engage in the same framework of pleasure-art-culture making-political activism that drove my participation in politically inflected erotic dance.

Some glamorized their jobs, likely, and many did not. Work was work, and though these choices may have been ways of exploring gender and sexual identities or making the lemonade out of lemons, dancing, doing phone sex, entertaining as go-go dancers and drag performers all involved a certain degree of sexual labor—for money—and that combination of drives produced ... well, someone with a strong Marxian framework would be able to take over here. But one can say that work itself is a problematic. And when it becomes a labor of the body—naked or explicitly erotic—this is like adding a giant fish into a little home aquarium. One need be attentive to the displacement of resources.

But butches dancing, butches stripping? What were the models for us? How could we produce the phallus in such a context? What was the dancery language for expressing jouissance pour la femme, in front of a bunch of other butches who themselves were grateful-ambivalent about their own (naked) bodies, and thus grateful-ambivalent about yours on the stage in front of them?

The friend who had invited me—a handsome butch if there ever was one; an intellectual who had gone to law school, dropped out, and become a full-time organic farmer—was herself able to laugh about how wonderful it would be to surprise the birthday girl





with any number of butches teasing the lines between public and private, towards the goal of giving pleasure. But whose excitement about stripping matched their own ability to expose themselves, and why?

Cross-dressing had become a regular part of my performance life. The goal was to satirize masculine power through re-representing male stereotypes on my body, and to touch the erotic potential of a room full of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and gender-benders, a.k.a. deviants. During the 1990s in the Bay, cathecting queer pride and visibility in the names of AIDS activism, healthcare change, and radical sexualities and understandings of gender + performance all made for active aesthetic partying. That meant a lot of underwear and throwing of clothes around. It meant there was more room to dance.

Gran Fury's national bus panel campaign *Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do* donned the Market Street area. There were Queer Nation stickers all over—neon orange, green, yellow with sayings such as "Silence=Death," "Queers Bash Back," and all sorts of queer turns of phrase bespeaking the identity aesthetics and fuck-you politics of the times. With all this sex and visibility happening, a radical sex community on both sides of the Bay officially formed. I found it at the

Tania Hammidi is completing a doctorate in dance history and theory at UC Riverside. Her focus on costume and performance investigates the role of the material in choreography, studio exploration, and the production of the racist state. She currently is a teaching assistant in media studies and teaches the class "Theories of Innovation" regularly at the Southern California Institute of Architecture. Tania was raised in San Diego, France, and Denmark, spent twelve years in Yolo County, Cali, and presently lives in the Inland Empire. She is fond of tomatoes and basil.

Bearded Lady, BUILT, and walking down 16th Street, right on Valencia or Mission, stumbling into friends.

But the party was really what mattered: it set the tone for what was expected of me.

What a beautiful smile. The music is on, Tom Jones is crooning. Incoming. How to get from the entrance to her chair? Quickly synch into my own time. Turn her around. Straddle her. Hey baby, it's your birthday. Stand back up, pull off first layer. Keep singing the lyrics, lip-synching. She has begun to sing with me! New negotiations. What matters in these moments are what the women—or throng of people—at the other end of the erotic stick want in the play of desire and illusion. Is she or are they kind and playful? Do they demand the evidence of sexual prowess, demand when you give it up? What is the discursive that substantiates erotic spectacle?

This question gets us back to the flip side of the casual pleasures and safe erotic play implied by a drag king performance, or a butch strip show, or the exchanges of phallic production between butch and femme dance partners. On the other side of my warm recollections are the histories of State violence landed upon queer subjects. While some may feel way beyond the strip search, I offer disbelief. And it is the State that gets paid for that.

PUSSY ART

NIKI DE ST. PHALLE, HON-EN-KATEDRAL (SHE-A CATHEDRAL), 1966

Moderna Museet, Stockholm (collaboration with Tinguely & Ultvedt). 100,000 people walked through the soft-sculpture vagina of one of de St. Phalle's Nana sculptures. A playful/subversive artist, de St. Phalle intentionally challenged European art history's role for women as passive objects of desire for male artists. She filled galleries, museums, and public sites with giant females, round and colorful. Inflatable replicas of her nanas are available throughout France. By contrast, de St. Phalle's Nanas were pre-dated by a series of Shooting Paintings, in which she would shoot at all white assemblages containing paint that would splatter and drip when shot at. She said of them: "In 1961, I shot at Papa, at all men, at important men, fat men, men, my brother, society, the church, the convent, school, my family, my mother...." I haven't had a direct experience of this work, but because it predates the others by ten years, I wanted to include it here.

I first saw hon-en-katedral in an art historical comparison to Courbet's *Origin of the World* (*L'Origine du Monde*, 1866). Painted for a private collector as a kind of renaissance porn, Courbet gives us a lavishly painted, oil on canvas, crotch shot. A sprawled naked woman, breasts, belly and thighs, head and arms covered with a sheet, with all the focus, through a mastery of light and perspective, on her bushy vulva, lips parted. When I went to view it at the Musée d'Orsay, I tried my best to mask my porn viewing face with my art viewing face, didn't succeed, and instead came to see it three times during that one visit to the museum, a very different kind of viewer participation than that inspired by Niki de St. Phalle.

keith hennessy

MEMORIES AND ANECDOTES OF ORIFICE/OBJECT ART

CAROLEE SCHNEEMAN, INTERIOR SCROLL, 1975

Ahh the power of a photograph! Many times in many contexts I have seen the photo of Schneeman on the table, naked and mud-painted, a long umbilical-like cord extending loosely from her vagina to hands. I first saw it in the mid or late 80's after I was already identifying as a performance artist engaged with ritual, body art, the body as text or source of text. I remember knowing that it was an important and pioneering work but I don't remember anything else. Just the image. I recognized it as a ritual image, as a trance performance, as feminist and radical action. I'm pretty sure that I knew the first time that I saw it that I would never forget it. And I was attracted and attached to this photo, to this image. The risk, the sex, the shock, the ritual paint, were immediate and ongoing inspirations.

When I searched the web recently for the photo, I find a different pic, full frontal as opposed to the diagonal I remember. And there is a watering can next to her. What else happened in that performance? www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit6-10-16.asp www.caroleeschneemann.com/interiorscroll.html

ANNIE SPRINKLE, PUBLIC CERVIX ANNOUNCEMENT

The female cervix demystified. Premiered in the late '80s and then performed as part of *Post-Porn Modernist* (1990-1995) in theaters and performance spaces internationally. www.anniesprinkle.org

... and since I seem to be working by decade, here's another memorable pussy performance from the '90s:





**OSSEUS LABYRINT,
848 COMMUNITY SPACE**

Osseus Labyrinth is a butoh and film duet of Hannah Sim and Mark Steger which performed around SF before moving to LA. A strange and almost violent approach to butoh-inspired dance and performance, they usually performed naked and shaved everywhere. In one performance Hannah and Nao Bustamante slowly bent their legs in a wide second position, revealing some kind of tale extending from their vaginas. With breathing, muscle contractions and a little help from their own hands, they each birthed a beet, long root intact. Amazing body control and adventure. www.osseuslabyrinth.net

BUTT AND BUTTHOLE ART

Friends and colleagues and a couple of strangers

**CHESTER MAINARD, BODY ELECTRIC
SCHOOL OF EROTIC SPIRITUALITY,
1990-PRESENT**

Chester was known as the avatar of the asshole. He began his research as a pelvic model for doctor and nurse exams, educating health care professionals on how to penetrate an anus for tests. For years he worked for Body Electric, teaching massage and sexual health, specializing in ass and anus massage, inside and out. He combined this work with dedicated research in Jungian psychology, developing theories clarifying the role of the anus in shame and shadow, especially but not exclusively with relevance to gay men's anal pleasure and health. Chester was a teacher/inspiration for AA Bronson. www.bodyelectric.org

**AA BRONSON,
AABRONSON*HEALER, 2002-2005**

AA Bronson, surviving member of the Canadian collaborative art team General Idea, was engaged in a conceptual project sourced in his healing practice. Bronson says: "Butt massage is advanced work. The muscles of the anus hold the most deep-seated of our traumas, our shadow selves, all that we want to hide. With butt massage we release the most closed-down energy, which is often our greatest strength." www.aabronson.com

**SF BUFFOONS, DIVIDED WE FALL,
JON SIMS CENTER FOR THE ARTS,
2003-05**

A local buffoon company that rips at the polite masks and scabs of American culture and then laughingly slips and slides in the resulting river of blood. Divided We Fall features a scene with an endless scarf pulled from the butt of one of the female clowns. Makes references to both the classic clown gag (an endless streamer from the pocket or mouth) and Schneeman's Interior Scroll. I directly quoted/appropriated in my An Us public site action... although I had four streamers.

**CURTIS YORK, HIGHWAYS PERFORMANCE
SPACE, SANTA MONICA, EARLY 1990s**

York, raised Mormon in Salt Lake City, studied with performance pioneer Rachel Rosenthal in L.A. and made a series of provocative political satires of solo and small group performance. In one performance—I think he played Reagan as Hitler—York gave himself an enema on stage, squeezing (all-American) apple pie filling up his butt, and then shitting it onto an American flag. I have thought many times about this image, this performance, the memory of the performance, and use it as an anchor to remember Curtis, who died of AIDS in the late '90s.

**SETH EISEN, BODY OF FREE RADICALS,
848 COMMUNITY SPACE, 2002**

While going through cancer treatments Eisen often photographed and/or drew his poops, charting the effects of the treatment. www.eyezen.org

**HARRY DODGE, VARIETY OF MEDIA AND
EXHIBITION SPACES, 1995-2005**

Dodge has done several series, from simple line drawings of anuses to turd-like sculptures and references to turds in two- and three-dimensional projects. Dodge's work is whimsical and mysterious, accessible yet deeply considered.

RON ATHEY, SOLAR ANUS, 1999

Athey was raised Pentecostal and became a performance artist within the SM punk and drag spectacles of L.A.'s Club Fuck. Since the early 90's he has toured the world and taught at UCLA. I see Ron on his knees. Shaved ass fully spread. The geometric sun tattoo radiating from asshole makes the w/whole seem larger and more active than expected. When something is inserted I expect it. This solar ass looks normal only when penetrated. Bataille's Solar Anus was a part of a virginal girl. Athey reclaims virgin and girl as his experienced ass is ritually entered, first time/every time.

Ron's first theatrical performance (a reenactment of Jesus throwing the money changers from the temple) involved intense sensory deprivation (ears plugged with cotton then sealed with dripping wax) as well as sensory overload, piercing needles in a periphery around his head for a crown of thorns... I facilitated the tense post-show discussion. It was electric and forever memorable.

OHN GREYSON, ZERO PATIENCE, 1993

AIDS musical film, with singing butt-holes via animated costumes, about Patient Zero who allegedly brought AIDS from Africa to North America. (Similarly, my project American Tweaker looks at the New York man who allegedly has Super HIV, a new strain of HIV resistant to all known anti-virals and protease inhibitors.) An online review says, "This is an extremely strange musical recounting the AIDS crisis. Parts of it are very well done; though I think I can live the rest of my life without ever seeing two assholes (literally) singing." www.queerhorror.com/ghost/items/199.html

JIM E SPARKLEPANTS, 2004

Jim e sings homemade songs that would be ironic coming from anyone else. Super vulnerable, almost naive, personal lyrics including tributes to his asshole, the ask-for-what-you-want song, I Want You To Fuck Me Lovingly plus more unbelievable gems. www.sparklepants.org

**KAREN FINLEY,
YAMS UP MY GRANNY'S ASS, 1986**

This is one of the most cited works by Karen Finley yet relatively few people saw it. I didn't see it. For years, even my friends would refer to the piece where she pushed yams up her butt. I asked her directly and she was exhausted with having to answer, "No I just smeared them." In an earlier performance with one of the Kipper Kids in Germany, when having diarrhea while on tour, she did crap into a bowl on stage during a performance, which I consider much more daring and telling than the yam action. In 1989 I performed naked line dances, choreographed by Jennifer Monson, in Finley's Suggestion of Madness (Life on the Water, SF). After seeing Finley perform four or five consecutive shows, I went home and wrote my first full-evening solo work, Saliva, and performed it the following month. www.villagevoice.com/news/0045,carr,19637,1.html

TARO GOMI, EVERYONE POOPS, 1993

Highly recommended book for children of all ages. Colorful drawings of animals pooping. Need I say more?

MATTHIAS HERRMANN

German self-portrait photographer and conceptual/action artist. Mostly nudes, mostly erect, always alone. I remember most the photo of his unclean anus that I saw in 1994 or '95. Actually it's not the image that I remember but the discussion with AA Bronson, who wrote the forward to a book of Hermann photos, where he pointed out the shit stained butt. "He turns his asshole to us like the closed lens of a Leica, unflinching, without shame, smudged with the faintest blush of shit, refusing to see us, refusing to take our picture. The erotic body of Matthias Hermann is not visual: it is kinesthetic. It is beyond gender. It is yielding, transformative. Like Marlene Dietrich in Blonde Venus, he is all manner of men." (4 Publications, 1997)

Hermann has taken many photos of his ass, more recently with text. An example: "Oh le beau jour encore que ça aura été" — text across jockstrap above his rear hole spread wide by his hands (Paris Text Pieces, 1998). www.herrmann-studio.com





PATRICK CALIFIA, BOY IN THE MIDDLE, CLEIS PRESS, 2004-05

I participated in a reading tonight at the SF Public Library with this legend of sexual writing. He read a vibrantly detailed story of a gay vampire fucking a despondent junky gutter punk having his first non-paid anal sex. This image was intense but not particularly inspiring or even memorable, especially among all the rough erotica that Califia has written, but he deserves to be on this list because of his non-fiction. Califia's books are by far the most inspiring, informative, and provocative books I've read on sexual politics. I highly recommend: Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex, Speaking Sex to Power: The Politics of Queer Sex, and Sex Change: Transgender Politics, all from Cleis Press. Califia's work on sex and power, dating back to her early SM feminism to more recent trans and queer male perspectives, has positively influenced, expanded, awakened, and contextualized the interdependent mobius of how I speak and how I have sex.

WOMAN WHO POOPED LONG ONES AND MEASURED IT

This is crazy that her name escapes me, I can't find her online, and yet I have seen in more than one book the image of her squatting in a gallery or all white space with a very long turd or stain behind her. Is it real or not real shit? I don't know but the memory is strong. (Long after this initial writing I saw the work again. It's a figurative sculpture, and not even that realistic, by Kiki Smith. A female figure, life size-ish, in crawl position with a very long brown trail smeared on the floor, as if she's crawling away.)

HECKLINA, PROMOTER AND FOUNDER TRANNYSHACK, WEEKLY AVANT-DRAG SHOW, STUD BAR, SINCE 1995

I have been going to this club intermittently yet consistently for ten years. Hecklina, always in drag, is a known rimming fetishist, a fag who loves to lick and eat other men's butt. Like a lot of queens she favors straight-acting boys and either for money, prizes or thirty seconds of fame s/he convinces them to come up on stage, drop their trou and get served. In ten years I have seen this countless times. Quick and symbolic, yes, but tongue to anus contact is happening almost every time. We can see it in the face of the boyman getting rimmed, his surprise and then delight.

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE, SELF-PORTRAIT, 1978

The artist in leather chaps, whip handle penetrates ass with long tail dangling, looks over shoulder at viewer. One can't see one's own ass. So he looks at camera (me/we) looking at him, fucked, fetishized. Mapplethorpe's sex photos—fisting, SM couples, black dicks, pissing, dicks in suits—were hugely inspirational and influential in my waking up to the possibilities of queer desire in widely distributed art.

TOM OF FINLAND

The first gay porn I ever saw was Tom's Kake stories. Twenty years later, I found reprints in a small shop in Paris and immediately bought them. Although I have never responded to the hyper-masculine in actual gay men, I have been a huge fan of Tom of Finland's lumberjacks and cops, soldiers and truck drivers. An early image that is always on the memory file is a double fuck in a park, two oversized dicks in the same hungry hole while the fuckee shoots his jiz just from anal contact.

DIETRICH WEGNER, PRIVATE SPLASHES, SCULPTURE CENTER, 2003

Huge sculptures of assholes that look like organic plant forms, lichen maybe, but then again, no, it's a massive anus. I've only seen these works online but am impressed with the clash of formal sculptural concerns and the almost shocking content. www.sculpturecenter.org/csarc/wegner.html

KEITH BOADWEE, ACTIONS 758-817 YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, OCT. 2002-JAN. 2003

Video documents of performance actions (and more) including his mooning ass ink scrawled with "Molly Ringwald", with the "o" of Molly circling his anus. I remember thinking that this guy must be straight and that it was only a matter of time before straight men started quoting gay/queer art. I remember again trying not to make it obvious that I was hanging out in the x-rated part of the gallery waiting for the naked parts, especially his erect dick, to come around again, not wanting to see it however at the same time as someone who might be embarrassed, as if I would be embarrassed for them too.

JACKASS: THE MOVIE, 2002

Based on a "reality" show on MTV, 2000-2002, in which some craazy stunt guys do the most stupid shit they can think of for our entertainment and their wealth and fame and excitement. Several of the guys, all of who perform 'not-gay,' have butt obsessions. There is the big beefy guy who loves to strip to a g-string and dance in public places, shaking his ass at bystanders. There are gags of sticking things up the butt, taking laxatives to shit in public, shocking the asshole with electricity, and trying to unsettle others with their butt antics. These guys exaggerate the dumb-guy archetype to the point of masochism for the lead Johnny Knoxville. I could barely watch the movie all the way through. It was much more stupid than funny but I was amazed at how many of the gags involved asses and anuses and how each of these gags depended on a homophobic cultural context for their shock and humor value. And I was amazed that no one, of those who recommended I see it, mentioned their performance of heterosexuality as a way to exploit homophobia as excellent comedic source material, ad infinitum. www.imdb.com/title/tt0322802





CODE PINK at the 2008 Republican National Convention photo by Anna Graves

PERFORMATIVE DILDONICS

A partial list of some of my favorite performances in which strapping on becomes an aesthetic tactic for subverting the politics of the phallus.

NAO BUSTAMANTE, INDIGURRITO, 1992

In which Bustamante topped a series of white men (or anyone channeling their inner white man) with an edible cock in a ritual of purification for the conquest of the Americas. Protesting Columbus quincentennial celebrations, the performance had audience volunteers kneeling face deep into Bustamante's crotch, apologizing for their sins, then biting deep into the strap-on burrito she guided down their throats so that the "healing rush" of spurring warm beans could absolve their guilt. www.naobustamante.com

WILLIAM POPE.L, MEMBER (A.K.A. SCHLONG JOURNEY), 1996

In which the provocative performance artist walked the streets of Harlem wearing a white suit and twelve-foot white cardboard phallus that at times had a stuffed white bunny attached at the end. Pope.L has stated that the piece is about "trying to own whiteness, make whiteness, through the phallus." And the bunny?

DONALD BYRD/THE GROUP, THE SHACK, 2000

A rarely seen satire featuring a Dr. Seussian burlesque, with dancers strutting about in Day-Glo bright, excessively oversized secondary sex organs. Women stroked their knee-length appendages, men tweaked nipples on their hyperbolically bulbous bee-hive breasts, but as I wrote in the LA Weekly in 2001, the beauty of the scene lay in Byrd's refusal to settle for cross-gender buffoonery and to instead fashion a menacing presence out of the ensemble, which stared down the audience, daring them to laugh.

THE YES MEN, MANAGEMENT LEISURE SUITE WITH EMPLOYEE VISUALIZATION APPENDAGE, 2001

Infiltrating a textile conference in trademark Yes Men style, Andy Bichlbaum demonstrated an innovative fashion statement/management tool: a golden unitard featuring an inflatable three-foot phallus equipped with a video interface system that provides the wearer with anywhere worker surveillance. www.theyesmen.org

GIGI OTÁLVARO-HORMILLOSA, INVERTED MINSTREL, 2000-04

A live performance and subsequent video installation in which Otálvaro-Hormillosa (a.k.a. Devil Bunny in Bondage) inhabited a series of male personas to critique the black-white binary of U.S. racial politics and which culminated with her strapping on a huge, half-black, half-white Naugahyde dildo. Almost as large as she is, the comically unwieldy member's color binary opposed her black-and-white body paint; turning profile, she alternated between being a white man lovingly stroking his black penis and a black man proudly displaying his white wiener. www.devilbunny.org

JANICE KANG, PACKING, 2005

This short film frames the action of stuffing dead fish, roughly the size of the palm in which each is cradled, down the front of a pair of boys' tighty-whites to build and shape (fish-by-fish) a sizeable bulge. Kang's choice of material wryly subverts misogynistic jokes about female genitalia while deconstructing the singularity of the phallus.

Sara Wolf is a doctoral candidate, Teaching Fellow, and Jacob Javitz Fellow in UCLA's department of World Arts and Cultures; a freelance dance critic for the Los Angeles Times; and an itch co-conspirator.



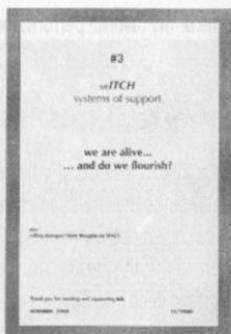
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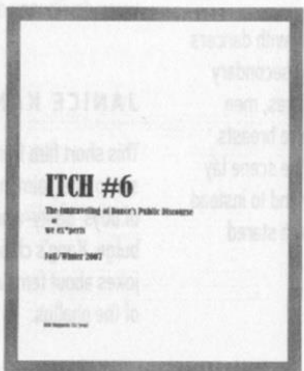
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the BEFORE AND AFTER issue

itch is an evolving art project qua artist forum cum journal/zine published three times a year. We publish poetry, political rants, scholarly work, one sentence email responses, cryptic fortune-cookie fortunes, photos, found images, etc., submitted from our highly elastic community of visual, performance, video, multi- and intermedia artists, dancers, choreographers, movers and the politically-inclined, all of whom have divergent interests and practices that constellate around an issue theme in a happenstance yet curiously fortuitous bricolage.

itch serves the community of dancers and other artists of the Los Angeles area and beyond. Practice participation in the developing LA dance culture: insert your thoughts, your body, your voice. help itch grow should you be enhanced by it ...

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