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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF FINE ART: SCULPTURE

BEYOND PATRIARCHAL VISION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of visual representation, women have been relegated to the position of the second sex. Representation of women has been of a male construct, existing merely as a male vision of female body. Living within the realms of patriarchy, it is a monumental task for female self representation to be constructed beyond male phallogentric logic. The goal must be for the creation of new images that are not humiliating or oppressive, a revolution in representation that succeeds and does not perpetuate patriarchal myths. In this thesis I shall cite the works of women artists, Barbara Kruger, Jeanne Dunning, Mary Duffy and Jo Spence who have succeeded in exposing the myth and clearing the way for other women to follow. They are of a diverse grouping, dealing with issues of stereotyping, health-care, disability and the fragmentation of the female form. It is an exercise in showing how women have become a challenge to contemporary vision and have empowered the voiceless with a voice.

The issues of the structures under which women should operate to achieve greatest effect and recognition is a concern. If language and the symbolic order are excluded to women, should they operate from outside existing structures, to create a female zone outside of patriarchal constraints. Such a place may enable women to de-construct the existing orders to create new meaning, or it may relegate women to the fringes of society, a place where they are trying to escape from.

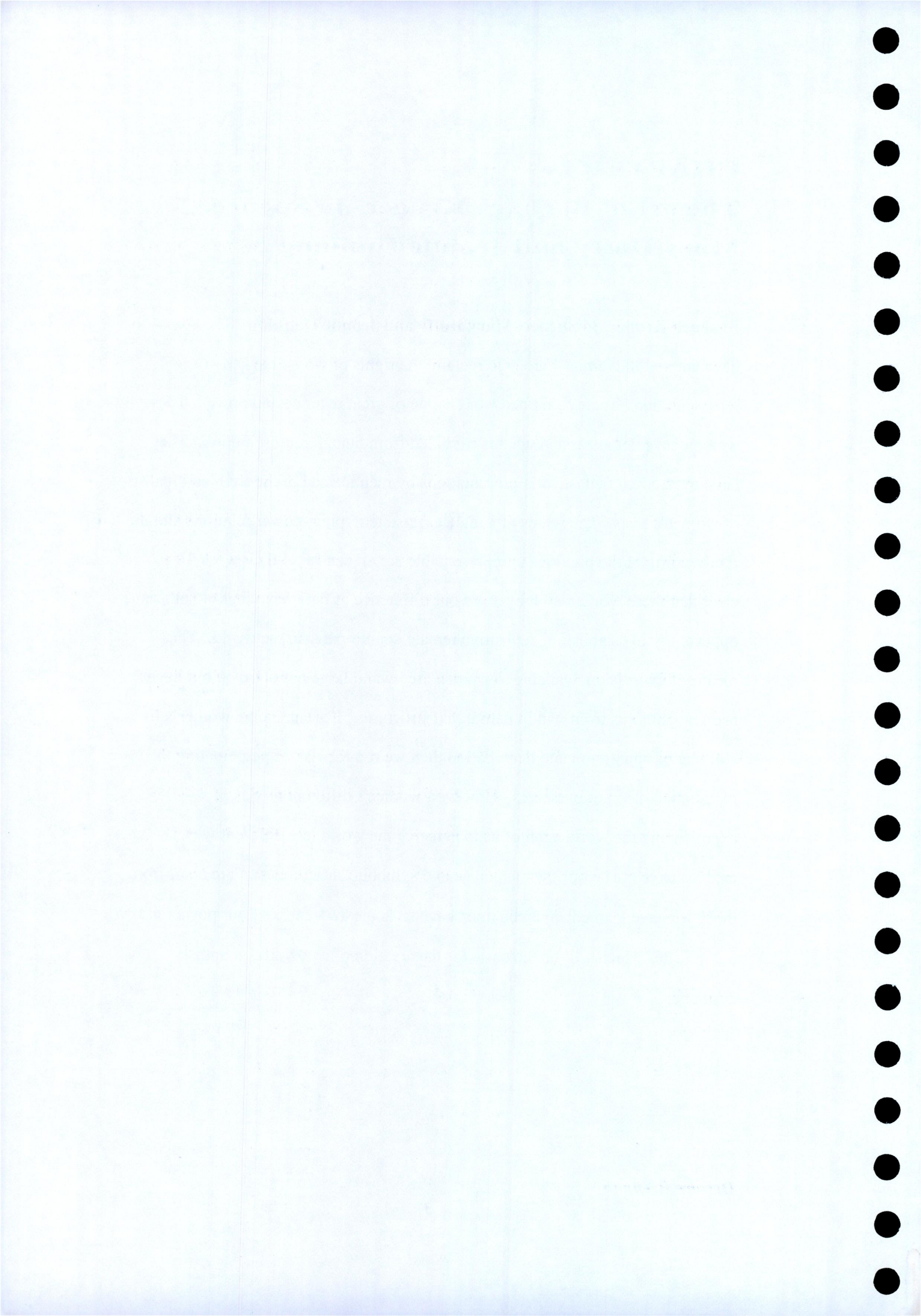
If women do not wish to be merely a reflection of male privilege, it has to be decided exactly what images they want of themselves. Is there a possibility that women take pleasure in projecting their own image onto the fantastical image of themselves? Perhaps women may not wish for 'exact' images of their lives, perhaps we enjoy the fantasy as much as our male counterparts. However the fantasy increases women's sense of inadequacy and such a feeling enables those in power to maintain their control. Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority serve to control and reduce the space women occupy in society. What is required is a view of women's natural shapes and sizes, of their bodies and their minds. The issue of how representation positions women as the object of the distanced, controlling male gaze is an item of discussion. It raises the question of no matter what the modes of production and consumption may be, women will always remain as the spectacle of male pleasure. Lucy Irigaray states how the predominance of the look over other sensory capabilities, robs the body of its materiality (Irigaray 1985). Thus are women beyond representation. I believe that the utilisation of the body in art can be about identification, about exploring, not of alienation or distance. The art of the female body can be seen as a political endeavour towards consciousness raising and for the intervention of women to reinvent dominant visual codes.

CHAPTER I

The art of Barbara Kruger, Jo Spence, Mary Duffy and Jeanne Dunning

Barbara Kruger, Jo Spence, Mary Duffy and Jeanne Dunning

have entered the feminist arena to reclaim the rights of women to self-representation. Their combined work is one of great revenge and power. These women have demonstrated what is excluded from human representation. They have overturned fantastical representations by men instead of the truth and reality of women's lives. The issues of a male gaze stereotyping, power relations and the representing of the previous unrepresentable are all central to their work. It is clear that these women no longer see our difference as deficiency but rather as an opportunity to establishing a positive female counterparty to the world. The means of expression available to women are by and large not our own but have been taught to us from within patriarchal structures. If we perceive women's lives still that of oppression and degradation then we run the risk of perpetuating the patriarchal vision of ourselves. However, women's different modes of experiencing the world enables us to perceive the world in a different way. It enables us to create our own language and symbolic structures that are apart from those we have learned. Women must have an acute awareness of our power and our abilities which will be the basis for the creation of a powerful feminist aesthetic.



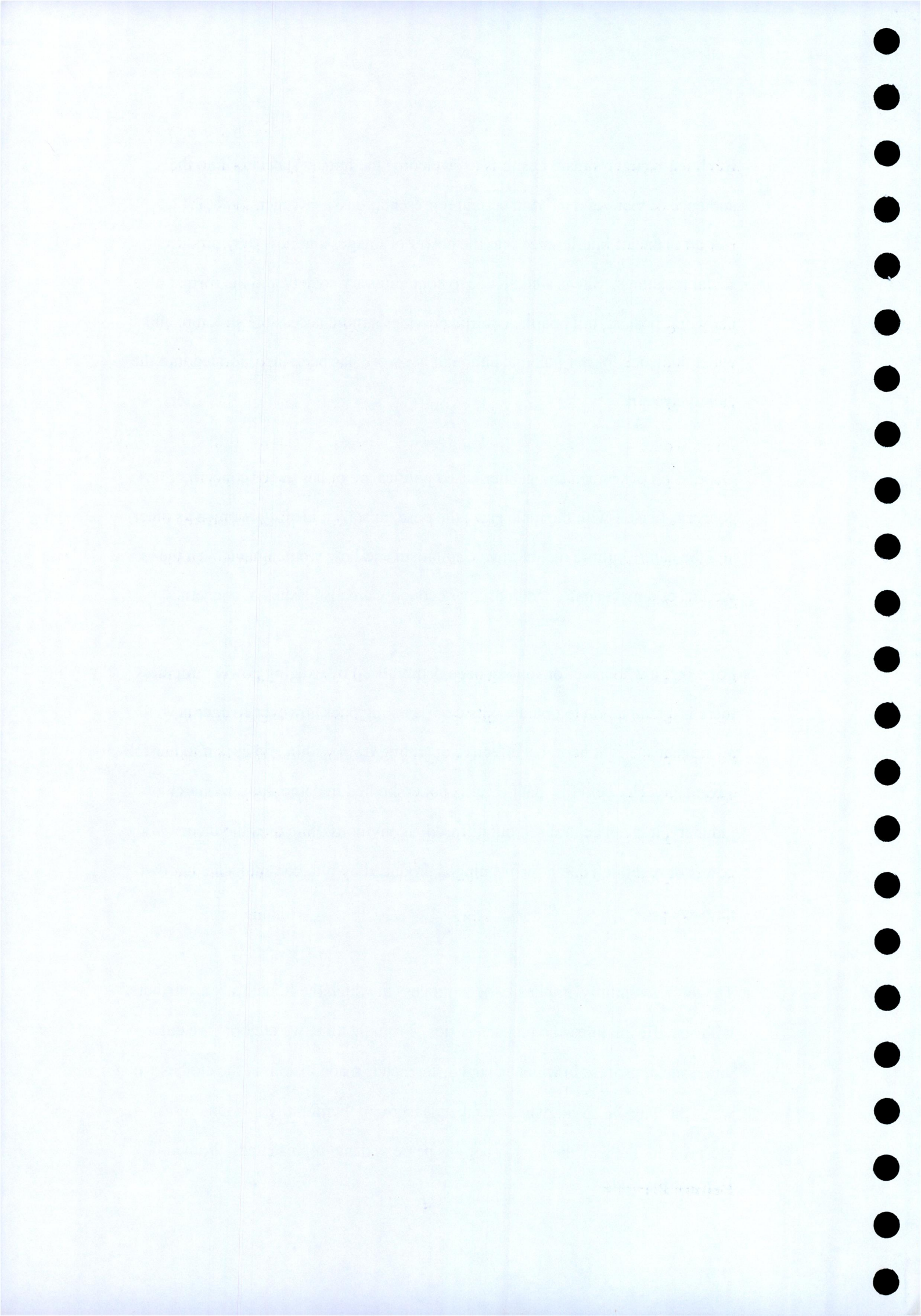
Barbara Kruger's main desire is to "welcome the female spectator into the audience of men" and to "ruin certain representations", (Kruger, 1988, P.12). Her art is one of interference into the power of images and how they produce social meanings. She is a challenge to contemporary society and the format of her work, posters, bill boards, t-shirts, provides a more accessible structure and wider audience for her polemic although her work has been incorporated into the gallery system.

Oppression of women and gender based politics are of her major concern. She concerns herself with the male gaze, the pose, mistaken identity, women as other and the nature/culture dichotomy. Capitalism and how women have been the victims of a male controlled consumer economy are also issues of concern.

For women who have for so long been demoralised by existing power structures there is a temptation to operate outside of existing ones however Kruger is well aware that she is at her most effective operating from within and uses it to her full advantage. Her belief is that power is not embodied in democracy, monarch or judiciary, it is not centralised but diffused, anonymous. She uses the theory of the power of repetition and how meaning is produced by it to communicate her own message.

The term 'femininity' implies a social process in which the female sex is attributed with specific qualities and characteristics. From the time we are born we enter into a social process in which sexual difference is made visible in the clothes we wear, the way we speak, what we take pleasure in. Femininity is bound up closely with the way the female body is perceived and represented. Women face

Deirdre Brennan



the daily masculine objectification and fetishisation of specific body parts by the media and with its power and strength shapes the social ideals of 'how women are'. Kruger intervenes to expose the way women have been glamourised and fetishized for the male viewer. She utilises images from the media to expose the cultural construction of femininity. She mimics the media stereotype, but counteracts the usual reading of the image with superimposed text to produce a different meaning, robbing the stereotype of its power. Kruger exposes how women are positioned as the passive object of the male gaze. Veiling devices are used over women to show how women are prevented from returning the gaze.

- (I can't look at you and breathe at the same time) under water
- (You are not yourself) behind shattered mirror
- (You thrive on mistaken identity) broken glass.

She also refuses to become a reflection of man's ego • (I will not become what I mean to you).

Kruger's work also explores the theme of women as the 'other', absent. In Freud's *Three essays on the theory of sexuality* (1905) he wrote that the child's look establishes the mother as lacking the masculine order and therefore inherently 'less than' the male. The female is therefore castrated within the patriarchal order. Lacan extends Freud's concepts and states the phallus as signifier of privilege, it is the mark around which social law and acquisition of language resolve. Human sexuality is therefore lived accordingly to having

Figure 1: Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (I can't look at you and breathe at the same time)* 1982

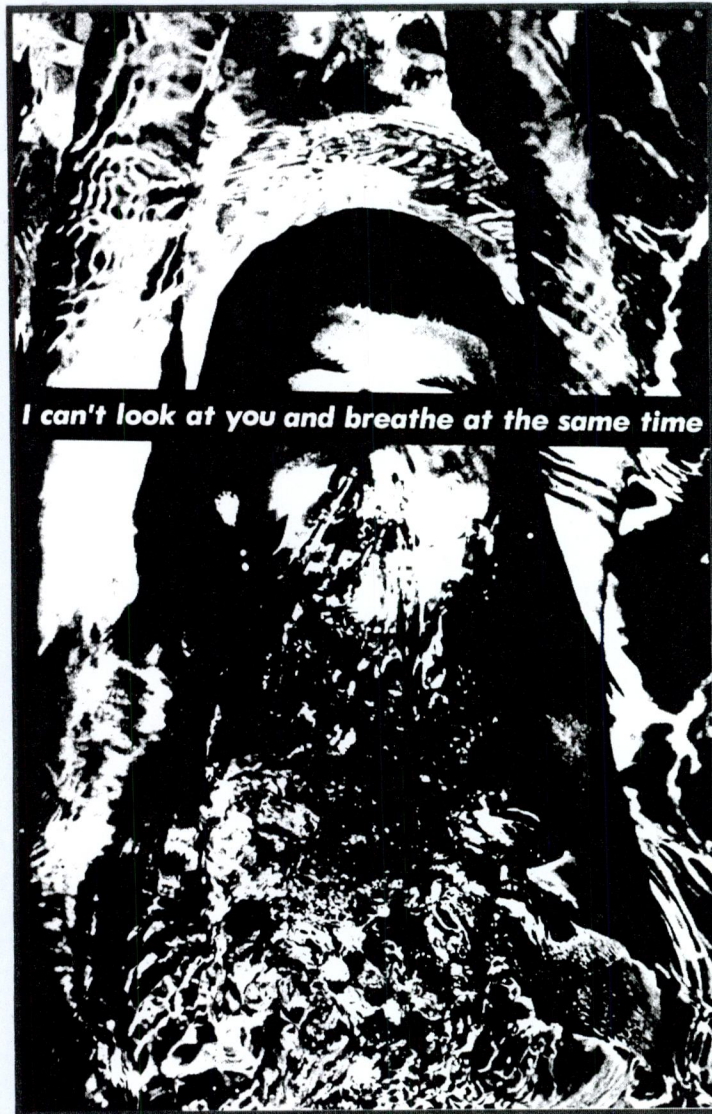
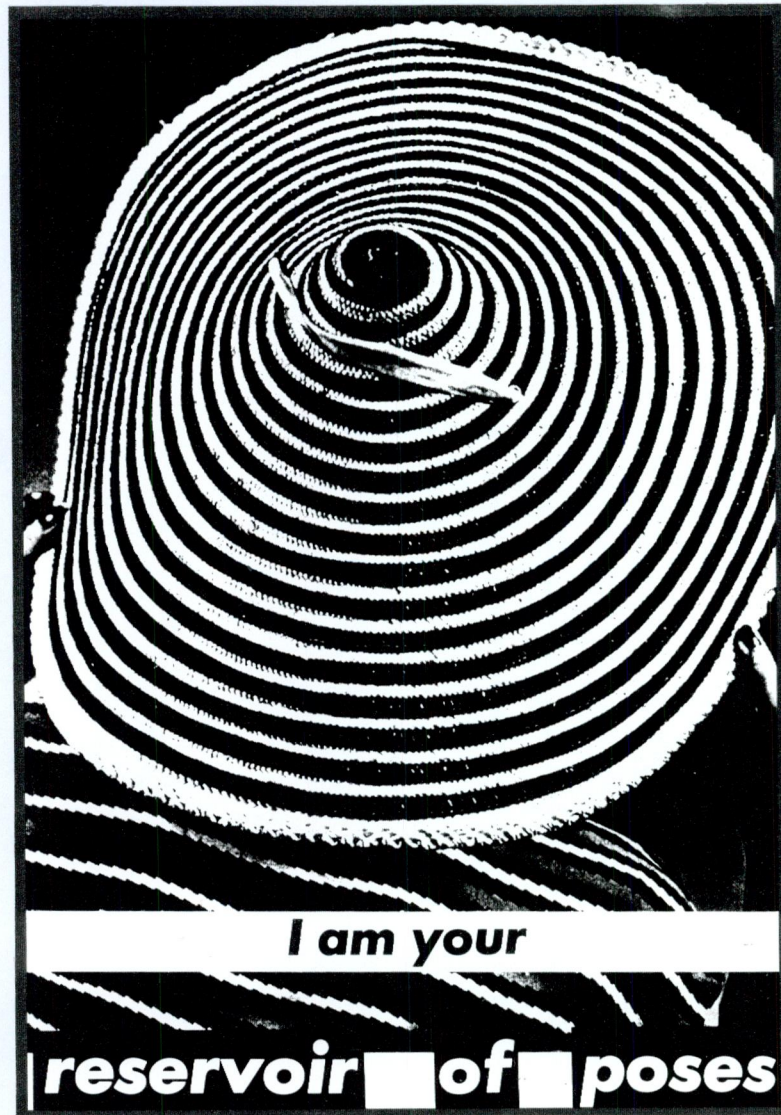




Figure 2: Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (I am your reservoir of poses)* 1982.



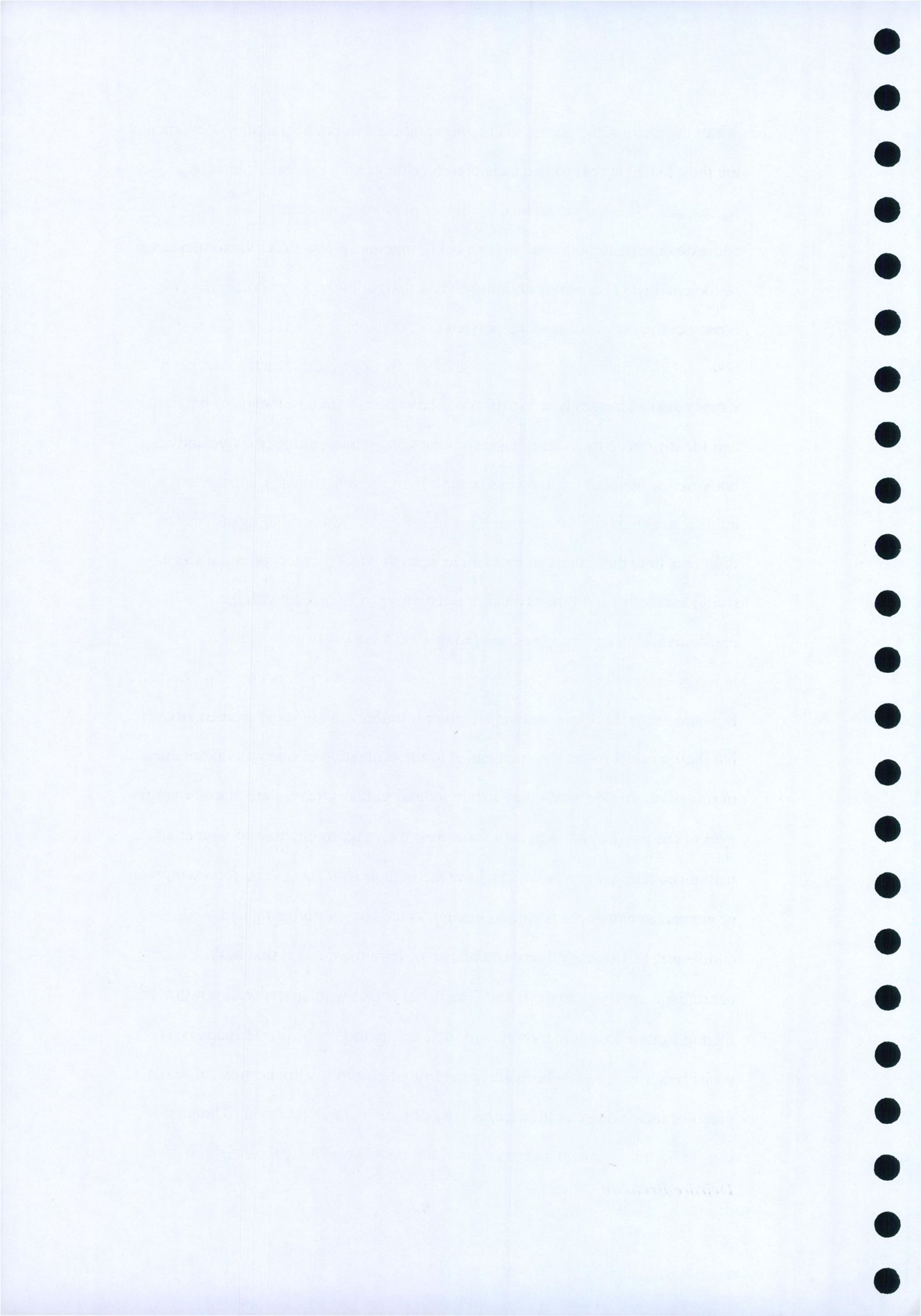


or not the phallus and access to language and the symbolic structure. If women are thus denied access to language therefore they cannot represent but are represented, thus the prevalence of images of women in society. Kruger addresses the male fiction of women being inherently 'less than' due to their lack of the phallus. • (I am your nothing) • (You delight in the loss of others) • (We construct the chorus of missing persons).

Kruger also addresses how binary codes have been used as a means to separate and identify male from female, reason/emotion, nature/culture, passive/active, body/mind. Women have always been seen as the subordinate opposite to reason, culture, active, mind. Catherine King in her essay "Making Things Mean" discusses how these dichotomies can be seen as equal partners of equal worth (mind and body) and how other characteristics can be placed with them such as reason, emotion and imagination, (King 1992 Ch.3).

It would seem that these notions are present in the work of most women artists but their work is sometimes demeaned to the evaluation of decorative, ornamental or imitative. In (We won't play nature to your culture); leaves are placed over the eyes of the woman, her aim is to show how men's representation of women as nature can take away woman's right to see in their own right. The representation of woman as nature has banished women to the area of nurturing and childbearing. However, there is a branch of feminist thought that have a naturalistic approach to the body. The belief is that women's special powers lie in their closeness to nature by virtue of their ability to give birth. This approach states how women have been alienated from their physicality because of sexist views of their bodies as inferior because of their 'natural' function. There is weight in this argument and women should not have to deny their right to give

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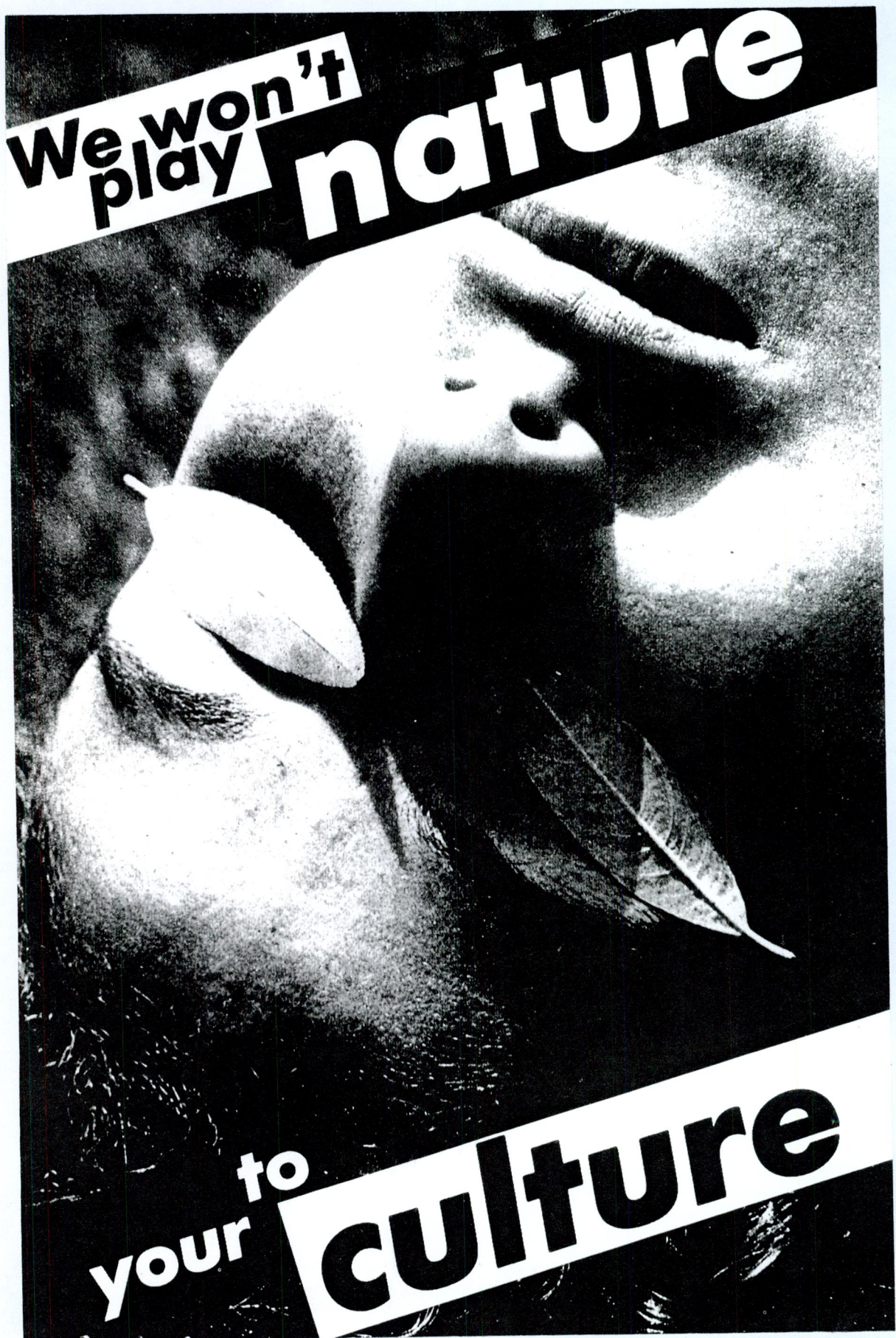


birth in order to occupy the social sphere. The ideal should be that women have the right to experience both nature and culture.

Capitalism and feminism are issues also dealt with by Kruger, how women have become the victims of a capitalist society controlled by men. • (Our time is your money). Kruger also associates the realms of 'high art' with the capitalist system, how art has become a commodity with a supply and demand factor. Kruger also views here work as a commodity and of how her red frames contain and 'commodify' her work, but from within the same frame she disputes the ideology of capitalism • (Buy me I'll change your life).

Kruger also criticises how the romantic myth of the artists has been used as a sales pitch for the aesthetic consumer. The myth of the Great Artist, predominantly male, is one of isolation, creating works of pure genius independent of any social or economic factor. Art has never been a self contained experience but its origins and development come from the social framework. An individual artistic production has always needed the contributions of others by means of encouragement, material and intellectual support. The notion of pure genius shining through despite all in the end, overcoming any obstacles, is false. It is almost certain that countless humans full potential as writers, artists, scientists have not been realised because social and economic factors were not conducive, this is particularly applicable to women. • (You invest in the divinity of the masterpiece) is a work which the text appears over an image from the Sistine Ceiling in which God reaches out to touch the hand of Adam. It is an indictment of arts commodity status and a statement of the masculine, ethos of artistic endeavour as a transaction between father and son. An 1984 piece in

Figure 3: Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (We won't play nature to your culture)* 1983.



1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of agriculture, the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of industry, and the third section deals with the results of the work in the field of commerce.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions of the work in the field of agriculture, and the second section deals with the conclusions of the work in the field of industry and commerce.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the recommendations of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the recommendations of the work in the field of agriculture, and the second section deals with the recommendations of the work in the field of industry and commerce.

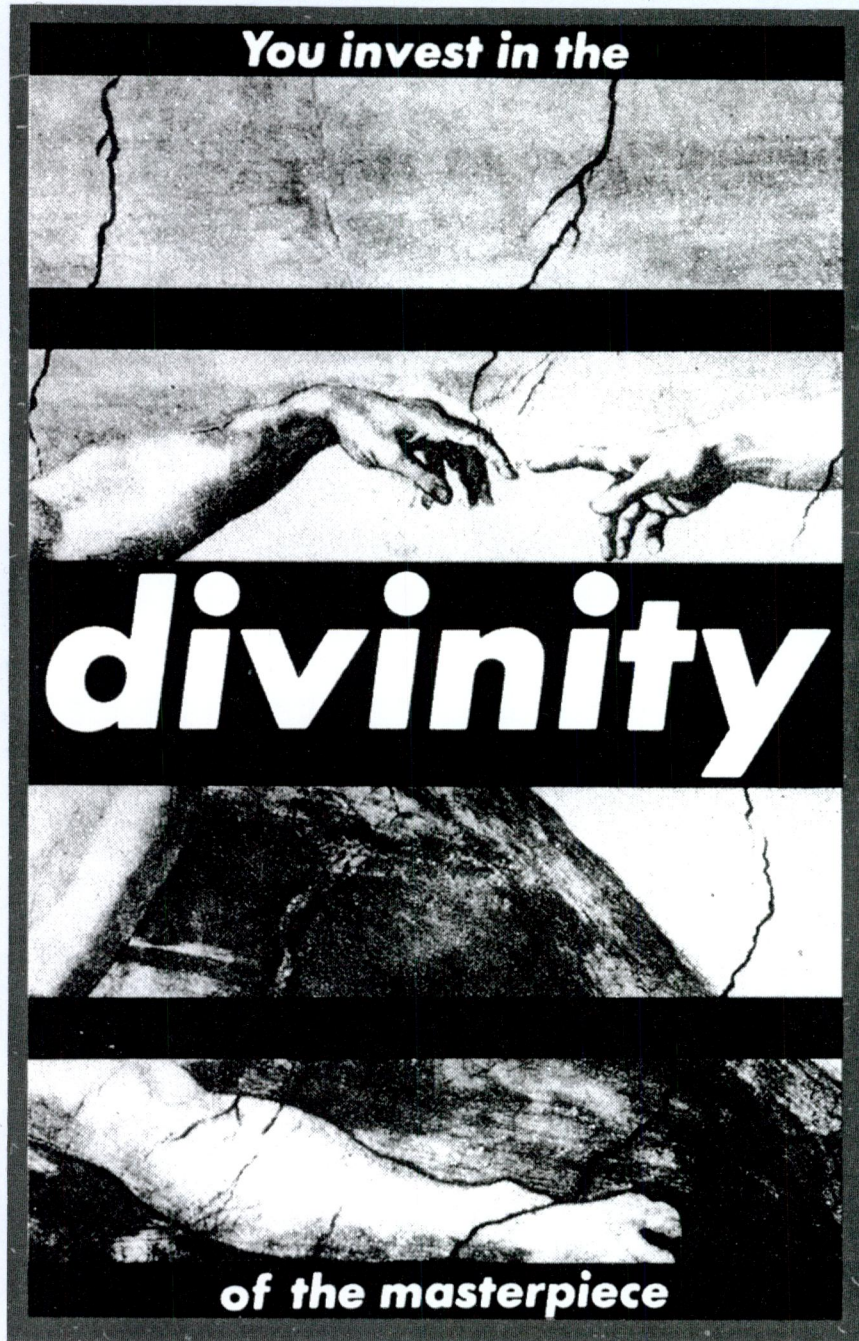
5. The fifth part of the report deals with the summary of the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the summary of the work in the field of agriculture, and the second section deals with the summary of the work in the field of industry and commerce.

which the words (Your creation is divine/Our reproduction is human) imposed onto an old Masters drawing, is an exposure of the privilege and prestige of the masculine artistic domain.

As women we are conditioned to strive for what is considered 'beauty' and 'normality'. In the same vein as women we do not conform to current ideals of 'beauty', women with disabilities are seen as abnormal and therefore unrepresentable.

The absence of persons with disabilities in the main stream media is acute. When they are present their part is usually played by an able bodied person who has no consciousness of living and experiencing within a disabled body. Their representation is usually that of the hapless victim. **Mary Duffy** is an artist who overturns these stereotypes of disabled people but she does not consider herself as incomplete, disabled. As an art student she was unsatisfied with the range of options open to a person without arms, not wanting to become a foot or mouth painter of Christmas cards. Her initial exploration was by photographing parts of her body using her feet. She found no difference in image between her propping her chin with her foot and another person with their hand.

Figure 4: Barbara Kruger *Untitled (You invest in the divinity of the masterpiece)* 1982





Her major concerns were a trying to find a balance in relation to the feelings towards her body. Surrounded all her life by images of the complete, rounded female, a culture which denies difference inspired her to confront such issues and to consider her identity as a woman with a disability as 'strong sexual, sensual, fluid, flexible and political'.

Cutting the times that bind is an eight panel photographic piece with accompanying text! The first photograph is an image of a figure wrapped head to toe in white fabric, reminiscent of a mummified figure. As the sequence progresses the figure shakes itself free of the protective wrapping. The final image is revealed, unexpectedly, a figure without arms. The figure discarding the wrapping may be seen as a metaphor for the throwing away of social, economic and cultural constraints that weigh down disabled women. "Asking for it" is a photographic response to the perception of others of her inability to embrace. The embrace of others was for her an invasion of her boundaries because of her inability to return a traditional embrace. It consists of a series of images where Duffy embraces an able-bodied person with her legs. The impact of her work is the normality of her images, her body appears as a complete functioning form.

"By confronting people with my naked body with its softness its roundness and its threat, I wanted to take control, redress the balance in which media representation of disabled women is usually tragic, always pathetic. I wanted to hold up a mirror to all those people who stripped me bare previously, the general public with their naked stares and more especially the medical profession".

Mary Duffy (From the Female Nude, Lynda Nead 1992)



Duffy represents a threat to cultural sensibilities in that she represents what is considered 'abnormal'. The issue of the relation of the part to the whole is a consideration that her work raises. The power of the fragmented form is considered to be derived from the viewers need to complete and repair the whole. Duffy disputes this notion of her body being in need of repair, what she presents to the viewer is a whole, entire body, not a mutilated form.

In line with Mary Duffy **Jo Spence** presents the taboo body. Since the female body is constantly subjected to the judgmental gaze, which defines the body as beautiful or ugly, healthy or unhealthy, Spence does the unthinkable and presents the ageing, unhealthy body. Issues of control and the reclamation of it are at the centre of her work. My main focus shall be her work on the politics of women and health-care. Spence questions the wisdom of the health profession and how she would put her life into the hands of an organisation about whose working and ideologies she knew little. Women have been appointed their place as carers in society but beyond the most basis of skills, anything 'medical' is put into the hands of the professionals. Women have the emotion to nurture but men have the intellectual ability to save lives. There is an abundance of information on health and beauty for women in the mass media, but the emphasis on health seems to be in order for women to maintain their desirability. Women should stay healthy for themselves not for men.

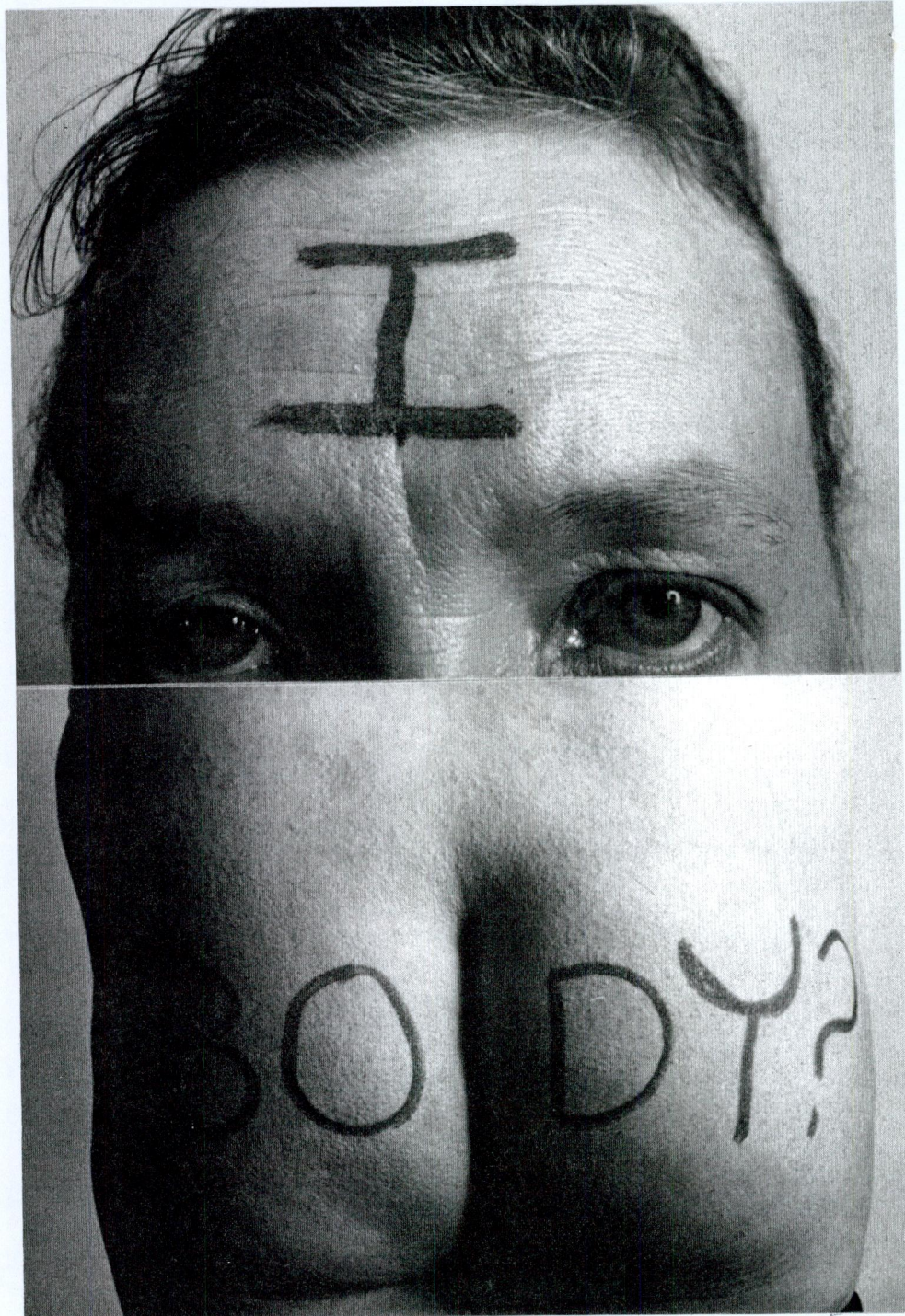
**Figure 5: Mary Duffy, *Cutting the ties that bind*,
1987**

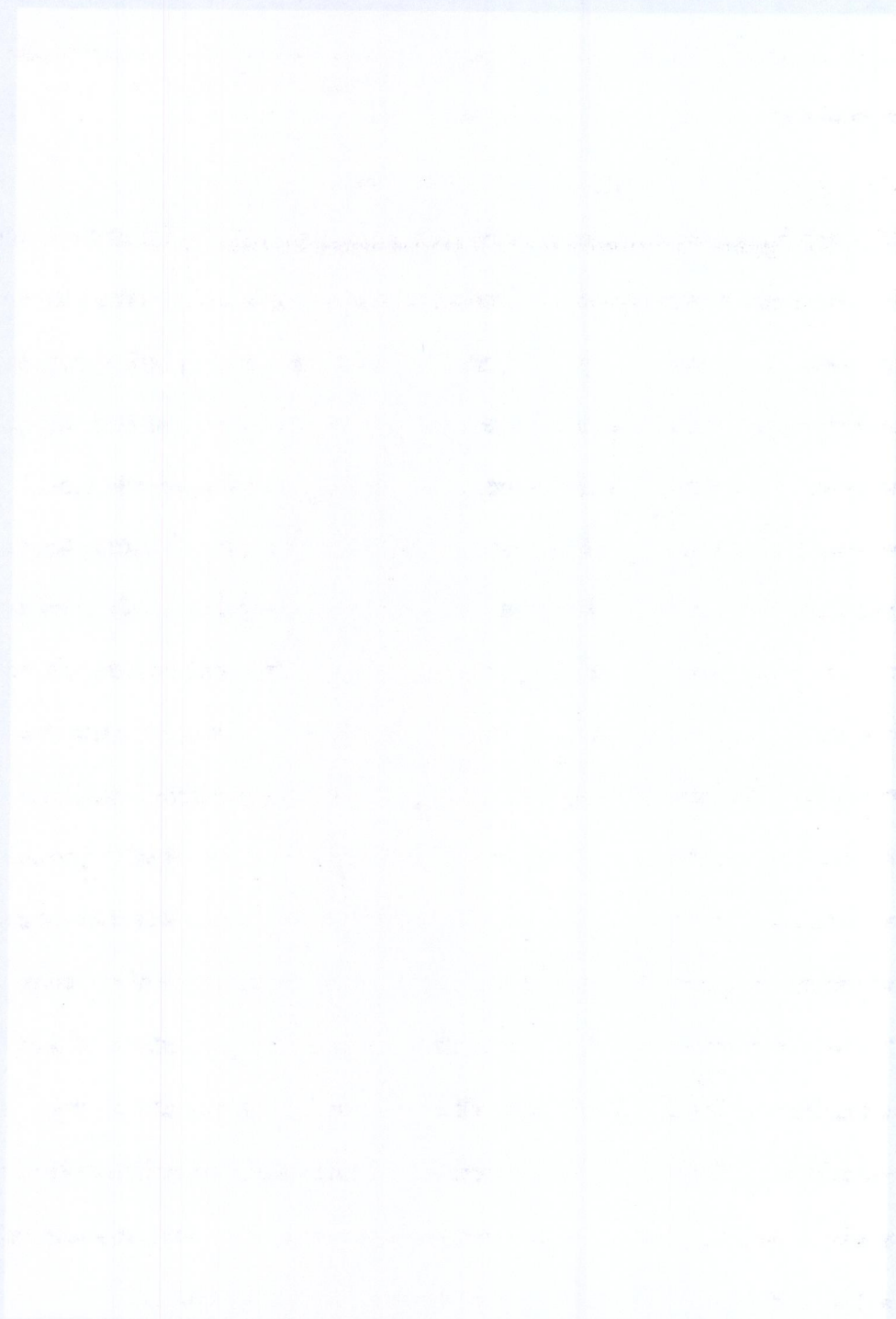


In a collaborative work *Narrative of Dis-ease*, Jo Spence puts her unhealthy body on show. It is a visual narrative of her experience of breast cancer and the treatment she received under a system of which she had little understanding, and one that splits the mind from the body. Evelyn Fox Keller in her article *Gender and Science* discusses the issues of how women are distanced from the treatment of their own bodies and their exclusion from science (Keller 1989 P.189). She discusses the feminist theory on how the active, rational masculine intellect operates on the passive objectified female body. Therefore to think under patriarchy is to take the masculine position. Keller states that scientific ideology divides the world into two parts the knower (mind) and the knowable (nature) and the relationship between the knower and the known is one of distance and separation.

Patriarchy thus genders the two halves, nature objectified and oppressed in the female, the male is knowledge. Thus women are excluded from science by such an ideology Keller claims. What Keller argues for is the coming together of the two opposites and for a refusal of the subject/object division and that an empathy between the two cannot be achieved unless 'feeling' is allowing a place within science. These are the notions of which Spence deals with in her mind/body split. There is the testimony of women who have experienced treatment at the hands of the medical profession of how their bodies have been detached from themselves to be treated according to the wishes of their handlers.

Figure 6: Jo Spence, *Mind Body Split*, 1982





Issues of how the body is disguised after radical surgery is also dealt with. After breast removal women are offered a prosthesis to disguise the damaged female body that would offend others sensibilities. The exploration of post-operative patients is seen in "Monster?" (the word written across her breast) expressing the fear and shame inside a woman who sees her body as destroyed.

The struggle for self-representation is inherent in her piece "Write or be Written off". A foreshortened figure is enshrouded completely in a cloth on a table in a bare room. It gives the image of alienation and detachment. The instructions are the principles of feminism to tell women's own stories for no-one else will do it for them. Spence considered the breast to be a metaphor for the struggle of women. The breast is usually seen within patriarchal society as a male fetish and a phallic substitute. Jo Spence brings different meaning because of its size and shape, how she worried over its function, how it fed children and how it became dispensable after child-bearing years, we can see how it can be a metaphor for the realities of women's lives. This shows us how the same image can have inherently different meanings that are accorded to the intentions of the producers and the audience for consumption. Another of her metaphors is of interest and was the cause of her turning from traditional cancer treatment to alternative Chinese acupuncture. She likened chemotherapy to the male actions of war, locate, fire and destroy. Spences' work may seem depressive but her art is revolutionary. She brings into the arena issues that would never before have been associated with the art-making process, her work is enlightening. A source of comfort and recognition to other women of the same experience.

Another concern of Spence is how working class women have been excluded from representation in the visual world. In her essay "*Class and gender in images of women*" she states how women are presented in visual formats as not needing to work and thus inhibits themselves as workers. (Spence 1987 Ch4.) She states how the representation of "natural" roles of 'wife' and 'mother' ignores the crucial work of unpaid work in the home and the representation of a labour force. Her concern is also the contradiction imposed by the necessity of this work and the pressure to maintain 'femininity'. Spence negates the products that are pushed on women to revive their "flabby bodies and faces", which she presents in her work, presumably so they can maintain the attraction of the men in their lives and possibly their financial security. Although women's work is now more recognised in the media, women are rarely shown actually working and the emphasis is on their appearance and not actually on the work they do, a continuum of women on display. Hence women are regarded as consumers even though their labour is being represented. Spence uses the stereotypical image of the secretary which she regarded as one of the few attainable 'dream' jobs for her working class women to show how working class women are oppressed and exploited. Spence states how the common image of the secretary is of a consumer at work and do not actually show her working. Hence her reality as woman and worker is negated. If images of women in the workplace, as well as wife and mother and sex object are part of the wide representation, it is not to show how women have moved through the ranks into the labour force but to increase consumer practice.

Figure 7: Jo Spence, *The Picture of Health?* 1982





The representation of the ageing body is central to Spence's work. After a certain age older women it seems should not be seen. There is a double assault against older women of ageism and sexism primarily because they are less desirable for men. Women over a certain age are beyond representation unless they are eccentric, have performed an outstanding deed or have gained victim status. In opposition men gain distinction beyond a certain age, even glamour and his experience of living brings increased charm and desirability, supposedly. Women are not afforded the same experience. They face the daily onslaught to become consumers of products that will help them attain the fountain of youth, such pressure is not brought to bear on men. They are deemed insignificant in society and when they are represented they are stereotyped as the nagging wife or mother in-law. Spence refutes these notions by becoming the subject of her own work and representing a body that shows the signs of live, of living. In many ways the ageing body can be a more interesting subject than that of nubile youth.

The mature body gives a visual narrative to the response of the body to age, how skin and muscle shapes and sizes react to time. Although this is not the central core issues of Spence's work the sight of an ageing body of which we are unused to does present these notions.



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The relationship between femininity and representation are thrown into crisis when women are shown as ageing, as Mary Kelly remarks:

"Being a woman is but a brief moment in one's life. Definitions of woman's femininity were constructed primarily on the body: in its procreative capacity and as fetishized object - 'to be looked at'. Interim explores the possibilities for representing middle-aged woman in order to reinstate her age as a desiring subject in representation, a position from which she is dominantly excluded"

Mary Kelly (From Vision & Difference
Griselda Pollock 1988 P.180)

JEANNE DUNNING

HEADS

The viewers asks the image to speak, and by speaking to draw him in, to convince him, to cater to him, to coddle him, to suck up to him, to desire him.

The viewer asks the image to give him the power to accept or reject, to reinforce or ignore, to forgive or condemn, to pass judgement.

If no one is looking at me and I don't speak, then no one *will* look at me. I must have a voice to have power. Speaking without first being spoken to is a way to take power.

But if someone *is* looking at me and they know it, they're asking me to speak, they've given me power. I have something they want.

If I speak, I'll give away that hold over them, that thing that I have that they want, that thing that I know that they don't, which is power. If I don't speak, I'll retain the power to accept or reject and pass judgement.

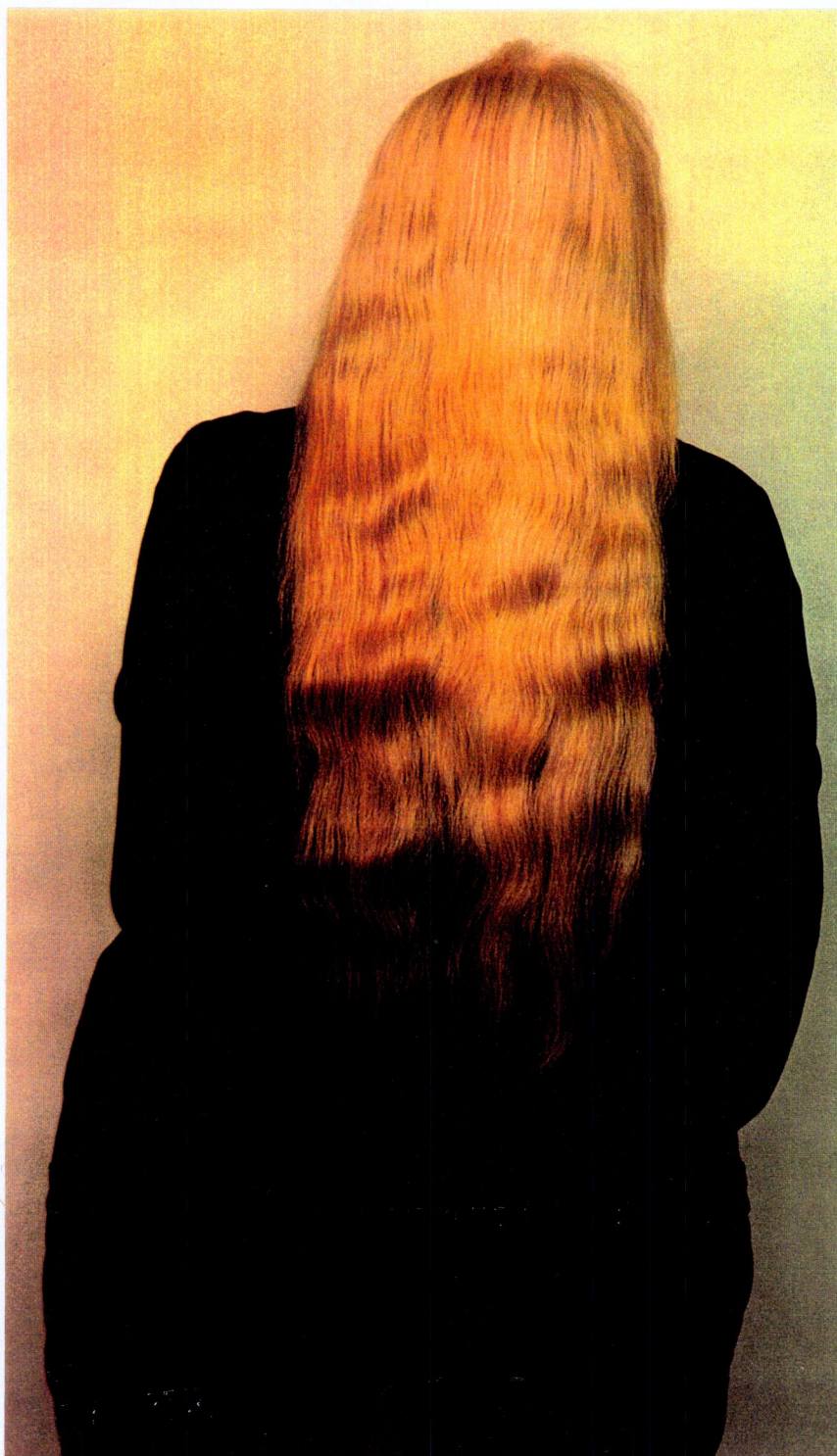
If someone is looking at me and they know I know it and I don't speak, they'll keep looking.

From *Heads*, 1989

an artist's book by Jeanne Dunning

Deirdre Brennan

Figure 8: Jeanne Dunning, *Untitled Body*, 1990



Deirdre Brennan



Jeanne Dunning's work is of a feminist concern for the male gaze and the objectification of the female body and positions her work within the structure of power relations. When a person enters into a relationship with an image they expect for their needs to be catered for and satisfied.

"I am not looking; I go to a gallery or a museum (or open a book). I want something too, but as a viewer I have the privilege to be wary, discriminating, not easy to please. In order to be seduced I have to be approached in a particular manner, with just the right balance - for instance - of lightness and force. In short, I am a spoiled brat, used to being catered to, and expecting to get it for free".

Laurie Palmer (Rock, Paper & Scissors from Heads 1989 p.4)

Palmer is assuming the privilege position of the male viewer, the freedom of the detached unobserved gaze with the means to master and objectify. Dunning draws the attention of the viewer in but then in an act of revenge she turns her back. She is aware that the viewer is looking but refuses to give in operating from a history of having been taken. In her act of revenge she draws the attention of the viewer with striking images and at the moment when she is expected to expose, she turns her back to the viewer (Heads) and refuses to speak (Untitled with Bulge, Untitled with Tongue). The issue of spectatorship has been a problematic concern for feminism. The de-construction of the pleasure offered in dominant art forms is essential as they entail the subjection of women to the fantasy of man. However, for work to be effective, to create change, it has to gain the attention of the spectator and to create pleasure.

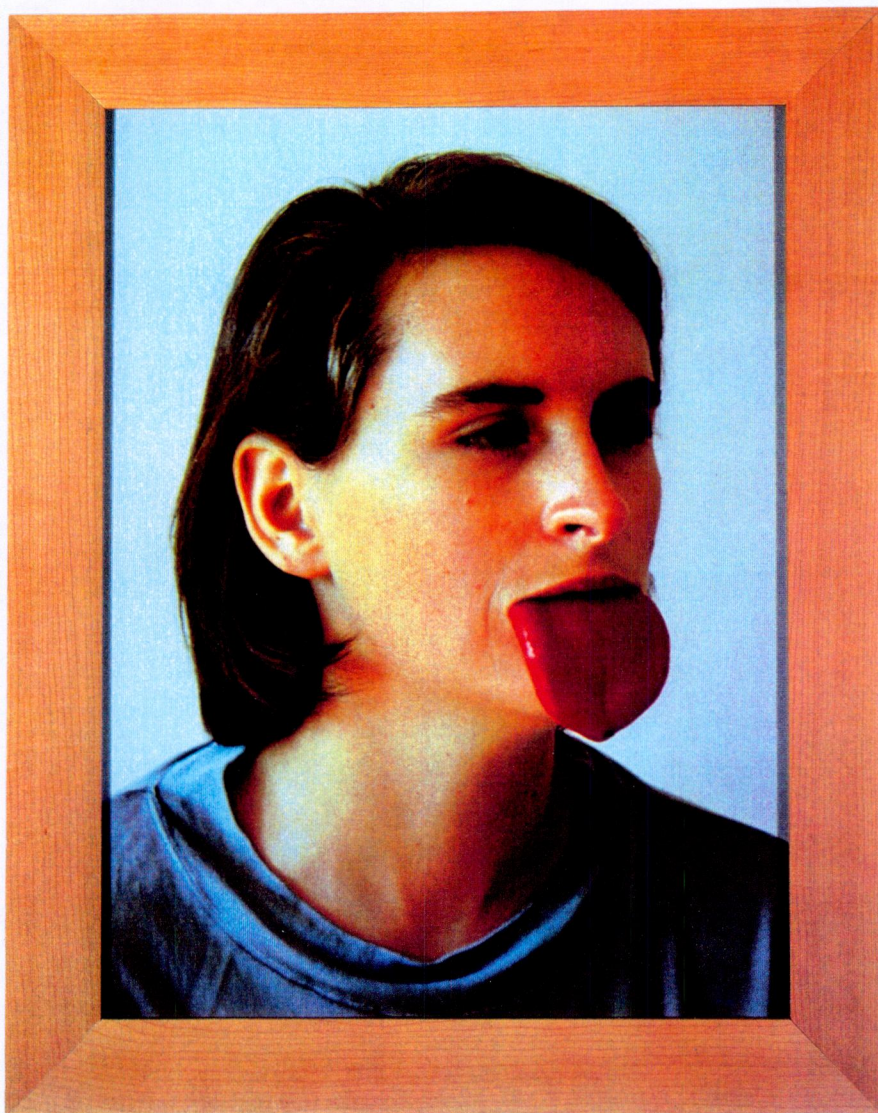
Dunning achieves both, gaining the attention of the viewer whilst refusing to become the centre of male phallogentric discourse. In her essay *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, Laurie Palmer positions herself as the socially constructed male viewer and asks does Dunning give her exactly what she is supposed to want from this position?

Dunning positions herself in front of the male viewer, she is held by his gaze but her message is that she needs to be looked at but she will never reveal herself, she will never give what the viewer wants. Palmer states that this may be exactly what the male viewer wants, to be refused again and again whilst being able to ogle the back of a woman's head. She questions that woman as phallus is what man is supposed to want, an image of himself, the sign of his power reflected back onto himself for comfort and reassurance. "The *real* woman - what or whomever that may be - is not the object of our desire, nor is she representable anyhow", (Palmer 1989 P. 4). Dunning's images take the female role, stereotyped as powerless and as an object of desire whilst the viewers role is male, to whom the image pleases. Dunning operates the only way she knows how through the lens of phallogentrism, however the difference is that she makes sure that we know she knows. Dunning's work does not offer an alternative to the patriarchal tradition of viewing but her work is a defensive reading and is a questioning of the subject/object roles of viewing.

Another defensive reading of her work is seen in *Untitled with Tongue* in which the woman refuses to look directly at the camera, whilst extending an enormous tongue, making speech impossible. It can be seen as a metaphor for the muzzling of women throughout history. It is also a humorous gesture a display of great rudeness a demonstration of the cultural constraints of women, how we are not

Deirdre Brennan

**Figure 9: Jeanne Dunning, *Untitled with Tongue*,
1990**





allowed to be bad, our banishment to the passive and docile. It is also a statement of power relation, she overturns the notion of not speaking until you are spoken to, to use the act of refusing to speak at all as a position for yielding power as she states in her prose passage.

The issues of the fragmented body the relationship of the part to the whole is seen in *Untitled Landscapes, Details and Holes*. What we are presented with are a series of images of body parts that are ripe for fetishisation. There is a heightened sense of claustrophobia, the sense of being in someone's face. In viewing *Untitled Landscapes* our sense of recognition of the body is thrown into disorientation. The work combines the traditions of landscape and nude photography. The questions of what exact part of the body is being presented to us throws the viewers into rationalising the fragment in terms of the whole. However, Dunning's motives are not the reconstruction of the body, if anything, it is a rejection of an anti-idealistic totalising philosophy.

Figure 10: Jeanne Dunning, *Untitled Holes*, 1988



1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1801. It is a very important document, as it is the first official communication of the new administration. The letter is written in a formal, dignified style, and it contains a great deal of information about the new government and the President's plans for the future.

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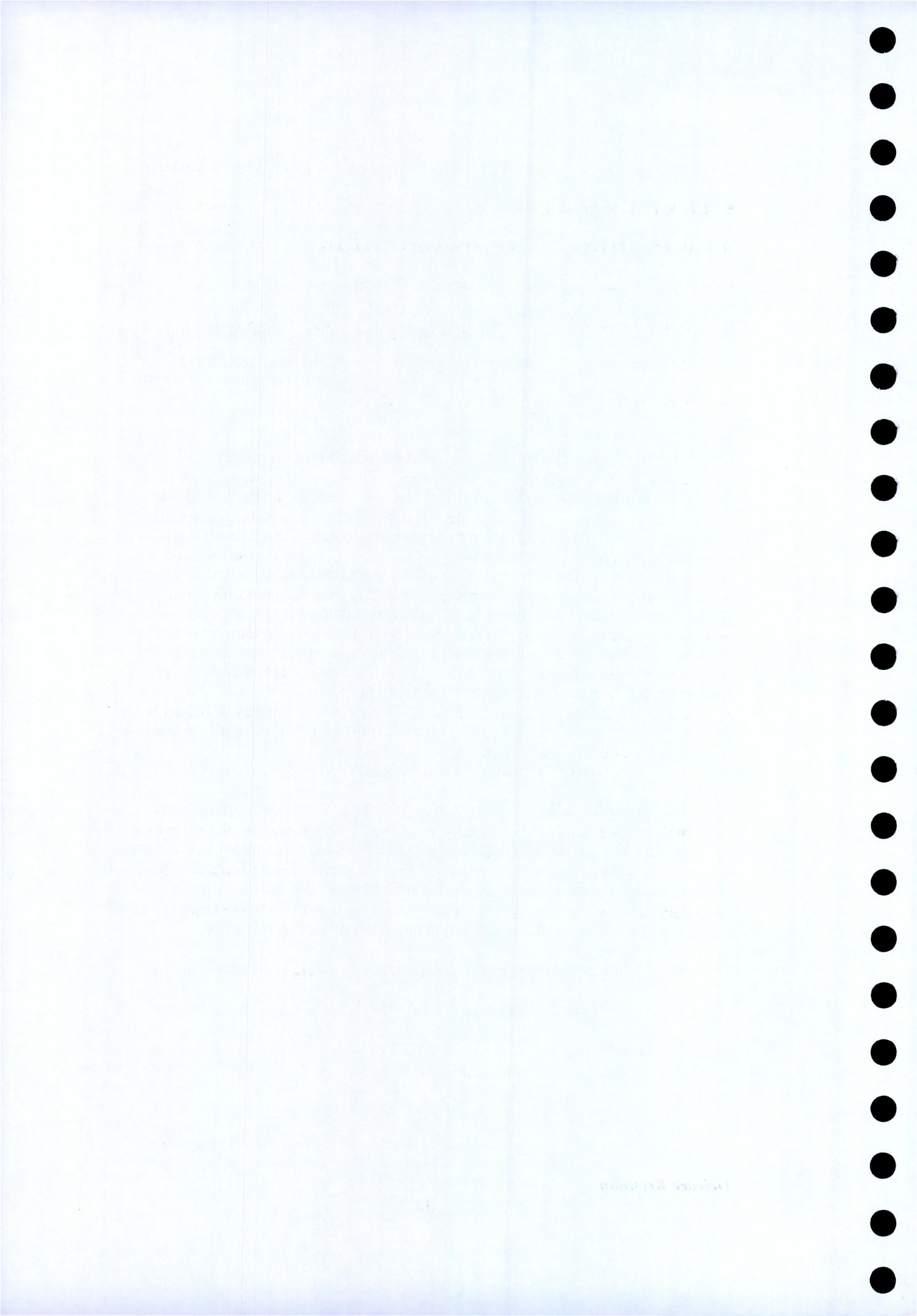
CHAPTER II

The Politics of Representation

"Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men, they describe it from their own point of view which they confuse with the absolute truth".

Simone De Beauvoir

In the area of representation it has to be acknowledged that the makers and consumers of images are predominantly male. Men control the media, books, newspapers museums through which images are circulated. As a result women are largely excluded from the realms of a female representation and exist largely on the fringes. Therefore women have resided in a culture where the only reflection of themselves have been of the male imaginings of their humanity of a passive object for male consumption. In the act of viewing feminist theory states that the spectator is male and the image female, thus allowing the male to exercise power and control over the image. In women's act of viewing, do they react to other women from a male perspective thus colluding in their own oppression? Since women in popular cultures are a spectacle for male pleasure will all images of women conform to this notion? De Beauvoir's statement raises the point that representation is a particular construction and not a reflection of reality. Therefore when women represent themselves, is it possible to represent the truth (since male representation has presented falsehoods) or is there such a thing as true female representation?



If a departure from male fantastical images is wished for it is important to decide exactly what kind of images women want. Do women want the representation of an ordinary slice of life or some utopian vision, the possibility of the real and imaginary? What exactly is a realistic image? Catherine King in her essay "The Politics of Representation" discusses the view of 'realistic' images and how we can only deem them realistic after considering who and by what means these images are being presented to us. (King 1989 Ch.4).

King states that the eye constructs meaning according to the viewers mental and social situation whilst they are looking and the visual image has been constructed under the same conditions. She states that the term 'realistic' is best reserved for describing if the person who is represented has existed, might possibly have existed or is totally fictitious. The notion of representation as a particular construction opens the way for a feminist means of representation because it allows us to see that current representations do not tell us what sort of beings we are and gives us the opportunity to create new language.

Women's pleasure in looking is usually associated with narcissism, the male look is concerned with voyeurism. The male is in control and views from a distance, the female is more closely involved, taking pleasure in reflecting the image onto herself.

"because desirability has been elevated to being the crucial reason for sexual relations it sometimes appears to women that the whole possibility of being loved and comforted hangs on how their appearance will be received."

Rosalind Coward (Visibly Female Ch. 4 1987)

Deirdre Brennan



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are in a standard serif font. The list is organized into two columns, with names on the left and addresses on the right. The names are: John Doe, Jane Smith, Robert Brown, Mary White, and Thomas Green. The addresses are: 123 Main St, New York, NY 10001; 456 Elm St, New York, NY 10002; 789 Oak St, New York, NY 10003; 101 Pine St, New York, NY 10004; and 202 Cedar St, New York, NY 10005.

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Coward's statement gives weight to the notion of female narcissism. Therefore women strive for these images that are held up to them as a basis of their self worth. John Berger discusses how "men act and women appear". He describes how "men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at" (Berger 1972). His notion is that the surveyor of woman within herself is male. That women adopt the male act of looking, powerful and controlling. Therefore women see themselves through the eyes of men giving women a passive relationship to herself within the visual world. If women consider these notions and relate them to their own lives they may see a lot of truth in his assumptions. However this seems a very pessimistic position.

Although we can state that the notion of 'woman' is a social construct women do have the capability to develop a sense of woman on their own terms. However it is clear that women have to adopt a 'masculine' viewpoint much more than men have to adopt a 'feminine' one. However to say that women have to adopt a 'male' viewpoint is denying the capability of women to revolt against fictitious images of themselves. Laura Mulvey examines the structure of spectatorship in the cinema (Mulvey 1989 p.19). She develops the idea of the "mobile" position of the female viewer. Woman is caught up in the "masculinization" but is unable to consistently adopt the masculine position. She explains the mobility in Freudian terms. Woman is torn between the memory of her "phallic phase" before the development of femininity, and her assumption of "correct femininity" which demands that the active phallic phase must be repressed she must become passive. The ability of women to switch viewpoints is crucial for allowing women to move on to a representation that is real for women.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey, and the second section deals with the specific results of the survey.

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When discussing the objectification of women it has to be stated that all representations of the human form entails an objectification of some sort in that it is presented as an object for sight and touch. However there are objectifications that are dangerous and some that are safe. Objectifications that are safe must ensure that humanity is recognised beyond the image. Roland Barth in *Camera Lucida* discusses the notion of a 'blind field' that beyond the motionless image there is a humanity to be imagined (Barthes 1984 P.59). If there is no 'blind field' everything which happens beyond the frame dies once the frame has been passed on. The image must have a life external to the image. He states that the presence of the 'blind field' is what distinguishes the erotic from the pornographic. Since pornography usually represents the sexual organs, creating motionless objects (fetishes) it represents nothing more than the object itself. The erotic he suggests does not make the sexual organ the central focus possibly does not present it at all but takes the viewer outside of the frame into an imagining of humanity of body and soul together. This I should think is the basic ideology of a feminist representation of women.

A feminist approach to the female body should not be a project for the ideal representation of the female but should show women's diverse identities. Within patriarchal culture the female body is loaded with meanings so it is impossible for it to come into the feminist arena as a neutral force, what is necessary is for existing signs and values to be transformed and given new meaning. The display of the female body does leave it open to the risk of the voyeuristic gaze but this should not be a prevention of its recognition as it could lead to a repression of discourses on the body and sexuality altogether. Lynda Nead states that there is no safe place outside existing social structures that feminist art can occupy that is untouched by mainstream ideology. This does seem true that those who have

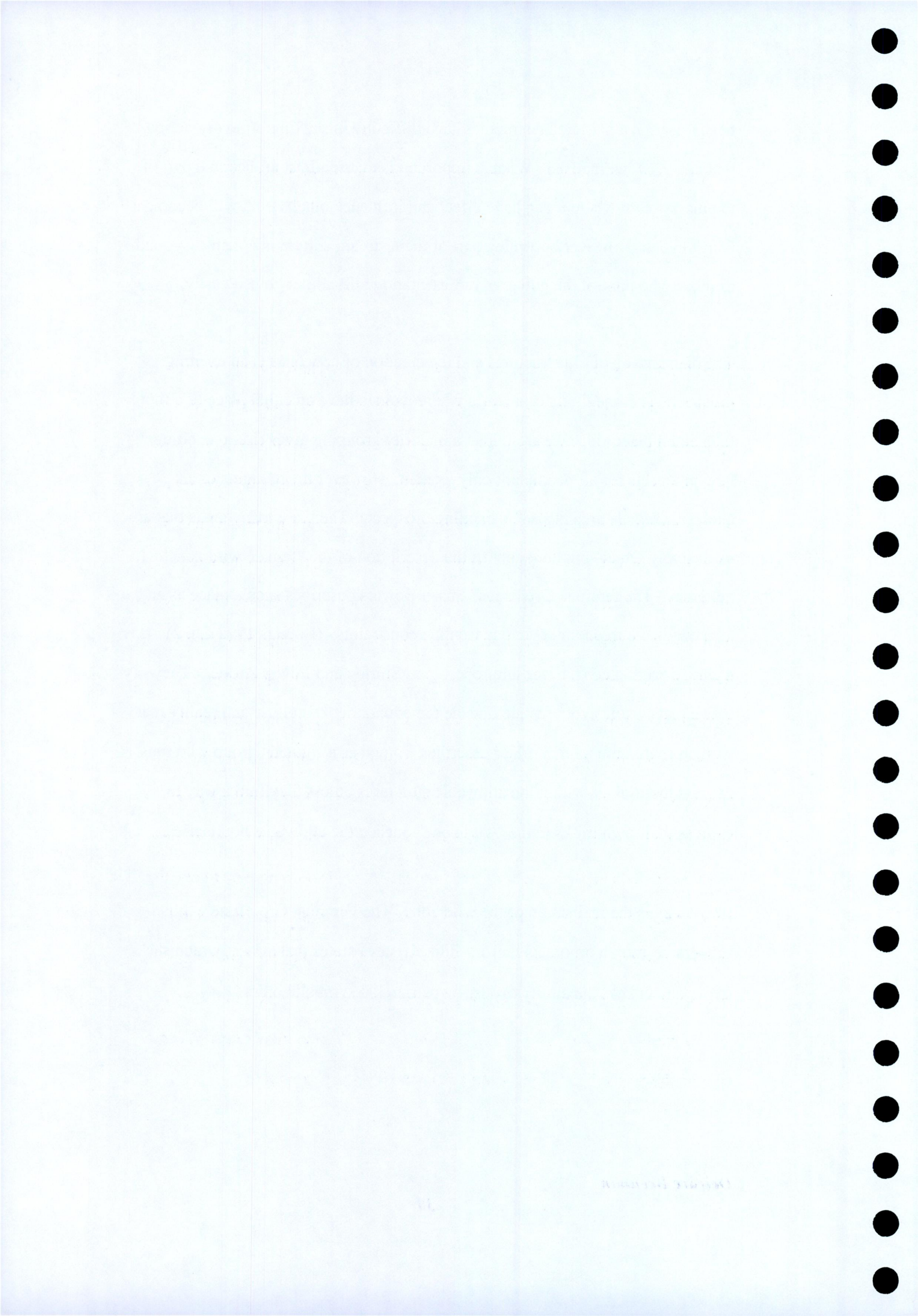
Deirdre Brennan



been raised in a patriarchal structure have difficulty in shaking off every notion that has been internalised. What is important is that feminist art become part of the mainstream where it can have effect and influence otherwise it will become a fringe event. However becoming part of main stream culture is not an easy road as those who control the power of representation will not let go if it easily.

The dismantling of old structures and the creation of new ones is an exciting prospect. The imagining of a world where women have an equal place or a more than equal place since we are in fact a majority grouping gives rise to exciting new prospects for all people not only women. However the thoughts of an exclusive female area is also an exciting prospect. There are many areas that are exclusively female but none that fit the description of the "female wild zone". In her essay "The feminist Grotesque" Susan Bowers describes such a place as an area of female freedom beyond masculine constraints, (Bowers 1992 Ch. 2). It is a phrase originated from the anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardner. They say it as a place exclusively female outside the boundaries of culture and reality that women share with men. Ardner describes women as a "muted" group who must express themselves within the allowable structures unless they find a way to express their own truths in the "wild zone" outside the allowable boundaries.

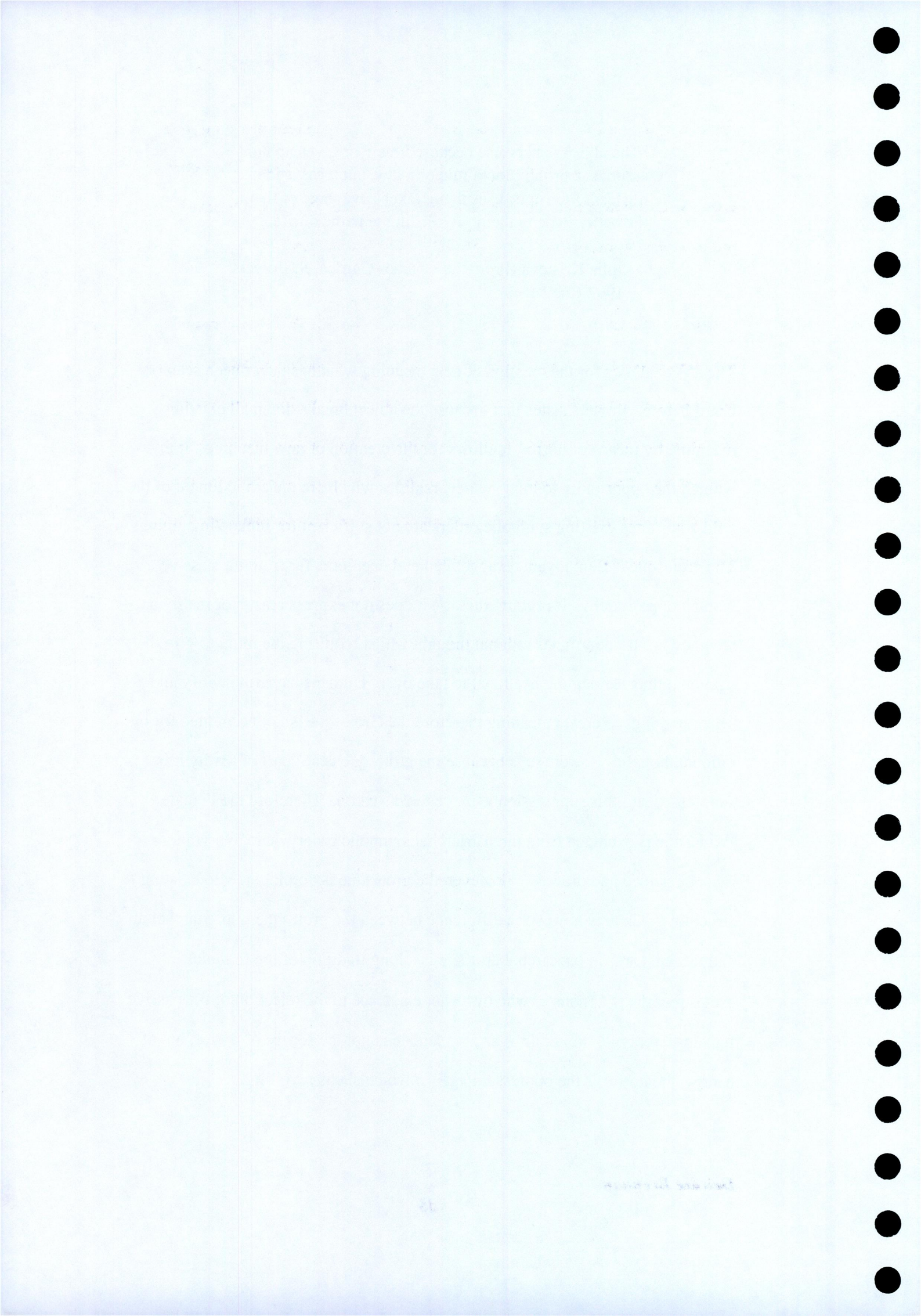
Bowers calls the realisation of the wild zone "The Feminist Grotesque". It is subversive and incorporates horror. Julia Kristeva states that horror, which she terms 'abject', has the ability to destroy patriarchal symbolic orders.



"The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition a rule or a law, but turns aside, misleads, corrupts, uses them, takes advantage or them, the better to deny them. It kills in the name of life.

Julia Kristeva (From the Witches Garden, S. Bowers 1992 Ch. 2.)

The abject allows for the creation of new meaning what has never been seen or heard before. Bowers states that because the abject breaks down all existing meaning, by means of horror, it allows for the creation of new meaning. It gives women the opportunity to imagine new realities which are the embodiment of the wild zone since existing symbolic orders are not sufficient for female imaginings. The grotesque is flamboyant, exaggerated and energetic, far from the passive woman of patriarchy. It is contradictory, it does not express reason or reality as we know it. It undermines rational thought whilst requiring the mind to grip the irrational thus leaving the irrational to take over. Humans have to identify and separate things to create meaning therefore the Grotesque is not accounted for by rational thought. Bowers says because the grotesque is not part of reality it is suppressed and this suppression is expressed as taboo. Therefore the Female Wild Zone is excluded from the patriarchal symbolic order where everything's must be named and ordered. However, the grotesque is nothing new to existing structures. There is however a difference between the grotesque in patriarchal art and feminist art. In patriarchal art there is a long tradition of the feminine grotesque, she is a monster who owes her existence to the rejection of the passive female stereotype. In Feminist art, the female is not the source of horror, but of energy, the horror is the oppression against which she is revolting.



Anne Sexton and Cynthia MacDonald are the poets of the feminist grotesque. They exude the exciting visual language of the female wild zone. They engage horror with humour, both deconstructive and creative. They use images of pregnancy, wombs, eating, in order to challenge boundaries.

Images of hair are abundant in the poetry of MacDonald. A male definition of femininity is of female hairlessness and the hilarity of potions to deal with 'feminine hair problems' are blared day to day from the media. However the notion of hair as a sign of power is well known. Witches believed that their hair was the source of their power. Hair is a sign of virility and power in her poems with the women growing beards in abundance and the men are hairless, it gives a vision of a transference of power onto women.

"Our civilisation is
falling apart;
Effete, hairless men,
And the women growing
beards
Bearding the wolf
In his den.
And winning."

Cynthia Macdonald.
(From the Witches
Garden, S. Bowers Ch. 2
1992)



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Anne Sexton in her poetry uses pregnancy as a metaphor for the grotesque. Sexton transforms the wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood" into a transvestite and then portrays him pregnant with Little Red Riding Hood and her Grandmother after he has eaten them.

"... now he was fat.
He appeared to be in his ninth month and Red
Riding Hood and her grandmother rode like two
Jonahs up and down with his every breath. One
pigeon. One partridge"
Anne Sexton (From the Witches Garden, S.
Bowers 1992 Ch 2)

Hers is a metaphor of immediate deliverance from male oppression. The wolf is a medium of metamorphosis for the women, who die in him and are reborn in him. These images of birth, death, pregnancy, genital imagery are revolutionary because of their absence from male dominated art. This may in some ways be seen as returning in a naturalistic approach to the body that many women have been trying to break away from, however the powerfulness and creativity of pregnancy cannot be disregarded. It is the social structures that are oppressive in giving birth and rearing children and not the act itself. Bowers talks about how the interiority of female genitals create a different attitude towards the worlds as opposed to the exterior of the males. She says that it entitles women to a give and take between self and the world which dissolves boundaries. Lynda Nead also discusses the notions of boundaries and how the body has been an area of containment and regulation. In the western tradition of high art the body has been sealed up to divide the inside from the outside, to cover up orifices to prevent the leakage of matter. The body has been contained and its boundaries sealed.



These notions have been overturned by artists such as Judy Chicago and Kiki Smith. Smith involves herself with those elements of the human body that are regarded as best left unseen, internal organs, bodily fluids, isolated limbs. She believes that the physical body is the primary means by which we experience the world. She also regards the female body as a battle ground for medicine, religion and governments. She has a desire to reclaim and acknowledge our bodies and its functions that have been distanced from us. Her most striking work involves twelve empty glass water bottles with the words, blood, tears, pus, urine, semen, diarrhoea, mucus, saliva, oil, vomit, milk and sweat engraved onto them.

Fluids which have been hidden away from view and thinking though they are as elementary to our bodies as our legs. Chicago also presents the unthinkable to our sanitised society. Her work Red Flag showing the removal of a bloody tampon challenges the ideal of the sealed and complete female form. Chicago's work also is involved in the process of reclaiming women's sexuality as an autonomous and self defined area.

The portrayal of women's sexuality is usually limited to a few stereotypes that are defined by male fantasy. If women do not exist in ways that define the stereotype, if we are beyond male fantasy, then we represent a threat. This can be seen in the way women who possess a self-defined sexuality are relegated to the position of whore. Female sexuality is constructed to maintain social control and it is also powerfully exploited. Although the pornographic industry and the mainstream media are seen as polar opposites, the representation of women in the areas of mainstream media and in pornography spring from the same view of women and their sexuality. Women as sex objects degrades and defiles us and forms a male view of women as well as a view of ourselves. Although this has

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been well theorised and is widely acknowledged it is not a defunct argument as a general scanning of the mass media shows women to be just as much an object of male consumption as we were twenty years ago, the only difference being the images have become more glossy and sophisticated and possibly more subtle. We are both the pleasure and profit of men. We internalise these images, we are used both to sell the product and are urged to buy it. If we look at advertising we can see that women never engage with the product in a useful or productive way, they are usually caressing it. Woman humanness is irrelevant, her function is to sell a product. It would seem that the male-defined ideal of woman makes it easier for them to 'consume' depersonalised images rather than relate to 'real' women. If women internalise these images and judge themselves and others accordingly it leaves a gap for women to have real role-models. Today there seems to be a great lack of such women. If main stream cinema is to be looked at it seems that strong actresses such as Meryl Streep have disappeared from our vision. It would seem that real women operate on the fringes. However women are not mute, if we have the power to accept or reject messages. What is important is that we have a consciousness and an understanding of how we are represented, the more powerful our position to change existing structures will be.

"To decapitate equals to castrate. The terror of the Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something. The hair upon the Medusa's head is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes, and these once again are derived from the castration complex. It is a remarkable fact that, however frightening they may be in themselves, they nevertheless serve actually as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror. This is a confirmation of the technical rule according to which a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration".

(Freud, The Medusa's Head)

The fragmented body and the fascination of the part to the whole has been seen in the work of Jeanne Dunning. When considering fragmentation we associate it with the sexual fetishisation of objects or anatomical parts as a replacement of the phallus. For an understanding of this it is important to discuss the Freudian theory of fetishism. His theory is an attempt to theorise the way in which we acquire a gendered sexuality, what motivations transform the infant into the fixed male/female subject. Freud accounts for the castration complex, the loss of the male sex organ. The main subject of Freud's theory is the male/child and the point at which the male child acquires the complex is at the phallic stage, the stage when the body is able to satisfy a need for comfort. The castration fear is not localised on the loss of a specific organ rather it represents a threat to the bodies narcissistic possibilities. The child has an uneasy sense of self and moves to form an ego dependent upon an image of the body perceived from outside, in a mirror perhaps. The image of the body as a complete whole unit is the basis for

the formation of subjectivity. The fear of damage to the body hinders the formation of a child's sense of self. The discovery of anatomical difference has a huge effect on the child. The revelation of loss signified by the absence of the phallus opens up the possibility to the child's own body and the damage already done to the maternal body. Twin images of the mother as the still all powerful phallic, and the fantasy of woman as not only damaged but of damage itself are produced. The mother is castrated and the symbol of castration. In Freudian theory the discovery of anatomical difference is a source of great trauma for the child and several defenses are put into play. Fetishism forms a major defence, this is the displacement of the trauma felt by the sight of a different body onto another object such as clothes, shoes, legs. Another form of fetishism involves not just displacement onto an object but fetishistic conversion, the conversion of the whole female body into a fetish, a substitute for what appears lacking on the female body, the phallus.

Laura Mulvey describes how the fetishist image of woman has three aspects.

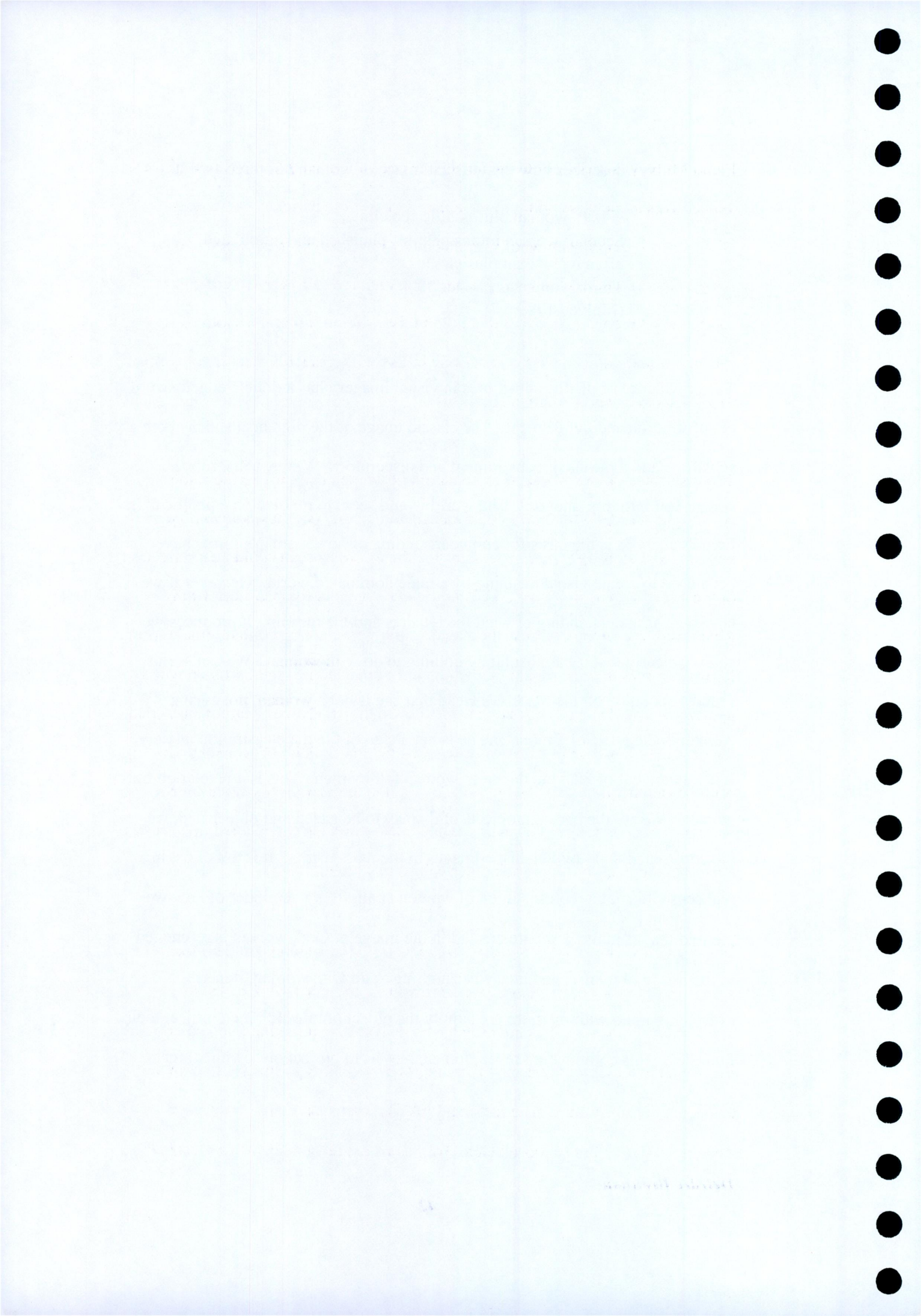
"First: woman plus phallic substitute.

Second: woman minus phallus, punished and humiliated,
often by woman plus phallus.

Third: woman as phallus".

(Mulvey 1989 p.7)

The prevalence of phallic substitutes in visual imagery has a double edged sword of substitution and punishment. The classic image of the high heel shoe is both a substitute and a means of containment and discomfort. Whips, belts, rubber, corsets fall into this category. The world would seem to revolve on a phallic axis. Freud's analysis is the basis for an understanding of how women's forms have been used to create visual meaning by a male dominated world. However if we have a clear understanding of what the fetish is and the meaning it produces we can see clearly that it has absolutely nothing to do with woman. We can see in Freud's quotation on the Medusa's Head that she is not a woman, not even a woman in the guise of a monster, she is but a sign of the male castration anxiety. It is a statement of fear and desire of woman felt by men. This is a revelation for women. We are the constant objects of display to be gazed and objectified, we are confronted daily by fetishistic images in the mass media. It is not of us, in a real sense it is not a representation of women at all. It is a reminder of how we are told that as humans we are created in the image of God, woman is re-created in the image of man. The fantasy has nothing to do with woman, it has everything to do with man, we are simply the object onto which men project their fantasies. This enlightening revelation enables us to project our own real fears and fantasies.



Freud's theory is proof of how women have been assigned to the position of the 'other' gives an understanding to the oppressive representation of woman. However it should not be wholly embraced by feminism as there is a space for women's representation beyond phallogentric logic. If the fragmented female form is to be seen as a phallic substitution this question if women should strive for representation of woman on the body in its totality, is it acceptable for women to view themselves in fragmented forms?

The insistence on the 'whole' representation of women can impose the same constraints on representation as patriarchal culture, and does a *whole unified* woman exist anyway? A representation of the *whole* woman could be a reflection of the male fantasy of woman. In *Behind the Fragment*, Ros Coward, Kathy Myers and Yve Lomax discuss their association with the fragmented female form. Myers believes that the notion of a whole unfragmented image of woman who is totally possessed is a religious one that is now defunct. Lomax's argument is that the desire for a 'whole' woman works against the multiplicity of woman and becomes a reductionist measure. For Coward the utopian ideally represented woman is a red herring. However she does not dismiss the fragmented images that appear in the mass media as being pernicious to women.

In her articles *Towards A Feminist Erotica* Kathy Myers asks should all forms of sexual imagery be regarded as a phallic substitute (Myers 1992 Ch. 4). She argues that symbolism does not only have one fixed meaning but that symbolism acts on many different levels and there exists a possibility of images that do not act as phallic substitutes. The fact that fetishisation usually employs a fragmented image this should not suppose that all fragments are fetishistic. Myers states that

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it is necessary to make a distinction commodity fetishism, butchering of the female form, and those fragments that could be termed "a pleasure in the past", a celebration of the constituent elements of the female form.

The important point is that the fragment has many different interpretations and the modes of production and consumption are embodiment of this. We have seen how Jo Spence saw the breast as a metaphor for the struggle of the women's women and represented it as such.

The use of the fragmented body images by women may serve to overturn the traditional violence against the female form. It can show the female body as a vital and disruptive force in its own right. It can show the boundlessness of the body and produce powerful unsettling images which overshadow the pleasure of ideal reflection.

"I imitate the artist as croton who when making the likeness of a goddess chose all remarkable and elegant beauties of form from several of the most handsome maidens and translated them into his work. So we too chose many bodies considered to be the most beautiful by those who know and took from each and all their dimensions, which we then compare are with another and leaving out of account the extremes on both sides, we took the mean figures validated by the majority of exempedia (ruled measurements)"

Leon Battista Alberti *De Statua* c 1464

The above is a formula for the representation of the human figure based on classical mythology. One version of the myth is the artist Zexius wishes to make a painting of the Goddess Venus. He considered no woman to be beautiful

Deirdre Brennan

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY

OF THE UNITED STATES

AND OF THE WORLD

OF THE EASTERN HEMISPHERE

OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN

OF THE ARCTIC OCEAN

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enough so he brought all the women of Croton together to pick the best part of each to piece together his ideal of a perfect beauty. On their own the fragments bore no significance, their meaning lay in their relationship to the complete form. Albertis' theory is a reformulation of this myth. The history of the display of the female body disallows those who do not live up to the acceptable criteria, bodies such as Jo Spence and Mary Duffy. Martha Rosler's video (1977) *Vital Statistics of a Citizen Simply Obtained* is an examination of how women have internalised the normative values of patriarchal culture. The woman is systematically measured by two men in white coats who record their findings on a chart behind her. Rosler's statistics are then compared to a set of 'normal' statistics.

THE
FEDERAL
BUREAU OF
INVESTIGATION
OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
WASHINGTON, D. C.
20535

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, FBI

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

DATE: [Illegible]

TO: [Illegible]

FROM: [Illegible]

RE: [Illegible]

[The following text is illegible due to extreme fading and is represented by a series of lines of varying lengths.]

Commentary to Video

"[Her mind] learns to think, perhaps without awareness, of her body as having 'parts'. These parts are to be judged. The self has already learned to attach value to itself. To see itself as a whole entity with an external vision [to] re-manufacture the look of the external self to simulate the idealised version of the natural."

Her work is an aim to show how women are regulated through scientific and cultural definitions of their bodies. Her work is not an attempt to show an alternative view of the body but to show how the female body lives within patriarchal culture. It shows how patriarchy has drawn the lines between what it considers as normal and what is deviant. She is exposing the insult and although she offers no alternatives, it is of a necessity towards consciousness raising.



CONCLUSION

To strive for a complete understanding of how patriarchal images of women produce meaning it is clear that there is a need for a strong theoretical understanding of how these images work. The images that I find derogatory now, I would possibly not have found so five years ago for the precise reason that I was not educated to understand these images. I had internalised them, found them as a representation of 'what I was'. There are certain images that a lot of women will find offensive, even those who do not have the privilege of a feminist insight, however the more subtle images that prevail in the mass media require an almost acute sensitivity to see how they collude in our oppression. There is also the prospect of no matter how positive and revolutionary our approach to self representation may be, our modes of thought and production, that these images will be read according to patriarchal notions. The fragmented body will be seen as a fetish, all bodies will be seen through the lens of phallocentrism. From my own experience, reading of my work has been seen under such conditions, toes, fingers, backs have been seen as phallic substitutes. This is an infuriating position as my work is an exploration of woman as an autonomous force.

However, I do regard 'woman' and the 'body' as a social construct and I am aware that it is almost an impossibility to shake off every patriarchal notion that I have been taught. I have also been in the position where I have had to explain to an outside assessor the difference between pornography and my video work. The clear difference was that there was an imagining of humanity beyond the screen, genital areas were not visible and as a woman I was not projecting any castration anxiety onto the female body and there was depth and context inherent in the work, it is a positive piece about women's relationships to their bodies. However, as I have stated male representation of woman that is oppressive has no relevance

Deirdre Brennan

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the second section deals with the results of the survey.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the survey. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the survey in the field of education, the second section deals with the results of the survey in the field of health, and the third section deals with the results of the survey in the field of social services.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions and the second section deals with the recommendations.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the appendix. It contains the following information: a list of the names of the persons who participated in the survey, a list of the names of the institutions that provided the data for the survey, and a list of the names of the institutions that provided the data for the survey.

to the reality of woman. When we realise this it clears a path for women to become a threat to existing meaning by injecting independent spirit into their work. I have cited the work of various feminist artists who are revolutionary, powerful and who enable us to envisage the reality and diversity of women's lives. However, although they may be positive representations of women, they are not completely autonomous. The notions of patriarchy are almost central to many of their works. It is most clearly seen in the work of Barbara Kruger, her central issue is to destroy the notions by exposing their meaning. Jeanne Dunning explores how she is the centre of phallogentric logic but makes sure the viewer is aware that she is conscious of this. Jo Spence researches how women put their bodies into the hands of a patriarchal structure to care and cure it. Perhaps Mary Duffy's approach can be seen as the most revolutionary as she presents herself as a whole, unified person. The point I am raising is that women will not be fully capable of an all powerful and positive representation until our place in society is equalised and that our work is produced free from the confines of patriarchy. This can only be achieved by women having a strong visualisation of their power and potential. It is necessary to approach the production of art with a strong theoretical understanding of patriarchy thus enabling women to destroy it and create a powerful visual on their own terms. There must be an insistence of an equal presence of women in the production and consumption of all areas of culture. The vision of a truthful representation of women may only be fully possible for a future generation who have not been raised in a culture that negates half of the human race. It is most important now for women to move forward with intellectual and emotional vigour for if we do not victory will be handed to those who wish to silence us.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific work done during the year.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific work done during the year. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the work done in the field, the second section deals with the work done in the laboratory, and the third section deals with the work done in the office.

3. The third part of the report deals with the results of the work done during the year. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the field work, the second section deals with the results of the laboratory work, and the third section deals with the results of the office work.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the conclusions drawn from the work done during the year. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions drawn from the field work, the second section deals with the conclusions drawn from the laboratory work, and the third section deals with the conclusions drawn from the office work.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the recommendations made for the future work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the recommendations made for the field work, the second section deals with the recommendations made for the laboratory work, and the third section deals with the recommendations made for the office work.

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