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**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN**

Faculty of Fine Art

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*The Deconstruction of Language and Advertising Imagery In*  
*the work of Barbara Kruger*

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## INTRODUCTION

Much feminism over the past twenty years has analysed the depiction of women in advertising and the ways in which these images reinforce the powerlessness of women. While many women artists have cautioned that women are victimised in many and complex ways by mass-culture, many selected this as the site of their intervention. Barbara Kruger was among the first artists to occupy a terrain from which women have historically been excluded or negatively inscribed.

Barbara Kruger is one of the most critically successful American women artists who found international recognition in the 1980's. She was one of the first female artists to successfully deconstruct mass-media and advertising imagery with a unique use of and manipulation of language. She employed "in-your-face" strategies and her work exemplifies the critique of social construction of gender initiated by theory. She appropriated the tradition of authoritative speech and graphic design by adopting the language of male authority in an effort to deconstruct power. Her work is illustrative of feminist analytical tools. She mimics patriarchal monologues in her texts. She boldly steps into the linguistic field by filling all environments with huge texts and images.

Since the early 1970's Kruger has been using her slogans to question the social and political forces within society. It was during the 1970's that Barbara Kruger became aware of the tools of structural analysis which were being applied to film, advertising, journalism and television. She was also concerned with analysing socio-cultural change in terms of man's urge to dominate others and to control his own



destiny through the use of force of manipulation. She applied her critique to state consumer capitalism, the politicisation of biological sex differences, and the art world. In applying this critique she obtained a revaluation of the nature of linguistic and artistic discourse. For it is within these parameters that the socio-economic, sexual, textual, and intellectual oppression of women has been found.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain how Barbara Kruger uses language and imagery, and how her use of these mediums operate as a site of political and power struggles. Her works are supported by a framework of feminist and theoretical analyses. She examines the works which entrap her in the male psychic arena - the language of capitalism. I also wish to discuss how, in her works (her early works from the early 1970's to her recent works in the 1990's), Kruger bypasses a preconditioned response to language, preferring that her reader/viewer examine the subtle processes by which words are used to influence others and also how she uses language as an instrument of force and power.

In Chapter One, I will give a brief outline of Kruger's early life and works. I will discuss the early influences on Kruger's life which I find are very important in the development of her work, for example, her early career as a graphic designer. I will also discuss how her work in the 1980's was labelled postmodernist and I have chosen a number of these works and I will discuss them in detail.



In my Second Chapter, I will discuss how Kruger attempted to locate her art within a broader network of questions about the nature of representation. Kruger's work in the 1980's was influenced by theorists such as Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. I will discuss how these theorists influenced her work and how Kruger used and manipulated language in her work.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I will discuss Kruger's new strategies of interference in her recent work of the 1990's - how her battle continues against the language of capitalism using similar techniques that she used in the late 1970's and 1980's.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Exposing the coercive methods of patriarchy.

The enquiry into the relations between representation, ideology and the subject has proved extremely productive for feminist artists who are, of course, particularly concerned with the ways in which femininity and masculinity are produced and reproduced within representations.

Barbara Kruger explores the power of the media and the market-place to shape our lives and thoughts. In her work she employs deconstruction and appropriation. Her work obviously stemmed from the emergence of a set of critical practices within modernism with the 1970s and 1980s that led to critiques of the ways that media images positioned women. The message of what it is to be “woman” was conveyed to women through the mass-media. In the work of Kruger, representations of “woman” are of central importance in the construction of female subjectivity. The mass-media does not merely provide a complex array of contradictory representations which produce multiple meanings and therefore affords myriad sites of identification.

For two decades, Barbara Kruger has made pictures and images that entice and beguile only to accost us with accusatory words. Her practice reflects the discovery of the formative power of images. It is a critique of the society of the spectacle, in dialogue with it through her use of idiomatic forms of cultural production. But we can also look at her pieces as items in the consumer world as well as responses to it, as products, not by-products, and examine their genesis as might a market-researcher



who seeks to understand a product in relation to the market. She manipulates the graphics we associate with the mass- media to ask her audience direct questions, or indirectly to tell the world what she thinks. The conflict inherent in our public and personal interactions is reflected in Kruger's form which in the end also exposes the lethal blandness of so-called popular-culture. In consequence of these activities, Kruger is at once a social commentator and a political agitator. Her work has both a place and a strategic role within contemporary artistic discourse.

To discuss the works of Barbara Kruger, I will first look briefly at her past, to the influences which shaped her as an artist.

In 1966, Kruger studied at the Parsons School of Design in New York, working with photographer Diane Arbus and graphic designer/artist Marvin Israel. Needing a job, Kruger presented her portfolio to Corde Nast publications and was hired as a graphic designer and picture editor: the expertise she acquired as "Mademoiselle's" chief designer would greatly influence her art a decade later. Her initial career as an artist began after seeing a 1969 show of woven hangings by Magdalena Abakanowicz, which influenced her choice of fibre-related craft techniques traditionally associated with "woman's work".

The mid-1970s was a time of transition for Kruger. She read widely and studied film and later would write film and television criticism for "Artforum" magazine. In 1975 she scrapped her soft materials and spent a year painting



abstractions before she stopped making art altogether. When she resumed work, it was as a photographer. Given her interest in writing, it is not surprising that she soon began to incorporate words into her art. Social relations as experienced in everyday life also began to become apparent in Kruger's work. She addressed this theme in various modes and media, using double-panel format or composing installations and performances employing slide projections and audiotape or live readings. A group of four-panel works entitled the "HOSPITAL SERIES" is indicative of her production at that time. Here, image and text are arranged in disparate panels : the first panel showing photographic details of hospital fixtures ; the third, images - now appropriated from other sources - of social situations. But in the second panel are cryptically evocative phrases - "the elimination of the romantic body", "the honing of the functional gesture" - that hints at Kruger's suggestive word use to come. In the last panel, language is reduced to a short phrase or word : "Please", "No", "Not that". Although the relations between the different panels are too elusive to trigger a sustained reaction, the heightened economy of the devices points toward Kruger's advanced development of work.

In 1981 her new mode, large-scale black and white images reshot from scavenged photographs and interpolated with written messages. She also lifted images from old advertising annuals and other such compendia of photographic clichés, which she enlarged, cropped, and then supplemented with bold slogans and crimson frames. These frames later became a trademark of her work. This seductive form ensured that the works would circulate smoothly at every level in commodity signs.



Photography penetrated the “high” art audience around the late 1960s and early 1970’s. In re-presenting photographic images from mass-culture, Kruger’s work was categorised as “postmodern”. For Kruger, postmodernism was not a style succeeding the dissolution of modernism, but rather a historical condition marked by new philosophical relations. The postmodern self is not the centred and controlling subject, set apart from and “master” over history ; as it emphasises the regulating power of social forces, it can be said to describe the decentring of the self. It’s major focus is less the modernist theme of the creative subject of production than the production of the subject, for it enquires into the ways in which our identities are constructed by representations in society. Kruger investigates the underside of this process, examining how representation legislates, defines and subjects.

Kruger developed images by reproducing other images, appropriating the media’s picturings so as to extend and amplify their rhetoric. No formal criteria can explain her manipulations. She erodes, merging images and words, multiplying media, and annexing concepts from other disciplines.

Seriality and repetition, appropriation, intertextuality; these were the methods employed by Kruger in her artmaking. This is apparent from the works she displayed in the “Public Address” exhibition in 1981 (organised by New York art dealer Annina Nosei). The works in that exhibition provided the final breakthrough into the form she uses today. “I saw it becoming more articulate about who I was and going through some kind of explicit rather than implicit critique.”(Squiers, 1987, p. 79).



Suddenly Kruger's works was straightforward and aggressive. Red-enamelled frames enclosed these sharp black and white images which where culled from old photographic annuals, instruction manuals, and magazines and overlaid with phrases set in blocks of bold-face type. The planarity of the imagery simulates the two-dimensionality of printed media, while their sharp foregrounding has an expository quality, a visual punch that assaults the viewer. Kruger's words are explicit, impertinent, declarative. The slogan "YOU DESTROY WHAT YOU THINK IS DIFFERENCE"(Fig.1) slides down through an area dividing a man's face from a woman's face. In another piece a man's hand raises a burning torch in front of a heart and next to it block letters spell out "YOUR MOMENTS OF JOY HAVE THE PRECISION OF MILITARY STRATEGY". A shadowy picture of well-shod feet is confronted with the charge "YOU MAKE HISTORY WHEN YOU DO BUSINESS".

Another work shows the mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion and bears the caption "YOUR MANIAS BECOME SCIENCE" (Fig.2). The works are all structured by binary oppositions - by we vs. you, nature vs. culture, active vs. passive, supine vs. standing - repeating, so as to rupture, those operations which construct the woman as "other".

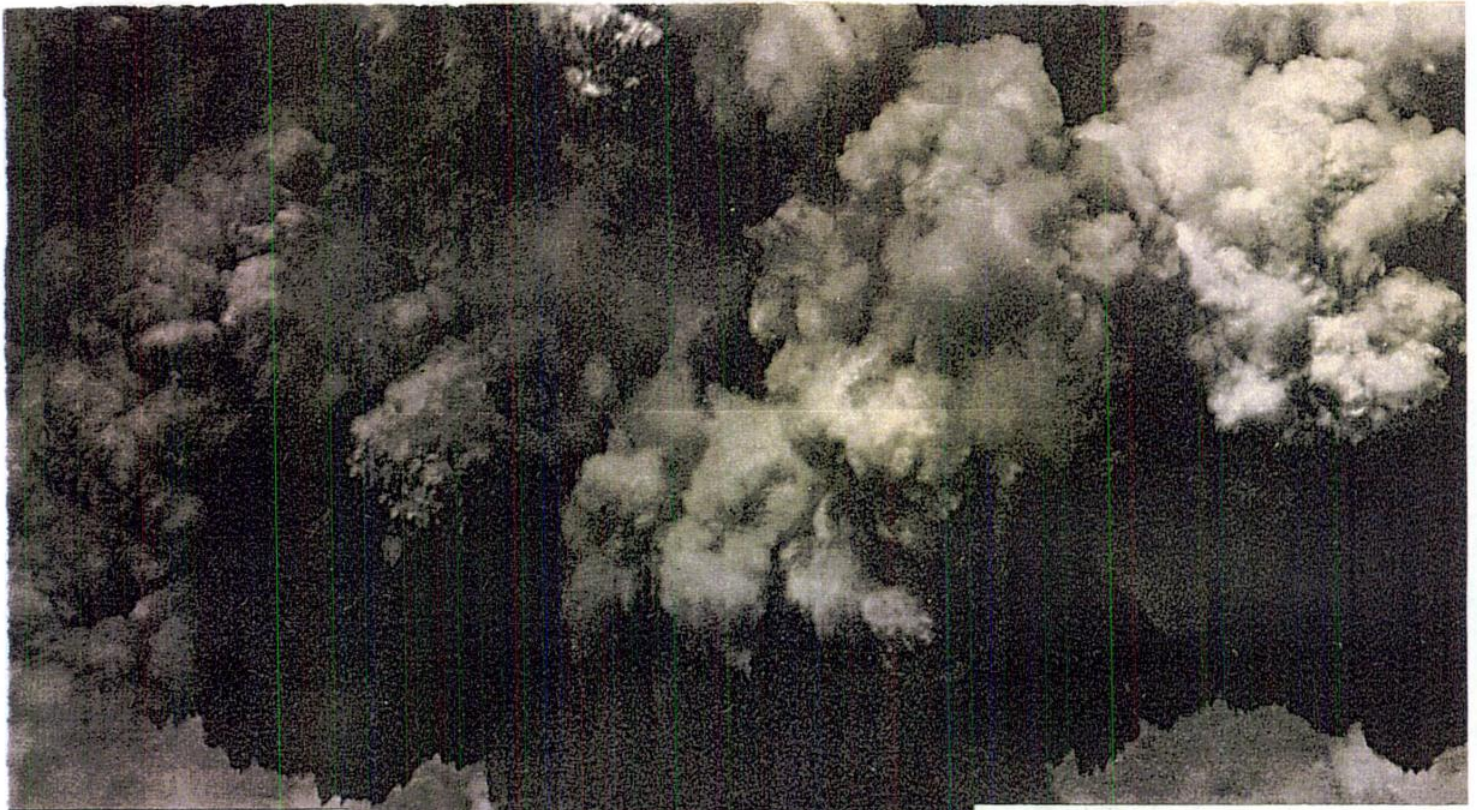
Kruger's critique of signifying conventions is specifically informed by cinematic theory. In cinema the two main instances of controlling perspective are voyeurism and the narrator's authoritative voice. It is the male voice-over that affords the conventional vantage on spectacle, a position occupied in advertising by the





Fig. 1. "YOU DESTROY WHAT YOU THINK IS DIFFERENCE"





**Your** *manias become* **science**



Fig. 2. "YOUR MANIAS BECOME SCIENCE"



masculine- phrased text, or by the female rehearsing the male perspective. Language serves to regulate the viewer's position through the disembodied stance of authority or knowledge, much as it serves to anchor or stabilise meaning, binding image to text. Kruger's use of the female voice is primed by the absence in cinema of the female voice that analyses, reflects or assumes an active relation to the narrative. The assaultive tone in her work counters the sham transparency of the masculine code. The disparity between text and the masculine phrasing of the image acts to fissure the process of identification, driving a wedge between image and referent and defeating the closure of meaning. A refusal of suture, then, which opens points of intrusion within dominant ideology ; which works to unmoor the unity of the masculine perspective, leading to the proliferation of meanings, none of them are subjectively centred. And within the gap between image and text, between illusioned object and assaultive, contradictory voice, is cleared a space for the participation of a feminine subjectivity long denied by its subjected status.

Kruger's use of literal language indicates her attention to the social construction of all identity. Her manipulations demonstrate that there is no basic self or fixed identity, but only a construction in process. "Position" is a part of language, produced in an intersubjective network - through the determinations that put "me" against "you", "us" against "them", or construct a self in relation to another. These oscillations indicate the evanescence of the subject, its continuous repositioning and restructuring in the process of signification. What they point to, in Kruger's work is the subjects mobility within those myriad representations, based on but not identical



to language, which comprise our putative reality. And in that mobility lies the prospect of a counterlanguage, aimed against language's rigidification.

Kruger's rise to art-world prominence in the early 1980s was fueled in part by critical endorsement from figures such as Craig Owens, Hal Foster, Kate Linker and Jane Weinstock (Linker, 1996, p.92). These critics described her work as capable of relentlessly "disrupting" the viewer's perceptions through the cunning deployment of "appropriated" images and personal pronouns. Her image/text pieces were endowed with the power to provoke the most remarkable kinds of transformations in the viewer's relationship to the mass-media. According to Craig Owens, Kruger's work "forces the viewer to shift uncomfortable between inclusion and exclusion" (Owens, 1983, p.6). And in Jane Weinstock's view, Kruger's work "literally positions" the viewer; "you are positioned" and "linguistically placed".

Owens analysed Kruger's early work of the eighties - its manipulation and interception of the stereotype as a way of contesting the social positioning of the body (Weinstock, pp.12-16). As Owens pointed out, her interventions use mass-cultural techniques of production to counter the subjugation imposed by the stereotype with an active pleasure in decoding and resisting (Ibid, p.7). Using linguistic shifters to play on and against advertising's direct address its appeal to identification, to the particularity of "you", the individual., that masks the stereotype's hostility to differences - Kruger parodies the operation of advertising. But a side effect of this emphasis on what Owens described as an attack on the stereotype was to marginalise or repress the possibility for sadistic and masochistic identifications that are also present in Kruger's work. For while Kruger obviously does perform a



vigorous critique of stereotypes - and there is no stereotype more conventional or more fundamental to advertising than the association of femininity, masochism and mass-culture - she also problematises these terms and their devaluation by constructing set ups that enact not only the satisfactions of decoding and analysis, but also the pleasures and torments of identification.

Kruger appropriates mass-culture not only, as Kate Linker wrote in 1983, to demonstrate how it operates as an instrument of social control, exposing “the practices by which ideology fixes the production of meaning, reducing its plurality to a limited number of signifieds which are equated with truth within the social economy”, but also to point out how certain images and practices open a space of resistance, even subversion (Linker, 1996,p.41). This potential for resistance depends on the possibility a tension between identification and refusal, between constraint and mobility in reading, and the oscillation between these terms has allowed Kruger to avoid implying, as Hal Foster put it, “not only that...cultural fictions and subject positions are more absolute than they are but also that the artist is transcendent in relation to them” (Foster, p.12). The use of interruptions and interventions can be seen not only as exposing the coercive methods of the stereotype but also the resistant ways that people read.

One mechanism of this staging of resistance is the text screen that is inserted between viewer and image. Figured as an obstruction, the text disturbs the seamless surface of the picture, blocking fantasies of possession and voicing fantasies of revenge. UNTITLED (“ I AM YOUR SLICE OF LIFE”) (Fig.3) for example, displays





Fig. 3 "I AM YOUR SLICE OF LIFE"



a row of three mat-knife blades, strangely suspended by their sharp tips poised against a drafting board. The images that are sliced to pleasure the gaze are withdrawn. The photograph is cropped not to intensify pleasure but to refuse it, removing the pleasurable part and picturing only the instruments of its construction. Through devices such as sharp cropping, extreme enlargement, and the text screen, and techniques of negation and substitution, Kruger draws attention to the usual subordination of image to gaze by interrupting it.

In UNTITLED ( "YOU ARE NOT YOURSELF") (Fig.4) a woman's grimacing face is shown reflected in a splintered mirror and her fingers are grasping one of the glass fragments to slide it into place in an attempt to reconstruct the fractured image. This gesture, of course, has the unsettling effect of destroying the appearance of a unified identity, so that the violence against representation is felt as an annihilation of the self. But simultaneous with this splitting of the unified 'I' comes a multiplication of the eye, mirrored in a pinwheel of divergent angles.

In an 1981 photograph, a head in profile is shot through a pane of bubbled glass. The distortion of the visual field by this screen obscures all the details of identity - race and gender, for example - while a band emblazoned with the word "mistaken" masks the eyes. The phrase superimposed on the photograph, "YOU THRIVE ON MISTAKEN IDENTITY" (Fig.5), forwards and an accusation, of course, about the false identities constructed by the sadistic gaze, whose fantasy of possession is obstructed here; but it can also be read as a statement of masochistic pleasure in mistaken identity.



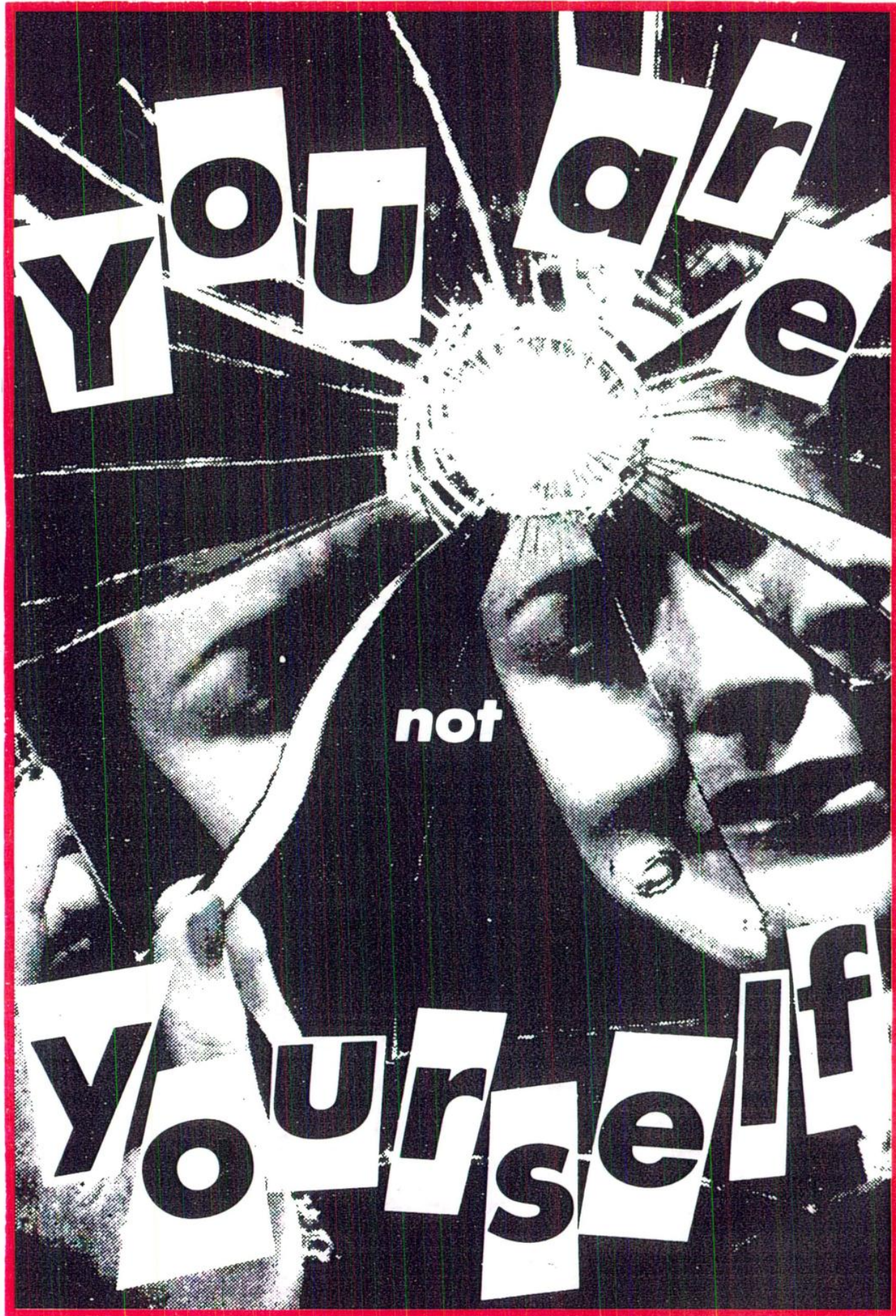


Fig 4. "UNTITLED (YOU ARE NOT YOURSELF)"



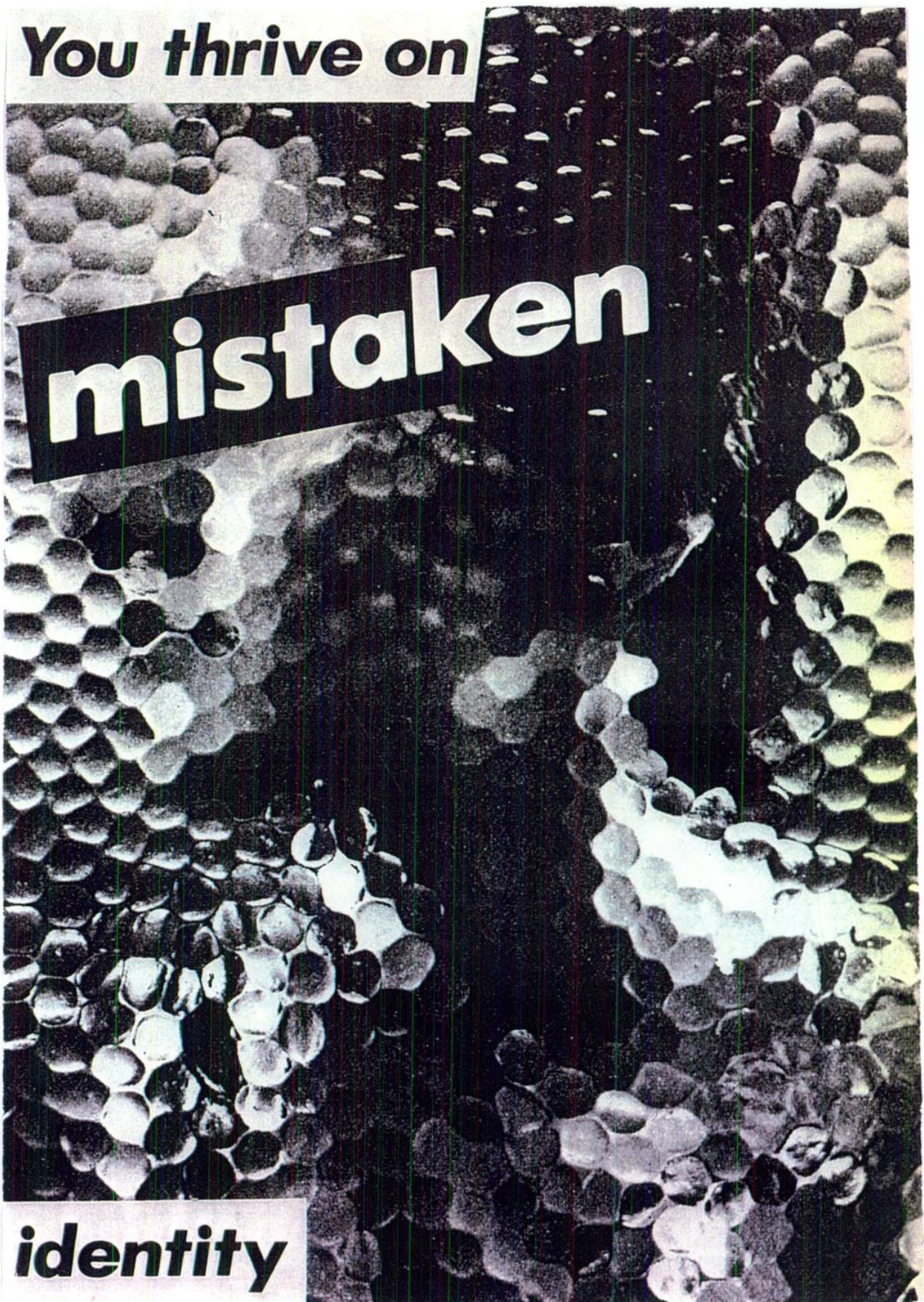


Fig. 5. "YOU THRIVE ON MISTAKEN IDENTITY"



In 1984, Kruger's work underwent a subtle change that confounded members of the art community. In a one-person exhibition organised that year, she showed two bodies of work, one concerning women's relations to looking, the other a new series dealing, bluntly and assertively, with money. The main features in her work were all in evidence. However, the focus of her pronomial play had shifted to a broader and more intricate sphere. For if the address in the early works was a masculine-sexed subject, the new series spoke to a more complex group of interesting subjects foregrounding money and consumption as guarantees of masculine power. In one work, drops of milk suspended from a baby's bottle are extended by the words "YOU ARE GETTING WHAT YOU PAID FOR"; in another, an image of an exploding house is countered by the accusation "YOUR MONEY TALKS". Both series disclose an underlying identity, hinging on the sign as a site of social, economic and sexual control.

Kruger's critique of the sign of commodity brings to mind the writings of Jean Baudrillard, which were central to many artists such as Jenny Holzer, Sherrie Levine and Cindy Sherman in the late 1970s, early 1980s. Basically, Baudrillard believed that "capital" enforces its power through the manipulation of representations. We have been purposefully deluged by a sea of representations, he insisted, and now they have drowned reality. We no longer judge our images in terms of how well they resemble our experience; we judge our experience in terms of how much it resembles our images. Baudrillard sees his contemporaries as adrift in the world of the "simulacra"-pure images, floating free, referring to nothing but themselves - and in the world of



the spectacle, the endless ribbon of entertainment and news and confession brought by the mass-media (Baudrillard, 1988).

In a group of texts published Baudrillard in the 1960's, he elucidated a stage in social relations that was no longer marked by the Marxist ethos of production but by the ideology of consumption. Describing a breakdown in the Marxist opposition between the cultural and economic, Baudrillard detailed the "commodification" of the former and "symbolisation" of the latter. "Today", he argued "consumption .... defines precisely the stage where the commodity is immediately produced as a sign, as sign value, and where signs (culture) are produced as commodities (Baudrillard, 1981, p.147). In this stage, in other words, the language of capital has so penetrated the sign that material production is indistinguishable from its semiotic effects. Consumption, Baudrillard tells us, is no longer dictated by needs or even by "real objects as sources of satisfaction", but by semiotic prestige. He also wrote:

**"Dominant classes have always either assumed their domination over sign values from the outset ...or endeavoured (in a capitalist bourgeois order) to surpass, to transcend and to consecrate their economic privilege in a semiotic privilege, because this later stage represents the ultimate stage of domination. This logic, which comes to relay class logic and which is no longer defined by ownership of the means of production but by the mastery of the process of signification...activates a mode of production radically different from that of material production." ( Baudrillard, 1981, pp. 115-116)**

Spectacle, then, represents a stage of display, and of manipulation through display, that manifests itself in control over the construction, distribution and reception of information.

The ideology of consumption is played out on several levels, each of which is manifested in Kruger's art. Thus, when Kruger accosts the viewer with the accusation "YOUR ASSIGNMENT IS TO DIVIDE AND CONQUER" in one work, she refers



both to the masculine desire to subjugate woman and to the political imperative to domesticate others, to colonise and control. Works by Kruger project a theme of personal loss, instituted by through sexual power (“DO I HAVE TO GIVE UP ME TO BE LOVED BY YOU?”). Others invoke the all-consuming urge for consumption (“JAM LIFE INTO DEATH”) (Fig.6).





Fig.6 "JAM LIFE INTO DEATH"



## CHAPTER TWO

### Focusing Through Concepts Of Power And Language.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, a great deal of feminist activity consisted of attempts to locate art within a broader network of questions about the nature of representation and how it conditioned the way women identified themselves and were identified to others.

Transformations in American art and criticism at this time were fueled by the introduction of new translations of European theory, including the works of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudillard, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. In part, this work studied the function of cultural myths in representation in social systems, and the perpetuation and function of these systems through representation.

Among Kruger's generation, gender was not regarded as an innate or "essential" condition, but rather as a construction produced through representation. Sexuality was regarded as the result of signification and semiotic effects, rather than of biology. Masculinity and femininity came to be seen as the products of adaptation of social standards of sexuality, in which the impact of signs play a determining role.

These debates, concerning the construction of gender informed the practices of feminist artists, including Kruger, and reflected in their work was the influence



European theory, in particularly the writings of Michel Foucault, Jean Baudillard, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan, whose account of the construction of sexuality in language was taken as offering an account of the way in which patriarchal values are assigned. Also important were the writings of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, which were extensive critiques of Western Representation and it's central concepts of originality, authority and selfhood. Most of these texts were read only generally; in fact, Kruger voiced her concern not to "illustrate" theory. However, crucial ideas that circulated within theory about the relations among sexuality, meaning and language influenced her work. For example, her work takes its impetus from Derrida's strategy of deconstruction which aims to displace patriarchal binary oppositions to re-inscribe them with different meanings. In Kruger's work the displaced oppositions comprise of active/passive, culture/nature, prowess/pose, subject/object, examples of Kruger's use of these binaries would be "YOUR FICTIONS BECOME HISTORY" or "WE WON'T PLAY NATURE TO YOUR CULTURE".

During these years Kruger has also been using and formulating various ideologies and theories available to her in endeavouring to understand language and its powers. Michel Foucault's post-structuralism theorises power and also the manipulation of discursive systems which construct ideological truths. Kruger's texts mimic the technologies of power and her work functions as a critique of these systems which maintain the oppression of women.

Derrida, Foucault, and Kristeva all have shared presumptions. They attempt to criticise conceptions of the work of art in terms of its creative origins. In refusing to



assign representations to an author or a controlling producer, they understand texts by means of an intertextual series of traces, echoes of echoes, which preclude any idea of a singular or decideable origin; texts are reproductions not of an original but always and only of other reproductions. In jettisoning the author or artist as the cause of the work of art, the history of discursive production and the contemporary synchronic terrain it occupies are invoked by explanation. This not only dissolves the notion of a creative source, but also problematises the presumption of a pregiven unity attributed to the text or art works, which now seem more as a fragment within a history and context of other fragments.

Such materialist analyses of representational systems are commonly part of more specifically political project. A politics of representation, however, is not considered as a reflection of politics undertaken elsewhere - in the streets, in the bedroom, etc. - a mediated politics, referring to a non-textual or non-artistic political world which it represents. If the politics of art or representation is based on this separation of art from life, then the politics of art must be viewed as internal to the field in which it is categorised.

There seems to be an intimate connection between these kinds of political analyses and questions of subjectivity and subjective positioning. In spite of many differences and tensions amongst them, Kristeva, Foucault and Derrida share the common concerns I have just outlined. In all of their writings, the construction of sexuality in language, the paradigmatic system for all representation and discourse, was taken as offering an account of the way in which patriarchal values were assigned



Barbara Kruger's art depends on a sense of the political and on an understanding of the human subject as constructed by the social forces over which it formally claimed control. She developed these focuses through a concept of power, which, like that advanced by Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, is opposed to the "traditional" interpretation of power as constituted or embodied in a sovereign state or juridical apparatus. To Kruger, power is not localised in specific institutions but is dispersed through a multiplicity of sites, operating in the range of discursive procedures that govern sexuality, morality, the family, education, etc. In this manner power cannot be centralised; rather, it is anonymous: it exists less as a "body" than as a network of relations unifying social apparatuses and institutions.

For Foucault, power is not an essentially corrupt phenomenon but a productive one. Yet power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to mask its own mechanisms. Foucault has been criticised for failing to properly distinguish between 'language' and 'discursive' systems in his use of 'discourse', however, his theories have useful applications for feminists.

Kruger's attention, like Foucault's, is directed to the control and positioning of the social body, a control that is instrumental to society's aim of producing normalised subjects that can be inserted into its ideological social and economic orders.



For Barthes, the instrument in which power is inscribed is language. Kruger works to expose what Barthes called "the rhetoric of the image" (Barthes, p.14): those tactics whereby photographs impose their messages upon us. It was Barthes who first proposed to replace the ideology of literary invention with an "ideolectology" whose operative concepts would be citation reference, stereotype, and many artists, like Kruger, worked within the regime of the stereotype, manipulating mass-cultural imagery so that hidden ideological agendas are supposedly exposed. But most of these artists treated the stereotype as something arbitrarily imposed upon the social field from without, and thus as something relatively easy to depose. Kruger, however, regards it as an integral part of social processes of incorporation, exclusion, domination and rule - that is, as a weapon, an instrument of power.

By focusing on the wider issue of representation, artists like Kruger sought to undercut the authority of certain dominant representations (especially as they emanated from the media through photography), and, to begin to construct representations which would be less confining and oppressive. Her work concerning subjectivity confronted a notorious absence - the question of sexuality. Examining its relation to questions of meaning and language, her work has exposed the way in which dominant discourses address spectators as gendered subjects, at once positioning and constructing subjectivity and securing patriarchal organisation. What is at issue for Kruger is a critique of patriarchy. For it is patriarchal relations that set the terms for the forms of subjectivity, serving to satisfy existing interests and echoing a history of feminine oppression. Throughout representation there are abundant forms in which the apparatus works to constitute the subject as male,



denying subjectivity to woman. Woman, within this structure, was unauthorised, illegitimate: she did not represent but was, rather, represented. Placed in a passive rather than active role, as object rather than subject, she was the constant point of masculine appropriation in a society in which representation was empowered to construct identity.

This perspective was corroborated by Jacques Lacan, who remarked in 1958, that "images and symbols for the woman cannot be isolated from images and symbols of the woman..... It is the representation, the representation of feminine sexuality.....which conditions how it comes into play". (Mitchell, 1975, p.126).

It was with the aim of understanding the construction of sexed subjectivity so as to disarm the positioning of the phallogentric order that artists, including Kruger, became interested in psychoanalysis. But to psychoanalytic theory of a very particular kind. The model which female artists of the late 1970's and early 1980's turned to was one that viewed the unconscious and sexuality as constructed through language, through modes of representation that characterised women's relation with others. Sexuality, then, could not have been understood outside of the symbolic structures that articulated it, and prescribed society's laws. The model employed what was most forceful in Freud's theory - his analysis of the construction of the psychological categories of sexuality - using the sciences of linguistics and semiotics that were unavailable to him. It is generally associated with the radical rereading of Freud undertaken by Lacan. For Freud, looking held the key to sexual identity. According to Freud the child's look establishes its mother, or another, as lacking the masculine



organ and therefore inherently “less than” the male (Linker, 1985, p.90). Sexual difference thus derives from a visible difference, which structures woman as “castrated” within the patriarchal order. Freud’s concept, however, should not be interpreted as anatomical determinism, for the play of absence and presence is only significant insofar as it already has meaning within a formation of sexual difference: it is specific to patriarchy and to its particular attribution of values. Lacan extended Freud’s concept, describing the phallus as the privileged signifier, or signifier of privilege, in our society. In the Lacanian system, the phallus is the mask around which subjectivity, social law, and the acquisition of language turn; human sexuality is assigned and, consequently, lived, according to the position one assumes as either having or not having the phallus and with it, access to its symbolic structures. Lacan’s work is mainly his revising of Freud’s ideas. Lacan’s way of reading Freud located sexuality itself in language, that is, in culture. In Lacan’s theory of language acquisition, what is essential is the relation of the unconscious to language and symbolic behaviour. Lacan believes that the study of the laws of language and the laws of the unconscious are one and the same thing. That the unconscious is structured like a language, for Lacan, linguistics is the cornerstone of all psychoanalytic science.

Two things are at issue in Lacan’s work at once, the unjust accommodation of woman to the masculine standard; the other, the specific role as fantasy she performs in the sustenance of that very arbitrary accord. Evident in Lacan’s writing, and before it in that of Freuds, is that the framework for the expression of “sexual complementarity” is masculine. Woman is defined as the difference from man,



judged against his determining maleness. This definition of woman as not male, as “other”, consists in the renunciation of feminine specificity. Defined as “negative” through the terms of sexual polarity, woman functions as a category against which masculine privilege attains to presence: it is through her negative place that the value of dominion accrues. This prescribes that woman will never be able to represent her difference but will serve as a mirror for the masculine subject, divesting otherness to the same. This is why, according to Lacan, there can be no “relation” between the sexes, but only “the union of opposites, difference resolved into one”.

Lacanian theorists insist upon the phallus as being a very complicated notion and much distinguished from the penis. Jane Gallop describes the Lacanians’ desire to separate phallus from penis and to control the meaning of the signifier phallus, as precisely symptomatic of their desire to have the phallus. Lacanians desire to be at the centre of language. “Their inability to control the meaning of the word phallus is evidence of what Lacan calls symbolic castration”. (Gallop, 1988, p.127). Thus, in society, as long as the attributes of power and the centre of language is a phallus which can only have meaning by referring to and being confused with a penis, this confusion will support a structure in which it seems reasonable that men have power and women do not.

Power always creates its own definitions and this is particularly true of the distinction made between male and female in patriarchal discourse. A Barbara Kruger text reads “YOU DESTROY WHAT YOU THINK IS DIFFERENCE”.



Many other works by Kruger address the theme of absence (“I AM NOT YOUR ALMOST NOTHING” states a work of 1983 and “YOU DELIGHT IN THE LOSS OF OTHERS” (Fig.7) says another of 1982). In a piece from 1983, an image of a woman is overlaid with the words “WE CONSTRUCT THE CHORUS OF MISSING PERSONS”, alluding to the construction of woman as a “category” defined by the phallic term. Elsewhere Kruger adopts the tone of a tease, collaging the preposition “NOW YOU SEE US..... NOW YOU DON’T” to an image of a rubber stopper suspended over a drain. Here Kruger is giving a literal form to the definition of a woman as incomplete, not “whole”.

Several works by Kruger comment on the illusion of visual detachment, disclosing it as a tool of masculine aggression. Indeed Kruger’s art is invariably directed at the manner in which visual mastery become aligned with difference or at the way in which representations position women as objects of the male gaze.

Freud commented on the impure pleasures of looking, observing that vision is always implicated in a system of control. In “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality”, he cited pleasure in looking as an independent drive, evident in children, where it assumes both passive and active forms. Thus, voyeurism gives pleasure positioning oneself against another while the desire to be both subject and object of the gaze characterises exhibitionism. Lacan later distinguished between the narcissistic impulse, which consists of erotic investment in one’s personal image, and



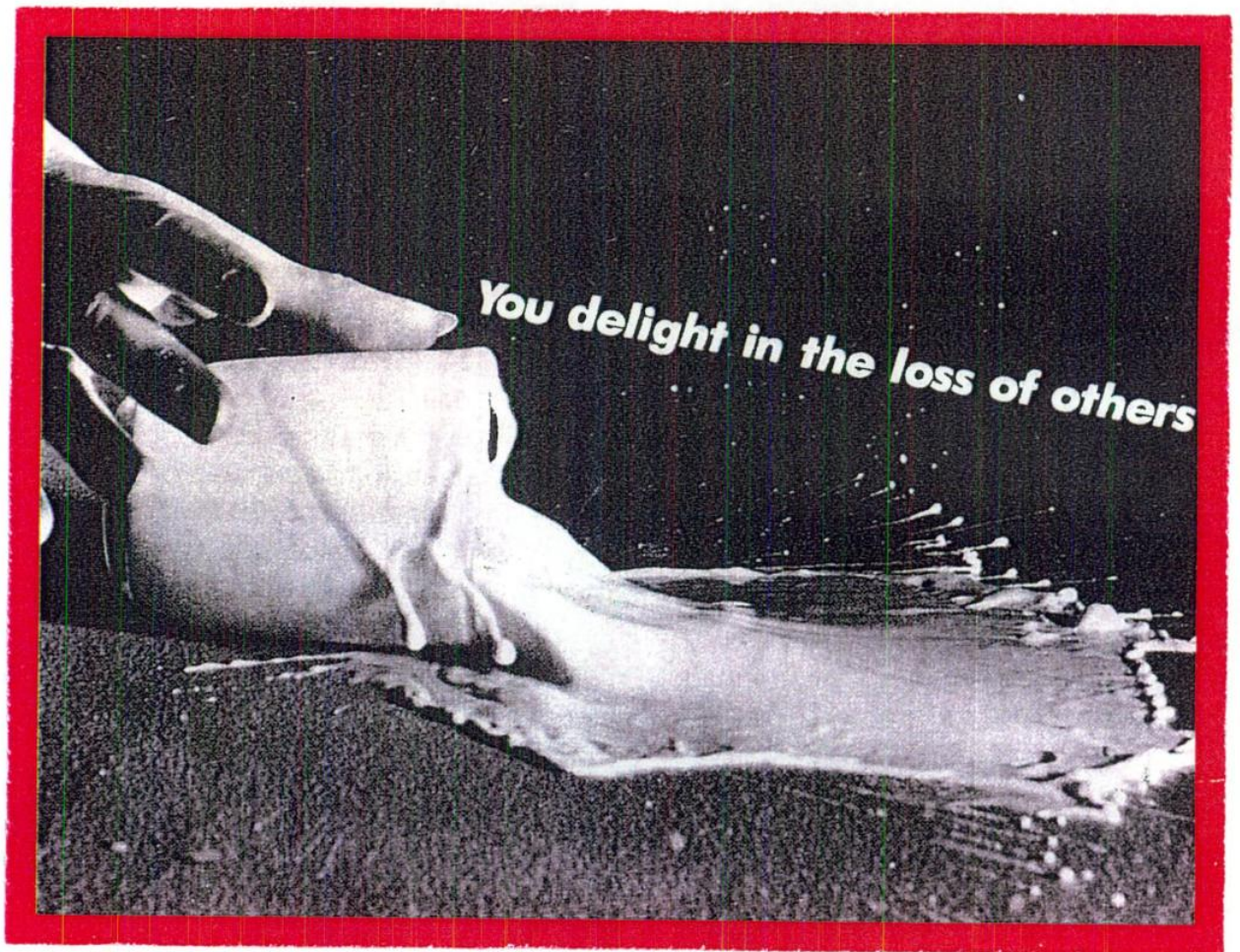


Fig.7 "YOU DELIGHT IN THE LOSS OF OTHERS"



the sadistic pleasure of the voyeur. Representations do not actually produce these objectifying effects; rather, they reproduce and reinforce modes of mastery that are found in early psychic structures of control. We recognise in Kruger's work the Freudian trope of the narcissistic woman, or the Lacanian "theme" of femininity as contained spectacle, which exists only as a representation of masculine desire. When Kruger collages the words "YOUR GAZE HITS THE SIDE OF MY FACE" (Fig.8) alongside the image of a stone female portrait head, she may be referring to the power of the gaze to arrest its object. When the words "YOU INVEST IN THE DIVINITY OF THE MASTERPIECE" appear over a blown-up detail of the creation scene from the Sistine Chapel, she may be simply parodying over reverence for works of art, or may be even making a commentary on artistic production as a contract between fathers and sons. Elsewhere she comments - "YOU ARE A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE". Here, Kruger may be referring to the convention in film and literary narrative by which the masculine protagonist arrests or advances action, controlling the course of events.

Throughout her art, women appear in static or supine poses, displayed according to clichéd conventions of popular representation. The binary oppositions of active/passive, surveyor/surveyed, standing/supine, like the conceptual category culture/nature are means by which society imposes its authority so as to subject one half to the privileged term. When Kruger reproduces a photograph of a recumbent woman, her eyes significantly blinded by leaves, she disrupts its impositions with a feminist retort. "WE WON'T PLAY NATURE TO YOUR CULTURE" (Fig. 9). In this piece, the female artist speaks to a male audience, but the privileged viewers are



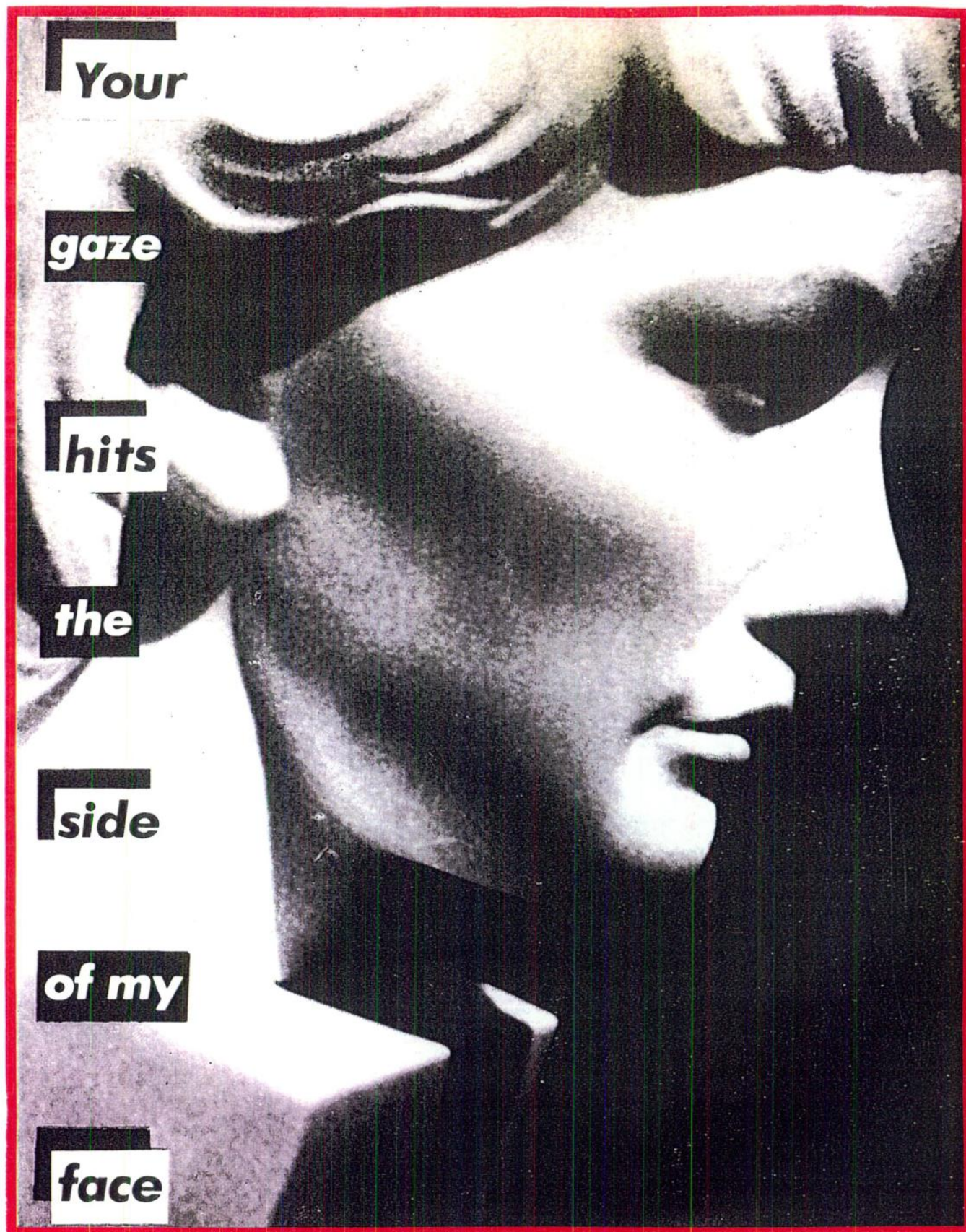


Fig. 8. "YOUR GAZE HITS THE SIDE OF MY FACE"



women, who share the assumption, and the full subjecthood, of the female artist as we look. Leaves blind the woman in the picture: but we can see how men's representations of women to "stand for" Nature, take away women's ability to see in their own right. These images reverse the advertising tricks used in designs aimed at the woman consumer. Kruger has given these incisive analyses the prestige of gallery art, but she has also given them wide circulation, printing them on T-shirts and on advertisement billboards.

In her "WE WILL BE" she made a large, one-dimensional hardboard cut-out of the racist stereotype of the black woman as household servant. True to white sign of black woman, her arms folded protectively across her body and she looks modestly away from us. But her skirt is made of images of black civil rights leaders and black fighters. And her apron tells us "WE WILL BE WHO WE WANT, IN THE WAY WE WANT, WITH WHOM WE WANT, WHERE WE WANT...." On her apron pocket is the word "NO", written fifteen times.

If sexual roles are constructed in representation, they can also be revised and restructured in discourse, thus, feminist theory contrasts the multiplicity of subject positions in language with the rigid paradigms of identity generated by and for the social order. The feminist approach to art and media has entailed a broad critique of signification for all representations that position their viewers, allowing for active participation in or subjection to meaning in an attitude of passive consumption. Since society depends on repetition to stabilise meanings, most images and texts confirm



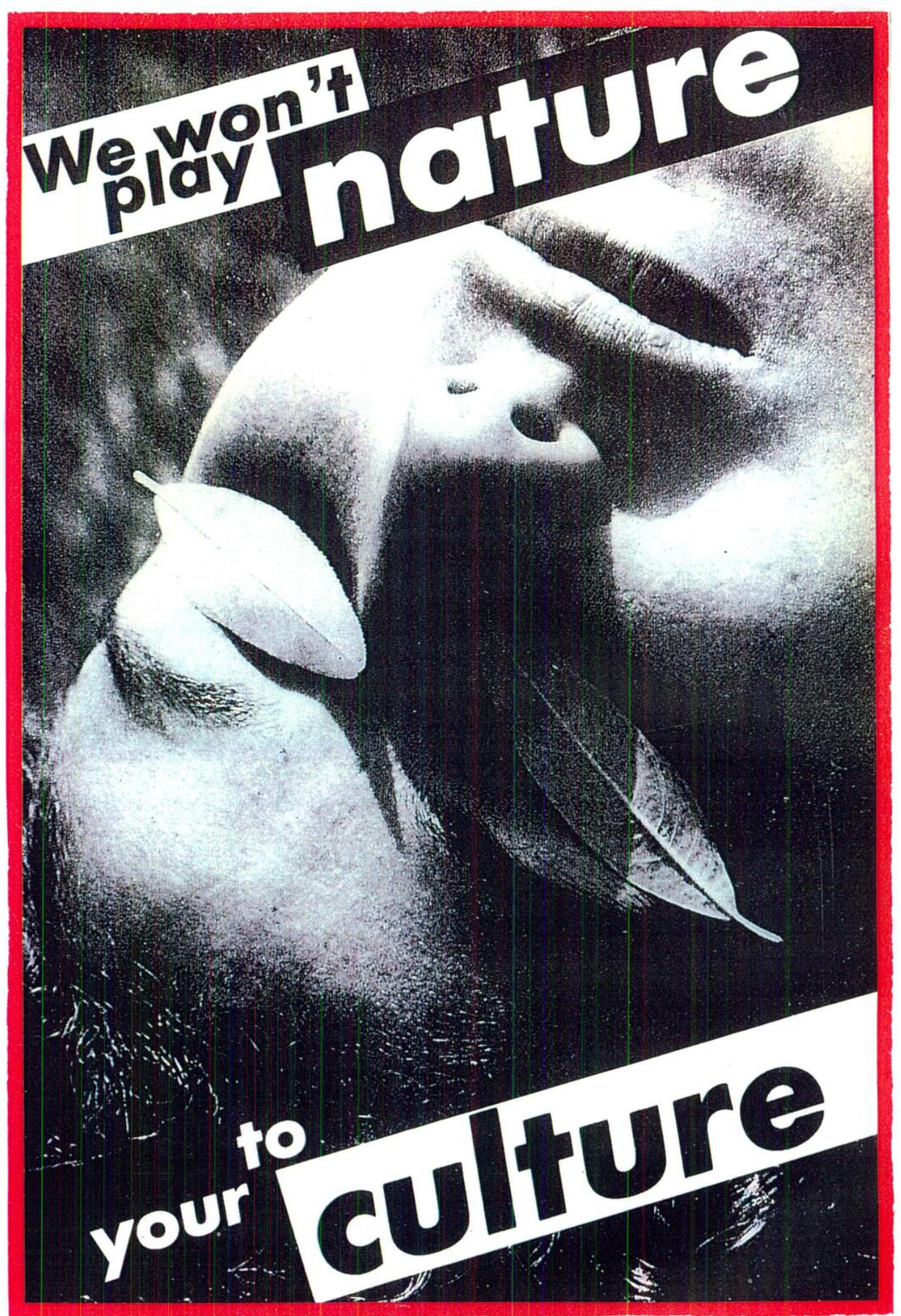


Fig. 9 "WE WON'T PLAY NATURE TO YOUR CULTURE"



and duplicate subject positions. Consumption, therefore, sets the stage for ideological domination; as Roland Barthes has suggested, the reproduction of the system requires our consumption of its codes. He said: "Language is legislation, speech is its code.... to utter a discourse is not, as is too often repeated, to communicate; it is to subjugate" (Barthes, In October, no.8 , p.14).

In our capitalist world, characterised as it is by privatised forms of gratification, there is an increased investment in leisure goods and services that are far from simple organs of entertainment. The array of enticements these commodities offer cannot conceal the limited meanings they convey; instead, they extend the regime of control implemented through the signifier. Kruger encapsulates this fascination with the words: "We are seduced by the sex appeal of the inorganic".



## CHAPTER THREE

### *Subverting the authority of words*

Since Barbara Kruger's signature red, black and white graphics first appeared in the early 1980s, they have become a familiar presence in the world of contemporary art as well as on the street. In the late 1980's Kruger's work was sometimes dependent on humour of the black variety. In one piece - surprisingly framed in baby pink rather than red - a colour photo of a suspiciously phallic-looking petit fours is labelled "GIVE ME ALL YOU'VE GOT" (Fig. 10) in hot-pink script. The cakes are tilted to one side, at a slight angle that suggests both aroused male sexuality and certain types of heavy artillery. These are the same kind of frilly little bonbons with which men proposition women, the currency used in exchange for female compliance and affection. But the command to "give me all you've got" is also an unusual public expression of a 'female's' demand for pleasure.

In making a sugary confection out of the arsenal of male sexuality and power, this piece is reminiscent of the playful teasing in Kruger's earlier work. But whether her work appears as outrage or comedy, her goal is always the same.

"Look", Kruger says, "Basically I want to be effective in making changes in power relation, in social relations. And my area of acuity is working with images and words. I grew up looking not at art but at pictures. I'm not saying it's wrong to read art-history books. But the spectators who view my work don't have to understand





Fig. 10 "GIVE ME ALL YOU'VE GOT"



that language. They just have to consider the pictures that bombard their lives and tell them who they are to some extent. That's all they have to understand". (Carol Squires, 1987, p.85).

However, Kruger in the last few years has made a huge departure from this method of making art and has begun doing large installation works. Her recent work is addressed less to the body as incorporated than to the corporeal body, the body that inhabits the space in all its sensuous particularity. Her recent pieces make tangible an effort to reinscribe this living, breathing body into the locations denied it by ideology, reversing the stereotype's address and countering the seductiveness of the image. For Kruger, this recovery of the body's multiplicity has a strategic aim, to social transformation, and to change.

Kruger began to make installation pieces in the early 1990s. The attraction of installation work to Kruger was "the idea of enveloping a space and getting messages across that connect to the world in ways that seem familiar but are different". (Stephanson, 1987, p.59).

Kruger's images present females in positions of subservience and males in positions of power and control. She applies this power discrepancy to a great range of critical issues: abortion, racism, freedom of expression, religious intolerance, war, consumption, sex, love, murder, censorship, bigotry, domestic violence, profit, money, power. She demonstrates how many aspects of our lives are affected by sexism.



These issues were addressed in April 1994, when Kruger converted the Mary Boone Gallery in New York into a giant, multi-sensory arena in which a brutal contest between the sexes was waged. Inflammatory indictments plastered the walls, hung from the ceilings, and even appeared on the floor. The recorded sounds of a stadium, in which a male interlocutor expounded to an agitated crowd reinforced the atmosphere of strife. An enormous, floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall photograph of a mass-gathering augmented the impact of the crowd's roar.

The first image the viewer encountered underfoot established the work's scornful and ironic tone. A screaming cartoon figure and a pointing figure were accompanied by the words "How dare you not be me?". The installation probed the identity of this "you" and "me". As in her 1980s work, genders clashed in nine large, wall-mounted photo-texts spewing venom-laden pronouncements. Examples include:

Text: "Your ability to empathise. Your eroticised combats. You big shots.

Image: A man and a woman in face masks, kiss.

Text: "Your aesthetics of virginity. Your image of imperfection. Your compulsive seductions. Believe like us."

Image: Two men being held aloft.

Text: "Your pleasure panics. Your total lack of irony. Your dour literalisms. Laugh like us."

Image: Head of a woman. Weapon directed at her.

A male voice bellowed threats against these accusations and commanded: "Just push me. Just push me a little harder and your world explodes. All your little niceties, your quality of life". The crowd cheered and the voice resumed, .... "picking



up kids from school. Renting a video. Stopping for gas. Doing the wash. Watching the game. It's all over - smashed into the dreams of shopping malls..." The sound of a woman screaming and groaning was heard. The voice continued: "I slap you because it makes me feel good. I want you to have my babies because it shows how powerful I am..."

Huge red, black and white epithets looming overhead contained the generic language of hate mongers. "My God is better than your God, wiser, more powerful, all-knowing, the only God... What I believe is truer than what you believe." Images and text underfoot summoned the grief occupied by victims of oppression: "Must we play dead to survive?"

The voices on the soundtrack were never silent. The drama was never culminated. Kruger offered no escape. If the piece redressed gender conflicts, it did so by helping female viewers build defences against coercion and requiring that male viewers examine their sexual biases and behaviour. Kruger explains,

**"I could say I'm involved in a series of attempts to displace things, to change people's minds, to make them think a little bit. I'm interested in making art that displaces the powers that tell us who we can be and who we can't be." (Goodeve, Nov, '97, p.93).**

Making their implicit ideology explicit, she builds the public's resistance against shy forms of indoctrination. People are then empowered to form their own attitudes and determine their own behaviour. In this way her work fortifies the public against the perils of mind control.



From 1992 to 1994, Kruger was commissioned to do a public work in a subway station in Strasbourg, France. In the subway, each stair leading to the platform has a single word on them - "play", "live", "die", "love", "hate". Up above the train it says, "Where are you going?". "So every single day you think out that question". (Kruger, Nov. '97, p.59). There are sixteen plaques inset onto the platform at the entrance to each subway car, some only words, others with images and words. Kruger wrote texts with the pronoun "you" on each of these; some are more tied to an image than others.

There is one huge silk-screened image that covers two concrete beams and hovers over the station. The image is of a man with a trap-door in his head, and the words across it read "Empathy can change the world". The other twelve beams have questions sandblasted into them, so they are very subtle. The questions are the ones she continually asks - "Who speaks," "Who is silent", "Who prefers questions to answers", "Who dies first", "Who salutes the longest", "Who prays loudest", "Who is beyond the law", "Who will write the history of tears".

Kruger saw this work as "an opportunity to work on a really large-scale, dealing with an enveloping environment" (Squiers, 1995, p.58) which she did not usually get the opportunity to do. "It gave me a chance to work in a dense and well-used public space where ideas about pleasure, oppression, nationality, empathy, fear, memory, love and history could all be addressed by using the conventions of public signage". (Squiers, 1995, p.58)



Again in 1994, Kruger undertook a large project - an installation, rather than individual pieces for the Mary Boone Gallery. In this piece she used sound after doing a number of radio spots for an anti-domestic-violence campaign. The over-riding conception of this installation was the same over-riding conception that motors all of Kruger's work: power, love, hate, sex. In the piece were also ideas about power and crowds and "What happens during a religious service or at a sports stadium or when large groups of people are together". (Squiers, 1995, p.77) The audio track had the "ability to rile people, to see how that posture is abused, how it appeals to people's worst instincts, their worst fears, their hate and contempt". (Squiers, 1995, p.58).

The installation consisted of one big image of a crowd which covered the gallery walls. There were nine images with statements inset onto the crowd: "Pray like us"; "Believe like us"; "Think like us"; "Fight like us"; "Hate like us"; "Talk like us"; etc. Then there were small texts in the middle of the panels above the statements, not illustrating them literally, but images that were suggestive of that command. "Believe like us" (Fig. 11) has a man with a bible and a snake; "Pray like us" (fig. 12) was a magnet with nails. For "Fight like us" there was a couple with surgical masks who were kissing, and addressing notions of ruthlessness, careerism, brittleness. The work also related to evangelism and crowds. The "goings on" in Bosnia, and all the daily "horrors" of current events at the time influenced the work. How the sanctity of the everyday - of shopping malls and renting a video, etc. - is broken by those conflagrations of hate and distrust and destruction.





Fig.11 "BELIEVE LIKE US"





Fig 12 "PRAY LIKE US"



Women, surprisingly weren't a prominent feature in this installation piece. However, there were women in the crowd. There were pictures of women in the larger images. One of them showed a woman with a hood over her head and it read, "YOUR CONSTANT SEEKING FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS, YOUR CAMPAIGN FOR A WORLD WITHOUT WOMEN", in which the woman's sexual identity is eclipsed.

In 1996, Kruger exhibited her work in the Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne, Australia. Her exhibition/installation tempted the visitors with sounds that spread beyond the gallery walls, creating the anticipation of the visual drama inside the gallery. This was an unusual prequel for an exhibition of Kruger's work. The powerful visual presence of her silent billboards and posters in public spaces is usually her mode of dissolutely prevailing the viewer's conscious and subconscious years.

Within the three rooms that made up the exhibition, the viewers were exposed to the force, aggression, and spectacle of the mass media that permeates contemporary culture. Complimenting the sound used (the noise of the crowd), Kruger displayed a black and white panorama in the first room. Suspending the euphoria of the masses were large, square billboards presenting photographs 'cut out' from mainstream media and tattooed with her usual slogans. The power of the mass media strives to strengthen images that will obsess and stimulate their target. The epitome of this power was encapsulated in a photograph of an authoritarian figure with his questioning, concerned look designed to appeal to the crowd. Kruger's



interpretation: "Hate like us". Over the photograph of a woman in a surgical mask is a slogan indicative of Kruger's concern with male power and the gaze: "Your craving for yourself in others. Your campaign for a world without women - fear like us". There's a woman in one of the photographs who hangs her head in shame at the sight of her appearance - so desperate with a world which desires beauty and confidence. Through these images Kruger attempts to ruin certain representations and to welcome the female spectator into the audience of men, and her work in the 1990's, as it was in the 1980's, is still concerned with subverting representation and difference although the difference is not restricted to gender.

Kruger also incorporates references to religion: "My God is better than your God", class: "Look at me. Look at me and know you'll never be me", and phobias: "Don't look at me. Don't laugh at me", into fuller transcripts projected onto the four walls and floor of the second room of the exhibition. This continued in the third room where young men and women mouthed aggressive statements like television soap opera characters. "I have to tell you why I'm upset?" shouted one man, while another, attempting to control himself, said through gritted teeth: "Don't make me angry!".

In 1997, after a three year absence from New York galleries, Kruger returned with a vengeance, showing sculpture at the Mary Boone, an installation at Jeffrey Deitch and a bus-as-artwork sponsored by the Public Art Fund.

In the front gallery of the Mary Boone Gallery was Kruger's entree into sculpture: three white fibreglass, larger-than-life, figural sculptures that referenced



American history and the dark history of rumours and hearsay about famous American figures. "Justice", for instance, depicted J. Edgar Hoover and Roy Cohn in drag, french-kissing. The word "Justice" was carved into the base of the sculpture, first as the word "Family" adorned the pedestal of a white sculpture of John and Bobby Kennedy holding Marilyn Monroe on their shoulders in a cheerleading pyramid. "Family" was arguably the star attraction at Kruger's show at the Mary Boone Gallery. The comedy team of Jack and Bobby Kennedy, good old boy Democrats were featured doing their famous comedy routine, "Who got there first?" holding aloft Marilyn Monroe. The Kennedys' likenesses were so crudely done, they almost looked like Siamese twins, with Frankenstein shoes and stilted smiles. On the surface, the public were meant to deplore the hypocrisy of two men whose mystique for the voting public was primarily bound up in being family men - the word F-A-M-I-L-Y was inscribed on the base. In this scenario, Marilyn remains the helpless victim passed around by disrespecting men.

But then there was a greater issue: Kruger made the decision to expose Marilyn's genitalia to view. Marilyn was perched up on the Kennedys' shoulders with her white dress flying high (like the famous scene from the "Seven Year Itch" subway shot). In this film, we only see one leg; Kruger gave much more in this piece. This exposure did several things: for one thing, as critique, it represented a double standard. The Kennedys were dressed for campaigning, praised for their minds; Marilyn was half-dressed, praised for her never-mind. This would have been a workable critique, though the introduction of Marilyn's genitalia changed things. The exposure went a step too far, and resonated as an emblem of a privacy which should have been inviolable, even in celebrity culture.



In the back gallery were four large-scale pieces in Kruger's signature black, white and graphic style. These works also referenced American history (and art history) in a round-about sort of way. A large silkscreened photograph of Eleanor Roosevelt, for instance, had the words "NOT UGLY ENOUGH" printed across it, while a photograph of Malcolm X had the words "NOT ANGRY ENOUGH"; Marilyn Monroe, "NOT STUPID ENOUGH", (Fig.13); and Andy Warhol, "NOT CRUEL ENOUGH". Pushing the envelope on stereotypes and general opinion about public figures (e.g., that Malcolm X was too angry, not that he wasn't angry enough!), Kruger tried to undermine our assumptions about history. Her sculptures seem intended as critiques of the kind of bland American history that white-washes (hence the bland, white sculptures) Hoover and Kennedy. The works at Mary Boone effectively combined white-blandness and political bite, addressed the obvious: that politicians are hypocrites. "I'm trying to deal with ideas about histories, fame, hearsay, and how public identities are constructed. And I'm playing around with the commemorative statutory - the whole larger-than-life, pedestal thing". (Goodeve, Nov. 1997, p.93).

Also in 1997, Kruger exhibited in the Jeffrey Deitch Projects, also in New York. The large-scale work was called "Power Pleasure Desire Disgust". The space was dark and there was a sound of amplified voices delivering short, angry speeches. There was text projected in light onto the dark walls, ceiling and floor changed at intervals, and three compartments on the front wall were lit up with projected close-ups of different actors. The tone of the text - projections was strong and accusing -



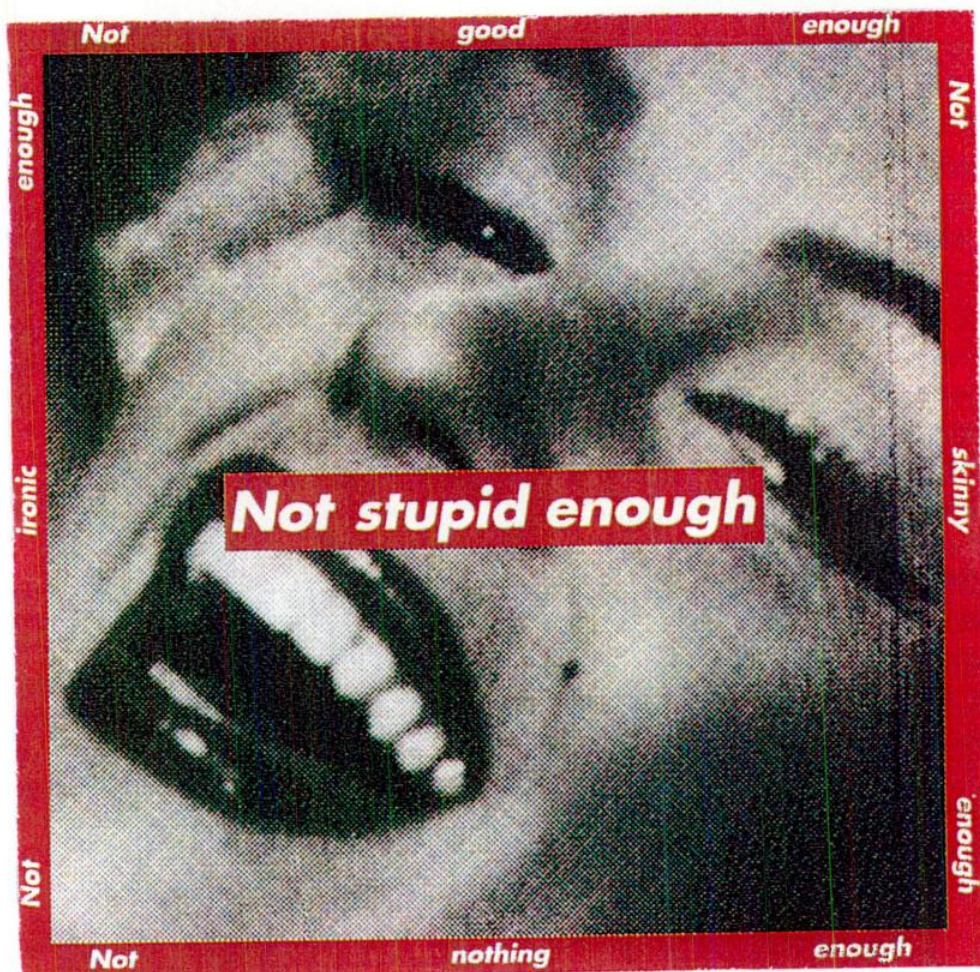


Fig.13 "NOT STUPID ENOUGH"



just what one would expect from Kruger - but there was a deeper psychological component than there was in her earlier works. Anger was tinged with streaks of doubt and statements rippled an undercurrent; hate suggests self-hate (one text read "I don't want your love, okay. It's got nothing to do with me. It's a delusion. It's some jerk's image of perfection. Your perfection, jerk. So go bother someone else, okay"); rejection that implies a lack of self-acceptance ("You're beautiful. We've had it with you. We're sick of your complaining, of your laziness and your alibis.")

In her recent works in the 1990s, as with her earlier works in the 1970s and 1980s, Kruger exposes the patriarchal logic of advertising fictions and reveals the ideological factors. She exposes the structure of the unconscious mechanisms of viewing which dictate the habitual reading of images by the passive subject. She plays the impact of image by exposing the rhetoric of the image. Kruger's images are powerful because they tap into the part of the psyche that has been invaded by the news media, entertainment industry and political structure.



## CONCLUSION

A great deal of feminist activity, such as the work of Barbara Kruger, has consisted of attempts to locate art within a broader network of theoretical discourse. Because of work done by women artists like Kruger, women are now asking questions about the nature of representation and how it conditions the way we identify ourselves and are identified to others. In terms of visual representations of all kinds, women want to know who is looking and who is being looked at. Increasingly they are seeing that the "self" is neither basic or fixed but fluctuates according to where one is positioned. Language, seen as a patriarchal construct into which we are all born and which predetermines our identities are being constructed thanks to artists like Barbara Kruger. For Kruger, the oppression and appropriation of women has been achieved and reinforced through language. Through her unusual use of language, imagery and text, Kruger reveals the formulation of complex strategies and practices through which women are confronting the theoretical knowledge and promoting social change.

Kruger's blown-up, severely cropped photographs of women, and their short accompanying text subvert the meanings of both image and text in order to destabilise the positioning of woman as an object. She emphasises the ways in which language manipulates and undermines the assumption of masculine control over language and viewing, by refusing to complete the cycle of meaning, and by shifting pronouns in order to expose the positioning of woman as "other". The notion of the gaze has important links with men's control of objects through ownership of capital, and it has implications, too, for the notion of nature and of science and connotations of an



asymmetry in sexual relations, in which women are supposed to make themselves passively receptive, and men are supposed to actively seek out their pleasures. However, Kruger has developed a way of successfully making women prime viewers, by, for instance, providing women with powerful images of the female (for example, in works such as “Your gaze hits the side of my face”, and Untitled (“You are not Yourself”). She nurtured and explored the female gaze, to construct images creating a democracy of looking and being looked upon. She has successfully turned the ‘gaze’ the other way. She successfully welcomes the female spectator into the audience of men.

Although her early work may have been psychoanalytically inflected and her later work more focused on capitalism’s consumerism, it always addresses the complex interconnection of gender and the marketplace. In this work, she subverted the authority of words. She changed the way language was used by power, by using and cheating it. She used many devices in her works (manipulation of language, imagery, text) to expose the language of capitalism/patriarchy. Because of artists like Kruger, women no longer have to be slaves to language. Instead, they too manipulate and use language to break into the world of the male gaze and force upon it a gaze of their own - a female gaze.

Kruger’s influence now permeates all the forms of media culture that she appropriated. Her work is capable of challenging some of the most deeply-held assumptions regarding the place and production of the female artist of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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