

Anonymous Is a Woman: The New Politics of Identification in *Magical and Untitled Feminist Show*

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In December 1976, in front of a stark white backdrop in Berlin's Mike Steiner Gallery, Marina Abramović performed a piece titled *Freeing the Body* in which she danced continuously for six hours, naked except for a piece of dark fabric covering her head and face. A drummer provided a rhythmic soundscape as Abramović bounced and swayed, shifting her weight from one foot to another and swinging her arms in time. As the performance wore on, fatigue set in, and her movements began to look less like choreography and more like exhausted flailing. The end of the piece found her sprawled on the floor, still nude, her face still concealed. Like so much of Abramović's work, *Freeing the Body* tested the stamina of both performer and spectators, who witnessed not only a work of bodily endurance, but one that denied them even the possible connection that can arise from seeing a performer's face. In the grainy black-and-white video that endures, Abramović's pale body nearly fades into the backdrop, leaving prominently visible only a triangle of dark pubic hair and her bobbing head, swathed in black fabric.

More than three decades later, French dancer and choreographer Anne Juren performed a lighthearted version of the same piece, in a self-aware homage to Abramović's original (fig. 1). Clad, like Abramović, only in a cloth that covered her head and face, its ends twisted loosely around her neck, Juren jiggled and bounced to the guitar riffs of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (among several other songs). This latter-day reenactment lasted not six hours but about ten minutes and served as a climactic sequence in *Magical*, a performance piece that Juren created in collaboration with boundary-crossing American theatre artist Annie Dorsen, and premiered in 2010. In *Magical*, Juren and Dorsen restage and revise iconic feminist performance art from the 1960s and '70s, uniting now-historic works with wry humor, sardonic magic tricks, and gestures from the domain of commercial illusionism. Whereas Abramović's 1976 piece served primarily as a display of physical and emotional stamina, *Magical* removes the dance from its durational context, drawing attention instead to the striking image it constructs: a body without a face. Juren appears onstage as a dancer whose identity is temporarily concealed, the physical element that usually serves as the site of recognition, empathy, and individuality eliminated from sight. She is (as Abramović was)

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Figure 1. Anne Juren and Annie Dorsen's *Magical*. Pictured: Anne Juren.
(Photo: Ian Douglas, courtesy of New York Live Arts.)

exposed though hidden, alone onstage though briefly unrecognizable. Abramović's implication, which Juren reprises, is that the female body can be "free" when—maybe *only* when—the female face is concealed. Nude but masked, Juren (and Abramović before her) conjures an image of the feminist anonymous.

Magical was not the only performance piece to reshape classic feminist iconography into something radically new at the end of the twenty-first century's first decade. In early 2012, audiences in Minneapolis and New York City witnessed the premiere of playwright and director Young Jean Lee's *Untitled Feminist Show*—an hour-long, text-free piece in which six women performed a series of wordless scenes and movement sequences, drawing on histories of feminist thought, as well as feminist and body-centered performance. These recent works, *Magical* and *Untitled Feminist Show*, evoke a series of pressing questions about feminist performance and, more broadly, identity onstage. Both create feminist performances not by disclosing, but by playfully concealing—or even rendering unimportant—personal identity and individual experience. Most provocatively, both offer the possibility that a performer can reveal her body without revealing her story or experience, and without being reduced to anonymous

archetype. In this essay, I aim to chart the political, aesthetic, and structural choices made by Dorsen, Juren, and Lee as a means of showing how they pose questions about feminism, identity, and individuality on the twenty-first-century stage.

I begin with the double image of the masked, nude performer—Abramović then, Juren now—because I believe this image forcefully evokes the vexed debates over exposure and identity that feminist body art called into being when it burst onto the performance scene during the 1960s and '70s, and that continues to attend discourse about the exposed female body onstage. In the section that follows, I trace the contours of some of these debates as a means of showing how Dorsen, Juren, and Lee engage with and alter them, paying particular attention to questions of how an artist's bodily exposure relates to her perceived identity onstage. I wish to foreground that the history of feminist thought I am mobilizing is necessarily *partial*—not a representation of *all* feminist performance or theory—but an investigation of exposure and anonymity that takes its cue from the points of contact I see between these recent works and the predecessors they recall. In addition to drawing on recent reconsiderations of feminist body art, then, I deliberately draw attention to the reception of such work during the 1970s and after as a means of contextualizing these predecessors and the debates they called into being.

The late 1960s and early '70s saw an explosion of visual and performance work by women artists that featured the exposed female body, frequently the body of the artist herself—from Carolee Schneeman's multi-mediated rituals, to Hannah Wilke's confrontational photography, to Abramović's feats of duration. For art historians, such work represented a radical escape from the abstractions of high modernism and, in the instance of performance, from the commercial pressures surrounding the art object. For theatre critics, this work was equally radical in its confrontational rupture of the fictive cosmos¹ behind the proscenium. And for feminist thinkers, explicit body art posed a pressing set of questions: Did exposing her own body offer a means of liberating the female artist—wresting control back from the male-dominated art world by calling attention to individual bodies and diverse women's experiences? Or, by contrast, did it reinscribe the tendencies it hoped to resist, offering nude female bodies for scopophilic pleasure and veiling women's multiplicity behind an essentializing biological determinism?

For many critics, the advent of an increasing array of feminist body art offered liberating possibilities. In her 1990 essay on feminist performance art, Jeanie Forte argued that “[p]recisely because of the operation of representation, actual women are rendered an absence within the dominant culture, and in order to speak, must either take on a mask (masculinity, falsity, simulation, seduction), or take on the unmasking of the very opposition in which they are opposed, the Other.”² For Forte, masks are oppressive—unmasking, a source of freedom. She goes on to suggest that

¹Here and throughout, I use the phrase *fictive cosmos* as Hans-Thies Lehmann employs it to describe the fictional world onstage in a conventional theatrical performance in *Postdramatic Theatre*, translated by Karen Jürs-Munby (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²Jeanie Forte, “Women’s Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism,” in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 252.

[w]omen's performance art has particular disruptive potential because it poses an actual woman as a speaking subject, throwing that position into process, into doubt, opposing the traditional conception of the single, unified (male) subject. The female body as subject clashes in dissonance with its patriarchal text, challenging the very fabric of representation by refusing that text and posing new, multiple texts grounded in real women's experience and sexuality.³

Not only could feminist performance draw attention to the diversity of women's experiences and subjectivities, but it often drew attention to the specific artist's own experience, as many works of feminist performance were grounded, in some way, in autobiography. Schneeman (whose work figures prominently in *Magical*) was a prime example of this, as Rebecca Schneider has noted in her landmark book *The Explicit Body in Performance*: "[t]he live nude was widely used in Happenings as an object, and often as an 'active' object, or an object with choice within the improvisational field of an artist's conception. But Schneeman was using the live nude as more than an active object. Whether she ultimately wished it, the object of her body was unavoidably also *herself*—the nude *as* the artist, not just as the artist's (active) object."⁴ Although Schneeman's work represents a single tendency within feminist body art, it stands in for a larger theoretical possibility: the idea that exposing one's body in performance linked directly to the exposure of individual identity.

And yet, even as many celebrated the advent of explicit feminist art, critics and artists like Griselda Pollock, Mary Kelly, Judith Barry, and Sandy Flitterman worried that when exposing their bodies, women artists opened themselves up to two troubling possibilities: first, the risk of "essentializing" women by suggesting that biological traits determine culture, selfhood, or experience, or second, that there is some common female identity that biological anatomy can represent.⁵ Moreover, many worried that no matter what an artist's intentions, exposing her body inherently offered it as an object of scopophilic pleasure. Combining these concerns, Kelly argued that "[m]ost women artists who have presented themselves in some way, visibly, in their work have been unable to find the kind of distancing devices which would cut across the predominant representations of woman as object of the look, or that would question the notion of femininity as a pregiven entity."⁶ Nudity, according to such lines of thought, can be inherently anonymizing: obscuring the subjectivity of the female performer behind the "mask" of the nude female body.

My analysis, and the model that I believe fits most closely with the work of Dorsen, Juren, and Lee, emerges from the more recent critiques of identification that art historian Amelia Jones makes in *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (2009). Jones had already renegotiated the terms of earlier debates in *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, arguing that body art need not be objectifying and anonymizing, but can, through its material resistance of abstraction and the presence of the artist's raced, classed, gendered body in an encounter with a spectator, destabilize the fixed ideas of subjecthood that, she argued, have been inherited from modernist

³ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 35–36 (emphasis in original).

⁵ See, for instance, Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, "Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art-Making," *Screen* 21, no. 2 (1980), 35–48; and Mary Kelly and Paul Smith, "No Essential Femininity: A Conversation between Mary Kelly and Paul Smith," in *Imaging Desire* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

⁶ Kelly and Smith, "No Essential Femininity," 67.

visual art. More recently, and important to my argument here, Jones advocated for replacing fixed models of identity—any identity—with fluid forms of identification. In *Seeing Differently*, she argues that

[r]eevaluating works from the history of contemporary art through a revised model that accentuates *identification* rather than *identity* will open a new path. The key here is to acknowledge the complex histories of art and theory explicitly addressing the politics of identity, respecting the important need in the past to identify (construct) binaries, while eschewing the repetition of these binaries in this renewed theoretical framework.⁷

Putting aside even the possibility of singular modes of identity, Jones marks out new territory for the more fleeting, more singularly live possibility of identification.

In what follows, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which this paradigm works in *Magical* and *Untitled Feminist Show*, and also how these artists depart from even such recent reevaluations of identity in performance—choosing, by turns, nonidentification over identification, the refusal of persona over a multiplicity of personas, and even the refusal of representation over the most fleeting forms of iconography. They inhabit a world in which anonymity can be freeing and bodily exposure need not imply liberation or objectification, but can instead point the way toward new, abstract modes of being.

***Magical's* Disappearing Acts**

In *Magical*, which lasts a succinct forty-five minutes, Juren (with a brief appearance from Dorsen) performs versions of Yoko Ono's 1964 *Cut Piece*, Martha Rosler's 1975 *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, VALIE EXPORT's 1969 *Genital Panic*, and two works by Schneeman, *Meat Joy* (1964) and *Interior Scroll* (1975), in addition to *Freeing the Body*. But she performs them with a difference: here, each of these iconic pieces is also staged in the register of the classic magic show, complete with vanishing props and bodily transmutations. If the provocations of radical performance art might at first seem incompatible with the polished patter of a magic show, Juren and Dorsen reveal the logic behind the unlikely pairing. Hasn't the female body always been a magic show of sorts, celebrated for its surfaces and reviled for what lies beneath? Isn't it a truism that dominant cultures demand illusionist tricks of women's bodies—maintaining youthful beauty at all costs—and seemingly effortless performances of women's labor? If so, what better form than the overt deceptions of magic to gesture to such histories of thought?

And if magic tricks and performance art might seem not just politically, but also artistically incompatible—the one a commercial entertainment, the other a marginal, oppositional form—avant-garde history suggests that this also is a narrower gap than first appears. After all, among the central inspirations for early avant-garde movements like Futurism and Dada, whose work preceded and influenced the solo artists of the 1960s and '70s, were the circus and the variety show. To these early twentieth-century artists, popular entertainments appeared more vital and more open to radical innovation than bourgeois dramatic form. Commercial entertainment and the legacy of vaudeville thus lingers in the work of 1960s-era performance artists on which *Magical* draws.⁸

⁷ Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 173 (emphasis in original); and *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁸ For instance, when analyzing Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* in his recent rethinking of feminism in the American avant-garde, James Harding compares Ono's use of collage technique to the variety show

And so, evoking the double histories of popular illusionism and radical art, Juren enacts her own variety theatre, each sequence reworking a celebrated piece of (frequently explicit) performance. Schneeman's original *Interior Scroll* famously featured the artist pulling a paper scroll from her vagina while describing an experience with misogyny in the art world. In Juren's *Interior Scroll*, the artist pulls a long string of brightly colored scarves out of her vagina. In Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, the artist examined cooking utensils—estranging the naturalized scene of domestic labor—while, in Juren's quotation of the act, eggs disappear into napkins and breast milk spouts mysteriously from a plastic funnel (fig. 2).

Juren's magic tricks are virtuosically smooth, but there is one thing conspicuously missing from her magic show, and that is a magician's identity—she almost never talks to us. There is no patter, no now-you-see-it, no alter ego, no bragging. Her body is constantly on display, but her identity, persona, and individual relationship to the works are left undisclosed. In fact, presentational as the performance is, Juren rarely engages the audience directly, something that is surprising both in the context of a magic show and a provocative performance work. We are not asked to pick a card or to offer our watches for a disappearing act; neither are we asked to snip Juren's clothing or hold a flashlight up to her vagina. She provokes by retreating, surprises her audience by leaving us alone. This distancing effect was noticeable to New York audience members when the show played there in early 2013. Jessica Rizzo, writing in *Theater* magazine, lamented that *Magical's* version of *Cut Piece* did not provide the opening for audience participation that the original did.⁹ Brian Seibert remarked in the *New York Times* that there was "an unpleasant edge of smugness to this cool and efficient show that made me pine a little for the hot, unreasonable messes of earlier times."¹⁰

I see this "coolness" as an essential element of *Magical*, an approach that points to important aspects of identity politics today. For the artists, such dispassionate reframing is a means of drawing attention to the ways in which nearly every aspect of radical counterculture can be, and has been, co-opted and commodified. A statement about the piece on Dorsen's website explains that

[n]early all of the symbols of the cultural left rebellion (from punk rock to drag shows) have been drained of their political power, as they have been, one by one, commodified and folded into a capitalist entertainment framework. The feminist performance art practices of the 60s and 70s have up to now resisted this treatment—they have rather been (at least for the moment) erased, because they couldn't quite be appropriated. Through this process of dragging the feminist body-art canon into a slick, [*sic*] entertainment package, we can look in a new way at the contradictions of our contemporary situation.¹¹

Such a choice provokes dissonance in its spectators: we long for, in Seibert's words, the "hot" and "unreasonable" performances of decades past, because, we would like to think, they gave their audiences identities too.

format that offered Asian Americans their first stage opportunities in the United States. See Harding, *Cutting Performances: Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 107–8.

⁹Jessica Rizzo, "Now You See Her," *Theater* 44, no. 1 (2014): 100.

¹⁰Brian Seibert, "Now You See Her, and Now You See More of Her," *New York Times*, 18 January 2013, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/19/arts/dance/magical-by-annie-dorsen-and-anne-juren-at-new-york-live-arts.html>.

¹¹Annie Dorsen and Anne Juren, *Magical*, available at <http://anniedorsen.com/showproject.php?id=8>.



Figure 2. Anne Juren and Annie Dorsen's *Magical*. Pictured: Anne Juren.
(Photo: Ian Douglas, courtesy of New York Live Arts.)

And yet Juren and Dorsen demonstrate, among other things, how insistently such thinking trades in nostalgia and obscures the real history of the art form, which was always rife with performers whose work did more to throw identity into question than to stabilize it. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* is a prime example. In the six-and-a-half minute video, Rosler stands behind a kitchen counter, holding cooking implements and stating their names before using them to perform a gesture—sometimes, but not always, the action that the given implement typically performs. “Eggbeater,” she announces, then uses the tool to whisk the air in an empty bowl; “icepick,” she states, expressionlessly jabbing the utensil into the counter in front of her. This is a parody of the typical associations between the kitchen and the female worker, a gesture at dismantling domesticity’s habitual iconography. Rosler has described her persona in the piece as “an anti-Julia Child [who] replaces the domesticated ‘meaning’ of tools with a lexicon of rage and frustration.”¹²

This critique broadens in the last few seconds, when Rosler stops identifying implements and, instead, uses them to form the shapes of the last six letters of the alphabet, UVWXYZ. Chanting and depicting these characters—arbitrary symbols upon which a civilization’s worth of meaning relies—Rosler gestures to the ways in which culture also demands arbitrary equations of signs and signifiers, objects and their implications, people and their gendered roles. If objects need not carry gendered cultural connotations, perhaps people can shed gendered identities—and, crucially, perhaps this can

¹²Martha Rosler, “Semiotics of the Kitchen,” available at http://ubu.com/film/rosler_semiotics.html.

be accomplished not by adhering to new identities, but by refusing identities, refusing stable relationships of signifier to sign.¹³

A tiny gesture at the piece's conclusion underlines this idea and places into question the link between the artist's identity and the figure she plays. After completing the alphabet, before the camera cuts out, Rosler looks straight at the viewer and shrugs, casually flipping her arms open and closing them again. This tiny gesture is enough to cast the performance's meaning into doubt. Is that person, the one angrily thrusting an icepick into a countertop, really Rosler? Is the rage her own? Is it, instead, a character or a persona? Or, if she can so smoothly drop the icepick and shrug, is it somehow neither one?

Such questions of theatrical fiction are crucial to understanding the intervention that *Magical* makes. In a video interview created by MoMA, associated with the 2010 exhibition of *The Artist Is Present*, Abramović outlined her ideas about the distinction between theatre and performance—ideas that offer a useful foil for *Magical*. In theatre, she says, “you repeat. In theatre you play somebody else.” In contrast to an art form so dependent on fiction, she argues, “[p]erformance is real.”¹⁴ Of course, many artists (both performance and theatre) would reject such a stark disciplinary divide, but Abramović's formulation is useful here in foregrounding Juren's and Dorsen's renegotiations. In contrast to its predecessors, none of which were “conventional” theatre pieces, *Magical* takes place entirely on a presentational stage. If Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* creates ambiguity about the relationship between the performer and her performed identity, Juren's restaging of it severs the two. In performance art, it is always possible for a spectator to assume that there is consistency between a body onstage and the identity of its possessor. In theatre, the opposite rules apply. We assume (not always, but often) that the performer is playing a role, that her onstage persona is not the identity she inhabits in life. *Magical* subverts both paradigms: Juren is reenacting performance art in a resolutely theatrical mode. She is neither playing Rosler nor playing herself.

In addition to drawing on the trappings of the fictive cosmos (without actually creating one), Juren and Dorsen overtly promise to do what, by Abramović's definition, might seem to doom their piece to some lesser form of authenticity: they repeat. *Magical* (and *Untitled Feminist Show*, for that matter) are not singular events, but theatrical productions. Audiences purchase tickets in advance; the shows tour to theatres and festivals. Repeating the performance night after night, Juren and Dorsen evoke its lack of singularity. In doing so, they alter the nature of the feminist identities they place onstage: in this explicitly theatrical piece, identity is less like performance (overtly “real”) and more like theatre (liberatingly fake).

Here also is where the double vision of art history and theatre history helps the spectator to watch *Magical*. For art historians, performance was, among other things, a move away from the art object, and so as spectators, art historians looked to bodies onstage to replace those objects—making the threat of objectification ever-present. For theatre historians, performance was a move away from the fictive cosmos, and so they looked to the body onstage for character, persona, experience. *Magical* denies the

¹³ For this point, I am indebted to Jacob Gallagher-Ross. Our discussions about his work on Stuart Sherman helped me a great deal in analyzing the Rosler piece.

¹⁴ Marina Abramović, “What Is Performance Art?” available at http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/marina_perf.html.

spectator both things: evoking the architecture of the fictive cosmos, but refusing the seduction of stage fictions, Juren channels the liberating anonymity inherent in theatre. Behind the proscenium, it does not matter who she is—it only matters what she does.

In *Magical's* final sequence, Juren clasps a small projector between her legs, playing a version of Schneeman's famous *Meat Joy*. The video, distorted and shaky, is the only bright spot on a darkened stage that obscures both Juren and the space around her. Is Juren, projecting Schneeman's work out from her own body, endorsing this classic work of performance art or mocking it? Should her own nude body, nearly erased by the projector's bright light, be seen as part of the piece's delirious ritual, as part of the scenic backdrop, as heir to earlier generations of performance art, or as critique of it? Generations of feminist body artists directed spectators' gazes to the vagina; Juren shines a light out from it, disappearing into the darkness all around. Vanishing behind the iconic work of art, Juren refuses the identity—static, fluid, fictive, or real—that has so frequently accompanied feminist performance.

Untitled Feminist Show's Abstract Utopia

In *Unmarked*, Peggy Phelan renegotiated the relationships among visibility, ontology, and identity across multiple art forms, including photography, theatre, and performance art. Her introduction famously critiqued what she viewed as overly simple assumptions about the value of visibility in identity politics:

[v]isibility politics are additive rather than transformational (to say nothing of revolutionary). They lead to the stultifying "me-ism" to which realist representation is always vulnerable. Unable to see oneself reflected in a corresponding image of the Same, the spectator can reject the representation as "not about me." Or worse, the spectator can valorize the representation which fails to reflect her likeness, as one with "universal appeal" or "transcendent power."¹⁵

Untitled Feminist Show gleefully traffics in the politics of visibility—not the kind to which Phelan objects, but rather a kind that could be said to be informed by just such observations as the ones she makes (and that Jones makes in *Seeing Differently*). Lee's performance piece offers not stable, but mutating forms of visible identity, a joyful landscape of fluid associations between bodies and meaning. Ultimately, it proposes a new relationship between identity and visibility, not through new forms of signification, but by refusing to signify at all. Throughout this section, in the spirit of Phelan's investigation, I draw together criticism that uses psychoanalytic models (such as that of Hélène Cixous) with other forms of performance history and criticism in an attempt to trace the multiple ways that *Untitled Feminist Show* re-teaches us how to see.

Magical ends in darkness; *Untitled Feminist Show* begins there. After the house lights dim, the auditorium remains in shadows, amid the rising sounds of rhythmic movement and coordinated breath. The theatre grows gradually lighter, allowing us to see that nude performers are moving through the aisles, breathing audibly and in sync. When they arrive onstage, they perform a sequence that Lee has titled "Ritual,"¹⁶ cycling through a series of ceremonial poses, which culminate in a double image. On the floor, one performer spreads her legs and holds a hand between them, as if to ward off

¹⁵ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 11.

¹⁶ Here and throughout, my references to scene titles are drawn from the scene identifications on the DVD of *Untitled Feminist Show* created by Young Jean Lee's Theater Company.

unwanted glances. Above her, in contrast, the remaining cast lifts another performer into the air, facing the audience, then parts her legs, her body splayed out wide.

This image invites spectators to gaze directly into the performer's vagina, but it does not tell us how or why we are looking, or what we should feel about our gaze. The tableaux could be a ritual empowerment of the female form—*The Vagina Monologues*, circa 2012. Alternatively, it could be a critique of modern art's fascination with the female nude, summoning the ghost of Courbet's infamous 1866 painting *The Origin of the World*. Or it could be a reenactment of any one of the works that Jones calls "cunt art": Hannah Wilke's unflinching self-exposures, for instance, or VALIE EXPORT's *Genital Panic* (or, I would add, Annie Sprinkle's *Public Cervix Announcement*). Like some of these predecessors, the pose in Lee's piece confronts the viewer without telling her or him how to look, and such lack of direction is itself political. As Jones writes, "[f]eminist cunt art at its best opens up exactly this kind of heightened ethical dimension of relationality—the viewer becomes interrelated with the building of sexual identification and desire, and thus ethically responsible for her participation in this nexus of meaning and subject formation."¹⁷

Thus begins an hour-long performance in which a cast of six female dancers and actors stage a series of nonverbal vignettes, movement sequences, and solo acts. They do not speak or impersonate consistent characters (occasionally, they slip into roles, then abandon them for others, or for no roles at all). They are not individually identifiable by costume because these six women perform nude for the entire production. The performers are physically exposed and yet they are rendered, through the lack of dialogue, clothing, and character, in many ways anonymous. The only props are a set of frilly pink parasols; and the only set piece is a large white block suspended from the ceiling, on which abstract, vaguely psychedelic projections play.

In program notes accompanying the performance, Lee says that in *Untitled Feminist Show*, she and her cast wanted to "present a world in which people with female bodies weren't constrained into particular roles and felt free to embody whatever identities they wanted at any given moment. Rather than trying to define feminism, say something new about it, or make a feminist argument, we wanted to create a utopian feminist experience."¹⁸ Disclaimers aside, *Untitled Feminist Show* does make a feminist argument and offers new definitions of feminism. Lee's feminist utopia is a gleefully nameless one, acknowledging its relationships to feminisms past while envisioning new forms of sexual and gender identity for a new era.

One of her most striking decisions in creating *Untitled Feminist Show* was to eliminate spoken language entirely. In interviews, Lee has explained that her primary inspirations for the piece were visual, but just as importantly, that she wanted to encourage audience members to confront directly the images onstage rather than filtering them through a set of previously articulated ideas. In a public conversation at the Walker Arts Center, where *Untitled Feminist Show* premiered, Lee told curator Michèle Steinwald that "[t]here is something challenging about watching something visually. It's more complicated and more ambiguous; people like the clarity of saying, 'Oh, she said this

¹⁷ Jones, *Seeing Differently*, 172.

¹⁸ Young Jean Lee, "From the Playwright/Director," program, *Untitled Feminist Show*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, available at <http://mcachicago.org/assets/pdf/performances/9bf4fYoung%20Jean%20Lee-Notes.pdf>.

about feminism and I disagree, so I'm going to argue about that."¹⁹ The elimination of language, then, removed the trappings of easy identification both from Lee's performers and from her audiences: without words, it was harder for spectators to place ourselves in sympathy, or opposition, to the figures onstage. Nearly every subsequent scene offered, similarly, new dialogue with now-classic feminist concerns—and new forms of feminism untethered by language, identity, or stable representations. I describe two of these scenes here in depth: the first commenting on the history of the feminine archetype, and the second, renovating and challenging the history of pornographic art.

In *Untitled Feminist Show's* first extended sequence, a form of fairy tale plays out, initially appearing to be a restaging of easy archetypes: evil witch, grotesque sidekick, carefree and innocent young girl. Archetypes are themselves a form of anonymity, as they encourage us to understand people as kinds of characters rather than individuals. To be a witch, an innocent princess, a housewife, is to be one of the many who fit a given role. And at first, it seems as if the section of *Untitled Feminist Show* called "Fairy Tale" will trade in familiar critiques of such generalities (fig. 3). The sequence concerns the efforts of a shape-shifting witch, portrayed with glee by Amelia Zirin-Brown, to seduce, immobilize, and cannibalize a group of innocent young women, with the help of her hunch-backed accomplice. As three members of the cast impersonate carefree, light-hearted young creatures, frolicking and twirling pink parasols, Zirin-Brown's character, grinning maliciously, transforms herself into a frog, a chicken, an elderly woman, and an Amazonian warrior, by turns, in order to capture their attention, and, in the moment when they drop their protective parasols and meet her eyes, in order to paralyze them. As they lie prone in the upstage corner, the witch's sidekick mimes feasting on their flesh, until a fourth woman rides to the rescue and resurrects the girls, who slay the witch's servant, then triumphantly disembowel her. The girls mime greedily consuming the servant's innards, stuffing handfuls of imaginary flesh into their mouths before carelessly skipping away, leaving the witch to her inconsolable grief.

On its surface, this is conventional, watered-down girl-power feminism, more *Maleficent* than *Meat Joy*. Innocent young girls prove stronger than they seemed, and we are given license to sympathize with the aging witch figure, who is left alone, mourning her lost battle and her lost companion. Some reviewers believed this sequence was tame enough to merit dismissing any radical possibility it might hold: writing on Culturebot.org, for instance, Jeremy Barker objected that "[w]hat Lee shows us isn't outside the construct of female representations in fairy tales—it's just outside the Disney version of fairy tales."²⁰

On closer examination, Lee's scenario is stranger and more complicated than this. It is worth noting that the villain presented here takes her power from her ability to freeze victims with a glance—turning them, effectively, to stone. This makes her not just any witch, but a form of Medusa, the Greek mythological figure whose visage was so horrifying that it transformed onlookers to statues on sight and who was slain only with the help of the shield-turned-mirror that allowed Perseus to cut off her head. Medusa—once beautiful, later hideous—has a long history in feminist thought as a symbol

¹⁹ "Young Jean Lee in Conversation with Michèle Steinwald," available at <http://www.walkerart.org/channel/2012/young-jean-lee-in-conversation-with-michele-s>.

²⁰ Jeremy Barker, "Young Jean Lee's 'Untitled Feminist Show': The Con," 25 January 2012, available at <http://www.culturebot.org/2012/01/12397/young-jean-lee-s-untitled-feminist-show-the-con/>.



Figure 3. Young Jean Lee's *Untitled Feminist Show*. Pictured (l-r): Hilary Clark, Regina Rocke, and Katy Pyle. (Photo: Julieta Cervantes.)

of female rage and a site of feminist recuperation. Most specifically, however, Medusa served as a central image in Cixous's pathbreaking essay "The Laugh of the Medusa." This essay, famous for rethinking women's relationships to writing, language, and the body, foregrounds the image of the early Medusa, when she was not a Gorgon, but instead a beautiful woman with unbearably alluring hair. Poseidon, seeing her beauty, raped her in the temple of Athena, and that goddess punished the young woman's apparent transgression by turning her hair into a nest of serpents.²¹ In her essay, Cixous redeems the Medusa, declaring that "[y]ou have only to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing."²²

Cixous offered several influential concepts for feminist thought and most particularly for feminist writing—ideas that are revealing when held up against the aesthetics and politics of *Untitled Feminist Show*. Arguing for the inextricability of language from the writer's physical body, Cixous proposed a form of writing by and for women, one that would take into account women's varied and personal histories and take shape in forms of language available only to women. This *écriture féminine*, she argued, would occasion a reshaping of every aspect of written language: "once she blazes *her* trail in the symbolic," Cixous wrote, "she cannot fail to make of it the chaosmos of the 'personal'—in her pronouns, her nouns, and her clique of referents."²³

²¹ M. A. R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 703.

²² Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen), *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 885.

²³ *Ibid.*, 888 (emphasis in original).

Writing in the age of Derridean deconstruction, it was of pressing urgency for Cixous and other thinkers to renegotiate questions of language's relationship to power. In a sense, Lee is drawing on such histories of feminist thought by using female bodies to "rewrite" familiar fairy-tale stories. And yet, Lee's fairy-tale women have no names; they do not speak. The fact that the shadow of language is still present—at least in spectators' inevitable recourse to narrative as we attempt to follow—only highlights Lee's insistent refusal of words. And without words, it is easy to distinguish one woman from another, but difficult, as they rush around the stage, to remember which woman is playing which character. They wear no clothing and speak no words to separate evil villain from innocent princess, and without these things, Lee shows her audiences how easily these roles can be assumed and how easily discarded. Cixous's nouns, pronouns, and clique of referents are here—but so are Lee's unnamed and unspoken.

Dispensing with overt language and clear character names resulted in, for some viewers, a kind of interchangeability—a place where Lee departs from many of her forbears and an element that proved provocative when the show premiered in New York. In his *New York Times* review, Charles Isherwood quoted Lee's program note in which she stated that the performers' collective nudity "prevented the audience from imposing identities" on them. Isherwood agreed: "[t]hat is mostly true," he wrote, "and detrimental to the work's effectiveness. Despite their various body types and distinctive faces, the performers gradually come to seem undifferentiated." Lee intended to, in her words, create "a utopian feminist experience," but, Isherwood asked, "shouldn't any utopia be populated by individuals?"²⁴ Isherwood's critique calls up the familiar refrain that women's experiences are unique and varied, not monolithic: that women are individuals, not anonymous combinations of breasts and thighs and hair and lips. Should such apparently anonymous staging undermine years of art and critique, belying the very word *feminist* in its title?

I believe it should not. Lee's stage figures may be nude and voiceless, but they are hardly undifferentiated. To offer only the most striking evidence, one is tall, with a blonde bob and enormous breasts; one has streaked brown hair and a round belly; a third is very butch, with short red hair. Their undeniably different physical appearances emphatically resist the gravitational pull of some undifferentiated choral identity. This range of female physical forms is, in itself, a feminist critique: seeing in these six women an "undifferentiated" sameness reflects less on Lee's artistic choices than on the ways in which viewers have been conditioned to understand the female body, assigning more significance to the fact that all six have breasts than that one has a short Mohawk and another a blonde bob. Lee's performance anticipates criticisms like Isherwood's and turns them back at her spectators, showing us the shortcomings of our own perceptual categories. The women are not interchangeable or easily replaced—the identities they inhabit onstage are.

If *Untitled Feminist Show's* "Fairy Tale" sequence unravels old equations between anonymity and the oppressive female archetype, a later section challenges old ideas about another kind of anonymity in the theatre: that of the audience member. In a solo sequence midway through *Untitled Feminist Show*, Zirin-Brown offers a blunt challenge

²⁴ Charles Isherwood, "Beneath Pink Parasols, Identity in Stark Form," *New York Times*, 16 January 2012, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/17/theater/reviews/young-jean-lees-untitled-feminist-show-review.html>.

to the performer–spectator power arrangement, as well as a revision of the history of pornography and sexually explicit performance art. In this scene, Zirin-Brown appears onstage alone, smiling sweetly at the audience. She scans the crowd, and then catches the eye of a male spectator. She points to him to make sure her target is clear. She grins. She winks. Then she begins to mime: holding his gaze, she makes the time-honored motions of performing a hand job. The audience giggles. She selects another audience member and repeats the process. Soon, however, her highly articulate miming makes clear that she is no longer giving the audience member in question a hand job, as she had just been doing: she’s castrating him, snipping off his testicles with a pair of imaginary scissors and a smile. This gesture repeats three or four times, as Zirin-Brown cycles through every possible permutation of both sexual gratification and painful, emasculating mutilation. Meditating on spectatorial power, she mesmerizes and manipulates her spectators—even though she is alone, nude, and voiceless, while they are together, clothed, and enclosed in the protective embrace of the seating area.

I would like to propose that one ancestor of this sequence (surely not the only one) is the legacy of “SCUMMY performance” staged and promoted by the legendary Valerie Solanas in her play *Up Your Ass*, her *SCUM Manifesto*, and other works. I am building explicitly here on Sara Warner’s reevaluation of Solanas’s life and work in Warner’s 2012 *Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure*. Warner mobilizes meticulous historical research to argue that Solanas’s play was not only written earlier, but was also more central to her aesthetic than the infamous manifesto.²⁵ *Up Your Ass*, as described by Warner, follows the self-assured, wisecracking hustler Bongi Perez (a Solanas alter ego) as she harasses, seduces, and prostitutes herself in a down-and-out neighborhood rife with colorful characters. Calling Solanas’s work “Theater of the Ludicrous” and an “act of gaiety,” Warner describes the artist’s aesthetic as containing, among other elements, “explicit eroticism that pushes the accepted boundaries of middle-class sexual norms; a pronounced anticapitalist critique; a profound engagement with European philosophy, especially existentialism, nihilism, and absurdism; the employment of a wry, irreverent, and satirical tone; and, finally, a penchant for wordplay, scatological speech, and linguistic innovation.”²⁶ Although I am not suggesting that Zirin-Brown’s monologue was explicitly inspired by Solanas, I do believe that it partakes of a politics similar to those Warner sees in the earlier artist’s work. It inhabits an identity with little inherent power—the singular, sexualized, nude female—and uses that position as a means of seizing laughingly gruesome authority from the audience member, happily overstepping the boundaries of accepted sexuality and of the performer–spectator relationship.

In her now-classic *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Jill Dolan argued that an audience’s collective anonymity works to conceal women’s perspectives behind the dominant position of the male spectator. In conventional theatre, she wrote, “[t]he spectators’ individuality is subsumed under an assumption of commonality; their differences from each other are disguised by anonymity. The spectators become the audience whom the performers address—albeit obliquely, given realist theater conventions—as a singular mass.”²⁷ This “singular mass,” Dolan point outs, is never gender-neutral: “[t]he performance apparatus that directs the performer’s address, however, works to

²⁵ Sara Warner, *Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 50–68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷ Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 1.

constitute that amorphous, anonymous mass as a particular subject position," adding that "[h]istorically, in North American culture, this spectator has been assumed to be white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male."²⁸ Anonymity, then, not only obscures the diversity of women's experiences, but it also obscures the spectator's identity, fusing individual audience members into a collective gaze. Zirin-Brown, channeling a "SCUMMY" history, shatters spectators' illusions of safe neutrality. It is Zirin-Brown for whom anonymity offers power, and spectators for whom its removal becomes a threat.

If *Untitled Feminist Show* stopped there, it might traffic in a welcome though familiar form of identity politics, presenting a female world onstage in which identity is fluid and elective. But the piece moves, instead, to abstraction, suggesting that utopia consists in resisting all forms of identity, not just permanent ones. Such strategies take form, for instance, in a pair of scenes titled, respectively, "Laughing" and "Shaking Dance." In the first, the performers stand in a cluster, giggling. It is a recognizable image: they are friends, perhaps, enjoying an inside joke. Very quickly, the image changes: one performer bounces up and down, another wiggles her legs. A techno beat begins to play. Soon, all six performers are wiggling and shaking, each holding onto another's body: one grips a shoulder, another an ankle. One performer is down on all fours, with a second holding onto her back. Breasts, hair, and bellies are everywhere. In reviews of *Untitled Feminist Show*, this scene was frequently labeled "an orgy"—or, occasionally, a meditation on cellulite, as the stage is suddenly filled with jiggling flesh.²⁹ The sequence could be a celebration or a fight, improvised or choreographed, representational or abstract.

Such a scene also conjures the ghosts of earlier works of performance art. We might think, for instance, of Schneeman's *Meat Joy* in which a group of mostly nude men and women cavort and caress one another in ritualistic ecstasy. Partway through Schneeman's iconic piece, a performer introduces the titular meat: piles of dead fish for the women, rubbery raw chickens for the men. In a tongue-in-cheek overload of signification, the women place the fish between their legs, while the men stuff the chickens into their Speedo-sized undergarments, which bulge grotesquely.³⁰ In its nude, orgiastic frenzy, Lee's "Shaking Dance" resembles *Meat Joy*; but where Schneeman comments wryly on the overwhelming significance that our culture assigns to gender, sex, and genitalia, Lee refuses to comment at all.

This choice alone represents a significant departure from the inheritances of feminist performance art with which *Untitled Feminist Show* is in dialogue. In *The Explicit Body in Performance*, Schneider established specifically the ways in which women's bodies have been employed artistically for their signifying potential: "[a] mass of orifices and appendages, details and tactile surfaces, the explicit body in representation is foremost a site of social markings, physical parts and gestural signatures of gender, race, class, age, sexuality—all of which bear ghosts of historical meaning, markings delineating social hierarchies of privilege and disprivilege. The body made explicit has become the *mise en scène* for a variety of feminist artists."³¹ In sequences like the two I have described, *Untitled Feminist Show* registers the inheritances of the female body as such

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See, for instance, Isherwood, "Beneath Pink Parasols"; Susan G. Cole, "Untitled Feminist Show," 13 February 2014, available at <http://www.nowtoronto.com/stage/story.cfm?content=196686>; Barker, "Young Jean Lee's 'Untitled Feminist Show.'"

³⁰ Carolee Schneeman, *Meat Joy*, video in the Electronic Arts Intermix video archive.

³¹ Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 2.

a site, but then it becomes a piece about refusing to signify or to limit the scope of feminist performance to presumed functions as an intervention, a gesture of rage, or a recuperation. In their conversation at the Walker Arts Center, Lee told Steinwald that she and her cast hoped the piece would, above all else, offer a vision of a world with greater gender fluidity, where people felt free not only to choose their gender, but where gender was flexible, summoned or discarded without stigma.³²

The final sequence of *Untitled Feminist Show* expands Lee's rejection of legible representation. Just before the curtain call, the cast exits and the white block that has been hovering overhead descends until it hangs center stage, suspended a few feet above the floor. Music plays and the screen displays a series of abstract, hypnotic projections—at first patterns that resemble fractals and multicolored mosaics, and then, increasingly, no discernable patterns at all. In the final few seconds the projections move faster and faster, frenetically flashing colors, smudges, and shapes. Are these *feminist* patterns and shapes—and if so, to which feminist traditions do they adhere? And if abstract smudges refuse to be read in terms of symbolic identity or political connotations, then why should such permanent significance be assigned to the series of ankles, wrists, hair, thighs, bellies, breasts, and faces that have occupied the stage up until this point?

In a recent review of *Untitled Feminist Show*, Sarah Bay-Cheng understands these abstract projections as a much-needed reminder that seemingly natural bodies are no more “real” or “authentic” than digitally rendered imagery; both are constructions, created and assigned meaning by artists and spectators.³³ I agree, and wish to draw on a longer history of abstraction to make an argument for why and how *Untitled Feminist Show's* final gesture is so emancipatory. In *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, Amelia Jones argued that it was precisely in its move away from abstraction that body art offered a new means of signifying: “[b]ody art is specifically antiformalist in impulse, opening up the circuits of desire informing artistic production and reception. Works that involve the artist's enactment of her or his body in all of its sexual, racial, and other particularities and overtly solicit spectatorial desires unhinge the very deep structures and assumptions embedded in the formalist model of art evaluation.”³⁴ For Jones, artists' moves away from abstraction and toward the representation of specific bodies in visual and performance work represented a means of including diverse female subjectivities in the process of art-making and viewing.

In bringing her spectators back—in this sense, full circle—to abstraction, Lee recalibrates this history, joining a full and open range of female identities with a full and open range of signification, and most importantly with the lack thereof. Just as *Magical* finds liberation in moving behind the proscenium, *Untitled Feminist Show's* utopia must include not only identifications and re-identifications, but also artistic forms that render such questions irrelevant. When the lights come back up, the six performers stand onstage wearing everyday clothing, the styles of which reinforce the specific identities they will carry out of the theatre: butch, femme, dressy, casual. The women have identities, but their onstage embodiments do not. The contrast serves as a reminder that performing identity need not entail divulging stories or committing to characters, and that a feminist utopia means, above all, an escape from the ways that signification indexes people.

³² “Young Jean Lee in Conversation with Michèle Steinwald.”

³³ Sarah Bay-Cheng, “Global Screen Shots,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 37, no. 1 (2015): 57–59.

³⁴ Jones, *Body Art*, 5.

Crucially, *Untitled Feminist Show* offers this critique not only at the level of the performer, but also in its structure and composition (Lee has remarked that the piece resists genre categorization, arguing that although it consists of primarily wordless movement, it should not be classified as dance).³⁵ So, too, does it resist classification through its name. Performance history includes some, but not many “untitled” dramas or performance pieces, while the history of the visual arts is rife with unnamed works, and so I turn here to a work of art-historical scholarship to consider the significance of Lee’s title. In *Invisible Colors: A Visual History of Titles*, John Welchman meditates on the significance that visual artists have found in leaving their works unnamed. This has included several artists for whom, according to him, a refusal to title their works can be understood as a feminist gesture: beginning in the late 1970s, a series of women artists, including Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and Sherrie Levine, have, in Welchman’s words, “made the ‘Untitled’ photographic image into something of a trademark.”³⁶ Describing the untitled works of several of these artists, he argues that by consciously designating their pieces as nameless, they “offer visions of the production, the effects, and the consequences of the non-naming or anonymity of women.”³⁷

With *Untitled Feminist Show*, Lee draws on just such a vision, then moves beyond it. The piece’s untitled status, I believe, signals an affinity with works that resist female anonymity, but it also asserts a form of feminism that does not need a name to forge an existence. The performance is untitled and anonymous, but not through repression or in protest. Juren and Dorsen remark on “the contradictions of contemporary feminism (feminism without activism, without anger, mostly without even naming itself as such),”³⁸ while Lee states to Steinwald that “so many people today don’t want to be called a feminist, it’s somehow become a dirty word.”³⁹ Largely eschewing words altogether—dirty or otherwise—*Magical* and *Untitled Feminist Show* point toward a past when feminism had many names, and toward a future where refusing a name can signal freedom.

Such gestures are all the more potent in an era when anonymity, especially gendered anonymity, resonates as a frightening force in politics and technology and a sought-after respite from a hyper-mediated age. In a 2013 article in *The New Inquiry*, Moira Weigel and Mal Ahearn argued that digital-age anonymity is increasingly gendered as male:

Virginia Woolf pointed out in *A Room of One’s Own* that, for most of history, if a piece of writing was signed “Anonymous,” its author was usually a woman. Recently, however, we have noticed that more and more unsigned publications coming from the left are written in what sounds like a male voice. From the boy bandit aesthetics of the anarchist magazine *Rolling Thunder* to the Guy Fawkes masks and Internet vigilantism of the hacker collective Anonymous, the protagonist of contemporary radical politics styles himself as a *him*.⁴⁰

³⁵ Lee, “From the Playwright/Director.”

³⁶ John Welchman, *Invisible Colors: A Visual History of Titles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 339.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 347.

³⁸ Dorsen and Juren, *Magical*.

³⁹ “Young Jean Lee in Conversation with Michèle Steinwald.”

⁴⁰ Moira Weigel and Mal Ahearn, “Further Materials Toward a Theory of the Man-Child,” *The New Inquiry*, 9 July 2013, available at <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/further-materials-toward-a-theory-of-the-man-child/> (emphasis in original).

I wish to move past *Magical* and *Untitled Feminist Show* to draw attention to the ways in which Dorsen and Juren's and Lee's works signify in a world where anonymous identity is rapidly changing its form, pointing the way toward new feminist forms of nonidentification.

In the summer and fall of 2013, an exhibit titled "Faceless," curated by artist Bogomir Doring, opened at the exhibition space Freiraum Quartier21 International in Vienna. The exhibit, which subsequently toured to Amsterdam, collected the work of more than eighty artists, linked by a mutual interest in depicting humans without faces. Sculptors, video artists, digital artists, and performers portrayed people wearing masks, headdresses, wigs, and other modes of effacing their individual identities. Doring's introduction to the exhibit places this surge of fascination with "facelessness" in the context of surveillance culture, social media, and anxieties over terrorism.⁴¹ And yet, even if largely unremarked on, the relationship between gender and anonymity constitutes a central theme running through the exhibit.

German artist Thorsten Brinkmann contributed an image of a woman in a beautiful, long-sleeved blue dress with gold braid around the collar—and a large quilted fabric covering her entire head. Dutch artist Carmen Schabracq contributed a sardonic "self-portrait" in which she wears a dark wig and a pale pink crocheted mask that entirely covers her face, leaving small gaps for her mouth, nose, and staring eyes. And five or more artists examined contemporary debates over women's head coverings in European Muslim communities. Serbian artist Tanja Ostojić, for instance, contributed documentation of performance pieces in which she appeared in public swathed in a burka printed with a pattern of military camouflage.⁴²

These works of female anonymity, of course, are not the first. Most prominent among anonymous feminist performers are the Guerrilla Girls, activists on behalf of women artists throughout the 1980s and '90s, who appeared in public wearing, always, gorilla masks that fully covered their heads. The Guerrilla Girls' recent embrace of Russian punk-performance art band Pussy Riot suggests continuity in the history of the feminist anonymous.⁴³

But the phenomenon of Pussy Riot itself evokes the ways in which anonymity has changed in an era of all-seeing social media and facial recognition software. The band became famous in early 2012 for their performance of "A Punk Prayer" in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. Appearing in their trademark balaclavas, the group had barely begun to sing before they were stopped by church security officials, but before the end of the day, their music video had begun to circulate around the world. The group has become an icon of resistance to the repressive Putin regime and a celebrated image of feminist performance art in the internet age. Their balaclavas are not temporary costumes, but a central element of their group identity. "Membership in Pussy Riot is completely interchangeable," said one of the performers' husbands to a reporter shortly after several of the band members were placed on trial. "The anonymous status is part of the group's ideological core."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Bogomir Doring, "About Faceless," available at <http://www.facelessexhibition.net/statement>.

⁴² All examples of artistic contributions to the exhibit are taken from the exhibition's website, available at <http://www.facelessexhibition.net/artists>.

⁴³ Michael Pollak, "What Are the Guerrilla Girls Doing Now?" *New York Times*, 21 September 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/21/nyregion/what-are-the-guerrilla-girls-doing-now.html>.

⁴⁴ Brian Whitmore, "Pussy Riot: The Punk Band That Isn't and the Concert That Wasn't," *Radio Free Europe*, 30 July 2012, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/pussy-riot-what-really-happened-russia-trial/24660925.html>.

Pussy Riot's most famous performance, the one that went viral, took place less than a month after *Untitled Feminist Show* premiered in New York City and just a year before *Magical* would open there, after being performed in Vienna, Paris, Oslo, and a range of other European locations.⁴⁵ Pussy Riot combines celebrity and anonymity; the creators of *Magical* and *Untitled Feminist Show* turn familiar imagery and iconic performances into new works that are not easily categorized, compartmentalized, or even identified. Only one of these works literally refuses a title, but in a larger sense, both are untitled: lacking characters and clearly delineated politics, reconfiguring identity for an era when losing a name can be just as freeing as claiming one. The women on these stages are in multiple senses anonymous, but they are not sorry to be evading identification.

⁴⁵ Dorsen and Juren, *Magical*.