



## **MIRROR MIRROR**

Main Gallery, Express Newark

Paul Robeson Galleries, Rutgers University - Newark

February 19 - December 20, 2018

## **EXHIBITION TOUR**

### **About the Paul Robeson Galleries**

The Paul Robeson Galleries' mission and programming embody Paul Robeson's life-long commitment to unfettered artistic freedom, cultural democracy, and transnationalism.

Paul Robeson Galleries is non-profit art gallery with emphasis on exhibitions, education, and community. We curate exhibitions and special projects across the Rutgers campus, as well as a dynamic schedule of educational and public programs including artist talks, lectures, concerts, art making workshops and more. We are free and open to the public.

### **Exhibition Overview**

*Mirror Mirror* is an expansive take on portraiture, challenging the viewer's expectations of the genre, rather than providing a definition of what constitutes a "portrait." *Mirror Mirror* presents works in a variety of media from thirty-two international emerging and established artists and one artist collective. The works in the exhibition unsettle dominant understandings of gender, race, age, social norms, technology, and beauty, to plumb the relationship between identity, cultural norms, and representation.

Portraiture is one of the most enduring and essential art forms, having a constant presence throughout art history. In the most abbreviated of forms, a portrait is a depiction of a person, usually a face, occasionally a torso, sometimes more of the body, or even a symbolic presentation of an aspect of an individual's character. Historically, portraiture was utilized in service of the ruling classes, and some of the works in the exhibition explore the machinations of the powerful, touching upon the fraught histories of colonialism, slavery, American inference abroad, and eugenic practices. Photography is presented in both documentary modes and as a means to deconstruct representations of femininity, adolescence, and motherhood. Other artists work in non-traditional media, exploring the portrait painted by our data and bacteria, and radical possibilities of self-

invention through new virtual and bio technologies. Taken as a whole, the works in *Mirror Mirror* communicate the connected nature of representation and self-determination.

### **Tatyana Fazlalizadeh**

*Stop Telling Women to Smile*, 2018

Wheat paste installation

Courtesy of the artist

Speaking freely is a constitutional right in the United States. The right to speak up often stems from a desire to live in a better world, to focus attention on inequities, and to propose inclusive alternatives. By virtue of making ideas visible, artists fulfill an activist agenda and assume the mantle of being agents for change. With a heightened sensitivity to the mechanisms of society, ideas for work can be sourced from daily difficulties. For example, simply walking down the street may bring to the fore unacceptable behaviors that need to be collectively addressed. For example, Fazlalizadeh created *Stop Telling Women to Smile* (2012–present), an international street art project that tackles gender-based street harassment. Each poster features the drawn likeness of a woman accompanied by a quote about her personal experiences with street harassment.

Fazlalizadeh is interested in defiance rather than compliance, knowing a true smile comes from a place of happiness, not an instruction to perform. Such a demand is antagonistic, disrespectfully relegating the female to a submissive position wherein she exists to validate and conform to the intentions of a male catcaller or harasser. This demand is but one of a number of actions that create a hostile public environment for women—an environment of external tensions which constantly reinforce women’s objectification as sexualized beings, rarely under the framework of their own desire or agency. The artist states, “This is all about how women’s bodies are consumed and are considered public property for display, comment, and consumption. Women need to start talking about their daily moments because it’s the smaller stuff that affects the larger

things like rape, domestic violence, harassment in the workplace.”<sup>1</sup> A native of Oklahoma City, Fazlalizadeh currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

## **Beat Streuli**

*Pallasades 05-01-01, 2001*

Single channel video

Courtesy of the artist and Bank of America Art Collection, Charlotte

Working in photography and video, Beat Streuli captures anonymous city dwellers—generally unaware of or unaffected by the recording—as they negotiate the urban environment. There is an elegance to the anonymity of subjects as they cascade before us in the work *Pallasades 05-01-01*. The viewer is transfixed by hundreds of faces captured in this forty-five-minute projection. The durational structure of the video abstracts Streuli’s subjects, both visually and thematically. We watch the common drama of daily life unfold as a play of colors: the high-key hues of t-shirts and purses, the way a body slouches over a cell phone screen, moments of self-consciousness between two speakers, moments of candid enjoyment, and the city dweller’s performance of blankness as protection.

Walking through a crowded environment, faces pass before us, quickly assessed by the brain to see if recognition is triggered by a familiar facial composition. Streuli’s work is a democratic, even utopian attempt to document everyone—the antithesis of a power portrait. The artist’s underlying egalitarian impulse encourages viewers to welcome the singularity of each human face. Even identical twins, sprung from the same zygote, differ in appearance due to the epigenetic effects of experience. This fleeting glimpse of a sea of faces reminds us of the fleeting nature of life, the daily and inescapable passing of time. As the artist states, “The aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can.”<sup>2</sup> Streuli lives and works in Zurich.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tatyana Fazlalizadeh quoted in Felicia R. Lee, “An Artist Demands Civility on the Street With Grit and Buckets of Paste,” the New York Times, April 9, 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/10/arts/design/tatyana-fazlalizadeh-takes-her-public-art-project-to-georgia.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Beat Streuli quoted in Brigitte Werneburg, “The Cruel Radiance of Glamour: Beat Streuli’s View of Urban Pedestrians,” *db artmag*, March 1, 2006. <http://db-artmag.de/archiv/2006/e/3/1/430.html>

## **Tatyana Fazlalizadeh**

*America is Black*, 2018

Wheat paste installation

Courtesy of the artist

*America is Black* was a direct response to the election of Donald J. Trump. The artist was heading to Oklahoma for Thanksgiving and wanted to install a public art work in the Republican-leaning state. The work asserts both the presence and necessity of a diverse population for the American experiment to thrive. “This piece was done specifically to challenge whiteness and the accepted idea of who an American is,” Fazlalizadeh said. “This work is declaring that people who are non-white and male are a part of this country, are integral to this country, and are not going anywhere.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Hyphen-Labs: Carmen Aguilar y Wedge, Ece Tankal, Ashley Baccus**

*NeuroSpeculative AfroFeminism*, 2017

Virtual reality installation

Courtesy of the artists

Hyphen-Labs is a speculative design firm with members based in New York, London, and Barcelona. It is led by Carmen Aguilar y Wedge, Co-founder, Experience Designer, and Creative Director; Ashley Baccus, Speculative Neuroscientist and Creative Director; and Ece Tankal, Co-founder and Creative Director. Through their global vision and unique perspectives, they create meaningful and engaging ways to explore emotional, human-centered speculative design. In this process, Hyphen-Labs challenges conventions and stimulates conversations, placing collective needs and experiences at the forefront of evolving narratives.

Concerned with the paucity of positive representations of women with black and brown skin, Hyphen-Labs imagines a sci-fi inspired virtual reality. In the installation, *NeuroSpeculative AfroFeminism*, participants experience a future world in which

---

<sup>3</sup> Priscilla Frank, “Street Artist Delivers Powerful Message To White America,” The Huffington Post, December 2016. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tatyana-fazlalizadeh-street-art\\_us\\_583c9912e4b04b66c01b53ea](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tatyana-fazlalizadeh-street-art_us_583c9912e4b04b66c01b53ea).

dominant paradigms have shifted and expanded to include a greater array of desirable ways of existing. Hyphen-Labs' sharp-witted aesthetics stem from lived experiences as women of color. The products in their salon imagine drawing on technology to optimize brain capacity, or to deflect a malicious gaze by donning an über-cool reflective visor. Not all the products are charming: some deal with the grim reality of the present day. For example, an earring is embedded with a hidden camera to be activated by the wearer during hostile police encounters. Occasional collaborator Adam Harvey offers his Hyperface scarf for sale in the salon: the garment is printed with 1,200 pixelated faces that initially read as an abstract pattern, but, in reality, are strategically designed to confuse facial-recognition software. The scarf serves as a form of camouflage, protecting its wearer from ever-present surveillance.

### **Patricia Piccinini**

*The Osculating Curve*, 2016

Silicone, fiberglass, and human hair

Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco

Patricia Piccinini's interdisciplinary practice encompasses digital photography, video, installation, and sculpture. Her work creates another world, referencing the emergent technologies of today to point to potential lifeworlds of the future. Piccinini examines the emotional landscapes of possible new forms of humans, animals, and objects, visualizing the types of relations that could emerge between them. The initial strangeness of a creature like *The Osculating Curve* fades with sustained engagement, allowing its vulnerability to come to the fore. Piccinini compels viewers to be curious about how such a creature might exist, and what its existence would mean in relation to our own. In our current moment, technology's status as an agent of change is amorphous, straddling biological, physical, and mechanical realms, and often being used to ethically indeterminate ends.

Like many artists included in this exhibition, her work has an autobiographical element. Her earlier work focused on understanding human cells, as her mother fought cancer during the artist's childhood. When starting her own family, Piccinini moved her attention to concepts of motherhood. *The Osculating Curve* has an equivocal beauty: the hair is so human, and the skin texture so lifelike, that we can almost perceive blood pulsing in

subcutaneous arteries. The creature is at the same time grotesque, a compellingly repulsive approximation of a pregnant woman. The work is a proposition: as humans have increasing control over their progeny, intervening at the earliest stages of reproduction, what are the potential outcomes? The artist compels her viewer to question precisely who might be charged with the responsibility of “natural selection” if this process itself evolves to incorporate human intention.

## **Ani Liu**

### *Microbial We*, 2017–2018

Microorganisms from the artist’s mouth and the mouths of those in close contact to her, agar, and nutrient solution

Courtesy of the artist

Based in New York, Ani Liu works at the intersection of art and science. Liu combines experimentation, intuition, and speculative storytelling with rigorous scientific research to explore the social and psychological implications of emerging technologies. Her work takes a variety of forms including prosthetics, architecture, augmented reality, and synthetic biology. In this work, entitled, *Microbial We*, the artist presents us with “smelfies,” an ongoing series of artworks comprised of bacteria cultivated from various parts of her body. Each human body is like a garden, a unique environment in which multitudes of microorganisms are born, reproduce, and die. Rough estimates report that there may be as many nonhuman cells as human ones on each person. The combination of bacteria that exist in each individual body, called the microbiome, are as unique as a fingerprint. With this in mind, each specimen in her presentation has a unique olfactory presence. As we speculate a future of virtual reality facilitated by all manner of innovative technologies, Liu frames for us a reality rooted in the common substances of which we are made.

This work brings to the fore the idea of bio-data as a method of cataloging and classifying humans. Liu encourages viewers to question how this data is collected, stored, and used. At the moment, legal systems in most countries lag far behind scientific actuality. This manifests in unchecked data collection, storage, and usage. The social impact is yet to be fully understood, but should fill us with a carefully measured balance of hopefulness and trepidation.

**Jessamyn Lovell**

*Surveillance Book*, 2014 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Archival ink jet print

*P.I.*, 2013 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Archival ink jet print

*Mug Shot*, 2012 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Archival ink jet print

*P.I. Folder*, 2013 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Archival ink jet print

*Stake Out*, 2013 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Archival ink jet print

*Surveillance*, 2013 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Single channel video without sound

*Dear Erin Hart*, 2014 from the series *Dear Erin Hart*,  
Hand written letter sealed in 5 x 7-inch paper envelope with handwritten name on  
outside

Courtesy of the artist

Jessamyn Lovell works in photography, video, writing, book making, and map-making. She mines her personal and familial history to explore the dynamic between private and public identity. For example, the theft of Lovell's wallet in 2009 led to the series *Dear Erin Hart*. The perpetrator, a woman named Erin Hart, assumed Lovell's identity to engage in low-level illicit activities. Lovell became aware of these actions only when she was accused of crimes she did not commit. In order to identify the perpetrator, she hired a private investigator to gather data. Together, they followed and documented Hart on the day she was released from prison; this process formed the basis of *Dear Erin Hart*.

Interestingly, at the same time the artist was compelled to prove to law enforcement that she was not the criminal, she was developing an involuntary empathy for her subject. The artist states, “I wanted it to be like: she was a criminal, and she did something bad to me. And it just wasn’t that. None of that satisfaction of, ‘I got her!’ It was just ... this weird transition. And anger started to be replaced with empathy.”<sup>4</sup> Both she and Hart had come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with family situations that were less than ideal. The resulting artwork is a deliberately haphazard affair consisting of surreptitious photographs taken at odd angles, identity cards with mismatched names and portraits, and, finally, a letter written to Hart by the artist. This document remains unopened. It is a sign of the ambivalence the artist feels toward the woman who stole her identity, and a passive attempt to directly address Hart should she ever encounter Lovell’s homage to her actions.

### **Paolo Cirio**

*Mugshots.com N.2*, 2016 from the series *Obscurity*

Archival inkjet print

*Mugshots.com N.1*, 2016 from the series *Obscurity*

Archival inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

New York-based artist Paolo Cirio engages with legal, economic, and semiotic systems of the information society. His work investigates social fields impacted by the Internet, such as privacy, copyright, democracy, and finance. Cirio’s research and online intervention-based works are exhibited as photos, installations, videos, and public art.

The series, *Obscurity*, is composed of over fifteen million mugshots of individuals arrested in the United States. These images are readily available online, and considered to be part of the public sphere. Techno-opportunists swoop in on these portraits, and a number of websites house databases of mug shots with names, photos, and details of

---

<sup>4</sup> Jessamyn Lovell quoted in Miki Meek, “Act Three. The Haunted Becomes the Haunter: Same Bed, Different Dreams,” *This American Life*, Chicago Public Radio, May 1, 2015. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/556/transcript>

arrests. A disclaimer on one such site states that included mug shots are “not evidence that an actual crime has been committed.” Regardless, inclusion on such a website can have an extremely negative impact on an individual’s life. This form of cyber trail can haunt a person’s future attempts to look for work, find housing, and build a life. The only way to delete such a record is to pay to have the portrait removed, which can cost hundreds to thousands of dollars depending on how widely the image has been disseminated.

Cirio took this injustice as the starting point for *Obscurity*. The artist created a website mimicking mug-shot sites, but instead of recognizable images, the faces are obfuscated and data is scrambled. Of this work, he states, “When data is technically indestructible, obfuscation might be the last resort.” Connected to this project, Cirio initiated the Right to Remove campaign which advocates for the legal right to remove personal information from search engines by adapting the European Right to Be Forgotten law for the United States.

## **Dread Scott**

*Wanted*, 2014

Community based project: offset prints, performance, video, website, inkjet prints, forums, community participants

Developed collaboratively with No Longer Empty, The Stop Mass Incarceration Network and young adults in Harlem. The sketches were drawn by Kevin Blythe Sampson.

Courtesy of the artist

New York-based Dread Scott works in a range of media, including performance, photography, screen printing, and video, posing significant social questions to push formal and conceptual boundaries.

In 1865, the first illustrated wanted poster was created in an attempt to capture the assassins of President Abraham Lincoln. To this day, the FBI continues to issue illustrated wanted posters in their efforts to arrest and incarcerate criminals. The United States has only four and a half percent of the world’s total population, but holds twenty-two percent of the world’s prisoners. More than half of the country’s incarcerated population consists

of people who are brown, black, or Latino, in a remarkable disparity with demographic levels in the general population.

The mass incarceration of youth has a profoundly negative long-term impact on both individual lives and entire communities. Deprived of traditional educations and with marks on their permanent records, formerly incarcerated individuals are limited from access to future opportunities. At the height of their social development, they are forced to navigate an environment more focused on disciplinary punishment and survival than real reform and redemption.

Scott's work *Wanted* takes the form of a street art project. Working with collaborator Kevin Sampson, the artist created a series of posters that depict youths "wanted" not by authorities "dead or alive," as the cruel colloquialism states, but decidedly alive and safe by their family and friends. Scott's posters imagine a better world in which routine criminalization of certain types of young people is nonexistent, and instead communities and families can support, love, and enjoy the company of those who are currently behind bars. Through this work, Scott examines and makes visible the prejudices openly concealed within the United States justice system.

### **Leo Selvaggio**

*URME Surveillance: Demipanoptiversal, 2018*

Light stands, sandbags, convex security mirrors, and Urme Surveillance Prosthetic  
Courtesy of the artist

Social media giant Facebook undoubtedly has the largest collection of photographic portraits to ever exist. The company has built increasingly sophisticated facial-recognition software, drawing on its ever-expanding database of portraits voluntarily gifted by its users. This database is invaluable; as social media becomes even more commonplace, it will serve as a longitudinal study providing evidence about how faces age. Applications of this software vary, from the seemingly harmless (tagging people in online snapshots) to crime prevention (assessing the criminal potential that some believe might be revealed in a face). As with all technology, the algorithms used are not neutral or transparent. Programs are mainly developed using data sets of white faces as the default, and have been criticized for their fallibility in recognizing different ethnicities.

Leo Selvaggio is an interdisciplinary artist whose work examines the intersection of identity and technology. He created a *Personal Surveillance Identity Prosthetic URME*, users of which can choose to elude recognition. Selvaggio's strategy affords users freedom from surveillance by proffering someone else's identity rather than their own. Every time you walk down the street in a major US city, you are captured from multiple angles by all kinds of cameras. In 2014, an estimated four-billion hour of this type of footage was shot each week. For only \$200, anyone can purchase a highly realistic, three-dimensional photo-printed mask of Selvaggio's face from the artist's website. How the user chooses to act when they "become Leo" is up to them: whether charitable, upstanding, or illegal.

### **Anne-Karin Furunes**

*Of Faces X (Portraits of Archive Pictures)*, 2016

Acrylic on perforated canvas

Courtesy of the artist and RYAN LEE Gallery, New York

Eugenics is a quasi-scientific practice related to "improving" any given human population through selective breeding. The intention is to encourage reproduction in types of people who are considered favorable, while simultaneously diminishing the reproduction of "undesirable" types. Coined by English mathematician and scientist Francis Galton in 1883, eugenics gained wide popularity in the wake of Charles Darwin's writings on the concept of evolution, and the possibility creating a new and superior species. In subsequent decades and across multiple continents, institutes sprang up dedicated to the study and implementation of eugenic principles. In 1922, one such venue, the State Institute for Racial Biology, was established at a Swedish university and subsequently produced an archive of photographs of its subjects.

Norwegian artist Anne-Karin Furunes came across these images in 2005, and was both horrified and intrigued by their existence. In a bleak period of Swedish history, from 1935 until about 1975, approximately 63,000 people were involuntarily sterilized, their genes efficiently removed from the pool. The goal of this inhumane project was to create a master race of people without "criminals," "Jews," and "gypsies," all of who feature in these archival photographs. People were documented not to remember, but to forget—a mechanism of intentional obliteration. Furunes's portraiture process imbues the sitter

with a dignity that they were denied in life, and at the same time acknowledges that her subject will forever remain anonymous. *Of Faces X* is a monumental painting of an unknown young boy. His beseeching gaze seeks the attention of the viewer. His expression is one of despair, his fate confirmed by the fact that he does not embody Scandinavian physical ideals. Furunes's technique of hand-perforating the canvas makes it impossible for viewers to fix their gaze on the portrait, which is as much absent as present. Here, Furunes reintroduces just one of thousands of forgotten boys, drawing attention to the very human cost of eugenics.

### **Wendy Red Star**

*Clara White Hip*, 2016 from the series *Grandmothers (I Come As One But I Stand As Ten Thousand)*

Mirror, digital images sourced from the Richard Throssel papers at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming and printed on photo tex

*Indian Woman (untitled)*, 2016 from the series *Grandmothers (I Come As One But I Stand As Ten Thousand)*

Mirror, digital images sourced from the Richard Throssel papers at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming and printed on photo tex

Courtesy of the artist

Wendy Red Star's cross-disciplinary practice spans photography, sculpture, video, fiber arts, and performance. Raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) reservation in Montana and now based in Portland, OR, she explores the intersections of Indigenous ideologies and colonialist structures, both historically and in contemporary society. Red Star appropriates and transforms archival materials, offering new and unexpected perspectives. Intergenerational collaboration is integral to her practice, as well as creating a forum for Indigenous women's voices in contemporary art.

Anthropologists were early and keen adopters of photo technology. Images provided them a means by which to convey information with all the implied "truthfulness" of the history of the photograph. Their aim to document and classify people "discovered" in global exploration led to many portraits, capturing and colonizing the "other" through

visual classification systems. In two pieces from her series *Grandmothers (I Come As One But I Stand As Ten Thousand)*, Red Star forms a distant collaboration between herself and twentieth-century photographer Richard Throssel—an imagined correspondence stretched over generations and lives that did not intersect. Around 1911, Throssel commenced an ambitious project to take photos of the Crow tribe. Being of Cree descent, he was trusted and adopted as part of the community, providing him with a rare access to the daily lives of his subjects. Red Star sees in Throssel’s work “glimpses of [his subjects’] personalities, and a real feeling of kinship” that inspired her to appropriate his photos into her own work. Juxtaposing his portraits against mirrored backgrounds, Red Star invites the viewer into the frame; we literally cannot be near these works without being implicated in the image. Unlike peer photographers such as Edward S. Curtis, Throssel did not see tribespeople as “noble savages.” Through his lens we have respectful depictions of powerful women in a matriarchal society. Red Star, by extension, invites us into her contemporary world, providing us with opportune moments to see the history of her people through her eyes.

### **Laura Splan**

*Manifest (Swallow)*, 2015

Laser sintered polyamide nylon

*Manifest (Furrow)*, 2015

Laser sintered polyamide nylon

*Manifest (Blink Twice)*, 2015

Laser sintered polyamide nylon

Courtesy of the artist

In 1855, French neurophysiologist Guillaume Benjamin Amand Duchenne de Boulogne published one of the first scientific texts illustrated with photographs, which took as its subject the physiology of human emotion.<sup>5</sup> In the photographs of facial expressions,

---

<sup>5</sup> In the textbook *De l'électrisation localisée et de son application à la physiologie, à la pathologie et à la thérapeutique* (Treatise on Localized Electrization, and its Applications to Pathology and Therapeutics).

Duchenne de Boulogne sought to make visible the connection between internal states and their external expressions. As part of his process, he attached electrodes to multiple parts of his subjects' faces and used electrical currents to stimulate various muscle groups. His research is located within broader studies of physiognomy, which proposes that a person's external appearance provides clues about their temperament. This type of research has existed since ancient times, but rose to prominence in the Victorian era alongside the rise of eugenics.

Splan engages this old pseudoscience in conjunction with new technology in the series *Manifest*. Described by the artist as "data driven sculptures," each form reflects an emotion enacted by Splan; the resulting sculptures represent captured expressions ranging from smiling to frowning. Unlike the forced participation of subjects in eugenic and physiognomic scientific experiments, Splan's participation in this project was entirely self-determined: sculptures representing "frown," "blink," and "swallow" were created under conditions established by the artist. As is typical of much of Splan's oeuvre, the work hovers in a liminal zone between science and art. Unlike Duchenne de Boulogne's photographs, Splan's work references science and art through elegant, calmly beautiful objects rather than with the tortured distortion of an unwilling participant.

### **Nona Faustine**

*Over My Dead Body*, 2013 from the series *White Shoes*  
Digital chromogenic print

*Venus of Vlacked Bos*, 2012 from the series *White Shoes*  
Digital chromogenic print

Courtesy of the artist

Working mainly in photography, Brooklyn-based Nona Faustine's practice focuses on history, identity, and representation. Her work calls for a critical and emotional understanding of the past, proposing a deeper examination of contemporary racial and

---

This book, which was heavily illustrated with photographs supporting Duchenne de Boulogne's research, had a significant impact on Charles Darwin's thinking on evolution.

gender stereotypes. Faustine uses her own body as a tool for creative expression to show its shifting significations in historical and culturally significant spaces. Faustine makes no apologies for literally inserting herself into the front and center of spaces that have historically excluded or oppressed bodies like hers.

In her series *White Shoes*, Faustine takes her viewer on a journey through American history, a lesser-known path revealing truths many have sought to hide. In *Over My Dead Body*, the artist ascends the stairs of a prominent neoclassical government building, Tweed Courthouse, in Lower Manhattan, nude except for a pair of white high-heel shoes. In Faustine's right hand, she holds a pair of shackles, a metal device commonly used to hold prisoners' and slaves' wrists or ankles together, rendering the wearer powerless. The image gives its viewer the impression of defiance—we imagine that, having removed her shackles, Faustine is returning to the courthouse to demand accountability. Tweed Courthouse is rapturously described on a historic register as “one of the city's grandest and most important civic monuments.”<sup>6</sup> It is named after the corrupt politician William “Boss” Tweed, who was widely known for ruthless syphoning government funds to enhance his own lifestyle. What is less well known is that this structure, the adjacent city hall, and many other buildings in the precinct are built on an African burial ground. It is estimated that there could potentially be ten- to twenty-thousand bodies buried within this six-acre site, meaning that the geographic hub of this country's financial center literally rests on the bodies of the enslaved.

### **María Verónica San Martín**

*In Their Memory. Human Rights Violation in Chile. 1973-1990, 2012*

Screen print on paper and ink

Courtesy of the artist

María Verónica San Martín is a Chilean printmaker, bookmaker, and performer whose work examines the often-silenced violence in Chilean collective memory. For example, the work *Make the Economy Scream* (2017) was inspired by a document outlining a plan to protect American commercial interests in Chile by staging a coup d'état of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Cited in the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission 1984 designation decision.  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/about/man\\_tweed.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/about/man_tweed.shtml)

democratically elected government of socialist president Salvador Allende. “There are messages that can be interpreted as corresponding to what happened in the transition from dictatorship to democracy,” the artist states. “As printmaking, it also made sense to me. An image that disappears in the printmaking process then reappears printed on paper, like the search for truth and reconciliation.”<sup>7</sup>

Fine red strings trickle from the base of a sculptural book created by artist San Martín, running in a random pattern like rivulets of blood. From 1973 to 1990, more than 3,500 people were disappeared in Chile under the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet—these political murders were only part of the endemic, systemic human rights violations perpetuated by Pinochet’s government. To this day, the victims’ whereabouts are unknown: they are referred to simply as “the disappeared.” It is believed that they were kidnapped, tortured, and killed, their bodies hidden in undisclosed gravesites. Family members who attempted to find their relatives were told by officials, “That person is not here, do not insist.”<sup>8</sup> The forms of torture enacted on victims ranged from psychological techniques to sexual abuse and waterboarding. Anyone thought to have left-wing politics, or to otherwise be an enemy of the state, lived in fear. San Martín’s book both marks and holds accountable those in power. *In Their Memory. Human Rights Violations in Chile, 1973–1990* is a protest book following in the steps of the resistance to the government begun by family members who survived. The structure of the book presents the viewer with an overwhelming array of sparse portraits drawn from basic records; it is literally impossible to grasp the magnitude of the event from a single viewpoint.

### **Deborah Willis**

*Carrie at the Euro Salon, 2010*

Digital chromogenic print

Courtesy of the artist

<sup>7</sup> María Verónica San Martín quoted in Matías Celedón, “Every Disappearance Implies A Search,” 2016. <https://www.mveronicasanmartin.com/every-disappearance-implies-a-search>

<sup>8</sup> Taken from the website <http://memoriaviva.com>, where volunteers have captured data through images and stories about the people who disappeared. This quote comes from the life of Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, who was extracted violently from her home and “taken hostage” while pregnant. Her whereabouts, and those of her child, are unknown.

Living and working in New York, Deborah Willis is a photographer and one of the nation's leading curators and historians of African American photography. Her practice expands the breadth and depth of representations of Blackness in circulation. Willis locates her work *Carrie in the Euro Salon, Eatonville, Florida* in a place geared for transformation. We see the artist Carrie Mae Weems seated in a salon chair, inspecting herself in a hand mirror. She is deliberately styled to look like Zora Neale Hurston, the renowned writer and anthropologist who lived in Eatonville and used the town as her muse for a lifetime of writing. Eatonville was one of the first self-governing all-black municipalities in the United States. Both Weems and Willis are invested in "creating a space in which black women are looking back."<sup>9</sup>

Unlike historical representations of black women, most of which were produced under an unequal power dynamic between subject and artist, the creation of this image was consensual, a collaboration between friends and peers. Willis's image vibrates with reflections and distortions as images embedded within images bounce through space and across mirrored surfaces. Through the eye of the photographer, we are present in the salon. Notions of truth are artfully challenged through the simultaneous, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives afforded by this complex composition. It is an apt metaphor for how our identities are constructed within our own minds and in society at large. Willis was inspired by the idea of "reflection and looking for not only self-approval, but also the idea of women embracing their own beauty." The artist explains, "I grew up in a beauty shop, I used to sit on the floor and listen to women talk about their lives, their hopes, and their disappointments. I was a young girl, but I understood that there was something central and important about that experience."<sup>10</sup> She presents the informal, women-centric community that flourishes within such venues. Despite the affirmative aspects of the photograph, restrictive beauty norms remain: the name of the store suggests aspirational ideals relating to European ideas of what is "beautiful."

---

<sup>9</sup> Carrie May Weems in *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her "Hottentot"*, ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Deborah Willis, "Carrie in Euro Salon, Eatonville," 2010

**Anna Ogier-Bloomer**

*Nursing and peeing, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2015*

Pigment inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

**Leah DeVun**

*Jennifer, 2016 from the series *In the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**

Archival inkjet print

*Erica, 2016 from the series *In the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**

Archival inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Artists Leah DeVun and Anna Ogier-Bloomer seek to dispel the romanticized and harmful aspects of motherhood myths, replacing these with urgent and unsentimental images of parenting in real-time. DeVun's work focuses on the mechanics of breastfeeding. Believed to be a natural process that all mothers should be able to do, breastfeeding can instead become an act of frustration when the process does not evolve gracefully. In these images, mothers stare directly into the camera, their bodies partially concealed with the apparatus for nursing. One clutches nursing pads to prevent unwelcome spillage; another poses in an undergarment with apertures specifically designed to expose the nursing breast. Neither woman is imbued with a rosy glow. Instead, they look fed-up, tired, and resigned to their immediate task. Neither looks happy—more likely, they are exhausted and, in the moment, weary of their procreative destiny. Ogier-Bloomer's photography invites the viewer into her bathroom, in which all bodily fluids are transacted simultaneously. Her blunt vision is the reality of many mothers: a private moment alone to urinate is impossible when the universes of both mother and child revolve around the latter's immediate needs.

Working mainly in photography, Anna Ogier-Bloomer's art reveals the intricacy of familial relations, particularly between women, using her own family as material. She has made images of Skype sessions, retirement parties, children hula hooping in the backyard,

fighting over divorce, shooting ranges, and more. The photos capture the fragments of life that usually pass without ceremony. Of her work documenting her own experience of motherhood, Ogier-Bloomer states, “I turn my lens on these physical elements: pain on the surface of the skin, illness, emotional outpouring of love and distress, a breast engorged with milk. I confront the complexity of these seemingly contradictory states of being.”<sup>11</sup>

Leah DeVun’s photographs and videos explore the legacy of queer and feminist histories. Amongst other subjects, DeVun has explored the legacy of the Women’s Land Movement and lesbian separatism, the possibility for agency within the gendered performance of Miley Cyrus fandom, intense affections for pets, and the utopian futility of the never accomplished task. DeVun is also a scholar whose work focuses on the history of gender, sexuality, and science in pre-modern Europe, as well as on contemporary queer and feminist studies.

### **Phyllis Galembó**

*Aye Loja (The World Market Place That We Visit)*, 2006  
Ilfochrome print

*You Can’t Buy Wisdom at the Market, Benin*, 2006  
Ilfochrome print

Courtesy of the artist and Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

New York-based artist Phyllis Galembó has made over twenty trips to sites of ritual masquerade in Africa and the Caribbean, capturing cultural performances with a subterranean political edge. The works in *Mirror Mirror* were taken in Benin, West Africa, enacting an homage to maternal forces with mystical costumes made by the people who wear them. Galembó’s work records a traditional ritual performance, Gelede, which has close connections to Yoruba culture. The nurturing spirit is not always a single entity, but encompasses all female ancestors, instantiating a prayer to a life force that protects

---

<sup>11</sup> Anna Ogier-Bloomer, “Statement: Let Down,” 2015

crops, ensures fecundity and health, and maintains peace. For over thirty years, Galemba has traveled around the globe to document such masquerades.

Through the masquerade, costumed people transcend the mortal world, taking on hybrid identities that are both human and spirit. Their apparel is made with materials readily found, combined in ingenious and fantastical ways. The masquerade's magic occurs when the costumes are worn and the celebration commences. Sometimes, figures embody multiple forces in one, with children and animals incorporated into their costumes. The costumes frequently serve educational means with moral messages such as, "You can't buy wisdom at the market," and activist slogans on potentially life-threatening matters such as AIDS. The spirits performed in these masquerades are always ones that nurture and care for the welfare of others.

**Shoshanna Weinberger**

*Third Sighting of My Doppelgänger, 2017*

Ink and gouache on paper

*Stepping Out Wearing Liz Lips, 2017*

Gouache, ink, and collage on paper

*Escape Artist, 2017*

Gouache and pencil on paper

*Encore for Princess Tam Tam, 2017*

Ink and collage on paper

*Gypsy, 2016*

Collage on paper

*Footprint, 2016*

Collage on paper

*Addendum, 2017*

Ink and gouache on paper

*She Runs With a Crooked Smile*, 2017

Ink and collage on paper

*Banana Dancer Second Portrait*, 2017

Gouache and ink on paper

Courtesy of the artist

### **Zoë Charlton**

*Be Sarah*, 2011

Single-channel video

Courtesy of the artist

In 1815, after a short, miserable lifetime in which she was treated as a specimen of both scientific and cultural intrigue, Sarah Baartman died. Of Khoisan heritage and born in Southwestern Africa, while technically not enslaved, twenty-year-old Baartman was taken to England by two men who were the first in a series to quite literally treat her like an animal. Known pejoratively as the “Venus of Hottentot,” Baartman did not find respite even in death: her brain, skeleton, and genitalia, as well as a plaster cast of her body, were displayed in a natural history museum until forced repatriation to South Africa in 2002. Artists Zoe Charlton and Shoshanna Weinberger pay homage to Baartman, creating works that expose the ubiquitous and degrading levels of sexism and racism that impacted Baartman’s life. Weinberger does so through hyper-exaggeration, unapologetically essentializing the female body to show the construction of the Venus character by reducing personhood and individuality to a set of body parts and sexualized gestures. For those who sought entertainment and scientific advancement at the expense of Baartman’s humanity, this series of racialized traits was all she could ever be. Genitalia allusions abound in Weinberger’s images, reflecting the still-pervasive obsession with the supposedly rampant sexuality located in all female, and especially black, bodies. Charlton uses a different strategy, forcing the viewer to embody the Hottentot character onstage. Through Charlton’s work we gain some understanding of the extreme debasement and humiliation of being made to perform. We experience the audience’s simultaneous indifference and fascination as we appear naked and exposed before them. Charlton’s work is about both looking and being: such a shift in subjectivity

may be eye-opening for viewers who had never considered what it was like, “Being Sarah.”

Born in Kingston, Jamaica and based in Newark, Shoshanna Weinberger’s work explores her Caribbean-American background, drawing strongly on the complexity of heritage and assumed norms as she defines and investigates female archetypes. She references herself among a sea of antiquated stereotypes, adolescent memories, and current affairs. Working primarily in mixed media on paper, Weinberger renders her female muses as excessive, sexualized, sometimes passive, and sometimes dominant, to question notions of beauty.

Zoë Charlton creates drawings that explore the ironies of contemporary social and cultural stereotypes. Working in video, drawing, gouache, and collage, she creates images of culturally loaded objects and landscapes with undressed bodies, pointing to her subject’s relationship with their world. The artist sites, “I’m really interested in perceptions of power. How a body translates that through the objects it is wearing (or carrying) contributes to its relationship to power, history, or identity.” The subjects in her series are often burdened, literally and figuratively, by the symbolic weight of these tokens’ painful histories.

### **E.V. Day**

*Mummified Barbie (DAY-0061), 2007*

Yellow beeswax, twine, Barbie doll

*Mummified Barbie (DAY-0116), 2010*

Barbie doll, beeswax, twine, silver glitter

*Mummified Barbie (DAY-0057), 2007*

Yellow beeswax, twine, Barbie doll

*Mummified Barbie (DAY-0115), 2010*

Barbie doll, beeswax, twine, silver glitter

Courtesy of Carolina Nitsch, New York

New York-based E.V. Day's work explores themes of sexuality and humor by manipulating iconic images and objects from popular culture: wedding dresses, fishnet stockings, Barbie dolls, and Stealth Bombers. Day transforms these materials into new, often architectural arrangements to illuminate contradictions in gender roles and stretch the confines of social stereotypes. With tongue planted firmly in cheek, Day has created an open-ended series of sculptural works she calls *Mummified Barbies*. The character at the core of these works is the Barbie doll, an ageless girl who is, in fact, almost seventy years old. In 1959, Barbie was first produced as a light-skinned, slim, blonde doll whose feet were permanently distorted to conform to high-heeled shoes. Over the decades, and with calculated precision, she has undergone various evolutions, expanding her interests, wardrobe, country of origin, and career.

What remains constant through these transformations is her unattainable body proportions, and, accordingly, any indication that Barbie might represent an actually existing person. In her work, Day wraps, enshrouds, deforms, and disfigures Barbie's eternally unobtainable frame. Research has shown a more widespread backlash against such oppressive perfectionism; gleeful destruction of once-beloved Barbie dolls—by means including anything from decapitation to pulverization in a blender—is now a recognized stage of adolescent development. The underlying impulses of such a disfigurement can be interpreted two ways: optimistically, killing Barbie could signify the child's progression to more diverse ideas about beauty. Less optimistically, the mutilation of this cultural symbol of femininity evidences a profound and pervasive misogyny.

### **David Antonio Cruz**

*Puerto Rican Pieta*, 2006

Oil on canvas

Collection of El Museo del Barrio, New York

Museum Purchase through a gift from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation  
[acc#: 2015.7]

David Antonio Cruz fuses painting, drawing, video, and performance to explore the invisibility and silencing of brown and Black queer bodies. Cruz's work communicates the complexities of the inner lives and outer struggles of queer people of color with richness, vibrancy, and psychological depth. He draws on the work of writers like Federico García

Lorca, Lillian Hellman, Leslie and Sewell Stokes, in combination with the stories of his friends and references to popular culture to construct visible queer narratives and expose forgotten histories.

Cruz pays homage to his mother in *Puerto Rican Pieta*. His composition echoes the Christian narrative of Mary cradling the limp body of her dead son Jesus, most famously rendered in Michaelangelo's iconic 1499 sculpture, which today resides in the Vatican. As in Michelangelo's work, Cruz's painting plays with various forms of weight, both physical and psychological: Cruz considers the physical strain of an elderly woman partially supporting the sheer heft of her son as he reclines on a chaise, as well as the psychological weight that comes with the duty of caring for a vulnerable creature, utterly dependent on their mother for months—indeed, years—of their early life.

Cruz's sensual strokes of paint play with skin tones that are deliberately harmonized to indicate shared sentiment between mother and offspring. His subjects' clothes, too, have a unified palette, but reference cultural differences that exist between the generations. His mother's clothing harks back to traditional garb of the Caribbean, while his jeans and shirt locate him firmly in the Western culture of the United States. His pose is one of careful abandon, with exposed flesh paying homage to Michelangelo's unrelenting and appreciative portrayals of the male body. His mother has a somewhat stern expression on her face, reflecting an inner consternation, as she was not convinced about all aspects of the portrait. Collaboration is a dynamic process; the negotiation between Cruz and his mother is evident in the work's outcome.

### **Kevin Blythe Sampson**

*Beulah's Ball Gown*, 1997

Mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York

Based in the Ironbound section of Newark, Kevin Blythe Sampson's sculptures are made of reworked and transformed found objects and various painting mediums including acrylics, oils, and stains. These objects—bones, tiles, tiny specks and leftovers from day-to-day living—are poetic archaeological elements that he sees as part of a conceptual vocabulary of impermanence and memory. His work teems with barely harnessed,

dangerous energy, crackling with political, religious, and racial significance. His subjects are people he has known, who have been part of this world, and who lived lives he thinks ought to be remembered. By constructing sculptures of physical memories inspired by Caribbean and American Southern styles, he builds works that are about family in all its forms.

Sampson similarly draws on his immediate environment not only as his subject, but as the sheer substance of his work. His experience as an African American man anchors his work, which explores the multifaceted complexities of identity. *Beulah's Ball Gown* is an autobiographical, speculative self-portrait created after the death of Sampson's wife. The name "Beulah" appears in American spirituals, derived from a Hebrew word meaning "bride" or "married." This figure is an embodiment of both male and female traits, manifesting Sampson's responsibility to his children to become both a mother and father figure. *Beulah's Ball Gown* is made with materials found in Sampson's immediate environment, which are subsumed into the sculpture's form with a democratic abandon, disregarding systems of classification and valuation. Traditional materials such as plaster, metal, and paint jostle with chicken bones, broken jewelry, and discarded toys. The sculpture is ultimately a life-affirming celebration of creative potential.

### **Polixeni Papapetrou**

*Blinded*, 2016

Pigment ink print

*Spring*, 2016

Pigment ink print

Courtesy of the artist, Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney and Jarvis Dooney Galerie, Berlin

Like portraiture, *nature morte* (dead nature, or, as it is commonly known, still life), has been a popular genre of expression from the times of ancient Greece and Rome. Still life has persisted in part due to its malleability as a subject, always existing on two levels—one didactic and the other symbolic. Many paintings made prior to the eighteenth century in the Netherlands are seductively beautiful; viewers continue to admire the artists' technical dexterity in using oil paint to create luminous surfaces through which

light pulsates. In these works, flowers and food appear as being beyond real, rendered with a heightened luster and compositional density that could not exist in reality.

Based in Melbourne, Australia, Papapetrou's works can be read within this tradition. Created by the artist as she lives with terminal cancer, this series of photographs represent what she imagines will be her last works. Despite this mortal context, the photos abound with optimism. They feature young women at the cusp of maturity in deliberately constructed scenes of lush texture and hyper-coloration; they scream rampant fecundity. Like Flemish still-life paintings, the women and flowers are both blooming and decaying before our eyes. Papapetrou demands that her viewer be conscious of the artifice, creating a compressed garden space not unlike a womb or the Garden of Eden, which threatens to protect, suffocate, or expel its inhabitants at any time. This layering of textures also acts as a form of vibrating camouflage. An intentional degree of ambiguity exists between subject and background, the photograph simultaneously depicting and hiding the young women.

### **Faith Ringgold**

*Listen to the Trees*, 2012-2014

Archival digital inkjet, silkscreen, woodcut, and acrylic on Habotai silk

Produced in collaboration with master printer Randy Hemminghaus, and published by Brodsky Center, Rutgers

Courtesy of the artist and Brodsky Center, Rutgers

Based in Englewood, New Jersey, Faith Ringgold's activist politics traverses her broad body of work across media. Ringgold began painting in oils in the 1960s. Though her method was traditional, her subject matter carried contemporary messages in support of civil rights. In the early 1970s, she switched to acrylic paints and used upstretched canvases with fabric borders, a technique that resembles Tibetan silk paintings. Out of these experiments grew her well-known painted-narrative quilts. Around the same time, Ringgold began making a series of African-style masks. Many of her mask sculptures can be worn, and this naturally progressed into a series of performance-based works. Ringgold is also an award-winning author and illustrator of seventeen children's books.

Ringgold's *Listen to the Trees* documents the history of oral traditions, which are a common means by which knowledge, art, myths, and cultural ideas are exchanged over generations. Because of the dominance of written history in Western countries, oral traditions often exist outside the mainstream, and are not registered seriously in academic and canonical history books. Sometimes, stories and histories are shared when people such a history, touching on both cultural and family traditions, issues of race and gender, as well as travels in Europe and West Africa. Ringgold's grandmother was a slave who created quilts for her white master; the artist's mother was a fashion designer who taught her to sew and imbued her with a sensitivity to textiles. Ringgold embraced these materials and techniques, incorporating them into her formal art. The juxtaposition between taut canvas and whimsical cloth is an apt metaphor for tensions between high and low, art and craft, male and female. Ringgold's practice challenges these prevailing schisms, which grant value and visibility to some traditions while relegating others to the periphery, and makes subversive use of materials with no formal recognition in Western art history.

### **Arne Svenson**

*Unspeakable Likeness #3*, 2005

Silver gelatin print

Courtesy of the Julie Saul Gallery, New York

Over the course of his career, New York-based artist Arne Svenson has documented a variety of subjects, including landscape photographs of Las Vegas, portraits of sock monkeys, forensic facial reconstructions, chewed dog toys, and medical museum specimens. Across his diverse body of work, he creates narratives that facilitate understanding of that which is hidden or obscured. The artist has said, "If I had to use just two words to describe my interests as an artist, they would be 'resuscitation' and 'reanimation': the breathing of life into the moribund, dormant, and/or unseen citizens and objects of our culture."<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Arne Svenson quoted in "Unspeakable Likeness—Arne Svenson Portrays the Sculpted Faces of Unidentified Corpses," *Foto Room*, <http://fotoroom.co/unspeakable-likeness-arne-svenson/>

The seemingly gleeful smile of the sitter in a large black-and-white photograph by Svenson is in stark contrast to the impetus for the sculpture upon which the portrait is based. The subject of Svenson's image is unknown to both viewer and artist. His likeness was commissioned by a law-enforcement agency to solve a crime of which he was the victim. This speculative portrait was created by a sculptor who drew upon the evidence left behind, as well as his artistic instinct and experience. Svenson traveled to a number of places in the United States and Mexico to take photos of these forensic portraits. Forensics is an area of expertise residing at the intersection of art and science. When grappling with such ambiguous and sensitive subject matter, Svenson approached the work as if his sitter were alive, focusing on the sculptures' eyes. The artist stated, "My point of focus was the eyes; I left the rest of the face to fall out of focus so as to better speak to the anonymity of the victim and the malleability of their existence." The photo has an unreal air to it, its subject being both quasi-photorealistic and obviously made by hand. Through the series of photos in *Unspeaking Likeness*, some of the anonymous victims of crimes have been identified. Although this process may seem grim, it facilitates closure, allowing families to grieve the loss of their loved ones.

**Kevin Darmanie**

*Master of Reality*, 2008

Ink on paper

*Kedar: An Alien In Babylon*, 2008

Ink and ashcan collage on paper

*Confetti*, 2008

Colored ink and paper collage

Courtesy of the artist

Kevin Darmanie's practice melds critical theory and fine art techniques with comic illustration, tackling questions of fairness and cultural difference with incisiveness and wit. Darmanie's work takes a variety of forms, including public projects, paintings, and sculptural objects, and ranges in degrees of verisimilitude, from abstract murals to text-based pieces to representational works. Darmanie was born and raised in Trinidad and

Tobago. His work has been exhibited in a number of venues, including the Lex Leonard Gallery, Jersey City; Rupert Ravens Contemporary, Newark; and Gallery Aferro, Newark. Darmanie is a largely self-taught artist whose work is comprised of paintings, murals, installations, comic books, and works on paper. He lives and works in Newark.

Darmanie explores the multiplicity of his cultural background through the lens of a character called “Kedar,” who exudes confidence as he strides through life, belligerently relishing in the freedom afforded when you don’t care about what others think. Through the graphic novel format, the viewer is witness to both internal and external states of being, able to literally read Kedar’s mind. Few black or brown superheroes appear in the comic books available to Darmanie, who was born in the Caribbean and moved to the United States at the age of fourteen, or any other immigrant child. Finding one’s place in a new country depends to some extent on looking at others to learn from the ways they negotiated new terrain. Popular culture, and so-called lowbrow forms, provide inroads to ideas and information. Kedar is not only the superhero the artist wishes he might have had, but a role model for others who see Darmanie’s work and recognize themselves in it.

### **Riva Lehrer**

*66 Degrees*, 2016

Acrylic on wood panel

Collection of Laura and Larry Gerber

Chicago-based Riva Lehrer is an artist, writer, and curator whose work focuses on issues of physical identity and the socially challenged body. She is best known for representations of people with impairments, and those whose sexuality or gender identity have long been stigmatized. In a moment of unexpected realization at Philadelphia’s Mutter Museum, while peering at glass jars of late-term human fetuses, Lehrer thought, “I have never seen what I looked like on the day I was born.” A particular fetus on view showed early signs of bulging in its spinal cord; Lehrer has lived a lifetime with spina bifida. Lack of visibility at all stages of life for people whose bodies do not conform to standards of “normalcy” inspired Lehrer to commit her artistic practice to redressing this imbalance.

Lehrer's work represents bodies that have historically been labeled "disabled" within a society of prevalent ableism. In a climate of ubiquitous prejudice in favor of able-bodied people, those whose bodies deviate are relegated to invisibility. A survey of popular cultural representations reveals few artworks or images that reference disabled bodies. In existing contemporary representations, disabled bodies are most often defined by what they are not. In her many portraits of herself and others who are redefining disability culture from within, Lehrer exhibits a profound sensitivity to her subjects. Each work is the result of her sustained commitment to shedding light on the reality of living with a disability. Her portraits are unflinching, proud, and poised, often revealing intimate details about people who have historically been hidden.

### **Chitra Ganesh**

*Untitled*, 2010 from the portfolio *Delicate Line: Corpse She Was Holding*  
Four-run silkscreen on Sekishu Natural paper

*Untitled*, 2010 from the portfolio *Delicate Line: Corpse She Was Holding*  
Monotype and three-run silkscreen on Stonehenge paper

Produced in collaboration with master printer Randy Hemminghaus, and published by Brodsky Center, Rutgers

Courtesy of the artist and Brodsky Center, Rutgers

Brooklyn-based Chitra Ganesh's drawing-centered practice brings to light narrative representations of femininity, sexuality, and power typically absent from the literary and art historical canon. Her wall installations, comics, charcoal drawings, and mixed-media works on paper often take historical and mythic texts as inspirations and points of departure to complicate received ideas of iconic female forms. Her visual vocabulary draws from surrealism, expressionism, Hindu and Buddhist iconography, and South Asian pictorial forms such as Kalighat and Madhubani painting, connecting these with the contemporary mass-mediated visual languages of comics, science fiction, news photography, and illustration.

Creating characters provides an artist the ability to conjure alternative worlds where the rules of the lived world no longer apply. Born in the United States to immigrant parents,

Ganesh draws on her familial heritage in India to explore ideas of female empowerment and sexuality. Ganesh has said, “I’m interested in representation that falls outside of what would be socially appropriate, or acceptable, or beautiful.” In her work, she addresses and reverses stereotypes of passive femininity. Her female characters are defiantly transgressive, assertively sexual, and unencumbered by social norms about how they are supposed to act.

### **William Kentridge**

*Invisible Object (Sphinx)*, 2013

Two-plate intaglio with photogravure, drypoint and burnishing

*Scribe 3*, 2011

Photogravure, drypoint, and burnishing

*Scribe 1*, 2011

Photogravure, drypoint, and burnishing

Produced in collaboration with Kristen Cavagnet and Randy Hemminghaus, and published by Brodsky Center, Rutgers

Courtesy of the artist and Brodsky Center, Rutgers

William Kentridge’s animated films, prints, books, collages, sculptures, and performances combine politics and poetics to explore the history and culture of South Africa through a personal lens. He was born and raised in South Africa, where he still lives and works. In his work, form is related to content: the artifice of a work’s surface gestures toward the structures of apartheid, colonialism, and totalitarianism. Kentridge places these oppressive systems under scrutiny, challenging ideologies that would assert white supremacy as the natural, default ordering of society. He is best known for his stop-motion films, which he creates by filming successive charcoal scenes drawn on the same sheet of paper, forming a palimpsestic structure of erasure and recreation. Each time Kentridge erases his work to draw a new scene in its place, traces of his previous work remain; this process is evocative of historical time, and the ways in which events of the past linger in the present.

As the artist states, “One has to think of the black ink as blood, and the brush mark as a dagger stroke. In a way, there has to be a meeting of a formal language or material—knowing that it has to be ink and paper, or charcoal, or torn paper, or sculpture—with some thematic element of the project, which is interesting. So that has to do with instability and desire, with the pictures shattering and reconvening.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Martha Wilson**

*I Make Up the Image of My Perfection/I Make Up the Image of My Deformity*, 2007 from the portfolio *Femfolio*

Digital print on Somerset Enhanced Velvet paper

Produced in collaboration with Chris Erickson and Josh Azzarella

Courtesy of the artist, the Brodsky Center, Rutgers, and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York

Based in New York, Martha Wilson is a pioneering feminist artist working in performance, video, and music, as well as a gallery director. Wilson’s work explores female subjectivity and the construction of identity through performance, role-playing, costuming, and adopting various personas. These personas include real people, like President Bill Clinton and Barbara Bush, as well as inventions like models and professional women. Wilson is also of critical importance for the community she created in Franklin Furnace, an artist-run space she founded in 1976 and which she continues to direct. Franklin Furnace champions the exploration, promotion, and preservation of artists’ books, installation art, video, online, and performance art.

The schism between an imagined/desired face and one’s actual appearance can be a source of much discontent. Popular culture bombards us with artificially enhanced and impossible, seductive images. This widely broadcasted version of beauty is defined with such a narrow scope that it reflects the reality of nearly no one. Wilson addresses this in her work *I Make Up the Image of My Perfection / I Make Up the Image of My Deformity* (2007), in which she creates and documents two versions of her face, one beautiful, the other not. Wilson is interested in the conceptual distortion that occurs when we can never actually see ourselves as others do. Women are subconsciously trained from birth

---

<sup>13</sup> William Kentridge quoted in Emma Crichton-Miller, “Black & White: Interview with William Kentridge,” *Apollo Magazine*, July 28, 2015. <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/black-white-interview-with-william-kentridge/>

to focus on a myriad of perceived imperfections. Markets rely on continuous consumption of “cures” for such benign conditions as large pores, dull hair, and under-eye circles. Industries are geared to tap into and exploit fears about appearance, creating consumers. Makeup is a multibillion-dollar industry in the United States. The power and wealth of this industry is used to strategically populate our collective consciousness with images most conducive to expediting unnecessary retail expenditures.

**Peggie Miller**

*Peggie Miller, 2009 from the series New Millennium Butch*  
Archival inkjet print

*Jae, 2009 from the series New Millennium Butch*  
Archival inkjet print

*Chucky, 2009 from the series New Millennium Butch*  
Archival inkjet print

*Little J, 2009 from the series New Millennium Butch*  
Archival inkjet print

Produced in collaboration with Akintola Hanif  
Courtesy of the artist

Peggie Miller was born in Kershaw, South Carolina and attended high school in New Jersey. She works in a variety of entertainment and activism-related endeavors, and is an active community member of the Unity Fellowship Church, Newark. Within our society, there are very few places in which what Miller calls “aggressive females” are visible or celebrated in any way. Violence against women who choose not to enact stereotypical versions of femininity is common. In 2003 in Newark, fifteen-year-old Sakia Gunn was returning home from an evening with friends in Manhattan. While she waited for a bus, she was accosted by a group of men who propositioned her. Refusing their advances, Gunn revealed that she was a lesbian. Within moments, one of the men stabbed Gunn; she died of a knife wound inflicted by a man who was apparently so deeply offended by

her sexual orientation—and its exclusion of his desire—that he felt the need to inflict grievous bodily harm.

Peggie Miller established the New Millennium Butch project with the goal of increasing visibility for butch women in mainstream society and celebrating their style. Unlike gay men, who have enjoyed relative acceptance, lesbian women have “taken a back seat,” Miller writes. She believes that lesbians of color, particularly those who are identified as “butch” or “aggressive,” need to step out: “It is time to emerge and be noticed.” Miller, who identifies as a butch woman, began the New Millennium Butch fashion shows in Newark, New Jersey, in 2000. These annual events, which showcase butch-identified models, designers, and entertainers, have enjoyed great success over the last decade. Of her work, she writes, “I decided to take us to the next level and bring us out of the darkness into the light for the whole world to see.”

### **Manuel Acevedo**

*Lawman's Cigarette Break*, 1986 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist

*Jump!*, 1983 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist

*At Biase's*, 1986 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Clement Price, Rutgers University – Newark

*Newark's Finest*, 1986 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Clement Price, Rutgers University – Newark

*Bronx Boy*, no date

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Clement Price, Rutgers University – Newark

*How Sharpe?*, 1986 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist

*Father and Son #1*, 1987 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Clement Price, Rutgers University – Newark

*Embrace*, 1986 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Clement Price, Rutgers University – Newark

*Three Girls in Church*, 1987 from the series *The Wards of Newark 1982-87*

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist

Manuel Acevedo has been a leading figure of the of the Newark art scene for over three decades. From the beginning of his career, the city has been a frequent subject of Acevedo's work. The city of Newark is often defined in the national media by crimes committed within the area. On July 28, 1967, the cover of *Life* magazine featured a distressing image of a twelve-year-old boy, Joe Bass Jr., lying wounded in the streets with the headline "Shooting War In The Streets—Newark: the Predictable Insurrection." Bass was an unintended target, and fortunately survived. However, this type of explicit, crime-focused coverage of the city has continued to dominate the mainstream media. People who live in the city are demarcated by their proximity to crime, and are subsequently dehumanized by this focus.

Acevedo's series *The Wards of Newark* represents a cross section of life in Newark, including not only citizens (politicians and children), but the very city streets. During his teenage years, Manuel Acevedo, growing up in a city he describes as being on "the imminent edge of disaster," decided to create a compelling photo essay of his lived



experience. Through his camera lens, the viewer enters into previously hidden worlds. Acevedo's intrepid traversing of the city led him to encounters with people from all walks of life. These portraits of the city and its inhabitants are a negotiation between Acevedo and his subject; the artist states, "There had to be a conversation. A certain amount of intimacy had to happen. I couldn't get the shot right away."<sup>14</sup> The resulting images are humane, thrilling, and spontaneous glimpses into the lives of real people, rather than stereotyped crime scenes. The works in the series are executed with a shrewd attention to powerful, transient moments.

---

<sup>14</sup> Manuel Acevedo quoted in Carrie Stetler, "The Wards of Newark," *Hycide*, <http://hycide.com/THE-WARDS-OF-NEWARK>