

Pictures in an Exhibition
An exhibition of digital video

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Can the female feel at home in nature, myth and on screen, realms where she is so often laid to rest? *Pictures in an Exhibition* is a pastiche that exposes popular culture and art historical tropes in which ambiguous signifiers have become lost in a chain of referents. An installation of videos documents durational performances—filmed, edited and performed by the artist unaccompanied—that are humorous, satirical, aesthetic, historical, philosophical and psychological. Making simultaneous reference to art history, mass media, literature and mythology, *Pictures in an Exhibition* exposes the conflicted condition of a postfeminist 'self' striving to arrive at an exhibition of subjectivity.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis exhibition to my family. To my parents: Barbara and Hanns Peter (whose house is overflowing with all my stuff and art), my sister Julia (who has taught me to “just draw a circle around it”), and my niece Lila Amelia (who constantly reminds me of the little and important things in life). My family has been unflinching in their support of all my crazy endeavours over the years and I love them.

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INTRODUCTION: Exhibition

Pictures in an Exhibition is an installation of digital video works that mimics an exhibition of paintings in a traditional museum setting. In a cheeky play on words, the works present an ‘exhibition’ in the act of exposing either a woman’s ‘parts’ or stereotypical representations. In each moving picture, the artist performs an action or narrative set in a natural environment that references a specific art historical trope or genre. Surveying the gallery space, six pictures are visible. The first, *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet* (hereafter *red carpet*) is featured on the wall facing the entrance of the gallery. Referencing cinematic widescreen, the video image is projected onto a grey wall extending to the floor: an invitation for the viewer to visually walk into the scene. This large projection is flanked on either side wall by two smaller video projections measuring 152.4 by 277cm each. *Fragonard’s swing; Miss La La; hung out to dry* and *white on white; marrying the wind; runaway bride* are projected onto raised panels and in this way reference the traditional canvas frame: a window view. Along the back wall there are three video monitors displaying three video loops. The first of these is *Leda and the Swan; pool toy; plastic pornography*, the second, *lost; Stella; looking glass(es)*, and finally, *Sisyphus yogi; Renaissance woman; somersault*. Bringing attention to the television screen, these videos are fully contained within their ‘monitored’ frame.

A soundscape permeates the space. Discordant choral harmonies and manipulated bird songs wash under melodies reminiscent of a Disneyesque dream gone awry, creating a disconcerting yet comic concerto that merges the subtle horror of the psychological thriller with a nature documentary. All the vocals and sounds are sung, recorded and edited by the artist; she is singing to reassure herself on her masquerade through the untrustworthy image. Like in many fairy tales, the starlet ‘whistles a happy tune’ but the tune sounds manic rather than cheerful through its overdubbing. The soundtrack suggests an ominous tone; something seems amiss.

A number of elements at play in *Pictures* will be expounded upon in this paper. Each theme will be explored in relation to a specific video: formal and physical descriptions will be coupled with a more in-depth theoretical analysis. The theory will build cumulatively as each video is examined from multiple perspectives. These analyses will be rooted in the disciplines of media studies, art history, philosophy, behavioural studies, and feminist discourse, as well as in personal experience. The structure of the paper will, in this way, reflect the broader aim of the exhibition: to unveil the contingent reading of representation within the postmodern exhibition space.

There is a self-awareness in *Pictures* as existing within the framework of a rich, yet problematic history and in the context of the gallery space itself, two givens that postmodern work can no longer escape. The performances are also being played back on a variety of screens, making it important to touch on the ‘reality problematic’ imbedded in the mediated, virtual space.¹ The social setting can also not be ignored. Consequently, the cultural and mass media environment that has formed the identity of the author—as performing subject—will be investigated as well.

The performance-for-video medium makes it necessary to consider the theory surrounding feminist video and performance art of the 1960s, a discourse still relevant today. Performance and video work allowed for a female perspective that had an affective immediacy and a truthful bodily presence. This was a perspective—an embodied and gendered visuality—that had, up to that point, been largely denied and muffled. Artists such as Yoko Ono, Marina Abramovic, Maya Deren, Martha Rosler, and many others forged a path that made possible experimentations by, and recognition of, women in various disciplines. The temporality inherent in performance and video—shifting the focus from object based to experientially situated form—set into motion a conversation about the efficacy of art. Art was examined as historical monument, as social and political testament and as contextualized idea and sign. This conversation pointed to another advantage of working in new time-based media as it was not mired in and weighed down by the male-dominated

iconographic history of painting. My play on landscape painting, the gendered scene, and the modern male spectator in particular articulate my investigation of this history.

It is in this playful mixing of references that *Pictures* questions but also pays homage to our expectations of tropes, myth, and representations and their signifiers. In his introduction to *Art in Mind*, Ernst van Alphen wrote “as a frame-up, art exposes history [...] art has made interventions in thinking, imagining, and representing such key aspects of human existence as individuality, identity, and space. Each of these issues is of major relevance for cultural life” (xvi). In reframing, it also has agency and presents new ways of defining our cultural meaning. It is my hope that *Pictures* will continue a dialogue about the representation of the female subject—women who are caught in a sticky web of mythology that defines their every move.² *Pictures in an Exhibition* exposes three distinct postmodern conditions: the ‘self’ adrift in a sea of signification; the female ‘self’ feeling detached from reality and situated within a mythologized and scripted narrative; and the postfeminist ‘self’ lost in the screen.



Figure 1. *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet.* Video still

EXHIBIT ONE: *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet*

On entering the gallery, the viewer encounters a long, plush, yet somewhat haggard looking red carpet. The carpet leads into and continues through a video projection of a landscape. Here, the gaze falls on a female figure, the artist herself; dressed ‘to the nines’ in a glittery long black gown, with an up-do, long feather earrings, and shiny three-inch black heels, she is teetering down the length of the carpet (fig. 1). Disappearing in the distance as the camera fades out, the figure reappears in the foreground of a new setting and a new scene begins. The fade-in and fade-out of the scenes echo the action of a curtain being dropped on the ‘act’. In this brief intermission, the illusion is disrupted and the viewer’s attention is brought momentarily to the blank screen.

Her back always facing the viewer, our heroine refuses personal identification and instead exemplifies *type*. Awkwardly balancing on the artifice of the carpet, yet stoically ‘strutting her stuff’, she confronts the natural obstacles encountered. Always staying to the symbolic ‘straight and narrow’, we witness her tripping over uneven surfaces, navigating through trees and dense bulrushes, plunging through a river crossing, confronting high winds, maintaining equilibrium on a carpeted log, baring skin bitten by snow and ice, careening down a deep snowy slope, and mounting sand dunes (fig. 2 and fig. 3). The scenes follow the flow of the seasons. Beginning in a green summer field, the figure travels through lush forests, dried-out grasses, changing leaves, first snowfall, snow drifts, spring flowers and the sands of summer. Finally, following the carpet into a sea of water, we watch as a wave crests over the top of our tragic heroine’s head (see fig. 24). She is gone, but only momentarily as the loop begins anew and our heroine is seen once again traversing a vast green field cut deeply by the slice of luxurious red.

The red carpet is imbued with pop culture and mythological meanings. In a literal sense, there is a gesture of carpeting over nature. In ancient mythology the red carpet was seen as a godly luxury separating the mortal, lowly earth from the tread of the gods. In the earliest known reference, the

play *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus (458 B.C.), Agamemnon arrives home victorious from the battle of Troy. He is hesitant to walk on the tapestries laid out by his wife Clytemnestra claiming that only gods tread on such extravagances.³ However, Agamemnon relents to the arguments of his wife, removes his shoes and walks upon the tapestries. Through this act he is foreshadowing the gruesome fate that is to befall him. In our current celebrity culture we no longer heed the same warnings—the danger inherent in acting as gods—and stars are honoured much as the gods were in ancient Greece. They parade past hoards of shouting idolaters and are frozen for posterity in the twinkling flash of the cameras. We are so accustomed to seeing celebrities walking the red carpet at award shows and premieres that the presentation of manufactured personas in highly controlled snap-shot moments does not feel odd or contrived. The expectation is subverted in *red carpet* where an unidentified woman is walking away from us, rather than presenting herself to us. The viewer remains unacknowledged and is denied a certain level of power. The female figure does not present her image for consumption in *red carpet*.



Figure 2. *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet*. Video still

Strength is depicted by the figure in *red carpet* through the woman's unflinching forging forwards. She seems unfettered by the obstacles in her way. At the same time she is entrapped, reluctantly tied to the meanings implicit in her historical and cultural symbolism. A blond Caucasian woman of an ambiguous age, the artist's body is imbued with social cues and readings that exist as socially constructed givens. These givens tie the subject down, but also provide the matter from which the subversion and comedy can be molded. Alongside the socially constructed subject we find a personally constructed author (one and the same, yet fundamentally very different). The authorship and subjectivity of the author, along with that of the spectator, are thus of concern within the work.

The obsessiveness of maintaining the semblance of the perfect manufactured woman is at odds with the feelings of self-consciousness and embarrassment I experienced during the filming of *red carpet*. This resulted in my shooting, performing and editing with no witnesses or assistants. The aloneness, isolation and shame felt throughout the process echoes the futility in attempting to keep up appearances in the broader social context. It also brings into sharp focus the potential danger of being a woman alone in the woods in what were often compromising positions. In the final product, romanticism glosses over the reality of the process that involved getting up at the crack of dawn, finding accessible yet secluded spots, and trudging there weighed down with gear—sixty feet of red carpet strapped to an external backpack frame, props, camera, and tripod. I was simultaneously sex object and pack-mule. Extreme cold was another hurdle. With bare skin exposed to temperatures and wind chill reaching between -15°C to -25°C, I had to pay close attention to my body and its exposure threshold. Throughout the filming there was a constant contradiction between presenting poise and being experientially present in the elements that consistently challenged my composure.

In thinking about embodiment and the acting of a performed 'self', Bibi van den Berg's examination of the *Interactionist* 'self' within the mediated environment serves as an interesting

entry point.⁴ Van den Berg believes that social interactions, and by proxy interactions with technologies and our environment, build our personas. She introduces several of the ideas of Erving Goffman. Goffman explains that in determining and defining a situation, individuals choose certain roles. He is quoted by van den Berg, “[h]aving assumed their ‘role’, the player then engages in ‘performances’ or ‘presentations’” (31). These ‘performances’ are judged by the situation, the audience, and the performer him/herself (31). Goffman believes that people perform both sincere and cynical performances and that “when roles are frequently portrayed and consistently valued by both the audience and the performer himself a person may come to identify with that role to such an extent that it becomes part of his self image” (qtd. in van den Berg 32). The ‘self’, from this perspective, can be seen as a construction made from many different rehearsed roles. Van den Berg argues, “[l]ike everything else, modernity turned identity into a ‘life project’” (27). This life project sees the manufacturing and up-keep of socially and commercially prescribed and personally regimented gender roles. In *Pictures*, it is the contemporary woman’s roles that I am emulating—rather flatly—and consequently revealing in my performances.

Finally, and perhaps less obviously, the viewer is also able to follow the path of reference in *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet* to modernist painting—the motif of the red stripe—as well as to the more traditional historic narrative landscape painting that exists on either side of the ‘zip’.⁵ If seen as a modernist exercise, *red carpet* can be interpreted as the striving for transcendence—following the ‘zip’ in order to ‘arrive’. Inherent in the pursuit of pure form by the avant-gardes was the drive to erase the artist’s hand in the work. Pure self-referencing form exceeded the individual, literary associations, dogmatic classical canons, and the illusionism of the representational image, and thus transcended historical tenets in general. This marked the loss of the romantic heroic ‘self’ and ushered in a *free* ‘self’. *Free*, however, only in the sense that the ‘self’ had *seemingly* freed itself from the linear narrative of history and of cultural expectation. I would argue that Barnett Newman, in particular, embodies a paradox to this idea.⁶ Through his attempts at

touching the sublime in works such as *The Wild* (fig. 4) and *Achilles* (fig. 5), he further sanctifies the artist as a spiritual messenger tied to the trajectory of the iconographic history of painting, rather than succeeding in erasing his hand from the work. The transfiguration of the artist's intention into the inevitable historical objectification of the artist and artwork persists in the postmodern but is now accepted as unavoidable. This quasi-heroic modern painter is replaced in postmodernism by an indeterminate and indefinable 'self'—a 'self' that has increasingly become tragi-comically self-conscious and somewhat self-loathing in the realization of the inescapability of the paradox of art making. In *red carpet* the female artist could be seen as figuratively negotiating this line—in literally 'walking the line'.



Figure 3. *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet*. Video still (detail)

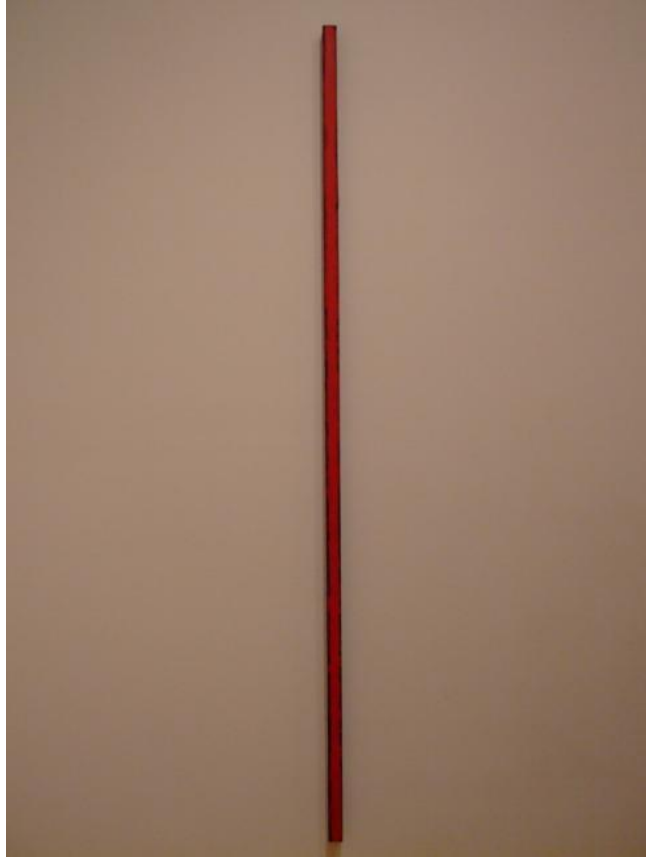


Figure 4. Barnett Newman. *The Wild*



Figure 5. Barnett Newman. *Achilles*

EXHIBIT TWO: *Leda and the Swan; pool toy; plastic pornography*

Opposite *red carpet*, on the largest of the three monitors, we find *Leda and the Swan; pool toy; plastic pornography* (hereafter *Leda*). A nude figure (recognizable again as the artist) is floating languidly along an idyllic river on a large inflatable plastic pool swan. We are lulled by the gentle gliding of our heroine through the water on her steed. She drifts by in a variety of positions. In some scenes the video play direction has been altered to make it appear as though the swan is rocking Leda back and forth. This absurdity and forced animation makes the viewer aware of the director's hand.

As in *red carpet*, the scenes in *Leda* are separated by fade-outs. However, far from being fluid and innocuous, the fade-outs in *Leda* are disruptive and alarming. Single frames flash in repeated sequence onto the screen: the suggestive flutter of orgasm. The climax of action is ironically represented in momentary still images set between lengthy scenes of virtual inaction (fig. 9). The viewer is made to question what was seen, and if indeed he or she saw the images at all. In this almost subconscious glimpsing, there is no time to take ownership of the action. The viewer's implication in the seeing is made manifest by the image's ephemeral flash and the subsequent cognition and questioning of it. In Laura Mulvey's terms this could be seen as a scopophilic reveal, an assertive frisson in the pleasure of voyeuristic viewing. Mulvey's seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" examines cinematic space as voyeuristic theatre, the scopophilic pleasure of looking, and the role of the eye of the camera (and by proxy the viewer situated behind this eye) in establishing an objectifying gaze (57-65). Mulvey wrote:

Going far beyond highlighting a woman's to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself. Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes

in distance, editing), cinematic does create a gaze, a world and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. (65)

The subject of Leda and the swan lends itself well to satisfying the whims of desire.

Historically, the myth of Leda and the swan was an opportunity for artists to represent the female figure in ‘metaphoric’ copulation with a ‘long necked’ swan (seen as much less suggestive and troubling than a man/woman coupling). Many of the renditions of these racy renderings were subsequently destroyed as they were labeled too risqué; however, several notable paintings survive. Among these is the storyboard-like depiction of the myth by Correggio (fig. 6).



Figure 6. Correggio. *Leda and the Swan*

In my version, the dead-pan, matter-of-factness of the copulation of female with gigantic plastic swan points to our often ridiculous and obsessive love affair with femininity that is plasticized and pornographic. In the final scene of *Leda*, Leda and the swan deflate until they are flaccid, collapsed into each other and almost fully submerged in the water. Two large white eggs float away from the pair in the river’s current and the loop begins again (fig. 8).⁷



Figure 7 and Figure 8. *Leda and the Swan*; pool toy; plastic pornography. Video stills

Filming this final scene meant sitting naked in the frigid water for an extended period of time (fig. 7). The swan, despite being weighed down with a couple of dumbbell weights and having just suffered multiple puncture wounds (footage not shown in the video), did not sink nearly as quickly as expected. So there I sat, shivering uncontrollably in the early hours of the morning. Having just mutilated my prop/love object there was no chance for a second take. Far from being sexy, the making of the work was an often challenging and a sometimes dangerous production. Inflated, the

swan was too large to fit into my car and access to electrical outlets for my inflator was limited, thus I was primarily restricted to filming at locations reachable by foot from my home. To capture the final scene the seven-foot-long swan had to be portaged on my head for several kilometres with the remainder of the gear (dumbbell weights included) slung onto my shoulders. As with *red carpet*, the endurance and the physical strength required for *Leda* meant that the process itself became a mind-over-matter performance. As with most cinematic work, the actual and often painful reality involved in the production is veiled in the theatrical pastiche—the illusion and delusion of the final work. The process also holds an interesting and often strained negotiation between performer and cinematographer (who in this case are one and the same), revealing an obsessive ‘does it all’ and ‘does it all herself’ contemporary superwoman mentality.

In my case, this negotiation instigated some soul searching—why was I so compelled to undertake this project and what was I hoping to express in doing so? I take my cue from the author and media theorist, Susan J. Douglas, who urges an examination of *cultural* history to find the root of the conflicted feminine identity (10). The building blocks of my mythology can be found in a specific social context. I was born in 1976 and spent my formative years embedded in the popular culture of the 1980s, arguably the liminal space between second-wave and third-wave feminism—now also termed postfeminism.⁸ Diane Negra’s *What a Girl Wants?* frames my own conflicted experience of growing up as a free yet carefully constructed girl: “[w]hat is apparent is that the postmodern mediathon is giving rise to a new kind of female figure who is closely tracked, ideologically fraught, and highly overdetermined in her meanings” (Negra 45). The “codification” of female *types* is redefined by postfeminism, especially in the idolization of “womanly girls” and “girlish women” believes Negra (12). Negra’s thesis is relevant to my exploration of the mythologized feminine ‘self’: how women are defined by their image as situated within stereotypical settings and played out in socially constructed actions and inaction.

Douglas's *Where the Girls Are* adopts a similar strategy and looks at the contradictory representation of women in the media of the boomer generation (particularly in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s). Douglas believes that it was these propagated and often hypocritical images that created the perfect storm and fanned the flames of second wave feminism. Douglas describes a media landscape that was torn between honouring an independent and strong post-war American woman who had carried the country through the war on the home-front through sheer muscle power and resilience, while at the same time urging these same women to return to pre-war domesticity and the commercially available power of Mr. Clean (14, 18, 23-28, 45-60). The negotiations between the public and the private roles for women continue to this day, even though they passed relatively unnoticed during my own childhood.

Free-play femininity was taken for granted during my 1980s childhood where feminism was an outdated and an unnecessary term. The only notion I had of the male/female dichotomy was that boys: a) were annoying; and b) always thought they were so much better than girls. So I did my utmost to run faster than them. I climbed trees and went down suicide-hills on my Hot-Stix hot pink skateboard. Today, the postfeminist paradox is the paradigm. In postfeminism, traditional roles for women tied to the home and the caretaker realm are again being glorified for women who have grown up putting huge amounts of care into becoming independent modern women.

The postfeminist image that is being proliferated by the mass media today shows women disillusioned by their cold hard working reality in the city returning to their hometown in droves hoping to reconnect with that school yearbook nerd who has blossomed into Dr. McDreamy and then instantly popping out some kids, rekindling that lost zest for life while giddily changing hundreds of soiled nappies looking Mommylicious in Lululemon. These messages are merging with those still infecting my Disney cortex. Cinderella is vogueing at the Ball; Sleeping Beauty has just woken up from a coma-inducing Brazilian wax job and not from the kiss of a metrosexual prince. Feminine plasticity is melting in a pot of mixed messages. Be pure—just as long as you are sexy

doing it. Don't be vain—just be sure to look good not being it. Embrace the 'real,' 'natural,' 'you'—just as long as your curves sit in the bikini top and not underneath it and the only hair that you have is firmly planted on your head. And then there is the continuing Princess craze, a marketing goldmine directed at vulnerable little girls who had just a generation ago been 'liberated' by a pink Tonka truck. Today, just as in the 1970s, women are attempting to squeeze their identities into conflicting articles and clauses. And they are trying to do so quietly, without drawing any attention. Add to this a certain amount of malaise with our self-fabricated and mass-produced reality and you have a situation that is itching for a meditation retreat with free-flowing vats of red wine. Ultimately it is the acknowledgement of this suppressed mental monologue—one that had been building steam for some time—that had me up at the crack of dawn sitting naked on a sinking swan.



Figure 9. *Leda and the Swan; pool toy; plastic pornography*. Video still

Feeling trapped between the idea of who I want to be versus what is presented to me and feeling guilty and not-quite-good-enough either way, conscious of the media and pop culture hamster wheel yet still finding myself compelled to jump aboard, *Pictures* is a metaphor for this striving and manic treadmill of identity. I think I may be waving a little white flag. Oh no, those are just my panties.



Figure 10. *Fragonard's swing; Miss La La; hung out to dry*. Video still

EXHIBIT THREE: *Fragonard's swing; Miss La La; hung out to dry*

In the first of the side wall projections on panel, *Fragonard's swing; Miss La La; hung out to dry* (hereafter *Fragonard's swing*), a female figure hangs upside-down off a trapeze from the nocks of her knees (fig. 10). Her white dress has fallen inside-out and is hanging down over the top half of her body, covering her head. The figure's arms are dangling, visible below the lace fringe of the dress. Bright white underpants, bare legs and black rubber boots are fully exposed. With the figure seemingly lifeless, the trapeze appears to be moving on its own accord. Like a perpetual motion machine, the trapeze picks up velocity as the figure does a series of slow turning pirouettes and then comes to rest again. Every once in a while, we see a leaf flutter off the ground and the illusion is again broken: the looping video is being played forwards and backwards.

Fragonard's swing makes reference to Jean-Honoré Fragonard's painting: *Happy hazards of the swing* (fig. 11). In this Rococo image from 1767, a young woman is being pushed on a swing by her manservant. Her suitor is in the bushes looking up her skirt as she swings overhead. One of the young lady's shoes flies through the air in full climactic release, symbolic of the girl's lost virginity.

(Milam 57; Posner 79, 85-89). This romantic image of youthful sexuality played out on a swing becomes warped in my version by a more contemporary association: an ominous murder of a young woman in the woods that is so familiar in prime time television crime series.



Figure 11. Jean-Honoré Fragonard. *Happy hazards of the swing*

As well as being an allegory for the wild ride of love—the giving and taking of control between participants in the act of pushing and pumping—the physical act of swinging also, according to Jennifer Milam, creates a type of “pleasing ocular distortion” (Milam 52; Posner 79). In following the sweeping circular and diagonal dynamics of *Happy hazards of the swing* the viewer feels a sense of vertigo as attention is brought to the top of the painting where the twisting branches and glimpses of sky make it feel as though the viewer himself were on a swing (Milam 59, 60). This distortion,

capable of “destabilizing the swinger’s normal sense of order”, made swing play a sought after activity in eighteenth-century France where reason, rationality and sense experience were being contested (52). It was suggested at the time that greater emphasis on imagination, memory and sense perception allowed for a heightened personal aesthetic experience and awareness (69). Milam wrote: “[t]he significance of the recollected experience involves both the cultural value of disoriented vision and the aesthetic merit of vertigo, which causes the beholder to see differently and to discern a chain of knowledge that begins with the art object and ends with thought-provoking reminiscences” (53).

In Fragonard’s painting the notion of relativity invoked by the simultaneous felt action of swinging in combination with observing the swinger moving through space from a static position is relevant to my questioning of representation, viewing, interpretation and control. As in my work, Fragonard included “open-ended signifiers that elicit both erotic and imaginative responses” (Milam 60). This open interpretation also encouraged “the beholder to understand that an image *of* a game is an image *about* visual game playing, which necessarily involves both the artist’s and the beholder’s full capacity for imaginative creativity” (69). While this is most certainly true, Milam also makes reference to the physical manifestation of the swing as frame for the swinging subject, a structural limitation on the female swinger’s freedom. She wrote, “[s]winging is a vertiginous diversion, providing a maximum range of movement while securely tethered to a frame” (52). In *Fragonard’s swing* the artist’s body is also ‘tethered’ to the frame of the video. However, the trapeze moves due to an external force as no ‘pusher’ is visible. The idea of sexual freedom has been literally turned on its head and remains somewhat ambiguous.

Fragonard’s swing is also a derisory play on the stereotype of the circus girl, the show, and the spectacle. In the video, the woman on the trapeze only partially offers herself up to be viewed: she is an inverted spectacle. In the café-concert of Paris in the mid-to-late 1800s, however, the trapeze artist was the epitome of the female spectacle. We find depictions of her death-defying acts in

several notable paintings from this time. For example, in Edgar Degas's *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando* (1879) we find the infamous performer Miss La La suspended precariously by her teeth, displayed in all her foreshortened glory above the viewer (fig. 13). She hangs like a piece of delicate, yet fleshy, scantily-dressed meat on a hook. We also find paintings of the spectators who witnessed these acts and the venues for these performances. In Edouard Manet's curious and oft-interpreted work *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1881-82) the trapeze artist's legs are just visible in the top left hand corner of the painting (fig. 12). A painting about the act of looking, *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* reveals the heroic modern male viewer, the flâneur. As described by Griselda Pollock in "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," the flâneur was seen as a new bourgeois dandy that was at liberty to drink in all the "sites/sights"—and the inherent sexuality of these sights—that the culture of the time provided (254). In Pollock's essay, Charles Baudelaire exemplifies the modernist artist/flâneur as follows: "[t]he spectator is a *prince*, and everywhere rejoices in his incognito" (255). Watching unobserved, Baudelaire paints the flâneur as a highly active and empowered viewer. It could be argued that this view(er) remained uncontested until the 1950s and 1960s and still sits stubbornly, semi-concealed in the wings today.



Figure 12. Edouard Manet. *Bar at the Folies-Bergère*

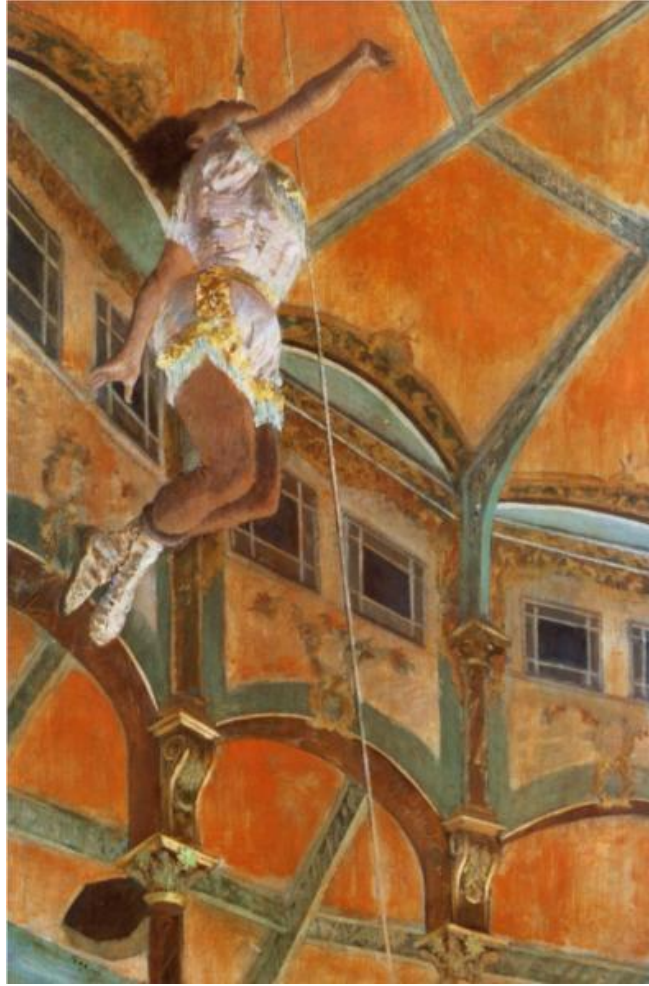


Figure 13. Edgar Degas. *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*

There is another important aspect to *Fragonard's swing* that is visible in all three of the videos discussed so far: the relationship of the figure to her setting. If we reconsider Fragonard's *Happy hazards of the swing*, nature is represented as romanticized backdrop; a theatrical set that seems to swallow the figures in its idyllic exuberance. The importance of the background in establishing the ambiance and the emotive import of the work cannot be underestimated. *Fragonard's swing* also uses nature as emotive device, one that the viewer cannot quite trust due to the disconcerting change in speed and reversed motion of the falling leaves.

In historical landscape images women act as symbols—often in the form of half-draped not-quite-naked nudes, languidly posed—to represent the fertile, the beautiful and the natural (fig. 14). It is through the continuous depiction of the image of woman as part of the 'view' that has led to her

aestheticized mythology (Andrews 58-65, 94-102).⁹ Historically, a pleasing beautiful landscape itself is equated with female iconography: rolling hills, undulating soft vistas, sexual containment, and ornamentation (102,133). Symbolic of action and the active: mountains, jutting cliffs, volcanoes, savage storms, and rough seas, are seen in contrast to the pastoral feminine scene. In *Landscape and Western Art* Malcolm Andrews wrote:

The Sublime is also a strongly gendered aesthetic through its rugged, primitive, patriarchal association. Its antithesis, in Burke's account, is a model of beauty that is recognized by the sense as having a fragile delicacy, an alluring smoothness of contour and a submissiveness—all of which are exemplified in the female form and in the cultural expectations of what is 'properly' feminine. Translated into landscape terms, the Sublime becomes associated with Salvator Rosa's world of dark, elemental violence, gypsies, and bandits; and the beautiful is associated with Claude's languorous and voluptuous pastoral scenes. (133-134)

When held at a safe observable distance the magnificent power and awe found in nature are considered to be Sublime—a notion that strikes at the heart of the faculties of thought and experience in the Kantian sense, bringing the focus back to the observer. We saw a similar masculinized hegemonic viewing perspective when considering the modern flâneur.

In her introduction to *The Picturesque and the Sublime: A Poetics of the Canadian Landscape* Susan Glickman makes the astute observation that “[s]eparation of topographical and ideal landscape is never really possible – *choosing* a particular landscape to describe and a vantage point from which to view it implies an ideological agenda, conscious or not” (7). The interpretation of the Sublime as masculine and pastoral beauty as feminine is problematic, as well as a gross oversimplification. The Picturesque is a third, more ambiguous, term in the reading of gendered landscape, occupying the liminal space in the dualistic model; in Glickman's terms it “mediates” between the two (10). In “An Essay on the Picturesque as compared with the Sublime and

Beautiful” written by Uvedale Price, the eighteenth-century exponent of the Picturesque, both the mysterious awe-inspiring power of the Sublime and the aesthetically pleasurable form of the pastoral scene are translated and transformed by the painter’s eye and his attention to “the breadth and effect of light and shade” and the “variety” and “intricacy” of form (14, 21). In this way the land is cultivated into a more cultured and consumable form—one that has aspects of both the feminine and the masculine. A slippery term, the abstruseness of Picturesque is adopted in *Pictures* to describe the video capture and digital framing of land (in this case the framed Canadian view) in pictorial terms by a culturally and historically contextualized author: transforming the view into a problematic gendered site.



Figure 14. The Nymph in the foreground is not part of the narrative depicted but tells the viewer how to ‘view’ the landscape (Andrews 102); Claude Lorrain. *Landscape with Narcissus and Echo*

EXHIBIT FOUR: *lost; Stella; looking glass(es)*

In the second of the videos presented on the three monitors, *lost; Stella; looking glass(es)* (hereafter *lost*,) we encounter a woman entrapped. She is frantically dashing from side to side, partially leaving but never fully able to exit her wooded theatre. The frenetic action cuts into the dark woods, delineates the edge of the image and makes us aware of the boundaries of the picture including the picture plane—the screen. After the video completes a full cycle of action, the figure slows down and comes into the center of the frame. Activated by the lowering of her hand-held mirror there is a moment of magic as the image fractures and a smaller mirrored video appears inside the first. This breaking up of the image continues after the completion of each subsequent loop until there are five inset videos running concurrently but out of synch. The video image now resembles Frank Stella's *Tomlinson Court Park* (fig. 15, fig.16 and fig. 19), except that the repeated frame is rendered in black rather than in white to echo the colour of the television monitor's frame. As in Stella's work, the structure of the picture plane is made concrete and inescapable; however, in *lost* a rabbit hole is also implied. The illusion is further emphasized by the manipulation of the speed: the fast motion, slow motion, and complete reversal of the action in the endless loop. This deconstruction of time and space implies a displacement of sign, spectator and subject, moving the work out of theatrical mimesis and acknowledging the image as construct.

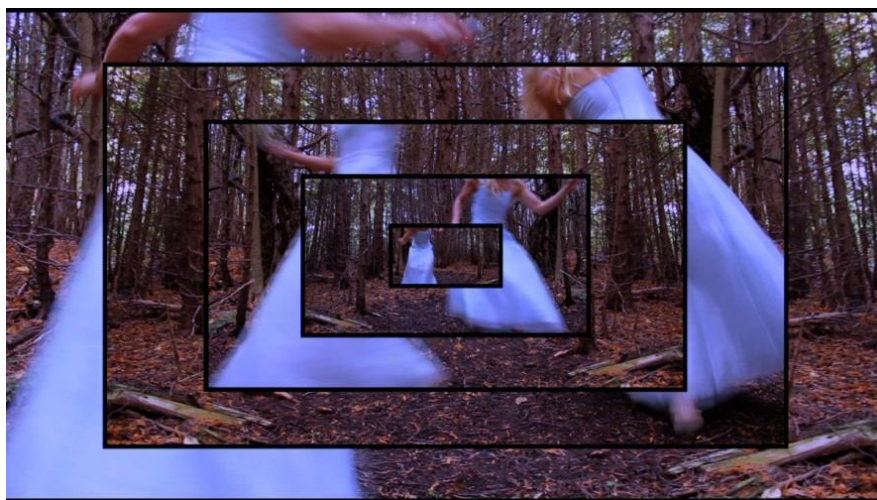


Figure 15. *lost; Stella; looking glass(es)*. Video still

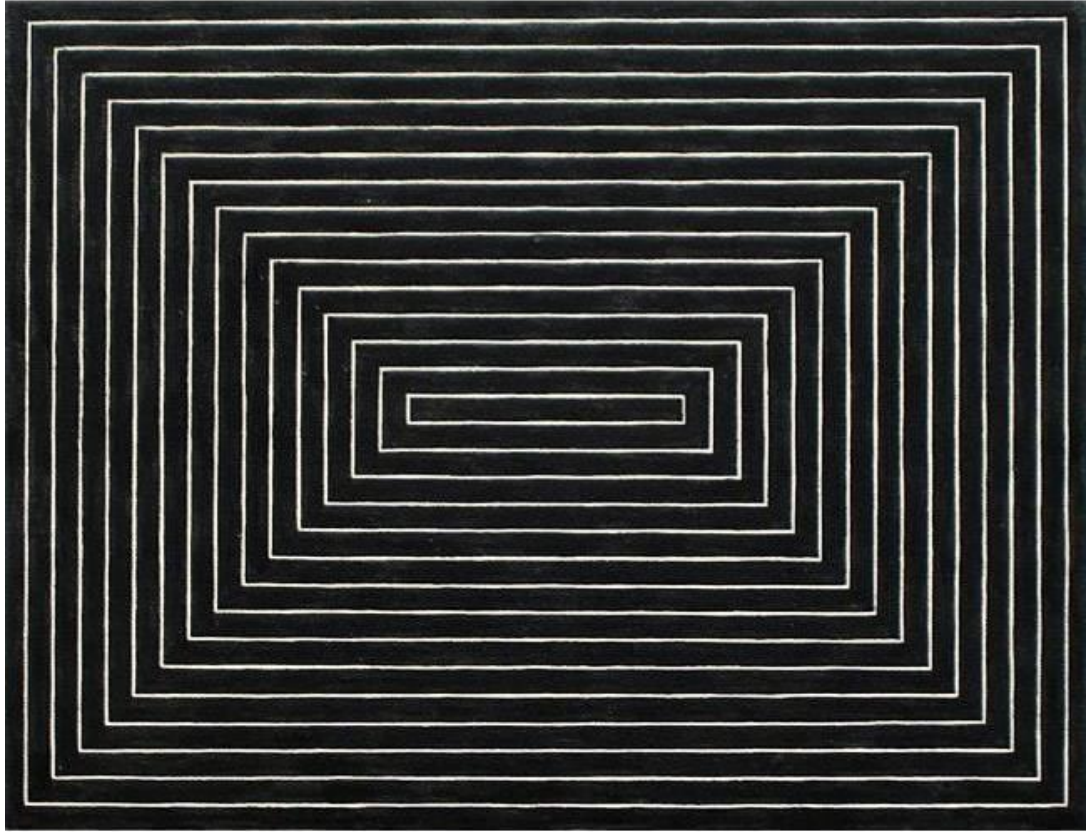


Figure 16. Frank Stella. *Tomlinson Court Park*

It is unclear which clichéd narrative the subject in *lost* is playing: lost white woman in the woods; hysterical woman overcome with emotion; princess impatiently waiting for her Prince Charming; Alice in Wonderland; narcissist obsessed by or monster repulsed by the reflection in the mirror she carries? Her headless-ness adds to the mystique of her femininity. She is a clean slate and can be fully painted-in by the spectator's desire and/or reflected self-image—that is, until, the terror of her slow-motion reveal. In the ever-so-brief glimpse of our subject's face, both desire and illusion are sabotaged—our heroine is wearing glasses. Our heroine has stolen the gaze (fig. 17). In her essay, "Film and the Masquerade", Mary Ann Doane wrote:

Glasses worn by a woman in the cinema do not generally signify a deficiency in seeing but an active looking, or even simply the fact of seeing as opposed to being seen. The intellectual woman looks and analyzes, and in usurping the gaze she poses a threat to our entire system of representation. (80)

In *lost* the eye is just another representation. The eyes have been painted onto the frame, and are literally blinding our subject.



Figure 17. *lost; Stella; looking glass(es)*. Video Still (detail)

By tapping into the pathos of the postmodern female subject, the work shares a penchant for the morose humorous sensibility of Cindy Sherman. In *Art in Mind*, Ernst van Alphen presents Cindy Sherman as the quintessential portrayer of “postmodernism, feminism, or intertextuality and art” (28). She presents the subject (her own costumed self-portrait), as social construct and a result of mass media representation. Van Alphen describes Sherman’s characters as “emptied out” and as being “a copy *without an original*” and “a subject that is constructed in the image of representation” (28). Her subject can be seen to exist exclusively as a “product of its images” (30). Like Sherman, I am representing the *representation* of the female subject. However, Sherman confronts the viewer, inviting and challenging the gaze head-on (fig. 18). The subject in my work, on the other hand, is always concealed—facing away, walking away from, turned upside down, or literally numbed by the gaze. Sherman is masquerading and in this masquerade is emptied out.¹⁰ However, she is still

an agent in charge of who she is picturing. My subject, for the most part, appears trapped by the narrative in which she is participating—a non-agent.



Figure 18. Cindy Sherman. *Woman in Sun Dress*

Typecasting is accented in my work through the denial of a specific subjectivity in not revealing the face. This facelessness accentuates the way the subject/object is on display. Susan J. Douglas wrote:

(...) women, much more than men, have learned from ads, movies, and TV shows that they must constantly put themselves under surveillance. In standard Hollywood movies men act—they solve crimes, engage in sword fights, right social injustice, and swing from vines—while women are on screen to be looked at. Constantly positioned on staircases, stages, rugs, beds, beaches, and even tables, their bodies exposed while men are covered by sheets, robes, boxer shorts, or jungle gear, women are primarily physical specimens to be surveyed intently by the camera, the male characters in the film, and, of course, the audience. (17)

John Berger wrote in “Ways of Seeing” that “[w]omen watch themselves being looked at”, that a woman is “almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself (50, 49). Add to this a

hyper self-awareness with a deep-rooted conviction that woman is ‘other’, irrational and acting in collusion with nature, and we end up with woman as narcissistic hysterical wood nymph.¹¹

As a culture we have always procured a longing for the image of beauty when it is presented to us struggling against the undercurrent of failure. We favour a Picturesque that only semi paints out the monstrous. We are more interested in stars when they fall into scandal, and happily bemoan lost youth when it is plucked in the crimson tide of a televised serial crime show. *Pictures* attempts to capture this ricocheting double standard as we bounce between the viewing pleasure and the power of the destructive gaze. However, the gaze is always refracted and never confronted in *Pictures*; mortality is only ever implied and the death of our subject is never actually witnessed; and the frustration is contained within the carefully controlled and aestheticized image.

All this said, *Pictures* is also a meditation on the ownership of my female identity and its repository of associated images. There is sincere enjoyment of finding comfort in my own skin, often in circumstances that suggests everything but comfort. The strength and implied physical endurance assumed to carry out the work supports this undercurrent of proud embodiment.



Figure 19. *lost; Stella; looking glass(es)*. Video Still

EXHIBIT FIVE: *Sisyphus yogi; Renaissance woman; somersault*

A second monitor displays *Sisyphus yogi; Renaissance woman; somersault* (hereafter *Sisyphus yogi*) in which a female figure in a tight black dress and high heels is attempting repeatedly to push a yoga ball up scree (fig. 20). In a dramatic backlit climax, just before mounting the summit, the woman slips and falls face-first into the incline. The yoga ball mockingly hits her head and bounces over her body back down the hill. The figure reluctantly pulls herself back to her feet and somersaults down the slope in hot pursuit (fig. 21). The loop begins again. *Sisyphus yogi* takes a close look at the mania of the ‘made’ contemporary woman. Caught in an intensive regimen of yoga and Pilates in the quest for tight buns, spiritual perfection and life-balance, our heroine can never achieve the self and culturally imposed idealism she places on her image making.



Figure 20. *Sisyphus yogi; Renaissance woman; somersault*. Video still

Today, both our spiritual guidance and image making is downloadable and updateable 24/7 on the portable touch screen. I am the first generation to feel the full impact of the internet revolution—one that has destabilized modern organization and signification, finalizing our fragmentation into a deconstructed and contingent postmodern differend.¹² As differential beings

have we lost our way, seeking ‘natural’ products on our grocery shelves and the ‘real goods’ on the dance club floor, contorting our balance on a petroleum by-product sticky yoga mat? The phenomenological realm of experience has been supplanted into a commercialized and virtualized ontology peppered with the reality problematic. We are mesmerized by the ever-shrinking screen while fondling its sleek plastic, protective sheath, being offered immediate pleasure and gratification. We purchase apps for ‘real-time’ living. The contradiction, of being part of the natural order while at the same time feeling removed from it, points to the inherent conflicted sense of ‘being in the world’. The ambiguity of ‘being’ is complicated further as I arrive at a discussion of embodiment through a series of performances that are being played back on a variety of screens. I see the screen as a go-between: between phenomenological embodiment and epistemological experience. It places reality at a safe distance but also contains it in a conceivable, graspable frame.

The ‘real’ versus mediated dynamic is also symbolically represented in my work through the use of props that act as facilitators between the physical figure and her experience in the landscape. The figure is suspended in, floating through, or passing into the setting without making direct contact with it; a prop or sign always negotiates the space between figure and ground. In *red carpet* it is a red carpet that divides the composition and keeps the figure almost always separated from the natural setting. In *Leda* it is a plastic inflatable pool toy as love object. In *Fragonard’s swing* it is a trapeze suspended in a tree: a ‘hanging’ and ‘framing’ device. In *Lost* a pair of glasses and a mirror ensnares the subject and in *Sisyphus yogi* it is a large, air-filled ball. These props point to the tenuousness of symbolic order and of embodiment more generally.

There is a presentment of the subject in *Pictures* despite the fact that she is never really ‘present’. She is not present in several regards. Firstly, her physical presence is an illusion—a representation rendered in the moving arrangements of pixels on a screen.¹³ Baudrillard would claim perhaps that in my videos “reality has been occluded by its representation” (Germain xvii). Secondly, as already discussed, the subject is not present in that she is not entirely embodied in her

action. Her action is staged as she performs the expectations of femininity. Finally, she is being directed by the paradoxically concealed yet simultaneously exposed author who is consciously directing from within the discourse of art history. Thus the actress as protagonist has multiple ‘appearances’: as a digitally screened image, as an acted expression of femininity, and finally as an image in dialogue with art history.

I agree with Jean Baudrillard that technology (and for my purposes mass media, popular culture and fine art) is hijacking our sense of reality. We take constructed reality as truth and use it as a model, mimicking elements presented to us, reflecting them back into our own existence and state of being. The ‘media show’ mirrored in our constructions of reality has become an unending loop of mythologized stereotypes and performances propagating themselves ad infinitum. The actress in *Pictures* is reflecting the cultural signs in an endless loop carried along by familiar plot. Once we realize that the author and subject are one and the same, the paradox in *Pictures* emerges. The artist is actively embodying disembodiment.

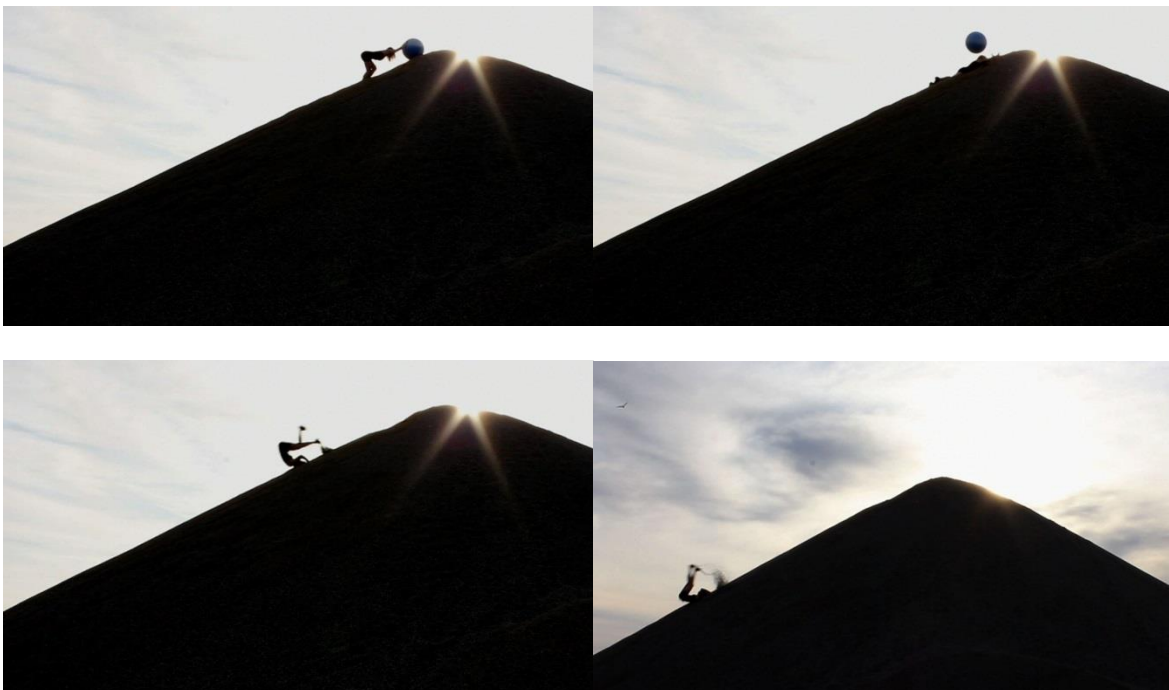


Figure 21. *Sisyphus yogi; Renaissance woman; somersault*. Video stills

EXHIBIT SIX: *white on white; marrying the wind; runaway bride*

In the second of the side wall projections and the final video on display, *white on white; marrying the wind; runaway bride* (hereafter *white on white*), we find a woman in a snow storm—a white out—sprinting through high winds and drifting snow wearing a flowing white wedding gown and veil, and dainty open-toed shoes (fig. 22 and fig. 23). Once again, we find reference to modernist painting: a white on white painting and the evocation of purity and the void. This transcendence is mixed with reference to the postfeminist ideal: the virtuous wife. Here, she could also be the bride of nature: free like the wind, yet already culturally owned and mythologized. *White on white* also plays with the all-too-familiar image of the runaway bride. Scorned by society she is capturing her freedom by ditching the altar. Who will speak for the happy single lady?



Figure 22. *white on white; marrying the wind; runaway bride*. Video still

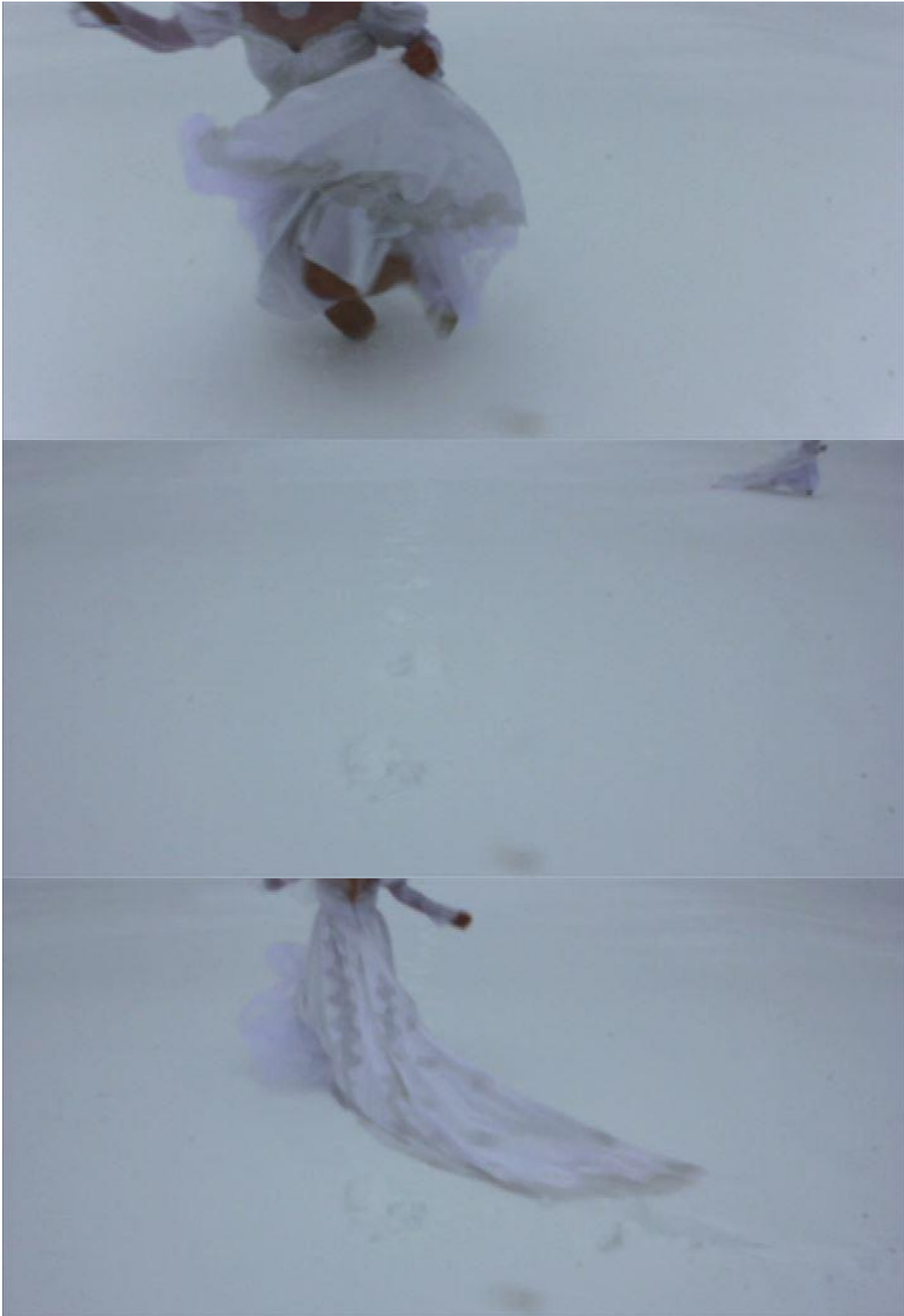


Figure 23. *white on white; marrying the wind; runaway bride*. Video stills

CONCLUSION: Framing the subject

In *Pictures*, symbolic order and personal truth can be said to be at odds with each other—leading to the proposition that images can never be fully trusted. Peggy Phelan wrote in *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance*,

Representation follows two laws: it always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing. The ‘excess’ meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant reading possible. Despite this excess, representation produces ruptures and gaps, it fails to reproduce the real exactly. (2)

It is precisely this precariousness, the trapeze act that representation performs, that I hope to capitalize upon in the work.¹⁴

As contemporary ‘beings’ we are becoming ever more engrossed by a spirit world of digitized codes that are working their magic on flickering screens. Concerned more with the externalized position of watching and making our aesthetic appearance from the outside-in, rather than ‘being’ from the inside-out, we are losing out on experiential embodiment in our physical natural environment. Gil Germain wrote that a significant aspect of human nature “seeks disengagement from, and mastery over, self and other” (203). We have never felt at ease in the natural world, one that is always infused with “physical threat and material want” (201). We feel estranged because “we have never been fully at home in the world” to begin with (183). Ironically, the more we build a world in our own image, the more we feel this estrangement from the ‘real’ world. We are caught in a feedback loop, or a Catch-22.

Art is the perfect vehicle for the simulation of reality in its mimicking and manipulation of experience. However, in mimesis art brings an awareness of the dangers and pitfalls of the mythologizing power of representation to the forefront, through postmodern self-referencing. This focuses contemplation back onto the heart of the matter. It illuminates that which has become

buried in the excess of information and the complications of contemporary living. *Pictures in an Exhibition* attempts to navigate a symbolically fraught, pixelated, contextualized, art-historicized, and postmodern space, exploring what it means to inhabit this space as a contemporary, single woman/artist in her thirties.

The author/artist sees herself in the contradictory and conflicted role as author in an art world steeped in mythologized images of the female subject. This is intersected by a complex postmodern environment—one that has birthed and housed advancements in feminist discourse in the last sixty years but also continues to challenge this discourse. Multifaceted layers of cultural, personal, and mass media experience and perspectives attempt to categorize, filter and define gender roles for a variety of reasons: control, power, understanding, expression, commerce, religious beliefs, etc. Methodologies attempt to not only lock down, but to also open up meaning in a complex world and existence. We are faced with the realization that modernism, defined by systematic order and the centrifugal “I” is no longer applicable in a decentralized, digitized, seemingly chaotic reality. This is, for me, also where the excitement lies. A flood gate has been opened from the single monolithic path to a world of potentiality. Thus in *Pictures*, social and historical references have been jumbled together and are indistinguishable in a postmodern pastiche where signifiers are ambiguous, becoming lost in a chain of referents. This is echoed in the use of multiple titles for each exhibit.

The works in *Pictures* cannot be defined solely as humorous, satirical, moral, aesthetic, historical, philosophical, or psychological. They also cannot be pinned down as referencing exclusively art history, movies, television, cartoons, literature, etc. They are ‘all of the above’ and ‘other’ depending on who is doing the viewing. This highlights the conflicted nature of the subject and representation in contemporary life and art. *Pictures in an Exhibition* is a postmodern project. It irreverently mixes referents from both popular culture and the art world arriving ultimately at an exhibition of subjectivity.



Figure 24. *red stripe painting; walking the line; red carpet.* Video still



Figure 25. *Pictures in an Exhibition.* Installation

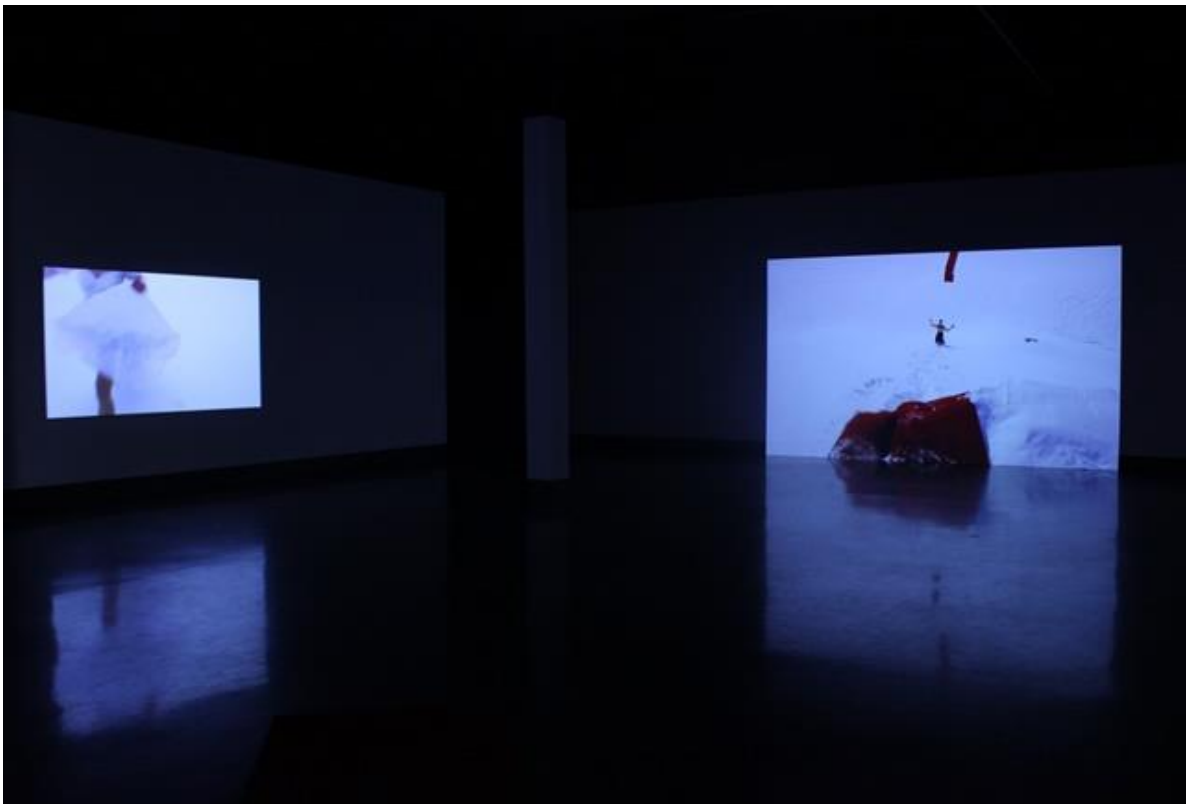


Figure 26 and Figure 27. *Pictures in an Exhibition*. Installation

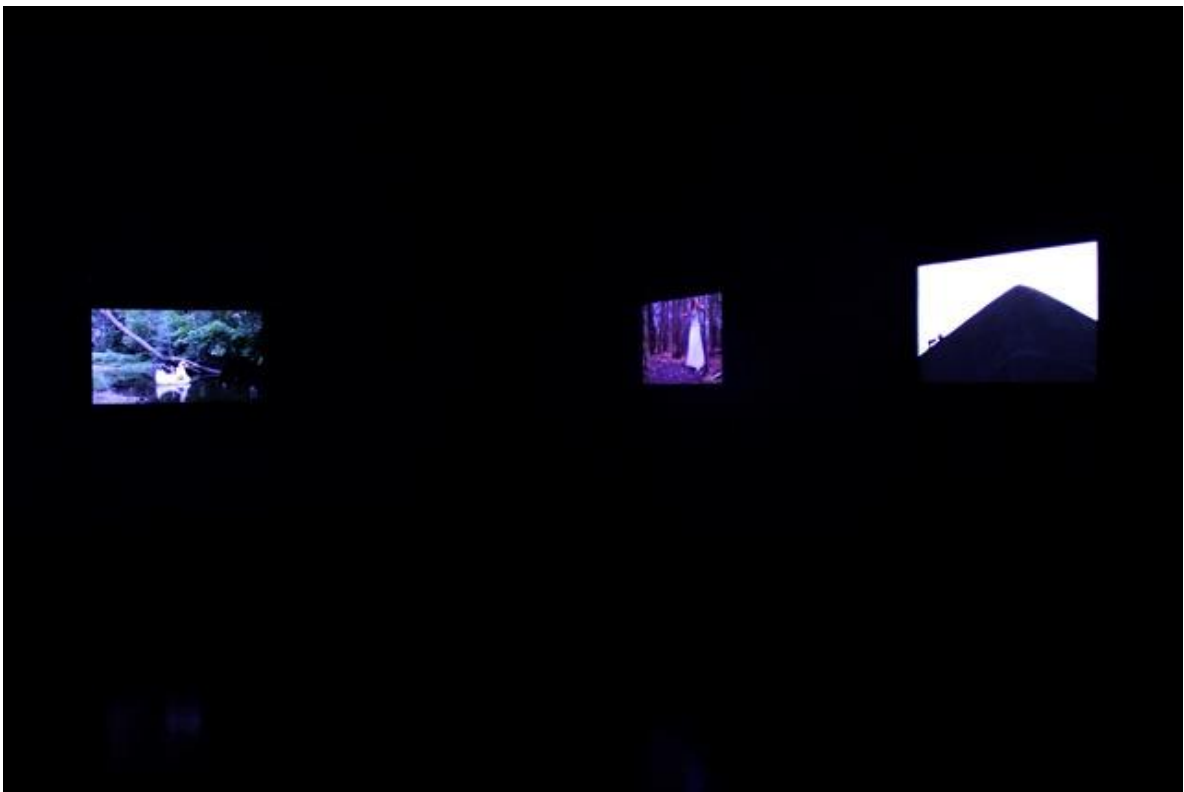


Figure 28 and Figure 29. *Pictures in an Exhibition*. Installation

Notes

1. I am using the term ‘reality problematic’ as it is defined by Gil Germain in *Spirits in the Material World* as pertaining “to the general set of assumptions, concepts, and debates on the contemporary status of reality” and “of the broader question concerning what is real” (xxii.6). In his discussion, Germain approaches the reality problematic from multiple perspectives focussing on how technological advances and virtual reality continue to complicate our perception of the ‘real’. The sociological approach is examined from the point of view of Jean Baudrillard, “claiming the ‘real world’ to be redundant to the extent that representations or simulations of reality are more commanding than reality itself both in terms of their appeal and their utility” (xvii). The epistemological perspective is based on the ideas of Jacques Derrida who believes “reality to be a construct, or a text” (xvi). Derrida claims that all our definitions, ideas and concepts are rooted in a chain of decentralized semiotic constructions and histories; truth resides in *différence* (Germain 11, 13). Paul Virilio is presented with an alternative sociological view where two realities coexist alongside each other and where both the fabricated and the seemingly real, vie for supremacy (Germain 73, 87, 98-104). Jean-Francois Lyotard’s approach sees the drive for the “eclipse of worldly being” as rooted in our being. He proposes that we are naturally driven to reach a “state of self-transcendence and transcendence over the material conditions of the Earth” (xvii). (For a more in-depth survey of Lyotard’s views see also *The Inhuman*.)
2. Roland Barthes defines the danger of mythologizing in “Myth Today” when he wrote that myths “immobilize the world”, and that they solicit men to “recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them on this day as if for all time” (Barthes in Durham and Kellner 104). In this way, myth can be seen as a ‘freeze-framing’ of ‘self’ and identity.
3. Tapestries, carpets, or robes (in ancient Greece no clear distinction can be made between references to these) are laid out by Clytemnestra when Agamemnon arrives home and descends from his chariot. He refuses the gesture claiming that it would be disrespectful to the gods. The following is quoted by Agamemnon in a translation of Aeschylus’s play by Hugh Lloyd-James:

*It is the gods you should honor with such things;
and to walk, being a mortal, on embroidered splendors
is impossible for me without fear.*

I tell you to honor me with honors human, not divine. (Aeschylus lines 922-925)

Agamemnon is the brother of Menelaus (the husband of Helen), and has just defended his brother's honour by attempting to retrieve Helen from the arms of Paris. Agamemnon is married to Helen's sister Clytemnestra. Helen and Clytemnestra are the daughters of Leda (see endnote 7). Agamemnon has just sacrificed the life of his daughter for his ship's safe passage at sea. This has given Clytemnestra reason to plot revenge on her husband, although other motives are implied. Clytemnestra's lover, the cousin of Agamemnon, Aegisthus, is found to be the architect of the scheme; however, it is Clytemnestra who ultimately carries out the slaying of Agamemnon and his concubine Cassandra.

4. "We choose our performances," according to van den Berg, "on the basis of our interpretation of the 'definition of the situation' a definition that is thoroughly imbued with ideas on social rules, the appropriateness of behaviours, and the limits within which one's performance 'ought' to stay if one wants it to be labeled as befitting the situation and the expectations that apply there" (32). According to van den Berg, this methodology has its start with George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism which has become "one of the most popular sociological perspectives of the twentieth century" (31).
5. In quoting the artist Barnett Newman and his work, and examining Lyotard's reading of it, Will Slocombe in *Nihilism and the Sublime Postmodern* highlights the "presence of absence" in the paintings, "that they 'make use' of nothingness" (Newman qtd. in Slocombe 65). The viewer is in the situation of being "'here' observing the painting, but the 'self' is an almost 'minimal occurrence'" (Lyotard qtd. in Slocombe 65). Slocombe states that for Newman, "creation is not an act performed by someone; it is what happens (this) in the midst of the indeterminate" (65).
6. See Barnett Newman's "The Sublime is Now".
7. *Red carpet* and *Leda* have an interesting connection in Greek mythology that I discovered while researching the subjects during post production. Clytemnestra is one half of the two sets of twins birthed by Leda. In Aeschylus's plays she is presented as the twin of Castor, fathered by Tyndareus, the King of Sparta. The other set of twins, Helen and Pollux, are fathered by Zeus in the guise of the swan, according to Aeschylus. However, the patrilineal line and sibling relation of the twins is disputed historically.
8. *Postfeminists* believe that feminism is no longer relevant or applicable to current culture (Negra 4). Postfeminism vilifies the working woman and re-establishes the ideology of woman as mother and

caretaker, thus romanticizing “retreatism” and subscribing to old moral standards. “Retreatism” and escapism is found in the “formulation of an expressive personal life” and by proxy a strongly defined and performed consumer driven ‘self’ (4). However, this strongly defined feminine ‘self’ and sense of egalitarianism is possible only for certain classes (upper), certain races (predominantly white), and is often influenced by “political empowerment of fundamentalist Christianity and regnant paradigms of commercialized family values” (6).

9. A way of looking at the subject’s agency is through the terms that Malcolm Andrews outlined in *Landscape and Western Art*. Here, the subjectivity of landscape exists either as *Argument*—the subject, the concept or moral undercurrents of a work of art, or as *parergon*—the “by-work” or the accessory to the Argument (30-1). In the 1400s, landscape appeared only as parergon, a stage or setting for an allegorical narrative. Pure landscape renderings appear only as preparatory sketches for more structured works that enact religious or moral themes (30). Christopher Wood has claimed that the first pure landscape works were painted by Albrecht Altdorfer (c.1480-1538); Wood is quoted in Andrews “[h]e prised landscape out of a merely supplementary relationship to subject matter” (41). It is not until the commodification of the landscape in the Renaissance, marking a clear shift to urbanization, in which landscape painting emerges as Argument in its own right. The land had become ‘other’ and thus desirable, romanticised through distance. Historically, the female form also plays the role of parergon. It is only in a few exceptions that the female figure is presented as Argument before the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It could be argued the emancipation of the female figure occurred only when women took full authorship of their own works of art and was not fully realized until the emergence of the feminist artists of the 1960s and 1970s.
10. The idea of the female subject taking ownership of the gaze through the masquerade of femininity was put forward by Mary Ann Doane in “Film and the Masquerade”. The masquerade, according to Doane, occurs when “the woman uses her own body as a disguise”, producing herself “as an excess of femininity (...) By destabilizing the image, the masquerade confounds this masculine structure of the look. It effects a defamiliarization of female iconography” (79).
11. The dualistic model can be traced back to one of the oldest schools of recorded philosophical thought in the western Greek tradition, the Pythagorean School of c. 570 BC. L.D. Derksen describes the

Pythagorean School as prescribing to the “world in terms of order, harmony and mathematically describable relationships” (2). Harmony was achieved by dividing the world into ten dualistic and contrasting categories of reality. Derksen lists these as: “limit/unlimited, even/odd, one/many, right/left, male/female, rest/motion, straight/curved, light/dark, good/bad, square/oblong,” noting that the female rested on the negative side (2). This gendered differentiation model was further articulated by Aristotle and has been carried through much of the western philosophical tradition. Some notable additions to the dualistic divide include: culture/nature, public/private, understanding/imagination, and sublime/beautiful.

12. Lyotard highlights the inherent differend in a postmodern reading of Kant’s “Critique of Judgement” in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (239). Lyotard highlights that Kant’s focus is not on the strengthening of the ‘self’, but in the irreconcilable ‘differend’ between the faculties. The great unknowable—the paradox of the thinking ‘self’ not being able to arrive at a concrete definition or purpose for its existence—is implied in Kant for Lyotard. Lyotard wrote, “[t]he sublime feeling is neither moral universality nor aesthetic universalization but is, rather, the destruction of one by the other in the violence of their differend. This differend cannot demand, even subjectively, to be communicated to all thought” (239).
13. Gil Germain calls this phenomenon *spiritization*, the out of body projection of our spirit into virtual space (xv). Germain describes the contemporary digital world as “the realm of image and fashion—rather than the more substantive domain of form and function” where embodiment was paramount (194).
14. Peggy Phelan also wrote that, “[t]he real is read through representation, and representation is read through the real” (2). She also made the very astute observation that “[i]f representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture”, thus making a claim that visibility does not equate social power (10). She speaks of the advantages of remaining ‘unmarked’.

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