ABSTRACT

Panel: COLLABORATION AND COLLECTIVITY: THE PAST OR FUTURE OF FEMINIST EXHIBITION MAKING

Chair: Kalliopi Minoudaki, Independent Art Historian

Oxymoronically collaborative and undemocratic, curating has become a highly marketable and often conservative product of the global art market. Such generalization is valid even for feminist curating under the institutionalization of feminist art and curating. Yet curating—referred to as exhibition making in defiance of curating’s brand-able authorial resonance and to embrace the diversity of its activist manifestations—has played a central role in the feminist politics in the arts since the beginning of the feminist movement. Making visible the work of female artists and feminist art, reconceptualizing the exhibition format, advancing and redefining feminist art politics, etc., feminist exhibition-making has been a primary tool of feminist intervention in conventional curatorial practice, in its confrontation with the institutions of art and art history or outside of them. Moreover, collaboration has diversely shaped feminist curating throughout its history—from the reconceptualization of exhibition making through collaboration by Womanhouse and the early collaborative galleries to many impromptu or long-term curatorial partnerships and the proliferation of all-women curatorial collectives and platforms today.

This panel focuses on the role of collaboration and collective identity in past and contemporary feminist curatorial practice, in line with the current interest in the history and politics of feminist curating and collaboration. Bringing together agents—both curators and artists—of recent feminist collaborative curatorial projects and collectives, this panel hopes to illuminate the diverse ways in which collaboration and collectivity underpin radical feminist exhibition making, while questioning their challenges and promises for future feminist political action in the arts, including effective feminist curating.

Panelists
Doris Caçoilo, Director of gaia studio; Lauren Denitzio and Kate Wadkins, founding members of For the Birds; Dr. Maura Reilly, Adjunct Professor, Sydney College of Arts, University of Sidney; and Ridyeulous, curatorial collective.

PAPER ABSTRACTS

We Are Here: The Feminist Art Collective in the Third Wave

Doris Caçoilo, Director of gaia studio, a New Jersey based women artists collective and gaia artist

_gaia, a center for creative process was formed by a group of ten women in 2002. As artists and activists, we needed a place to work, organize and support each other. We wanted to organize events and create programs to benefit the local arts community, especially women artists and to raise awareness of women’s issues. Focusing on the local artist community as a resource and audience. The history and framework for creating _gaia has its roots in the rich art history of women pooling their resources with similar visions for change, a sort of ammunition against the monotonous social construct of hierarchy, patriarchy, and sexism. From Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro’s Womanhouse in LA to A.I.R Gallery in New York, Riot Grrls, and Guerrilla Girls women have been creating safe spaces for dialogue and action. Beyond the established structures of
artists led exhibitions, majority votes on gallery direction, scheduled critiques, community oriented programs, performances and discussions. Women are meeting using MeetUp, creating community on social media via hashtags and other campaigns. Is there a way to leverage this on a global scale? Through a historical analysis we will explore how Third Wave Feminism can utilize the convergent media landscape to further support emerging women artists and create real change.

Femanist Curehating vs. Feminist Curating as a Lived Practical Practicum of Practice and Praxis

Ridykeulous, curatorial collective

Ridykeulous' presentation "Femanist Curehating vs. Feminist Curating as a Lived Practical Practicum of Practice and Praxis" will confront and dissect the notion, perception and field of study notated under the auspices of feminism, feminist scholarship, femanism and feminisms.

Ridykeulous is a collaborative effort on the part of Nicole Eisenman + A.L. Steiner to subvert the theoretical, performative, textual and visual languages which are commonly used to define "feminist" or "Lesbian" art. Ridykeulous purports to distill a cultural moment or tap into the blood and guts of an underground movement; however, Ridykeulous seeks the erosion of such conceits and the attendant limitations placed on a culture forced to operate as an alternative, rather than a viable contributor to the conversation at large. Ridykeulous constructs a counter-narrative that no longer adheres to the rules and definitions of either approach, engaging with both the traditional art-historical position of the female subject and the modern commodification of female artists and their work. Ridykeulous will tell you everything and nothing and plunge you into an abyss of fury. Ridykeulous is a confrontational mélange of recipes, poems, celebrity interviews, facts, fictions, accusations, jokes, sex, advice, merchandise, violence, puzzles, and luxurious artworks available and unavailable for your home. If you are one of those people questioning what is happening on planet earth, the womyn of Ridykeulous and a few of their mayle-identified frenemies purport to have the answer. We will meet your requirements and surpass your expectations, allowing us to serve you better.

Making Meaning, Doing Feminism

Artist Lauren Denitzio and writer/curator Kate Wadkins, founding members of the New York based feminist collective For the Birds

It is not enough to merely call oneself a feminist, feminism(s) must be acted and performed. As a collective, For the Birds constructs feminist identity via performance. If it is possible to build one’s gender via a stylized repetition of acts (in Judith Butler’s terms), then we believe a feminist identity can be accomplished through similar repetition. The way that activist groups employ actions determines the reality of their political and social identities. In this vein, For the Birds Collective’s performative acts occur within the context of feminist culture, and have taken the form of events, posters, zines, videos and direct actions.

Throughout our work in the collective, we have seen unconscious reproductions of sexism, transphobia, racism and similar internalized biases from many members of radical communities. By curating events, zines and art exhibitions, For the Birds creates alternative spaces in order to question and oppose structural patriarchy and other axes of oppression. Internally, For the Birds also creates processes to regularly address accountability within the collective. These actions are a direct response to the continued existence of oppression within activist and punk communities. It is too often the case that issues go unresolved under the false assumption that “revolutionary” automatically equals “feminist.” With this in mind, our activist and curatorial structures are a vehicle for us to collectively build a feminist reality.
In our talk, Making Meaning, Doing Feminism, we discuss the intentional collective practices we’ve put in place to combat oppression and marginalization, while building and nurturing feminist culture(s).