



XPACE Cultural Centre presents Gender Troubling

Gender/TROUBLING as title for this exhibition draws from Judith Butler's early work on performative acts and gender constitution. The performance of gender, sex, and sexuality is not a voluntary choice for Butler, who locates the construction of the gendered, sexed, desiring subject within what she calls "regulative discourses". These discourses, also named as "disciplinary regimes", decide in advance what are the socially permitted possibilities of sex, gender, and sexuality. The discourse itself naturalizes the construction of binary gender and heterosexuality - in other words heterosexuality in the West appears as "natural".

She writes, "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of an expected gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way." (1998, p. 527) Butler claims though that without a critique of sex as produced by discourse, the sex/gender distinction as a feminist strategy for contesting constructions of binary asymmetric gender is ineffective and subversive performances will be seen as nothing more than futile acts.

Our intention, as an activist/artist collective, was to engage in this discussion as we framed the building, contextualization and presentation of this work. Our desire is to expand the field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds and our strategy is play.

Maria Lugones (1990) notes: "The shift from being one person to being another person is what I call travel... Those of us who are "world" travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds"... The attitude that carries us through is [a] playful [one]... We are not worried about competence. We are not wedded to a particular way of doing things. We are there creatively" (396).

Does this exhibition present but a passing engagement with gender difference and otherness? Or do new meanings assemble and shift, creating fluid narratives of change? I would like to consider our practice here as straining towards the latter: the construction acknowledging the power of feminist art practice, the embedding of memory in image, and the productive use of fantasy. As artists, curators and writers, we are implicated in the production of the interpretation enacted by the visual frame. We make our production transparent, the context and content evident in location, producer, place and intent, but we refuse a stabilization of gender as we strategically play together



between our worlds.

We choose to make art. Rather than presenting easily recognizable images of bodies gendered female or male, we search for ways to connect with, and challenge, our viewers. As artist/researchers, we acknowledge our shared and different conditions and explore the complex interpretive practices that are involved. We admit our complicity, and model and critique the roles we play in mediating, betraying and building alliances among our diverse locations. In doing so, we are, in our art, inextricably engaged in the conditions, context, positionality and performativity of our gendered lives.



Mandate

XPACE Cultural Centre is a non-profit organization dedicated to emerging art and design. Our goal is to bridge students with their established counterparts through experimental programming that cultivates public dialogue. This allows for a dynamic art space that questions and re-evaluates the cultural and artistic expectations of visual language. XPACE is a membership-driven organization supported by the OCAD Student Union.

Gallery Hours & Contact Information

Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday: 12PM to 6PM

Thursday and Friday: 12PM to 8PM

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