

RIPE

conception & perception



Anonda Bell & Tara de la Garza



RIPE
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Dedicated to

*Anonda's son
Oliver Bo Pzena
born May 8th 2010*

and

*Our Mothers
Elinor Bell and Anne Brain*



*Tara's daughter
Xia de la Garza
born October 29th 2010*

RIPE

conception & perception

Anonda Bell & Tara de la Garza

Z|ONE|TWO|PROJECTS

Design

Tara de la Garza,
2|ONE|TWO|PROJECTS

Photography

Keith Schweitzer

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Manon Slome INTRODUCTION

RIPE: Conception & Perception could be said to have gestated from the simultaneous pregnancies of two Australian artists in New York City, Anonda Bell and Tara de la Garza. Both highly creative, independent and professional women who more than hold their own under any circumstances, pregnancy awakened in them a sense of vulnerability (among other things) that their bodies, and decisions relating to their bodies, were no longer private but overtly subject to the pronouncements of professionals and the opinions of just about everyone else. Rather than knit booties or become the property of the public domain or knitting booties, Bell and de la Garza chose to create artwork that critiques the mythology of pregnancy and motherhood, challenging some of the widely prevailing stereotypes about the purported nine months of fragility prior to the life changing experience of giving birth.

Studies in psychology and feminism often inspire Bell's choice of subject matter. In particular, her work as both artist and curator has focused on the history of female hysteria to examine systems of representation and knowledge, paradigms of power and the historical status quo as it is widely known. Bell often

reinstates people, places and events into a dialogue from which they have been largely overlooked. For *RIPE* she has focused on the story of a woman named Mary Toft, who was at the nexus of a great scandal in England in the 1700s, claiming to have given birth to rabbits and various animal parts, a claim corroborated by leading physicians of the day. Toft's story was one that captured the popular imagination and, once the hoax was revealed, led to a questioning of the nature and invincibility of the formal medical profession and to the downfall of the prominent doctors who had truly believed that an illiterate farm woman was indeed defying logic and science and giving birth to rabbits.

Tara de la Garza depicts women who, like herself, do not conform to the notion of the passive and nurturing female. In *Lucy Rupert, 9 Months Pregnant*, (2010) and *Kickboxing Series*, (2010), for example, she depicts women who will imminently give birth, dancing and kickboxing, activities and states of mind which transcend this idea of fragility. In *Listeria Lunch Series* (2010), de la Garza takes a humorous look at all the foods she was warned to shun during her pregnancy, not failing to include the listeria bacteria, salmonella etc. that could

take residence in such food. Steering away from toxic materials during her gestational period, de la Garza decided to experiment with the medium of watercolor, which proved to be an interesting challenge for the artist. In a medium where mistakes cannot be erased, and at a time when she was struggling with issues of control, she learned to surrender to the serendipity of the materials and find creative possibilities in letting go.

This exhibition invokes both a history of women making art from their own experiences and environments and provides yet another stepping stone in the journey begun with the seminal Mary Kelly work, *Post Partum Document* (1973-9) which brought the minutiae of birth and parenting into the discourse and politics of representation. Bell and de la Garza's work continues this compelling dialogue between the personal and the political, the private and the universal. Their aesthetic and their materials convey a certain lyricism, delicacy and humor; but make no mistake – these are women, artists and mothers with great power.



Anonda Bell

ARTIST STATEMENT

Studies in psychology and feminism often inspire my choice of subject matter. I am particularly interested in systems of representation and knowledge, and I have been known to question the status quo of history as it is widely known. I do this through drawing attention to people, places and events which have been largely overlooked and hence have succumbed to oblivion. I am interested in constructing new modes of representation for the female body, and finding ways to reinstate women into histories from which they have been excluded. As the result of pervasive patriarchy, throughout the history of anatomy the male body has assumed the role of default constitution. Early studies of the human form by seminal anatomist Galen relied heavily on imagination, as dissections were not de rigueur. His knowledge was derived from glimpses into the body via small scale operations and speculative supposition from tactile interaction with patients - the external nature of the male sex organs meant that more information was able to be obtained about structure and function. Subsequently, representations of the female form were couched in terms of the hidden organs and were conceived of as 'other' to the male norm. For the most part, anatomical drawings have

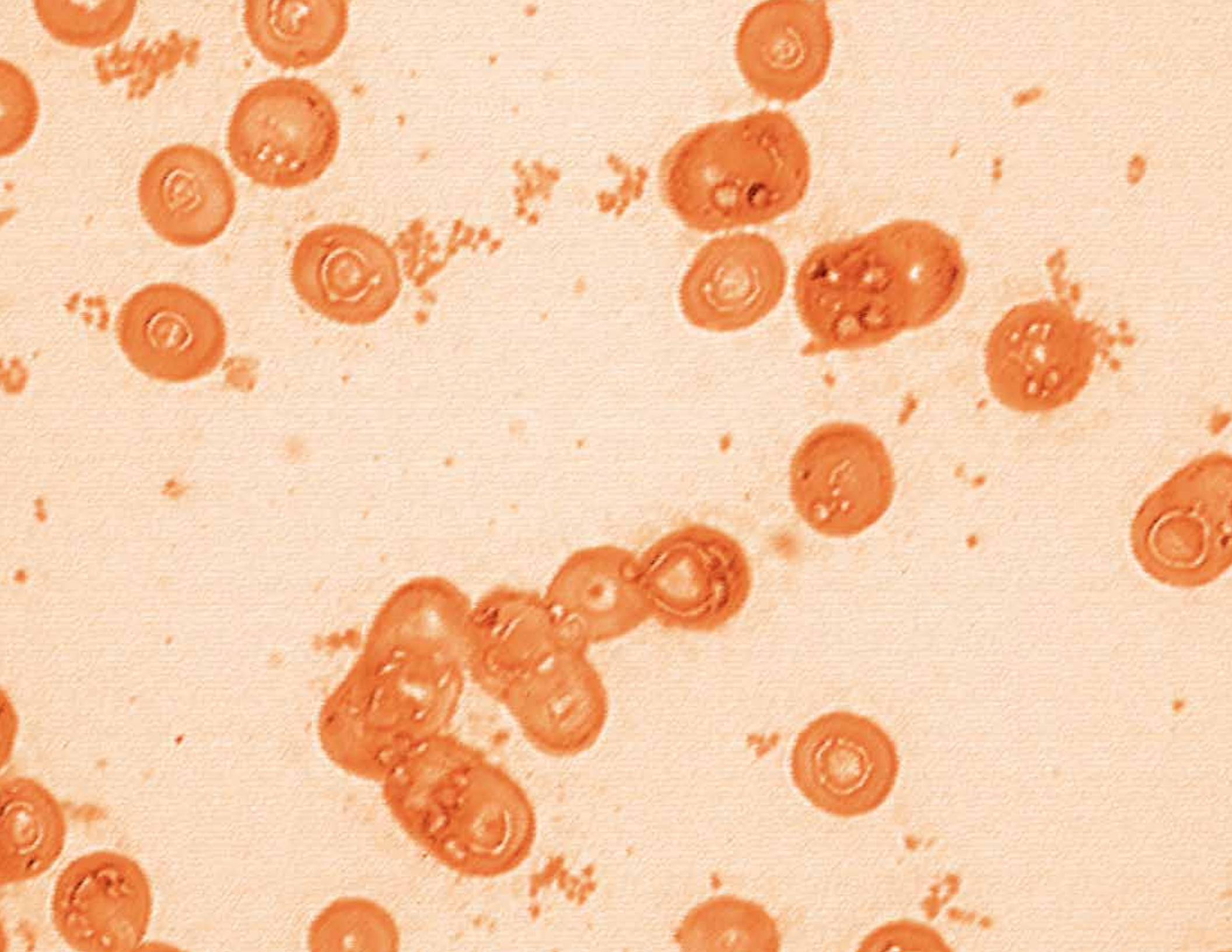
been executed by men, in a language authorized and constructed by men, to communicate knowledge that was imbued (not surprisingly) with inherent bias. Underlying tendencies to marry male and female form has been thought by some to be isomorphic. This is patently untrue, as it implies an equality which does not exist when the male version is continuously triumphant over the female. The figures I create address issues of ambiguity. Rethinking historical perspectives provides an opportunity to conceive of new approaches to representation which acknowledge the socio-political context in which it was produced.

In my art work I am attempting to develop new forms of representation that have been inspired by research. To facilitate this aim I have applied techniques of creation which blur the dichotomous boundaries of inside/outside, male/female, literal/metaphorical, culture/nature. For example, in some of my work I have used iconic elements of fashions popular in the late nineteenth century and combined them with representations of the inner body; the skeleton of the corset is fused into the ribcage of the woman, both reflecting a cage form, thereby suggesting restraint and restriction. My portraits of women deny the possibility of an 'appropriate' singular

state of being female. My agenda involves recontextualizing descriptions that are intended to reflect negative qualities and imbuing them with positive attributes. A woman's incomprehensible nature may well be her strength, her ambiguity a desirable character trait that suggests all is not immediately revealed and will only be known through further investigation.

I have an ongoing interest in multiplicity. I like to juxtapose the single hegemonic voice of art history/the artist with jostling dissent, offering multiple, and sometimes contradictory, ways of being as well as seeing. My work is both fickle and fragile, for the most part taped and pinned to the wall, made from materials with varying degrees of longevity. The work remains a statement primarily in my own voice, speaking as a woman on behalf of women who have been silenced by time and circumstance. I speak from a position of fated liberty as a result of my biological constitution. The work is not intended to be a literal illustration of my situation but an embroidered rejoinder to the state of being female.





Tara de la Garza
ARTIST STATEMENT

For the exhibit *RIPE: Conception & Perception*, I am exploring the perceived and implied fears and taboos associated with the journey into motherhood. I am interested in depicting women who, like myself, do not conform to the traditional notion of the passive and nurturing female, one whose exclusive *raison d'être* is to procreate.

In researching this exhibit I was struck by how little has been said about the pregnant experience or parenthood in contemporary visual arts. In music, many songs have been written about the gift of life, but very little comes to mind when I think of iconic art pieces, other than the depictions of the Virgin Mary. This omission is possibly because of the under-representation of female artists in the history of western art, but I think it is more than this. I think there is a fear for female artists, that touching on this personal theme will marginalize them and hinder their careers. There is a prevalent notion that a woman is somehow disabled once she has children, in fact most American corporations don't place women on maternity leave, instead they receive a 'disability' benefit. The semantics of this inform our view as a society.

Whilst pregnant myself, I became acutely aware of the role that pregnant women are expected to play in society, the angelic 'glow' that is supposed to occur and the lofty persona of one 'with child'. Only, none of this happened to me. In fact I became more fiesty, more aware of my enormous strength rather than my fragility. I felt the urge to tear down established myths surrounding pregnant women and set about looking for new role models, women who were powerfully aware of their bodies and not afraid to express this. I took my research to YouTube, where I typed in '9 months pregnant' in the search box and came upon two truly inspiring women: Lucy Rupert, a contemporary dancer and Danyelle Berger, a black belt in Modern Kung-Fu. When I discovered these women, who in the last throes of their gestation were performing contemporary dance pieces and maintaining a kick-boxing training regime, I contacted them and asked their permission to create artworks from their images.

Often my work starts like this - with a concept - then the medium becomes integral to the message. This can manifest as a painting, a photo series, a performance or installation. In this instance the media for *RIPE* were determined by

my desire to not expose my pregnant self to toxic solvents, pigments and sprays. Using watercolor for the *Listeria Lunch* series, I was struck by the lack of control or editing available with this medium, one needs to abandon oneself to the mistakes that occur with watercolor. The medium provides an apt metaphor to surrendering to the changes occurring to the body during pregnancy.

Overall, the seemingly disparate works are unified in a theme of empowerment. I am depicting the stories of women as unconventional, following their own paths into motherhood, whilst blasting out of the water notions of fragility, passivity or physical incompetence. These are stories of women who are indefatigably able.



Meghan Keane
FROM VIRGINS TO NUDES:
SHIFTING DEPICTIONS OF
PREGNANCY IN WESTERN PAINTING

During the early 20th century, a new trend of depicting pregnant nudes emerged in western painting, a trend that has continued to surface in complex forms in the 21st century. This essay provides an historical overview of pregnancy in western painting, tracking the shift from a clothed pregnant figure to a nude pregnant subject by focusing on the contexts and conditions that help account for this trend and ultimately investigating specific approaches used by artists painting pregnancy in the new millennium. Moreover, the text offers a framework in which to contextualize and engage the exhibition *RIPE: Conception & Perception*, a show critically examining our assumptions about embodiment and pregnant women's experiences.

"[N]udes, they practically sell themselves," claimed artist Raymond Pettibon, referring to the traditional role of the painted nude as a titillating site of sexuality, objectification, and economic transaction for male audiences.¹ Clothed pregnant figures have been similarly "selling themselves" as an alternative feminine ideal in western painting since the beginning of the use of the medium itself, dating to pre-Renaissance

times. Although nudity and pregnancy did not officially intersect until the early 1900s, the discourse of female sexuality, objectification, symbolic representation, and traditional gender roles is nonetheless extremely relevant when looking at paintings of clothed pregnant women. The following historical examples look to biblical figures and secular myths, the grand narratives that formed the basis of western thought and, in turn, the tenets of art history in which these precedent-setting pregnancy paintings take part.

The original paradigm of pregnancy in western painting arose from Christianity: the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ. Mary, who gives birth to Christ as the son of and direct link to God, is held up as motherhood's miraculous ideal: she conceives through divine intervention, simultaneously fulfilling a human biological imperative and a moral mandate - in this case, virginal "purity." As such, she is "alone of all her sex. ... Rather than a fecund and sensual goddess reveling in her own sexuality and the pleasures of procreation, our culture may be unique in constructing an asexual model of motherhood."² Indeed, this construction of motherhood is problematic; as the primary model of motherhood in the west to which women have been historically held and judged, the challenge for women

has henceforth been moving beyond an inescapable, asexual Christian fantasy. Christianity's creation of antagonistic female archetypes, the Madonna as "Good Virgin Mother" and Eve as "Evil Temptress," has further contributed to holding western women to unattainable standards for 2000 years. Unlike Eve, Christianity's instigator of original sin, the Virgin Mother symbolizes moral perfection. She models, thus helps define, morality as permitting the effacement of self, allowing the paternal link between father and son to dominate. "In Christian iconography, the Virgin Mary is represented as the unwitting 'interval' from the Name of the Father to the Son, with any traces of matrilinearity expressly disavowed."³ Eve, on the other hand, symbolizes immorality; her disobedient behavior is sinful not only because it acknowledges the self, but a self with gendered desires.

Consequently, the self-effacement of the Virgin has diminished matrilinearity from the very foundations of western culture, an absence that weighs heavily on the art historical canon. In spite of the historical reality of women's lives being circumscribed by



Mariotto Albertinelli, *The Visitation of Saint Elizabeth to the Virgin Mary*, 1503



Jacques Daret, *Visitation*, from Altarpiece of the Virgin, c. 1434-1435, Staatliche Museen, Berlin

patriarchal double-binds, matrilinearity exists, in a broken sense. There is a history of female figures in painting, even protagonists, and a continuity of ideas about women such as temptress or nurturer. Yet even this pieced-together matrilinearity is maligned by gendered binaries, typical of patriarchal attitudes: passive not active, nature not culture, object not subject. Exemplary images of the earliest pregnancy paintings in western art convey the beginnings of a matrilinearity: a biblical scene of *Mary Greeting a Pregnant Elizabeth* is one example, an icon in which the Virgin Mother is pregnant is another. What must not be forgotten in viewing these images is that:

In addressing the construction of motherhood we are not dealing with a biological given, still less with an essence, but with a complex set of representations which imposes itself as reality - a set of representations suited to the needs of a particular social order which circumscribes women's lives.⁴

Pre-Renaissance and Renaissance paintings of Mary the Virgin Mother are fundamentally part of this "construction of motherhood" that feminist author and art historian JoAnna Isaak describes above. Implicit in these early works is the understanding that women operated in a social order where they were not yet the creators of paintings except in a few rare cases, thus lacked representational control of their own bodies and experiences. The shift that takes place over time, away from the impossible ideal from which pregnancy iconography begins, towards contemporary paintings of the pregnant nude, indicates a desire to reevaluate the social order that delimits the autonomy and agency of all women who inhabit and are informed by western culture.

In significant artworks painted during the mid to late Renaissance and up through the early 20th century, male artists depicted pregnancy, overt or implied, while exploring



Sandro Botticelli, *Springtime*, c. 1482

non-religious iconography such as classical mythology or domestic settings. One Italian Renaissance example is Sandro Botticelli's painting *Springtime*. Considered to be from Ovid's *Fasti*, this scene from Greek and Roman mythology celebrates the fecund delights of spring's rebirth in the natural world. Venus, the central figure, is painted with a larger than usual womb, literally embodying her role as mythological goddess of love and fertility. Although Botticelli is painting outside of a Christian context, Venus is depicted in a strictly biological role. Her relaxed passivity, compared to the dancing revelers around her, aligns her more closely with the Virgin than with the characteristically feisty, empowered, divine agents of classical myths.

Another Italian Renaissance example is *La Donna Gravida* by Raphael. This secular work offers a glimpse into the life of an undistinguished and unassuming—yet visibly pregnant—woman seated for her portrait. She is moderately aristocratic and sits with her left hand resting upon her rounded, pregnant stomach. She looks at the viewer with blank eyes. Although



Raphael, *La Donna Gravida*, 1505-06

her stomach does not figure prominently in the composition, the mere existence of a secular pregnancy portrait, made unmistakable by its title, is notable. Intimate portraits of explicitly pregnant women were uncommon during the Renaissance—and a particular anomaly in the state-commissioned oeuvre of Raphael.

One of the most famous paintings of the northern European Renaissance is also the ongoing subject of scholarly disagreement over the subject's gravidity. *The Arnolfini Wedding* by Jan Van Eyck is exemplary of a much more elusive rendering of pregnancy. Art historians to this day debate whether or not the bride of Arnolfini is pregnant under the mass of green dress fabric. Is this Renaissance artist pictorially implying that the relationship of an unmarried couple resulted in pregnancy, prompting marriage? This implication may surprise



Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Wedding*, 1434

the contemporary viewer. However, it must be kept in mind the degree to which Puritanism and Victorian modesty thrive in present day morality—a fact that may explain in part the ongoing discord among scholars. Although



Johannes Vermeer, *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, c. 1662-63

pregnant brides do not figure prominently in the history of art, let alone in the earlier part of the canon, Arnolfini's bride is visibly grasping folds of cloth in order to hide or protect something under her thick velvet gown. Thus, pregnancy remains a highly plausible reading of the work.

Paintings of pregnancy post-Renaissance through the end of the 19th century were limited, if any. Johannes Vermeer's oeuvre was a unique exception. Although Vermeer executed a relatively small number of paintings in his lifetime, compared with his prolific 17th century contemporaries such as Rembrandt or Rubens, his paintings overwhelmingly featured female subjects and, significantly, a handful appear to be largely pregnant, though heavily robed. Some art historians still argue whether one can confirm their pregnant states. Edward Snow, author of *A Study of Vermeer*, argues that the roundness of the middle section of Vermeer's women is not just an aesthetic convention of the milieu. In none of Vermeer's northern European colleagues' works, such as DeHooch

or Van Eyck, "is the idea of woman's pregnancy communicated, as it is so powerfully in these ... paintings by Vermeer."⁵

In the article, "Vermeer's Pregnant Women: On Human Generation and Pictorial Representation," art historian Karin Leonhard argues that we can further understand the pregnant women in Vermeer's paintings through the lens of 17th century scientific and social thought on reproduction and childbirth. Her essay points to the temporal intersection of Vermeer's pregnancy paintings with scientific medicine's rise and its interest in turning the previously-invisible visible in order to immediately claim it as knowledge.⁶ Notably, different schools of thought often used the same findings to prove conflicting points, especially when it came to women's bodies and the socio-political interests surrounding them—indicating the risk of using sight as the primary mode of knowledge acquisition in empirical science. For example, the first drawings of sperm were published after seen wiggling under the newly invented microscope in 1677. This confirmed for spermists the intuited idea that this



Nicolaas Hartsoecker, *Sketch of a Homunculus enclosed in a human spermatozoon*, from *Essay de Dioptrique*, Paris, 1694

gender-specific fluid was what contained life. The theory of the homunculus grew out of the discovery of active sperm, claiming that a little man was housed in each head. Spermists also believed the moving sperm confirmed that women were little more than passive incubators during pregnancy. Science congratulated itself for discovering the metaphor of the Middle Ages to be not just proverb, but truth: "woman was like the soil in which the seed fell."⁷ However, ovulists of the time argued in favor of the female role in conception, that it was not passive, but played an active role in the creation of the fetus—despite conventional medical and scientific wisdom consistently describing woman in "receptive, protective and nourishing functions" such as "incubator, vessel, cavity, tunnel covered by a tunic..."⁸

Vermeer's pregnant women, *Woman with a Balance* and *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* appear unaffected by 17th century sexism; rather, they possess a "heightened sense of receptivity... symbolized alone by the special condition of the women who both find themselves in the hopeful, growing, expanding state of gravidity and are depicted in an iconographic variation of the well-known theme of Maria gravida [Mary pregnant]."⁹ It is striking that Vermeer created these works during such a formative era, a time when traditional ideas about gender were solidifying through scientific "proof" of

woman's passive role in creation. In spite of the gendered assumptions developed during his time, Vermeer painted pregnant women without erasing selfhood or human dignity, thereby offering an alternative to the dominant paradigm of his milieu.

Although our attention to historical depictions of pregnancy concludes here, scientific medicine's growing capacity to directly impact women's lives through their search for "truth" merits pause. As seen in *RIPE*, artist Anonda Bell takes a closer look at 18th century medicine and scientifically informed social constructions of "truth" by examining maternal impression as her subject. Maternal impression was a commonly held idea that what the mother dreamed, saw, or felt could influence conception and pregnancy.

For example, many believed that pregnant women overly familiar with household pets could cause their children to resemble that animal. Maternal impression was used widely by doctors prior to 20th century genetic theory to conveniently explain away the physical and mental defects of babies. It was



Anonda Bell, *Mary Toft and her much beloved children*, 2010

also used to "prove" that women alone were responsible for any negative qualities their offspring may bear, while simultaneously holding onto the unempirical belief that males played the most active role in determining the qualities of the child.

Bell's multimedia wall installation of Mary Toft, a woman who claimed to give birth to rabbits, confronts pre-20th century attitudes towards pregnant women and their agency, particularly when faced with their bodies - bodies that were the subjects of science, medicine, and art, but hardly their own. Similar to the ways in which 19th century hysterics (another topic explored by Bell) evolved as a cultural phenomenon, a form in which women found outlets of expression for their hyper-delimited lives, Bell's British protagonist claimed to be capable of an exacerbated form of maternal impression, not just birth defects, but actual rabbits. The hoax was eventually discovered when she arrived at the court of King George and the royal surgeon determined that her claims were false. There were, however, multiple cases of women claiming to birth animal parts; this woman and her rabbits was one of a small collection of cases of women using maternal impression in ways that, if not empowered, fostered a sort of ownership of their bodies and experiences. In a traditional world of little choices, these women employed the lore of maternal impression as a coping

mechanism, perhaps, but still actively, rather than be victims of social labeling or convenient ways of justifying why men have dominant roles in reproduction.

Up to the turn of the 20th century, all instances of pregnancy in the western art historical canon were paintings by white men, of clothed, white women. The dominance of the Christian religion, and its Virgin Mother model, coupled with prevailing colonialist and imperialist attitudes towards non-white peoples and cultures, informed the ongoing exclusivity of the canon as the hegemonic domain of educated white male artists. Previously, if and when women painters existed within the western patriarchal social structure, they were largely unknown in comparison and limited in number and opportunities. However, along with the 20th century came shifting socio-political contexts, shifting gender roles, and shifting opportunities, all of which began making way for women artists on a larger scale.

Women artists have always worked in a Catch-22 situation and the catch is motherhood—an “original” division of labor: women have babies; men create art. Sublimating the maternal, or primary narcissism, has always been the necessary precondition for artistic achievement.¹⁰

Paula Modersohn-Becker, a German woman, was the first western female artist to paint a pregnant nude, and a pregnant nude self-portrait at that. Strikingly, she painted an imagined self; she was not actually pregnant at the time of executing the painting. “She ... deliberately chose to represent herself as pregnant at the precise moment in her life when she had decisively rejected the identity of wife and mother.”¹¹ This painting, entitled *Self-Portrait on my Sixth Wedding Day*, was a means by which she worked out her ambivalence towards motherhood and childbirth. Modersohn-Becker was revolutionary for bringing “together two poles of femininity which are traditionally held apart, the representation of the female body as erotic and sexually available and as reproductive and private,” as author and feminist scholar Rosemary Betterton notes.¹² Using the maternal nude, Modersohn-Becker was able to investi-



Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Self-Portrait on my Sixth Wedding Day*, 1906

gate the catch-22 situation of the female artist as the creator of art and possible creator of life as well.

Mexican artist Frida Kahlo followed shortly after Modersohn-Becker. Kahlo is included here with other

20th century western painters because of her prominent place among them in the tomes of art history. Kahlo completed numerous paintings, predominantly self-portraits, about the physical and emotional pain she experienced in her life due to a debilitating accident that compromised her ability to have children; she suffered multiple miscarriages. “Kahlo’s life was plagued by many accidents and ... her many self portraits often focused in a harrowingly personal way on her intense experiences and troubled inner states of mind.”¹³ As seen through her two surrealist paintings of pregnancy and birth, Kahlo’s only means to “give birth” was through her artwork. In *My Birth*, a nude woman on a bed delivers a large head. The nudity is authoritative, owned by the woman who painted it, and entirely unerotic. It is the contrary of a fetishized image of female nudity crafted for the male gaze.



Frida Kahlo, *My Birth*, 1932

[If] one of the principal functions of the female nude in western art has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body... the maternal body potentially disrupts that boundary. For the maternal body points to the impossibility of closure, to a liminal state where the boundaries of the body are fluid. In the act of giving birth, as well as during pregnancy and breastfeeding, the body of the mother is the subject of a constant exchange with that of the child. Whereas the nude is seamless, the pregnant body signifies the state in which the boundaries of inside and outside, self and other dissolve.¹⁴

Kahlo’s painting effectively dissolves the boundaries between bodies and selves, rejecting conventional nude “seamlessness” in favor of expressing “liminal” maternal experiences.



Alice Neel, *Pregnant Maria*, 1964

Of all the 20th century painters of the pregnant nude, American artist Alice Neel remains perhaps the most famous. In line with Modersohn-Becker and Kahlo, Neel’s paintings are not glorified depictions of pregnancy; rather, she depicts the discomfort, awkwardness, and complete embodiment of her subject’s experience. Although none of her nudes are self-portraits, distinct from Modersohn-Becker and Kahlo, she maintains a certain sense of safety, interiority and privacy around these women. They are painted in domestic interiors and are nude in a non-public way. Rather, one gets a sense of intimacy between Neel and her sitters, one that is not voyeuristic but comes from female camaraderie and a clear desire to make visible the integrity of the subject before her. In the painting *Margaret Evans Pregnant*, one undoubtedly senses the dignity of the pregnant woman, despite her hugeness, through her upright, assertive, almost regal posture. An air of pride in her pregnancy emanates from the painting as she stares boldly ahead. Such intimacy and privacy, as well as the absence of pregnancy glorification (depicting maternity as anything other than what it actually is), is marked. In turning to millennial paintings of pregnant nudes, a dramatic shift in representation occurs away from these unmediated, intimate 20th century expressions.

Looking at the painting *Naked Portrait 2002*, of a nude, pregnant Kate Moss by British painter Lucian Freud, the sexualization of pregnancy embraces popular and celebrity culture in a single work. Freud’s painting of Moss, on one hand, attempts to change our view of Moss-as-celebrity. On the other, the work, as an exemplary 21st century painting of a pregnant nude, does nothing to subvert the trend of depicting normalized female subjects (slender and white), nor shield the sitter from the male gaze. A sex symbol and object of desire to begin with as a model for multi-national high fashion companies, Moss is once again presented as a sexual object. The only way by which Freud jars our expectations is in depicting Moss more plump than “normal” and giving her legs more prominence than her face, as would not typically be the case in a fashion spread.¹⁵ Having Moss recline in the traditional passive model position (Gustav Courbet’s *The Origin of the World* is the easily recognizable art historical reference), and by getting what would be considered a pornographic glimpse of her



Lucian Freud, *Nude Portrait 2002*, 2002

genitalia from a lower vantage point, rather than a frontal, high fashion nude photograph in which the actual female sex is still hidden between the legs or by a mound of pubic hair, Freud paints Moss in such a way that she is clearly meant to still be an object of the voyeuristic male gaze, and correspondingly, still a sexualized figure of desire. What is most striking about Freud's painting is that Moss doesn't appear to own or delight in this sexualizing. Her face lacks glamour. She looks tired if anything. One almost does not recognize her normally iconic facial features. In that regard, the viewer feels assured that what we see is fairly accurately what Moss looked like, or expressed, while posing for the painter. Nonetheless, this painting is paradigmatic of a 21st century shift towards viewing the pregnant body as an object of sexual desire—yet viewing it with a specifically male gaze.

Precisely because the nude pregnant body remains a site of conflict over representational control, it has become a landscape for potential subversion and positive reclamation of embodiment for female artists. This is even more the case because vestiges of the “woman as incubator/breeder” mentality persist in our culture. The mixed media artwork in *RIPE* by New York-based Australian artists Anonda Bell and Tara de la Garza, in addition to contemporary paintings by

American artists Debra Goertz and Lisa Yuskavage, elucidate the myriad positive strategies and approaches used by women artists working in the complex 21st century milieu.

One instance of positive reclamation of embodiment is the large-scale installation on paper, *Mary Toft and her much beloved children* (2010), by Anonda Bell, in *RIPE*. The genesis of this piece derived from research into the history of medicine and pregnancy, while the artist was herself pregnant. The desire to explore a poignant site of intersection between historical medical practices and attitudes towards pregnancy, ultimately finding voice in a story of maternal impression, was additionally fueled by reflections on her direct, personal experiences with conception, miscarriage, and fertility drugs. Her awareness of the medical establishment and drug industry complicity in determining public attitudes towards her own pregnancy, facilitating an outcome that for many people is effortless and occasionally undesired, created even further interest in exploring a historical subject not widely discussed in contemporary society. Stemming from an overarching artistic practice that engages conversations surrounding feminism, hysteria, and the conditions of interplay between female body and formal western medical practice, Bell is ultimately deeply invested in questioning the historical status quo.

In recent years Bell has worked predominantly in large-scale paper installations, in both public art and private gallery contexts. Her piece *Mary Toft* was crafted specifically for the exhibition site, but is a work in a state of constant revision. Exploiting the rich transformative qualities of installation works, she notes how this work may “exist again in another format at another site, [and may have] related yet different incarnations. In a sense the work doesn't have closure.”¹⁶ As part of Bell's practice of constructing new modes of representation for the female body and finding ways to reinstate women into histories from which they have been excluded, the physical scale of *Mary Toft*, a larger than life figure with crimson arms upstretched, glancing askance with ribcage exposed—and surrounded by hundreds of rabbits the size of dogs in shades of red, black and purple—assertively commands attention to Toft's presence and reinstates her in a context that honors her experience, rendering her story both visual and visceral.

RIPE coexhibitor Tara de la Garza's own pregnancy was also the impetus for her work. She champions powerful women who fight pregnancy stereotypes of fragility and angelic poise (mimicking the self-effacing Virgin Mother model). While pregnant, de la Garza became aware of the enormous strength she needed and, indeed, possessed to create life. She was not content to maintain the societal

conditioning of passively incubating with a divine glow. Her works grew out of a desire to confront the myths surrounding pregnancy by depicting a different reality. Two of de la Garza's pieces in *RIPE* focus on women in the last throes of gestation: Lucy Rupert performing a contemporary dance piece and Danyelle Berger maintaining a kickboxing training regime. “I was completely inspired - these are the women whom I relate to,” noted de la Garza.¹⁷ Her works visually exude power and dynamism, featuring pregnant women unafraid of expressing their powerful physical presence.

Moreover, de la Garza's choice of materials and subjects critiques the socio-political discourse that informs our understanding of pregnancy as a fragile period, worthy of great caution. As an artist, generally aware of the toxicity of art materials, she conscientiously chose



Tara de la Garza, *Kickboxing Series*, 2010

to avoid potentially harmful solvents, pigments, and sprays. Experimenting with watercolor, a previously foreign medium, she commented, “Watercolor is considered more of a marginal medium, so the fear that I would be marginalized as an artist because I chose to be a mother is also embodied in the choice of medium. What I found fascinating about watercolor is the lack of control or editing available, you need to release yourself to the mistakes that occur. This could also be a metaphor for the need to surrender to the changes occurring in your body.” Her watercolor series, *Listeria Lunch*, depicting foods pregnant women should avoid, serves as a strong reminder of the forces outside of women that act upon their lives, but particularly so during pregnancy, when their bodies become part of our culture's public and political discourse.

Debra Goertz, a Brooklyn-based painter, invigorates embodiment in contemporary painting by re-visioning the nude as genre. Her interest came from the realization that, although the female nude figures prominently in the canon of art history, there were few images of pregnant nudes. The pregnant nude, according to Goertz, was a figure difficult to fetishize with the male gaze and she sought to present a positive depiction of female nudity, a nude that was not initially perceived as a sex object. Goertz painted exclusively fellow painter and friend, Margaret Michaels. One aspect that Goertz emphasized

during our personal interview was her desire to celebrate the pregnant figure.¹⁸ When she was pregnant with her child, approximately thirty years ago, she personally experienced the pregnant body as hidden and shameful—“think mumu.” She wanted to show how the pregnant body could be sexy without being fetishized and she wanted to portray Michael's joy in being pregnant. “Everyone always talks about the pregnant ‘glow’ and how beautiful pregnant women are, yet I wasn't seeing anyone addressing that visually,” Goertz explained. In her painting *Olympia*, Goertz paints Michaels reclining casually on her couch with what appears to be intentionally constructed basic forms and colors on the floor around her. The use of primary colors for the pure, geometric forms (circle, cube) was, Goertz notes, serendipitous—their placement was there prior to her arrival. Goertz, however, very consciously named the painting after Edouard Manet's famously transgressive



Debra Goertz, *Olympia*, 2005

painting at the Musee D'Orsay in Paris, in which the reclining nude prostitute affronted 19th century Paris salon-goers by her whiteness and her confrontational gaze directly at the viewer. Goertz' *Olympia* exemplifies how women artists, like Bell and de la Garza, are continually taking representational control over pregnancy and nudity. All three artists subversively remove the shame from pregnancy by reclaiming their sitter's embodiment and in the case of *Olympia*, Goertz reclaims the self-contained "glow" along with it.

"There is a difference between the sexiness of a nude woman and the sexiness of a nude pregnant woman," claimed Goertz, indicating the values placed on women by male viewers. Since pregnancy transforms women into physical symbols of reproduction (not sex symbols or symbols of libidinal fulfillment for that end alone), males traditionally



Debra Goertz, *Untitled [Margaret Laughing]*, 2007

consider pregnant women unavailable; their gaze recoils in response to sensing someone else's "territory," a body already under "ownership." The perception that the female body when pregnant transforms into the private property of the husband is a central part of why Goertz sought to present a female nude that men would not find erotic—with the exception of the husband—and to consciously avoid painting with her own gaze becoming a male gaze. She sought to both illuminate and subvert patriarchal perspective.

"Laughter, ...[is] a metaphor for transformation, for thinking about cultural change [in addition to] ...providing libidinal gratification..."¹⁹ Discussing this excerpt from *The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* by Jo Anna Isaak, Goertz was struck by how one untitled work actually captured Michaels laughing, as she sits full term with her overwhelming stomach torpedoing out at the viewer. Michaels is painted as joyful in her pregnancy, the end result of enjoying intercourse and, it would follow, her own female sexuality. The libidinal pleasure so evident in the painting seemed to perfectly underscore the notion that painted laughter just might be capable of shifting normative thoughts on pregnancy, by visibly exposing the sexual delight in embodiment. Throughout the *RIPE* exhibition as well as Goertz' series, the intent to sentimentalize pregnancy or glorify it is remarkably absent. Rather,

looking at the works by de la Garza and Goertz specifically, the strategy of *jouissance* dominates, a strategy defined by Isaak as the "enjoyment, pleasure, particularly sexual pleasure or pleasure derived from the body."²⁰

Lisa Yuskavage's works are also celebratory of female fecundity and delight in the authority of one's sexuality. In her recent paintings, depicting pregnant women with bellies that resemble the bottoms of giant fruits—a reflection of the surrounding still life—Yuskavage liberally associates female sexuality and genitalia with the *nature morte* genre. Frequently, Yuskavage's women are portrayed as cartoonish bimbos or sexpots, with bulbously stylized eyes, breasts and buttocks. Her figures simultaneously invite and repulse the male gaze, playing with fetishized stereotypes held by western viewers.

In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, author Susan Bordo remarks that the female body is frequently accused of "speaking for itself," even if the woman is silent.²¹ Yuskavage's pregnant women on



Lisa Yuskavage, *Brood*, 2005-6

couches are enticing, yet emotionally unavailable, allowing their bodies to "speak for themselves." Historic portrayals of woman-as-evil-temptress reinforce the idea that "the arousal of [men's] desires is the result of female manipulation"—and therefore the woman's fault. In the sexy yet authoritative paintings by de la Garza, Goertz and Yuskavage, in which the body is nude and silent, we are led to wonder: if the body speaks for itself, what is the contemporary pregnant body saying? Bordo notes that we are all vulnerable to the images and ideologies of our culture; since "women and girls frequently internalize this ideology ... guilt festers into unease without femaleness, shame over our bodies, and self-loathing."²² The pregnant bodies painted by de la Garza, Goertz and Yuskavage speak to the contrary; by employing the strategy of *jouissance*, which expresses delight in a sexual "femaleness" and the joy, not "unease," of pregnant embodiment, these artists forcefully challenge the cultural penchant towards bodily "shame" and "self-loathing."

Paintings of the cumbersome nature of locomotion when pregnant, movement in a body that is beyond its normal scale and form, a body that is out of the embodied figure's control, are conspicuously absent from 21st century pregnant nude works. All other instances looked at in this essay show pregnancy through a static reclining,

sitting or standing figure. Tara de la Garza's gestural, multilayered projection painting, *Lucy Rupert, 9 Months Pregnant*, and the multiple viewpoints depicted over multiple paintings in her *Kickboxing Series* are two rare examples of painting pregnant women in motion. Goertz' small panel study of Michaels standing up is another. The physical "deformation" or "dismorphic" nature of the nude pregnant body is one that is carefully studied and rendered in Goertz's monochromatic underpainting. When we witness in person the awkward attempts of a woman in the third trimester trying to sit down or stand back up, we are viscerally reminded of the extra physical weight a pregnant woman carries due to her embodiment—actually carrying another being around inside herself— and the burden of being a physique that is not valued in contemporary society's ideal of physical beauty. De la Garza challenges the awkwardness with bold representations of



Tara de la Garza, *Lucy Rupert, 9 Months Pregnant*, 2010

pregnant women in highly active forms of physical expression.

21st century shifts in painting processes and reference materials due to contemporary technology are significant, contrasting significantly with the unmediated works of 20th century painters Modersohn-Becker, Kahlo, and Neel. Although Goertz' paintings are lovingly intimate, the mediating device of the video camera with which she gathers footage—later painting from extracted video stills—renders the paintings more public because a mechanical voyeur was also present during the shoot. De la Garza's process of painting from video is similar, though she works from rolling footage. Her paintings reveal this process through fluid gestures and sequential imagery, layered and juxtaposed. In both cases however, there is a greater sense of the pregnant subject anticipating an audience. These women express not only approval but also proud delight in the display of their pregnancy, complicit collaborators in transcending normalizing 21st century trends. The happiness and exuberant sexuality that is publically embraced is a clear break from historical precedence.

Thanks to the artists in *RIPE* and works by contemporary female artists, here exemplified by the oeuvres of Debra Goertz and Lisa Yuskavage, subversive and critical gestures are shifting us away

from overtly homogenizing perspectives about pregnancy in art: "...the very nature of contemporary art has been changed because of the power of the persistent critique that women [such as these] have brought to bear on key assumptions about art, art history, and the role of the artist."²³

RIPE is not only a thoughtful visual critique of historical assumptions, but it underscores the contemporary interest in expansive approaches towards process, materials, and socio-political discourse, each a fundamental part of the richness of artistic expression. The ongoing importance of paper as a support in both Anonda Bell's mixed media cut-outs and Tara de la Garza's paintings, as well as the inclusion of video and installation, exemplifies the way in which new media continues to impact our attitudes towards painting and the traditions it embodies. Daniel Richter, a German painter, reminds us that "[p]ainting is the most sluggish, unhurried and tradition-conscious medium, and the most difficult to broaden."²⁴ Author Jo Anna Isaak agrees, emphasizing the importance of these new forms of artistic production, stating that, "what is most encouraging about the recent influx of women [artists] into the mainstream is the changes they have made in art production itself and how successful they have been in addressing a far larger audience than that which frequents galleries and

museums."²⁵ *RIPE* is a case for the liberating possibilities of new materials, allowing women and the representation of women and their bodies to transcend the patriarchal history of representation.

The contemporary shift away from painting as the medium of choice was echoed by two of the speakers at the *Feminisms Without Borders Symposium: Local | Global Feminisms* panel, held in conjunction with the opening of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum in March 2007. First, Melissa Chiu, Museum Director and Curator of Contemporary Asian and Asian-American Art at the Asia Society, New York City, noted that the Chinese women artists discussed in her presentation were consistently working in photography and video, as it was for them "an easier way to break free from the painting canon." Second, panel moderator Maura Reilly discussed anti-globalist contemporary feminist art practices as forms of "infiltration" because the artists work in a Foucauldian manner: within the system or spaces that bind them. Reilly further pointed out that since much of contemporary art engages identity politics, a preference for "phenomenal mediums [such as photography and video] to explore identity" could be considered a response to such anti-globalist politics.²⁶

Both *RIPE: Conception & Perception*, and the *Global Feminisms* exhibit are timely contemporary examples of complex responses to shifting trends in depicting the pregnant nude in art. They visually illuminate the idea that women's experiences are myriad. Investigating the historical shift in pregnant nude representation highlights this position. It also champions artistic practices that explore new forms of visual expression, critically considering the diversity of experience of all individuals. Ultimately, this historical overview reveals the ongoing efforts of women artists to reclaim their own bodies, their own experiences, and their own sexualities, from the grip of historical determinism because "...we have come to realize how one woman's work or words lead onto or enables the next woman to work or speak."²⁷ This essay, this book, and this exhibition embody the work of women who seek to join and further a very fundamental conversation about gender and the socio-political systems that inform our essential dignity as human beings.

ENDNOTES

- 1 JoAnna Isaak, *Feminism & Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* (London: Routledge, 1996) 59.
- 2 Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 142.
- 3 Isaak, *Feminism*, 140.
- 4 Ibid, 140.
- 5 Edward Snow, *A Study of Vermeer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 138.
- 6 Karin Leonhard, "Vermeer's Pregnant Women: On Human Generation and Pictorial Representation," *Art History* 25, no. 3 (June 2002): 293-318.
- 7 Leonhard, "Vermeer," 302.
- 8 Ibid, 302.
- 9 Ibid, 310-11.
- 10 Isaak, *Feminism*, 140.
- 11 Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, artists and the body* (London: Routledge, 1996) 30.
- 12 Ibid., 20.
- 13 Grosenick & Burkhard Riemschneider, ed., *Art Now: Artists at the Rise of the New Millennium* (Taschen: Köln Germany, 2005) 225.
- 14 Betterton, *An Intimate Distance*, 33.
- 15 Martin Gayford, "A Model Painter," *The Telegraph (online)* <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3582104/A-model-painter.htm> 31 August 2002.
- 16 Anonda Bell, Artist, New York, e-mail interview by the author, 15 November 2010.
- 17 Tara de la Garza, Artist, New York, e-mail interview by the author, 13 November 2010.
- 18 Debra Goertz, Artist, Brooklyn, personal interview by the author, 18 March 2007.
- 19 Isaak, *Feminism*, 5.
- 20 Ibid., 2.
- 21 Bordo, *Unbearable*.

- 22 Ibid., 8.
- 23 Isaak, *Feminism*, 2.
- 24 Grosenick, *Art Now*, 270.
- 25 Ibid., 4.
- 26 Melissa Chiu, Maura Reilly, "Local|Global Feminisms," lecture at Brooklyn Museum, *Feminisms Without Borders Symposium*, 31 March 2007.
- 27 Isaak, *Feminism*, 9.

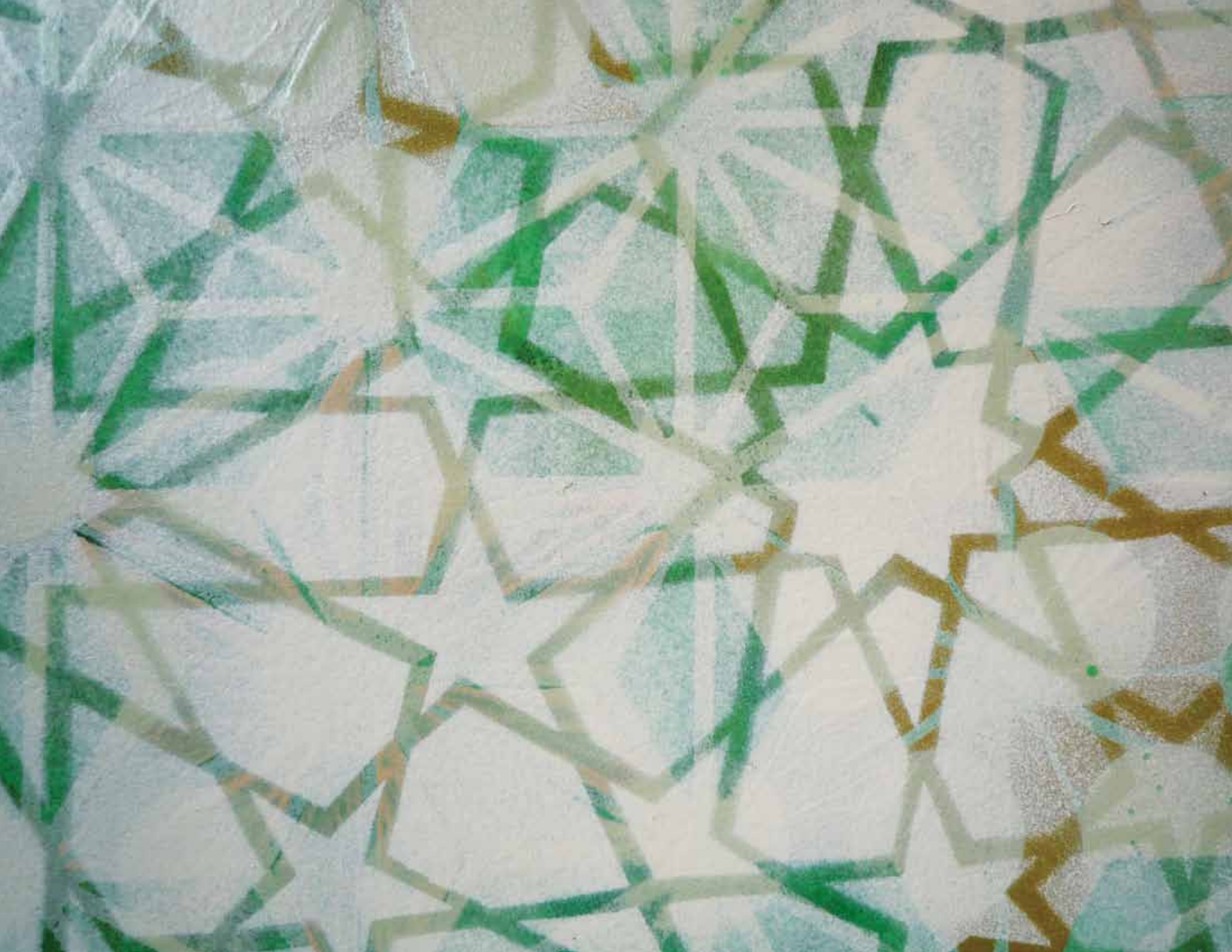
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Anonda Bell
**MARY TOFT AND HER MUCH
BELOVED CHILDREN**

As a child I had many pet rabbits, but one in particular comes to mind. This female rabbit spent many hours of intense and seemingly strategic activity focused on creating a nest for her intended offspring. This small home for bunnies that never were was a haphazard conflation of found materials forming a shell that was then tenderly lined with much teeth-tugged fur from her body. When it came to be my time to create offspring it was with much dismay that, contrary to common assumptions, I found I could not breed like a rabbit, but instead had to indulge in treatment from both the east and west to realize my son Oliver. As my body endured the imposition of various forms of diagnostic testing and seemingly endless imaging technologies, I struggled to rationalize this unexpected turn of events. This inspired me to read widely on the history of medicine and the body and it was through this avenue I became aware of the story of Mary Toft.

From Guildford comes a strange but well-attested Piece of News. That a poor Woman who lives at Godalmin [sic], near that Town, was about a Month past delivered by Mr. John Howard, an Eminent Surgeon and Man-Midwife, of a creature resembling a Rabbit but whose Heart and Lungs grew without [outside] its Belly, about 14 Days since she was delivered by the same Person, of a perfect Rabbit: and in a few Days after of 4 more; and on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, the 4th, 5th, and 6th instant, of one in each day: in all nine, they died all in bringing into the World. The woman hath made Oath, that two Months ago, being working in a Field with other Women, they put up a Rabbit, who running from them, they pursued it, but to no Purpose: This created in her such a Longing to it, that she (being with Child) was taken ill and miscarried, and from that Time she hath not been able to avoid thinking of Rabbits. People after all, differ much in their Opinion about this Matter, some looking upon them as great Curiosities, fit to be presented to the Royal Society, etc. others are angry at the Account, and say, that if it be a Fact, a Veil should be drawn over it, as an Imperfection in human Nature.

Weekly Journal, 19 November 1726, as cited in Haslam, Fiona (1996), *From Hogarth to Rowlandson: medicine in art in eighteenth-century Britain*, Liverpool University Press, p.30-31.



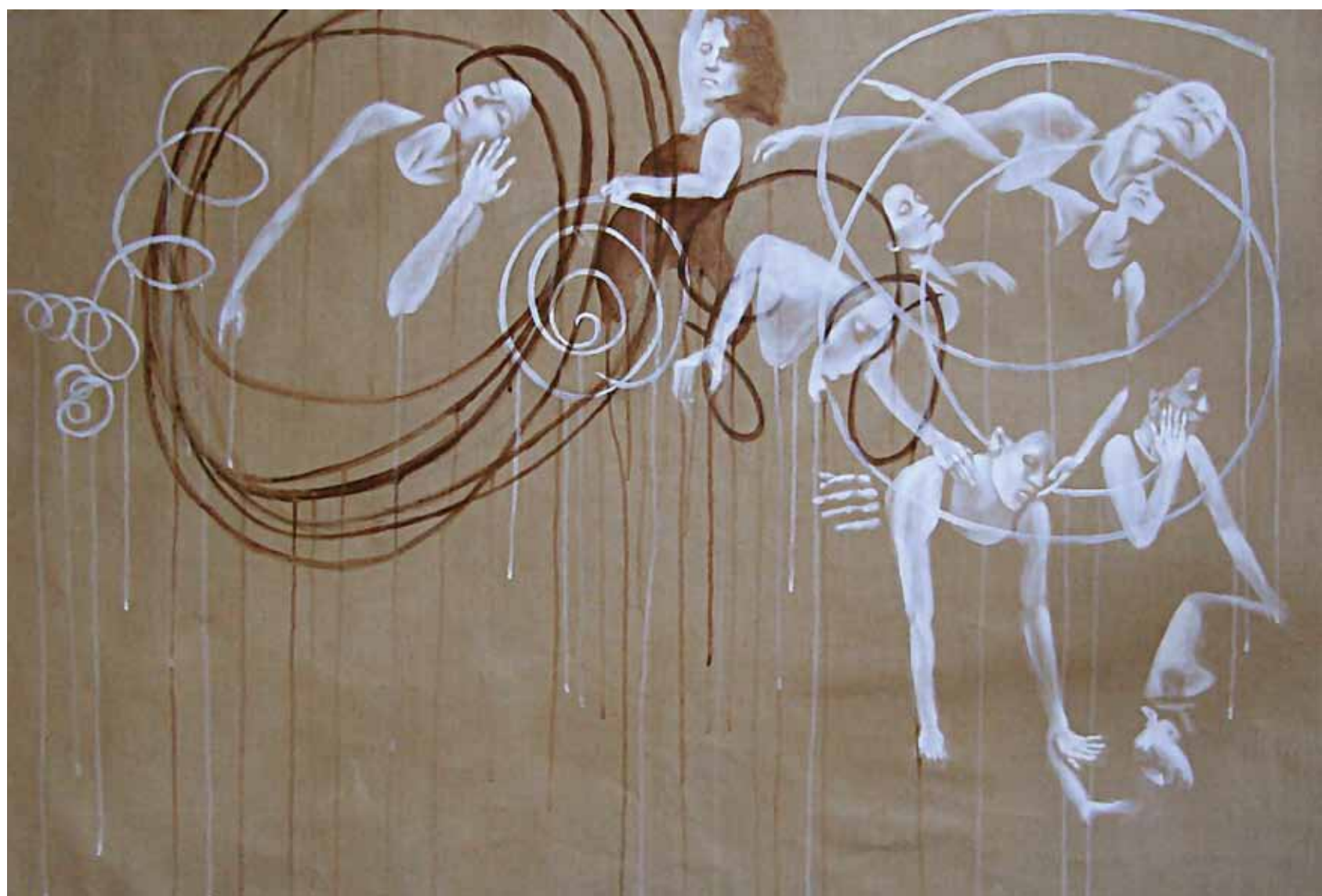












Tara de la Garza,
Lucy Rupert, 9 Months Pregnant
2010, acrylic on belgium linen and
1 channel video projection 4.34 min

Tara de la Garza is interested in depicting women who, like herself, do not conform to the notion of the passive and nurturing female, one whose exclusive raison d'être is to procreate. In this piece, de la Garza was inspired by the strength and grace of the dancer Lucy Rupert during a period of pregnancy when traditionally women are expected to 'convalesce'.

The piece creates new narratives using an interplay of film and painting. The field of view seems to change as the dancer recedes and comes forward when she momentarily lines up with the drawn figures as a tumultuous, energetic vision.

The video depiction of this projection painting can be viewed on the artists' website, taradelagarza.com.



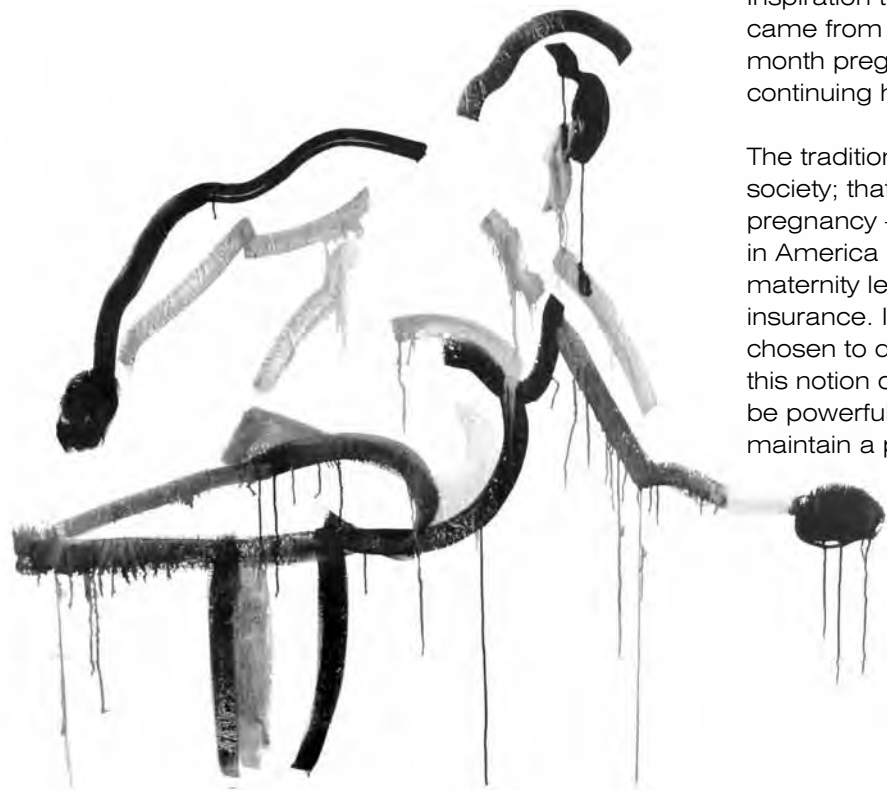


Tara de la Garza,
Conception 2010,
Sumi-e ink on Japanese rice paper, 60ft

This ephemeral work is a 60 ft scroll of Japanese rice paper painted in a meditative state with a recurring symbol of fertility. The symbol is distilled from various cultural/historical symbols of fertility such as the Venus of Willendorf, the circle (of life) and the Celtic spiral. The sculptural form was itself a spiral and was sectioned and distributed during the exhibition as lucky talisman to people who wished to conceive.

“Before I fell pregnant I started to think about all of the women that I know who have struggled with conception. I am interested in superstition and how to instill my seemingly innate luck into an object that I could distribute to others. I wanted to create a symbol that embodied the essence of fertility. I began to paint this symbol with Sumi-e ink on Japanese rice paper. Then I fell pregnant...”





Tara de la Garza,
Kickboxing Series 2010,
sumi-e ink on builder's paper

Like the mother who miraculously gains the strength to lift the car off the trapped child, during her pregnancy de la Garza felt defensive and even aggressive towards people who were a perceived threat, this is perhaps a hormonal sensation, but mostly a byproduct of living in New York! Inspiration to do this series of drawings came from watching footage of the 9 month pregnant Danyelle Weiss Berger continuing her practice in kickboxing.

The traditional idea is still at play in society; that women are 'disabled' during pregnancy - in fact in many corporations in America a woman doesn't take maternity leave, but is put on disability insurance. In this series, the artist has chosen to depict women who transcend this notion of fragility by continuing to be powerful, vital human beings, who maintain a physical practice.



Tara de la Garza,
Listeria Lunch Series 2010, watercolor
and ink on paper. 12 x 16 in. each (9)

Whilst pregnant, de la Garza became acutely aware of her perceived role in society. Everyone had an opinion about how a pregnant woman should behave, how she should treat your body and what she should ingest. This series is a depiction of all the foods the artist was advised to stay away from, mixed with a texture of listeria bacteria, salmonella and such.

Steering away from toxic materials during her gestational period, de la Garza experimented with the medium of watercolor, which proved to be an interesting challenge—this is a medium where mistakes cannot be undone she discovered the need to surrender to the serendipity of the mark.











Tara de la Garza

EDUCATION

2006
Bachelor of Fine Arts
Curtin University, Western Australia

2003
Design for Industry
CMC School of Art and Design, Western Australia

1990 - 1993
Diploma of Media Design, Film and Television
CMC School of Art and Design, Western Australia

1989
Preliminary Certificate of Art and Design
CMC School of Art and Design, Western Australia

AWARDS

PICA 'Gold' Award
John Curtin Museum
Environmental Design

FTI Young Filmmaker of the Year
"Fruffin"

RESIDENCIES

2008
Gallery Residency, Agni Gallery, NYC

EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 2 person show 'RIPE: Conception & Perception', Gallery Aferro, NJ
Group Show 'Fremantle Festival' Moores Contemporary Art, Australia
Group Show 'the possibility of a painting', Chelsea Hotel Gallery Suite, NYC
- 2009 Group Show 'No Longer Empty' storefronts at Chelsea Hotel, NYC
Group Show 'Figment' Governor's Island NYC
'good morning' intervention, streets of NYC
Group Show 'World Of Imagination Vol.2', APW Gallery, NYC
- 2008 Solo Show, Installation 'The Clubhouse' Agni Gallery, NYC
Group Show, Umbrella Arts, NYC
Open Studio, Performance "Life is too short NOT to stuff a mushroom"
121 Ludlow Collective, NYC
Group Show 'Movement, Color and Light', Reflect Arts, NYC
Group Show 'Dada Art Fair' Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
- 2007 Group Show 'Mail/Art Global Collaborative Massive" ABC No Rio, NYC
Artomat, art dispensing machine, Chicago Art Institute
'please' intervention, streets of NYC

CURATORIAL

- 2010 'the possibility of a painting', Chelsea Hotel Gallery Suite, NYC (curator)
- 2009 'No Longer Empty: RePurpose' storefront at East Broadway, NYC (curator)
'No Longer Empty' storefronts at Chelsea Hotel, NYC (associate curator)
'No Longer Empty' storefronts at Caledonia, NYC (associate curator)
Group Show 'Figment' Governor's Island NYC (curator: Mail/Art)
- 2007 Group Show 'Mail/Art Global Collaborative Massive" ABC No Rio, NYC (curator)



Tara de la Garza was born in Ireland and grew up in Australia. She now lives and works in New York City. She studied Film and Television, winning a Young Filmmaker award, and established an award-winning graphic design agency. She studied a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Curtin University in Western Australia.

Tara's conceptual work involves a combination of design, curatorial practice, photography, installation and painting. Her solo projects include building a giant collaborative clubhouse and a photographic project where she photographs people BY THE LIGHT of their cell phones. Currently she is working on creating new narratives using an interplay of film and painting.

In her practice, Tara wrestles with the desire to be authentic versus the impulse to be a complete charlatan; her work often represents a mixture of the two.

Tara works extensively with the public arts initiative No Longer Empty and currently runs her own art space 2|ONE|TWO|PROJECTS where she initiates art projects with other NYC artists. She is also the instigator of a global mail/ art collaborative.

Tara is interested in the serendipity that occurs when one is open to change.

www.taradelagarza.com

Anonda Bell

EDUCATION

2006
Masters in Fine Arts
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

1996
Post Graduate Diploma in Fine Arts
University of Melbourne, Australia

1995
Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting & Printmaking)
R.M.I.T. University, Melbourne, Australia

1991
Bachelor of Arts (Psychology & English)
University of Melbourne, Australia

AWARDS

2008
Lower Manhattan Cultural Council: Community Arts Fund Grant, Green Spaces: Project to increase awareness of community gardens in East Harlem, New York, U.S.A.

2003
Australia Council for the Arts, Professional Development Funding for Placement in International Program at Museum of Modern Art, New York

1997
University of Melbourne Post Grad Exhibition Award

RESIDENCIES

2008/2009
Awarded Studio Residency at Gallery Aferro, Newark, New Jersey, U.S.A.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

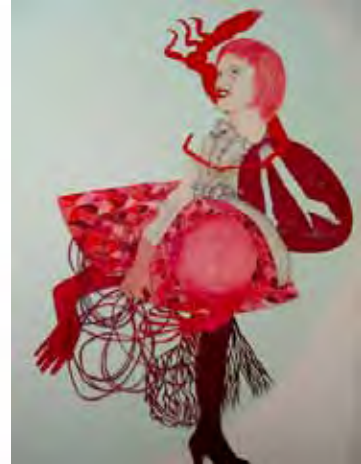
2007 Hysteria - Monash University Project Space, Melbourne, Australia
1994 Chaos Theory - No Vacancy Exhibition Space, Melbourne, Australia
1994 Interference - Spencer Street Train Station Platform Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010 *RIPE: Conception & Perception*, Gallery Aferro, Newark, New Jersey, U.S.A.
2009 *City Without Walls*, *ArtReach XVII* Newark, New Jersey
Figment Festival, Governors Island, New York (as part of the Mail Art Collaborative)
OMG Gallery Aferro Fundraising Auction, Newark, New Jersey
Wish you were here 8: Annual Postcard Exhibition Air Gallery, Brooklyn
Theatre Town, NJIT School of Architecture Gallery, Newark, New Jersey
2008 *Green Spaces* - Public Art Project in East Harlem, New York City, U.S.A
Annual Invitational, Redsaw Gallery, Newark, New Jersey.
Ides of March - ABC NO RIO Gallery, New York, U.S.A. (Mail Art Collaborative)
1997 *Linden Post-Post Card Exhibition*, Melbourne, Australia
Post Graduate Exhibition University of Melbourne, Australia
1996 *Gryph-on-Line* (Inaugural web gallery for the University of Melbourne)
Silicon Psyche, George Paton Gallery, University of Melbourne, Australia
1995 *William Patterson University Women's Day Exhibition*, New Jersey
Ben Shahn Gallery, *William Patterson Student Exhibition*, New Jersey
Printmaking Council of New Jersey *Student Exhibition*
Paradigm R.M.I.T. University Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
RMIT Graduate Exhibition, R.M.I.T. University Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
1987 Loreto Mandeville Hall *Student Exhibition*, Melbourne, Australia
1983 National Gallery of Victoria *Student Ceramics Exhibition*, Melbourne, Australia

PUBLICATIONS

2010 Exhibition catalogue "RIPE: Conception & Perception", Gallery Aferro, Newark, NJ
2009 Exhibition catalogue "ArtReach XVII" City Without Walls, Newark, NJ
1996 Exhibition catalogue "Silicon Psyche", George Paton Gallery, University of Melbourne, Australia
1995 Exhibition catalogue "RMIT Graduate Exhibition", R.M.I.T. University Gallery, Melbourne, Australia



Anonda Bell is a New York City based mixed media artist. To date, all of her education was completed in Melbourne, Australia. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts from Monash University, a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne (Psychology & English), and a Post Graduate Diploma from the University of Melbourne and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from R.M.I.T. University (Painting and Printmaking).

For more than a decade Bell has worked in the not-for-profit arts sector as a curator. She has worked at Bendigo Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Victoria in Australia. In the United States she currently works as the Director and Curator of the Paul Robeson Galleries at Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey. Bell has had solo shows in Australia and has participated in numerous group exhibitions in both Australia and the United States.

www.anondabell.com

Manon Slome

Manon Slome (PhD) is the curator and founder of the public art initiative NO LONGER EMPTY. NLE orchestrates public art exhibitions in vacated storefronts and properties in New York City. Conceived as an artistic response to the economic recession, NLE aims to revitalize empty spaces and areas around the venues by bringing thoughtful, high-caliber art installations with accompanying programs to the public.

From 2002 to June 2008 Slome was the Chief Curator of the Chelsea Art Museum in New York. During that time, she curated and oversaw a program of some forty exhibitions, symposia and museum publications as well as monographs and scholarly essays. Ms. Slome became highly involved with the Israeli art scene during her research for the exhibition, *Such Stuff as Dreams are Made on* (2005), and has followed and researched the Israeli scene for the last three years.

Prior to the CAM, Slome worked as a curator at the Guggenheim Museum for seven years and was a holder of a Helena Rubinstein curatorial fellowship at the Whitney Independent Study program. She has written widely on contemporary art and has recently completed *The Aesthetics of Terror*, published by Charta Press.

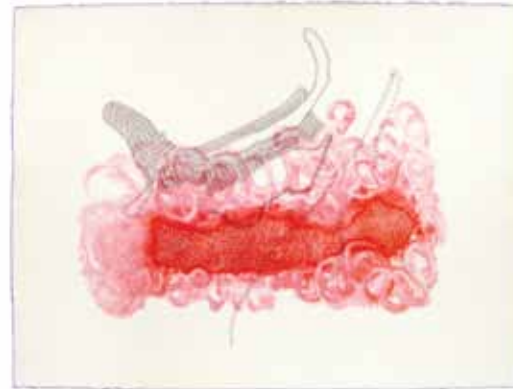
Meghan Keane

Meghan Keane is a Brooklyn-based artist and writer. Her work explores visual dialogue by translating a singular form between different media. She exhibits widely and her works can be found in private collections throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe and Japan.

Keane received her studio art B.F.A. from Brooklyn College in 2007. Formative training includes fashion design and architecture at Parsons School of Design, drawing at Musée du Louvre, and painting at USFQ, Ecuador. While at Brooklyn College, she was awarded the prestigious Furman Travel Stipend for sculpture studies in Paris and was a three time recipient of the Shaw Award for Painting. Keane received a Vermont Studio Center artist grant and residency in 2008. Currently, Keane is a visiting alumni artist at the Brooklyn College Art Department Printshop and a teaching artist at the Kentler International Drawing Space.

Keane's first international solo show was in 2008 at Galerija DLUM in Solvenia, featuring hair on canvas. Recent shows include solo exhibition PROJECT NIHON / sustainable art travel, at Design Festa Gallery, Tokyo, Japan, a three-person exhibition at Ileana Viteri Galeria de Arte, Quito (Fall 2010) and group show Pillow Pageant, A.I.R. gallery and DUMBO Art Festival

<http://meghankeanestudio.com>
<http://projectnihon.com>



Meghan Keane
Stitch and Bitch Cesarean, 2009
from the Internal Medicine Series
30 x 22 inches
monoprint-drawing on paper

GALLERY AFERRO

73 MARKET ST. NEWARK NJ
WWW.AFERRO.ORG



Gallery Aferro is an alternative arts space founded in 2003 by artists Evonne M. Davis and Emma Wilcox, offering engaging exhibitions that connect new audiences with contemporary issues and exciting experiences in a welcoming environment that builds community and reflects a positive image of Newark.

The mission of Gallery Aferro is to bring cultural education and aesthetic engagement with contemporary issues to all people equally, and to create an environment where emerging artists can gather and share physical and intellectual resources. We are working towards an arts community that is available to everyone, without sacrificing standards or quality of experience.

We offer 12 exhibitions a year in four distinct spaces, featuring local, national and international emerging artists and a wide variety of educational cultural events such as interactive public art projects, performances, talks, on and off-site film screenings and portfolio reviews. Gallery Aferro's year-round residency program serves artists by offering studios to continue or create ambitious work.

www.aferro.org

Gallery Aferro would like to thank StepOn to Design LLC for ongoing support of the exhibitions.

