



No more bad girls?



KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE
Vienna, May 7 – June 11, 2010

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No more bad girls?

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Artists

Arahmaiani

Patty Chang

Nezaket Ekici

Judith Fegerl

Regina José Galindo

Chitra Ganesh

Mathilde ter Heijne

Maryam Jafri

Agnes Janich

Nadia Khawaja

Elena Kovylyna

Nomusa Makhubu

Elodie Pong

Larissa Sansour

Ene-Liis Semper

Andrea Sunder-Plassmann

Newsha Tavakolian

Curators

Kathrin Becker and Claudia Marion Stemberger

KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE

Framework Programme KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE

May 8, 2010, 2pm: Panel discussion with Edith Futscher
June 10, 2010, 7pm: Panel discussion with Nora Sternfeld

Catalogue

Edited by Claudia Marion Stemberger and Kathrin Becker,
84 pages, contextual essays in English and German,
numerous colour photographs.
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Claudia Marion Stemberger (Germany/Austria)

Art historian, lives and works as independent curator and writer in Vienna and Berlin. She is graduating from the Department of Art History at the University of Vienna with a Master's degree. Previously she completed her Master of Advanced Studies in Arts Management at the International Centre for Culture and Management in Salzburg; and received her Doctor of Medicine from the Universities of Graz, Leipzig and Barcelona.

Research interest: art theory relating to performance art and photography. Publishes on contemporary art in exhibition catalogues, international art magazines and peer reviewed articles in scientific magazines. Recent publication: 'Schwindel der Postmoderne. Zufall und Kontingenzpotenzierung in Performance und Film', *ilinx – Berliner Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft. Nr 1, Wirbel, Ströme, Turbulenzen*, edited by Anna Echterhölter et al., Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2010 (in collaboration with Isabel Exner).

Curatorial Residency, Bag Factory, Johannesburg, 2010; grant by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research, 2009; scholarship by the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna, IFK_Akademie, 2008. Participated in numerous conferences, such as South African Visual Arts Historians, Pretoria; Performance Studies International, Zagreb; and German Dramaturgic Society, Heidelberg.
www.artandtheory.net

Kathrin Becker (Germany)

Art historian, curator and writer based in Berlin, currently working as head of Video-Forum at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein n.b.k. Studied Art History and Slavonic Studies at the Universities of Bochum, Moscow, St. Petersburg (MA). In 2009 she received a research grant from Goethe-Institute Munich to travel to Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Selected curatorial concepts and publications, amongst others: *Gruppenbild 1: Karolin Meunier*, n.b.k. 2010; *Video Of The Month 1: Prilla Tania*, n.b.k. Video-Forum 2010; *Art and Publicity. 40 Years n.b.k.*, n.b.k. 2009; *Excuse me, are you famous?*, Invaliden1, Berlin 2009; *Conceptual Art From California*, n.b.k. 2008; *My favourite pastime | Vienna*, Kunsthalle Wien (ursula blickle videolounge) 2008; *Artur Zmijewski. Selected works*, n.b.k. 2007; *Masculinities*, n.b.k. 2005; *displaced. Interventionen / Interaktionen im öffentlichen Raum*, Berlin 2005; *Matthias Müller: Album*, n.b.k. 2004; *Louise Bourgeois. Intimate Abstractions*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin 2003; *Remake Berlin*, Fotomuseum Winterthur et al. 2000/01; *Can you hear me? 2nd Ars Baltica Triennial of Photographic Art*, Stadtgalerie im Sophienhof, Kiel et al. 1999/2001.

www.k-becker.org

Curatorial Statement

The exhibition *No more bad girls?* opens up perspectives on contemporary women's art praxis. These female artists no longer exclusively reflect on gender binarisms, but rather at the same time also reveal multiple identity categories such as life situations of migrants, social status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation or ethnic origin. With a critical awareness of a hegemonic, white, canonic feminism, the exhibition uncovers alternative cartographies of a deconstruction of culturally-informed stereotypes of femininity which refer to heterogeneous and complex spatial contexts as "locational affinities". As Marsha Meskimmon puts it, critical cartographies "are maps of affinity rather than influence, and they recognize the possibility of multiple networks of relations between 'feminisms', art, and ideas across a global geopolitical sphere."

Newsha Tavakolian (Iran)

lives and works in Tehran



The Day I Became a Woman (2009)
Series of 11 c-prints, 70 x 100 cm each
Courtesy Aaran Gallery, Tehran

In her series of photographs *The Day I Became a Woman* (2009), Newsha Tavakolian allows visual access to a ceremony in Iran that is held when nine-year-old girls first wear the chador. In contrast to the projected images of the apparently sad and lonely everyday lives of Iranian women, Tavakolian's work provides sensitive and differentiated insights into the private lives of young girls. Simultaneously, *The Day I Became a Woman* questions the function such public (and even private) displays of female life play within this specific system of representation.

Andrea Sunder-Plassmann (Germany)

lives and works in Berlin and Alfter



Apornithosis / Verwandlung in einen Vogel (2003/2010)

Colour, sound, 10:00 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Andrea Sunder-Plassmann questions the feminine stylization of the exotic, when, in her video, *Apornithosis / Verwandlung in einen Vogel* (2003/2010), she is made up as an Indonesian bride. With this, the artist evokes the Western regimen of “the gaze” in the form of a Neo-Colonialist position, which she herself exemplifies with a longing for authenticity. This “cross-cultural dressing” highlights how colonial and erotic desires of an idealized femininity are anchored in the collective memory even in this day and age.

Arahmaiani (Indonesia)

lives and works in Yogyakarta



I Love You (2009)

Installation/textile, 400 x 800 x 30 cm, Courtesy of the artist

In her huge bag-type sculpture, *I Love You* (2009), Arahmaiani visualizes the stereotypes and negative encodings with which Arabic characters have come to be fraught, especially in a post-9/11 world. The artist challenges the perception and interpretation of the “Jawi” letters (the Malay form of Arabic script) sown from fabric which seems to oscillate iridescently between a transcultural urge for contact and its repudiation. In another twist of meaning, the look and feel of the fabric questions the semantics of surfaces of the (female) body.

Patty Chang (USA)

lives and works in New York

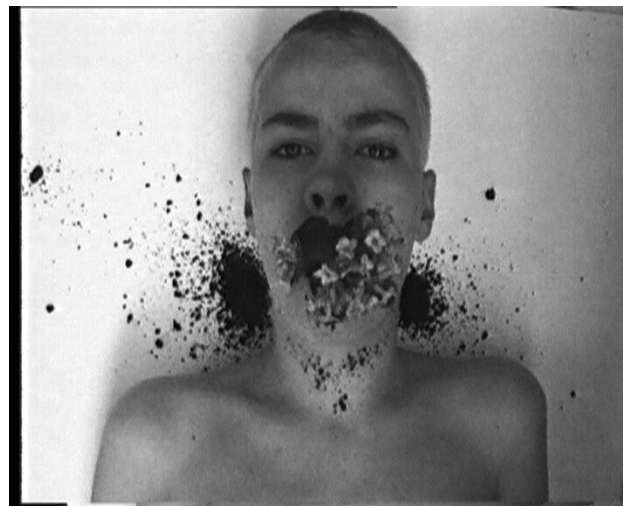


Melons (At a Loss) 1998,
Colour, sound, 3:44 min., Courtesy Galerie ARRATIA, BEER, Berlin

In her video performance, *Melons, At a Loss* (1998), Patty Chang addresses her aunt's lethal breast cancer, while at the same time hinting at – besides inferring Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) – the connections between the female body, nature, and fertility, which have never been perfectly tamed [nor acquiesced]. In this piece, the artist slices through one of two cantaloupes dangling from her x-large bra and, then, spoons pulp into her mouth. The artist is perfectly conscious of the fact that her Asian physiognomy is present in the video.

Ene-Liis Semper (Estonia)

lives and works in Tallinn



Oasis (1999)
Colour, sound, 3:05 min., loop
Courtesy Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna

Vociferously, Ene-Liis Semper rejects connections with radical positions of "Second Wave Feminism" and refuses a universalised appropriation by art critics. Against this, she claims a nuanced way of handling the provocative radicalism of her works dealing with the visualisation of violence. When, in her performative video work, *Oasis* (1999), a man's hand shovels dirt into the mouth of the artist before planting a primrose in it, this ostensibly everyday act of gardening leaves the artist quasi-muzzled.

Larissa Sansour (Palestine/Denmark/UK)
lives and works in London and Copenhagen



A Space Exodus (2009)
Colour, sound, 5:24 min.
Photos: Soren Lind, Cinematographer: Niels A. Hansen, Courtesy Gallery La B.A.N.K, Paris

In her video, *A Space Exodus* (2009), Larissa Sansour pursues an ironic play with geopolitical and gender-specific constellations of power, so far as no woman, and especially not a Palestinian woman, has ever set foot on the moon. Sansour's ironic pot shot at the history of great male heroes and Western hegemonies updates an historic event with a critical hint at the situation in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories. With an almost eye-winking sarcasm, she states: "A small step for a Palestinian, a giant leap for mankind."

Nezaket Ekici (Turkey/Germany)
lives and works in Berlin and Stuttgart

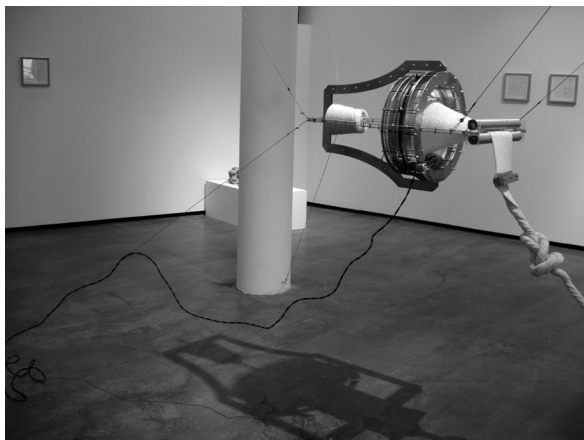


Veiling and Reveiling (2009)
Colour, sound, 24:17 min., loop, Camera, cut and video stills by Branka Pavlovic
Courtesy of the artist

In her video performance, *Veiling and Reveiling* (2009), Nezaket Ekici caricatures clichés of projections onto other cultural spheres as her ambiguous, reversed-gaze reveals how identity and representation are interwoven mutually. On the one hand, the chador that the artist wears represents, in the West, a symbol of the suppression of women; while, on the other, Ekici's masquerading questions how, in the Islamic societies, stereotypical clichés of Western women are also imagined – as always being sexy, dressed in lingerie, and wearing glaring make up.

Judith Fegerl (Austria)

lives and works in Vienna and New York



Galatean Heritage (2007)
Installation, self-growing sculpture, 500 x 200 x 100 cm, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

In her machine sculpture, *Galatean Heritage* (2007), Judith Fegerl triggers questions of authorship and reproduction. Fegerl's hybrid aesthetics make clear how female artists today develop their own forms of representation, beyond passively-connoted modes of production. Within the context of the (male-produced) pictures of time-transcending artist heroes, the artist herself refuses to endorse such male longings for self-reproduction, which has a long history of connotation within the art circuit as such "bachelor machine(s)" by Marcel Duchamp and Harald Szeemann.

Elodie Pong (Switzerland)

lives and works in Zurich



Je suis une bombe (2006)
Colour, sound, 6:12 min., loop
Courtesy of the artist and Freymond-Guth & Co. Fine Arts, Zürich; Lokal30, Warsaw & London

Elodie Pong's video, *Je suis une bombe* (2006), refers to the current post-feminist generation of women, with their awkward position between their own roles and multiple opportunities. Pong's contradictory images of women of a powerful yet vulnerable generation show how gender identity is produced performatively. The artist not only frames contradictory media models of femininity for identification – between the sexualised pole dancers and innocence of teddy bear-clutching girls – but also reveals drastically how women still style themselves as objects.

Nomusa Makhubu (South Africa)
lives and works in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape



Trading Lies (2006)
Series of 9 hand processed colour photographs, 70 x 50 cm / 50 x 70 cm each
Courtesy of the artist and The Photographers Gallery, Cape Town

In her photo series, *Trading Lies* (2006), Nomusa Makhubu positions herself within the bizarre settings of a Museum of Colonial History; she does so to challenge memories long neglected in the process of the re-invention of the South-African identity. The interior shots remind us of the fact that, in nineteenth-century portrait photography, (white) women were mostly photographed in family portraits and not, say, occupying any political function. The fact that, at the same time, black women were only photographed out of an ethnographic interest, illustrates the ambivalent relation between the colonised and the colonisers.

Regina José Galindo (Guatemala)
lives and works in Guatemala City



PERRA (2005)
Colour, sound, 5:25 min.,
Courtesy of the artist and Prometeo Gallery di Ida Pisani, Milano

In her video performance, *PERRA* (2005), Regina José Galindo alludes to “Second Wave Feminism” and Leslie Labowitz, Suzanne Lacey, and Bia Lowe in the performance *In Mourning and In Rage* (1977) – although, here, the artist acts violently against herself. Galindo cuts the word “perra” (Spanish for “bitch” and/or “whore”) into her flesh to visualize how sexual violence committed at the hands of men is inscribed traumatically – both metaphorically and physically – into the bodies of Guatemalan women.

Chitra Ganesh (India/USA)
lives and works in New York



Lady Mollusk (2009)
From the series *The Unknowns* (2009)
Inkjet prints on canvas with mixed media collage, 203 x 101,5 cm each
Courtesy Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

In her large format series, *The Unknowns* (2009), Chitra Ganesh quotes feminine images, which overlap in a collage of anonymous female subjects, B-movies of the 1960s and '70s, paintings from the period of French orientalism, documentary photography of prostitutes, and studio photography from India. Ganesh shows how exotic images of femininity – after they have been removed from their respective cultural contexts – circulate globally and are given new meaning by the mass media.

Elena Kovylnina (Russia)
lives and works in Moscow



Carriage (2009)
Black / white, sound, 9:00 min.
Courtesy of the artist

Elena Kovylnina's video, *Carriage* (2009), is a remake of famous sequences on the Potemkin Stairs in Odessa from Sergei Eisenstein's film *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925). In this piece, she highlights how, in reality, for female cultural producers and far from mythical (male) artist legends, a post-socialist, apparently de-ideologised space does not feel any less disoriented than before. The work underscores how, up to the present day, nothing has changed regarding the non-existent social security for female artists in Russia.

Nadia Khawaja (Pakistan)
lives and works in Lahore



eye am (2001)
Colour, sound, 10:00 min.
Courtesy Grey Noise Gallery, Lahore; Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

Nadia Khawaja encounters the viewers of her performance video work, *eye am* (2001), literally at eye level. The focussing of one of her eyes reminds us, on the one hand, of the “evil eye” that has been (and still is) associated worldwide as being inherently female; and, which, particularly, in Islam, can be warded off by wearing the *Nazar*, the eye of Fatima. The alleged distance the Niqab, the Muslim veil for the woman’s face, produces turns paradoxically into an irritating, inescapable (physical) intimacy in Khawaja’s piece.

Mathilde ter Heijne (The Netherlands/Germany)
lives and works in Berlin and Amsterdam



Before the Miao build a house, they dig a hole into the ground and put a pot in it with grain, fruit, gold, and silver. This offering is covered with incense and then serves as a foundation for the sacred female fireplace. The house is then built around this fireplace. As soon as the house is completed, the first activity is to light a fire in the fireplace. That is how the fireplace spirit is invited into the house to bless it.

The Empire of Women - Not a Fairy Tale (2007)
Comic book, 32 pages, Courtesy Galerie Arndt, Berlin

Mathilde ter Heijne comes to terms with her journey to the matriarchal Mosuo ethnic group in China. Here, in contrast with the masculine-encoded image of the explorer, the particularities of the feminine gaze are revealed in order to realize one’s own emancipation. Although the risk of a (re)stabilisation of dichotomies needs to be taken, the documentary media used (i.e. radio play *Further Than We’ve Gone* [2009], video *Constructing Matriarchy* [2007]), in response to pop-cultural media (i.e. Comic *The Empire of Women – Not a fairy Tale*, [2007]), do offer post-feminist perspectives.

Maryam Jafri (Pakistan/USA/Denmark)
lives and works in New York and Copenhagen



People of the Book (2003)
18 posters, archival inkjet on paper, 21 x 29,7 cm
Courtesy of the artist

In her eighteen part poster installation *People of the Book* (2003) Maryam Jafri deals with the perception of Islam in Western cultures. Her project unfolds from the first contacts of colonisers with the Arabic world up to the questions of how fictitious narratives of ethnicities circulate in today's societies and how reality is distorted by representation. From a migrant's perspective, the artist creates cartographies of shared interests as much as tensions between postcolonialism and (post)feminism.

Agnes Janich (Poland)
lives and works in New York and Warsaw



My Mom's Diary (2009)
Series of 11 archival inkjet prints, 10 x 15 cm / 15 x 10 cm each
Courtesy of the artist and Charim Gallery, Vienna

In her series of small format photographs, *My Mom's Diary* (2009), Agnes Janich refers back to the figure of the Polish mother as a pathetically occupied, projection screen for concepts of motherhood in the public sphere, rooted in national and religious ideologies. In her image commentaries, the artist thwarts the current neoconservative relapse of Eastern European societies into traditional role models and stages the relation of mother and daughter as a cross between fetish and rival; she achieves this by placing herself in the picture instead of the mother figure.