

Performing Body-Politics:

Belle Rogue Collection's

Runway Interventions

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Fashion Preview: Performance, Performativity, and Politics

In *Monuments and Maidens*, Marina Warner addresses the monumentalization and allegorization of the female form. Her analysis includes a discussion of Woman's iconic roles in cultural nationalisms' contributions to state formation. In so doing, Warner's argument explicitly links certain "fashioned" femininities with the politics of nation-building. But, if femininity contributes to, among other things, the construct(ion) of state-sanctioned versions of "the political," how is femininity, alongside other markers of identity (like race or class), itself under construction?

Feminist theorists, and more recently theorists of sexuality (queer theory), have tackled gender/sex/sexuality as constructs. Judith Butler, a renowned contemporary voice on the subject, has shifted the discussion into the arena of performance and its Siamese-twinning, dichotomous theoretical object, performativity. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler uses performance/performativity interchangeably, making "performance" a metaphor and a metonym for the enactment and embodiment of personhood.

Butler writes of gender, ... the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established (ibid: 140)... Just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself... (ibid: 146) Butler's critics widely cite the above passages as problematic, as indicative of the tired argument that "clothes make the woman." In her subsequent *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler qualifies her besieged assertions, making it clear that she had no intention of reducing gender to its material "accessories." But, what if we could momentarily suspend disbelief, and work with the idea that clothes do tell stories of identity? Perhaps we would find ourselves, like Jennifer Craik, concerned with the cultural and political "face of fashion" (1994). Such a premise informs and forms the starting point of Neutral Ground's performance spectacle *Belle Rogue Collection*.

“Belle Rogue Collection”

In May 2000, Lorena Wolffer, a Mexico City and San Francisco-based performance artist, travelled to Regina, Canada, to lead a two-week workshop and community-based performance piece. *Belle Rogue Collection* (a performance spectacle and runway fashion show) harboured at its conceptual center a previous solo performance by Wolffer *If She Is Mexico, Who Beat Her Beat Up?*. In *If She Is Mexico...*, Wolffer vogues on a runway as a high fashion model to the sounds of Mexican rap music and the rap sessions of the U.S. Senate on the drug decertification of Mexico. Wolffer employs the runway as a model for both thinking about the U.S.’s role in Mexico’s ongoing socio-economic, political crisis(es) and to question the status of Mexican women in what Wolffer has termed “pre-feminist social conditions” (1998). Pivotal to the performance is a peripatetic moment in which Wolffer stages shame and its prerequisite trauma of self-recognition. Specifically, Wolffer recognizes on her body the marks of abuse (bruises, cuts, scars) and her attitude shifts; she scoops up the various red-green-white, flag-referential clothing she had been flaunting and slinks off stage. In an interpretative nutshell, *If She is Mexico...* presents a disidentificatory national/transnational allegory concerned with demystifying the violent process of allegorization which itself accompanies transnationalizations of the Woman-Nation as symbol/object. But, momentarily sidestepping the complexities of Wolffer’s piece, I want to accent the work’s deceptively “simple” conceptual premise: Wolffer reappropriates fashion’s methodology, converting the runway into a political gangplank via an underscoring of the link between the commodification and (trans)nationalization of the female form. This premise bedrocked Neutral Ground Artist-Run Centre and Gallery’s proposal for *Belle Rogue Collection*.

Neutral Ground solicited individual proposals from Canadian artists; and, chose eleven women—Anna Scott, Val Kinistino, Carolyn Meili, Lori Weidenhammer, Joelle Ciona, Robin Brass, Robin Poitras, Sarah McGaughey, Jessie Dishaw, Michele Sereda, and Lori Blondeau—to participate in the two-week workshop led

by Wolffer which culminated in the final group performance. The model of the fashion show allowed each member of the group to focus upon her own interpretation of the project's overarching argument and to take part in a collective performance. Or, in the words of Jack Anderson, a Saskatchewan-based art critic, the space provided the project's participants with the opportunity to use "their bodies as discursive tools addressing the body colonized, the body as cultural paradigm, and the body as weapon of resistance" (2000). I seek to "accessorize" the artists' performances through my readings of their representative presentations of the "body politic," through my interpretations of their body-politics. In addition, I seek to keep the collective performance's "conversation" going, to emphasize the "conduits" between the parts of the whole. My observations and conclusions have benefitted from interviews with the project's participants. But, being the product of too many critical cautionary tales, while respecting each performer's narrative of intentionality, I have based my analysis on more than these conversations in order to locate the pieces and the whole in ongoing conversational forcefields concerned with the politics of performance and the performance/performativity of politics.



Shaming the Woman-Nation: "Miss Mexico's" Allegorical Accessorization

"Miss Mexico" sets the stage for *Belle Rogue Collection's* subsequent pieces. Particularly, it foregrounds the performance spectacle's attentions to the spectacle of Woman (capitalized and in the singular), to the iconicity of politicized femininity. If, in *Between Woman and Nation*, Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcun, and Minoo Moallem, reference the ways in which "nation-building in modernity is always predicated upon Woman as trope... (even as) the woman/feminine signifier continues to serve as an alibi or figure of resistance in the

fraternal struggles for control of the nation-state and the national project,” Lorena Wolffer as “Miss Mexico” vogues the runway, literalizing the symbolic trope of the Woman-Nation (1999: 6). To this end, the slides projected behind her, both highlight the cracks in this supposedly unified construct and reemphasize its larger-than-life dimensions (for instance, note the images of femininity-as-drag, the transvestite as one contender for “Miss Mexico”’s title). “Miss Mexico” reenacts *If She Is Mexico, Who Beat Her Up?*. But, by changing the piece’s title and some of its detail, Wolffer both underscores the role of the individual in socio-economic constructions of Woman, and spoofs on “national representation,” the premise of the nationalized beauty pageant—that one of its participants will earn the right to act as metonym for her nation in larger, transnational contexts. And, while in *If She Is Mexico, Who Beat Her Up?* Wolffer presents the subject of abuse as the piece’s rhetorical, and by extension, its allegorical, question—as the interpretative mystery to be solved—in “Miss Mexico,” she poses both the question and answer implicitly over the course of the piece, further embedding the work’s allegory in its narrative detail.



Abuse grounds the figure of Mexico in relation to an Other who does not enter the performance except by way of its soundsystem and the audience’s imaginative skills. The voices of U.S. male senators clue viewers into the ways by which Mexico has been, and is, effeminized in the shadow of U.S. economic-cultural capital. The very specific clothing, actions, gestures, and form of Wolffer as “Miss Mexico” provide additional symbolic clues through which to interpret the piece’s allegorical dimensions. “Miss Mexico”’s accessories and Wolffer’s responses to them give Wolffer’s body its identity as the nation-state. Wolffer enters the runway in red heels and a green, specifically Mexican “verde limun,” dress. She then proceeds to vogue other versions of green and red, which bear the weight of

repetition: She veils her face and vision with a green scarf. She dons an army green jacket, conjuring a scene of paramilitary occupation. She crosses her chest with, and ties around her waist, a red and white polka-dotted scarf, (de)limiting the boundaries of her body. She showcases an EZLN (pro-Zapatista shirt routinely sold in such locales as Mexico City's *zucalo*) with her own mock crucifixion (a cruci-fiction of sorts) after walking the length of the runway and returning to its centerstage; an accessory-action which blunts the seductiveness of her dress' cut, and, concurrently, the seductiveness of reading her performance as only a commentary on U.S. (neo)colonialisms. She acquires a homegirl attitude, modelling sunglasses and a baseball cap's overdetermined Mexican/Chicano iconography (the flag and Virgen de Guadalupe), and, then, upturns the symbolism, using the cap to beg her audience—as if its attention(s) were coins to be had. She models a red tie, which she uses, in turn, to choke/hang herself. Finally, she puts on boxing clothes, with which she blows kisses, begs, and flexes her muscles; until, all her accessories (and actions) are discarded on the runway, littering the performance's narrative and its literal location with landmarks of green and red, which return (something like the repressed) as Wolffer re-presents the Woman-Nation as a site of shame.

A variety of critics have responded to Fredric Jameson's canonical *Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism*, an essay which blends Freudian and Marxist analysis to contend that the majority of third world literatures operate as "national allegories" (1986). For example, in *Foundational Fictions*, Doris Sommer draws upon Jameson's argument to note "how the rhetorical relationship between heterosexual passion and hegemonic state functions as a mutual allegory" in Latin American fiction (1991: 31). But, while Sommer's account begins to take into account the function of symbolic Woman in allegorical contributions to nation-



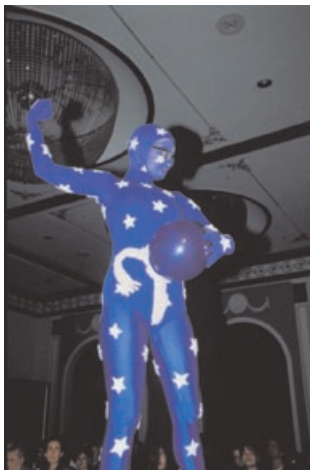
building, her work does not respond to Jean Franco's call for a "project of displacing the male centered national allegory and exposing the dubious stereotyping that was always inherent in the epics of nationhood that constitute the Latin American canon" (1992: 75). In contrast, Wolffer's performance begins Franco's imagined displacement, in a specifically Mexican (and U.S.) (trans)national allegorical context, by offering a critique of the process of allegorization and its accessorization—its use of symbolic Woman. Key to this critique is "Miss Mexico"'s strategic use of shame, operating as a self-consciousness which literally and figuratively trips the performance up.



In a variety of writings on minority politics and cultural production, the conversion of shame into pride is underscored as a necessary prerequisite of artistic creation and personal empowerment (among many, see Sedgwick & Frank 1995, Rushdie 1983, and, in the context of *Belle Rogue Collection*, McGaughey and Dishaw's "Stephanie and Jessica"). "Miss Mexico"'s narrative reverses this unquestioned tenet; Wolffer as "Miss Mexico" travels from postures of pride to those of shame and abjection. Noticing the marks of violence on her body, Wolffer's persona suddenly begins to collect her discarded accessories. Scrubbing the stage with the scarves she dropped, she drops to her hands and knees, gathering the flotsam and jetsam of her national(ized) identity. So that, while the piece's movement offers a powerful commentary on (neo)colonial violences, it likewise deconstructs,

to subsequently critique, the equally violent (trans)national allegorical practice of pedestaling identity, in this case, allegory's deployment of symbolic Woman-Nation. This narrative complication, the piece's critical double-consciousness, is made manifest in its ironic posturing, its use of the medium it critiques as its own medium. Via irony, "Miss Mexico" operates as a disidentificatory (trans)national allegory, where "disidentificatory" signals its constructive ambivalences, what Jose Muoos has defined as a performative strategy.

In this symbolic economy, “disidentification” presents neither an identification nor a counteridentification with certain culturally naturalized scripts, but, (re)presents, a recycling of cultural contents with critical edge and distance. “Miss Mexico’s” disidentifications prove crucial to a reading of the piece’s narrative, but also provide an additional lens through which to interpret the overarching premise of *Belle Rogue Collection*. The various pieces of Neutral Ground’s performance spectacle “disidentify” with the tenets of the fashion show, but take what they deem useful from ongoing cultural connotations of the scripted event, modifying to critique its constitutive fashioned femininity (read, among other things “raced”), thereby making explicit the fashion-show-as-project’s implicit politics of representation.



Staging State Reproduction: “Space Woman” as Potential Motherhood.

In “Space Woman,” Anna Scott grapples with the monumental iconography of mother and child to comment upon contemporary debates regarding female/state agency and corporeal boundaries which pit fetal and female personhoods against one another. Like “Miss Mexico,” “Space Woman” presents a performative persona and a narrative which trails her like a balloon. Scott stated in our interview that “society views pregnant women as heroes, until they do something that’s not right for the fetus and then the fetus becomes the hero” (2000). The struggle for iconic status, the visible position of hero/heroine, informs the movement of Scott’s performance, just as Peggy Phelan contends that the struggle for visibility informs the “performances” of such pro-life advocates as Operation Rescue.

In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Phelan argues that Operation Rescue's rhetoric juxtaposes the politics of reproduction against the politics of representation. She notes in OR's representational economy, the woman-as-body paradoxically becomes larger-than-life even as she is snuffed out. In contrast, the male figure never cedes political center-stage, insofar as pro-life rhetoric, which posits abortion as a mother-child conflict, assigns a sex to the fetus. Phelan maintains in pro-life narratives, "the main character remains an embryonic man" (1993: 132) with the not so invisible implication that the father and the symbolical father/state both "channel" this child, claiming to represent, to speak for him, and use the figure of the fetal male to stand in, to re-present, the fragile status of state authority and its threatened (re)production.



Anna Scott as "Space Woman" directly addresses the juxtaposition of reproduction and representation, performing the iconically constructed clash between mother and child as the piece's narrative.

Referencing the fetus' high visibility in abortion and fetal alcohol debates, "Space Woman"'s movement unpacks contemporary high-profile mother-and-child territorial disputes over possession of the female body. However, one of the crucial differences between Scott's portrayal and other representations of the mother child opposition in circulation (like Operation Rescue's) resides in Scott's deployment of humour to layer affect, to spoof on representations of the conflict in her presentation."Space Woman" resituates the conflictual dyad in per-



formative space, but introduces “camp” into the debate (a performative strategy the piece shares with “Polar Bear Waitress,” “Chch Shhh,” and “Cosmosquaw”). Drawing upon her previous work with comics and graffiti art, in “Space Woman,” Scott creates a superheroine, who likewise references Scott’s ongoing interest in the similarities between representations of astronauts and fetuses (independently dependent upon lifelines). In Scott’s revised iconography, Woman, who also happens to be a spaceship mother, is more clearly defined than the ballooning fetus (reversing imagery which presents a fetus with an abstract curve around it, suggesting the mother’s swollen belly). Costume and gestures prove crucial to “Space Woman’s” revisionary narrative. Wearing blue-face an heroine. She surveys the landscapes, flies, flexes her muscles, pats her baby-belly and waves to, and impresses her audience with hilarious belly-rolls. Then, as she lets the undefined fetus unwind, giving it the full leash of their umbilical connection, the performance’s power struggle likewise erupts.

Confronting the fetus at umbilical-length, “Space Woman” tries to bat it away, to fly away from it; but cannot escape its attachment to her. Resisting her own resistance, she attempts to return to her former superheroine status, flying with the balloon overhead, waving to her audience--but the fetus prevails, tangling “Space Woman” in their shared umbilical connection. Reduced to her hands and knees (like Wolffer at another crucial juncture in “Miss Mexico”), “Space Woman” crawls off the runway, the balloon-fetus trailing, projecting its own shadowy prominence onto the runway's backscreen. The lingering presence of the fetus punctuates the performance's argument. Scott's piece positions itself as neither pro-life nor pro-choice per se; crudely put, as neither pro-mother nor pro-child. Instead, it re-presents representations, contemporary political discourses' either/or, neither/nor



dichotomies which leave women and their always-already potential children, intimately, umbilically connected, figuratively and literally in opposition.

“Space Woman,” humorously underscores the ways in which Woman operates as a vessel of potentiality, as a walking territorial dispute, where the female figure gets overshadowed by the competing iconicity of the fetus (encapsulated in the uterus), inflated to monumental proportions. By ceding to the piece’s balloon center-stage, Scott’s persona firmly establishes the place of additional personae in her piece- that of the fetishized hero-fetus and the “patriarchal state” it represents, suggesting that in this political circuit of representation, in the battles it stages for heroic status, Woman as assumed mother/madonna doesn’t stand a chance against the child’s visible monumental-ness, against the state’s invisible, but omnipresent, reproductions of itself. Through “Space Woman,” Scott’s persona re-models ongoing debates, underscoring biopolitical powerplays for control of the female form.

Finally, by tweaking the location of Woman in the venue of the fashion show, by introducing the obvious question of fetal versus female into the playbill, “Space Woman” implicitly problematizes and contrasts two models of idealized femininity—Woman as unrealized mother-object-to-be versus Woman as sex-object—humorously suggesting the possibility that not only are women asked to approximate impossible models of femininity but also that these models themselves compete for cultural attention. Meanwhile, literal women get lost, left, in representational space, out-of-form; read as “space women,” as taking up too much space, as potential “spaces,” they float in between, tethered to socio-economic industries of iconic reproduction.

“Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier,” A Monumental Disidentification.

Donna Haraway closes her now famous “Cyborg Manifesto” with the declaration, This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia.... It means both building and destroying

machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess. (1991: 181) In her essay, which operates as an intellectual fable/political myth, Haraway posits the cyborg as an embodied merger of nature and culture which disavows pristine origin myths and narratives of muddled displacement/exile from the garden. Haraway's cyborg challenges contemporary representations of personhood by pragmatically deromanticizing a variety of epistemic dichotomies like nature/culture, even as her post-modern mythic figure romanticizes fuzziness, hybridity, *mestizaje* (racial, cultural, natural/technological...). Haraway builds the cyborg's agency upon revalorizing the beleaguered subjectivities of women, racial minorities, and working-class peoples, all the while as the cyborg resists the status of victim and/or oppressed. But, try imagining Haraway's savvy agent of transformation. What would a cyborg look and act like? I'm tempted to think she'd resemble Val Kinistino's "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier." Historically aware, but situated in a postmodern present, deploying recognizable constructs, but disidentifying with them, "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier" resituates *Belle*



Rogue Collection's commitment to (re)fashioning local and global representations of subjective iconicity. "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier" not only interrogates constructions of iconic Woman, but those of iconic "Indian;" and, in the process, uses the process to construct an alternative icon. Put differently, just as Amelia Jones contends, "James Luna has mobilized technology explicitly within a revised politics of identify" (1998: 200), I would argue that Kinistino mobilizes a technological/natural, male/female, white/native binaries in the service of revising prevalent narratives of "Woman" and "Indian."

Collaborating with Blair Gerrard to fashion an outfit for her persona, Val Kinistino set out to present a ver-

sion of empowerment. Drawing upon other work she had done in theatre, film, and video, Kinistino created a second First Nations' persona for herself under the auspices of her performance "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier." In "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier," Kinistino performs a necessary fierceness, which challenges, instead of putting at ease, her audience. Ritualistic in format, the piece's movement relies upon Kinistino's embodiment of strength and "technologized body/self" hybridity—she hunts with laser light guns, attached to her wrists; she enacts a ritualistic cleaning, skinning cable wires as if she were disrupting a mythic information superhighway. In "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier,"



Kinistino via her constructed persona questions narratives of purity—lines between nature and culture, identity and assimilation—disidentifying with what she critiques in order to further her piece's performative commentary.

Carrying a metalworked buffalo head and bundles of sage, Kinistino as "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier," makes her

presence known in the piece's opening. "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier" introduces to its audience a figure melded in the tradition of the aboriginal warrior. However, the piece modifies ritualistic articles of clothing, replacing bone/organic materials with contemporary renditions of fortitude. For example, Kinistino uses nails in lieu of porcupine quills, where metal itself operates both as a sign of "toughness" and of native assimilation into white culture. In addition, Kinistino's outfit mind-conjures a representation of updated armor (a necessary identity politics?), replete with a metal breastplate which gives equal referential time to more traditional aboriginal garb. Wearing a welder's shield with a reservation number cut into its visor, "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier" comments upon Canadian responses to First Nations' people, including Canada's healthcare



system which uses such numbers to determine the quality of its recipients' healthcare (Kinistino 2000). Kinistino's attention to detail—numbers—brings to mind other observations on the relationship between enumeration and social control the likes of Arjun Appadurai's.

In *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai argues that in the British control of India, numbers, populations, and landscapes intermingled so that “a politics of representation” and “a politics of representativeness, that is, a politics of statistics” met under the auspices of colonialism (1996: 131). If one considers “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier” in terms of a meeting of representation and representativeness, Kinistino's performance would appear to highlight the nation-state's methods of controlling minority bodies, but, likewise, offer commentary upon the under-

representation of native populations in contemporary cultural production; where native absence gets marked by its own gaping repetition, in this instance, “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier”'s endless reiteration of Bob Marley's classic “Buffalo Soldier.”

Similarly, Kinistino's performance obliquely evokes and resists its debt to a tradition of female and feminist performance art which would stylize a link between the female form and nature (as stylized as the parallel narrative that weds “the Native” with “the natural”). So that, while performers like Ana Mendieta emphasized the female body in the context of “the natural,” Kinistino



denaturalizes this narrative- acknowledging, critiquing it, but not fully jettisoning its premises—reconstituting it as one in which the female body acts as a bridge, as the literal overlap between nature and culture. In so doing, Kinistino resists a model of Woman as “earth goddess,” replacing this image with an alternative romanticized, but pragmatic cyborg super-heroine; one, who also challenges neat gender/sexual identification.

Finally, “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier”’s denaturalizations throw into question previous performative collusions with the construction/maintenance of the artist-hero(ine) in order to “disidentify” with them. So that, while “Space Woman” seems uneasy in her “superheroine” identity and “Miss Mexico” undoes iconic Woman Nation, “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier” inhabits her self-revised iconic status to claim both her rightful inheritances and Fredric Jameson’s “cultural logic of late capitalism” embodied in a postmodern (anti-)aesthetic. Kinistino recreates the cultural injunction for the hero/heroine, for the super-individual, and by extension, the artistic “genius;” but, in the process of offering an alternative iconography, also interrogates hero worship as a cultural practice, its vital role in both identity formation and the construction and maintenance of imagined community (something “Cosmosquaw” also addresses in a slightly different manner).

Just as Donna Haraway suggests that the cyborg’s subjectivity depends upon her deployment of irony, the very metal and mettle of “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier” (like “Miss Mexico”’s interrogation of the Woman-Nation’s construction and conjunction), rests in its ironic refusal to leave the icons of “Woman” and “Indian” alone (both in terms of separating the two, and leaving them unquestioned). Note, Kinistino’s performance contains its own ambivalence within its very title, where “heavy metal” ironically draws upon the phrase’s double/tripled-edged connotations of strength and contamination (nevermind, its additional sound of music, calculated to leave its viewer’s eye-ear ringing). In “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier,” Kinistino presents her audience with a living, foot-stomping monument to and for aboriginal, mestizo, and non-native

(Canadian) populations, which disidentifies with constructions of “the natural” and “the cultural” to valorize their merger.



“Tumbleweed Woman”: Styling Displacement, Foot-fetishizing the “Political”

“Why is the tumbleweed political?” (Meili 2000). In our interview, Carolyn Meili suggested that rather than offering her own answer, she would like to leave her audience with the above question about the representational choice(s) she made/makes in constructing her performance. Meili argued that if her piece operates within the context of a “political fashion show,” she wished to throw the word “political” into crisis. Consequently, “Tumbleweed Woman: A Natural Phenomenon of Political Forces,” relies upon its audience to interpret, imagine, script and/or “fashion” the political forces to which its title makes reference. Stating, “I’d always been wary of political art,” Meili argued that she set out to create a piece that would make a statement without being “didactic” (ibid). In addition, in an effort

to emphasize a distinction between performance art and theatre, Meili focused upon animating her painstakingly handmade costume, in order to contrast her piece to others in “Belle Rogue Collection,” i.e. she chose “to animate an object,” versus using the costume to accent the character/persona whom she presents (ibid). I want to explore Meili’s above-cited question and its implicit, more general corollary—But, what does “Tumbleweed Woman” (re)present?—in order to address Meili and the piece’s professed performative political minimalism. My analysis will rely upon some of Meili’s own stated intentions, but will itself implicitly question the limits of citing a cultural producer’s narrative of intentionality in critical analysis.

“Tumbleweed Woman” draws upon Meili’s previous artistic minimalism, her political activism (usually separate from, but sometimes incorporated into, her artwork), and her fascination with regional symbols of identity. Unlike other performers in “Belle Rogue Collection,” Meili wanted to move away from narrative, to keep things simple, to concentrate upon embodying a symbol. Subsequently, unlike “Miss Mexico” which presents its audience with a kind of (anti-) allegory or “Space Woman” and “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier,” which tell other kinds of political “stories,” “Tumbleweed Woman”’s narrative seems to have already happened, leaving its audience with a presentation of an endpoint of events versus an arrival at the situation. “Tumbleweed Woman” is tumbling, cast out of a linear or nonlinear story, she operates as embodied consequence, as an unattached radical, signifier of movement, a.k.a. change itself.

Contributing to the sense of “Tumbleweed Woman”’s unmoored status, the piece’s music and its background slides offer clues to its missing narrative of wayward drift, of displacement and unspecified relocation. “We’ve moved” backdrops “Tumbleweed Woman”’s own movement, furthering the piece’s whimsical “nostalgia for the present” (Jameson 1991: 279). Unlike a variety of contemporary representations which would lament a traffic in persons/capital, Meili, in the guise of a tumbleweed, puts a lighter face on the phenomenon of globalization. Dancing to a techno-Western tune of displacement and smiling coyly at her audience, “Tumbleweed Woman” presents uprootedness as “a natural phenomenon;” paradoxically, grounding the phenomenon of rootlessness in a Canadian regionalism.

“Tumbleweed Woman”: Stylizing Displacement, Foot-fetishizing the “Political” “Why is the tumbleweed political?” (Meili 2000). In our interview, Carolyn Meili suggested that rather than offering her own answer, she would like to leave her audience with the above question about the representational choice(s) she made/makes in constructing her performance. Meili argued that if her piece operates within the context of a “political fashion show,” she wished to throw the word “political” into crisis. Consequently, “Tumbleweed

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Referencing previous work in which she sought to re-present the tumbleweed, the iceberg, the grain elevator, the lobster, Meili cited her intersecting interest in mascots and how regions get iconically represented for their tourists as part of her motivations behind creating “Tumbleweed Woman.” In another performance/piece entitled *Lobster Girl*, Meili sought to embody the animated lobsters which were made to stand in for the Maritime Islands/Provinces in advertisements for them. Meili explained that after being disturbed by the lobster as a regional icon, she hit upon the idea of claiming it for herself since it was already being used to represent her (Meili 2000). Similarly, in



“Tumbleweed Woman” and her other tumbleweed artwork, Meili seeks to explore “icons of Saskatchewan”—to consider the ways in which the tumbleweed historically represented/represents Saskatchewan as a region. In so doing, Meili historically resituates discourses concerning displacement, insofar as her work points out that contemporary narratives of movement do not address a recent development; that, on some level “globalization” has always already been part of collective (un)consciousness and its representations. But, importantly, Meili’s modifications of ongoing globalization narratives also relocate them in a postmodern present. For a little while I puzzled over “Tumbleweed Woman”’s noticeable, in Meili’s words “very serious,” red shoes. Like some adult version of Dorothy’s “red slippers” from the Wizard of Oz which would refute versus bolstering the possibility of clicking home, “Tumbleweed Woman”’s shoes shine forth incongruous, out-of-place with the rest of her outfit, unnerving; their displacement, in turn, dislocates viewers’ expectations, complicating the commentary which Meili’s performance presents.



In the opening chapter of *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson discusses several sets of shoes. Beginning with Vincent Van Gogh’s *A Pair of Boots*, as representative of (the) work’s materiality, as “a clue or a symptom for some vaster reality” (8), Jameson moves into a discussion of Andy Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes*, as representative of “the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality” (9) and “the waning of affect in postmodern culture” (10). In turn, he addresses Remo Ceserani’s discussion of Walker Evans’ *Floyd Burroughs’ Work Shoes* and, finally, René Magritte’s *Le modÈle rouge*, as a magical realistic and postmodern version of societal foot

fetishism. Jameson's attentions to "the fetish" in both the Freudian and Marxist senses grants his readings of the above-mentioned footwear ground to walk upon. I want to think about the ways in which Meili's red shoes underscore "Tumbleweed Woman"'s concerns with regional icons, turned commodity fetishes.

"Tumbleweed Woman"'s dancing red shoes break the performance's costume into two visual frames—above, the tumbleweed; below, its revised method of movement, legs and feet. If Marx spoke in *Capital* of the commodity acquiring a life of its own, of being animated into the fetish; Meili's performance literalizes the animation of the commodity-object, literalizing as well, the animation of regional commodification, where regions, represented iconically, become goods, tumbling in global circulation, the objects of touristic desire. Furthermore, if Freud argues the idealized fetish in its beholder's imagination "represses" what it represents, Meili, via her dancing red heels, returns the repressed to her audience's consciousness, drawing upon a recognizable fetish already in circulation, the shoe, standing in for iconic Woman. But, why assign the tumbleweed a sex? Meili would seem to address the location of Woman in mass culture (Huysen 1986), the commodification of the female form, the feminization of the commodity, and the equally peculiar gendered, engendering effects of globalization. In both the performance's title and in its use of distinctly feminine red shoes, "Tumbleweed Woman" situates Woman as central to a reading of the performance, as central to readings of globalization and displacement. Nevertheless, the piece acts as neither lament, nor a critique of globalization, but only as its re-presentation, offering a political minimalism, which refutes the fetishization of "the political" itself, presenting the piece's politics as both open and resistant to interpretation. Which is to say—the viewer is left to read the tumbleweed as "political" and/or "gendered" only insofar as it proves emblematic (like Woman on the runway who becomes clothing's accessory; or, like a given team's mascot) of (trans)national political forces at work (a "natural phenomenon" also present in Michele Sereda's "Chchch Shhh").

Finally, true to her attention to understatement and movement, Meili minimalizes her performance as “the transition between Val Kinistino’s Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier’ and Lori Weidenhammer’s Polar Bear Waitress” (2000). Indeed. Resisting static readings and/or interpretations, “Tumbleweed Woman”’s ostensible simplicity shuttles its audience between “Buffalo Soldier’s” regional, implicit global, disidentification and “Polar Bear Waitress’s” performative reflections on “the fantastic”, local effects of global pollution; relocating these and the other pieces in *Belle Rogue Collection* as potentially symptomatic and symbolic of a local/global dialectic in imaginative circulation and/or an expanding notion of “the political” in artistic production and reception.

“Polar Bear Waitress”

Belle Rogue Collection bifurcates Lori Weidenhammer’s presentation of pregnancy and motherhood. Appearing twice in the performance spectacle, Weidenhammer presents separate, but related, personae, who utilize, celebrate, and question the fashion show runway’s premise of the ideal commodified feminine.



Drawing upon her background in theatre, the visual arts, poetry, and music, Weidenhammer generated two polar bear waitress performances based upon written texts (which were in turn taped), costumes, and Weidenhammer’s own stylized gestures. Among her objectives and interests, Weidenhammer cites her fascination with spectacle, kitsch, humour, and reclaiming sexuality as “a fun, powerful thing” (Weidenhammer 2000a). Unlike Meili, who strives to draw a line between theatre and performance art, Weidenhammer endeavors to create multidisciplinary works which blur aes-

thetic boundaries, which recycle practices and objects that already have lives of their own. However, in contrast to her intentionally “blurry” artistic practice, Weidenhammer maintains a clear, politicized aesthetic self-identification, “The reason I call myself a performance artist is it’s a political decision because I want to align myself with the feminist tradition of performance art and distance myself from the patriarchal position of hierarchial theatre” (ibid). This political-artistic clarity of vision, among other things, marks Weidenhammer’s pieces as performative interventions which seek to remedy physical and psychic representations of pedestaled Woman.

Lori Weidenhammer has attitude in “Polar Bear Waitress”’s performative interior monologues. As if animating Eleanor Antin stills, Weidenhammer humorously performs the personae she assumes, granting even anxious ambivalence the elevated status of emotional kitsch. In the first of her two pieces, “Polar Bear Waitress,” eponymous of her overall performance, Weidenhammer presents three stories and two dreams which encapsulate “Polar Bear Waitress”’s anxieties concerning “Something about global warming, and a lack of food in the North.... Something about global warming and the global economy” (*Belle Rogue Collection* 2000). This “Something about...” signals her persona’s uncertainty/ambivalence; unable to fully connect her exemplary narratives, “Polar Bear Waitress” tentatively questions each of her own recitations, “I’m sure it’s a sign. What does it mean?” (ibid). The performance’s repeated question “What does it mean?” both reenforces its conversational tone and invites audience members to aid Weidenhammer’s persona in her efforts at self-analysis. The question, likewise, invites viewers to imagine the overall narrative as operating on more than an anecdotal level, to assign to the text a meta-narrative, to resituate



“the personal” in a larger referential frame which might include the global. But, like the text’s own complex set of checks and balances, Weidenhammer’s counter- “Something about…” in turn pokes fun at the overall narrative’s attempts at auto theorization/self-aggrandizement.



The contents of the stories and dreams the “Polar Bear Waitress” presents further heighten the performance’s sense of kitschy, anxious ambivalence. In the first, a polar bear is cited/sighted where it should not be, operating as some embodied sign/signifier in a greater disrupted chain of being. In the second, which represents one of the pregnant narrator’s dreamscapes, “Polar Bear Waitress” must enter the stomachs of taxidermied polar bear phone-booths. The text’s play with inside-outside interpretative confusion is further heightened by the narrator’s attempts to gather change purses (which, like boxes, in Freud’s symbolic landscape signal female genitalia), which in turn contain “foreign currency I’d never seen” (ibid)- foreign currency, like an unreadable text, a.k.a. “signs” which resist a viewer/reader’s assignment of meaning. In the third narrative, the performer assures her audience “This next story isn’t a dream” (ibid); but, once again the inexplicable polar bear, coupled with the figure of a pregnant woman, appears in need of the latter’s protection. In the performance’s fourth “vignette,” the audience is offered

another dream which blurs inside-outside distinctions—a woman and her pet polar bear enjoy “performing” a “trick” in which the polar bear swallows her halfway and spits her out again (ibid)—a performance embedded in Weidenhammer’s performance, which, in turn, highlights performative reiteration. Finally, the “Polar Bear Waitress” speaks authoritatively, “I know why the polar bears are moving south. It’s because we’ve polluted the North Pole” (ibid). The statement segues into an additional anecdote regarding the narrator’s dry-cleaned

dress-shirt: The dry-cleaning chemicals cause the narrator's "insides" to come out—she throws up all over her outfit. This final narrative "scene" sets up the piece's signifying couplet—"It's a sign. What does it mean?/I should never have dry-cleaned that shirt"—a de-escalation which derails the performance's meta-narrative aspirations, downsizing their status to the anecdotal.

The repeating polar bear and pregnant woman serve to suture the performance, as that which colludes the coincidental into a coherent narrative. Meanwhile, visually, the figures of the polar bear and the pregnant woman merge in "Polar Bear Waitress"'s uniform-clad body. Parodying the playboy bunny, Weidenhammer wears a polar bear cocktail white two-piece, replete with ears and a tail to wag, which draws attention to her pregnant body-stomach. Touting a tray with two cocktails, the "Polar Bear Waitress" aims to please, smiling coyly, cleaning her teeth, taking orders from imaginary customers in the audience. Like Patricia Williams, who uses the phantasmatic figure of the "polar bear" to ground her readings of legal and critical theory and U.S. gendered race relations in *Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991), Weidenhammer uses "the fantastic" figure of the polar bear, juxtaposed against the more commonplace figure of the pregnant woman, to render the second "fantastic." Weidenhammer draws attention to the "status of the pregnant woman in public" (2000a), her visible invisibility which obscures issues like her need to earn an income (note the slide projected behind Weidenhammer in which the "Polar Bear Waitress" sits at a bar counting her tips), locating her outside-the-garden of a maternal utopia in which pregnancy and work do not intersect. Weidenhammer's "Polar Bear Waitress," like her second performance "Maternal Urges/Pedestrian Rages," also resituates the figure of the pregnant woman as more than a vessel of her fetus; as a subject with temporary dual citizenship, as someone possessing both her own agency and that of her unborn child (in contrast to the overpowering fetus of Scott's "Space Woman").

In "Maternal Urges/Pedestrian Rage", Weidenhammer deploys "the vulgar," like she deploys "the burlesque,"

to counter the stereotypical sophistication of the fashion show and its accompanying expectations of (pregnant) women. In both “Polar Bear Waitress” and “Maternal Urges/Pedestrian Rage,” Weidenhammer’s literal pregnant presence and her performative personae, reworks *Belle Rogue Collection*’s operating premise, foregrounding Weidenhammer’s re-presentation of *Belle Rogue Collection*, offering a Weidenhammerian version of the project’s “politics.” Weidenhammer’s performances interpret/read *Belle Rogue Collection* as a refiguring of the female form which both demands the attention of its audience and physically, psychologically (and, in a not-so implicit sense, politically) empowers its participants.

This second waitress’ attitude parallels that of Weidenhammer’s *Belle Rogue Manifesto*, her vision of the performance spectacle as a whole. In this short poem, Weidenhammer’s narrator insists on showing her reader/audience an alternate feminine, an updated pragmatic ideal, insofar as the poetic narrator insists, “I am here and I am fully present” (Weidenhammer 2000b). In both the poem and *Maternal Urges/ Pedestrian Rage*, Weidenhammer deploys “the vulgar,” like she deploys “the burlesque,” to counter the stereotypical sophistication of the fashion show and its accompanying expectations of (pregnant) women. The poem’s list of reidealized, traditionally reviled, female mind and body parts, like Weidenhammer’s literal pregnant presence and her performative personae, reworks *Belle Rogue Collection*’s operating premise. “Belle Rogue Manifesto” foregrounds “The Polar Bear Waitress”’s re-presentation of *Belle Rogue Collection*, offering a Weidenhammerian version of the project’s “politics.” Weidenhammer’s poem interprets/reads *Belle Rogue Collection* as a refiguring of the female form which both demands the attention of its audience and physically, psychologically (and, in a not-so implicit sense, politically) empowers its participants.

“Dr. XX”

“Dr. XX”’s Repackaged, Impassioned “Political” Joelle Ciona, who was trained in architecture, claims her work comes “from a very intuitive, emotional space” versus a theoretical or political position (Ciona 2000). Resisting the political premise of *Belle Rogue Collection*, Ciona set out in her piece to question inside-outside dichotomies (in a manner distinctive from Weidenhammer) and the model’s “power of anonymity,” her facade of exteriority. Initially, Ciona conceived of her piece as being an anonymous box on the runway; but after workshop conversations with the project’s other participants, she was convinced to modify her ideas. The modifications Ciona implemented alter the piece’s temporal dimensions, providing its viewers with a conceptual meta-narrative, versus the endpoint of an argument (which would have paralleled Meili’s performance). While the box alone on the runway would have followed in the footsteps of some of Ciona’s previous performances which address “what time does to an audience” (ibid) in terms of viewers’ endurance (How long will they watch me do this?), “Dr. XX” leads its audience through cause and effect, calling upon viewers to witness a fractured, but linear, narrative which eventually also presents Ciona’s re-packaged performative persona.



“Dr. XX” fragments into four segments via blackouts. Initially, Ciona comes onto the runway, modelling a mirrored, hot pink satin-lined, box she constructed for the performance. After the first blackout, Ciona performs a rendition of the Lacanian “mirror stage,” admiring herself in the box’s exterior. In turn, she uses the box to body-build, lifting it as she rewalks the runway. Finally, Ciona’s body is “disappeared,” as the audience

is left with the mirrored box making its exit and the “hysterical” sounds of Ciona’s persona beneath it. To think about what the piece “means,” I want to return to Ciona’s claims about her works’ emotional contents to consider the ways in which “the emotional,” “the political,” and “the theoretical” collapse into one another in “Dr. XX.”



Like Scott’s “Space Woman,” “Dr. XX” runways a literal and representational power struggle in which an object, standing in for larger, invisible constructs, wins out over the performer/subject. Which is to say, “Dr. XX” presents a power struggle between Ciona’s persona and the box she models.

Furthermore, Ciona doubly stages this struggle on the level of both the visual and the auditory. Whereas the piece begins with the model-persona’s mastery of the object-box, the piece ends with only the aural remnants of the model persona. Swallowed by the box, her embodied hyper-visibility (her body as workout outfit and muscles) is reduced to aural emotion, the sounds which the box emits, and the box’s movement (her invisible visibility). Unlike Robert Morris’ “Untitled (Standing Box),” which functions as an artistic self-portrait, the model-self Ciona presents stands in opposition to the box, eventually subsumed by it (Schimmel 1998: 89).

As a commentary on the model and her accessories, the piece would seem to suggest the model’s own invisibility in contrast to the clothes/commodities she presents. Such a visible/invisible commentary runs throughout the performance as Ciona’s disappearance exaggerates and literalizes the invisibility of the model. But, paradoxically the aural presence of the model exists in inverse proportion to her supposed visibility; where initially she has no voice, but a background fractured soundtrack of Diamanda Galas and smashing ceramics;

and, finally possesses a voice, which in its incomprehensibility becomes paradoxically its own version of “psychobabble,” symptomatic of “madness,” but nevertheless visibly audible.



In addition, the box itself, spotlighted in the performance’s final fragment, enlarges the scope of the piece’s commentary. The box as the curious object, turned subject, of the performance both resists and invites analysis. Conjuring up images and narratives of already available significations –i.e. the boxes with which identities get constructed in contemporary political discourses, Freud’s symbolic conflation of boxes

and female genitalia, late capitalism’s “gaze” and its commodified/boxed/packaged idealized femininity—the box centrepieces Ciona’s performance, even as it inverts the gaze it would purport to represent. With its exterior mirror panels, the box returns the viewer to her/himself, where what is seen is both the performance’s object/subject and the viewer’s own reflection [not unlike madness encapsulated in both the diagnosed and the diagnostician via his (and, it usually is a he) diagnosis], not unlike the contractual, S & M relationship Kathy O’Dell documents between the performer and his/her audience (1998).

The box’s meaning would seem to exist as boxes within boxes, which



divert the viewer's attention with their pseudo-promise of interiority. Like Scott's balloon, which stands in for a fetus, which in turns stands in for larger patriarchal forces, the box metonymically flirts with its viewers' interpretative expectations. Containing its own logic, "Dr. XX," via its box, theorizes its own performance as it performs its theory. Read: The box contains the model in the end, paralleling the movement of socio-scientific discourses through which feminine subjectivity gets boxed into "the hysterical." In addition, conceptually rich, "Dr. XX," through its title, confers upon the randomly assigned genetic, pink rubber-gloved, woman (XX) (reified to Woman status) the honorary, but earned degree of "Dr." (doubling as both an M.D. and a doctorate) that grants her a level of expertise with which "to authorize" her auto-readings of boxed subjection-subjectivity.

Finally, just as "Dr. XX" refuses to draw lines between "the emotional" and "the analytical" (Woman is both "crazy" and her own best analyst), it likewise blurs the boundaries of these constructs and "the political." Claiming Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1965) as one of her piece's influences, Ciona presents emotion, in the guise of madness, as the central political subject of her piece. Speaking of her uneasy relationship with "the political" in artwork, and in general, Ciona conceded, "If being political is being passionate about something, I'm really passionate about emotions and trying to relate emotional experience" (Ciona 2000). To relate emotional experience requires that it be put in context, and contexts themselves act as political forcefields. "Dr. XX" presents a fractured, but linear, narrative of the idealization and demonization of Woman ("the beautiful" versus "the hysterical"—versus—"the beautiful" versus "the sublime") where the boundaries between the two practices merge, where Woman is reduced to boxed emotion even as the box reflects the box-er's visage/actions, where the audience itself becomes complicit in the reiterative process of re-packaging the feminine.

“Mining Dog”’s Exploration: “How do you transform a dog into a woman?”



In “Mining Dog,” Robin Brass, in collaboration with Robin Poitras, performs an allegorical regionalism, which examines the symbolic and metaphoric connections between the earth and effeminized Others. Like “Miss Mexico,” “Mining Dog” operates on more than one level, presenting one story to tell another—the constructive “essence” of allegory (Brogan 1994, De Man 1986, 1979). While the piece draws upon the obvious connection made between land and the female body, it also explores the parallel, but sometimes diverging, link between land/nature and “Indian” subjectivity. “Mining Dog” renders “the symbolic literal,” re-performing the “Indian”’s and the “Woman”’s primitivization in (post-)colonial cultural practices, in a process which, in the words,

of Rebecca Schneider, “discovers collusions of contemporary narratives of sexology and ethnography, illustrating the deep imbrications of issues of sex and race (the Woman Question and the Question of Colonials) in the development of modern Western identity” (1997: 135). Put differently, “Mining Dog,” like Val Kinistino’s “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier,” presents stories of “contamination,” which resist neat political equations and/or interpretation, which simultaneously celebrate-lament hybridity as social reality and practice.



In the piece, Brass as “Mining Dog” performs a Saskatchewan body-politic as she jaggedly dances a darkened runway, using light, like Ciona in “Dr. XX,” to both illuminate and confuse her audience. With two mining lights, like a set of breasts or eyes, Brass discovers strewn articles of clothing—high heels, a bra, later, a large, wrinkled earth-coloured skirt—even as, the dishevelled, blackened runway, coupled with her sporadic actions, suggests violent narratives of rape and/or disfigurement. The piece’s soundtrack intensifies its opening frenetic movement, including even the warning, “I have always recommended that the Indian not become a heavy equipment operator” (Belle Rogue Collection 2000). Tonally, the piece shifts once “Mining Dog” is dressed as Woman (read “goddess”), and the soundtrack rings clear as bells, “Uranium, uranium.” Lights on, “Mining Dog”/Woman twirls the runway, hands out-stretched, offering her audience members the “fruit” of her exploration, a sacrificial “yellow cake,” which, in turn, she decides to eat.

In “Mining Dog,” Saskatchewan, the largest uranium producer in the world, figures as the unspoken, embodied survivor of violences enacted upon its land and minority populations. But, paradoxically, the agent of the performance’s narrative both enacts the violence and is the recipient of it, both “is mined” and “does the mining.” A phenomenon, which Robin Poitras explained, both she and Brass sought to underscore in the piece, “When you seek uranium, the uranium seeks you.... The uranium invisibly goes into the mind, into the organs; so the person who is there doing the mining is being mined by the uranium” (Brass and Poitras 2000). “Mining Dog”’s attentions to this symbiotic working relationship denatures narratives of “contamination,” leaving nothing “pure” in its wake.



Furthermore, this acknowledged, contaminated codependence underscores the performance's intertwined thematic: To address colonization of land is likewise to address the colonization of populations. Meaning, among other things, bodies that perform certain tasks do not always do so of their own volition (historically, the "Indian" has had delimited choices, required, at times, to "become a heavy equipment operator"). In contrast, the figure of the dog in the piece ambivalently relocates the Native's compromised agency, drawing upon the trickster story as performance, the trickster figure as representative of parody, irony, and transformation. The performance's allegorical utilization of, and internal reference to, a native oral tradition high-



lights "Mining Dog"'s concerns with re-presenting native populations' ongoing presence in Canada, and specifically, in Saskatchewan.

One trickster tale, in particular, informed Robin Brass' conceptualizations of the performance. In this story, which explains why dogs sniff each others' crotches, several dogs had gathered at a sweat lodge. Before entering, they took off their skins and hung them on a pole. Seeing this, Weskecahk, a Cree trickster, decided to play a trick on them. He scattered the skins so that when the

dogs came out they were completely confused; unable to identify their own exteriors, they donned each other's skins. Since then, the narrative contends, dogs sniff each other's crotches in the hopes of relocating "themselves" (ibid). I re-tell this story in my analysis to suggest: In "Mining Dog," Brass and Poitras surreptitiously draw upon this Cree narrative, transforming it into one in which a dog/bitch—read "native"—re-dresses as Woman; a performative alteration which emphasizes the rate of exchange in colonialism's symbolic economy—where Woman and "Native" Other represent a symbolic "same difference."

In addition, attempting to literalize Western adages, as well as Western symbols and native oral narratives, Brass and Poitras noted that “if clothes figure as a second skin,” “Mining Dog” enacts her dog-persona’s search for her identity as she sniffs, then discovers her scattered clothing. Shining this second light on its own implicit question, “How do you transform a dog into a woman?,” “Mining Dog” backtalks to itself, allegorically: The dog, instead of inverting into god, inverts into a “goddess,” acquiring the clothes of Woman to become “a dog in drag.” Although, it might be more apt to say: The dog uncovers via clothing, femininity- Woman’s lost skin—where, to read the piece as such might suggest that any given individual acts as “someone in drag,” trying to approximate ideals of identification like “whiteness” and/or “femme-inity” (or its flipside masculinity) via, among other methodologies, the visual body language of fashion, movement, and gesture (a thematic Sarah McGaughey and Jessie Dishaw reiterate in their performance “Stephanie and Jessica”).

Finally, attempting to rewrite a Western notion of “having one’s cake and eating it, too,” “Mining Dog”’s finish repositions the Woman/Native Other, offering a vision of her sampling what she initially offers to her public. Significantly, in this scenario, the literalization of “yellow cake” transubstantiates into its doubled metaphorical value: Uranium and racial hybridity (where “yellow” affords the possibility of “white” plus “x;” but, where, ultimately, the Woman/Native Other re-privileges her own sense of taste).

Drawing together the discursive skirts of art, nature, science, economics, “Mining Dog” demonstrates the ongoing politics of maintaining these discourses’ disconnections. Presenting hybridity as a violence, as an inevitability, and, ultimately, as a weapon-tool, “Mining Dog,” like “Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier,” resists, to disidentify with, its own interiorized lament, allegorically re-creating a “goddess/cyborg/heroine” via existing narratives which symbolically suture iconic Woman-Native-Land.

“Allegorizing Gender”: “Stephanie and Jessica’s” Dragnet

A wise Frenchman once said there are no ugly women, there are only those who don't know how to make themselves beautiful... There's a woman.... Here kitty-kitty... Gotta get me some of that... How much for the girls?... I could definitely fuck that... I used to look like that, but I decided it wasn't worth it...



Whore... Cunt.... She doesn't want me, she must be a lesbian... Slut... No wonder you don't have a boyfriend; you're so bitchy... I know what she needs... She looks like she needs some... Do you know how many chicks it takes to change a lightbulb? Two. One to change the bulb and the other to suck my fucking dick. (*Belle Rogue Collection* 2000)

Perhaps, more than any other performance in *Belle Rogue Collection*, Sarah McGaughey and Jessie Dishaw's "Stephanie and Jessica" both utilizes the symbolic potential of the runway and blurs the line instigated between "performance" and "performativity." In "Stephanie and Jessica," McGaughey and Dishaw explicitly deconstruct culturally prescribed femininity via their "change of clothing" and their deployment of a sound-track which showcases the performative power of language.

Like other performers in *Belle Rogue Collection*, McGaughey and Dishaw drew upon their previous work to

limelight their ongoing personae-project. For instance, on other occasions, the pair had used the personae of “Stephanie” and “Jessica” to stage public interventions and to further the aims of their respective aesthetic-personal projects [”dressing up,” McGaughey and Dishaw had frequented Regina bars, had gone shopping in-character; or, Dishaw had “played with” the figure of “Jessica” in installation pieces like “Blow-up Jessie,” an inflatable sex-toy/doll with “Jessica”’s face attached to it]. Speaking of the motivations behind their project, McGaughey and Dishaw, said that when they hit upon the idea of being “Mainstream Girls,” they wanted “to do mainstream things, not to make fun of them, but to see what it’s like—how we are treated differently” (McGaughey and Dishaw 2000). However, both McGaughey and Dishaw emphasized that not only did they discover differences in how others treated them, they also discovered how their own “attitudes shifted with different clothing” (ibid). For instance, McGaughey said that once in “Stephanie”’s outfit, she found herself “giggling and shrieking” as she ran through blizzard-like conditions to enter a car; or, that with make-up, she could/can walk in heels, but without it she stumbles (ibid). In a similar vein, Dishaw explained, “As long as the wig’s on, it’s all good. When that comes off, it’s all gotta go” (ibid). Taken to its extreme, each contended that they must shop for additions to their “costumes” in-character; although, McGaughey noted that this necessity is also due to reception: “I tried going as myself and I couldn’t get served; but, when I went back an hour later in the wig and everything... it was totally different- they came up and helped me, were completely sweet...” (ibid).

If in their previous work McGaughey and Dishaw strove to be in-character, in *Belle Rogue Collection*’s edition of “Stephanie and Jessica,” the pair seek to emphasize the distinction between “the before” of “Stephanie and Jessica” and “the after” of their disassemblage. This act of emphasis rests upon the performers’ deconstruction of their own personae, and by extension, ideals of femininity. But, interestingly enough, in this performance-as-process, which requires of its audience the “shock” of recognition, McGaughey and Dishaw use negative-speak and a change-of-appearance to underscore the link between the piece’s deconstructive movement and



its construction of alternative “feminine”/gender identifications. To consider more closely the agenda of “Stephanie and Jessica,” I will move between the performance and various contemporary theoretical discussions of performance/performativity, shame, and the recently politicized term “queer” to consider how the performance contributes to these current theoretical conversations.

In *Queer Performativity* (1993), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick claims shame as a constitutional affect for queer performativity. For Sedgwick, the phrase “Shame on you” acts as an antidote to discussions of performativity which might center around J. L. Austin’s compulsive citation of failed marriage vows in *How To Do Things With Words* (1962). Shame becomes a space in which performance and performativity commingle, “shame, it might finally be said, transformational shame, is performance” (Sedgwick 1993: 5). In turn,

Sedgwick uses this insight to explain the Western political potency of the revalenced term “queer,”

If queer is a politically potent term, which it is, that’s because, far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy. (ibid: 4) In her reading of Henry James’ *Prefaces* and his *The Art of the Novel*, shame acts as Sedgwick’s ligature between everyday practices of survival and artistic presentations and representations of them, which in fact, double as everyday (aesthetic) practices. Through James’ “performance,” Sedgwick defines queer performativity as “the name of a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma” (11). The “strategy” allows identity formation to claim its own evaluative activity, revalencing the marks of trauma, injury, stigma. In this respect, Sedgwick’s model of

“queer performativity” coincides with the drawstring of Judith Butler’s arguments concerning gender, sexuality, and performance/performativity in *Bodies that Matter* (1993).

In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler presents the politicized term “queer” as dependent upon its previous function as “a shaming interpellation” (226), as a term, like any other, which operates within a field of citational accumulation; which both limits the subject and offers her/him possibilities of revision. For Butler, “queer” avows “a set of constraints on the past and the future that mark at once the limits of agency and its most enabling conditions” (228). In a similar vein, in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997b), reading Foucault as suggesting that “injurious interpellations (can) also be the site of radical reoccupation and resignification,” Butler argues that a minority subject must occupy the very sites of her/his discursive injury in order to eventually resist trauma enacted upon her/him. Meanwhile, in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997a), Butler repeats her interest in the agency of language, its role in molding subject positions. The arguments in these, her two most recent texts, coincide with those of her earlier works in which she focuses upon the constitution of gender/sex/sexuality systems via “habits of the body” and linguistic practices. Additionally, in both *The Psychic Life of Power* and *Excitable Speech*, shame saturates Butler’s arguments about subject formation; insofar as, she theoretically conceives of shame, among other things, as a kind of subjective superglue, facilitating an individual’s reoccupation of stigmatized identity and identification. Finally, in his construction of the performative practice of “disidentification,” José Muñoz draws upon the transformative power of revalenced shame and subjugation in constructions of alternative subjectivities (see footnote 4).

The centrality of shame does not escape the attentions of McGaughey and Dishaw. Just as “Miss Mexico” relies upon shame as its peripatetic hinge, “Stephanie and Jessica” utilizes “shame” to alter the course of its movement. However, unlike “Miss Mexico” in which shame ultimately drives Wolffer’s performative persona off the runway, shame in “Stephanie and Jessica” facilitates the performance and its personae’s reoccupation

of the runway as literal and symbolic space(s). In “Stephanie and Jessica,” McGaughey and Dishaw dismantle their “costumes” to generate “gender trouble.” To a soundtrack of accumulating hate speech, the pair drop stereotypical pretenses (often heterosexualized—although the “high femme” can never be underestimated) of femininity—changing clothes, discarding false eyelashes, wiping their faces clean of make-up, rediscovering eyeglasses, nose piercing, tattoos, and finally, dewigging themselves to reveal-revel in shaved and dyed heads, respectively. All the while, “Stephanie and Jessica”’s “deconstruction” is choreographed to the whistles, catcalls, verbal pronouncements (read injurious, stigmatizing, traumatic speech) that the piece’s performers and its audience cannot help but hear. From its inception, the performance’s message is framed by the corporealities of McGaughey and Dishaw, by the textual shrapnel that flies through the performance’s airwaves, by a steady state insistent bass-line which further accentuates the piece’s performative, monumental disassemblage- McGaughey and Dishaw’s striking poses. But, what’s so striking about their poses?

One answer involves a closer look at the performance’s conversion narrative. Unlike Wolffer in “Miss Mexico,” the pair convert shame into shamelessness by looking defiantly, conclusively at their audience in the performance’s “hair-raising” conclusion. The shift in their attitude further underscores the fine line (better, read/heard as a continuum) the performance’s soundtrack establishes between “admiring” and “disparaging” comments made in regards to the monumental and allegorical “female form,” and directed at literal women. If the piece’s aural narrative begins with the optimism that any woman can be “made beautiful” (“a wise Frenchman”’s observations), it ends with “the joke” of Woman, which reduces women to (task-oriented: “change the bulb,” “suck my fucking dick”) sexualized objects.



Furthermore, “Stephanie and Jessica”’s conversion narrative does not rely upon an epiphany, but upon process. This distinction proves crucial for a variety of reasons, including the performance’s efforts at re-location—relocating the subject’s agency within the piece’s web of catcalling. If “Stephanie and Jessica” respond to the piece’s soundtrack, they do so by “bashing back,” by reclaiming themselves at the site of stigmatized subjugation. Unlike “Dr. XX,” who gets boxed into her own image, “Stephanie and Jessica” respond to the performance’s shaming interpellations with a revalorization of the negative. They rewrite runway femininity and challenge their viewers to do the same.



In addition, they do so collaboratively, proving that the “and” in the title of their piece is both accented and does the accenting. In a possibly homosocial, at the least, female–female queer moment of solidarity, the pair wipe each others’ faces clean, helping to mend the break between the performance’s before-and-after affect, between its two presentations of Woman (epitomized in “Stephanie”’s one-heel on, one-heel off, jagged jaunt up the runway–mid-conversion). By highlighting the dissonance between two versions of femininity, the pair performatively pluralize Woman. In addition, they introduce the possibility that any woman operates in drag when she seeks to approximate the vanishing point of Woman. That the performance catches all women in its drag-net proves crucial in considering how it contributes to contemporary ruminations on

gender/sex/sexual identification.

If Butler argues that “drag allegorizes gender” (1990, 1993, 1997b), Esther Newton in *Mother Camp* (1972) both anticipates and substantiates Butler’s argument via her ethnography of drag performers and their audiences. Newton notes the ways in which drag draws attention to its status as performance in order, in turn, to

contextualize performance within a larger field of performativity. Detailing the techniques of drag, Newton argues: “The art in these impressions depends on a sharply defined tension between maintaining the impersonation as exactly as possible and breaking it completely so as to force the audience to realize that the copy is being done by a man” (ibid: 48). In addition, Newton contends that drag is not about performers looking like women; instead, their goal is to appear as Woman’s idealized version of femininity. Specifically, the performers Newton works with aspire to a glamour standard. They do not claim to be transvestites or to wear “transy drag;” in fact, transy drag violates their aesthetic because it “makes one look like an ordinary woman, and ordinary women are not beautiful” (ibid: 51). The idea that “ordinary women are not beautiful” presupposes that Womanhood is a performance in which femininity can only be approximated.

In “Stephanie and Jessica,” McGaughey and Dishaw literalize this premise, “allegorizing gender” as performance. And, in so doing, the pair broaden the scope of drag’s argument, presenting women personae drawn into its net, queering a “normativity,” which, in turn, the pair demagnetize. Refuting their personae’s (auto-)idealization, McGaughey and Dishaw reveal women’s “impersonations” of Woman, while simultaneously presenting to their audience the possibility of other feminine subject positions. Finally, by widening “drag”’s net, “Stephanie and Jessica” introduces the possibility that all *Belle Rogue Collection*’s participants act as performers in drag (an idea “Mining Dog” and “Miss Mexico” obliquely second, or, at the least, echo); thereby giving additional breadth to the gendered “politics” of “Belle Rogue Collection”’s body-politic.

Misting Empathy: “Chchch Shhh”’s Environmental Onomatopoeia.

Like Weidenhammer, Michele Sereda claimed “the burlesque” and “cabaret” as influences for “Chchch Shhh” and for her work in general (Sereda 2000). In addition, Sereda cited her ongoing interest in experimental theatre and her experience in directing the independent theatre company *Curtain Razors* as shaping the con-

tent and form of formal questions she brings to performance. Viewers' interpretations of her previous work spurred Sereda to investigate performance art as a medium, to continue to question, "What is form?... What is a gesture? What is a movement? ... What is the relationship between the performer and the spectator?" (ibid).

Furthermore, Sereda's thematic interest in landscape grounded her readings of corporeal geography; she noted, "Our bodies, whether you're male or female, are landscapes... how connected is your body landscape to your sense of who you are and

then to the external landscape that you're living in?... I'm

dealing with an external landscape influencing an internal (and back and forth)" (ibid). Sereda brings her external-internal topographical mapmaking to the forefront as she inhabits "Chchch Shhh"'s persona. In "Chchch Shhh," Sereda enters the runway, draped in a raincoat-cape which covers her mossy hat and two-piece fashioned land-outfit. Walking to the tune of *I Fall to Pieces*, Sereda literally risks dissolution, littering the runway with scraps of her landscaped argument.

Gestures, facial expressions, body language prove crucial in Sereda's execution of the performance. Nowhere is this more notable than in the piece's autoerotic, orgasmic epicentre. Taking off her raincoat and sporting a spraybottle with which "to tidy" herself up, Sereda begins to deconstruct in a violent, but con-



trolled shaking dance, which culminates in Sereda's Cheshire-cat grin of satisfaction. Maneuvering humour as a performative element, Sereda appeals to her audience's sense of empathic connection. Like Meili's interest in a "political minimalism," Sereda's desire for connection, versus confrontation (in direct contrast to pieces like "Stephanie and Jessica"—which paradoxically puts the performances in confrontation), and her use of humour to achieve this end, both separates her work from a body of performance art (and connects it to other performative traditions) and implicitly informs its relationship to an understated "political."



On one level "Chchch Shhh" suggests the metaphoric embodiment of a love relationship's prolongation and/or aftermath, where *I Fall to Pieces* voices the humorous literalization of the performative persona's enacted "heartsickness." But, if, like Brass and Poitras, one takes into account the historically constructed relationship evoked between nature/the land and symbolic Woman, one cannot avoid reading "Chchch Shhh" as also suggesting a second layer of interpretation, as gesturing toward an oblique "politics of location," which, in turn, it works to critique via gentle, but constant, elbow-ribbing.

All the while, "Chchch Shhh" actively resists linear narratives, allegorical acts of interpretation. Instead, the piece enacts Sereda's distinction between "persona" and "character," where a persona "simplifies" context, following her/his own "internal line and action" (ibid). "Chchch Shhh" simultaneously evokes and revokes symbolic/metaphoric constructions of Woman as "earth (goddess)"/landscape, by both drawing upon a 1970's and 80's tradition of essentialized (and, often spiritualized) feminine performance art (i.e. the works of Judy Chicago, Mary Beth Edelson, Betsy Damon, Carolee Schneemann, and in a more complicated manifestation, the oeuvre of Ana Mendieta) and earth art move-

ments and by poking fun at these aesthetic, and often overtly politicized, media of representation. Just as Jane Blocker strives to read the larger political commentaries concerning exile, diaspora, and minority subjectivity in Ana Mendieta's performances and earthworks in *Where Is Ana Mendieta?* (1999), Sereda calls upon her audience to imagine the regional, global, environmental (political) commentaries of her performance "Chchch Shhh." When pressed, Sereda compared the thematics of "Chchch Shh" to those of "Heavy Metal Buffalo Soldier," "Mining Dog," and "Polar Bear Waitress," insofar as each piece concerns itself with land, environments, and questions of contamination. But, locating the politics of "Chchch Shhh," involves navigating its off-putting process. Sereda's piece postmodernizes previous links between symbolic Woman and landscape, littering the runway with the fallen pieces of these connections. Its fragmentation of prior narratives hints at its ambiguous "environmentalism," applicable to and integrating both regional and global contexts.

Describing "Chchch Shhh"'s persona as a "portable greenhouse" (2000), Sereda suggested that, like Meili in her attentions to regional "mascots"/icons, she strove to rework symbols of nation; and, that the persona of "Chchch Shhh" represented/represents her "ideal national icon": "This is what I would love the national icon to be... if we all took time to care for things, to study the land and be with it, we probably wouldn't do half the things we do to it..." (ibid). That the land itself becomes Sereda's symbol of nation bespeaks to her concern with replacing traditional narratives of nation and nationalism with a revised politics of location which likewise reverts back to the literal equation of a nation equalling its land; for a version of environmentalism, which privileges landscape as language. Furthermore, an attention to linguistic practice, shapes "Chchch Shhh" from its title to its movement. Sereda cited her concern with alternative, often oral, forms of communication, "When we stay with just the alphabet, then, we no longer have to connect with our landscape" (ibid).

Certainly, the onomatopoeia of “Chchch Shhh,” coupled with the aural literalization of the piece’s/ persona’s deconstruction, hints at the idea that “Chchch Shhh” presents a fragmenting politics of environment(s), which does not occlude from its interpretative orbit piecemeal narratives of nation. To this end, “Chchch Shhh” distances itself from neat, clear “political” readings of its movement, suggesting, instead—with a wistful smile and a gesture of misting the audience—that “the political” proves itself to be equally fragmented and fragmenting; that the “romance” of individual or collective agency has “fallen to pieces” in contemporary political climates.



“Subversive Narcissism”: “Cosmosquaw”’s Star/Royal Status.

I get a kick out of Lori Blondeau’s performance “Cosmosquaw.” In *Belle Rogue Collection*’s version of “Cosmosquaw,” Blondeau models an aboriginal persona with attitude as noticeable as “Polar Bear Waitress”’s. Sporting sunglasses, a beehive hairdo, an “Indian princess” tattoo, black boots, a red negligee and feathered, glittery robe/wrap, “Cosmosquaw” presides over her audience, snapping her fingers to solicit lipstick, a lit cigarette, a glass of wine. Her sovereignty shines complete when she even demands the performance’s second-take, yelling, “Cut” to rewind the soundtrack *I Get a Kick Out of You*. Blondeau located “Cosmosquaw” as part of an ongoing collaborative project with visual artist Bradlee LaRocque. Through this representational project, Blondeau and LaRocque seek to deconstruct stereotypes of native persons and reconstruct them with an eye attentive to the “absurd” before-and-after of revision

(Blondeau 2000). Blondeau and LaRocque have developed and are developing performative personae to encapsulate non-traditional aboriginal women (insofar as they stand in stark contrast to representations of

“Indian” women generated by a largely white, Western constituency—for one recent example, see Walt Disney’s Pocahontas). In an “Artists’ Statement,” Blondeau and LaRocque note, Through the history of popular media and image in North America, Indian women have been depicted as either the beautiful Indian princess a perch mountain ledge, or as the firewood hauling “squaw”.... These images helped to erase the vitality of Indian people from the new North American landscape, so the general public would not question the validity, or the process, of colonization. (1999)

Over the course of two years, Blondeau and LaRocque have generated a series of images of Ms Cosmo, including one of her as Cosmosquaw, a glamour magazine’s cover-girl (one of the slides projected during the performance). She shares the spotlight with two other personae they have created—the “Lonely Surfer Squaw,” a postcard persona (posted on the website *Virtual Postcards from the Feminist Utopia*) who poses beaver bikini-clad with a pink phallic surfboard; and her grandmother-persona “Belle Savage.” In *Belle Rogue Collection*, Blondeau utilizes the fashion runway to give their effort three-dimensions, underscoring and resignifying previous iconography of aboriginal femininity by implicitly contrasting these to “Cosmosquaw”’s glamorous self-confidence, her “subversive narcissism.”



“Cosmosquaw”’s “obvious” politics offer a transformational vision, which involves an out concern with revising racialized and sexualized (and, for that matter, classed) representations of (ef)feminized nativism. Using humour and star-coded cultural registers, Blondeau performs to remedy Western representational deadends,



flaunting, what Lauren Berlant has called in another context, a kind of “diva citizenship,” embodied in the “tragi-comic” figure of “Cosmosquaw”’s performative anti-essentialism (1997).

In her final chapter of *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998), Amelia Jones examines the work of two U.S.-based minority visual/performance artists Lyle Ashton Harris and Laura Aguilar. Jones revalences the word “narcissism” by arguing that the two use the construct in their self-portraiture/performances to subvert hegemonic representations of personhood; she writes: “Harris appropriates narcissism to impose his flagrantly nonnormative body on an aesthetic system that cannot accommodate it without changing its assumptions” (217). Similarly, Blondeau presents her persona’s confidence in a humorous effort to challenge the limitations of “an aesthetic system” which can only accommodate the aboriginal woman via preestablished representational stereotypes.

“Cosmosquaw” presents the flipside of prevalent essentialisms, via her persona’s internalization and externalized refutation of them, rendering “absurd” flaunted icons of “Indian” Woman—the “squaw,” “prostitute” and “drunken Indian.” “Cosmosquaw” converts the “princess” into a “Queen,” giving her representational reign over performative practices of resignification/disidentification. “Cosmosquaw”’s flair for disidentification becomes apparent in even her persona’s given name. Blondeau explained that she and LaRocque named “Cosmosquaw” in part to work against the word “squaw”’s contemporary negative connotations (which remove the word from its aboriginal origins). In a quintessential disidentificatory narrative, Blondeau asserted: “I wanted to use the word “squaw” because I grew up being called a “squaw,” “a fucking, ugly squaw”... all these derogatory things toward me. When I was sixteen, I was called a “fucking, ugly squaw”... and I go home and my grandmother’s there and she asks me, “What’s wrong?” and I say, “Oh, I was called an ugly

squaw.” And, she goes, “Well, do you think you’re ugly?” And, I said, “No.” And she goes, “Well, you are a squaw.” And, it was the first time anybody explained to me what the word meant from an adult’s point of view and she goes, “It just means woman and you are a squaw.” And, so after that, when I would be called “squaw,” I’d just sorta say, “Yeah, I am. Do you have a problem with that?” And, it would totally take the power away from the people who were calling me that. (2000)

Like “Stephanie and Jessica”’s reversal of shame, “Cosmosquaw” inverts subjugating hate-speech which deploys the word “squaw” to further its pejorative portrayals of native subjectivity. Likewise, in the vein of “Stephanie and Jessica,” “Cosmosquaw”’s performance’s persona preserves the traces of negativity which the performance both subverts and references.



Furthermore, within the context of the *Belle Rogue Collection*, “Cosmosquaw”’s critical commentary extends. If Amelia Jones constructs her theory of “subversive narcissism” in opposition to previous aesthetic “narcissisms” (the idealized masculine artist-hero—and, I might add, in another context, the critic-hero- embodied by figures as diverse as Jackson Pollock, Yves Klein, Georges Mathieu, Vito Acconci), “Cosmosquaw” pokes fun at the idea of the performer-hero(ine) by pushing the image to an extreme or limit. “Cosmosquaw”’s presentation of its “star” performative persona sheds light on *Belle Rogue Collection*’s disidentification with both a fashion world’s and art world’s constructions of hierarchial star systems. Put differently, “Cosmosquaw” demonstrates the ways in which *Belle Rogue Collection* both showcases the work of individual artists and presents the fruits of aesthetic thematic collaboration; so that, disidentifying with the model and methodology of the fashion show, “Cosmosquaw” and the overall performance spectacle also disidentifies with hegemonic models of artistic

creation which would reify the individual (performance) artist. I raise my glass to “Cosmosquaw”’s raised-glass, slide-projected final salute, to her stellar resignifications of hegemonic representations of aboriginal women and the hero(ine)-artist.

Fashion Review: Performing Body-Politics.

Belle Rogue Collection calls upon its viewers to trace the specters, the spectacles, and the spectrum of “the political” (re)presented in its performances. Just as Jane Blocker argues against “marginaliz(ing) performance as a narrowly artistic endeavour” and for “open(ing) up artworks as social practice to the relations and interrelations—the performances of everyday life and culture—in which they are embedded” (1999: 24), *Belle Rogue Collection* argues for reading the form and content of its various performances as offering a range of commentary on contemporary political and performative practices. As such, the “value” of the collection rises in relation the diversity of its contents. Attempting to honor this diversity in my own readings of the performance spectacle, I have tried to respect each performance’s autonomy and address the links



between the pieces as a whole. Furthermore, I have attempted to consider *Belle Rogue Collection*’s disidentifications with the fashion show’s runway premise of the overdetermined, sexualized model persona. And, I have worked in my interpretations, from the theoretical position that no piece of artwork is “vacuum-packed” (outside of political contexts), that no performance operates as an “apolitical” creation. I state the latter explicitly to conclude with the statement that *Belle Rogue Collection* re-presents the range of a body-

politic, even as it presents a range of body-politics. From its oblique commentaries on globalization and environmentalism to its presentation of fetal-female conflict, to its varied mobilizations of politicized shame, to its foregrounding of aboriginal subjectivities and (post-)colonialities of power, to its explorations of (trans)nationalisms' symbolic (and often heterosexualized) sedimentations, *Belle Rogue Collection* runways its participants' interests in utilizing the constructed female body to identify, counter-identify, disidentify with ongoing cultural, social, and economic narratives of Woman, Nation, Native, Other, Environment. As such, *Belle Rogue Collection* underscores the intimate relations of performance, performativity, and politics; where, "outfits," "gestures," "bodies" supply spectators with the merchandise of social commentary and critique.

Arriving with distinctive professional and personal formations, the performance spectacle's collaborators showcase femininity as imposition, reiteration (a repeat performance), and a possible site ripe for reappropriation. Like the Regina public interventions they also enacted in-character, *Belle Rogue Collection's* performers—Lorena Wolffer, Anna Scott, Val Kinistino, Carolyn Meili, Lori Weidenhammer, Joelle Ciona, Robin Brass, Robin Poitras, Sarah McGaughey, Jessie Dishaw, Michele Sereda, and Lori Blondeau—publicly interrupt and intervene in practices of subjugation and subject-formation, enlivening Judith Butler's argument that "genders (and identities) can... be rendered thoroughly and radically incredible" (1990: 141).

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NEUTRAL
GROUND