



## DRY WIPE

26 April - 30 June 2013

**LAUNCH:** 26 April 6pm - 9pm

**LOCATION:** Nottingham Contemporary WIFI & Sleeping Upright.com

**ARTISTS: LARA ANGOL (UK), DORA BUDOR (USA/CRO), MAJA CULE (USA/CRO), KAH BEE CHOW (NZ), JESSE DARLING (UK), ALEXANDRA GORCZYNSKI (USA), MIA GOYETTE (DE), BERRY PATTEN (UK)**

Dry Wipe is an all female online exhibition at [www.sleepingupright.com](http://www.sleepingupright.com) that sits alongside The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things curated by Mark Leckey at Nottingham Contemporary.

The online project hijacks the Nottingham Contemporary WIFI system and brings together artists works that explore modes of display via mass media and digital aesthetics as a means to navigate reality and investigate the production of meaning.

Each artist will display new work during a given time period:

Berry Patten	26 Apr - 5 May
Jesse Darling	6 - 12 May
Maja Cule	13 - 19 May
Mia Goyette	20 - 26 May
Alexandra Gorczynski	27 May - 2 June
Kah Bee Chow	3 - 9 June
Lara Angol	10 - 16 June
Dora Budor	17 - 30 June

Access the online exhibition:  
i) by logging onto the internet via the Nottingham Contemporary WIFI system  
ii) visiting [www.sleepingupright.com](http://www.sleepingupright.com)

For enquiries please email:  
[info@sleepingupright.com](mailto:info@sleepingupright.com)

Sleeping Upright is a project by Candice Jacobs.

**INTRODUCTORY TEXT WRITTEN BY RÓZSA ZITA FARKAS, DIRECTOR & CURATOR OF ARCADIA MISSA, LONDON**

[WWW.ARCADIAMISSA.COM](http://WWW.ARCADIAMISSA.COM)

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**FEMININE AESTHETIC AS FEMINIST AESTHETIC (INCORPORATION OF THE 'AFFECTIVITY' SENSIBILITY)**

Georgia O'Keeffe painted Black Iris in 1926, it was a large-scale oil painting of a natural form at close range, prompting the viewer to take a good look at the ephemeral object. O'Keeffe's work was often interpreted by Freudians and later by Feminists as a representation of female genitalia, and the artist has often been accredited as the progenitor of female iconography. O'Keeffe however always denied that this symbolism was present within her practice, which leaves us questioning whether her legacy has been laid out as feminist simply because of the essentialist 'feminine' subject matter (of flowers perhaps), her gender, or both. Her feminine aesthetic is feminist, by prescription, by default. It is a continuation of identification, an identification that the artists exhibiting in this online exhibition, Dry Wipe, are too negotiating, eighty-seven years on.

In the recently translated Preliminary Materials for the Theory of the Young-Girl, its authour Tiqqun, a French collective/ journal for radical philosophy (1999 – 2001), presents the gendered language of representations - in its own form, and in its claim that 'identity' is prescribed by capital. One of these selfhoods we know is femaleness. For Tiqqun, 'femaleness', or 'female essence', would be one of many self-definitions that occur after a process of Young-Girlification. Young-Girlification is the valorisation of self within an explicitly neoliberal framework; bluntly put, you are what you buy, and a sense of self is 'found' within what you personally consume. Or perhaps self-consumption.

Tiqqun describe the reason for the term Young-Girl as being thus:

*The formal domination of Capital has become more and more real. Consumer society has come to seek out its best supports from among the marginalised elements of traditional society—women and youth first, followed by homosexuals and immigrants.*

*To those who were minorities yesterday, and who had therefore been the most foreign, the most spontaneously hostile to consumer society, not having yet been bent to the dominant norms of integration, this gives an air of emancipation.*<sup>1</sup>

Fourteen years on from Tiqqun writing this, consumer society is no longer solely centred within the post-Fordist shopping mall, but exists instead in our communication. I must mention here that material realities are intrinsic to communication; I don't mean technicism, or objects 'coming to life' by some essential conscience, which technology instigates within them. I mean

that our interactions are contained within a digital landscape embedded in, and structured on, the socio-political relations of global capitalism.

Thinking of the Young-Girl in light of technological advancement and economic recession, we need to further interrogate what our consumption is and where 'femaleness' sits within this if we are to make use of the antipathetic term 'Young-Girl'. Consumption across networks enables the construction of identity without the significance of the mall. This happens via simulacra, image-objects – products of labour-consumption. This consumption, although not directly fiscal, is bound with a global economy of exploitation – where were the minerals for my Macbook mined from, who do all my shared 'likes' garner traffic and wealth for? Existing in these global economies of exploitation are image-objects, our aesthetic language that reinforces the gendered etymologies; which have been previously formed through the reproduction of capitalist ideology.

The fact that capital constructs 'femaleness' is a context that many artists are dealing with in relation to online culture, such as in Emilie Gervais' <http://w-h-a-t-e-v-e-r.net/> - a site to upload any html artwork on the premise that you decide whether it is filed under 'girl art' or 'boy art'. Rather than objects undergoing a new life, or transformation, in regard to the advancement of the digital image, the digital image is approached as the propagator of narrative, as product and representation of late capital.

If Dry Wipe contained an all male list of artists it would be pulled up for its inequality (as happened in regard to other art projects last year, in Art Fag City amongst other forums). So what is this

<sup>1</sup> Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for the Theory of the Young-Girl, Semiotexte 2012, pp.15-16

exhibition saying in its all female line up of artists? In the Art Fag City article, curator and artist Sally McKay is quoted saying “if I put together a show with all one gender (especially a large group show) I have to know that the show is therefore going to be about gender, whether I like it or not. If I do it by accident, then I am missing a big piece of what it is to be a curator. If I do it on purpose, then I have to own it in the curatorial premise of the exhibition.”

Artist and Curator of Dry Wipe, Candice Jacobs, notes that the title of the show itself “alludes to a dirty use of feminism, or the feminine, a somewhat un-romantic idea of the feminine”. In its takeover of the wif, an extension of the institution, it makes clear that the show’s ‘femaleness’ is packaged by capital and performs on top of it. In its title it realises it is defined because of its gender make up, before it has existed.

What is femaleness when it is constructed not by desire for identity, but by knowledge of ‘identity’ as an operation within the confines of a preordained self-hood? Does this exhibition attack the binary that it reproduces?

Nelly Richard pulled up this question through another binary of our understanding of aesthetics within the bio-political frame of gender: feminine and feminist aesthetics. For Richard this is the distinction of that which qualifies the dominant essentialism of ‘feminine’, and that which subverts it. It was written in 1993 and marks the encounter of ‘feminism’ and ‘postmodernism’, when

such ‘an encounter’ was still delineated, clear and needed.

*The definition of a “feminine aesthetic” usually connotes art that expresses woman as a natural (essential) fact and not as a symbolic-discursive category formed and deformed by systems of cultural representation. Feminine art would be any art representing a universal femininity or a feminine essence illustrating the universe of values and meanings (sensibility, corporeality, affectivity, etc.) [ . . . ] On the other hand, a “feminist aesthetic” would be that other aesthetic postulating woman as a sign immersed in a chain of patriarchal forms of oppression and repression which must be broken, through a coming awareness of how masculine superiority is exercised and combated.<sup>2</sup>*

Dry Wipe occurs within a pre-defined binary. It doesn’t pertain to present ‘femaleness’ in its selection of artists, it instead demonstrates a shifting notion of the object, and ‘self’. Saturating physical space through Nottingham Contemporary’s wif, the work becomes less ‘virtual’, and instead connotes non-delineation, messiness, within existing definitions of reality. I would argue that the artists for Dry Wipe are likewise swerving definition and operating within both ‘feminine’ and ‘feminist’ aesthetics simultaneously.

So how do these artists operate in simultaneity, if their work is not specifically about gender, yet exists in a show gendered by societal conscription? There is a difference between a feminist use of

the feminine, and re-appropriation. Re-appropriation is a form of reclamation in order to ‘take back’ a word that has been appropriated as derogatory against a specific group. It is a method of re-identification, attempting a re-ordering of societal definitions and delineations. The work in Dry Wipe is not driven by an action to reclaim, it is aware of its ontological positioning within an aesthetic language, and takes its own subsumption as a point of departure.

Thus, in this amorphous context these artists employ ‘the feminine’, not as a method of re-appropriation, but as incorporation into feminist dialogue<sup>3</sup>. They cannot ‘re-appropriate’, as the descriptions, aesthetics and attributes have been thrust upon them previously. As delineations become increasingly colonised and erased by consumption, Dry Wipe is against definition. What these artists have instead laid out is a vehement dis-identification: a compaction, a mutation of the container / description of identity that feminist debate may travel through. They can, for a moment more, resist the commodification of their ‘alternativity’, or ‘otherness’, not by bringing objects ‘to life’, but via the knowledge that they themselves have incorporated the image-object (as labour-consumption). As Sarah Gram writes,

*Participating in femininity, and documenting and representing that participation, is not only a relation of the young girl to herself, as the narcissism explanation would have it. It is also the relation of the young girl to herself as the*

*Young-Girl, as an object to work on [ . . . ] The image may assert sexual subordination, but it still asserts.<sup>4</sup>*

If, as Richards posits, aesthetics continue to provide essences of ‘sensibility, corporeality, and affectivity’, then it is with this that our image was already made, and with this image that a common language is spoken. Celebration would be too strong a word; it is not celebration of the dualistic construction of normativity, but more that the practices demonstrate an understanding of how this dualism has seeped into neoliberalism. The digital offers no transcendence, but rather stands within your corporeal understanding of reality. As Dry Wipe clogs your wif, affectivity is waged, essentialism rammed down your throat till you are choking in disgust and fake crying at its beauty. I am still thinking of Georgia O’Keeffe, how the artists in Dry Wipe and O’Keeffe sit as book ends to the ‘encounter’ of feminism and postmodernism, neither operate with cynical distance or ironic turn, parody or pastiche. The artists’ aesthetic language and the context of feminist thought are inseparable. Lets aim for its reproduction to maintain their own terms.

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**Text also available online at**  
[www.nottinghamcontemporary.org](http://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org) &  
[www.sleepingupright.com](http://www.sleepingupright.com)

<sup>2</sup> Richard, *Masculine/Feminine: Practice(s) of Difference*, pp.12, 2004 Duke University Press

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Feminine’ (or as Richard would put it – affectivity, corporeality, sensibility – and for the group of artists in this show, their individual, expanded and communicative/narrative based practices, ‘affectivity’ would be the most apt ‘feminine aesthetic’ for inscription here.)

<sup>4</sup> <http://text-relations.blogspot.ca/2013/03/the-young-girl-and-selfie.html> , Sarah Gram, *The Young-Girl and the Selfie*, 2013