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AMALIA ULMAN: *EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS* _____ Between April and September 2014, the artist Amalia Ulman, born in Argentina, raised in Spain and educated in London, posted on her Instagram account a series of pictures and selfies seemingly documenting the authentic and intimate story of a transformation, a crisis and its resolution. This series of pictures, however, as she later revealed, did not depict her 'real' life but constituted an art piece in three parts called *Excellences & Perfections*.[1]

_____ In the first phase of the piece, one could follow the young artist moving to Los Angeles and beginning a new life there. The imagery is that of a showy 'cuteness', the artist playing with visual references to the *kawaii* culture, with white and pink as dominant colours. Alongside images of bunnies, cats, cakes, and flowers, Ulman mixed innocence and sexualisation, such as when she posted a picture of her bottom in pink shorts with the caption: "tomorrow i start juice fasting cuz i hav a photoshoot on sunday brrrrr > ___ <" (Ulman 2018: 78 and 231). In the wake of the Instagram-influencer model, she gradually started using the account to advertise lingerie, T-shirts, and other products. Thereafter, her modelling became more frequent and the use of hashtags more professional.

_____ The peaceful and cute atmosphere was suddenly abandoned on 20 June: what was supposed to be a fancy date with her boyfriend turned into the end of the relationship. Her life took a new and unexpected shift. Ulman turned into a 'bad girl', the posts of expensive fashion products, luxury hotels and herself in 'sexy' poses dominate her feed. The imagery was now direct and aggressive, the colours darker, without a wisp of cuteness. "Stay pretty. Be educated. Dress well. Get money" – this was the new tone (ibid: 132). Ulman let us understand that she had started working as an escort (ibid: 155 and 235), joked about cocaine consumption (ibid: 164 and 235), shared with her followers the whole process of her breast augmentation surgery from preparations to recovery (ibid: 156ff. and 235).

_____ Gradually, the path toward *Excellences & Perfections* had acquired a self-destructive character. At the beginning of August, Ulman seemed tired and distressed. On 8 August, after publishing a selfie while holding a gun, she posted two videos of herself crying desperately (Ulman 2014). After eight days of silence, the artist

published a post on Instagram depicting a heart and apologising for her recent behaviour: "I'm recovering now and I feel better, all thanks to the help of my closest friends and family" (Ulman 2018: 191 and 237). It was the beginning of the third and final phase of the performance, characterised by the overcoming of the crisis and the finding of an inner stability. Ulman appears in meditation on her bed; posts images of vegetarian breakfasts and the nutritionist and personal trainer she travels with; and shares pictures of a trip to Istanbul (ibid: 211f., 218ff.). In yet another photograph, in black and white, she is holding her baby cousin in her arms (ibid: 204). The cuteness has returned but now is inserted in a frame of ostentatious self-awareness. The bad girl has given way to an apparently emotionally centred woman. Natural colours and wood tones command the scene, accompanied by hashtags such as #simple, #healthy, #ethnic, #namaste, #love and #family.

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯The performance ended on 14 September with the black and white photograph of a rose (ibid: 229). On the same date, in two posts leading up to that of the rose, a new male partner had entered the scene of Ulman's life (ibid: 227f.). "Isn't it nice to be taken care of ✨", writes the artist, captioning a selfie of the couple in bathrobes (ibid: 239). In the tale of a pretty girl who gets lost along the way but goes on to find her path again, the prince, who guarantees protection and ensures her newfound stability, could not be missed. In the meantime, Ulman's Instagram account had reached almost 90,000 followers, many of which, however, as Steinberg notes, were fake profiles purchased by the artist Constant Dullaart as part of a project concerning the generation of artificial audiences and attention (Steinberg 2019: 54).

⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯Just over a month after the end of the piece, on 17 October 2014, the artist participated in a talk organised by the ICA Off-Site in London as part of the event *Do You Follow? Art in Circulation.* In a panel moderated by Michael Connor, artistic director of Rhizome – a media art organisation affiliated with the New Museum in New York and collaborating with Ulman's project – the artist finally revealed that what was seen on her Instagram account over the last few months was nothing but a well-scripted performance piece entitled *Excellences & Perfections.*[2] This revelation generated great attention to the artist's work and calmed the anxiety that professionals in the art world were beginning to express to the artist regarding the way she was presenting herself online (Sooke 2016): this was not a 'true' Instagram profile; she was not telling a 'real' story. Showing the deception, Ulman transformed the frame of the reception: The authenticity of Instagram thus emerged as the

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product of a fictional process.[3] The sense of documentary intimacy was nothing but the result of well-known expectations and stereotypes that Ulman appropriated from the most popular girls trending on Instagram. She was playing in accordance with the algorithm of the platform to gain visibility for her Instagram persona.

By unmasking Instagram as a space for producing a pseudo-authenticity, Ulman also aims at a more specific goal. She intends to show how this construction applies specifically to female representation: "I wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, and not something biological or inherent to any woman" (Sooke 2016). In so doing, she not only exposed the stereotypes that govern gender representation but displayed how these are the results of an intersubjective process as well as how marketing and commodification strategies are based on these stereotypes. The Instagram persona presented by Ulman acquired its veracity from the belief of her followers, which in turn was based on the recognizability and verisimilitude of the female model presented.[4] By making this circuit and its artificial character explicit, the performance brought to light the labour behind the production of authenticity within social media – which functions, as Rob Horning remarks, only as long as it remains hidden (Horning 2018: 25). This labour is rewarded, both economically and affectively, through social recognition. The pain that may be necessary to endure in order to attain this reward, from misogynistic attacks on social media to the physical pain of plastic surgery, is taken for granted and accepted as part of the game. Ulman, while not manifestly presenting any clear alternative to this model, allows us to observe it from a possibly critical distance by exposing its functioning.

Because of its capacity to intercept and unveil the processes of constructing norms and meaning on social media, this work received praise and consideration in the subsequent years. It was displayed in the *Electronic Superhighway (2016–1966)* exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery and *Performing for the Camera* at the Tate Modern in London in 2016 and has been discussed since by traditional media outlet such as the Telegraph, the BBC or the CNN.

In this article, by analysing the Instagram piece and comparing it with earlier performance-based works revolving around gender and identity, I will examine its multiple layers and scrutinise its ambiguity. In particular, by considering the statements and supplemental information provided by Ulman after the end of the Instagram piece as integral to its formation and meaning, my aim is to show how different modes of framing the work produces distinct, if not opposite, modes of critical intervention.

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GENDER AND ROLE PLAY: *EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS* **AND THE EARLY PERFORMANCE-BASED ART** _____ Ulman's Instagram work can be connected to that tradition of performance-based art that, from the beginning of the 1970s, used role play and the construction of fictional personae to investigate the social constitution of identity and the stereotypes that govern gender representation. In this regard one can mention artists such as Eleanor Antin, Lynn Hershman, Adrian Piper, Cindy Sherman, Martha Wilson, among others.[5] The relation between Ulman and these performance-based art practices is not to be considered in terms of a direct genealogy, nor should the goal be to identify a clear set of influences or direct reference. Relating Ulman to those artists means, rather, to examine how certain strategies of interrogating gender and identity formation are dislocated in different historical contexts and how the processes that they set in motion address both the wide societal and the specific artistic frameworks in which they operate.

_____ In 1973, Adrian Piper created the *Mythic Being*, a young black male alter ego, characterised by an Afro wig, moustache, sunglasses and a cigar. The performance-based project was actualised through multiple modes of display, ranging from street performances to photographs, drawings and advertisements that were presented once a month for almost two years in the *Village Voice*, a New York alternative newspaper, 'hidden' in its section of gallery advertisements.[6] In these ads, the same pictures of the *Mythic Being* appeared each time with a different 'mantra' in a thought bubble,[7] which was excerpted from the personal journals the artist had been keeping since she was eleven (Piper 1996c: 263): "Today was the first day of school. The only decent boys in my class are Robbie and Clyde. I think I like Clyde. 21-9-61" (Piper 1973). In the *Village Voice* series, as Cherise Smith has pointed out, Piper produces an "androgynous, liminal or third-sex being" (Smith 2007: 50f.). Is this a male attracted to males? Or is it a female dressed in drag attracted to males? A clear distinction does not seem either possible or relevant. As Piper herself explains, her alter ego embodied, in fact, an investigation into identity formations, transitions and multiple possibilities: "The Mythic Being is, or may be: An unrealized but possible product of the particular history of events I in fact underwent, a necessary alternative to the limits of my sense of the self […]" (Piper 1996b: 118). The liminality of this persona disrupts a binary perception of gender and the idea of the self as a natural and stable entity. Furthermore, the ambiguity of this representation leaves room for the imaginative intervention of the newspaper's readers. In some notes on the

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piece, Piper underlines the public nature of her alter ego (Piper 1996b: 124f.), maintaining that the alter ego is not a singular individual among others but a mythical one (Piper 1996a: 107), a space for multiple – and possibly contradictory – projections that provoke the spectators to make use of, and reflect on, their own view of gender and race.[8]

_____Similarly, Cindy Sherman, only a few years later, began her photographic work, calling into question the viewer's gaze and revealing its power of constituting the subject portrayed. Starting in the late 1970s, Sherman, with herself as model, employed make-up, costumes, and disguises to create a number of female characters and investigated the representation of femininity. In the early series such as *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980) and *the Centerfolds* (1981),[9] for example, she explored, respectively, the iconography of the cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, and the centrefold format of men's erotic magazines. In the pictures of those series, however, she did not simply reproduce the conventions and stereotypes of these media. If, on the one hand, her photographs clearly let well-known imagery resonate, on the other, they remain in a state of suspension. The artist does not offer any clear references to specific iconographic sources or to the action that precedes or follows the depicted frame. The viewers must participate, as they are invited to complete these images, attributing meanings and narratives to them. As observed by Amelia Jones, Sherman's practice showed how the subject "is never complete within itself but is always contingent on others […]" (Jones 1997: 40). In these series, Sherman did not explicitly block the voyeurism of the male gaze but, by infusing the images with theatricality and by playing with the conventions – for example, showing the vulnerability of the subject portrayed in a pin-up format – she exposed its objectifying dynamic. Here, the 'gaze' that makes these attributions is thematized, thus the structural disposition of the representation becomes manifest and its power is disrupted.

_____The multiplication of the self through numerous masks, the reason for the attention devoted to Sherman's work by postmodern criticism, has at the same time caused a sort of nostalgia for a stable subject, expressed in the words of those critics and curators who have thought to identify, in this or that work of the artist, the 'real' Cindy.[10] What is behind those masquerades? Is there really a 'real' Cindy to locate somewhere in her work? Is this a relevant question? Or are we rather faced with representations of subjectivity as a processual product of an intersubjective exchange?

_____The question of identity and the relationship between self

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and other is also of central importance in the early works of Martha Wilson. In photo-performances such as *Posturing Drag* (1972), where she impersonates a man dressed in drag as a woman, Wilson investigates the intertwining of selfhood and appearance, challenging the notion of a stable identity: "Form determines feeling, so that if I pose in a role, I can experience a foreign emotion" (Accompanying text by the artist). In *Painted Lady* (1972), presenting two photographs of herself before and after a make-up session, Wilson analyses the effect of make-up in the creation of the subject. Here, the objectification is turned upside down, becoming the space for the empowerment of the female artist: "Exaggeration and stylization of my surface results in disappearance of my 'own' features, or sensation of an absence of preconditions. A range of possible expression, of unaccustomed attitudes, can fill this vacuum; absence of self is the free space in which expression plays" (Accompanying text). The spectator's participation in the process of identity construction is explicitly thematised, during the same years, in the performance *Selfportrait* (1973), where the artist simply sat on a stool in the gallery space, asking the audience to write who she appeared to be, thus creating her and subverting the meaning of self-portrait (Wark 2001: 18).

_____The subject no longer appears to exist as something stable and self-contained but emerges as the result of an intersubjective negotiation. Against the modernist myth of a transcendent and autonomous artistic subjectivity, whose hidden body is a male one (Jones 1998: 62), the artists who, since the 1970s, have utilised their own bodies as medium, show the body in its singularity and specificity, not as the source of an undivided agency but as a field of plural and temporal inscriptions. In so doing, the disinterestedness of the beholder and the aesthetic autonomy of the art object are disrupted and the relationship of desire and disturbance becomes part of the artistic work.

_____In the kind of performance art that uses role play and shows the unstable character of identity, the documentation – mostly photographs and videos – is revealed in its opacity and artificiality. Eleanor Antin, who in the early 1970s created a series of fictitious alter egos, such as *the King*, *the Black Movie Star*, *the Ballerina* and *the Nurse*, has declared:

> The early conceptualists were primitives. Contrary to their belief, documentation is not a neutral list of facts. It is a conceptual creation of events after they are over. All 'description' is a form of creation. […] I began to see that my interests in transformation were inextricably bound up

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with the nature of the documentation process itself. (Antin 2012: 893)

_____ In so doing, these (feminist) art practices anticipated some of the motifs of Judith Butler's reflections on gender performativity,[11] according to which there is no core or essence to gender that is expressed in certain acts, but it is these acts themselves that performatively constitute the identity they are supposed to express:

> The distinction between expression and performativeness is quite crucial, for if gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed. (Butler 1988: 528)

_____ Remaining within these theoretical perimeters, these art performances can be described, in Butler's terms, as "parodic practices" that, through cross-dressing, drag or sexual stylisation of gender stereotypes, contribute to a de-naturalisation of identity and gender categories (Butler 1990: 174ff.). Herein lies the strongest contact between this feminist performance art tradition and Ulman's piece. In a dialogue with Rob Horning, the artist compared the subversive potential of her work to that of the drag workshops described by Beatriz Preciado in *Testo Junkie* (Horning and Ulman 2014). In these workshops, as well as in her Instagram piece, the imitation and theatricalisation of gender roles are capable of exacerbating their features and hence unveiling their fictionality.

IS THE PERSONAL (STILL) POLITICAL? *EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS* **AND THE ANXIETY OF THE ART WORLD** _____ Ulman's strategy of disturbance, however, does not emerge during the run of the Instagram piece but is set in motion by the additional information that the artist provides after its conclusion. The artwork therefore is not yet complete at the cessation of the Instagram performance; the subsequent phase of unveiling is an integral part of it. Revealing

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the deception, Ulman places herself in a position of distance and knowledge: under the mask of her Instagram persona appears a self-aware artist, who is critically examining this social network and its commodifying mechanisms. The 'real' Amalia Ulman shows herself to be different from the role she enacted. Some statements by the artist herself support this interpretation, as she, for example, emphasizes that everything was scripted, and her posts were totally fabricated (Black, Connor, Shields and Ulman 2014). Thus, the performance would essentially be a hoax, but one that, as Emma Maguire points out, does not intend to mock the Insta-girl: "Like many hoaxes, the object of critique is the audience" (Maguire 2018: 196). Ulman reflects her followers' own manipulability back onto themselves and hence shows how authenticity and intimacy on social media is nothing but a well-constructed illusion. By framing her online presence as an art piece, Ulman makes explicit the intersubjective quality of this construction.

_____ Unmasking the hoax, Ulman produces two different audiences: those who have been (involuntary) participants of the performance, and those who can subsequently observe it from the critical distance ensured by its new frame as an art piece. In so doing, however, Ulman brings the Instagram performance back to the safe space of the artistic creation. On this distinction and on the production of this aesthetic frame lies the possibility for the performance to enter the system of conservation and circulation of contemporary art: the piece, now stored in a digital archive developed by Rhizome, was published as a book by Prestel in 2018 and has been displayed in recent years at different exhibitions.

_____ Before the artist revealed the fictional character of the story she depicted, however, this division between audiences did not exist. Ulman had consciously mixed her life and her artistic work, successfully leading her followers to believe her to be identical with the persona appearing on her Instagram account. This, while attracting attention to her online profile, caused, as Ulman recounts, concern in her professional surroundings about the effects that her social-network presence could have on her art career: "Some gallery I was showing with freaked out and was like, 'You have to stop doing this, because people don't take you seriously anymore.' Suddenly I was this dumb b---- because I was showing my ass in pictures" (Sooke 2016). In the book documenting the performance, Ulman embeds, in the middle of the printed reproduction of the Instagram posts, a written 'documentary' section. These are the letters she had allegedly written from the Ananda Meditation Retreat where she had said she was from 23 June to 11 July 2014 – in

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the same time frame when she was appearing on Instagram as a 'bad girl' – to recover from the psychophysical consequences of the bus accident suffered the previous autumn. In the last of these letters, she writes:

> I was having a great day yesterday and I think my heart chakra was too open (therefore, it was easy to upset me) when I spoke to O. I've become used to being extremely sensitive to my surroundings, and the soft manners of the inhabitants of this village. The London chit-chat really penetrated my heart like a dagger.
> He was aggressive and told me he might have to cancel my solo show because the performance is upsetting people. He brought back all the big city bitchiness I've lost touch with. He also reminded me of the effects of the images I was blindly posting every morning, almost like a reflex. The levels of negativity were so intense that I felt extremely weak afterwards. (Ulman 2018: 127)

_____ That kind of woman appearing on Ulman's Instagram account – in short, uncritical, inhabited by the desire and need for recognition, and incapable of resisting the processes of commodification – is not welcome in the art world. But underneath a pertinent criticism against a model of female objectification, we can glimpse a misogynistic element. This emerged clearly during the discussion at the ICA panel in London, when Michael Connor stated:

> People have expressed a lot of anxieties about this project, and a lot of criticisms as well, because for four months you looked like the worst person that we know or something. You looked like someone who was propagating this terrible image of cis-gendered woman. And so, people that are in this room have this privileged knowledge that that was a performance and it was studied from a kind of world where that is actually, unfortunately, very common. One of the key anxieties, and a lot of men expressed this anxiety to me, is that then convinces other women to have a boob job or something […]. (Black, Connor, Shields, Ulman 2014)

_____ Exposing the deception, Ulman neutralises this anxiety and the possible negative consequences of her Instagram presence for her professional path. She is not that "terrible image of cis-gendered

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woman" (ibid) but merely plays her, thus adopting a critical distance from this model.

_____The shift of the performance from its original context to the artistic frame removes it from that dangerous and scandalous site of ambiguity in which it was previously located. However, this shift – establishing well-defined boundaries between her art and her (social media) life – affects, at the same time, a sort of process of domestication of her work, something with which performance art has had to confront since its early days. It is precisely here that Ulman's work diverges from the political potential of early feminist performance-based art. At that time, social criticism was indistinguishable from a radical questioning of what is visible and how it is visible in the context of the visual arts. The very use of the body and of performance as medium represented a challenge to a still dominant modernist model and its gender politics. Ulman acts instead in a context in which these mediums and their political quality have not only entered the canon but have, in a sense, become part of the mainstream. By stating that she wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, she brings the images of her piece into the safe harbour of a determined tradition: her Instagram account, once seen as a possible detriment to her career, can now be legitimately exhibited alongside the photo-works and documentation of Eleanor Antin, Adrian Piper, Cindy Sherman and others.[12] If we read Ulman's work of art along these lines, it appears to be, regarding to the systems of art production and consumption, rather conformist. Paradoxically, in fact, at the very moment when the work's political intention is made explicit, the work loses its critical potential with respect to the expectations that govern gender constructions within the apparently progressive field of visual arts.

_____This reading, however, is somewhat undermined by other statements by the artist, which we should also consider as informational supplements that contribute to other possible constructions of the work and its narratives. Ulman, in fact, emphasises the closeness of her own character to that of her Instagram persona with the same frequency with which she underlines the latter's fictionality. For instance, she has revealed that she indeed worked as an escort to support herself after art school (Langmuir 2016); she has said that in *Excellences & Perfections* she was embodying her own insecurities and fears (Björk 2016); and she has stressed that she is so engaged with her art subjects that she is not able to distinguish between life and artistic practice (Maguire 2018: 196). Thus, if on the one hand Ulman places herself in a position of safe distance, on the other, she presents herself as someone who has

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embodied and explored, first-hand, the anxieties and desires that characterise this fictional persona. This polarity seems to be the result of an ambiguity inherent to the performance piece itself, disclosing its multiple layers and interpretations.

_____A closer analysis shows, in fact, a further – and even primary – goal of the artist: as Ulman explicitly declares during the ICA panel discussion, and as pointed out by Maguire in her contribution (Maguire 2018: 176), she did not simply intend to deceive her Instagram audience to betray their manipulability but rather meant to 'troll' the gatekeepers of contemporary art and, in so doing, investigate the rules and regulatory mechanisms that govern the art field and its gender representations:

> In December 2013, I was invited to participate in a talk on self-branding. The term nauseated me. Was I self-branding? My openness had become a commercial strategy. No filter. I was unintentionally performing the stereotype of the artsy brunette, the poor female artist that had moved from a provincial town to the big city, the eager learner that requires to be saved by the male director of some museum or some school of fine arts. So if self-representation was an asset, if Facebook selfies overshadowed works of art themselves, I'd have to boycott myself to undermine the capitalist undertone of my online presence. Let the trolls in. (Black, Connor, Shields, Ulman 2014)

_____The artist therefore seems to have intended to produce a persona not acceptable in the art world, to disturb its regime of visibility and to bring out its misogynistic undertone. Seen from this angle, Ulman's performance thus acquires a political and critical dimension that closely resembles that of numerous works of (feminist) performance and body art. Read this way, Ulman's piece turns into a questioning of the ideology and power structures of contemporary art and its market.

_____One of the most interesting accounts provided by Ulman concerns the reactions caused, during the performance, by her alleged breast surgery. Instead of the attacks she would have expected, Ulman said that not only did she receive numerous private messages of encouragement from her colleagues, but that many of them also revealed to her their own desire to undergo plastic surgery – "even though their 'ideology' didn't allow them too [*sic*]". The paradox that seems to be born of these exchanges is that of a model of emancipation from objectification that turns

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into a normative apparatus and that potentially banishes bodies and subjects that do not correspond to its norms – such as that presented by Ulman in her piece:

> What the three characters did was to bring up all these 'hidden' desires that some people, because of being part of an art crowd 'ideology' usually keep repressed. I personally thought I'd get slammed by feminists for my behavior, but generally what I got was people saying things like: 'You are very brave' or 'Praying for you to recover ASAP'. Especially interesting is how many women privately asked me about the surgery because they had thought many times of altering their bodies and adapting themselves to the male gaze, even though their 'ideology' didn't allow them too [*sic*]. This inconsistency with regard to how the art crowd behaves superficially and how it reacts privately was very illuminating. I got all these women's insecurities afloat—not because they are weak, but because there is obviously, in the supposed liberal and supportive art crowd, a very misogynistic undertone. (Horning and Ulman 2014)

⎯⎯Following Ulman's argument, it is also necessary to underline a problematic aspect inherent to it. As Snyder (2008) and Wood (2006) have pointed out in their respective analyses of the so-called 'third-wave feminism', a pro-sex and non-judgmental attitude exclusively emphasising the 'free choice' of women – for example, to adapt themselves to the male gaze – risks paying too little attention to how "chosen desires are constructed", not recognising "how an aggregation of individual choices can have a negative impact on gender relations at large" (Snyder 2008: 189). As Bryson shows in her survey, more recent feminism has begun to correct this former excessively individualistic approach and its neoliberal framework by focussing on structural conditions and inequalities that participate in shaping individual choices (Bryson 2016: 279–282).

⎯⎯Whatever position is held with regard to this difficult balance between individual choice and social consequence, a criticism of female objectification should primarily address the wider conditions that, in the current capitalistic global framework, determine this objectification. In other words, it is not a (moral) reprehension of single individuals and their choices – nor the threat to sanction those who 'deviate' from implicit norms and expectations – that could bear an emancipatory value, but a wider reflection on the

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conditions in which these given subjects operate. Showing the pervasiveness of certain processes of shaping desire and pleasure, demonstrating how even allegedly critical [art] subjects experience this pervasiveness, means bringing out the tensions and contradictions that characterise gender norms and representations – not only in the wider context of society but specifically within the art world. And this is, I argue, the most significant critical potential of Ulman's performance.

_____ However, in Ulman's work, her attitude towards commodification remains, in the end, ambiguous, oscillating between criticising a pseudo-authentic femininity and the emphasis on the subjects' choice to determine their own selves – possibly also in line with that same pseudo-authenticity. This ambiguity resonates, ultimately, in the model that Ulman, on different occasions, proposes as pluralistic and liberating from the dominance of normatively stereotyped subjectivities, namely the sex industry: "In this regard, I've always thought that pornographic material is one step ahead; because it is an underground economy, it is easier for people to accept what they actually like looking at, because erections are harder to fake" (Horning and Ulman 2014).

_____ It appears clear in the example chosen by Ulman that although she refers to an effective multiplicity of choices that have the potential to deconstruct gender binarism, these choices remain within the bounds of a relationship of power and objectification: on the one hand, a subject that gazes and chooses, as a potential buyer; on the other, the object of consumption of this gaze. It is perhaps no accident that Ulman chooses, as an image by which to exemplify the functioning of this relationship, an erection – an image that seems to define the side of the subject / buyer, in whatever way it may be determined, as that of a presupposed maleness.

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