

Performing Feminism 'Badly': Hotham Street Ladies and Brown Council

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If you needed to pop to the loo during my curated exhibition *Backflip: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art*, you would have stumbled across a cake-frosted uterus spurting sugary menstrual blood all over the gallery toilet floor.¹ The gooey site-specific installation, entitled *You Beaut!* (2013), was the handiwork of Melbourne art collective the Hotham Street Ladies and created entirely from edible cake decorations, including icing sugar, sprinkles and raspberry lollies (for the... err... clots). As well as rendering Margaret Lawrence Gallery's bathroom inoperative for the show's duration, *You Beaut!* provoked a series of interrelated questions that I would like to explore in this article. What does it mean for female artists to insert menstrual blood—the female grotesque *par excellence*—into the gallery more than four decades after the emergence of such subject matter in the

Women's Art Movement? Why might contemporary feminist artists work collaboratively, use domestic techniques and materials and, in doing so, appropriate second wave feminist methodologies? Finally, what's so funny about this approach?

I will suggest that the humorous and revisionist tendencies evident in *You Beaut!* can be characterised as 'parafeminist parody'. Situated within the post-2000s resurgence of interest in feminism worldwide, parafeminist parody refers to the current trend in contemporary feminist art to mimic or cite aspects of earlier feminist practices. Parafeminist parody is an interpretation of art theorist Amelia Jones' conceptual framework of "parafeminism" read through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's revised theory of parody, and intends to explicate the forms of humour currently emerging in contemporary practices such as the Hotham Street Ladies.

The term parafeminism, first articulated in Jones's groundbreaking book *Self/Image* (2006), uses the prefix "para" to denote a model of contemporary art practice that runs "parallel to," rather than "post," earlier forms of feminism: it is "a conceptual model of critique and exploration that is simultaneously parallel to and building on (in the sense of rethinking and pushing the boundaries of, but not superseding) earlier feminisms."² It characterises an intersectional form of feminist art practice that refutes coalitional identity politics and adopts a "rethinking" and expansion of second wave feminist methodologies.³ Another aspect of parafeminism is that it belies conflicting attitudes and proximities to feminism: to use Jones' words, it "embrace(s)" the confusion of "the meaning, significance, and status of feminist—or parafeminist—visual practice today."⁴

I would like to further Jones' theory of parafeminism by arguing there is parodic potential in its historical homage, when read through the lens of

Hutcheon's theory of parody. Hutcheon differentiates parody from satire: a form of humour which, she argues, is always mocking, while parody's definition includes works that mimic, refer or pay homage through their utilisation of irony which "can be playful instead of belittling."⁵ The etymological root of the prefix 'para,' which is shared by para-feminism and parody, provides the foundation for Hutcheon's theory. She argues:

The prefix para has two meanings, only one of which is usually mentioned – that of "counter" or "against"... However para in Greek can also mean beside, and therefore there is a suggestion of an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast.⁶

The doubleness of parody's root 'para' leads Hutcheon to a new definition of parody which, I suggest, is particularly relevant to para-feminism:

Parody... is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the background text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signalled by irony. But this irony can be playful instead of belittling: it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humor in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual "bouncing" (to use E.M Forster's famous term) between complicity and distance.⁷

While Hutcheon's insights broaden the term parody to include "beside", and thus account for strategies of complicity and homage, I reverse Hutcheon's logic to argue that para-feminism can be expanded to include the term "counter", and thus account for strategies of distance and critique. This methodology elucidates two important elements of para-feminism: firstly, Hutcheon's insights convey that the term para-feminism etymologically has two contradictory meanings pertaining to complicity and distance. Thereby, I extend Jones' theory to ascertain that parodic pleasure in reading para-feminist practices is produced by the viewers' engagement in "bouncing" between complicity and distance.⁸

Secondly, I argue that the para-feminist strategy of "rethinking" earlier forms of feminism can be read, through Hutcheon's theory, as a parody of the past. Thus contemporary feminist art—or para-feminist art—can be considered as a temporal parody of previous "waves" of feminism: embodying both homage to

second wave strategies of the 1970s and, as will be later discussed, inversion of the 1990s *Bad Girls* phenomena.

In this way, para-feminism enables contemporary feminist practitioners such as Hotham Street Ladies to own and build upon the history of feminist art through parodic strategies of homage and citation.



Rethinking Earlier Feminisms

Para-feminist parody reveals itself in the work of the Hotham Street Ladies (HSL): Cassandra Chilton, Molly O'Shaughnessy, Sarah Parkes, Caroline Price, and Lyndal Walker. The collective, all of whom lived at one time in a Melbourne share house in Hotham Street in Collingwood, cite their inspiration as "groups such as mother's auxiliaries and the Country Women's Association. They also come together out of necessity to make things for the enjoyment of their community and for the enrichment of girly chat."⁹ HSL pay homage to women's collectives of the past through their titling as "ladies", their celebration of female friendship, and enjoyment of traditional domestic activities of baking, cake decorating and craft. However, HSL's practice exploits the grotesque elements of food and share-house living to present incongruities between ideals of femininity and the Ladies' lived experience as women today.

HSL's first collective effort was *The HSL Contribution Cookery Book* (2004), a community recipe book, after which their work has traversed a broad range of materials and contexts including: *Hotham Street House Cake* (2008), a cake creation of the original share-house exhibited in a gallery; *Frosting*, (2008–), an ongoing series of street art rendered in icing; *Green Bin* (2011), an oversized public sculpture of a recycling bin; and their most ambitious project to date, *At Home with the Hotham Street Ladies* (2013), an installation that transformed the foyer of the National Gallery of Victoria into two comically messy domestic

living spaces meticulously crafted through cake decoration. HSL's representation of the abject—food, mess, and bodily functions—is offset by their skilful mimicry of middle-class femininity through craft and baking techniques.



For three years in a row, from 2009-2012, HSL submitted absurd entries to the Royal Melbourne Show Cake Decorating competition. Their first effort was *Pizza Cake* (2009): a crude cake creation that depicted two pizza boxes emblazoned with a HSL emblem as well as half eaten crusts, an ashtray, and a remote control. They didn't win, but the following year the collective offered *Miss Havisham Cake* (2010) for the contest: a destroyed three tiered wedding cake which included fake mice scampering through-out detritus of broken columns and a missing plastic groom that was inspired by the unhinged female character in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Much to the artists' amusement, the second cake was disqualified for being "in bad taste."¹⁰ The judges' comments read: "Be aware that the exhibit is in bad taste. You are presenting something that is food-based and should be pleasing to the eye. A nice idea but not suited for a major competition."¹¹ In response, in 2011 HSL presented *Amy Varden* (2011), a cake that depicted the recently deceased pop singer Amy Winehouse.

HSL's cake contest performance enacts parody on a number of levels: it mocks the notion of competition based on women's domestic prowess through presentation of crude imagery in a medium that, according to the judges, "should be pleasing to the eye."¹² The subversive element of these works relies on the mimesis of a constructed femininity, based on the view that gender is instilled by behaviours regu-

lated by societal norms, and the subsequent failure to conform. At the same time, however, the cakes are meticulously detailed and demonstrate enormous technical skill: suggesting a sincere celebration of the women's work displayed at the Royal Melbourne Show. Further, HSL pay tribute to female characters and artists, thus remixing and presenting them in divergent cultural contexts. Therefore a dialectic of critique and homage operates within HSL's parodic performance, demonstrating Hutcheon's argument that parody can include "critically constructive" strategies of homage.¹³ The cakes demonstrate comic theorist Simon Dentith's argument that within parody "the polemic can work both ways: towards the imitated text or towards the 'world.'"¹⁴ Thus, to use Dentith's logic, HSL draw on the authority of precursor texts (the cake contest, the novel, the singer) to attack and satirise elements of the broader "world" (gender stereotypes).¹⁵ I want to characterise the dialectic between critique and celebration of women's work that emerges in HSL's work as a distinct strategy of para-feminist parody that relates to its "rethinking" of earlier feminist histories. However, before we can answer the questions posed at the beginning of this article in relation to HSL's installation *You Beaut!* (2013), the performative element of this temporal parody needs to be further elucidated. To this end, I will draw upon the work of another Australian feminist art collective who combine cake and collectivism to restage earlier feminist histories.



Performing "Badly"

Brown Council's work responds to the physical and historical context of performance to "critique why and how it is that we perform",¹⁶ according to the artists. Brown Council's members—Frances Barrett, Kate Blackmore, Kelly Doley and Diana Smith—met during their studies at College of Fine Art (COFA), a Sydney art school known for its ability to operate at the nexus of performance and visual art, and their collaborative work continues to straddle gallery and stage contexts. Often combining absurd humour with temporal citation, Brown Council's work operates as a

multi-directional parody that I characterise as explicitly parafeminist. Through analysis of their oeuvre, I ask: how does parafeminist parody operate when its restaging of the past is considered a deliberately "bad" performance?

Brown Council's early video works exaggerated elements of sexist popular culture to create grotesque presentations of its members' exhausted bodies through durational performances. *Milkshake* (2007) depicts the artists, who are wearing homemade skeleton suits, drinking one litre of milk before attempting an energetic choreographed dance routine to Kelis' song "Milkshakes." Similarly, *Runaway* (2008) presents a female figure (played by all four artists interchangeably) running towards the camera in slow motion. The dramatic soundtrack builds tension, lights flash onto her face and body, until suddenly the protagonist is squirted with (fake) blood and climactically rips off her singlet to expose a tan-coloured t-shirt with huge breasts drawn in black marker. From these early works, Brown Council undertook an intensive period of research into the form and functions of comedy itself. They developed a four-hour live performance, *A Comedy* (2010), in which the artists interrogate power dynamics in performance by placing themselves at the mercy of the audience; *Big Show* (2009), a video which documents the artists' durational performance of clichéd comedic gags; and *One Hour Laugh* (2009), in which the artists filmed themselves laughing continuously for one hour.¹⁷ In all three performance-based works, the members of Brown Council sport a costume of dunce hats and bibs hand-crafted from primary-coloured paper. This DIY style of costume, which reappears throughout Brown Council's early works, takes pleasure in sabotaging the markers of quality and taste that uphold discourses of "high art". Thus, I would suggest, these Brown Council works revel in "the queer art of failure", theorised by Judith (or Jack) Halberstam as the subversive potential that lies in resisting markers of "success" in a capitalist and patriarchal society.¹⁸ Failure is a strategy that circulates through the work, often to grotesquely comic potential: the *Milkshakes* performance is disrupted by bumps and cramps, the jokes told in *A Comedy* are often terribly bad, and the endurance tasks set in *Big Show* result in retching, pain, and boredom. In their emphasis on bodily functions, Brown Council image what literary theorist Mary Russo termed "the female grotesque": using laughter, to borrow Russo's phrase, as a strategy to "expose and subvert the impasse of femininity."¹⁹ However, unlike their "bad girl" feminist predecessors of the 1980s and early 1990s, Brown Council filter the female grotesque through a

parafeminist lens: a blend of self-conscious failure and irony that results in a parody of comedy itself.



More recently, Brown Council have turned their attention to the legacy of their preferred medium: durational performance. These works investigate the idea of "the artist" as well as the construction of performance and art histories, including, of course, earlier forms of feminism. This interest is exemplified in works such as *Dance Work* (2009), in which Brown Council hired a dancer to perform a striptease at an exhibition opening; *Photo with the Artist* (2011), in which the public were invited to buy a photo of themselves with the four artists outside the Museum of Contemporary Art; *Performance Fee* (2012), in which the collective sat blindfolded in Queensland's Gallery of Modern Art and sold kisses for \$2; and the ongoing project, *Remembering Barbara Cleveland* (2011-), in which Brown Council honour the life and work of a fictive 1970s Australian female performance artist named Barbara Cleveland.²⁰ Such works operate to deconstruct the conditions—financial, symbolic, and gendered—of performance. However, they also borrow from the aesthetics of early feminist practices (black and white footage), specific artworks (Orlan's 1977 performance *The Artist's Kiss*), and key figures (the popularity of the name "Barbara" in an earlier generation of feminists in Australia: Barbara Campbell, Barbara Hall, Barbara Creed, Barbara Bolt). Citation escalates into parody in the endurance performance video *Work in Progress: Dawn to Dusk* (2010), in which the four artists, dressed in blue overalls, silently hammer a wooden post into the ground for sixteen hours. As the critic Pip Wallis noted: "With tongue-in-cheek humour, *Dawn to Dusk* references performance art and its intertwined history with feminist art of the 1960s and 70s."²¹ That is to say, *Work in Progress: Dawn to Dusk* cites the aesthetics of feminist art history through their employment of durational performance, grainy grey-scale footage and costuming, but filters their homage through an added layer of absurdity: a "repetition with critical distance" that challenges the accomplishment of

women's labour rights. Through their aesthetic homage and conceptual critique of earlier forms of feminism, Brown Council's work presents a dialectic of proximity and distance to history that is intrinsic to my notion of para-feminist parody.

Australian feminist art historian Catriona Moore cited *Work in Progress: Dawn to Dusk* as an example of contemporary artists "performing feminism badly". In a brief talk at the LEVEL ARI symposium in Brisbane, Moore argued: "Today I see in a lot of contemporary practice feminism being performed in very funny ways, sometimes being performed badly."²² Moore has questioned the aesthetic and conceptual purchase of such an approach, most recently in her essay "Feminist Aesthetics, Then and Now" (2013), Moore writes:

Then, as now, feminist artists do not feel comfortable with any set formal or stylistic lexicon. Hipster feminism instead cheerfully embroiders, playfully unravels or badly performs the baser depths of feminine sensibility. Maybe this is another case of strategic essentialism, in this case feminist aesthetics, turned inside out and replayed in decadent, camp and provocative form.²³

In her attempt to theorise the aesthetic productivity of feminist revisionism, Moore barely hides her disappointment in mourning the loss of the political potency of earlier practices.²⁴ In this, she echoes an argument made by Amelia Jones in her article "1970/2007: The Return of Feminist Art":

"Recent practices seem to appropriate *strategies* from earlier feminisms without sustaining the *politics* these strategies aimed at promoting. And the strategies are replicated either without knowing of the earlier models or by knowingly repeating them, but in new contexts in which they do not have the same political effect."

However, other critics have argued that contemporary mimicry of earlier feminist aesthetics could potentially function as gateway drug to feminist politics. In her oft-cited essay "Extimacy: A New Generation of Feminism" (2009), the critic Alexie Glass writes: "In recent practice feminism is often claimed as a site of discourse which has become actively recharged via appropriations of feminist visual language."²⁵ This "recharging" of feminism through artistic appropriation simultaneously gives weight to history, as Bree Richards argues in her article "Doing, Being, Performing". Reviewing the "resurgence" of performance art by women artists in Australia,

through the insights of Glass, Richards argues: "Their collective sidelong glances, quotations, nods, random encounters or riffs on the multi-layered histories of the body and the performative in art history gives *presence to the past*, reimagining the terrain for new parallels."²⁶



I suggest that, to use Moore's words, "performing feminism, and performing it badly",²⁷ might be a productive way to consider the emergent strategies of historical revisionism and aesthetic citation that I am characterising as para-feminist parody. As a case study, let us consider the live performance *Mass Action: 137 Cakes in 90 Hours* (2012), in which Brown Council undertook a 90-hour "bake off" in the headquarters of Sydney's Country Women's Association (CWA). CWA is the largest women's organisation in Australia, known for its support of rural women through fundraising activities such as the Country Classics Cookbook series and female-only hostel accommodation in major cities, and is tied to a particular generation of predominantly white middle-class women's Anglo-Christian values of respectability and goodwill. Brown Council's durational performance saw the artists attempt to cook every recipe in CWA's *Country Classics Cookbook* without stopping for three days, while the action was broadcast on the internet through a live video feed and updates by invited bloggers. Thereafter, the artists offered the cakes to a judging panel and held an afternoon tea for CWA members.²⁸ By exaggerating the CWA's mission through repetition and exhaustive performance, Brown Council's premise illustrates Hutcheon's notion of parody as "repetition with critical distance".

However, the titling and promotion of *Mass Action* denotes the performance as a protest. Brown Council's grey-scale publicity shot clearly channels the aesthetic of 1970s feminist protest actions, depicting the serious-faced, overalls-clad collective marching in the streets carrying a placard with the text "Mass Action". Historically, feminist protests usually involved withdrawing from domestic work; however, Brown Council inverted this logic by doggedly baking an enormous amount of cakes. Brown Council's refusal to present a clear-sighted target for their *Mass Action* protest reflects strategies of broader political movements such as Occupy, whose open-ended agenda has been praised by critics as resistance to its conclusion, and presents issues of women's labour as an ongoing and multifarious battle.²⁹ Thus, in its simultaneous functions of feminist critique and celebration of women's work, *Mass Action* exemplifies the broad range of parody articulated by Hutcheon's definition: including works that mimic, refer or pay homage through their utilisation of irony which "can be playful instead of belittling".³⁰

Brown Council's restaging of earlier strategies of feminism, or to use Moore's phrase, "performing feminism, and performing it badly",³¹ presents a para-feminist "rethinking"³² of durational performance and women's histories and thus operates as a parody of second wave feminist methodologies. This temporal parody, I argue, is politically and aesthetically productive in reimagining new terrain for (para)feminist practice.

Coming to Terms with the Weight of the Past

As I have examined in this article, both Brown Council and Hotham Street Ladies have made performance-based work that utilises domestic strategies of food preparation to enact various types of feminist critique and homage: of femininity, women's work, and the politics and practices of an earlier generation of feminist performance artists that includes Barbara Campbell, Lyndal Jones, Bonita Ely, and Joan Grounds. Indeed, the feminist strategy of performing with domestic materials to render the female grotesque, shared by the artists I have selected for analysis, was developed in the 1970s; notable performances include Bobby Baker's invitation for audiences to eat life-sized cake versions of her family members in *The Edible Family* (1976), the Waitresses' performance of a many-breasted torso waitress *The Great Goddess Diana* (1978), and Bonita Ely's cooking demonstration *Murray River Punch* (1980) in which she served "punch" with ingredients of pollutants in Australia's Murray River.³³ The interjection of food into

discourses of gender and performance allowed a previous generation of feminists to understand the way that systems of labour and value influence the codification and regulation of women's bodies according to patriarchy,³⁴ as well as to rework models of female desire and pleasure towards inter-subjective forms of exchange.³⁵ Thus works by Baker, the Waitresses, Ely, and others, functioned to simultaneously celebrate women's work and critique the subjection of women through domestic roles, while relishing in the corporeal pleasure of grotesque food behaviours.

By re-presenting these second wave strategies in the 2010s, Brown Council and the Hotham Street Ladies are part of a new generation of feminist artists employing strategies of parody as defined by Hutcheon: they possess a "critical distance" to their predecessors and are "repeating with difference" earlier feminist agendas.³⁶ Such work demonstrates not only contemporary artists' continued commitment to addressing gender inequality but also their subtle homage to earlier feminist artists through para-feminist "rethinking" and extension of earlier strategies: thus their presentation of a simultaneous proximity and distance to history that shifts the terrain of feminism towards new dimensions of practice.³⁷ I suggest this strategy is the defining feature of our contemporary moment in feminist art history.

In this article I have focussed on the work of Brown Council and Hotham Street Ladies, however my argument could be easily extended to a number of Australian feminist artists including Catherine Bell, Emily Floyd, Danielle Hakim, Alice Lang, Eugenia Lim, Hannah Raisin, Salote Tawale, Inez de Vega, and Kalinda Vary, among many others. I suggest that the citational and historicising project of these para-feminist practices allows the corporeal preoccupations of live and video art to be restaged: both more proximally and playfully, and at a distance from, the explicit politics of the past. At the same time, para-feminist parody can be considered a parodic inversion of the 1990s *Bad Girls* phenomenon, which disassociated humorous forms of gender-based practice from their feminist predecessors, since contemporary artists are including homage as a central element of their subversive feminist humour. The pleasure produced in such para-feminist practices demonstrates the value of para-feminist parody to a new generation of feminist artists, enabling them to assess both the gains and losses of their foremothers and, in doing so, negotiate new possibilities for feminist practices and ideology. Hutcheon suggests the "critical distance" that enables parody is usually presented through irony, however:

"Irony functions, therefore, as both antiphrasis and as an *evaluative* strategy."³⁸ Therein, I read contemporary feminist art as a parody of earlier forms of feminism, with the "critical distance" between the text being parodied and the new, incorporating, work signalled by an irony that is both critical and *evaluative*.

To conclude, I will return to the delightfully disgusting work mentioned in the introduction to this article, *You Beaut!* (2013). I began with this artwork to open up questions about humour in contemporary feminist art and the associated strategies of parody and historical homage, and I asked more specifically what kinds of conclusions can be drawn when artists render abject female bodily fluid in a medium usually reserved for domestic pleasantries. From the outset, HSL's presentation of menstrual blood as feminist subject matter demonstrates the continued constraints and expectations that surround women's bodies. However, it further recalls the centrality of this subject matter in feminist exhibitions of the 1970s.³⁹ The Ladies' rendering of female bodily fluid through cake decoration (itself a parody of another second wave methodology) exaggerates the work's feminist politic to the point of exaggerated cliché. Through the insights developed in this article, I propose that *You Beaut!* parodies the very notion of a feminist exhibition: both the predictability of feminist art conventions as well as their continued relevance after forty years. It revels in menstrual blood, parodies (both in the sense of critique and celebration) women's work, and delights in the viewer's shock; and in doing so, it laughs at how very clichéd this performance is. At its critical peak, this multi-layered parody asks of feminism: how far have we really come? Thus, *You Beaut!* instantiates Hutcheon's claim that parody is "one of the ways in which modern artists have managed to come to terms with the weight of the past."⁴⁰

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Captions

1 Hotham Street Ladies, *You Beaut!* (2013), site-specific installation for *Backflip: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne

2 Hotham Street Ladies, *At Home with the Hotham Street Ladies* (2013), installation in the foyer of Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne.

3 Hotham Street Ladies, *Miss Havisham Cake* (2010), entered in 2010 Royal Melbourne Show cake contest.

4 Brown Council, *Work in Progress: Dawn to Dusk* (2010), HD video, 8:51 mins.

5 Brown Council, *One Hour Laugh* (2009), HD video, 60 mins.

6 Brown Council, *Mass Action: 137 Cakes in 90 Hours* (2012), promotional image.

Notes

1 Laura Castagnini, ed., *Backflip: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2013.

2 Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject*, Routledge London and New York, 2006, p. 213.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 217.

5 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms*, Methuen, New York, 1985, p. 32.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 The Hotham Street Ladies, see <http://www.hothamstreetladies.com>.

10 Ibid.

11 Undecipherable author, "Royal Melbourne Show judging comments: Hotham Street Ladies," September 9, 2010. Original scanned and emailed to the author by Lyndal Walker, February 15, 2014.

12 Ibid

13 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (1985), p. 32.

14 Simon Dentith, *Parody*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, p. 17.

15 Ibid.

16 Brown Council website: <http://browncouncil.com/about>

17 For more on this body of work, see Anneke Jaspers, "Brown Council: Critical Comedy," *Runway*, 18 (2011); Megan Garrett-Jones, "Just for Laughs: Brown Council's A Comedy," *Das 500*, published September 3, 2010, <http://www.dasplatforms.com/writing/just-for-laughs-brown-councils-a-comedy>

18 Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2011.

19 Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*, Routledge, New York and London, 1995, p. 73.

20 The video *This is Barbara Cleveland* (2013) is

the latest instalment in the project.

21 Pip Wallis, "The View From Here: 19 Perspectives on Feminism: Exhibition Review," *Next Wave Text Camp Reader*, Next Wave Festival, Melbourne, 2010.

22 Catriona Moore, "Introduction: Performing Feminisms", MP3 sound recording, 4:41 mins, from a paper presented at LEVEL - Feminism and Art in 2013 Forum at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, March 9, 2013, <http://www.ciprecinct.qut.edu.au/archive/2013/feminism-art.jsp>

23 Catriona Moore, "The more things change... feminist aesthetics, then and now," *Artlink*, 33.3, 2013, p. 24.

24 Amelia Jones, "1970/2007: The Return of Feminist Art," *X-TRA*, 10.4, 2008, <http://x-traonline.org/article/19702007-the-return-of-feminist-art/>.

25 Alexie Glass, "Extimacy: A new generation of feminism," *Art & Australia*, 47.1, 2009, p. 135.

26 Bree Richards, "Doing, Being, Performing," *Performa Magazine*, Posted January 24, 2013, <http://performamagazine.tumblr.com/post/41227948102/doing-being-performing>. My emphasis.

27 Ibid.

28 Documentation can be viewed at the project's website: <http://browncouncil.com/massaction/>.

29 Hito Steyerl, "Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life", *e-flux*, 30.12, 2011, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-as-occupation-claims-for-an-autonomy-of-life-12/>

30 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (1985), p. 32.

31 Catriona Moore, "Introduction: Performing Feminisms" (2013).

32 Amelia Jones, *Self/Image*, p. 213.

33 This strategy is also evident in photography; see Lee Miller's surrealist cakes of the 1960s and 1970s.

34 Mary Douglas's work was particularly influential in this area; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge, London and New York, 1966. Key exhibitions include *The D'Oyley Show: An exhibition of Women's Domestic Needlework* (Sydney: Watters Gallery, 1979); *Women at Work: A week of Women's Performance* (Melbourne: George Paton Gallery, 1980); and internationally *Dirt & Domesticity: Constructions of the Feminine* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992).

35 Rachel Fensham, "An Appetite for Trapeze," *Performance Research* 4.1, 1999, p. 142-50.

36 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (1985), p. 32.

37 Amelia Jones, *Self/Image*, p. 213. Other local examples of contemporary artists that incorporate cake into their feminist art are: Madeline Kidd's glossy sculptural and painting arrangements; Heide Holmes' video *CAKE* (2010); Damp's *The Damp Pie Chart* (2009); and most pertinently Kalinda Vary and Ebony Gulliver's recent performance *Food for Thought* (2014) in which they offered to their audience a choice of home-made cakes with satirical names such as: "The Obedient Wife" (crushed nice biscuits, no fillings, just the shell); "The Julie Bishop/Margaret Thatcher Tart" (Zesty lemon tart in flaky pastry case) and "Pussy Riot Tart- Vladimir Putin with cream on his face" (Caution: Contains unpalatable, indigestible elements.)

38 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (1985), p. 53. My emphasis.

39 For example the Feminist Art Program's iconic exhibition *Womanhouse* (1972) which included Judy Chicago's installation *Menstruation Bathroom*.

40 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (1985), p. 29.

Laura Castagnini is an Australian curator and writer interested in the performance of feminist, queer, and anticolonial histories. Recent curatorial projects include our word is our bond (*West Space*, Melbourne, 2015); *Alice Lang Originals* (Sydney College of the Arts, 2014); *Backflip: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art* (Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne, 2013); and *Memory Screens* (co-curated with Eugenia Lim, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2013). As well as in numerous exhibition catalogues, her writing has appeared in *Frieze magazine*, *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* (Routledge), and *Artlink journal*. She is currently Programme Coordinator at Iniva (Institute for International Visual Arts) in London, and Secretary of fCu (Feminist Curators United).