

Restless Images: The Feminist Performances of Rose Finn-Kelcey

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1. Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

2. Teresa de Lauretis, 'Feminist Studies/Critical Studies: Issues, Terms, and Contexts', in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 1–19 (p. 2).

3. Teresa de Lauretis, 'Feminist Studies/Critical Studies', p. 7. I refer to 'patriarchy' throughout in the knowledge that it is an inadequate, monolithic term which may detach or distract from individual culpability and the reality of multi-issue, intersectional configurations of power. However, I also harness the radical potency of the term precisely because 'patriarchy' illuminates the patriarchal ideal as monolithic; see bell hooks, 'Understanding Patriarchy', in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria, 2004), pp. 17–34.

4. See, Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009). I do not intend to argue that diverse schools of practice labelled as 'post-feminist' are the sole harbingers of complacency with regard to the continued predominance of patriarchal structures of power. Indeed, activists who are very visible in their promotion of feminist viewpoints present a greater danger in covertly reinforcing specific prejudices of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy. For example, as is the case in the London Feminist Network's ongoing negation of transgender women and non-binary gender identities.

5. *BP Walk Through British Art* [Room: '1970 and 1980'] (London: Tate Britain, 14 May 2013–). Tate and the recent book on Finn-Kelcey's work both date *The Restless Image* as made in 1975; see Rose Finn-Kelcey (ed.), *Rose Finn-Kelcey* (London: Ridinghouse, 2013), p. 204. However, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey archival documents from the time give the date as 1976; see, 'The Bird – Four Declensions 1971–77', typed document, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey. In summer 2014 I assisted The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey in creating an inventory of the artist's personal archive. Subsequent citations are from this source unless stated otherwise.

In her 2012 book on the history and theory of identification and the visual arts, Amelia Jones argues for a rethinking of '1970s' notions of identity revolving around binary structures (for instance, of the 'self' and 'other', or the 'master' and 'slave'), and proposes a 'new model for understanding identification as a reciprocal, dynamic, and ongoing process that occurs among viewers, bodies, images, and other visual modes of the (re)presentation of subjects'.¹ Jones, following on from Teresa de Lauretis and other feminist thinkers, particularly from the 1980s, presses for a continual process of reflecting and rethinking how we self-define our feminisms, as past and present models of feminist representation and critique collide, in resistance to an otherwise certain position of impasse.² As de Lauretis pointed out, the never-far away threat of allowing ourselves to settle into a passive and static feminism would see us unwittingly subsumed into the very institutions which (at the very least, latently) constitute and preserve patriarchal cultures.³ This call for consciousness and self-criticism with regard to feminist issues is as urgent – if not more urgent – today, when our public spaces and social–cultural–political institutions are now more, though, never fully, representative of women (particularly white, cisgender women). We are at risk of sliding towards a half-believing notion of 'success', particularly in the aftermath of variously defined post-feminist discourses that nominally suggest that we are living and working in a post-patriarchal society.⁴

Indeed, it can be lauded as a triumph of feminism that the English artist and feminist Rose Finn-Kelcey's photographic work, *The Restless Image – A Discrepancy Between the Felt Position and the Seen Position* (c. 1975), can now be seen hanging on the walls of Tate Britain, a major, publically funded gallery, curated directly alongside Order of Merit recipient Lucian Freud, and Royal Academician Anish Kapoor, as representative of British Art (Fig. 1).⁵ Finn-Kelcey was born in Northampton on 4 March 1945, and died of motor neurone disease on 13 February 2014.⁶ She studied at Ravensbourne College of Art and Design and later Chelsea College of Art, and lived in London from 1968, working as an artist and teaching. One of the first formal showings of Finn-Kelcey's work was in an exhibition of Post-Diploma Chelsea graduates at the University of Sussex's gallery space in May 1968,⁷ and she was subsequently unyielding in her pioneering of new art forms, such as performance and installation, as well as artist-led feminist activism. Finn-Kelcey was a member of the Women Artists Collective (WAC), and a founder member of the Women Artists Slide Library, which later evolved into the Women's Art Library, now located at Goldsmiths, University of London.⁸ Her respect and appreciation of the work of her peers drove a desire to self-organise, curate, and exhibit works of other artists including Carlyle Reedy, Susan Hiller, and Tina Keane.⁹

Although a general overview of the artist's practice over a lifetime is made difficult in that Finn-Kelcey worked with very diverse materials and forms

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Fig. 1. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *The Restless Image – A Discrepancy Between the Felt Position and the Seen Position*, 1975. (Courtesy of the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.)

including sculpture, flag-making, photography, live performance, sound, installation, and paper cut-outs, it is possible to follow shared thematic threads and meticulous working processes. Perhaps at the heart of Finn-Kelcey's practice is what Guy Brett refers to in relation to her early work as processes of 'interactivity and change'.¹⁰ Flags, which Finn-Kelcey also termed 'wind-dependent objects', are sculpted by their interaction with uncontrollable variables of the environment and the position of spectators, in terms of both form and their performative messages.¹¹ For instance, as Brett points out, *Here is a Gale Warning* (1971), a flag which bears its title, 'would not function as a warning unless there was already a wind', or indeed unless the viewer happened to catch sight of the object in the London skyline, flying above Alexandra Palace.¹² This aspect of the chance encounter functions similarly in an earlier work from September 1970, for which Finn-Kelcey organised her own solo show, *24 wind-dependent objects*, by placing a series of windsocks alongside a railway line between Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamstead, to be seen by train commuters and not the 'select minority of art gallery visitors'.¹³ In Finn-Kelcey's later work, this openness to chance, change, and participation continued in pieces such as *A Shot in the Locker* (2000), where visitors who place coins in a donation box at a disused church in Mexico City unexpectedly fill the building's chambers and high domes with the amplified echoes of coins rolling and falling downwards. Later, in *Angel* (2004), a glittering facade of bright yellow, red, and silver shimmer discs reveal an SMS-style 'angel' emoticon to passers-by on the side of St Paul's church at Bow Common. Even Finn-Kelcey's later paper cut-out works, such as *Rip-Roaring Harum Scarum* (2010),

6. Guy Brett, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey Obituary', *Guardian*, 24 February 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/feb/24/rose-finn-kelcey>> (last accessed 9 September 2014).

7. *Sixteen – works by Post Diploma painters from Chelsea School of Art* (Arts Centre, University of Sussex, 28 May–15 June 1968).

8. The Women Artists Collective grew out of the Women's Workshop of the Artists Union (established 1972); a brief history can be found in the exhibition pamphlet for, *Hang Up Put Down, Stand Up* (Covent Garden: Art Meeting Place, 15–21 July 1974). A brief account of the Women Artists Slide Collective and other feminist groups can be found in Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 58 (footnote, p. 174). Finn-Kelcey's role in the collectives was detailed to me in conversations with fellow members Sonia Knox (in interview, 26 June 2014) and Hannah O'Shea (via email, 13 August 2014).

9. '4 artists to set up a permanent exhibition in the gallery' [c. 1973–1975], typed document, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

10. Guy Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, ed. by Rose Finn-Kelcey (London: Ridinghouse, 2013), pp. 9–170 (p. 24).

11. For early usage of the term 'wind-dependent objects', see 'September 1970 – exhibition of 24 wind-dependent objects', typed document, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

12. Guy Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', p. 24.

13. Finn-Kelcey attempted to make a film of this project following 'failures' including thefts and disappearances of the windsocks; 'September 1970 – exhibition of 24 wind-dependent objects', typed document, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey. See also, Sue Braden, 'Sky Signs', *Art and Artists*, vol. 7, no. 1, April 1972, pp. 28–30.

14. I also point this out in the Wikipedia page that I created for Finn-Kelcey during a feminist Wikipedia edit-a-thon at the Live Art Development Agency, 25 April 2014; see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Finn-Kelcey> (last accessed 1 September 2014).

15. Catherine Elwes, interview with the author, 25 July 2013, London.

16. Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, p. 1.

17. Jackie Wullschlager, 'Tate Britain's Rehang', *Financial Times*, 17 May 2013, <<http://on.ft.com/107MSXn>> (accessed 2 September 2014).

18. I thank Jen Harvie for asking a similar question in response to my paper 'Power Play: Charlotte Moorman at the Institute of Contemporary Arts', Colloquium, Queen Mary, University of London Department of Drama, 6 June 2014.

recall the interplays of absence, presence, and participation of her earlier works in their interactions of positive and negative space.

Though Finn-Kelcey greatly contributed to the seismic shift in the mainstream cultural landscape commanded by emerging feminist and egalitarian practices in the late 1960s and 1970s, during her lifetime she received virtually no visibility in the major institutions of art in London, where she lived and worked.¹⁴ In *The Restless Image*, we see a monochrome self-portrait of the young artist posing in a handstand on the starkly bare Greatstone beach at low tide. Finn-Kelcey's face has been obscured by the hem of her full-length pleated silver skirt, which falls up (or rather down), billowing across her torso. Her slim legs, clad in pale tights and platform espadrilles, emerge from the folds of the fabric as they are thrown skywards in abandon; glowing luminously in the light of the sun. A long shadow is cast on the sand and a tiny outline of a figure can be seen at the shoreline in the far distance, further foregrounding the body of a woman captured in a moment of both personal liberation and protest.

In addressing the discrepancy between 'seen' and 'felt' positions, the title clearly situates the work within feminist discourses focussed on women as 'seen' objects in search of subjecthood; yet the image itself, slickly printed in a new larger scale format, would perhaps also be presented fairly comfortably today alongside particularly stylish advertising, or fashion marketing photography. Catherine Elwes, another feminist artist who worked in performance and video in the late 1970s, recently voiced her concern that the changing political and institutional contexts in which we view the work of Finn-Kelcey and her contemporaries may heighten the risk of images being (mis)interpreted as more decorative than political.¹⁵ Without an understanding of the social–cultural–political historical context, which the work is both informed by and also intervenes into, *The Restless Image* can be 'recuperated' more readily by conservative capitalist culture, and possible readings of the work as sartorially inspired iconography of a celebrated (neo)liberal 'femininity'. In this instance, the icon of a young woman who appears adventurous, fashionable, and individualised – qualities identified by Angela McRobbie as 'post-feminist' – might bring her into a kind of 'visibility', but one that is necessarily limited to, and complicit with, a pacifying consumer culture which reinforces 'feminine' normativity under the illusion of personal 'freedom'.¹⁶ So, to regard Finn-Kelcey's current 'inclusion' in Tate Britain's rehang of British art in itself as a kind of 'victory' that redresses the historical invisibility of women artists in public space, as proof – as an article in the *Financial Times* has suggested – that feminism and other localised egalitarian practices have been 'embraced' by the institution, would be a mistake.¹⁷ How might we, in present-time, retain and sustain the radical potential enacted by women performing in history?¹⁸ This crucial and enduring question for feminist criticism drives my desire to historicise Rose Finn-Kelcey's feminist art, not simply as a means of representing or merely commemorating her work, but as a way of recognising, re-evaluating, and reworking the possibilities it presents. Here, the important project of acknowledging, and making women visible through intervening into history's narratives also works alongside, and in tension with, the accentuation of the polemical non-normativity or oppositional aspects of artists whose position outside of the social–cultural–political status quo directly compound elements of their practice and its potential as both subject and artistic intervention. In drawing on the model of criticism proposed by Jones, which seeks to trouble and ultimately displace binary notions of identity, subjects situated at the 'margins' are imbued with agency, and understood as irreducible in their complexity. As Finn-Kelcey oscillates here between the 'centre' and the 'margin', definitions of those as fixed, mutually exclusive

locations are dismantled, even as positions of difference are simultaneously asserted.

Rooting an examination of the work in contemporary discourses and feminist paradigms of the 1970s and 1980s, from which Finn-Kelcey's performance practice emerges, not only aids the necessary understanding of the historical context, but also serves the crucial political impetus, recently reaffirmed by Griselda Pollock, of working towards 'transgenerational' discourses and understandings.¹⁹ Here, I also rearticulate a position put forward by Judith M. Bennett in *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* in arguing that identifying continuities across time, not only of historical conditions and the systematic marginalisation of women, as Bennett suggests, but also of the creative resistance practices formed by women and their 'transgenerational' resonances, strengthens the political potency of feminist inflected arts and history-making, and troubles hegemonic 'master narratives'.²⁰ Given the complex, overlapping ways in which forces of cultural and pedagogic institutionalisation clash with the feminist project of formulating positions of resistance to patriarchal hegemony within and around configurations of relational non-normativity, marginality, subalternity (and its reinscription, as outlined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak),²¹ or even the cultural 'new' (if only in seeking to disrupt those positions), it is necessary to outline the research and its position in relation to the archival material from which it emerges. A portion of this research stems from examinations of the artist's personal archive, which was in the process of being catalogued in summer 2014 following Finn-Kelcey's death. The important materials found there are contextualised alongside resources including clippings, publicity, and proposals housed in other London-based archives: the British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London), Tate Archive, Acme archive, and the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum). Conversations and interviews with friends and peers including artists Catherine Elwes, Sonia Knox, and Anne Bean also contribute to an understanding of Finn-Kelcey's practice, as they perceived it through time. This primary research is a central component in adding to existing publications on Finn-Kelcey and her work, which – apart from reviews and brief notes – mainly consist of the artist's own monograph, studies by Guy Brett, and an interview and a scholarly article by Lisa Tickner, published in this journal 35 years ago.²² An interview with Hermione Wiltshire, and shorter studies by Jennifer Walwin and Catherine Elwes, are also notable research resources.²³ Although the self-archived materials, in their seeming proximity to the artist and her 'intentions' as we may imagine them, give clues in relation to important questions of material conditions, factors of influence, and so on, it must be noted that my use of the archive is necessarily 'unofficial'. The research, of course, does not and should not make a 'claim' to Finn-Kelcey's own voice, nor should the researcher overestimate their position of privileged insight into the work. Rather, in the spirit of 'transgenerational' discourse I rearticulate the documents, suggest my own narratives, and make visible the moment of reception as my own. In this respect, the work follows on from Amelia Jones in her insistence that the relationship between bodies in the moment of performance and their performance documentation-as-representation 'most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centered modernist subject and thus most dramatically provides a radical challenge to the masculinism, racism, colonialism, classicism, and heterosexism built into this fantasy'.²⁴ Here, the lack of fixity of performance and its representation presents an important set of problems to be negotiated (the

19. Griselda Pollock in conversation with Lynne Segal and Sonia Boyce, 'Radical Thinkers: the Art, Sex and Politics of Feminism', *Tate Modern*, 9 February 2015.

20. Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 28; p. 129.

21. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography [1985]', in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 203–36 (p. 217).

22. Rose Finn-Kelcey (ed.), *Rose Finn-Kelcey* (London: Ridinghouse, 2013); Guy Brett, *Carnival of Perception: Selected Writings on Art* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2004); Lisa Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth: The Performance Work of Rose Finn-Kelcey', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, April 1980, pp. 58–72 (p. 66).

23. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Conversation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire*, London, 3 September 1997 (London: Camden Arts Centre, 1997); Jennifer Walwin, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey', in *The British Show*, exh. cat., ed. by William Wright and Anthony Bond (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1985), pp. 135–8; Catherine Elwes, 'In Praise of Older Women', *MAKE*, no. 78, December 1997–February 1998, pp. 17–19 (p. 17).

24. Amelia Jones, 'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation', *Art Journal*, vol. 56, no. 4, Winter 1997, pp. 11–8 (p. 12).

25. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972, rpt. Penguin: London, 1992), p. 41.

26. Monique Wittig, 'One Is Not Born a Woman (1981)', in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 9–20 (pp. 15–16).

27. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Thirty Years After', in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. by Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (London: MIT Press, 2006) pp. 21–34 (p. 59).

'who', 'what', 'where', and so on), but it is also precisely where the transformative, political possibility of the form and its scholarship lies. In what follows I focus on two performance works, *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* (1976) which emerged out of Finn-Kelcey's desire to find a new artistic language suitable for her experience as a 'woman artist', and *Mind the Gap* (1980) which was shown as a part of London's Institute of Contemporary Arts' (ICA) 'women's season' and represented a form of crisis for Finn-Kelcey in the live performing body.

Finn-Kelcey's turn to performance as an artistic form emerges dialogically alongside her work and activism in feminist organising. To return to *The Restless Image*, notes and drawings in the artist's archive suggest that Finn-Kelcey may have originally conceived of the work as a performance for a shop window display, possibly to be seen by the audience through the glass via small peep-holes or gaps. Concurrently, Finn-Kelcey was organising weekly mixed-gender seminars on women's art, discussing the merits of parallel women-only spaces for art and education, and investigating how a specifically 'woman artist'-based practice might be developed. She noted contemporary theories then in circulation that suggested women do not simply act as men do, but that they simultaneously 'watch themselves being looked at', a notion popularised by John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* in 1972.²⁵ A series of notes filed and kept in her personal archive show how Finn-Kelcey grappled with questions of how art might dismantle or disrupt these static roles of 'women' and 'men', comparable to designated professions of capitalist patriarchy, which isolate, silence, and reduce people to their assumed functionality. Particularly significant is the repeated emergence of the category or misnomer of the 'woman artist'. Like many of her peers, in specific situations in the 1970s Finn-Kelcey self-identified with the term 'woman artist', which was and continues to be a contested category in its usefulness for artists who are also women. While reinforcing a kind of marginality (what precludes women from being, like men, simply artists), it is also essential to understand the usage of the term here and the milieu of criticism and practice it signifies. In the case of Women Artists Collective, of which Finn-Kelcey was a part, 'women artists' signals a collectivity and collective demand that an art world dominated by men engages with women, their experiences, and their representations of those experiences, as formatively part of their art practice and its value and validity. Possibilities and confines of the concept of the 'woman artist' emerge in equal measure in Finn-Kelcey's notes, alongside the repeated call that such constructed categories be dialogically related to the social realities of women's lives. Many have rightly pointed to the limits and limitations of the category of woman artist, or indeed of 'woman' altogether; for instance, French writer and theorist Monique Wittig argues for the abolition of the singular 'woman' myth as a political and ideological formation which negates women and their social realities.²⁶ In Finn-Kelcey's case, however, identification with 'woman artist' in the 1970s seems to point to a process of collective identity formation revolving around a position of opposition to masculine hegemony, based on the desire to move closer to a dialogic relationship between artistic representation and practice by women, and the lived experiences of women as hitherto marginalised subjects. In other words, rather than signifying only a static, singularised identity of an implicitly marginal woman-who-is-an-artist, the term might also stand for an anti-category: a dynamic process of collective intervention and renegotiation from a necessarily shifting position of reclaimed and declaimed difference. As Linda Nochlin has pointed out, the self-defined 'woman artist' had in the 1970s, and perhaps continues to hold the potential for, a rupturing effect, which, for Nochlin, is also bound up with the 'newness' and 'transgressivity' of the 'feminine' as a taken, constructed and elastic position.²⁷

Though aesthetically dissimilar, Finn-Kelcey's presentation in *The Restless Image* of an inverted body in a handstand recalls the Rabelaisian grotesque, as the head is thrown under, top to bottom; a transforming subject, vacated by precedent, the unruly body reveals a vacuum and invites possibility. In the face of an art historical precedent of white male hegemony, Finn-Kelcey's desire to invent and create space for art forms which speak of, to, and for otherwise marginalised experiences and subjects presents a crucial political challenge to a field of representation where dominant images of women are appropriated, represented, and reproduced by men. A similar impetus can be seen in the feminist *écriture féminine* of Hélène Cixous and Marguerite Duras, both of whom demand and construct literary representations more attuned to their desires and experiences in giving voice, as Cixous writes, to 'the body without a frame, without skin, without walls, the flesh that doesn't dry, doesn't stiffen, doesn't clot the wild blood that wants to stream through it – forever'.²⁸ The volatility of the body that refuses to be contained, like the Rabelaisian grotesque, is extended through the practice of writing-the-self as 'blurry, several, simultaneous, impure'.²⁹ In *The Restless Image*, the disjuncture between the 'seen' and 'felt' positions represented in the title is interminably muddled and the art work offers no 'resolution' between categories of the seen 'public' and the felt 'private', which flow into and between one another.

The Restless Image was developed separately from Finn-Kelcey's initial idea for a performance, and was reworked via a series of study photographs of handstands shot in a studio. The performance for the shop (or gallery) window came to fruition as *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* (1976), on 26 and 27 September 1976, made as a part of *London Calling 1976 Festival* at the Acme Gallery in Covent Garden, London.³⁰ As Sally Potter told Marc Chaimowicz in an interview for *Studio International* in 1976, performance, as a relatively uncharted terrain and 'anti-specialist area', enabled women in the UK to assert their status as makers of art and enter the institutional art world while also challenging and redefining it.³¹ The prerequisite in this journey is the necessary process of women claiming agency of their bodies and practice, and troubling patriarchal objectification by becoming their own subjects. As Griselda Pollock has argued, this is achieved in instances and representations where women can be seen to be actively looking and doing, which divert the objectifying, pacifying force of the gaze as the woman 'figures as the subject of her own look'.³² This line of enquiry refers to the content and form of women's work, but also to the means of production, which holds particularly interesting implications for performance as a 'permissive' site of subjectivity, and consciousness-raising, or potentially 'woman-only' space. In the germinating years of collective feminist arts practice of the UK in the 1970s, women artists in London were also turning to discussion workshops, 'rehearsal' and performance as a means of collective identity-formation, for which there were antecedent examples; for instance, in the US civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.³³ Similarly, in the early 1970s, Judy Chicago, along with the women engaged in her Feminist Art Program at California Institute of the Arts, constructed the *Womanhouse* project, 'playing around' with performance as a personal and political consciousness-raising practice; as Chicago puts it, 'to test out my desires' and express 'those aspects of myself that I didn't see how to bring into my art'.³⁴ While Chicago's recollection positions performance as ancillary to her painting and installation, for Finn-Kelcey performance was central to her practice in the mid-1970s – intervening, as Lisa Tickner puts it, into a 'subversive' anti-establishment and anti-discipline live art tradition from the modernist avant-gardes such as Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, happenings, and Aktionism.³⁵

28. Hélène Cixous, 'Coming to Writing', in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, ed. By Deborah Jensen, trans. by Sarah Cornell and others (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 1–58 (p. 10).

29. Hélène Cixous, 'Coming to Writing', p. 29.

30. The festival (14–27 September 1976) was organised by the groups Artists for Democracy, Art Meeting Place, London Musicians Collective, The Art Room, and Tone Place; co-ordinated by David Sharkey, they approached Acme Gallery (1976–1981) for use of their space. *London Calling*, pamphlet, Acme Studio archives, Mile End, London [cataloguing is in process at the time of writing].

31. Sally Potter interviewed by Marc Chaimowicz, 'Women and Performance in the UK', *Studio International*, vol. 192, no. 982, July/August 1976, pp. 33–5 (p. 33).

32. Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 76.

33. For a discussion of 'choreography', rehearsal and performance in the US civil rights movement, see Susan Leigh Foster, 'Choreographies of Protest', *Theatre Journal*, vol. 55, no. 3 (2003), pp. 395–412.

34. Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (rpt. 1975, London: The Women's Press, 1982) pp. 117–8.

35. Lisa Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 60.

36. The archive suggests the birds may have been acquired or borrowed from Jean Rubenis' 'Bird Corner' Wild Bird Hospital project in Berkshire. One or both of the birds were also said to have been 'arrested' for stealing babies' rattles on a previous occasion; see Guy Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', p. 10.

37. 'Notes on a performance One for Sorrow, Two for Joy', typed document, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

38. John Sharkey, 'Performance Art in Britain', *Flash Art*, nos. 94–95, January/February 1980, pp. 46–49 (p. 48).

39. Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008), p. 11.

40. Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote*, p. 6, 15.

41. While the wider documentation suggests that the coyote is most likely playing with Beuys, the singular image appears quite unnerving.

42. Sonia Knox, interview with the author, 26 June 2014, London.

That Finn-Kelcey kept pages of notes from WAC meetings alongside her plans for art works reaffirms those ostensibly separate practices as linked on a spectrum of consciousness-raising. The advocacy of the development of separate spaces for women in opposition to patriarchal dominance, which admittedly reinforce gender binaries (as well as binaries of 'self' and 'other'), functions here as a necessary precursor to achieving the ultimate goal of dismantling those binaries altogether. More specifically, in order to reshape how 'women' act and are defined in society, a working towards understanding and sharing representations of women's 'identities' (both 'given' and self-defined) must take place. For Finn-Kelcey, through performances of the self, of which gender plays a part, there is perhaps a 'consciousness-raising', but also a space in which to exert transformative desires and wills of the imagination. In *One for Sorrow Two for Joy*, this is expressed most cogently in her interaction with two live magpies, which she called her alter ego sisters (Fig. 2).³⁶ In the performance, Finn-Kelcey interacts with the birds inside the Acme Gallery window, as female 'species' on display amongst tree branches arranged on the floor. Separated by the glass, sound is relayed via an amplifier to the ever-changing audience in the street outside, looking in as Finn-Kelcey performs a repertoire of movements; attempting to move closer, she offers objects and food to the birds, and gauges her response based on their acceptance or rejection of the item. Finn-Kelcey magnifies her position as a cultural performer, placing both herself and the birds in a zoological position of display in the glass cage. There is an emphasis on the distinction between spaces demarcated as 'public' (the street) and 'private' (inside), but, as with *The Restless Image*, a simultaneous collapsing of those categories with the interactions of an invited voyeurism through the glass. Finn-Kelcey wrote that 'the birds mirror much of my own behaviour', identifying with their position in folk history as both marvelled and despised, and their hazardous attraction to, and hoarding of, material, glittering objects.³⁷ A later review by John Sharkey described the 'metaphysical wonder' and 'poetic density' of this quiet, almost delicate performance of 'the majestic birds and the forlorn girl attempting to communicate with them'.³⁸ These qualities (implicitly registered by Sharkey as 'feminine') seem particularly striking when considered in comparison to Joseph Beuys' earlier work *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (René Block Gallery, New York, 23–25 May 1974). For extended periods lasting over three days, and wanting to see nothing else of America on his brief visit from Germany, Beuys caged himself in with a live, isolated coyote as symbolically representative of hunted and suppressed indigenous Native American cultures.³⁹ Food, water, hay, and copies of the *Wall Street Journal* for the animal to defecate on were provided, and Beuys periodically sounded a triangle hanging from his neck, which prompted recorded sounds of a turbine.⁴⁰ While an examination of the documentation shows the animal to be largely passive, even uninterested, the most well-known images of his performance show Beuys wrapped in protective felt, which is tearing away from him as the coyote rips at it with snarling teeth.⁴¹ Compared with Beuys's stunt, which was clearly coded as a risky, somewhat 'macho', stunt, Finn-Kelcey's piece appears relatively quotidian: a modestly dressed woman whispers to a pair of timid birds, who are sporadically sedated in the artificial light. However, embedded in the apparent, comparative quietness of Finn-Kelcey's action, there is also a forceful assertion of criticism and rebuttal at play. Finn-Kelcey's friend and WAC colleague Sonia Knox remembers that, for her, the piece was powerful precisely because of its creation of an aesthetic language that was politically nuanced, beautiful, and founded – in opposition to dominant forms – in the experience of a woman.⁴² Sharkey genders

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Fig. 2. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *One For Sorrow Two For Joy*, 1976, performance, *London Calling*, Acme Gallery, London. (Courtesy of the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey; Photo: Simon English.)

43. John Sharkey, 'Performance Art in Britain', p. 48

44. This statement appears in notes on *One for Sorrow Two for Joy*, as well as *Her Mistress's Voice* (Eisteddfod: Wrexham Art Centre, 1977), also appeared later as an artist's statement in the programme for *London Calling presents Performance Plus* (16 – 23 January 1978), The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

45. Rose Finn-Kelcey interviewed by Lisa Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 66.

46. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, pp. 184–7.

47. *Time Out*, 18 July–3 August 1972 [clipping], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

48. For example, *Here is a Gale Warning* (1971) exhibited at the city-wide *Art Spectrum London* (11–30 August 1971). The *SPACE* initiative was established in 1969; Greater London Arts newsletter August 1971.

49. For an excellent account of suffragist artist-activist use of craft and performance, see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987).

Finn-Kelcey's work as normatively 'feminine' (he also commented of a later performance that Finn-Kelcey 'looked strikingly beautiful in static Hollywood style'), and outlines a dichotomy in British performance art between 'the male artist' presenting himself variously in passive roles, and the contrasting 'femininity of artists like Carlyle Reedy, Jackie Lansley or Tina Keane', which 'often forces them to exaggerate the active stance and exploit the ambiguities of role playing'.⁴³ This totalising portrayal of a gender binary is problematic in that it assumes that 'feminine' (meaning women) artists are somehow 'forced' to exaggerate activeness in resistance to an essential passivity implied by Sharkey (the women's activeness is not seen as a deliberate tactic of their own agency, as it is by Pollock) – but it also points to the irreconcilable set of problems around identification and how to escape assumptions of identity; how can the experience of a woman, as seen by Knox, be represented and read as such in art works by women?

Like the magpies, Finn-Kelcey is drawn to steal or 'borrow' from others; she can never understand or be fully engaged in the calls of the birds, although she attempted to imitate them, nor is she in a position to maintain established modes of expression and visual languages commanded by men, which the artist is forced to use in the absence of recognisable, shared expressions of women with which she identifies. The performance notes read, 'I regard working from a codified – though non-verbal – text, as analogous to my desire to find an appropriate voice for my experience as a woman artist'; the artist searches for the possibility of a self-defined language, a third area negotiated between and beyond the binaries of 'borrowed' or 'belonging'.⁴⁴ In her interview with Lisa Tickner, Finn-Kelcey said of the appearance of the magpie in her work that:

It was the end of a period of wanting to be like them, wanting to be accepted on male terms, establishment terms which must be male terms, and so I went overboard to make everything large, undecorative and serious looking. . . I see now how I was really confined by an attitude, so defensive, a bit like saying 'I can do it too' – maybe a bit better.⁴⁵

Here, Finn-Kelcey underplays the value of her earlier work using wind-dependent objects to perform powerful interventions in public space, as products of her desire for 'acceptance'. For instance, it is difficult to regard *Power for the People* (1972), four large flags bearing their title, flown at each corner of Battersea Power Station, as anything other than innovative, subversive, anti-establishment, and wryly playful statements, and not simply as 'serious looking' works of art.⁴⁶ Indeed, there were complaints from local residents about the work and the Director of the Central Electricity Generating Board demanded that 'People' be replaced with the apparently softer word 'Nation'; Finn-Kelcey refused, leading to the breakdown of a month of negotiations and finally the removal of the flags, which were made from 'silver tissue and black bunting'.⁴⁷ A document in the artists' archive suggests that Finn-Kelcey may have projected patterns onto the walls or surfaces of a local playground in order to cut-out her huge flags, before hand-tacking and reinforcing the lettering with a large sewing machine. The results of this practice were exhibited in specifically anti-establishment, artist-led contexts such as those of *SPACE* (Space Provision Artistic, Cultural and Education) in London,⁴⁸ and entirely in keeping with the political and artistic uses of craft by early feminist and suffragist artists and activists in their subversion of the 'woman's sphere'.⁴⁹

Meeting and collaborating with Tina Keane was particularly influential to Finn-Kelcey's turn to performance, and in the summer of 1976 the two artists undertook a project (or long-term performance work) entitled *Old Wives' Tales*, in which they recorded and documented conversations with the oldest women

they could find across a range in specific localities in order to redress the lack of existing representation.⁵⁰ As with flag-making, performance pushed Finn-Kelcey's art towards heightened states of interactivity, as she began to produce work that was increasingly grounded in its interrelation with the environment and participants, whether as spectators or as performers.⁵¹ Time and again Finn-Kelcey would strategically muddle 'inside' and 'outside' spaces as analogous to the foundational feminist conception of the personal as political, where the 'private' moves into the 'public' sphere and vice versa. In *One for Sorrow Two for Joy*, as Finn-Kelcey wrote in her notes, we see the artist in dialogue with the birds, but simultaneously she turns her gaze inwards. As Finn-Kelcey noted: 'Magpie as Ego/Feeding my ego.'⁵² Offering the birds food and objects, to be accepted or rejected by them, expresses the artist's perpetual quest for nourishment, located within, rather than in spite of, the unpredictability of the live interaction between bodies. Within this framework, Finn-Kelcey reclaims aspects of prescribed 'femininity' as a material for use, citing qualities of timidity, uncertainty, cautiousness, and fragility. The process of negotiation, between and beyond acceptance and rejection, of the 'Magpie as Ego' signals Finn-Kelcey's wider process-as-practice of becoming, of the socially constructed, composite identity, between the 'outside' (the given) and the 'inside' (the self-defined) of the woman and woman artist. In her later works Finn-Kelcey brought 'outside' spaces inside, and vice versa, in very literal ways; for example as in *God Kennel* (1992), *Join the Dots* (1997), and *Pearly Gate* (1997), in which Finn-Kelcey brings features of 'outside' landscapes (a dog house, hay, and a farmyard gate, respectively) into the gallery. In *Bar Doors* (1991) uncanny saloon-style doors stand independently in a Texan public park, and *It Pays to Pray* (1999) gives passing walkers in Sussex woodland the opportunity to select prayers (named after chocolate bars) from vending machines. Strikingly, for a solo show at Milton Keynes Gallery, Finn-Kelcey even re-produced the building structure and shop front of her local Chinese takeaway in miniature inside the gallery in *Take-Away* (2006).

Although *One for Sorrow Two for Joy* utilised tropes of 'femininity' in order to critically examine the overlapping outward perceptions and lived realities of the 'woman artist', broadly speaking Finn-Kelcey's work rarely explored or demonstrated any interest in shoring up 'feminine' aesthetics in culturally pre-determined, normative senses (here I refer to assumptions of 'femininity' as ornamental, quiet, and precious, for example, in binary opposition to the technical, assertive strength of 'masculinity'). Her subsequent performance work, *Her Mistress's Voice* (Eisteddfod, Wrexham Art Centre, 1977), which was 'conceived and executed in a spirit of play', consisted of a 'live collage', performed with the assistance of Harry Walton, whom Finn-Kelcey regularly credited as 'technicien du rêve' or architect of dreams (I wonder how changed accounts of the practice of even the most lauded 'genius' male artists in history would appear if their women friends, colleagues, lovers, and collaborators were credited in this fashion?).⁵³ Pairs of various objects ('dinosaurs, fir trees, sausages') were placed within a large circle formed by an electric toy train track, and recorded baby noises sounded in the darkened room.⁵⁴ Interacting with corresponding objects, Finn-Kelcey attempted to articulate the magpies' language; her distaste for her own voice, as documented in her notes, is paralleled in the folkloric 'ugliness' of the magpie call.⁵⁵ A Welsh woman's 'translation' of the magpie calls added to the aural collage, and the piece reached a climax as Finn-Kelcey, lying on her back, screamed her phonetic imitations to the limit of her breath.⁵⁶ Audience members reported feeling 'threatened'; according to Finn-Kelcey, one man angrily said, 'You really can't treat your audience

50. Document entitled 'Old Wives Tales', The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey. I thank Dominic Johnson for drawing my attention to Keane's later film *Shadow of a Journey* (1980), for which Finn-Kelcey is also listed as collaborator, and which may have been a direct or indirect outcome of the research conducted for *Old Wives' Tales*; <http://www.rewind.ac.uk/database/searchrewind.php?table_name=REWIND&function=details&where_field=id&where_value=234&Section=Details> (accessed 22 September 2014).

51. Guy Brett, 'Here, Now and Beyond', p. 24.

52. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, p. 14.

53. There is a growing field of scholarship which returns to historical narratives of singular male artists and gives credit to the work of previously marginalised or invisible women partners and co-creators. For instance, see Joan Rothfuss's recent scholarship on Charlotte Moorman; Joan Rothfuss, 'The Ballad of Nam June and Charlotte: A Revisionist History', in *Nam June Paik*, ed. by Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert (London: Tate, 2010), pp. 145–68; Joan Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2014).

54. Lisa Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 61.

55. Jennifer Walwin, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey', in *The British Show*, exh. cat., ed. by William Wright and Anthony Bond (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1985), pp. 135–8 (pp. 137–8).

56. One review recalls that at this point in the performance Finn-Kelcey invoked a witches' spell from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; see Alan McPherson, '"There's Another Way of Communicating, and It's not Through Meaning": Performance Art at Wrexham', *Artscribe*, no. 8, September 1977, pp. 52–4 (p. 54).

like that, you really can't relate to people like that'. As told to Tickner, Finn-Kelcey noted that,

it was apparently because I was at the time a very *strong person*, a very strong woman, and it was the other extreme from the weakness side that I happened to feel [...] when I was in it, I felt very able, in a way that I'm [...] not at many other times [...] I just don't think both men and women are familiar with seeing that, I don't think they're familiar with angry women anyway who are also *creative*. ... it must have hit on some kind of nerve ending.⁵⁷

Finn-Kelcey's attempt to find a language appropriate to her by borrowing from others was in one sense aesthetically frustrated (her imitations would never be as 'good' as the 'real thing'), but also effective in finding a process of 'live collage' that foregrounded the composition as an unresolved, shifting constellation of elements in liminal space. Confronting her audience with normally invisible disquiet by putting to use, and perhaps even cannibalising, her own anxiety and uncertainty as a kind of unbelonging subject, Finn-Kelcey demonstrates a process of grappling with artistic and ontological nomadism. As Catherine de Zegher writes of 'women artists', a practice emerges which is based on 'subjective transivity'; de Zegher clarifies, '[c]hallenging the existing canon, this vision brings forward an idea based not on essence or negation but on the idea of an artist working through traces coming from others to whom she or he is "borderlinked"'.⁵⁸

While Finn-Kelcey was drawn, at least in part, to the fluidity and flexibility of performance, there is also evidence that she felt self-conscious and tentative about being seen as a 'performer'. Anne Bean was a peer and friend of Finn-Kelcey's and also used her body as a material within her sculptural work made during the 1970s. Bean sensed that Finn-Kelcey worried about the term 'performance artist', as there was a perception that the term might be used by professionals entrenched in strictly 'visual art' traditions as a form of dismissal, or a way of discounting performance practice as legitimate art.⁵⁹ Parallel debates within feminist art communities questioned use of the live body as potentially complicit with perceived pre-determined, gendered categories (as they may have been seen in the 1970s); as Mary Kelly commented in an interview, 'Men were artists; women were performers'.⁶⁰ Examination of Finn-Kelcey's work alongside her personal notes suggests that she worked to refuse this kind of compartmentalisation and embraced a broad conception of performance as foundational to her practice that revolved around states of flux and re-invention. As Catherine Elwes wrote, '[t]he shapes [Finn-Kelcey] takes on are never an easy fit, her costume is only ever borrowed, and its wearing is as absurdly contradictory as lived experience'.⁶¹ This notion of the 'contradictory' lived experience, compounded in the changeable 'costume' identity is well illustrated in another early photographic piece by Finn-Kelcey, *Divided Self (Speakers' Corner)* (1974), which shows a double image of the artist seated on a bench in Hyde Park, Cixous' notion of the 'several, simultaneous' body is manifested as the two figures are caught in dialogue, looking across at each other. However, there was a point at which Finn-Kelcey began to wonder about the live body in performance as a 'borrowed' costume, and already-occupied space. Later, in the 1990s, she commented,

I suppose for me the work has always been about re-inventing myself each time, and not believing that anything is stable. Never believing that there is a foundation from which I work – which is untrue in reality because obviously there is a foundation – but in my mind I don't have that. I always feel that I'm starting again each time as if I've never done it before.⁶²

This process of invention and re-invention was complemented by Finn-Kelcey's painstakingly meticulous approach to working and reworking her ideas, by

57. Lisa Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 63.

58. Catherine de Zegher, 'Introduction', in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. by Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (London: MIT Press, 2006) pp. xv–xx (p. xviii).

59. Anne Bean, interview with the author, London, 9 July 2014.

60. Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London* (London: I B Tauris, 2013), p. 24; p. 29.

61. Catherine Elwes, 'In Praise of Older Women', p. 17.

62. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Conversation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire, London 3 September 1997* (London: Camden Arts Centre, 1997), p. 25.

which images and texts would be researched and re-crafted through many ‘draft’ versions before settling. The sapping and addictive force of the work, and the difficulty in attempting to forge and *realise* it, came to a form of apex for Finn-Kelcey in 1980. By this time, WAC had effectively disbanded,⁶³ but several members came together again in the (unprecedentedly ‘mainstream’) context of *About Time: Video, Performance and Installation by 21 Women Artists*, curated by former WAC member Catherine Elwes, with artist Rose Garrard, and then ICA curator Sandy Nairne.⁶⁴ *About Time* grew out of the organising for what became the figurative art exhibition *Women’s Images of Men*, originally planned by a committee of feminist artists including Elwes, Joyce Agee, Jacqueline Morreau, and Pat Whiteread. The parallel time-based art project that encompassed video, performance, and installation, developed due to the volume and variety of responses to an open call for women artists to submit to an exhibition initially entitled *A Man’s World Through Women’s Eyes*, designed, as archival documents verify, to show high-quality work by women which stems from an awareness of society as patriarchal, and to bolster dialogue between women and their practices.⁶⁵ In her proposal, Finn-Kelcey outlined her initial ideas for a 35-min performance, ‘*Mind the Gap* – a subject in the negative who wants to displace the horizon’, which was to have ‘some of the atmospheric and dynamic qualities found in concisely edited T.V. advertisement, cameo music-hall turns, and attempts to break athletic records’.⁶⁶ She wrote,

the silent assumptions are vocalised, visualised / toppling old conceptions, creating shifting viewpoints, / signalling in fluid space, dancing on viscosity, / the experience of ‘oddness’ / is not under the carpet. . . / Here I take my stand / anger is the space in the middle / caught between two / focussed consciousness and diffuse awareness.

Here, the negotiation of a ‘third space’, situated between and within the ‘gaps’, is manifested explicitly and clearly. Again, Finn-Kelcey utilises and reshapes the potentially debilitating questions of how to say, how to appear, and how to express *as* the substance and strength of her work. Like a growing number of women before them, the *About Time* artists and organisers were aware of the significance of archiving their own works and experiences as a means of protecting their histories from erasure and invisibility, and took care to review each other’s performances.⁶⁷ The artists’ personal records, and Harry Walton’s detailed account, including a retrospectively crafted maquette, of the event, suggest a picture of *Mind the Gap*.⁶⁸ The performance began in the darkness of the ICA theatre, the audience taking their seats, arranged in parallel rows, facing one another across a central aisle. At the one end, two white plinths support a large, rectangular prism of ice. At the other end, a treadmill waits in the entrance to an adjoining gallery, its chrome glowing beneath an ultra-violet spotlight. A Marconi radio, amplified by a microphone, occupies another plinth in the corner, and in the centre of the aisle, a small electric flame flickers on a lamp stem. Tape-recorded sounds of supermarket muzak, ‘one blithe tune after another’, can be heard in the gallery before Finn-Kelcey’s voice-over begins to tell the story of a working process characterised by uncertainty and impossibility.⁶⁹ The script reads, ‘She didn’t know whether to bridge the gap or stand in it’, and lists (overly-ambitious) desires to achieve ‘speed, anxiety, dexterity, humour, optimism, friction, strength, absurdity, velocity, tempo and exertion’.⁷⁰ Thanking the organisers and apologising for changes to her proposal and her failure to perform, Finn-Kelcey describes a series of variously abandoned and attempted ideas before confessing; ‘finally, she didn’t know what she wanted to say’.⁷¹

63. Sonia Knox recalled that WAC may have disbanded due to struggles around members’ differences and individual aims and ideas, though Knox and Finn-Kelcey did not want to ‘split’; Knox, interview with the author.

64. See Nairne and others (eds), *About Time*, exh. cat. (London: ICA, 1980). Having also been approached by Margaret Harrison and Lucy Lippard with *Issue: Social Strategies by Women Artists* (14 November–21 December 1980), Nairne worked with the women organisers in building a ‘women’s season’, supplemented by screenings, lectures, and seminars; Sandy Nairne, interview with the author, 15 August 2013, London.

65. ‘Images of Men – an exhibition of work by women artists’, typed document, TGA 955/7/5/44, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.

66. Rose Finn-Kelcey, ‘Proposal for a Performance, November 1980’, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

67. Catherine Elwes, interview with the author, 25 July 2013, London; see Catherine Elwes and Rose Garrard (eds), ‘*About Time* at the ICA’, in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970–1985*, ed. by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora, 1987), pp. 225–31.

68. Harry Walton, ‘*Mind the Gap*’, in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, ed. by Rose Finn-Kelcey (London: Ridinghouse, 2013), pp. 86–7.

69. Harry Walton, ‘*Mind the Gap*’, p. 86.

70. *Mind the Gap* script and notes, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

71. *Mind the Gap* script and notes, The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

72. Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body*, p. 62.

73. Harry Walton, 'Mind the Gap', p. 87.

74. Catherine Elwes, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey *Mind the Gap*', in Elwes and Garrard, *About Time at the ICA*, p. 228.

75. Harry Walton, 'Mind the Gap', p. 87.

76. Catherine Elwes, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey *Mind the Gap*', p. 228.

77. Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 1.

78. The term 'third area' refers to the fluid space between and beyond identity binaries, but has also been used to describe performance and time-based practices, for example as neither painting nor sculpture; see *About Time*, exh. cat., p. i.

79. Jen Harvie, 'Being Her: Presence, Absence and Performance in the Art of Janet Cardiff and Tracey Emin', in *Auto / Biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 195–216 (pp. 196, 201).

80. Rose Finn-Kelcey interviewed by Lisa Tickner, 'One for Sorrow, Two for Mirth', p. 61.

81. For a summary of ways in which verbal-textual English language is made by and for men, see Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Pandora, 1985).

82. Susan Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', in *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 3–34 (p. 11).

The audience remained seated, sensing (as Kathy Battista puts it) a 'bluff', until the artist did finally appear, dressed simply in pale trousers and shirt, her hair cut close to her head. She silently placed a wire across the block of ice. Weighted by two dumbbells at each end, the wire cuts down and through the ice, almost imperceptibly slowly, for the duration of the performance.⁷² Finn-Kelcey disappeared from view and a man's voice continues, 'She turned to Chapter Five of *Frankenstein*', and recited a passage where, at the point of the creator's 'terminal exhaustion', the created thing assumes life.⁷³ Out of a seemingly deathly point of crisis, the artist then re-emerged, mounting the treadmill which 'at last' comes 'lumbering' into activity, as she broke into a slow, steady jog, the body 'showing its strength', as Elwes noted, its movement highlighted by her pale clothing, 'headless and handless' in the ultra-violet light.⁷⁴ As Harry Walton describes, 'The gallery was silent, responsive only to the hum of the machine and the remorseless pacing of the runner';⁷⁵ Finn-Kelcey ran to her limit, having trained for weeks to increase her endurance – which holds particular significance in working against the residual effects of physical difficulties that affected Finn-Kelcey's mobility as a child. At the point of being unable to continue, the artist steps down, and disappears again with the re-introduction of muzak and the woman's voice ('She noted down words like crevice, ravine, gorge, breach, interval, crack, chink, rift, fissure, chasm'), before her final re-appearance. An aural crescendo culminates in the 'shattering sound of an earth rift and the all clear siren – the final irony of a nuclear conclusion', as Finn-Kelcey moves into visibility, crouching as a runner 'on her marks' before the audience; she maintained her still position, the siren sounding, adamantly waiting for the audience to reluctantly disperse.⁷⁶

I read *Mind the Gap*, through the archive, as a representative of Finn-Kelcey's developing investigation into ways in which binary systems of identification might be disrupted. The piece can be read as an exercise in this model of feminist understanding, proposed by Amelia Jones in *Seeing Differently* (cited at the beginning of this article) and others,⁷⁷ which resists total and totalising position-taking, where there can only ever be an oppressive 'masculine' patriarchy in opposition to alternately oppressed or liberating 'femininities'. Finn-Kelcey locates her practice differently, alongside the ever-consuming, continually shifting questions of precisely how to say, to appear, to express, to make work, to place oneself, to live. She occupies a 'third area' in refusing to 'perform' as expected, or to settle into any single 'identity' position.⁷⁸ At the same time, the performance avoids succumbing to mystification by foregrounding the labour of the work, and the labouring body, playing with expectations of 'productivity' (of work, of presence), on which the institution itself relies. For instance, as Jen Harvie points out, absence can be utilised by women artists as a tool for subverting commodification (the assumed 'service provision' of an artistic display) and problematising the 'availability' of women and their given experiences.⁷⁹

Finn-Kelcey's enactment of appearing and disappearing, of visibility and invisibility, before reaching a final position of 'silence' constitutes a subversion of the displayed 'female object', but also, as she told Tickner, of the painful and awkward legacy of growing up in the patriarchal family structure, in which 'women weren't supposed to have opinions'.⁸⁰ Time and space for interpretive and interrogative thought are expanded, opening up the possibilities of a silence – not one of complicity, but of renegotiating inadequate 'man-made' languages and hegemonic structures of representation.⁸¹ In 1967, Susan Sontag wrote that, 'Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue'.⁸² This is evidenced in that Finn-Kelcey is able to claim voices and create spaces in a way that is powerful because there is no definitive 'answer' in the work, whose politics

must always be located in the personal—political, the experiential—factual, and the feeling—intellectual. This refusal of containment is perhaps typified in the artist's waiting impetuously on the starting line, the audience already frustrated by the sustained sense of 'non-starting'. Finn-Kelcey insists on the discursive, interpretive space of open-ended silence without succumbing to an empty ('feel-good') mysticism, and mystification of the critical issues at stake. Though Sontag argues that 'art', as a singular and generic myth, is itself a form of mystification,⁸³ I rearticulate this here in terms of the specific historical context of Finn-Kelcey's work as a form of 'making complex'. Some, but not all, art mystifies and exists within the boundaries of its own 'mystery', which then stifles dialogue in the seeming futility of questioning. Rightly so, Sontag also warns of the 'unhistorical' project of silence as a dubious invocation of 'the ineffable', which must be circumnavigated with caution.⁸⁴ Finn-Kelcey's work, I argue, points not to unknowability (as distinct from uncertainty, which she deals in explicitly), but to interpretive possibility. Her action, and my representation of it, is rooted in dialogue with spatial and temporal context, as well as in an awareness of self-positioning — in this case as part of a feminist exhibition brought about as a result of lobbying and renegotiation of a mainstream gallery space that is latently and, in 1980, actively, patriarchal.⁸⁵

Through the early and mid-1980s, Finn-Kelcey continued to rework the concept of performances of absence or disappearing, which she defined in collaboration with Walton as 'vacated performance', inquiring into 'a desire to make performances which questioned the assumption that a performance necessarily requires a human performer, and that without one all human presence is absent'.⁸⁶ This desire stemmed, in part, from Finn-Kelcey's perception of an inescapability of the body of the 'woman performer' as a focal point which diverts attention or clouds other concepts, as well as from exasperation with expectations of 'stage charisma' and narrow-minded conceptions of (stage) 'presence' and 'absence'. Finally, Finn-Kelcey found new ways for her body to enable practice — as she did in *Bureau de Change* (1987), by working on and from the floor, meticulously arranging £1000 worth of loose change to resemble Van Gogh's 'priceless' *Still Life: Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers* (1888). In her later work, Finn-Kelcey continued to challenge institutional prejudice against women artists in public spaces through interactive installation. For instance, in *Pearly Gate* (Camden Arts Centre, 1997), the viewer is confronted with an over-sized, opalescent gate in the centre of the gallery; it is not only clinically clean but also vaguely recalls an uncanny sense of the pastoral. While in part a homage to a distantly remembered rural childhood, the work also represents a mechanism by which, in Finn-Kelcey's words, 'you're either let through or you're excluded'.⁸⁷ Perhaps even more significantly, the work's pristine perfection poses an ironically seductive but also off-putting challenge to attempt to pass through the untouchable (in a sense, forbidding) gateway.⁸⁸ While the aesthetic experience of Finn-Kelcey's work often seems to reach towards 'formal' structure and beauty, subtlety and delicately overlapping concepts, this is always synthesised with profound criticisms of 'power and *who holds the power*' as a 'necessary' ingredient, even when unwanted (for example, in a desire to flee categorisation as 'issue-based' art).⁸⁹ This is perhaps particularly well illustrated in *Steam Installation* (Chisenhale Gallery, London, 1992), where Finn-Kelcey 'played god' by designing a warm, swirling mass of steam, contained only by invisible curtains of cold air in the centre of a chilly ex-warehouse space.⁹⁰ Working at the intersection of the visible and the invisible, Finn-Kelcey's artwork calls on multiple senses, reveals the normally hidden qualities of the environment, and invites interrogation through her work as a catalysing force. Indeed, Finn-Kelcey's fascination with Yves Klein's *Leap Into the Void*

83. Susan Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', p. 4.

84. Susan Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', p. 30.

85. For an account of how the shows came about, see Jacqueline Morreau and Catherine Elwes, 'Lighting a Candle', in *Women's Images of Men*, ed. by Sarah Kent and Jacqueline Morreau (London: Pandora, 1985), pp. 13–26.

86. Rose Finn-Kelcey, Serpentine Gallery Proposal October 1981 [*Glory*], The Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

87. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Conversation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire*, p. 18

88. Catherine Elwes has also commented on the 'discouraging' effect of the 'formica-white perfection' of *Pearly Gate* in Catherine Elwes, 'In Praise of Older Women', p. 18. I elaborate on Finn-Kelcey's comment on *Pearly Gate* here by foregrounding the pristine but also forbidding qualities of the gateway, which seems to hold more possibility for individual agency and feminist reorganisation of power than the passive hope of being 'let through'.

89. Rose Finn-Kelcey interview in *Audio Arts* [cassette], ed. William Furlong, vol. 12, no. 2 and 3 [Documenta 9] (1992).

90. Sarah Kent, 'Blowing Hot and Cold', in *Rose Finn-Kelcey*, ed. by Rose Finn-Kelcey (London: Ridinghouse, 2013) pp. 199–203 (p. 201).

91. Rose Finn-Kelcey, extract from a lecture given on the occasion of an *Yves Klein* exhibition (Hayward Gallery, 1995), *Audio Arts* [cassette], ed. William Furlong, vol. 15, no. 4 (1996).

92. *Glory* [VHS], BAFV.1189, British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection, Central Saint Martins, London.

93. Guy Brett, 'Rose Finn-Kelcey Obituary'.

94. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Conversation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire*, p. 10.

95. Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Conversation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Hermione Wiltshire*, pp. 7–9.

96. Donald Rodney was a founder member of the BLK Art Group, see 'Press Release: Truth, Dare, Double-Dare... Rose Finn-Kelcey and Donald G Rodney', and 'Information: Press Release, New Collaborative Installation: Rose Finn-Kelcey and Donald Rodney' [Ikona Gallery, Birmingham, 4 June–15 July 1994], National Art Library Information File 'Rose Finn-Kelcey', Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

97. Catherine Elwes, 'In Praise of Older Women'.

98. This relegation is a function of reinforcing patriarchal supremacy, but also occurs across many other boundaries, including artistic form; for instance, ICA records dated 1979 show programmers' aversion to curating Joseph Beuys as a perceived artist of the 1960s (letter from Cob Stenham to Sandy Nairne [cc. Bill McAlister], 9 November 1979, TGA 955/2/6/38, Tate Archive, London).

99. Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently*, p. 239.

(1960) – where upwards trajectory of the body, and downwards pull of gravity meet in a void-like space of equal possibility – opens up a rich territory for thinking about her work when considered alongside the inverted body of *The Restless Image*.⁹¹ The body is seen simultaneously as an expression, an instrument, and a trace of a kind of liberation and 'opening up' of worlds of possibility and desire. Klein positioned his work in terms of an ostentatiously cryptic notion of a Rosicrucian 'desire world', whereas for Finn-Kelcey, the desire is perhaps located in the possibility for self-determination in the 'void', in a space of fluidity between and without the 'self' and the 'other'.

Finn-Kelcey's practice was articulate but it also often said without saying, for instance through the use of objects or figures which 'stand-in' for Finn-Kelcey's own body and voice or where, as in *Glory* (Serpentine Gallery, 1983), 'surrogate performers' appear as Finn-Kelcey remains silent.⁹² The restlessness of Finn-Kelcey's thinking and practice is evidenced in the formal mutations of her images across time, up to the point at which her body would no longer allow her to speak or do, with the debilitating onset of motor neurone disease in 2013.⁹³ In her practicing lifetime, Finn-Kelcey was concerned about being seen as 'belonging' or relegated only to an 'older generation' rooted in the 1970s, by which her art would be assumed 'redundant', and she would succumb to the lure of retreating to a final place of stand-still.⁹⁴ In light of the diversity of Finn-Kelcey's practice across time, and her continual, active engagement in self-criticism (for example, retrospectively reflecting on the limitations of the self-perceived 'radicalism' of alternative art spaces in the 1970s) the possibility of this form of temporal compartmentalisation seems absurd.⁹⁵ Finn-Kelcey's ability to bridge and form productive coalitions that refuse expected or confining categories flourished in the form and content of her work, but also in the force of her growing desire to strive for equality and difference in anti-separatist, egalitarian processes, and collaborations – for example in her work with artist and black arts activist Donald Rodney, whom Finn-Kelcey greatly admired.⁹⁶ It is crucial that this pertinent intersectional approach continues to develop, confront, and find new expression in work happening today, for reasons outlined at the beginning of this article. However, many of Finn-Kelcey's peers, such as Catherine Elwes, Carolee Schneemann, Cosey Fanni Tutti, and others, continue to experience (and protest) this relegation to the status of '1970s' artist – or, the even more restrictive, '1970s feminist' artist.⁹⁷ A feminist historiographical approach must be particularly conscious of ways in which women artists are diminished and ultimately silenced where they are wittingly or unwittingly confined by curators, history-makers, and institutions to a specific era.⁹⁸ Within this form of containment, women and their work exist as 'secrets' to be discovered, which may be displayed and treasured in their 'rarity', but are then in turn liable to remain as tokens or static fetish-objects of the archive, and discursively silenced where mere presence or naming is regarded as an adequate treatment of the subject. It is important to note, therefore, that my archival approach does not seek to contain the work as or within 'documents' of another era – but is used to explore how the work holds resonance and relevance in its uses for us today. Recognising the achievements of women artists, and continuing to engage and take pleasure in their work across time remains an important imperative for feminists and historians. The extraordinary challenges posed by Finn-Kelcey in her work enable the deployment and development of models of art and interrogation, as proposed by Jones, which 'rethink' and are 'relevant to our increasingly complex experience of myriad identifications', as we continue to revise and reshape how we perform in theory, and in practice, actively and consciously, towards vital reorganisations of power.⁹⁹