



'A Play on Action' at Rosamund Felsen Gallery

In a year that witnessed historic elections of the first female presidents in Latin America and Africa, alongside an ongoing struggle for women's rights that includes a devastating rise in abuse as a tool of war, this is a critical time to reconsider feminism. *A Play on Action: 5 Los Angeles Artists Consider Feminism*, curated by artist Bari Ziperstein, takes on the subject, albeit in a playful manner. The five artists address issues of gender and women's roles through strong work, but the exhibition lacks an in-depth appraisal of the state of feminism.

It is vaguely emblematic that the only male artist included here exhibits photographs of empty stages. Kevin McCarty's subtly evocative works feature the well-worn and gritty stages of Los Angeles nightclubs that are, by turns, gay or punk. That this is of critical importance—or social significance given the shifting sands of Los Angeles culture—is debatable, but the idea has clearly served as emotional fodder for the artist to wreak a mixture of lonely expectations and exuberant release from the shadows of these spaces. The inclusion of McCarty's work, supported by Tamara Sussman's ingenious installation, makes the broad claim that any examination of identity falls under the purview of feminism.

Sussman's site-specific installation includes purple, red and glittery silver vinyl text flowing across the walls and floor to tell of a fictional liaison between rap stars Eminem and R. Kelly. Based on the phenomenon of slash fiction, in which female fans eroticize the objects of

their attention through writing, the concept flips traditional roles by objectifying hyper-masculine stars in a homosexual scenario from the perspective of a female fan. Sussman's installation is carefully designed and, like McCarty's photographs, manages to integrate its conceptual underpinnings while engaging viewers emotionally. That the sexually explicit finale begins on the glass door of Felsen's office and climaxes on the concrete floor is both funny and gutsy, surreptitiously reining viewers into a scene that conflates fame, repression and voyeurism.

Corrina Peipon also takes a fictional character as her subject, though hers is amorphous and focuses on the thoughts and emotions of an anonymous woman. The artist's creation of such a nuanced

examination of identity—not as object, but as experience.

This association with fashion and role-playing take a more obvious turn in Julie Orser's video *Occurrence at Lookout Rock*. While beautiful to look at, the work does little to delve beneath the surface of films that Orser mines for visual and theoretical reference, in this case, Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Westerns. She replaces the characters with female archetypes representing the demure, the sultry, the cocky, and the adventurous in clothing that evokes fashion pages as much as movies. If the intention is to address the viability and persistence of stereotypes, the period costumes and vacant expressions subtract from this effort. The lush cinematic display is playful, but curiously devoid of action—either narrative or conceptual, a looping reminder of the playful glance the exhibition as a whole casts on feminism.

—Annie Buckley

A Play on Action: 5 Los Angeles Artists Consider Feminism: Kevin McCarty, Julie Orser, Corrina Peipon, Tamara Sussman and Haruko Tanaka closed in April at Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.

Annie Buckley is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.



Haruko Tanaka, *Fit in Room Piece (#11)* Summer 2000, 2000, chromogenic print on wood panel, 10-7/8" x 10-7/8", at Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.

portrait with minimal materials (the work consists of either Letraset or photocopy text on copy paper) reveals the sharp focus of her attention. In a combination of found and artist-authored text, Peipon posits the weight of experience against the ephemera of objecthood with striking accuracy. A group of nine square pages typed in courier font and pinned to the wall includes phrases like "things I have that are not mine" and "letters sent by friends from long ago" and carries the vibration of those things without the material substance.

The twelve photographs in Haruko Tanaka's series *Fit in Room Piece* complement Peipon's text. The artist gazes into the camera in a refreshingly vulnerable and honest enactment of self-portraiture. Having entered the dressing rooms of various department stores with clothing in her size, Tanaka tries it on and photographs herself in a pose gleaned from fashion magazines. Camera at her hip, she commands an exceptional performance as woman/fit-model/artist looking variously bored, haughty, lonely and sensual. Tanaka's work embodies a layered