

MAGA ESBERG

It ('s a) girl!



Performers, audience, postcards, texts, ready made frames - various sizes, © Maga Esberg, 2017, NFS

For HATCHED 2017 Esberg researched major London museums and art galleries looking for women's presence as subject and as artists. In the shops' postcard sections, among hundreds of images of women produced by male artists, she found reproductions of sculpture, drawing, painting, photography and mixed media spanning over 200 years by about 40 women artists.

Tracey Emin, Marlene Dumas, Barbara Hepworth, Georgia O'Keefe, Leigh Seiner, Meredith Frampton, Gillian Wearing, Jacqueline Wilson, Pauline Boty, Rink Dijkstra, Sarah Lucas, Alice Neel, Gillian Wearing, Vanessa Bell, Babette Mangle, Jessica Ennis-Hill, Rosemary Trockel, Dorothea Lange, Viviane Sassen, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Minna Keene, Ruth Bartlett, Angela Garcia, Dame Laura Knight, Cassandra Austen, Olive Edis, Maggi Hambling, Corinne Day, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Nan Goldin, Cindy Sherman, Marisol, Anna Zinkeisen, Joe Tilson, Julie Blackmon, Louise Bourgeois, Linda McCartney, the Guerilla Girls, Barbara Kruger, Clarisse D'Arcilomes and Eve Arnold's works were represented in these institutions at the end of 2016; a handful of artists were found in several places.

With It ('s a) girl! Esberg juxtaposes texts by contemporary and historical writers with a snapshot of the current art establishment. During a performance the public is

invited to make a contribution to the installation piece and to question what is it like to be a woman (artist) now.

Maga Esberg is an artist and curator. She set up HATCHED in 2015 as a platform to develop, make and promote work addressing women's issues to respond to the political and social climate. Esberg has an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Art in London and her work has been exhibited recently at 'L' éloge du voyage lent 2016', HATCHED 2016 at Freud's Oxford, RCA Secrets 2015, Brighton Photo Fringe 2014. Since 2013 she has been an artist in residence at Wytham woods, Oxford.

List of texts:

HENNA (Performer)

'The connections between and among women are the most feared, the most problematic, and the most potentially transforming force in the planet.'

Adrienne Rich NATASHA (Performer)

'These poets will be! When the infinite servitude of woman is broken, when she lives for herself and by herself, the man, - hitherto abominable, - having given her her freedom, she too will be a poet! The woman will find some unknown! Will her worlds of ideas be different from ours? - She will find strange, unfathomable, repulsive, delicious things; we shall take them, we shall understand them.'

Arthur Rimbaud

NATASHA

'A flower is relatively small. Everyone has many associations with a flower - the idea of flowers. You put out your hand to touch the flower — lean forward to smell it — maybe touch it with your lips almost without thinking — or give it to someone to please them. Still — in a way — nobody sees a flower — really — it is so small — we haven't time — and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.. .So I said to myself — I'll paint what I see — what the flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it — I will make even busy New-Yorkers take time to see what I see of

flowers.. .Well — I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower, you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and

you write about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower — and I don't.'

Georgia O' Keeffe

Contribution to the exhibition catalogue of the show 'An American Place' (1944)

JEMIMA (Performer)

'How many feminists does it take to change a lightbulb? No need for a light bulb, when you have a glass ceiling.'

Anon.

HENNA

'But, in spite of good intentions, and with the best intentions of the world, all these communication campaigns supposed to open our eyes have one thing in common: they are addressed only to the victim. The aggressor is still playing the field. This is particularly evident in all that concerns domestic violence: one sees a hand gagging, a fist that raises it, sometimes a shadow that threatens, very rarely a whole body. The one who strikes, who insults, who oppresses, remains in the blur, he has no face. It is like disembodied. Strange paradox: it exists, it is named - it is a man to 94% -, but he is excluded from the debate.

Violence without author.

This unilateral point of view poses a problem. Campaigns against road violence are addressed, directly, to the drivers. The message is more or less radical, but it is unambiguous: the culprit is the one who drinks, the one who speeds up, the one who falls asleep at the wheel. In domestic violence, the culprit is the one who gives the blows. Now he is in the blind spot of the campaign.

We understand the importance of getting the victims to speak up, inciting them to file a complaint, to say it all. But by pointing all the spotlights on them, and on them alone, one induces that they are the unique actresses of the drama. In a nutshell, one can not get over the "she banged her head on the door". That the door has a vague human form does not change anything.

The violence suffered by women, as well as the reactions or non-reactions they provoke, do not come from nowhere. They have individual, private, but also societal and collective

roots. To reduce them to their consequences is to refrain from questioning their nature and confronting them. The only question that is relevant to domestic violence is not "why doesn't she leave? "But" why does he hits? ". Why does he think he is not an aggressor? Because he drinks, because he is a monster or a bastard are not sufficient answers.'

Charlie Hebdo 2016 JEMIMA

'To say I enjoyed making fires sounds rather awful doesn't it but it really was lovely to find that you had been successful that the thing really had burnt down and you hadn't got caught and I know we only just got out on time in one occasion. but there we were there was the thing blazing and there we were in the glare of the light . well later on we thought it wasn't a good idea to make the fire straight away so that we could be seen in the light of it. so we got dark lanterns i believe they were police dark lanterns we directed a trail of cotton wool soaked in paraffin to this dark lantern wrapped it around the bottom of a candle then we got it all built up and ready put a sort of shade in case any light could be seen from any angle and we lit the candle and went away. and when the candle had burnt down to the cotton wool it presumably we didn't stop to see , ran along and set fire to it. by then we were miles away very likely.'

Anon. Extract from BBC Time Watch 1975

NATASHA

'It's my fault. I am forgetting too much. Tonight I will say my prayers .No longer kneeling at the foot of the bed, knees on the hard wood of the gym floor, Aunt Elisabeth standing by the double doors, arms folded, cattle prod hung on her belt, while Aunt Lydia strides along the rows of kneeling night gowned women, hitting our backs or feet or bums or arms lightly, just a flick, a tap, with her wooden pointer if we slouch or slacken. She wanted our heads bowed just right, our toes together and pointed, our elbows at the proper angle. Part of her interest in this was aesthetic: she liked the look of the thing. She wanted us to look like some Anglo-Saxon carved out tomb or Christmas-card angels, regimented in our robes of purity. But she knew the spiritual value of the body rigidity, of muscle strain: a little pain cleans out the mind, she'd say.

What we prayed for was emptiness, so we would be worthy to be filled: with grace, with love, with self-denial, semen and babies.

Oh God, King of the universe, thank you for not creating me a man.

Oh God, obliterate me. Make me fruitful. Mortify my flesh, that I may be multiplied. Let me be fulfilled...

Some of them would get carried away with this. The ecstasy of abasement. Some of them would moan and cry.

There is no point of making a spectacle of yourself, Janine said Aunt Lydia.

I pray where I am, sitting by the window, looking out through the curtain at the empty

garden. I don't even close my eyes. Out there or inside my head, it's an equal darkness.

Or light.'

Margaret Atwood, the Handmaid's Tale 1985 JEMIMA

'Her presence is felt by both men and women, and every member of society past the age of five is aware of her. She is the fashion model archetype, an implicit image of reference. She always looks perfect. She also smells wonderful at all times. She has sex appeal. However she is asexual . We look but don't imagine . Whether she is intelligent is irrelevant.'

'The goddess, A portfolio of models', 1974 Martha Wilson

JEMIMA

Apparently it is ungraceful of me to mention my period in public cause the actual biology of my body is too real

It is okay to sell what's between a woman's legs more than it is okay to mention it's inner workings

The recreational use of this body is seen as beautiful while its nature is seen as ugly

Anon.

HENNA

She plays down her competence to get along. Perhaps she is not beautiful, but she is extremely well -groomed, approaching goddessdom at least by the cost of her outfit. Her sexuality is a point of debate: does her job, fulfil her and make her a self loving person, or does she succeed in her job because she is frigid?

'The professional, A portfolio of models', 1974 Martha Wilson

We worked on a beach on Long Island. She was visiting Norman Rosten the poet... I asked her what she was reading when I went to pick her up (I was trying to get an idea of how she spent her time). She said she kept Ulysses in her car and had been reading it for a long time. She said she loved the sound of it and would read it aloud to herself to try to make sense of it — but she found it hard going. She couldn't read it consecutively. When we stopped at a local playground to photograph she got out the book and started to read while I loaded the film. So, of course, I photographed her. It was always a collaborative effort of photographer and subject where she was concerned — but almost more her input.

Eve Arnold on Marilyn Monroe photo shoot NATASHA

She claims she doesn't give a shit about the goddess. actually , to be such a perfect mirror reversal of her, in her workbooks and braless peasant blouses, she is just as conscious of her sexuality , not out of boredom , but because it is a natural function , god given for us to enjoy . She has shelved her intellect for the time being, deriving fulfilment from working the land with her hands.

'The Earth Mother, A portfolio of models', 1974 Martha Wilson

HENNA

these are the models society holds out to me: goddess, housewife, working girl, professional, earth -mother, lesbian. at one time or another , i have tried them all for size , and none has fit. all that is left to do is be an artist and point the finger at my own predicament . the artist operated out of the vacuum left when all other values are rejected.

'A portfolio of models', 1974 Martha Wilson