

RE-CONSTRUCTING FEMININITIES: PERVERTING PERFORMANCE IN  
HANNAHLISA KUNYIK'S *SUSANNE FOTOGRAFIERT MICH BEIM BADE*  
(2011/2012/2018)

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KEYWORDS

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## Re-Constructing Femininities: Perverting Performance in Hannahlisa Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* (2011/2012/2018)

### Abstract

“If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young *white* women should be running Western culture.”<sup>1</sup> Peggy Phelan’s witty quote perfectly sums up the imbalance between in\_visibility and (political) agency. One example of being *hypervisibly* naked while at the same time lacking agency is the subject of Susanna bathing, which, emerging from the Old Testament Bible story *Susanna and the Elders*, is one of the best-known and most-cited motifs of Western art history. In the intermedial installation *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* (2011/2012/2018) by Viennese artist Hannahlisa Kunyik, *Susanne* is the one who *sees*.

In the following article, I shall analyze Kunyik’s artwork by introducing my concept of *perverting performance* as a subversive strategy for marginalized subjects to gain visual agency, as well as the possibility of visual re-constructions of femininities. The possibilities of a perverting performance can be understood in the repeated and parodying reversal of existing norms and modes of representation that have proven themselves to be normative through performative repetition in a cultural image repertoire. With the concept of *perverting* I revisit and reappropriate a term that has been used to produce Otherness and altered sexuality.

### 1\_Preface

When, in 2018, Black British artist Sonia Boyce (b. 1962) took over the Manchester Art Gallery’s 18th and 19th century collection for an evening of performance and the filming of what was to become *Six Acts* (2018), the possibility of a discussion about the role of art institutions in relation to canon production and to the construction of meanings could have emerged. Instead, fixating on one particular part of the event, the takedown of John William Waterhouse’s painting *Hylas and the Nymphs* (1896), international media discourse focused mainly on the question of ‘freedom of art,’ the proclamations of a ‘publicity stunt,’ and the panicked accusations of ‘censorship’ and ‘feminist moralizing,’ thereby neglecting the complexity of Boyce’s artistic work, which enables discourses about gender, sexuality, transgender identities, *race*, and nationalism. Boyce brings to attention that curatorial decisions are made in museums on a daily basis: decisions about which artworks are exhibited and *made visible*, and which endure *invisibility* in storage. By opening up a space for visitors to engage in a dialogue about their own perception and interpretation of artworks and the way they are exhibited, Boyce’s artistic *takeover* challenges to reflect on *what* is given to be seen (*zu sehen gegeben*) and *how*.<sup>2</sup>

In my reading of Boyce's artistic practice I propose a perspective that feminist art historians have been formulating at least since the 1980s in their efforts to explore the exclusion of women and artists read as non-Western from academic art history: to reveal this scholarly discipline as a discourse formation, following the power-critical discourse theory of Michel Foucault.<sup>3</sup> The achievements of early feminist art history are to be emphasized in the fact that supposedly neutral terms like *art* and its central categories *artist*, *genius*, *quality*, and *creativity* are scrutinized for their inherent ideological and gendered attributions.<sup>4</sup> That these categories are "in need of labeling" ("bezeichnungsbedürftig")<sup>5</sup> in order not to be thought of as inherently *male* is disclosing the unmarked norm and the subject position understood as the center of art historical discourse: In her analysis of the art historical canon, first published in 1991, art historian Nanette Salomon points out how the subject of art history has since the 16th century been constituted as a *white*, heterosexual, upper class male.<sup>6</sup> Within such a discourse different kinds of in\_visibilities are being produced. The criteria for excluding artists read as female and non-Western are established and produced as objectified and marginalized positions with the stigma of Otherness, and treated as exceptions.<sup>7</sup> Femininities, as the constructed Other of masculinities, become the latter's projection surface, and the Other, as the supposed *outside* of the discourse, becomes a product and inscription surface of the self.<sup>8</sup> A response to the critics of Boyce's artistic *takeover* in the Manchester Art Gallery who see the freedom of art being in danger could mean not only asking *whose freedom*<sup>9</sup> is being restricted, but also to what extent a discursively generated Western concept of art is not already inscribed with a privileging of the gaze of some individuals at the expense of *Others*.

## **2\_Introduction**

In the following article, I am going to address questions of in\_visibilities and representations of femininities, their constructions, de- and re-constructions throughout artistic and art historical discourses. My research is based on the assumption that aesthetic practice and the technologies and structures of seeing strongly partake in how subject positions are marked as marginalized and alterized<sup>10</sup> and thus become projection surfaces. By posing the question of how subjects who claim the field of femininities can be re-constructed in visual agency and recognition, I would like to propose the concept of a perverting performance (lat. *pervertere* as *to reverse, turn around*) in

reference to Judith Butler's *gender as performance*. The possibilities of perverting performance<sup>11</sup> can be understood in the repeated and parodying reversal of existing norms and modes of representation that have proven themselves to be normative through performative repetition.

I have developed the concept of perverting performance with and on the basis of the intermedial installation *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* (2011/2012/2018) by Viennese artist Hannahlisa Kunyik, as it operates so distinctly with the artistic intervention in the art historical subject Susanna bathing as well as with inventions in gendered and racialized beauty norms.<sup>12</sup> In this way, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* deals with visual re-constructions of the gendered and racialized Other, and points to the question of how art historical discourse is involved in the constructions of gendered and racialized bodies. With Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*, I choose an artwork that, in the following article, I shall interpret as linked to the concept of perverting performance as an offer of a subversive artistic practice that at the same time demands a subversive practice of seeing from its viewers.

The title of my article, *Re-Constructions of Femininities*, is not meant to give credit to the assumption that there is something *authentically feminine* that would allow itself to be re-constructed. Rather, femininities seem to be in need of de-struction<sup>13</sup>: as something that needs to be grasped in its inherent constructedness. The question of femininities is not one that can be answered conclusively or homogeneously. By conceiving of women, as postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out, as a homogenous, ahistorical, cross-cultural group with a shared experience of oppression, women are reduced to the category of gender: Sexual difference is equated with female subordination, and the power imbalance of heteronormative gender binary is merely reinforced rather than challenged.<sup>14</sup> The idea of an essential femininity, a universal female experience or identity, ultimately fails to look beyond the perspective of *white*, heterosexual, middle-class women and blocks out "the differences *within women*."<sup>15</sup> In order to approach the question of femininities in a reflective way, it seems essential to adopt an intersectional and postcolonial as well as anti-racist feminist perspective that understands identity-creating categories such as gender, *race*, class, and sexuality as constructions with social impact that are intersected—not only in questions of discrimination, but in the way subjects constitute themselves and develop agency.

Taking this into account, the question about the visibility of femininities would have to be answered with performance theorist Peggy Phelan as follows: “*The Woman cannot be seen.*”<sup>16</sup> For just as femininities are not masks hiding authenticity but rather must be understood as constructs, their pictorial enclosures are products, testimonies, and sites of their production and naturalization. What we see, what is given to be seen, are not evident realities, but representations whose symbolic meanings are discursively negotiated. Thus, I am interested in understanding visually experienced representations of femininities in their constructedness. I suggest that in revealing and inverting—in perverting—constructions, the possibilities of re-constructions are to be found. I would like to emphasize though that a re-construction is also always a construction.

Issuing the question about visual re-constructions of femininities does not merely mean making femininities *visible*: Bodies that are read as female are at least visible throughout art history and visual culture. But to quote Phelan: “If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young *white* women should be running Western culture.”<sup>17</sup> Phelan’s witty quote outlines the inequality between in\_visibility and (political) agency. Following the epistemological connection between being *seen* and being *recognized*, during the last four decades, visibility has been transformed into a political category and is often used synonymously with the concept of recognition.<sup>18</sup> In her extensive research on the ambivalences of in\_visibility, cultural studies scholar Johanna Schaffer problematizes the assumption that visibility causally results in political power and agency, for such a notion overlooks the technical, social, political as well as cultural manufacturedness of in\_visibility, posing the question *what* is given to be seen, *how* and by *whom*. On the one hand, being visible neither comes with the promise of agency nor with the promise of *positive images*. On the other hand, being invisible (being unmarked) does not mean the absence of agency.<sup>19</sup> In\_visibility is materialized and produced through visual representation. Since the 1980s at the latest, poststructuralist feminist research has been pointing out that visual representation as *depiction* does not reflect or mimic social realities and power relations, but rather performatively produces what it supposedly only depicts.<sup>20</sup> Turning to visualizations of femininities therefore means the necessity of understanding them as representations in and through which gendered and racialized realities as well as power relations are produced, constructed, and naturalized by veiling their construct-

edness. Making marginalized subjects intelligible in a hegemonic discourse in which their marginalization and alterization is initially produced carries the danger of reproducing the visual constructions of their exclusions. Becoming intelligible in a certain system, however, necessarily always turns out to be connected with a recourse to and inscription in existing representational parameters and standards.<sup>21</sup>

### **3\_Perverting Performance**

The question to be negotiated, therefore, is: How can marginalized subject positions be represented without affirming the existing norms of representation and identity prescriptions that have produced their marginalization and alterization in the first place? How can subjects situated in the field of femininities be made visible in visual recognition and in agency?<sup>22</sup> In order to represent in a recognizing way, a critique of representation is needed in the sense of a “work on the practices of signification” (“Arbeit an den Bezeichnungspraxen”)<sup>23</sup>, as art historian Silke Wenk puts it. The possibility of re-constructing femininities, which I understand as subject positions represented in recognition and agency, requires a re-reading, revision, and possible deconstruction of existing parameters and conditions of representation and an analysis of the processes of their meaning-making. I see the necessity to start with the disclosure and defamiliarization of constructions of meaning in Butler’s remarks on the strategy of subversive parodying as well as in Haraway’s plea for the situatedness of knowledge production: An attempt to situate oneself visually outside of existing representational structures would only deny one’s own situatedness.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, I refer to Schaffer, who points out that “any oppositional and critical statement is dependent on a hegemonic system of statement,”<sup>25</sup> in the sense that “the representational structure and vocabulary of the ideology of the ruling class have become established to the extent that resistance [...] must also express itself within its representational system and vocabulary.”<sup>26</sup>

My research makes a proposal of a possible subversion with the concept of perverting performance. I understand perverting performance, following Butler’s concept of gender as performance, as a possibility of inverting, parodying, or overturning interventions into those very modes of representation of a cultural image repertoire that prove to be normative via performative repetition. Perverting performance functions, in the sense of its wording, as just such a performance: With the concept of *pervert-*

*ing*, which has negative connotations as *perversion*, I choose to revisit and reappropriate a term that has been used to designate and thus produce meaning for Otherness and alterized sexuality. Thus, I would like to encourage a revision of signification practice on this level as well.

As early as the 1970s, feminist artists take action by performing and parodying existing gendered and racialized social norms. Through various media, feminist artists critically engage with dominant systems of representation, questioning and deconstructing identity constructions and their gender orders. What emerges as a common tendency is the open display of what has been rendered obscene and altered, and to interrogate its encodings on one's own body.<sup>27</sup> Feminist artists further work with perverting existing depictions of subjects read as female and non-Western throughout art history. The concept of perverting performance could also be applied, for example, in a reading of the intermedial photo-performance series *Untitled (Glass on Body Imprints)* (1972/1997) from Cuban-US-American artist Ana Mendieta (1948–1985), which is dealing with visual experiences of alterization in a cultural image repertoire. Engaging with two media that are often (still) ascribed authenticity in the articulation of evidence, the (naked) body and photography, Mendieta questions the conditions in which the non-*white* Other and the visual production and perceptibility of alterization are constructed. Perverting performance could also be a tool in reading the photography series *Not Manet's Type* (1997) by Black US-American artist Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953). Weems demonstrates the projectional nature of visual representations by citing marginalizing representations and in\_visibilities of Black femininities (which she calls up in prominent positions from the modern art historical canon), while also describing the process of canon production and the need for re-constructions.

#### **4\_Hannahlisa Kunyik: *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* (2011/2012/2018)**

In *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* (2011/2012/2018) by Hannahlisa Kunyik (b. 1986), discourses of femininities are negotiated on various bodily surfaces (Fig. 1–2).<sup>28</sup> Composed of various media, the artwork displays different stages of artistic and technological reproducibility, thereby complicating the very notion of originality. Kunyik herself describes the artwork as *cross-medial*, as it materializes in drawing, performance, photography, print, and sculpture.<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 1: Hannahlisa Kunyik, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade II*, Edition 3+1, Silkscreen on paper, silkscreen on glass, 2012. 100 x 70 cm, 80 x 50 cm, destroyed copy. © Hannahlisa Kunyik

Hannahlisa Kunyik is a Vienna based *white* visual artist and studied sociologist, whose artistic practice is still to be discovered in broader art historical research. Kunyik's intermedial artistic practice includes film and video, photography, performance, installation, and print. Kunyik holds a diploma in Fine Arts as well as Art and Cultural Studies from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.<sup>30</sup> Artworks like *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* strongly relate to Kunyik's background in sociological research, corresponding with her interest in the mechanisms of action of sociocultural structures and norms that bodies incorporate through feelings, for example shame, through which they in turn experience disciplining. Artistic examinations of gendered power relations interlace Kunyik's work as an essential constant factor.



Fig. 2: Hannahlisa Kuniyik, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade II*, Edition 3+1, Silkscreen on paper, silkscreen on glass, 2012–2018. 100 x 70 cm, 80 x 50 cm, Sammlung Wien Museum/Private collection of the artist. © Hannahlisa Kuniyik

*Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade (II)* (2012–2018) (Fig. 2) is an extremely fragile installation in fourfold edition (*Edition 3+1*) consisting of a silkscreen on paper (100 x 70 cm) with a smaller silkscreen on glass (80 x 50 cm) placed in front of it. Given to be seen is a fragmented body of a person who could be perceived as *white* and female, and who is using mascara to dye her leg hair. The two image-bearing materials are arranged in a way that the printed motifs do not exactly overlap, but are rather placed parallel to each other in three of the four works with alternating directions of view, and in the fourth case are contrary to each other (see Fig. 2: 2nd from left).<sup>31</sup> *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade (III)* is also a series of silkscreen prints on paper that vary in viewing direction, exposure, type of paper, size, and color and were created in 2018 (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Hannahlisa Kunyik, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade III*, Silkscreen on paper, 2018. 100 x 70 cm, 80 x 50 cm, Private collection of the artist. © Hannahlisa Kunyik

The initial motif of *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*, which is reproduced in the prints, is a photograph taken in 2011 as a photo-performance. While performatively painting on herself, Kunyik lets the artist Susanne Mariacher photograph her performing in various public places in the city of Salzburg. The motif ultimately selected (*Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade (I)*) as a C-print Fig. 4) is taken in the inner courtyard of the Hohensalzburg Fortress.<sup>32</sup> In the following, my analysis shall concentrate mainly on the glass print installations (i.e. *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade (II)*). Later on, however, I will return to the paper prints as well as the photography and performance, because the artworks' entirety underlines important points of my concept of perverting performance.

What is given to be seen in Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*? Who sees whom? What is already *given-to-be-seen*? Which notions of femininities are made recognizable in their constructedness and which possibilities of re-construction are formulated by and can be formulated within the artwork? In order to grasp the possibility of subversive reformulation by means of a perverting performance in Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*, it is first necessary to locate the normative parameters of representation to which Kunyik refers: Here we encounter, on the

one hand, the popular art historical subject of Susanna bathing with the heteronormative matrix of desire formulated therein, emphasized in a hierarchized and gendered gaze relationship and, on the other hand, the societal call for female-read bodies to adhere to beauty norms as well as to code themselves as women.



Fig. 4: Hannahlisa Kunyik, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade I*, Photo-Performance, c-Print, 2011, Private collection of the artist and Susanne Mariacher. © Hannahlisa Kunyik

### ***5\_To-be-looked-at-ness and Susanna bathing***

The title of Kunyik's artwork already opens the reference to one of the best-known and most-cited motifs of Western art history, the subject of *Susanna bathing*, which emerges from the Old Testament Bible story *Susanna and the Elders*. Early depictions of Susanna, dating back to early Christian 3rd century Rome, are placed in a narrative sequence, and are presented as clothed bathers, inscribed with idealized notions of fe-

male chastity and divine righteousness. Starting at the beginning of the 16th century in (especially Northern) Italy, Susanna is detached from the narrative context and increasingly isolated into an objectifying and eroticizing act for the private sphere.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the moralizing and juridical impetus of the biblical narrative is increasingly neglected and the theological grounding is used as a pretext to produce idealized naked *white* female bodies.<sup>34</sup> Through depictions of Susanna bathing racialized femininities are produced and naturalized in their constant repetition. Representing Susanna as a *white* woman enforces a deeply racialized view on which body is thought of as virtuous and ideal, which body is to be sexualized in an idealized way, and which body, in its omission, is not. Thereby a *white*, young, well-proportioned, able-bodied, hairless body is set as the standard ideal of female beauty.<sup>35</sup>

The painting *Susanna Bathing* (also known as *Susanna and the Elders*, around 1555/1556) by the canonized *white* Venetian artist Jacobo Tintoretto (1518–1594), which can be found in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum can be seen as an example of this new tradition of representation.<sup>36</sup> I would like to relate Tintoretto's Viennese *Susanna Bathing* to Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* because of similarities formulated in pose and gaze relationships, which Tintoretto raises to a complex level by the addition of a mirror. I would like to highlight how femininities are constructed and represented in *Susanna Bathing*. My focus lies on the differentiation of gendered gaze relations, whose emergence in Susanna representations since the Renaissance have proven influential on Western culture, according to art historian Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat.<sup>37</sup>

As the moment of representation for *Susanna Bathing*, Tintoretto chooses a scene that the Bible story does not depict as explicitly: the tense moment before Susanna becomes aware of the elders, two *white* males, watching the young woman from the background. This scenery allows all viewers to dwell in voyeurism: Susanna, depicted as a seated nude in light body color ("helle Körperfarbe"),<sup>38</sup> is already bathing in the garden. Susanna's gaze is directed at the object of the narrative: her image in the mirror. The mirror, whose existence is not to be found in the Bible story, reinforces the visualization of Susanna as object to the gaze.

As cultural studies scholar Mieke Bal points out, there is a particular focus on viewing in the biblical narrative: Seeing and looking not only significantly determine the narrative, they are also instrumentalized to construct specific gender hierarchies.

Bal identifies in the narrative the voyeuristic potential that underlies the tradition of Western eroticizing depictions of Susanna.<sup>39</sup> Which leads to the question of what role the gaze plays in constructions of femininities in *Susanna Bathing*. Susanna, in the text as in the image, is to be seen as an example of ambivalent in\_visibility: Although she is seen extensively, she is denied the status of a recognized subject endowed with agency. Biblical scholar Jennifer A. Glancy also highlights the connection between gender representations and gendered gaze regimes in the Bible story.<sup>40</sup> She develops her analysis with reference to film theorists Laura Mulvey and Teresa de Lauretis. Glancy analyzes the elders and later the prophet Daniel as the subjects of the Bible story—they are the acting, seeing, and speaking parts. Susanna, on the other hand, becomes the object of the narrative—she is looked at and desired, she is spoken about, while she herself does not speak out to tell her version of the story. Glancy analyzes that “the story does not allow us to share her vision.”<sup>41</sup>

This sentence can equally well be applied to Tintoretto’s *Susanna*. The perspectival composition does not allow viewers to share Susanna’s self-gaze in the mirror. Rather, the central perspective allows for a pictorial composition that directs all gaze towards Susanna as an object of voyeuristic desire. Central perspective representation allows the body to be experienced in supposedly realistic and idealizing wholeness. However, as art historian Sigrid Schade elaborates, the *whole body* (*der ganze Körper*) is constructed only out of its dissection. Schade refers to the Albertine window in Albrecht Dürer’s woodcut *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman* (*Der Zeichner des liegenden Weibes*, 1538): Claiming to reproduce a neutral and objective copy of the visible world, a transparent grid is placed between the artist and the object’s body as well as on the paper. The fact that the grid is later rendered invisible denies the constructedness of the representation and passes it off as *naturalistic*.<sup>42</sup> At the same time (and this is a much-discussed subject of feminist art criticism), the possibility of voyeuristic looking is formed in the central-perspective-gaze from a spatial distance, which proves to be constitutive of the female nude since the early modern period: “It is a gaze that itself does not want to be seen, because it feeds on the desire to look.”<sup>43</sup> The elders, shifted into the background, merely stage the scene intended for the viewers of the painting: the desirous looking at Susanna. The viewers are offered the best view of Susanna, they are allowed the perspective promise of the *hortus conclusus*—they are the real voyeurs.<sup>44</sup> In the construction of

this detached and eroticized nude, as art historians Marianne Koos and Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat observe, male sexualized violence and the perpetration of the elders is rendered invisible, while the voyeuristic desire is transferred to the gaze of those looking at the image.<sup>45</sup>

An ideal image of a nude *white* female body is constructed, which is represented in the stereotype of passive beauty. Susanna represents *white* femininity as *to-be-looked-at-ness*, not as a subject in agency, but as an object to the gaze.<sup>46</sup> Laura Mulvey has already pointed out that little authenticity can be found in the position of *to-be-looked-at-ness*; it functions as a projection surface of a desire understood as heteronormatively masculine and *white* and is being coded accordingly. In this understanding, Susanna is not only denied the status of empowered subjectivity but is also drawn into the responsibility for her *being-looked-at-ness* in an idea of female ideality oscillating between “embodying beauty and seduction while simultaneously remaining absolutely chaste.”<sup>47</sup> Deeply racialized in emphasizing Susanna’s light body color, underlined by the white fabric—a *white* body as a desirable body is constructed. By reproducing the supposedly desiring looks of the *white* male elders onto Susanna, not only is heteronormative sexuality reinforced, but also the *white* male is posited as entitled to (look at) the *white* woman’s body. The trope of *to-be-looked-at-ness* could not be applied in the same way to non-*white* female nudes or bathers or non-*white* viewers throughout art history because it does not take the colonizing implications of the gaze into account.

In criticizing this subject-object dichotomy of seeing, film theorist and art historian Kaja Silverman emphasizes that the problem is not being the object of the desiring look but serving as a projection screen for an invisible subject.<sup>48</sup> The desiring looks attempt to legitimize themselves in the position of *to-be-looked-at-ness* and formulate a problematic shift of the narrative from attempted rape to being seduced. Another problem of this gaze relationship is that it constructs, stages, and thus naturalizes not only heteronormative gender binary in the perpetuation of heteronormative desire but also heteronormative *whiteness* as a norm.<sup>49</sup> The fact that the desiring gaze is not only projected onto the (female-read) body from the outside is made clear in Tintoretto’s painting by the addition of the mirror: Susanna’s gaze at her own reflection also reinforces her status as an object of voyeuristic gazes.<sup>50</sup> What is often mistaken for an expression of gendered narcissism should rather be understood as an internalization of

controlling gazes, as self-monitoring and disciplining in the compliance with social norms.

So, what does Susanna see? What image might be framed by Tintoretto's mirror? Wouldn't Susanna's look into the mirror show her an image similar to Kunyik's fragmentary corporeality in *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*? Kunyik's artwork takes up the motif of Susanna bathing, references itself within the framework of this system of representation, and reverses the gaze relationship by parodying and perverting the idea of a *white* heteronormative male desirous gaze: *Susanna* is no longer the bather being observed. *Susanne* as the photographer becomes the subject of the gaze, enabling the viewer to share her vision.

### **6\_Woman in the Picture—Woman as Image?**

Kunyik's subversive perverting of the subject of Susanna bathing, however, is not only based in the reversal of subject and object. As Silverman already makes clear, the marginalizing representation of femininities does not lie in being the object of desire.<sup>51</sup> Rather, the problem lies in negated agency and lack of recognition as well as in the attempts of a subject that remains invisible to determine its own identity through the differentiation of a gendered and racialized Other, thereby producing visibility for the Other as an image. What has begun in *Susanna Bathing* with the withdrawal of the elders and the isolation of Susanna as a *white*, sexualized, and passively idealized object of contemplation denotes an inscription of Susanna into an *image-status* (*Bild-Status*) that is ascribed to the female coded and racialized Other by using her body "as an embodiment of 'something else,' as a sign for 'something else'."<sup>52</sup> *The woman as image* (*Die Frau als Bild*), a concept established by art historian Silvia Eiblmayr, acts as a projection surface onto which an invisible (here primarily *white*, male, heterosexually perceived) subject transfers its own deficiencies and desires and establishes its own identity through the differentiation of the (female) Other.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Eiblmayr assumes an "equation of the woman or the female body with the object reality of the artwork" and formulates a fundamental "representative constitution" of bodies read as female.<sup>54</sup> According to Eiblmayr, artistic subversion in the self-representation of female artists is only possible in affirming and identifying with the *status as image*.<sup>55</sup>

For Silverman, assuming an image-status is a necessity in order for the object of the gaze to be perceived: Assuming a pose (the “anticipatory congealing of the body”) is already the element of a “pre-photographic photograph.”<sup>56</sup> Assuming a pose in an image-status is connected with designing oneself *as* an image and with Lacan’s mimicry, i.e. mapping oneself *in* an image, although Silverman does not yet conceptualize the mere reproduction of a pose (*mimicry*) as subversive. She maintains an element of agency by postulating that subjects can actively resist appropriation by the image, i.e. fixation in an image-status.<sup>57</sup> Art and media studies scholar Kerstin Brandes’ research into the possibility of keeping the image-status of the Other in motion and out of the fixation as an image also assumes “affirmation *and* deconstruction of dominant formations.”<sup>58</sup> By inscribing herself as a bather, which means that she is making herself visible through this trope of *white* femininities, Kuniyik identifies with her image-status. But contrary to the idea of the constructed ideal of *white* femininities the protagonist appears not in idealizing features—not nude, not hairless, not obviously female, and with varying body colors from light to dark due to the printing process. Furthermore, by painting onto her own body, she reveals the *representational constitution* of the body, on whose surfaces meaning is negotiated. Kuniyik’s work recapitulates the idealizations and devaluations negotiated in representations of femininities. In revealing and perverting ideals of femininities and their differentiations based on beauty norms, she succeeds in parodying and deconstructing their image-status.

## **7\_Body Coding and Beauty Norms**

How are bodily surfaces being coded as female? Not only do bodies have to be designated as such before they can be read as *female*, the designations must also be performed. Butler’s example of the postnatal exclamation “It’s a girl!” always implies “You will be girl!” in a heteronormative understanding, as queer feminist thinker Sara Ahmed writes: “Sex is given as an assignment; homework.”<sup>59</sup> The visible surfaces and materialities of the body, both skin and hair, become a stage on which this assignment is acted out. The discourse of body hair, in particular, is strongly gendered. Across *race* and class lines, the practices of body hair removal (of leg, arm, armpit, and pubic hair) while simultaneously emphasizing head hair and highlighting eyelashes and eyebrows via the application of makeup still largely serve a contemporary

Western cosmetics industry as performative acts to designate embodied femininities.<sup>60</sup> The Western beauty industry continuously produces images of what *women* have to look like or in which images one has to inscribe oneself in order to be perceived as a *woman*. To be perceived is important here, because to be signified, to be *coded* (*bezeichnet*), with meanings that are discursively negotiated, is to be designated, to be *scanned* as the signified as well—scanned like the barcode of the little mascara bottle in Kunyik’s work. One can speak of a social pressure on *women* to code themselves as *women*, which in this case means to follow beauty norms.

Looking back in time reveals that the treatment of body hair has changed historically. Hair removal practices can be traced back to antiquity and beyond the borders of the Global North and have historically been by no means limited to women. The contemporary removal of female body hair is a “practice shaped by a *white* culture of dominance.”<sup>61</sup> As a Western beauty standard especially for *white* women, hairlessness became established in the USA between 1915 and 1945 and is associated with changing fashion trends that allow more visible skin as well as with a profit-oriented cosmetics industry. In Europe, this development began later, but by the beginning of the 2000s hairlessness seems to have established itself as the norm in Central Europe.<sup>62</sup> Common justifications for removing body hair include the desire to differentiate between *male and female*, thus solidifying the idea of a heteronormative gender binary (although this is certainly in flux), to establish attractiveness and youthfulness, and basically to conform to the common norm. Visible body hair, on the other hand, is associated with ideas of monstrosity, scruffiness, loss of control, shame and taboo, and stereotypes of lesbian/non-binary and feminist identities.<sup>63</sup> The “hairless ideal”<sup>64</sup> has also long been considered the norm in art history.<sup>65</sup> Alice Macdonald, exploring the cultural origins of female hairlessness, traces the hairless ideal back to antiquity.<sup>66</sup> Renaissance nudes such as *Susanna Bathing* follow and reinforce the bodily ideals of antiquity, and in the beauty-oriented classicist theories of art following Johann Joachim Winckelmann, body hair is regarded as a threat.<sup>67</sup>

Art historian Katharina Sykora, in her research on representations of femininities, the monstrous, and the Other, points out that the normative and idealized aesthetics, as represented by the classicist theories of art, emerged in the 18th century as a differentiation from increasingly biologized *deviations*. In the normalization of a *white* male bourgeois will to power, one’s own superiority had to be legitimized by the infe-

riority of Others. The notion of supposedly *natural* differences in terms of *race* and gender is produced in the 18th/19th century primarily by scientific and biological means. Sykora dates images of full-body-haired *wild women* back to the 15th century, situated in discourses negotiating the boundaries of Eurocentric civilization: The wild and monstrous woman, Sykora states, is always perceived as a disruption of unambiguous gender ascriptions and her image is used to call upon *the European woman* to discipline her body. Moreover, in the course of the development of racist theories of classification, *white* idealized femininity is formulated in differentiation to treated as monstrous Black and non-*white* femininity. This normalization of the female-read body is negotiated through visual representations. If body hair is represented, it is to highlight an allegedly excessive and animalistic sexuality, marginalization, and alterization.<sup>68</sup> This means that negative examples are actively created to control and discipline female bodies to code themselves as female. Tintoretto's *Susanna Bathing* operates with the element of internalizing controlling looks at the female body in the enforcement of beauty norms and the sanctioning and affective disciplining through shame, which is always understood as invested as a female phenomenon.<sup>69</sup>

The ideal female body (one that is ought to be desired) in the Global North, produced and naturalized throughout art history, is always understood as one that is *white*, young, able-bodied, hairless, and mostly thin. Especially for non-*white* women, these beauty norms cannot be achieved. By imposing unrealistic beauty standards on the female body, Western cosmetics industry exercises a specific form of violence on non-*white* bodies. In order not to be socially sanctioned or to be exposed to physical violence, it is deemed necessary to literally work on one's own body. Examining social impacts of body hair, Women and Gender Studies scholar Breanne Fahs points out that women who are already discriminated through racism and classism feel more pressured to adhere to beauty norms like the hairless ideal.<sup>70</sup>

In Kuniyik's case, the practice of dyeing leg hair is to be understood as a reversal of the beauty norms placed on women, such as applying makeup and shaving. A moment of confusion arises because mascara is used here to dye leg hair rather than eyelashes. What could have been a normative gender identity performing act, painting the eyelashes with mascara or removing leg hair, is perverted into an action that exposes the absurdity and possibly the arbitrariness of beauty norms to sexualize and fetishize one hair (head hair, eyelashes, eyebrows) and denigrate other body hair.

Kunyik borrows the dyeing and painting of leg hair from the field of drag performances. Kunyik herself performed as a drag king for two years before studying Fine Arts and states that a friend of hers used leg hair dyeing as drag practice. The practices of drag are known for citing, exaggerating, and parodying gender norms. Butler names drag and travesty as a possibility of subversive and denaturalizing performance, because here not only are social constructions of gender identities exposed and alienated, but at the same time the idea that there is a *natural* gender identity is parodied.<sup>71</sup> Kunyik incorporates the two sides of projections into *Susanne*, on the one hand, the idealization in the call to follow beauty norms and, on the other hand, the degradation, the fear of the supposedly wild and unclassifiable, of what is outcast, and not-heteronormative that is *given-to-be-seen* in women's body hair.

### **8\_Movement on the Screen—Body Image in Motion**

So far, I have considered the possibility of intervening in (representational) norms on the level of content. In the following, I would like to turn to the technical and formal aspects and materialities that enable subversion and re-constructions of femininities in Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*. I will take a closer look at the fragmentary representation of the body, the possible perspectival disruption, and the glass, thereby discussing the notions of looking and the gaze.

*Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* is composed standing on the ground and leaning against a wall or similar support. The larger paper print lies vertical against the wall, maintained standing only by the smaller glass print. Fragility is given to the artwork not only by the glass plate, which is only two millimeters thin and extremely fragile, but also by the otherwise unfixed nature of the paper material, which has been alienated into standing. Due to the specific materialities, the image on the glass always appears less solid than the image on paper. It partly looks more like a reflection or mirroring of the paper print, especially where the printed areas overlap, which varies depending on the version. The material permeability of the glass print also allows the two layers to constantly merge into one another, as the thicker areas of the paper print become more prominent. This results in a strong communication between glass and paper, which often does not allow for a quick answer as to which layer and which material forms the foreground and which the background. In this way, Kunyik's artwork variously challenges the viewer to question their way of seeing. It re-

quires a permanent re-vision of what is in front and what is behind. A change in the position of the viewer's gaze is called for—the installation opens up in a particularly interesting way when the viewers place themselves at the same level as *Susanne*. Through the positioning of the two prints, the artwork takes on a sculptural character. If the light falls favorably on the installation (in the best case from above) it produces another image through the casting of shadows: The space between glass and paper allows the image contours of the glass print to construct a third image on the paper. In this way, the installation illudes a moment of three-dimensionality of the fragmentarily represented body.

On a technical level, Kunyik also inverts notions of idealized and supposedly natural/prediscursive femininities. While the voyeuristic viewers still observe Tintoretto's *Susanna Bathing* in her idealized wholeness, Kunyik's *Susannes* offer a view of a subject in fragmentary form. The fragmentation of the body, which refuses an idealized wholeness and reveals its constructedness, can be understood as a subversive strategy, following Schade, Wenk as well as Brandes.<sup>72</sup> The sculptural character of Kunyik's installation, which allows shadows to be cast by the incidence of light, opens up the possibility of remaining in motion, of not fixing oneself in an image, with the potential of creating a new and at the same time always fleeting image. The glass materiality enables a constant exchange of the images imprinted on the two image-bearing materials, glass and paper, as they overlap, intertwine and do not stand still. In the way they are intermedially developed and installed, Kunyik's *Susannes* also confuse the central perspective, not only the idealizing central perspective of *Susanna Bathing*, but the gaze of the camera organized by central perspective as well. By prompting the viewers to question and change their position, Kunyik's *Susannes* succeed in keeping the viewer's position in motion. Thus, neither looking from a certain point nor one's own gaze can be grasped as *universal*.

### **9\_Perverting the Gaze—Kaja Silverman: The Cultural Image Repertoire**

How to read the doubling of the image on the glass? How to understand the materiality of glass? As a material, glass is characterized not only by a particular fragility, but also by its inherent “transparency and reflective capacity,” which “points beyond its own materiality.”<sup>73</sup> With the possibility of transparency and reflection, glass allows a constant communication with its surrounding materials. Glass plates placed in front of

artistic works are familiar from an exhibition context. But unlike a glass plate used for protection in a museum, the glass in Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* does not cover the entire work. Kunyik herself associates the glass plate with the character of a frame fixating the paper. But what is framed? What is rendered outside the frame? I would like to propose a reading of the glass as a metaphorical visualization and simultaneous perverting of what is called, with Kaja Silverman, the *cultural image repertoire*.<sup>74</sup> Kunyik's artwork raises not only the question of what is given to be seen and how, of what is made in\_visible and how. It also poses for reflection how we look and perceive, thus drawing attention to the fact, that the im/possibilities of looking are also socially and culturally shaped (and thereby malleable).

Kaja Silverman suggests that the gaze is never neutral, as it is charged with all that is socioculturally already *given-to-be-seen* (in the sense of dominant meanings).<sup>75</sup> Taking Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic concepts of *screen*, *gaze*, and *look* as a starting point, Silverman critically examines visual regimes and extends Lacan's concept to include the possibility of agency.<sup>76</sup> For the *field of vision* Silverman differentiates between *look* and *gaze*, whereby *look* is to be understood as individual, embodied vision, characterized by lack, desire, and the imaginary of the seeing subject, and *gaze* as ideologically implicated and functioning as "the presence of others as such."<sup>77</sup> Silverman agrees with Lacan that in order for a subject to constitute itself, it is dependent on being seen by an Other.<sup>78</sup> Being seen and recognized as a subject requires assuming an image-status, designing oneself for the camera/gaze in the representational possibilities that the cultural image repertoire holds in store. According to Silverman, a screen, defined as a cultural image repertoire, mediates between the seeing subjects and the gaze: "The full range of representational coordinates which are culturally available at a particular moment in time constitute what I have been calling the 'screen,' and those which propose themselves with a certain inevitability the 'given-to-be-seen'."<sup>79</sup> Silverman locates the screen "'inside' us"<sup>80</sup> and describes it in its "fundamentally photographic 'consistency'" as a kind of camera lens: "But it is not only that this imaginary camera lens intervenes between the world and our look, structuring what we see in photographic terms, but also that we experience ourselves-as-spectacle in relation to it."<sup>81</sup> Through the cultural image repertoire, subjects are constituted and at the same time differentiated along the categories of class, *race*, sexuality, gender, age, and nationality.<sup>82</sup> The cultural image repertoire always operates in both di-

reactions: On the one hand, it describes the ways in which subjects are constituted through the gaze and, on the other hand, how subjects experience themselves in the gaze.<sup>83</sup>

In Kuniyik's installation, the glass print placed in front of the paper print disrupts not only what is given to be seen, but also how it is seen. By not operating as a kind of frame in front of the image, as an invisible or transparent element of protection for a (museum) object, the glass moves itself into the image and draws attention to itself—comparable to the screen, which operates mostly invisibly between the gaze and the subject. Let us imagine the glass as a visualization of the cultural image repertoire, as the screen that we place in front of everything we see: What is *given-to-be-seen* poses confusion because of the dyeing of leg hair, and it makes us charge what we see with certain meanings, meanings that are culturally, socially, and historically shaped. Kuniyik designs herself for the camera as an image, within the possibilities given in the cultural image repertoire, but she does not let herself be taken over by the image. Projecting the image onto the glass plate, Kuniyik demonstrates that her image-status is always already given-to-be-seen and invites the gaze to reflect. Just like the cultural image repertoire, the glass print is limited: At the edges, some elements remain invisible and cannot be perceived. According to Silverman, there is always the possibility of re-evaluating what is seen and formulating new meanings in a collective act. On a second look, the dyeing of leg hair may not be so confusing after all:

Fortunately, however, no look ever takes place once and for all. Rather, each act of spectation is subject to a complex series of conscious and unconscious 'vicissitudes:' which can completely transform the value of what is originally seen, and which cannot be easily predicted in advance. [...] if the look acts in concert with enough other looks, it can reterritorialize the screen, bringing new elements into cultural prominence, and casting into darkness those which presently constitute normative representation. Under such necessarily collective conditions, the look could significantly change how the camera/gaze 'photographs' the world.<sup>84</sup>

## **10\_Medial Reproduction and Perverting Performance**

In *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* Kuniyik operates through two techniques, which can be both understood in their claim of a *realistic* reproduction of the visible world and in expressing a high degree of reproducibility: photography and (silkscreen) print. Kuniyik engages critically with a concept that is charged with essentialist notions—the concept of the original.<sup>85</sup> Which *Susanne* can be called the original? Although *part* of an artwork, each print (on paper as well as on glass) is an

original and unique in its renewal of the motif. No *Susanne* of the glass print installation Edition 3+1 resembles another. Especially the many paper prints show a great variety. Due to the variations in paper and differing color composition, due to supposed errors in the printing process with more or less moisture, and probably also simply as a rejection of uniformity, there is a great diversity in the artworks (see Fig. 3): Besides the black color prints, there are red and blue *Susannes*, prints without a face, prints with dissolved body outlines, a fleeting paling of the painting action, and stronger shading and darkening of the lighter body color. The photography can be identified as the initial motif, but it merely fixates the performance in the image from which the pose originates. *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* locates Susanne on one side, behind the camera, as the subject of the gaze, and the *I (mich)* in the image on the other side of the camera. Someone *photographing me* doing something expresses at the same time a notion of evidence: the *I* has been bathing at that particular moment—Roland Barthes' moment of "*having-been-there*,"<sup>86</sup> with which he denotes the claim to reality and the indexicality of photography. Brandes, however, shows with Rosalind Krauss that photographic evidence stands in a "paradoxical original-copy relationship, [...] in which 'original' and 'copy' stand in a reciprocal constituting relationship and at the same time turn into each other in repetition."<sup>87</sup> What is given to be seen in the photograph is the status as image that the subject occupies.<sup>88</sup> However, as previously discussed, the pose struck in front of the camera is once more a quotation of an image already existing in the cultural image repertoire.

Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* cites and perverts gaze relationships related to the subject of Susanna bathing, the idea of an unmarked viewing position and the heteronormative desire articulated therein, as well as notions of idealized and devalued femininities and beauty norms, and repeats the inversions intermedially: in the *de-notation* of the body, in the photograph, in the silkscreen prints on paper and on glass, even the shadow cast on the printed glass repeats the created image—in a perverting performance. Kunyik re-constructs a fragmented body that refuses an idealizing wholeness, on whose surface the codes for femininities and their possibilities and limitations are questioned. She re-constructs a body that eludes essentialist and homogenizing notions of femininities and presents possibilities of a different desire beyond heteronormative gender binary.

## 11 Conclusion

Art historical discourses strongly partake in constructing in\_visibilities and representations of femininities. As Sonia Boyce's aforementioned artistic intervention has shown, not only are in\_visibilities in constant need to be performed, but also the art historical discourse that produces them must be performed over and over to pose itself as normative. However, the need for reiteration comes, as Judith Butler points out, with the possibility of disruption and thereby malleability.

I have proposed my concept of perverting performance, following Judith Butler's gender as performance, as one possible answer to the question of visual re-constructions of femininities. My research question was to reveal how subject positions marked as marginalized and alterized can be represented and made visible in visual agency and recognition without affirming the existing norms of representation and identity prescriptions that have produced their marginalization and alterization in the first place. In doing so, my investigation focused on subjects who lay claim to the field of femininities that eludes homogenization. I proposed that in revealing and inverting—in perverting—constructions, the possibilities of re-constructions and differentiated in\_visibilities can be found. In this way, I have articulated the concept of perverting performance as a possibility of reversing and parodying interventions into precisely those modes of representation of a cultural image repertoire that have proven themselves to be normative through performative repetition. Taking Hannah Lisa Kunyik's *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* as an example, I examined how traditional modes of representation can be cited, perverted, and kept in motion in their constant repetition. I understand Kunyik's artwork as a re-construction of femininities visually claiming agency and recognition through a perverting performance.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 [1993]), 10 [italics A.N.].
- <sup>2</sup> For further information about Boyce's artistic takeover and its reception, see Charlotte Higgins, "'The Vitriol Was Really Unhealthy': Artist Sonia Boyce on the Row over Taking Down Hylas and the Nymphs," in *The Guardian*, January 13, 2022, <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/mar/19/hylas-nymphs-manchester-art-gallery-sonia-boyce-interview>>; Sonia Boyce, "Our Removal of Waterhouse's Naked Nymphs Painting Was Art in Action," in *The Guardian*, January 13, 2022, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/06/takedown-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-art-action-manchester-art-gallery-sonia-boyce>>; Reinhold Feldhaus,

- “(Dis-)Kontinuitäten—Grenzüberschreitungen, die wieder unsichtbar wurden: Zur Rezeption feministischer kunstwissenschaftlicher Forschung in Populärkultur und Medien heute,” in *Geschlechterwissen in und zwischen den Disziplinen: Perspektiven der Kritik an akademischer Wissensproduktion*, eds. Corinna Bath, Barbara Paul and Silke Wenk (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020), 167–205, here: 190–194. With the use of the phrase *given to be seen*, I follow Sigrid Schade’s and Silke Wenk’s coining of the concept *Zu-Sehen-Geben*, see Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, “Orte und Weisen des Zu-Sehen-Gebens im kunsthistorischen Diskurs,” *Kritische Berichte* 21, no. 4 (1993): 5–9; Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, “Strategien des ‘Zu-Sehen-Gebens’: Geschlechterpositionen in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte,” in *Genus: Geschlechterforschung/Gender Studies in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften: Ein Handbuch*, eds. Hadumod Bußmann and Renate Hof (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2005 [1995]), 144–184.
- <sup>3</sup> See Griselda Pollock, “A Lonely Preface,” in *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, eds. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013 [1981]), xviii; Nanette Salomon, “Der kunsthistorische Kanon: Unterlassungssünden [1991],” in *Kunstgeschichte und Gender: Eine Einführung*, ed. Anja Zimmermann (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 37–52; Schade and Wenk, “Orte und Weisen des Zu-Sehen-Gebens im kunsthistorischen Diskurs,” 5–9.
- <sup>4</sup> See Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, xix; Anja Zimmermann, “Einführung: Gender als Kategorie kunsthistorischer Forschung,” in *Kunstgeschichte und Gender: Eine Einführung*, ed. Anja Zimmermann (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 9–35, here: 9.
- <sup>5</sup> Irit Rogoff, “Er selbst: Konfigurationen von Männlichkeit und Autorität in der deutschen Moderne,” in *Blick-Wechsel. Konstruktionen von Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte*, eds. Ines Lindner, Sigrid Schade, Silke Wenk and Gabriele Werner (Berlin: Jonas, 1989), 21–40, here: 21 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>6</sup> See Salomon “Der kunsthistorische Kanon,” 37–38.
- <sup>7</sup> See Salomon “Der kunsthistorische Kanon,” 41–45.
- <sup>8</sup> See Schade and Wenk, “Strategien des ‘Zu-Sehen-Gebens’,” 144–184, here: 147.
- <sup>9</sup> On the initiative *#wessenfreiheit* created by German speaking art scholars, see Feldhaus, “(Dis-)Kontinuitäten,” 193–194.
- <sup>10</sup> I use *alterization* in the sense of a philosophical understanding of *alterity* synonymously with *Othering* as an emphasis on the process that one *is being made* different or Other.
- <sup>11</sup> The notion of the term *performance* used in the article at hand is rooted in a broader philosophical understanding rather than in the artistic concept of *performance*. I am following Judith Butler’s concept *gender as performance*, who in turn refers to John Langshaw Austin’s linguistic-philosophical theory of performativity and Jacques Derrida’s notion of iterability, to develop the understanding of gender as a performative and constantly repeated construct. The German rendering of the philosophical term *performance* as *Performanz* facilitates the distinction from the artistic concept. Hence, *perverting performance* corresponds to the German translation *pervertierende Performanz*.
- <sup>12</sup> Concerning the reversal of beauty norms, Hannahlisa Kunyik herself already uses the term *perverting*, see Hannahlisa Kunyik, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade II* (Wien: SCHLAFZIMMERPRODUCTION, 2018).
- <sup>13</sup> In my understanding of deconstruction, I follow Jacques Derrida’s definition, which Kerstin Brandes summarizes as “a revealing of the construction, a questioning and reworking,” see Kerstin

- Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität': Visuelle Repräsentationspolitiken in künstlerischen Arbeiten der 1980er und 1990er Jahre* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), 19 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>14</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses [1984]," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (Abingdon, Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2003), 49–74, here: 60.
- <sup>15</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Houndmills and London: Indiana University Press, 1987), 2.
- <sup>16</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 6.
- <sup>17</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 10 [italics A.N.].
- <sup>18</sup> Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, *Studien zur visuellen Kultur: Einführung in ein transdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011), 104.
- <sup>19</sup> See Johanna Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit: Über die visuellen Strukturen der Anerkennung* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), here: 12, 47, 51–55.
- <sup>20</sup> See Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 81; Maja Figge, "Repräsentationskritik: Einleitung," in *Gender & Medien-Reader*, eds. Kathrin Peters and Andrea Seier (Berlin and Zürich: Diaphanes, 2016), 109–117; Kea Wienand, "Funktionen visueller Repräsentationen von Alterität: Überlegungen aus gendertheoretischer und postkolonialer Perspektive," in *Macht—Herrschaft—Gewalt: Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Debatten am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Martin Krol, Timo Luks, Michael Matzky-Eilers and Gregor Straube (Münster: Lit, 2005), 203–214; Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Basingstoke and London: Indiana University Press, 1984), 38–39; Zimmermann "Einführung," 22–25.
- <sup>21</sup> See Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 52; Kerstin Brandes, "'What you lookn at': Fotografie und die Spuren des Spiegel(n)s," in *Medien der Kunst: Geschlecht, Metapher, Code: Beiträge der 7. Kunsthistorikerinnen-Tagung in Berlin 2002*, eds. Susanne von Falkenhausen, Silke Förschler, Ingeborg Reichle and Bettina Uppenkamp (Marburg: Jonas, 2004), 148–163, here: 149.
- <sup>22</sup> For previous discussions of similar research questions, see Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, 9; Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 161; Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 237.
- <sup>23</sup> Silke Wenk, "Repräsentation in Theorie und Kritik: Zur Kontroverse um den 'Mythos des ganzen Körpers'," in *Kunstgeschichte und Gender: Eine Einführung*, ed. Anja Zimmermann (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 99–113, here: 106 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>24</sup> See Judith Butler, *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2016 [1990]), 216; Donna Haraway, "Situierendes Wissen: Die Wissenschaftsfrage im Feminismus und das Privileg einer partialen Perspektive [1988]," in *Donna Haraway: Die Neuerfindung der Natur: Primaten, Cyborgs und Frauen*, eds. Carmen Hammer and Immanuel Stieß (Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Campus, 1995), 73–97.
- <sup>25</sup> Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 161 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>26</sup> Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 121 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>27</sup> See Wenk, "Repräsentation in Theorie und Kritik," 106; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Woman Who Never Was: Self-Representation, Photography, and First-Wave Feminist Art," in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, eds. Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 336–345, here: 343.
- <sup>28</sup> Fig. 1 shows a destroyed copy of the Edition 3+1, which Kunyik has later replaced. All photographic material regarding *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade* (I–III) (Fig. 1–4) were kindly

provided by the artist Hannahlisa Kunyik.

- <sup>29</sup> All information on dates, production, and background of the artwork are gathered from personal conversations and interviews with the artist Hannahlisa Kunyik during earlier stages of my research, at the end of 2020 to the beginning of 2021. I also refer to two self-published contributions by Kunyik, see Kunyik, *Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade II*; Hannahlisa Kunyik, “*Susanne fotografiert mich beim Bade*,” in *Hannahlisa Kunyik: Arbeiten 2007–2020*, ed. Hannahlisa Kunyik (Wien: SCHLAFZIMMERPRODUCTION, 2020).
- <sup>30</sup> For further biographical information, see Hannahlisa Kunyik, “CV,” accessed January 13, 2022, <<https://www.kunyik.com/en/cv/>>.
- <sup>31</sup> The first glass print installation was realized in 2012 in Istanbul, where Kunyik presented it as part of the local and self-organized exhibition of mostly queer artistic positions from Istanbul *Baski Haz Beden (Body Pleasure Pressure)* together with the video installation *Fine, I am* (2012). Later Kunyik completed the work with three more versions to create the Edition 3+1. One version has been in the collection of Wien Museum since it was purchased by the City of Vienna, in 2018, while the rest remain in the artist’s possession.
- <sup>32</sup> The photograph is part of the publication *Mit Haut und Haar: Frisieren, Rasieren, Verschönern*, published by Wien Museum as an accompanying catalog to the special exhibition of the same name. See Susanne Breuss, ed., *Mit Haut und Haar: Frisieren, Rasieren, Verschönern* (Wien: Wien Museum/Metroverlag, 2018), fig. on 405.
- <sup>33</sup> See Babette Bohn, “Rape and the Gendered Gaze: *Susanna and the Elders* in Early Modern Bologna,” *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 9, no. 3 (2001): 259–286, here: 261; Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, *Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare: Zur holländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau, 2009), 44–45; Elisabeth Friedl, “Ehe, Ehre, Keuschheit: Artemisia Gentileschi’s *Susanna und die beiden Alten*,” in *Bilder der Liebe*, eds. Doris Guth and Elisabeth Friedl (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 99–128, here: 113. Further, Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, “Jan van Eyck: Autonomisierung des Aktbildes und Geschlechterdifferenz [1989],” in *Kunstgeschichte und Gender: Eine Einführung*, ed. Anja Zimmermann (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 73–97, here: 90–91.
- <sup>34</sup> See Mieke Bal, “The Elders and Susanna,” *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 1, no. 1 (1993): 1–19, here: 2; A. W. Eaton, “What’s Wrong with the (Female) Nude? A Feminist Perspective on Art and Pornography,” in *Art and Pornography: Philosophical Essays*, eds. Hans Maes and Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 276–308, here: 292; Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 105.
- <sup>35</sup> Zoey Lavalée, “What’s Wrong with the (White) Female Nude?,” *Estetyka i Krytyka. The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* 41, no. 2 (2016): 77–98; on the construction of *whiteness* as a norm in painting, see Anna Greve, *Farbe—Macht—Körper. Kritische Weißseinsforschung in der europäischen Kunstgeschichte* (Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing, 2013), here: 205.
- <sup>36</sup> Tintoretto’s oeuvre includes five paintings depicting the theme of Susanna bathing in the newer secular tradition. Source of the image, Tintoretto, “*Susanna Bathing*,” in *Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien*, accessed January 13, 2022, <<https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/1564/>>.
- <sup>37</sup> See Hammer-Tugendhat, *Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare*, 45.
- <sup>38</sup> Art historian Anna Greve introduces the German terms *helle Körperfarben* and *dunkle Körperfarben* into the art historical discourse of Critical Whiteness Studies in order to signify the coloration materialized in the image without reproducing the concept of *skin colors* associated with racializa-

tion. The terms *helle Körperfarben* and *dunkle Körperfarben* could be translated as *light* and *dark body colors*. See Greve, *Farbe—Macht—Körper*, here: 34–37.

<sup>39</sup> See Bal, “The Elders and Susanna,” 1, 11.

<sup>40</sup> See Jennifer A. Glancy, “The Accused. Susanna and Her Readers [1993],” in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna*, ed. Athalya Brenner (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1995), 288–302.

<sup>41</sup> Glancy, “The Accused,” 291.

<sup>42</sup> See Sigrid Schade, “Der Mythos des ‘Ganzen Körpers’: Das Fragmentarische in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts als Dekonstruktion bürgerlicher Totalitätskonzepte [1987],” in *Kunstgeschichte und Gender: Eine Einführung*, ed. Anja Zimmermann (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 159–180, here: 169; Linda Hentschel, *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens: Raumwahrnehmung und Geschlechterordnung in visuellen Apparaten der Moderne* (Marburg: Jonas, 2001), 22, 28.

<sup>43</sup> Hentschel, *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens*, 28 [transl. A.N.].

<sup>44</sup> As well as Sigrid Schade, Linda Hentschel elaborates on relations between the central perspective composition of images and the voyeuristic gaze. In her research of sexualized and gendered spaces, Hentschel introduces the concept of *pornotopian techniques of viewing* (*pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens*), see Hentschel, *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens*.

<sup>45</sup> See Hammer-Tugendhat, *Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare*, 54–98; Marianne Koos, “Zum Bildthema der ‘Susanna und die Alten’,” *FrauenKunstWissenschaft* 15 (1993): 127–136, here: 129.

<sup>46</sup> With the dichotomous concepts of *to-be-looked-at-ness* and *male gaze*, film theorist Laura Mulvey states a distinction between, on the one hand, male and active looking, which takes the position of the subject, and, on the other hand, female and passive being looked at, in the position of the object, see Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema [1975],” in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, ed. Laura Mulvey (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996 [1989]), 14–26. Glancy analyzes *to-be-looked-at-ness* in the Bible story as well, see Glancy, “The Accused,” 293. Mulvey’s concept has been widely criticized as reduced to *whiteness*. For one Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff criticizes the relationship between the *white* male gaze and *white* female *to-be-looked-at-ness* (as it is understood) as essentialist and Eurocentric, see Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, “Weiße Blicke: Bild- und Textlektüren zu Geschlechtermythen des Kolonialismus,” in *Weiße Blicke: Geschlechtermythen des Kolonialismus*, eds. Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff, Karl Hölz and Herbert Uerlings (Marburg: Jonas, 2004), 8–18, here: 14.

<sup>47</sup> Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, *The Visible and the Invisible: On Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Berlin, Munich and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015 [2009]), 45. See also Glancy, “The Accused,” 290, 298.

<sup>48</sup> Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 143–145: “If feminist theory has reason to lament that system of representation, it is not because women so frequently function as the *object* of desire (we all function simultaneously as subject and object), but because the male look both transfers its own lack to the female subject, and attempts to pass itself off as the gaze. The problem, in other words, is not that men direct desire toward women in Hollywood films, but that male desire is so consistently and systematically imbricated with projection and control.”

<sup>49</sup> In her contribution to the 7th Kunsthistorikerinnentagung, Silke Förschler proposes that depictions of bathing scenes stage a supposedly natural heteronormative gender binary and thus produce it at the same time, see Silke Förschler, “Die Kamera im Bade: Inszenierungen von Natur-

- lichkeit in Badedarstellungen: Malerei und Video,” in *Medien der Kunst: Geschlecht, Metapher, Code: Beiträge der 7. Kunsthistorikerinnen-Tagung in Berlin 2002*, eds. Susanne von Falkenhausen, Silke Förschler, Ingeborg Reichle and Bettina Uppenkamp (Marburg: Jonas, 2004), 216–227.
- <sup>50</sup> On the use of mirrors in nudes, see Hammer-Tugendhat, “Jan van Eyck,” 87–88.
- <sup>51</sup> See Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 143–145.
- <sup>52</sup> Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 127 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>53</sup> Eiblmayr’s concept does not include the racialized Other. Brandes extends Eiblmayr’s discussion, which is limited to the category of gender, to include the category of *race*, see Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 16, 136.
- <sup>54</sup> Silvia Eiblmayr, *Die Frau als Bild: Der weibliche Körper in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Reimer, 1993), 10 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>55</sup> See Eiblmayr, *Die Frau als Bild*, 10–11.
- <sup>56</sup> Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 200.
- <sup>57</sup> See Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 200–207.
- <sup>58</sup> Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 181 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>59</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 26: “Sex is given as an assignment; homework. No wonder mere description (it’s a girl; it’s a boy!) provides the basis of a task (being boy! being girl!) as well as a command (You will be boy! You will be girl!). To receive an assignment is to be a given a sign: boy or girl.”; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 232.
- <sup>60</sup> Although diversity-oriented approaches are seemingly increasing in the cosmetics industry (e.g. the launch of the inclusive cosmetics brand *Milk Makeup* in the 2010s) and (influenced by social media) in the dealings and perception of cosmetics, a look at the advertising campaigns for cosmetic products indicates how strongly gendered the understanding of beautification products still is. In my opinion, it proves fruitful to take a closer look at the advertising campaigns for mascara on the one hand and body hair removal products on the other, which often target a clearly as female defined audience by creating and reproducing images of stereotypical femininities. Hairlessness is also still considered a female beauty norm. Visible body hair has only been addressed and depicted in the media in recent years in the wake of diversity campaigns (for example, in 2018, the US-American *female-first* oriented razor brand *Billie* produced the first commercial for razors in which female body hair is actually shown and not shaved over already hairless skin, as has been common to date), but in popular and advertising culture, female body hair still remains largely taboo. On body hair removal as an expression of femininities, see Merran Toerien and Sue Wilkinson, “Gender and Body Hair: Constructing the Feminine Woman,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 26, no. 4 (2003): 333–344.
- <sup>61</sup> Alina Strmljan, “Haare zum Schämen? Weibliche Körperbehaarung und ihre Entfernung: Normen, Tabus und Trivialisierungen,” in *Mit Haut und Haar: Frisieren, Rasieren, Verschönern*, ed. Susanne Breuss (Wien: Wien Museum/Metroverlag, 2018), 404–410, here: 404 [transl. A.N.; italics A.N.].
- <sup>62</sup> On historical development see Strmljan, “Haare zum Schämen?,” 404–406.
- <sup>63</sup> Research and studies on female body hair, its removal and psychosocial classification is scarce and especially non-existent for Vienna/Austria. However, some US-American studies can be found, see Strmljan, “Haare zum Schämen?,” 408–409. For earlier US-American studies, see Su-

- san A. Basow, "The Hairless Ideal. Women and Their Body Hair," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 15 (1991): 83–96; Toerien and Wilkinson "Gender and Body Hair: Constructing the Feminine Woman," 333–344; Breanne Fahs, "Dreaded 'Otherness': Heteronormative Patrolling in Women's Body Hair Rebellions," *Gender and Society* 25, no. 4 (2011): 451–472.
- <sup>64</sup> Basow "The Hairless Ideal," 83–96.
- <sup>65</sup> First comprehensive research on body hair in the field of cultural studies is offered by a publication by Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, who emphasizes the tabooing and simultaneous trivializing and monstrousizing of female body hair and refers to its invisibility in visual culture, see Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, "The Last Taboo: Women, Body Hair and Feminism," in *The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair*, ed. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 1–17; Alice Macdonald, "Hairs on the Lens: Female Body Hair on the Screen," in *The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair*, ed. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 66–82. In art historical discourses of hair (as an artistic material), body hair in its gendered and racialized attributions is thematized, but female leg hair is not explicitly negotiated, see Alexandra Köhring, Petra Lange-Berndt and Dietmar Rübél, "Haare," in *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials: Werkstoffe der modernen Kunst von Abfall bis Zinn*, eds. Monika Wagner, Dietmar Rübél and Sebastian Hackenschmidt (München: Beck, 2002), 136–140, here: 136.
- <sup>66</sup> See Macdonald, "Hairs on the Lens," 71: "The smooth marble bodies of Greek sculpture—whether hairless because of artistic censure or because they reflected the social custom of depilation—have over the centuries structured the cultural imagination in such a way as to make the glabrous female body an entrenched and irresistible feminine aesthetic."
- <sup>67</sup> See Köhring, Lange-Berndt and Rübél, "Haare," 136–140, here: 136.
- <sup>68</sup> See Katharina Sykora, "Weiblichkeit, das Monströse und das Fremde: Ein Bildamalgam," in *Projektionen. Rassismus und Sexismus in der Visuellen Kultur: Beiträge der 6. Kunsthistorikerinnen-Tagung, Trier 1995*, eds. Annegret Friedrich, Birgit Haehnel, Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff and Christina Threuter (Marburg: Jonas, 1997), 132–149. On negative connotation of body hair, see also Macdonald, "Hairs on the Lens," 67: "For from folklore and myth comes a tradition that links female body hair with evil and danger: with promiscuity and lust because hairiness is associated with the devil or an animal nature; with ugliness through its association with hirsute hags and witches; with deviant sexuality from the supposed lesbianism of witches; with insanity, with unkempt hair being a sign of mental instability; and with the threat of castration linked to the Medusa and the 'vagina dentata'."
- <sup>69</sup> On shameful bodies read as female, see Sykora, "Weiblichkeit, das Monströse und das Fremde," 143.
- <sup>70</sup> See Fahs, "Dreaded 'Otherness'," 451–472, here: 455.
- <sup>71</sup> See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999 [1990]), 174–177, here: 175: "The notion of gender parody defended here does not assume that there is an original which such parodic identities imitate. Indeed, the parody is of the very notion of an original [...], so gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin."
- <sup>72</sup> Schade makes Derrida's concept of *deconstruction* fruitful for art historical discourses about the *whole body*, see Schade "Der Mythos des 'Ganzen Körpers,'" 169; Wenk "Repräsentation in Theorie und Kritik," 105; Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität,'* 150.
- <sup>73</sup> Dorothee Böhm, "Glas," in *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials: Werkstoffe der modernen Kunst von Abfall bis Zinn*, eds. Monika Wagner, Dietmar Rübél and Sebastian Hackenschmidt

(München: Beck, 2002), 113–120, here: 116 [transl. A.N.].

- <sup>74</sup> See Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*; for Silverman's earlier discussion of *gaze*, *screen* and *cultural image repertoire*, see Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 125–156.
- <sup>75</sup> See Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 220–221.
- <sup>76</sup> On agency, see Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 203–227.
- <sup>77</sup> Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, here: 134. See also Wienand, "Funktionen visueller Repräsentationen von Alterität," 208.
- <sup>78</sup> See Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 133–134; Wienand, "Funktionen visueller Repräsentationen von Alterität," 208.
- <sup>79</sup> Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 221.
- <sup>80</sup> Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 221.
- <sup>81</sup> Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 197.
- <sup>82</sup> Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 150: "Although *Four Fundamental Concepts* does not do so, it seems to me crucial that we insist upon the ideological status of the screen by describing it as that culturally generated image or repertoire of images through which subjects are not only constituted, but differentiated in relation class, race, sexuality, age, and nationality."
- <sup>83</sup> See Wienand, "Funktionen visueller Repräsentationen von Alterität," 208–209.
- <sup>84</sup> Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 223.
- <sup>85</sup> See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 174–177.
- <sup>86</sup> Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 101; See Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 112.
- <sup>87</sup> Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 84 [transl. A.N.].
- <sup>88</sup> See Brandes, *Fotografie und 'Identität'*, 84.