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# A CASE FOR PERFORMANCE ART: AN ARTIST/EDUCATOR EXPLORING IDENTITY

by

ZULLY ANDREA CONDE

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport, PhD

## ABSTRACT

How can vulnerability and censorship culminate into a teaching philosophy in art education? In the following thesis, a studio exploration from photography into a performance piece documents how presence and vulnerability play roles in performing and defining identity.

INDEX WORDS: Art education, identity, vulnerability, censorship, pussy, gendered terminology, sexism, etc -

A CASE FOR PERFROMANCE ART: AN ARTIST/EDUCATOR EXPLORING IDENTITY

by

ZULLY ANDREA CONDE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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2015

A CASE FOR PERFORMANCE ART:  
AN ARTIST/EDUCATOR EXPLORING IDENTITY

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May 2015

**DEDICATION**

To my monkey, penguin, Poca, and my beautiful purple feathers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The source for an idea doesn't spring from one place. Inspiration, to me, is the most precious of all gifts that I have received from those around me. I believe an idea is like an ice cream sundae- a multi-faceted concoction that eventually melts into a swirly reality. Inspiration has been gifted to me from various artists, images and experiences. These factors are like the creamy ice-cream that sits at the bottom. The support that I have received from family and friend has been unconditional and I shall never forget it. At work and at home, the people around me have been there to catch me when I have fallen and they have been willing to lift me up when I have needed them to. The late night chats, encouraging texts, and patience through an unforeseen change of course in events have been the color in my life-in my existence. They are like the sprinkles that bring joy to my world. During this adventure, I have also discovered my faith and God's desire for me to lead a fearless life. Through all the doubt and fear, I knew that I had to do this performance and I knew that it would take me to places of professional and personal vulnerability. I learned to hear His call and to follow through. Much like the chocolate syrup on my sundae, God has poured into my life and I have been renewed by it.

The sources of my inspiration don't exist in a hierarchy. When one takes a bite from an ice cream sundae the enjoyment is the mixture of all the delicious parts in unison.

Thank you from the bottom of my bowl...my heart.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 Purpose of the Study .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.2 Operational definitions .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2 Chapter Two: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.1 Why performance as an artist?.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.2 Why performance as a researcher? .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.3 Why performance as an art educator?.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.4 Using metaphor to create sexual identity .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.5 Censorship in the Art Classroom and beyond.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3 Chapter Three: Methodology and Process.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3.1 Method of Study .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.2 Limitations of Study.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>4 Chapter Four: Performance .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>5 Chapter Five: Reflections and Implications.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Appendix A: Space Plan of studio during Performance.....</b>	<b>105</b>



<b>Appendix B: Song Lyrics of songs used in performance .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Appendix C: Timetable of Performance (with photographs) .....</b>	<b>118</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 2.1: Sample of M. Barney's work</i> .....	18
Figure 2.2: Sample of M. Barney's work .....	18
Figure 2.3: Sample of cat-like creatures from M. Barney's work.....	19
Figure 2.4: Infinite Kisses II by Carolee Schneeman .....	21
Figure 2.5: Sample from Meat Joy by Carolee Schneeman.....	21
Figure 2.6: Sample from Cunt Play by Judy Chicago .....	22
Figure 2.7: Photo of me standing in front of my photograph, after it was found in a closet .....	43
Figure 2.8: Photo of me explaining and validating my work to someone at the show .....	43
Figure 3.1: Sample collage from sketch book .....	58
Figure 3.2: Sketch of cat from memory .....	58
Figure 3.3: Sketch of cat from live observation.....	59
Figure 3.4: Sketch of cat from live observation.....	59
Figure 3.5: Sketch of body positioning for photograph.....	60
Figure 3.6: Sketch of costume idea.....	60
Figure 3.7: Photo of 'Normal' cat face .....	61
Figure 3.8: Photo of 'Happy' cat face .....	62
Figure 3.9: Photo of 'Sexy' cat face.....	62
Figure 3.10: Photo of 'Aggressive' cat face.....	63
Figure 3.11: Photo studio set-up .....	63
Figure 3.12: Editing process in Photoshop .....	64
Figure 3.13: Editing process with emphasis on food and expression .....	64
Figure 3.14: Editing process with emphasis on food and body position .....	65

Figure 3.15: "Two Pussies Are Better Than One" .....	66
Figure 3.16: "It's Okay to Eat Pussy" .....	66
Figure 3.17: Action shot from photo shoot.....	67
Figure 3.18: Action shoot from photo shoot.....	68
Figure 4.1: Performer at the beginning .....	70
Figure 4.2: Video clip at the beginning .....	70
Figure 4.3: Lionesses grooming.....	71
Figure 4.4: First body position on stage.....	71
Figure 4.5: First layered images from projector .....	72
Figure 4.6: First moving image from projector .....	73
Figure 4.7: Rest position .....	73
Figure 4.8: Back bend position .....	74
Figure 4.9: Beginning of 2nd song .....	75
Figure 4.10: More explicit images of cat-like creature.....	75
Figure 4.11: Explicit image of cat-like creature .....	76
Figure 4.12: Cat-like creature with leg up .....	76
Figure 4.13: Close-up of cat-like creature .....	77
Figure 4.14: Close-up of raw chicken.....	77
Figure 4.15: Close-up of raw chicken.....	78
Figure 4.16: Human face layout.....	78
Figure 4.17: Image during last song .....	79
Figure 4.18: Layered image near end of Performance.....	79
Figure 4.19: Resting position.....	80

Figure 4.20: Backbend on tiptoes .....	80
Figure 4.21: 2nd Resting position.....	81
Figure 4.22: Working towards elbows.....	81
Figure 4.23: Moving into the deepest part of the backbend .....	82
Figure 4.24: Last rest position .....	82
Figure 4.25: Video Clip from P.O.P. ....	83
Figure 4.26: A woman being interviewed about being a stripper.....	83
Figure 4.27: Performer has moved into the audience .....	85
Figure 4.28: Removing chicken from under skirt.....	85
Figure 4.29: A video clip with five zoomed mouths chewing and moaning .....	86
Figure 4.30: Placing raw chicken on plates .....	86
Figure 4.31: Preparing chicken and plates .....	87
Figure 4.32: Cutting raw chicken.....	87
Figure 4.33: Stage after the performer has left .....	88

## 1 Chapter One: Introduction

*“All of the world is a stage.  
And all the men and women merely players;”  
-William Shakespeare, As You Like It, 1623*

Performance is a part of my daily existence. Throughout any given day, I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a student, an employee, a resident in an urban city, and much more. Each role comes with a different personae and different characteristics, yet they all come together to create my identity. For example, I am a responsible older sister, but also a free-spirited, inquisitive student. Baker (2008) defines identity in terms of construction:

So individuals could be said to hold a sex identity, a gender identity, and a sexual identity, as well as an ethnic identity, a national identity, a social class identity, an age identity, a religious identity, a work identity, a physical appearance or body identity etc.

It is the sum of these identities that make us who we are. (p. 11)

Yet, where is the line between authenticity and inauthenticity? Who is the true person? What is the actual or ‘real’ identity? It is my belief that the exploration of identity is the constant performance of trial and error with different personas. Identity is constantly challenged as it is questioned, constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed.

At times, questioning identity is confusing and highly emotional work. I have chosen to focus on sexual identity and how it can be constructed. “As well as being able to characterize people according to sex and gender, a third aspect of identity, *sexuality*, is related to both sex and gender” (Baker, 2008, p.6). I will address how the construction of my sexual identity is affected by external factors and is ‘acted out’ and taken as identity. Throughout my research, I have become increasingly aware of my sexual identity and how openly questioning and sharing information about my sexual attitudes and desires informs how those around me behave and

assume things about me. Eventually, how I perform my identity, all aspects of my identity, helps communicate my identity to others.

Exploring sexual identity remains taboo and is commonly referred to as a private, not public, venture. As such, sexual identity is played out, 'acted out,' rather than openly questioned. "This social constructionist approach to gender and sexual identities sees these and other identities as not a matter of who or what people are but a matter of what people do: rather than have identities, people perform them" (McConnell-Ginet, 2011, p. 8). Both youth and adults require enough opportunity to question the many constructs that form all aspects of their identity through performance, or by acting them out. Carlson (2011), in his discussion of the video, *Teenage Sexuality in a Culture of Confusion*, quotes one of the featured interviewees as saying "adolescents' sexuality 'expresses' itself in virtually every physical way-in the way you walk, in the way you talk, in how you dress, in what you do, and how you act" (p. 20).

Questioning gender roles and sexual identity can be important and beneficial work on one's self. Adolescent youth may not have the personal insight that adults may have and may, therefore, not be readily able to discuss sexual attitudes and desires. This is especially true of younger students. There may, however, be other taboo issues that teachers want to address with students ranging from elementary to high school. Within my research, I reflect on how my studio process feeds into my teaching practices and philosophy and how my reflections can be applied by other art educators. However, encouraging youth to ask questions about assumed gender roles can also have a lasting positive impression. Sexual identity plays a profound role in person's identity.

According to Levine (2002):

Gendered sexuality goes far deeper than social attitudes or behavior. It shapes our fantasies, which are the wellspring of desire, not only what we believe we should want

but also what, in our heart and groins, we do want: the silent, menacing male stranger; the reserved but sexually yielding, then voracious, girl next door. Without alternative to these ingrained fantasies (and again, particularly in the hyper-conformist adolescent years) these caricatured desires can impede the process of discovering and accepting the idiosyncrasies of what a person might really want in sex and of finding emotional fulfillment in relationships. (p. 158)

While it's imperative that youth actively partake in forming their identity, the idea of combining 'youth culture' and 'sexuality' also conjures questions of maturity and censorship, especially when being combined in a classroom setting. Within my research, I have leaned into the question of how exploring my own identity has expanded my understanding of how students and teachers may process questions of identity within the classroom setting.

Risk and vulnerability are themes that repeatedly arise in both my performance and teaching reflections. A part of the performance art experience has been an increased awareness of risk and vulnerability between myself and the audience. The relationship between intimacy and risk in performance art is described by Dominic Johnson (2012) in the following:

In its most pressing formulation, live art redefines our understanding of intimacy and risk. It invites new ways of thinking about how these seemingly opposed logics are tied to each other, in our experiences of art, performance and the everyday. Live art also stages the ways intimacy and risk have been historically tied to social, cultural and legal crises concerning the body, ownership, pleasure and desire. (p. 121)

In this studio-based thesis, I have been able to expand my understanding of risk and vulnerability through performance art, specifically about a taboo issue such as sexual identity. From this first-hand experience, I have learned more about how identity formation occurs in the presence of



others and how risk and vulnerability are constantly in flux throughout the process of creating identity.

### **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

The focus of the following study is two-fold. The first purpose for my study was addressed through my studio practice, as I seek to explore the process of using the visual platform of performance art to hold a socially relevant conversation, specifically in regards to the construction of female sexual identity. Eisler (1995) describes the social construction of sexuality in the following:

In short, sex does not, as a once-popular song had it, ‘just come naturally.’ Rather, as illustrated by the jarring differences in the prehistoric and contemporary sexual symbols and images we have been comparing, sex is to a very large degree socially constructed.  
(p. 22)

I used metaphor and the use of meaning through language to explore the creation of sexual identity both internally and in community. Specifically, I relied heavily on the feedback of my cohort, professors, and studio instructors, with ranging experiences in art education and art making, as context for my reflections and insights. My studio research questions are:

- How can I challenge the socially and historically constructed meaning of the word ‘pussy’ by reconstructing metaphors through the use of songs, images, advertisements, and my personal reflections?
- How can performance art enable me to explore my identity, specifically sexual identity and help me reframe and reclaim the word ‘pussy’?

Then, I took my insights and processed reflections to address the implications of performance art practices in my art education practice. The second purpose of my study was explored through

my lens as an art educator and I contemplated if and under what circumstances controversial issues should be introduced to students in the art classroom. Within my practice as an art educator, my research question is:

- How creating a performance piece and documenting an extensive creative process has benefitted or hindered my teaching philosophy?

The focus of my research is in the realm of taboo issues, as I have found it difficult to introduce issues deemed as taboo into a classroom. Similarly to sex and sexual identity, other taboo issues also rely heavily in social metaphors to create, maintain and share their meaning. Ultimately, I hope to engage students in themes centered on social justice art education; students making relevant and meaningful comments on social issues even if the issue may seem taboo.

In my curriculum, I hope to include different experiences in art education that require students to develop empathy. Exploring an otherwise private identity, sexuality, in public can help create empathy. Barrett (2013) noted, “Self-disclosure can aid in garnering empathy. The more we reveal about ourselves the more others can think about and feel our experiences” (p. 32). My hope in employing a philosophy based on empathy is to foster students’ empathy for themselves, as well as each other. It takes courage to explore identity, but, even more so, to question identity in the presence of others. Similar to my exploration of a taboo and censored topic--sexual identity and the word ‘pussy’--adolescents and teenagers may also find it relevant and meaningful to explore their sexual identity or other taboo issues in their community within the art classroom. By deconstructing my creative process, I am better able to understand, and empathize with, the obstacles that others may encounter when creating artwork. Empathy is an essential piece within my teaching philosophy and in my ambition to incorporate social justice

art education into my teaching practice. As such, I have reflected on my understanding of empathy in both my performance piece and my teaching philosophy.

## 1.2 Operational definitions

Several key terms for this study are briefly defined below. The relevance of these terms and concepts is discussed in greater detail within the review of literature. The following definitions explain how I have decided to use these concepts throughout my research.

Sexual Identity- Weeks (2010) states:

The strong emotions it (*sex*) undoubtedly arouses dives to the world of sexuality a seismic sensitivity, making it a transmission belt for a wide variety of needs and desires; for love and anger, tenderness and aggression, intimacy and adventure, romance and predatoriness, pleasure and pain, empathy and power. We experience the erotic very subjectively, and in a host of often contradictory ways. At the same time, the very mobility of sexuality, its chameleon-like ability to take many guises and forms, so that what for one moment can be a source of warmth and attraction, for another might be a cauldron of fear and hate, make it a peculiarly sensitive conductor of cultural influences, and hence of social, cultural and political divisions. Through their sexualities, individuals are expected to find themselves and their place in the world. (pp. 2-3)

Performance Art- Gomez-Pena (2011) suggested that:

Performance as an artistic “genre” is in a constant state of crisis, and is therefore an ideal medium for articulating a time of permanent crisis such as ours. Performance is a dis-narrative and a symbolic chronicle of the instant which focuses mainly on the “*now*” and “*here*.” Performance is about presence, not representation. (p.9)

In doing this, performance artists engage in the practice of critical citizenship and radical forms of democracy that have significant implications for teaching in schools (Garoian, 1999, p.2).

Censorship- Atkins and Mintcheva (2006) asserted that censorship is:

Sometimes disguised as a moral imperative, at other times presented as an inevitable result of the impartial logic of the free market. No matter how it may be camouflaged, however, the result is the same: the range of what we can say, see, hear, think, and even imagine is narrowed. (p. xv)

Taboo- Rosewarne (2013) explains the following about taboo topics:

While sex, politics and religion might be conversation topics that make first dates awkward, dinner parties uncomfortable, and classroom, staffroom, and locker-room discussions fiery, the very fact that they summon such strong — such visceral — reactions highlights that these are also the very topics that we have the most passion for and certainly harbor the most curiosity about. (p. vii)

Time and time again, these topics have been shown to titillate, offend, arouse, and create angst — if not outrage. Likewise, each has a history of controversy and scandal, be it related to censorship, restricted classification, protest, or just accusation of poor taste.

(p. viii)

Metaphor- As a literary term, metaphor is “a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar; an object, activity, or idea that is used as a symbol of something else.” (Merriam-Webster dictionary)

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphors, as it relates to self-understanding, can be explained as:

We seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities and our dreams, hopes and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of your experience to yourself. It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences that give new meaning to old experiences. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself. (p.232-233)

A/R/Tography- This term describes the relationship between artist, researcher and teacher and how each role can interfere and complement each other. The roles are present all the time and are not limited to conducting research. According to Pinar (2004) a/r/tography can be described as the following:

A/r/tographical work is a specific category of arts-based research practices with education research. A/r/t is a metaphor for artist-research-teacher. In a/r/tography these three roles are integrated creating a third space. These practitioners occupy ‘in-between’ space.

A/r/tography merges knowing, doing and making...A/r/tography is a form of representation that privileges both text and image as they meet within moments of metissage. But most of all, a/r/tography is about each of us living a life of deep meaning through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has been known, and imagine what we hope to achieve. (p. 9-10)

## 2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will discuss in more depth the themes I explored in my performance piece and thesis, such as my choice to use performance art practices in my studio and for reflections in the art classroom; the relationship between language, metaphor, and the construction of sexual identity; and how censorship can play out in the art classroom and beyond.

### 2.1 Why performance as an artist?

In the spring of 2013, I decided to take a photography class, ‘The Animal’. The premise behind the class was to research the many relationships between human beings and animals. By the end of the semester, we identified a small location that was willing to host an exhibition of the work made by all the artists in the class. Prior to opening night, I was informed that my photo had been removed from the exhibition space. My speculation is that the title of my photo, “It’s Okay to Eat Pussy” was the determining factor for it getting taken down, rather than the image itself. Initially, I felt offended and surprised. While the audience was engaged and curious in knowing the reasons why it was removed, the audience was also dismissive of the complex image of sexuality and desire that is constructed in the photograph (See Figure 3.16). This hit a nerve. By including the word ‘pussy’ in the title and therefore making a reference to explicit female sexuality, I addressed the taboo, and otherwise private, issue of female sexuality and desire.

Performance art has a history of addressing controversial issues. “In more recent times, it [performance art] has been the genre of choice for artists of marginalized cultures who have found the strategy of radical critique necessary to aestheticism issues surrounding ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, race, and class distinctions” (Garoian, 1999, p. 18-19). The history of performance art, specifically as it has addressed sexuality and the female body, was the natural

trajectory of my studio work. In the book *Live Art and Performance*, Heathfield (2004) describes the use of the body as “stepping away from the representation of the human subject found in portraiture and the depiction of the artist found in the self-portrait, twentieth-century artists increasingly stepped inside the frame, using their own bodies as sites of experimentation and expression” (p.11). With the use of performance art, I have addressed the body, specifically the female body. Heddon (2012) asserts that:

Live art brings the artist body into view in new ways, engaging questions of ownership, property, self-determination, legitimating, repression and control. Bodies themselves need to be read as a result of various discursive practices, practices located historically and culturally. The body is never experienced-lived or witnessed- as an unmediated, unmarked canvas. Mediation, though, marks bodies differently. Live art practices, where the body is engaged as material, often take that already culturally marked body and remark it- revealing the operations and impacts of cultural inscriptions and/or rewriting such inscriptions in an attempt to figure other possible bodies and lives lived through them. (p. 184)

My decision to use the female body in a performance piece was an invitation to dialogue about female sexuality, particularly as represented by the word ‘pussy’.

My artistic pursuits towards a performance piece started with extensive research of contemporary performance artists, specifically how artists investigate the construction of desire in performance art. I wanted to understand how the consumption of the female body changed when the body was placed in the same space as the audience. There were numerous artists that influenced my work. The artists that made the greatest contributions to my work are Matthew Barney, Judy Chicago, and Carolee Schneemann. From these artists, I was able to find clear

paths for addressing the female body in performance and I gathered the greatest insight on how to address female sexuality. I started with an interest in Matthew Barney's work. While Barney is not considered a feminist artist, his work does address gender and identity. As Margo Crutchfield, the director of the *Fast/Forward* series notes, "fact and fiction are blurred. Barney presents an outrageous and baffling arena in which issues of gender, the body and the construction of identity do battle ("Matthew Barney's enigmatic art", 2000).

I was astonished by his complete metamorphosis into characters, both human and creature, and his commitment to staying within that character for the duration of the performance (see Figure 2.1, 2.2). Aesthetically, Barney sexualizes flesh, but the result is not a *sexy* image but grotesque, even horrifying images. I was inspired by Barney's use of flesh as it resembled, in my mind, meat. More specifically, I was drawn to a cat-like character in his film *Cremaster 3* (see Figure 2.3). The image is of a half-human, half-cat creature that is naked. I found the image to relate to an alter-ego associated with female sexuality and the persona that female desire should resemble. The creature fashions sharp nails and bare breasts, a mixture of predator and nurturing care-taker. The image is a contradiction of sorts and I believe it resembles an internal conflict that women may experience when working out their desires and sexual identities.





*Figure 2.1: Sample of M. Barney's work*



*Figure 2.2: Sample of M. Barney's work*



Figure 2.3: Sample of cat-like creatures from M. Barney's work

The second artist I researched was Carolee Schneemann. Schneemann is considered a feminist artist and her work uses cats and meat as well. Amongst Schneemann's extensive work, I focused on *Meat Joy* and *Infinity Kisses II* (1990-1998). The work, *Infinity Kisses II*, is a series of 124 self-shoot 35mm color slide photo sequence (see Figure 2.4). Benzan (2010) states, "In *Infinity Kisses*, the boundaries that distinguish feline and female beings are physically probed through the exchange of saliva and the ambiguous touches of two tongues" (p. 9). "However, the particular presence of *Infinity Kisses* speaks to the intimate connectivity between Schneeman's feminist practice, sexual politics and ongoing attention to (and thinking with) feline companions in her art and life" (p.7). From Schneeman's *Infinity Kisses II*, I was inspired by the rawness and imperfections in the images that she shares.

*Meat Joy* is a performance piece in which a group of 8 partially nude people were asked to dance, run, and embrace each other in the center of a room. While the participants interacted with each other, Schneemann would periodically lay paint, raw fish, and raw chicken on the participants and the participants would include the new material in their interactions. For example, a couple lays on top of each other while a whole raw chicken is smashed between them (See Figure 2.5). I appreciate Schneeman's use of raw meat to question to ideas of 'flesh' and

the construction of the erotic. Within Schneeman's work, I traced back questions of the construction of intimacy and the erotic. Johnson (2012) describes the role of intimacy in the following:

When viewed as a continuum, intimacy unsettles and outstrips binary oppositions: love/hate, monogamy/infidelity, pleasure/pain, security/danger, and, perhaps, intimacy/risk. Sliding uncomfortably between supposedly distinct terrains, intimacy is therefore seemingly bounded by abuse, solitude, infidelity, and other risks, such that too little to too much intimacy augurs a dereliction of sorts. (p.122)

Intimacy is filled with contradiction and experienced duality. Intimacy is not only associated with tenderness but also with violence. According to Benzan (2010) violence has been associated with 'Infinite Kisses II' in the following way:

Viewers have asked whether this is bestiality or whether the cat was biting Schneeman, but what Schneeman captures on film is not the sexual intercourse of bestiality. It is gentler exploration of and by the sensual organs of speech that are not speaking. (p.10)

From Schneeman's work, I became increasingly aware of the violence associated with intimacy.



*Figure 2.4: Infinite Kisses II by Carolee Schneeman*



*Figure 2.5: Sample from Meat Joy by Carolee Schneeman*

Another artist whom influenced me is Judy Chicago. During a practice exercise with her students at Cal State, Chicago would ask students to wear enlarged replica genitals. The students would use the word cunt and cock to describe different gender roles, such as “You have a cunt. A cunt washes dishes. And I have a cock and I cock does not wash dishes” (Dancoff, 2012). As performed by Wilding and Lester, two of Chicago’s students, *The Cock and Cunt Play* inspired me by the overt use of the genitalia to reconstruct sexual identity as an experience. The enlarged genitalia became the focus of identity and the reason for behavior. In this way, the genitalia symbolized both sex and gender roles. Also, the nude female body, which is common in performance art, is not present. I believe that even though the bodies are covered with black leotards, the flesh colored genitals and their positioning remain erotic.



*Figure 2.6: Image of Cock-Cunt Play by Judy Chicago*

Within the emerging trajectory of my studio work, performance art was the next step. I wanted to challenge the notion of ‘being’ and performance art is able to question both presence and time. Having started my research in photography, I heavily relied upon my ability to capture a moment in time and then remove myself from that moment. After taking a photograph, I am no longer a part of the moment in the photograph but a member of the audience. I took

advantage of, and took comfort in, the nature of photography in allowing for this removal. I am able to simultaneously experience my photographs as artist and as viewer with ease. However, through performance art I am present as woman artist and not as viewer. Instead, I surrendered my ability to be the viewer so that the audience becomes the only present viewer in a specific time and space. What does it mean to ‘be present’ or to ‘be there’? According to Josette Feral (2012):

The first step is to define presence in comparison with absence. Presence would be what is here, what is not absent. This is to say, present within the subject’s space and time.

This relationship with respect to space and time is fundamental. (p. 31)

More so, Feral (2012) defines the ‘presence effect’ as ‘the feeling of a body’s (or an object’s) presence- that these bodies or objects create the impression of really being there, even if the audience rationally knows that they are not” (p. 29). I chose to consider some of the characteristics of ‘presence effect’ when planning for my performance. The audience is required as spectator to participate by watching the performance. An awareness of the ‘observer gaze’ is a part of all performance. More specifically, my performance addresses female sexuality -female body and desire- on public display and, therefore, the male gaze becomes more voyeuristic. The audience is viewing something that is private and as they become aware of their voyeurism; they also become aware that they are a part of a group watching a female body in sexual exploration. As a performer, my awareness of the audience’s gaze becomes a part of the performance. According to Carlson (2004), the male gaze can be challenged during performance art. The author states that ‘live art...can expose the (male) spectator to the fearful proximity of the performer and the dangerous consequences of his own desires” (p. 185). More so, ‘his (*the spectator’s*) cloak of invisibility has been stripped away and his spectatorship becomes an issue

within the work” (p.185). As a performance artist, I must determine how to address the audience and the role the audience will play in the performance. Even in choosing to ignore the audience or to operate as if the audience isn’t there, would be a role that the artist chooses for the audience. As such, by acknowledging the ‘observer’s gaze’ I meant to invite the audience to watch an otherwise private exploration of female sexuality through my performance. In the operations of my performance, I acknowledge the audience by my choice in body position, talking to the audience, and ultimately moving into the audience’s space. However, beyond watching the performance, presence can also include reflection or what the audience thinks during the performance. While the physical presence of the spectator is necessary, the artist can thereafter determine if a ‘presence’ beyond that is required from the spectator. In *How to Define Presence Effects*, Feral (2012) defines presence effect in as ‘the point between the self and the world outside, in a place where the sense of place and time are fictionalized” (p. 43).

According to Feral (2012), other characteristics of ‘presence effect’ are that:

It puts man, at the very core of his own representation, into play. Through him, the subject experiences, his existence in the world...Evokes the feeling that there is a genuine sharing of a common space and time. It takes place in the present.... It is this primary relation to perception that gives the spectator the feeling that there is a real sharing of a common space and time. (p. 44)

During the performance, the audience is invited into an aesthetic experience as well as an evoking an imaginative experience. As such, Feral (2012) explains:

Allows the senses to be awake, to be ‘on call’. Among the sensory organs involved, the most important are the eyes, whether vision is ‘effective’ and serves a caution to the impression received, or whether it is a vision ‘by default’, serving to remind the spectator

of a gap, an absence, a play of illusion...with the presence effect, there is an escalating process of automation of the image by showing it as an escalating process of automation of the image by showing it as the focus, not the product. This is the visibility of the imaginative process in its truest sense; the image's revelation creates the presence effect because it makes the focus of perception palpable. (p. 45)

Lastly, performance can also conjure up memories and therefore effect presence as the audience remembers previous experiences and association with what they are viewing. Feral (2012) elaborates in the following:

Reality is absorbed, rendered, in a hyper-personalized space that intensifies self-consciousness to an even greater degree than the awareness of outward reality. It becomes equally clear that presence effects call upon memory and are connected to the different modalities of representation that authorize the operation of 'recognition' in the absence of the object. (p.43)

To clarify, the aim of my performance is not to coax the audience into believing that female sexuality is defined by my behavior. Rather, I invite the audience to be present in my questioning of private thoughts and desires. Beyond being present, the audience can reflect on their desires and exploration of the word 'pussy'. The audience does inevitably become aware of their presence, though it may not always occur during the performance. Feral (2012) comments about presence effect in the following:

Allows spectator to find themselves at the heart of a 'performative' experiment where, first and foremost, they understand that there is a gap between their perception and the reality the installation offers their senses, hence a powerful presence effect. (p. 45)



Using performance as an artist to explore identity, specifically sexual identity, I am able to engage the audience in a different type of experience by altering the time of their presence. It was my goal to bring the audience into the performance and include them in an actively present role, but to also include moments in which the audience may be reflective and analytical of the performance.

## **2.2 Why performance as a researcher?**

Traditionally, research is based on the reliability and predictability of the scientific method. In this way, the results or findings from research are tested and considered valid. “An assumption embedded in the scientific method is that knowledge is gained through the speculation, accumulation, analysis, and confirmation of facts, and the utility of empirical approaches remain the cornerstone of scientific inquiry” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 41). Art, however, is different. It does not depend upon its predictability or reliability for its success. Instead, art can arguably be said to stray in the opposite direction by being most effective when it is unexpected and uncommon. Arts-based research may then sound like a contradiction and unlikely to yield ‘quality’ research findings. Yet, when the process of art-making is looked at closely, it resembles the inquiry and problem-solving that are also a part of other forms of research. “Art and science bear intrinsic similarities in their attempts to illuminate aspects of the human condition” (Leavy, 2009, p.2). Within my process of theorizing and problem solving, methods of research are found. “Constructive theorizing helps to construct explanation about what, why and how problems arise, and how discrepancies between what is believed and what is encountered are resolved” (Sullivan, 2005, p.76). Within my research questions, I investigate the socially constructed meanings and applications of the word ‘pussy’. “Research of art subsequently communicates new insights into how objects carry meaning about ideas, themes,

and issues” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 80). As such, my research includes not only my personal reflections but how I have found that the word ‘pussy’ is socially defined through the use of music and its association to accepted behavior.

More specific to my research, my pursuits as a researcher are supplemented by my endeavors as an artist and teacher. Using the relationship between artist, researcher and teacher, also referred to as *a/r/tography*, I allow and heavily rely on my studio practice and interest to communicate and translate into research questions. Irwin (2004) defined the *a/r/tography* experience as:

*A/r/tographers are living their practices, representing their understandings, and questioning their positions as they integrate knowing, doing, and making through aesthetic experiences that convey meaning rather than facts. Theory as a/r/tography creates an imaginative turn by theorizing or explaining phenomena through aesthetic experiences that integrate knowing, doing, and making: experiences that simultaneously value technique and content through acts of inquiry; experiences that value complexity and difference within a third space. (p. 31)*

As such, I have used arts-based research in my exploration of the constructed meanings of the word ‘pussy’.

In many examples of research, art and writing complement each other and, by being coupled together, provide a clearer, deeper understanding. As explained by Irwin (2004):

*Art and writing unite the visual and textual by complementing, refuting, or enhancing one another. Image and text do not duplicate one another but rather teach something different yet similar, allowing us to inquire more deeply into our practices. (p. 31)*

The characteristics of presence and time are also relevant to using performance art in my research. The role of performance in research is described by Kershaw (2012) as:

Performance is always already boundless. Yet also performance (and performativity) in both organic/inorganic “worlds” is never other than perfused with space and time. Every example is incorrigibly particular. Hence boundless specificity is a constitutive paradox of performance and performativity, creating multiple ontologies and epistemologies, ways of being and knowing. That paradox ensures that performance practice as research—defined as the use of practical creativity as reflexive enquiry into significant research concerns (usually conducted by “artist/scholar” in universities) —will present both highly specific and very broadly applicable results. (p.4)

However, there are also challenges to basing research on performance art practices. One of the challenges has been to putting the lid on the social connections and implications that can be found in my performance. Embedded with questions of feminism, violence against women, gender studies, technology and art, and much more, numerous disciplines can be found within my performance. As further defined by Kershaw (2012), a characteristic of performance art as research is as follows:

Its concerns may be defined by languages of particular disciplines, but the paradox also ensures this type of research will always resist becoming a *single discipline* as its projects proliferate insights, understandings, knowledge that overall, will be part of many disciplines. Similar tendencies propose performance as an *antidiscipline*. A similar move for performance practice as research would claim it as a *transdiscipline*. Implying that, most typically, it will generate procedures and protocols relevant to research in many disciplinary fields. Thus, *performance practice as research* more precisely defines

itself as method and methodology in search of results across disciplines: a collection of transdisciplinary research “tools”. (p. 5)

Opting to use performance art as the medium to show my research has allowed me not only to address personal reflections but also to include and relay social and philosophical insights.

### **2.3 Why performance as an art educator?**

One of the original inspirations for my research comes from an experienced intersection between my identity as teacher and as a researcher and using this experience for reflection in my studio practice. As a Pre-kindergarten teacher, I observed how my students used performance to create their identities and test experiences. Without much prompting, a number of my students created artwork, mostly collages and role-play, addressing not only events they saw at school that day but also dialogue and behavior they had witnessed at home. A majority of the narratives that they created or acted-out were strongly driven by gender roles. For example, roles such as ‘mother and father’ or ‘caretaker and worker’, were commonly divided between girls and boys according to traditional gender roles. Even though I did not have formal conversations about identity with my students, my students did find it necessary to perform their identities in solo-play and during interactions with other students. My students might not have been aware of how, through play, they were in fact creating their identities through performance. As such, my teacher observations were my first impressions of how gender roles can be explored in performance art and the risk and vulnerability that are a part of the process.

The work of creating identity is a constant ambition. Regardless of age, all students will go through various experiences of constructing, questioning, and reconstructing identity. As described by Baker (2008):

Our age identity is constantly changing throughout our lives, and there is very little we can do to stop changing it. We have no choice in becoming a teenager, adult or old person (although we do have more control over the way we orient to and outwardly express those identities, for example, by attempting to hide our increasing years by wearing clothes normally worn by younger people). So we have varying amounts of control over, and consciousness of, the different types of identities that we possess.

(p. 11)

As such, my work as an art educator is to be aware of how identity is constructed and to be alert to the fact that my students will inevitably deal with the construction of their identity. Baker (2008) explains the following about the construction of identity for students, specific to sexual identity, “Ideologies of gender and sexuality are interdependent. How students believe, value, and practice gender in their talk directly connects to how they believe, value, and practice sexuality” (p. 8). While younger students may not be deciphering their sexual identity or sexual desires, my pre-kindergarten students did explore their identity by role-playing gender roles.

Charles R. Garoian is both a performance artist and an art educator. In his book, *Performing Pedagogy*, Garoian (1999) describes the connection between performance art and art education:

Performance artists use memory and cultural history to critique dominant assumptions, to construct identity, and to attain political agency. In doing so, performance artists engage in the practice of critical citizenship and radical forms of democracy that have significant implications for teaching in schools. (p. 2)

In a traditional classroom, the teacher is the performer and the students engage as audience. By definition, this engagement consists of students listening and learning from the teacher, the main

speaker, the performer. According to Garoian (1999), the use of performance art pedagogy is a three-layered process:

First, as a process of objectification, the critique of performance art enables student to see the culture that they embody and to expose and problematize its hidden circumstances.

Second, as a process of subjectification, it enables students them to see themselves within culture by critiquing it from the perspective of personal memory and cultural history.

Third, it provides them as opportunity to see their performances within culture as they critique the positionality of their performances within the expanded field of cultural history. (p. 9)

However, I believe that introducing performance art and performance pedagogy can help change the dynamics of who is teaching. In other words, performance pedagogy can empower students into becoming the source of information, i.e. the teacher.

I have also chosen to consider performance pedagogy, because performance art is a contemporary practice that has helped to redefine art by constantly challenging the norms. “It is this critical-thinking dimension of performance art-the desire to experience, question, and respond to contemporary culture and to create culture anew from interdisciplinary and intercultural perspectives-that is significant to a pedagogy of postmodern art education” (Garoian, 1999, p. 19).

During my classroom observations, I noted that some of my students created distance between their identity and their experiences by employing fictional characters in their artwork and in their skits. An awareness of risk and intimacy, and ultimately vulnerability becomes a part of the performance art experience for both artist and audience. The relationship between intimacy and risk in performance art was described by Johnson (2012):

In its most pressing formulation, live art redefines our understanding of intimacy and risk. It invites new ways of thinking about how these seemingly opposed logics are tied to each other, in our experiences of art, performance and the everyday. Live art also stages the ways intimacy and risk have been historically tied to social, cultural and legal crises concerning the body, ownership, pleasure and desire. (p. 121)

If risk and vulnerability are a part of performance art, one of my concerns, as an art educator, is creating a safe space for the exploration of taboo issues. An example of using performance art to dialogue about a taboo issue with high school students is *The Roof Is on Fire*, a project pioneered by Suzanna Lacy. Garoian (1999) offered that:

In June 1994, two hundred Oakland, California, teenagers, mainly African Americans and Latinos, gathered on the rooftop of the new downtown federal building parking lot to discuss a number of issues concerning their lives in the inner city: sex, violence, values, family, school, the future, and the mass media's stereotyping of youth as criminals. As they spoke out about these and other issues that affected their lives, they sat in new, rented, and loaned automobiles that filled the parking lot, private spaces of their choosing within the public context of the city. They sat and talked in parked cars with their windows rolled down and, in the case of convertibles, their tops open. As the students began their conversations, the audience walked up the ramps of the garage and approached the "sound installation" of parked cars in order to "listen in". (p. 125)

Even though Lacy uses performance art as the medium, community values and issues become the topic of the performance and, therefore, they are most important to Lacy's approach to curriculum. Within her student's performance piece, Lacy reconnects students with their

community and engages them in dialogue with their community. Garoian (1999) describes her curriculum's role in the community in the following:

Her art work is performative curriculum because it opens a liminal space, within which a community can engage a critical discourse, a space wherein decisions are contingent upon the collective desires of its citizens, as well as an ephemeral space because it is applicable to the particular time and place for which it has been designed. Thus, for Lacy, communities are contested sites, and performance art is a function of community development. (p.128)

As an educator it is essential to remember that what is considered taboo will vary and that a keen awareness of what would be considered deviant in any community is important to know before attempting to address taboo issues in an art classroom. Maintaining an awareness of community values can help create a safe space. Students may feel less at risk and vulnerable and begin to feel valued and supported by their community. According to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, "students need to feel emotionally and physically safe and accepted within classroom to progress and reach their full potential" (McLeod, 2007) As part of my teaching philosophy, I hope to encourage students to ask questions and decipher through their opinions on taboo issues relevant to themselves and their community.

#### **2.4 Using metaphor to create sexual identity**

"One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one"

-Judith Butler, (1990)

Language is a part of everyday life; it helps us communicate who we are and gives us information about the world around us. As such, language is powerful. According to McConnell-Ginet (2011), "using language is fundamental to pursuing our various life projects: to



coordinating actions with others, to sharing ideas, to reminding others and ourselves of plans and commitments, to amusing ourselves and others, to making sense of ourselves and our world” (p. 5). More so, the use of language defines identity and culture. The influence of language on culture was described by Kyratzis and Sauntsson (2007) thus:

A language’s vocabulary and grammar, according to Spair (1949: 90-1), is not a mere collection of meaning and structures, but a ‘complex inventory’ of whatever is culturally significant to a community. Therefore, in order to understand a culture we should look at language first. (p. 7)

Language is therefore manifested in all realms of society, including creating sexual identity and desire. Language is able to create meaning by defining acceptable and deviant behavior. As described by McConnell-Ginet (2011):

Language plays a key role in creating and sustaining (and sometimes challenging and changing) all of the varied kinds of beliefs and practices that inform gender and sexual identities, relations, practices, and ideologies. This is because language is meaningful: we use it to do things with one another, to ‘do’ gender and sexuality as well as much more. (p. 15)

To construct meaning through language is a process. The process of creating meaning involves both power (a consensus of meaning) and practice (using language with specific meaning). As described in Campbell-Kibler, Roberts, and Wong (2002):

Those with meaning making power (e.g., the media) attempt to naturalize their own ideologies about the social category that a given label denotes. Naturalization works by making ideologies appear to be natural and spontaneous representations of ‘reality,’ thus

creating what Stuart Hall (1982) calls “the reality effect.” Dominant ideologies that are naturalized become the literal meaning of the label. (p. 9)

Therefore, meaning is constructed through language by a common acceptance of meaning. Secondly, the accepted meaning of words must be performed to communicate and further establish meaning. However, meaning is not stagnant and can be changed through power and practice. For example, Campbell-Kibler, Roberts, and Wong (2002) describe the change in meaning of the word ‘hussy’:

According to McConnell-Ginet, it is plausible that a certain ideology of the speech community was that sexual wantonness was a characteristic of the housewife. Those who embraced this ideology would say hussy and rely on their addresses to invoke that characteristic when interpreting the utterance. When enough uses of hussy to insult succeeded, subsequent language users would be able to interpret the insult without relying on any extralinguistic attitudes. (p.9)

Currently, the use of the word ‘hussy’ continues to have a negative connotation. However, the degree to which the word ‘hussy’ is offensive may vary in different communities. Hence, the construction of meaning through language is also directly influenced by the culture in which it is used. As explained by Kyratzis and Sauntson (2007),

In an Austinian definition of a speech act, to say something is to do something, so that we literally perform actions by producing utterances. This notion has informed much current theorizing of language, gender and sexuality- we speak our gender and sexuality into existence....So, gender and sexuality are not simply brought into being by speaking or doing, but via a process of interaction between the speech act and the grounded sociocultural and situational context in which it is produced and received. (p.3)

As such, the actual meaning associated with a word, such as ‘hussy’, can vary depending on the community or culture in which it is used.

Within the realm of language, I will be focusing on the use of metaphor to connect both language and meaning. As described by Kyratzis (2007),

Metaphors are ‘filters’ that help us structure abstract concepts so that we can understand them; in this sense, our conceptual system is to a large extent metaphorical and, consequently, the way we live is largely based on metaphors. Metaphorical processes involve the bringing together of two concepts; hence, metaphor can be defined as understanding one thing in terms of another. (p.96)

In my use of metaphor, I will compare the word ‘pussy’ to the images it is associated with (aggression, animal-like, cat-like, sensual). I am completing the metaphor ‘Pussy is like...’. In this way, I will use metaphor to help define ‘pussy’ based on language found in popular culture. More so, specific to sexuality, metaphors have helped to create and maintain negative aspects of sexuality. Kyratzis (2007) explains the finding of a previous study that sought to survey conventional metaphors of desire in the English language (drawing data from the British National Corpus); the study found the following:

- We fear desire, possibly for its potential to disrupt the established patterns of our lives;
- desire is talked of metaphorically as a wild animal and as the dangerous elements of water, fire and electricity;
- we project [desire] linguistically onto objects or forces outside ourselves. Thus, desire appears uninvited and takes us over; we are not responsible. This both

reflects our physical perception of desire and allows us to disclaim responsibility for 'sinful' desire. (p. 114)

The meanings implied in the metaphors that construct female sexuality and desire are most relevant to my research.

Female sexuality has a range of metaphors associated with it. Specifically, I am focusing on the metaphors constructed for the word 'pussy'. In my research, I have challenged the meaning and the use of the word 'pussy' by questioning the metaphors associated with it and how men and women create desire (behavior) based on the accepted meaning. The word 'pussy' is closely associated to a cat or feline. As described by Blackledge (2003),

Cats are, curiously, still irretrievably associated with female genitalia and all things female. In Britain, 'pusse' first surfaced in 1662 as a vaginal descriptor; now the term has become 'pussy'. In Italy, the words for a female cat, chatte and gatta, both signify the vagina. Cats in many cultures also have associations with sex, female sexuality and, sometimes, prostitution. Women are feline, men never. Various cultures recognize and respect cats as having mystical powers, as a witch's companion or familiar, for instance, while some, in particular in Japan, believe cats bring good fortune. Japanese brothels also use the cat as sign to indicate the nature of the establishment- a place where the vagina can be viewed and more. Despite the intervening centuries, cats and vaginas are still linked, just as vulval display was with Egypt's feline pleasure goddess, Bast. (p. 13)

In other words, by using the word 'pussy,' one is linking female sexuality to an animal, a cat.

Through this connection, meaning is constructed through the metaphor of 'women are like cats'.

The accepted metaphor of female sexuality resembling a cat, leads to female sexuality resembling animal-like behavior.

## 2.5 Censorship in the Art Classroom and beyond

Now imagine the following: a teacher decides she wants to introduce her students to meaningful, socially relevant art. She wants to talk about racism, sexism, and social justice. She wants to familiarize herself with what her students have to say about these issues and how the issues come into view in their community. Our teacher, in this scenario, is a firm believer that her students can be agents of change, and she wants them to ask questions and deal with difficult answers. We all know what happens next: parents react, principals respond, and teachers are reprimanded. This story may seem bleak and scary. However, while the narrative may seem exaggerated and oversimplified, it illustrates how values can be created within a community and how censorship can occur when divergence from established behavior ensue.

During my research and into my studio practice, I was censored and edited by three sources: the art education cohort, the artist community from a photography class, and myself. They edited and censored for different reasons and their reasons were a reflection of the values they were upholding.

To begin with, the process of censoring is clearly not an isolated self-indulgence. Rather, self-censorship responds to community values and perspectives from those that may be interested in my work. Therefore, the questioning and censoring of my work was not limited to one group of people. After showing my photographs to my cohort, I was asked, “Will you show this work during a job interview?” and “What will you tell a principal who wants to know details about your thesis work and its implications in your classroom?” Prior to sharing my photos with my cohort, these questions had crossed my mind, not once or twice, but at every decision I made in my creative process. *Will I be naked in the photographs? Should I change the title of my photographs to say ‘cat’ instead of ‘pussy’ and would a title change affect the nature of the*

*work? Will I include the titles in my resume? How will I describe my work so that I am not perceived as either an angry, bitter woman or a crazed pervert?* The questions that I asked myself, or my self-censoring, were shared concerns amongst my cohort. Our concerns were not a reflection of our own collective values, instead what we were voicing were perceived values of people in power (principal, administrator, and parents) and what people in power might think of my work. Collective values can be hard to define and maintain as they usually include disagreement, frustration and compromise. During my studio practice, I was not teaching in the classroom and therefore, I was not a part of a specific school community. In most situations of self-censoring, a school community plays a large role for an art educator.

The art education cohort that I was a part of supplied most of the teacher lens and voiced the majority of the concerns about my research, thesis, and subject matter in a classroom. The question then becomes how an art educator can decipher whether students are a mature audience and if the information will be in the best interest of the students. In this process of censorship in the classroom, teachers can become the police, and communal values can limit a teacher's choices of the content students are exposed to. When this practice is used in radical ways, a teacher loses all autonomy and content is stripped of all controversial content. Henley (1997) expands the description of this process:

Considering whether to censor depends upon assessing the quality of the artist's intentions and the artistic venue or audience to which the art will be exhibited. Assessing artistic intention requires that the art educator astutely observe each student's art process and, in doing so, discern the pay-offs of the art experience; meaning, intention and benefits, if any, to be derived from such a performance (experience). (p. 41)

If censorship is to be guided by what is considered in the ‘students’ best interest’, then extreme censorship can be as detrimental and as irresponsible, such as engaging students in topics that they are not mature enough to dialogue through. Emery (2002) suggests in her article ‘Censorship in Contemporary Art Education’, that choosing to leave out contentious art works or images is denying students of all ages the chance to debate and form personal opinions in a safe and structured environment (p. 27). Kirlew (2011) also comments on censorship by stating, “however, by censoring education, it can be seen that educators are missing vital opportunities to confront the relevant personal, social, political, and cultural issues that shape young peoples’ lives in our postmodern contemporary society” (p.379). In this argument, the criteria by which to censor or not to censor changes to include the relevance of contemporary issues in students’ lives and art’s ability to question norms and that lead to change. In contemporary times, with images becoming more and more a part of our everyday culture, considering this argument and its questions is no longer optional for art educators. In reference to art education and social engagement Desai and Chalmers (2007) claim the following:

Socially engaged works of art require us to ask critical questions about our current political, social, economic and cultural situation. And, through this questioning, we arrive at different ways of looking at our situation and, hopefully, creating some change.

(p. 9)

My teaching philosophy is aligned with the belief that art should solicit questions and lead to social change, hopefully in the form of social justice. However, censorship in art education is not only relevant, it is essential. Students’ maturity and the benefit to students should be carefully weighed and considered.

Beyond being a part of my art education cohort, I was also a member of a photography class and made many of my photographs within the context of my identity consisting mostly as *artist*. The nature of the class was to engage in an in-depth critical exploration of the relationships between people and animals. As such, I was never discouraged from pursuing all possibilities. Reasons for images produced, even controversial images, were more readily supported by the community of artists in the class. When I created my photos and planned my performance, I made the majority of my decisions as an artist, operating in a community of artist. Within this community, I felt safe and encouraged to push ideas and boundaries to better understand my vision. However, the value of self-expression decisions in the community of the photography class did not necessarily reflect the same values within the art education program at Georgia State University, or within the community around the exhibition space. Outside of the photography class, the accessible, safe environment that we had created during the class was no longer available to me in the gallery space or its surrounding community. Henley (1997) describes the relationship between freedom of expression and censorship for artists as:

Artist often confuse the *right to create* with the *right to show*. While art educators must embrace an artist's freedom of expression, this freedom extends only to the work's right to exist. Should art leave the studio and enter the public domain, it would then be governed by the community values rather individual freedom. (p.40)

As a collective, the artists in the photography class decided to exhibit work at a local gallery space and the artwork was to be displayed facing the street. My work, mostly due to its controversial title, was removed from the show by the management from the gallery space (See figure 2.7). I was informed that the management of the space feared that the children and families that walked by the space would be offended by the work. My image was removed from



the space and hidden in a closet, while the name of my piece was still printed in the show's pamphlet.

Members of the Georgia State University community who viewed at the show seemed intrigued by the censorship, but their responses varied. Some tossed in the explanation that 'we are in the South' and that Atlanta isn't as progressive as we would like to think. While others simply stated that 'if you (the artist) make artwork with the word 'pussy' in the title, you pretty much know that this is going to happen.' You should change the title to 'cat' or 'kitten'.'

After this experience, I was frustrated and didn't really understand why my piece couldn't be shown, even if it was offensive. I had to realize that the classroom was not a smaller version of the outside community. I decided to take a risk and create a performance piece that focused on the cat-like creature, which seemed to have enlarged genitals, from the photograph that was removed from the gallery space wall and placed in the closet. I decided to continue to venture forward, into a performance piece that addressed the word 'pussy'. Operating between both the censorship of art education and the freedom of contemporary art practices has exaggerated my disconnected identity between the two worlds. This exploration and reflection on censorship helps me better understand the nature of art education and how my teaching philosophy can truly be an agent that works for social justice.



*Figure 2.7: Photo of me standing in front of my photograph, after it was found in a closet*



*Figure 2.8: Photo of me explaining and validating my work to someone at the show*



### 3 Chapter Three: Methodology and Process

In this study, I intended to address my first studio research question by documenting my studio process. The question was: *How can I challenge the socially and historically constructed meaning of 'pussy' by reconstructing metaphors through the use of songs, images, advertisements, and my personal reflections?* As such, I decided to address the socially constructed meaning of 'pussy' through a performance piece. Within my process and decision-making, the use of metaphor determined most of my choices including the use of materials, the choice of music or audio, the movement of my body and, ultimately, my performance.

At the heart of my question, I understand that language is shared through popular culture and meaning that is derived from language can shape a shared meaning and behavior. I also selected language that is easily shared and highly accessible through YouTube. The influence of technology has on creating identity is described by Garoian & Gaudelius (2004):

Technology simultaneously evokes both pleasure and terror. It is the medium through which one's lives and bodies are facilitated, mediated, and controlled...Pleasure and enjoyment is delivered by commercial media through movies, television, and the Internet. Yet, many of these same forms of technology can strike fear in people when they are used for surveillance and control; when they challenge one's sense of autonomy; or, when people begin to lose what we believe to be their innate human qualities. (p.51)

As such, I used specific songs that contain the word 'pussy' in the lyrics and titles and songs that convey specific messages about female sexuality in relation to the word 'pussy'. The songs I chose were: *Pussy Control* by the Artist Formally known as Prince, *PU\$\$Y* by Iggy Azalea, *Pussy* by Lords of Acid, and *Cola (Pussy)* by Lana del Rey. The lyrics in the songs are important because they are the language that is found in popular culture and the language that I

am using to create the metaphors for ‘pussy’. For example, the song *Pussy Control* by The Artist Formally Known as Prince (1995) says "(This song is) about a woman you already know; no prostitute she, but the mayor of your brain, Pussy Control" The song describes a woman that uses her sexual abilities to control men, get money and earn respect. The song *PUS\$\$Y* by Iggy Azalea (2011) says "You know bitches envy me cause you won't get rid of me. When you cum, I run. This cat got you missin' me." In this song, a woman uses her ‘pussy’ to attract and keep her partner, and to make other women envious. The song *Pussy* by Lords of Acid (1998) says "She turns into a tiger when she's ready to eat. My pussy's always hungry for a big chunk of meat; so lay your little pussy right next to mine. You can bring her over around dinner time." In this song, a ‘pussy’ is described as a predator, with an insatiable appetite. Lastly, the song *Cola* by Lana del Rey (2012) asserts "My pussy tastes like Pepsi cola." In this song, a woman describes her pussy as tasting like Pepsi cola and she describes how she wants her man, ‘daddy’, to buy her jewelry in exchange for sex.

These songs are, for the most part, considered a part of popular culture, and are upbeat and catchy. The songs I have chosen expand through different decades but regardless of the time span, I found that all four songs contain lyrics with similar messages and representations of the word ‘pussy’, as it pertains to female sexuality and female sexual behavior. All of the songs illustrated the ‘pussy’ as a source of influence, power, or money for women. However, the power and influence that women can aspire to is dependent on another’s approval or measured by a woman’s ability to manipulate another person with her sexuality.

I referenced popular culture in both music and advertisement. One day, while watching television, I saw a commercial for a product called ‘Cat’s Meow’, a yellow undercover fabric moving toy that mimics a hiding and moving mouse. The commercial describes a house cat’s

behaviors and needs by including a kitty's need to play and pounce on prey and how kitties get bored and fat if they don't play. While listening to the commercial, I closed my eyes and I tried to visualize a woman preying and capturing her prey as a kitty would. While completely unrealistic, morbid and a bit silly, the image that I visualized was one that I wanted to recreate during my performance. Continuing with the image of cat as predator, I included video clips in my performance of lionesses hunting prey and slowly crawling through tall Saharan grass before pouncing on their prey. I also included video clips of lionesses playing and grooming themselves. Lionesses are real animals of prey and I wanted to show how aggressive they can be in all of their activities. When these video clips are projected while listening to the before mentioned songs, the audience is then invited into the paradox that using the word 'pussy' to describe a connection between female sexuality and animals of prey has created.

My decision to use street clothing and not a cat costume is based on the daily rituals and processes women go through to create their sexual identities. Women don't always wear costumes but they do alter their appearance and take on different personas based on their clothing. Ultimately, a choice in clothing can translate into a sexual attitude or behavior. However, when the decisions are daily and subtle, they become less questionable and the choices women make in their clothing and the sexual undertones become more subtle as well.

Another material choice was to use raw chicken throughout the entire performance and in the video clips that were projected on the wall behind me as I performed. This decision was partly based on historical connections between woman and animal rights. In the beginning of his book, *Animal Liberation*, Singer (1990) pointed out a historical connection between the women's rights movement and the animal rights movement. "When Mary Wollstonecraft, a forerunner of today's feminists, published her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, her views were

widely regarded as absurd, and before long an anonymous publication appeared entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*” (Singer, 1990, 1975, p. 1). This publication took Wollstonecraft’s argument and made a satirical argument that if woman could be equal to men then why not animals. After reading the first paragraph, on the first page, in Singer’s book, I was astonished that the rebuttal argument for sexism was drawing a likeness between women and animals. Adams (2010) explains:

Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat. The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinctions with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity. I found that while the negative consequences of consuming meat can be downplayed and underestimated, the ramifications of unknowingly operating every day in a society that consumes the female body to be insidious and far more subtle. (p. 48)

Beyond a historical argument, sexist attitudes are pervasive today. I was also reminded how subtle sexism continues to be as it can seemingly be a part to so many unquestioned biases.

The raw chicken is present from the beginning of my performance. From the beginning of the performance, the raw chicken can be seen on the cat-like creature in the video clips. Due to the color and texture of raw chicken, the raw chicken appears to be fleshy outer vagina lips. Unknown to the audience, the performer was wearing raw chicken under her skirt throughout the entire performance by safety pinning it to the outside of her underwear. By concealing the raw chicken during the performance, my intention was to emphasize the distinction between public and private spaces--what we are allowed to see and not see. The contradiction is that while the real raw chicken is concealed under the performer’s skirt, the images of raw chicken pretending

to be fleshy vagina lips is what the audience is viewing. Again, I wanted the audience to become hyper-aware of their voyeuristic role and how they were still invited into the conversation. Near the end of the performance, I show the audience the raw chicken under my skirt and I remove it. I then placed the raw chicken on four small plates and proceeded to cut the raw chicken into bite size pieces with a dinner fork and knife. During the rituals of preparing food, it is ascribed by gender roles that women prepare and serve the meal. Adams (2010) suggests that:

language distances us from the reality of meat eating, thus reinforcing the symbolic meaning of meat eating, a symbolic meaning that is intrinsically patriarchal and male-oriented. Meat becomes a symbol for what is not seen but is always there--patriarchal control of animals and of language. (Adams, p.3)

Language reinforces the understood gender roles and language also reinforces attitudes of consumption and enjoyment. Therefore, not only is the consumption of meat, or women, to be enjoyed by men but it is in sequence after women prepare themselves to satisfy not themselves, but others.

The meanings of the language used to describe women and the products marketed to them, as well as the actual the depictions of women in stereotypical pervasive advertisements can lead to the inaccurate conclusion that females may appropriately be viewed as sexual objects for the pleasure of male consumption. (Capella, 2010, p.37)

While the actual consumption of women may be a morbid and violent, I have included it because it can be found in subtle messages and language that are shared and can be found in behavior.

Throughout the performance, I questioned the sense of fantasy and the realities of intimacy. In the video clips, the fantasy cat-like creature inhabits a bedroom and is exploring, what seems like raw desire and pleasure. The cat-like creature is audibly heard moaning and it is



seen thrusting it's hips in the air. By contrast I, the performer, am dressed in modest clothing and not making much sound. Instead, my body is bent into a back bridge as I physically struggle through different uncomfortable, difficult positions, never finding rest or satisfaction. Again, what I am showing is the difference in the realities of intimacy--something that takes work and effort--and fantasy, unlimited and always satisfying. During the performance, I further invite the audience to compare reality and fantasy when I include a video clip from *P.O.P: The Power of Pussy*, a short documentary about the life of strippers. In this clip, a woman shares how she is different on stage than in her real life. She describes the process of seduction and how 'you just have to be yourself' (ChristmasinJuly1982, 2012). While this video clip is being shown, I move into the audience and sit amongst the audience. By physically moving myself into the audience, I remind the audience that they are a part of the conversation and that they will also have to distinguish between reality and fantasy.

Lastly, I invited the audience to ask who actually gets to enjoy the socially constructed meaning of the word 'pussy', and female sexuality in general. Who benefits from the animalistic attributes to female sexuality and desire? Who is at a disadvantage? On the projector, I show a series of video clips of close-ups of mouths making moaning noises and licking their lips. As the mouths seem to be chewing on something, one by one they disappear. While the images disappear, the performer places pieces of raw chicken on small plates and begins to cut the chicken into smaller pieces. Leaning towards a ritualistic image, the performer cuts up the raw chicken with a dinner knife and fork and serves it on several plates. I leave the chicken on the plates and leave them to be consumed by someone else--a comment on who actually enjoys female sexuality and the consumption of female sexuality.

Next, I added my layers of personal insight. My personal thoughts would address how I have accepted, rejected, interpreted and shared my sexuality, in reference to the word ‘pussy’. While I am pulling from exterior sources, songs, language and commercials, they are being filtered through my mind, through past and present experiences. As my purpose is to depict the socially constructed metaphors for ‘pussy’, I made specific choices about what I wore, how I used my voice, and my body language and movement. I dressed up in costume and became cat-like. I wore makeup that helped me become, what I consider, an animal-like creature exploring desire. As an animal exploring desire, I added audio clips of my creature moaning and groaning. The sounds are raw and explicit. All of my interpretations of ‘pussy’, as animal and predator, are depicted in the video clips that are projected behind me while I perform. However, I did not overtly include my identity, my name, nor did I act out my previous sexual experiences.

### **3.1 Method of Study**

My research has continually tried to decipher how performed gender roles and implied meaning in language can shape sexual identity. My process operates within the realm of arts-based research and employing the roles in a/r/tography. As an artist, I have explored my deconstruction and reconstruction of the word ‘pussy’, and how it can influence my performed and real sexual identity. As a researcher, I have included my findings into how language and messages from mainstream culture can influence sexual identity, specifically related to the word ‘pussy’. As a teacher, I have reflected on how, if possible, all my findings can benefit my teaching philosophy and practice. Harold Pearce (2004) describes the connections between the roles of a/r/tography in the following:

Art, research, and teaching can be said to contain parts of each other, and in praxis, form a kind of synthesis. This is especially true when a common concern or theme, such as

time, runs through them all. Nevertheless, real synthesis is rarely achieved in art and life, and /or in teaching. There are extraneous pieces, lumpy bits, things that are messy or unresolved (p. 196)

During my research, my identities of artist, researcher, and teacher contributed different insights, asked different questions and required different information.

One of the commonalities within each role, and present at varying degrees, was the concept of censorship. Communal values and censorship were equally relevant to my studio contributions, research findings, and teaching reflections. As an artist, I was censored within a community and yet applauded by another. As a researcher, I was questioned and had to defend my choices. As a teacher, I was also questioned and expected to hide my research and identity. After these experiences, I decided not to turn away from the themes or the images in my work. However, I did learn a few lessons that have changed my approach to my studio practice and my teaching philosophy. Included in my research, the role of censorship in the art classroom, specifically referring to taboo issues such as sexual identity and some of my reflections on the differences between contemporary art practices and art education, are addressed.

### **3.2 Limitations of Study**

There were several challenges that I foresaw in this piece and tried to address them ahead of time. One was to find a convincing costume and how to portray a convincing enough persona of a cat. This will be mostly determined by my commitment to the character and my clear definition of the character. For example, would I make it obvious and show that I am wearing a costume or would it be more important for the audience to be convinced that I am a cat?

Performance art isn't easily documented or recorded. As described by Schneider (2012), performance art seems to 'disappear':

According to the logic of the archive, what is given to the archive is that which is given to the archive is that which is recognized as constituting remain, that which can have been documented or has become document, it is, constitutively, that which does not remain. As the logic goes, performance is so radically 'in time' (with time considered linear) that it cannot reside in its material traces and therefore 'disappears'. (p. 66)

As such, I anticipate that even if I record my performance, some of the essence of my performance will be lost and can only exist in memory.

My performance relied heavily on metaphor and language to construct meaning. However, the meaning that is created through language and taken on as social norm is not created in a vacuum. Rather, depending on the community, or culture of operation, meaning can change. As explained by Kyratzis and Saunton (2007):

When we come into contact with the actions or behaviors of people from a culture other than our own, we are experiencing 'lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs.' Within this paradigm, a system of linguistic acts constitutes a system of linguistic signs. We therefore agree with Kramsch (1998:3) that language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality. (p. 7)

Hence, within my cohort, or audience, there may be varying operating definitions and experiences with the word 'pussy' that will inevitably influence how the audience receives the performance.

Using an arts-based methodology for research also has its limitations. As described by Hauptfleisch (2009),

Here the subject of study is some issue (for example, in society), the methodology is the process of making the work of art, and the output is, for example, a performance (and/or a published text). This constitutes a unique form of “soft science,” where the work of art itself is seen as simultaneously “process” and “research output.” (p. 44)

As such, using a performance piece as both process and product may be questioned when being considered part of a viable research method. Along the same vein, Hauptfleisch (2009) also elaborates on the focus on product in research. “Unfortunately, most assessment procedures do not focus on *process*, but on the final *product*, and “replicability” suggests that any output must contain, *within itself*, a description of the aims, the methods, the process(s) utilized, as well the result(s)” (p. 46).

I also anticipate misconceptions of the content in the body of work. This is especially true because of the possible connections made between my performance and bestiality, sexual violence against women and/or lesbianism. Assumptions may be made about my personal reflection or opinions in any of these matters, and assumptions may also be made about my sexual expertise or experiences, even my sexual orientation.

The materials needed for my performance consisted mostly of a projector, an audio system, edited video with songs, and myself. The detailed list of materials and equipment are the following:

- One video projector, with cables
- Audio system with speakers
- One costume for cat-like creature (black jumpsuit and fur vest)
- Face makeup for cat-like creature’s face
- One audio clip of ‘Cat’s Meow’ commercial

- One video with shots of cat-like creature in bed room
- Several clips of lionesses eating prey, and prowling
- Several audio clips of moaning noises
- One audio clip of song 'Pussy Control' by Artist formerly known as Prince
- One audio clip of song 'Pussy' by Iggy Azalea
- One audio clip of song 'Pussy' by Lords of Acid
- One audio clip of song 'Cola (Pussy)' by Lana del Rey
- One video of stripper dialogue from the film "P.O.P: The Power of Pussy" with audio
- One video with 5 chewing mouths moaning with audio
- 1/2 pound of raw chicken
- Safety pins
- 4 plates
- a fork and a knife

Timetable of events leading up to performance:

Spring 2012:

- Researched relationships between animals and people and decided to focus on the word 'pussy' and its influence on women's' construction of sexuality and desire.
- Researched performance artists that have dealt with female sexuality and desire, and links to animals
- Created costume for cat-like creature
- Took photos of me in cat-like creature costume
- Edited photos
- My photograph, 'It's Okay To Eat Pussy', was removed from the exhibition space

Summer 2013:

- Researched performance artist that have dealt with female sexuality and desire, and links to animals
- Explored cat movement and natural behavior through observation and sketches
- Began exploring cat movement through mimicking a copying cat's natural movement.
- Also began to compare the difference between cat's natural movement and 'sexy' movement women should partake in
- Chose location for performance to be my bedroom, an intimate space where sexual exploration and desire usually happen
- Made song selection of songs that include the word 'pussy'. Songs include the meaning of the word 'pussy' that I have to either embrace or reject.
- Edited video and added song.
- Practiced performance with video projection in the background
- Performed in front of art education cohort

The following are journal sketches and collages that illustrate the beginnings of my exploration into the construction of the word 'pussy' and my personal reflections. Within them, the questions that I am grappling with are 'how does a cat behave?', 'how can I behave and become a cat?' and 'what does that transition say about my sexuality?'.

I started my experimentation with collaging and sketches (See Figure 3.1). I wanted to capture the coming together of a cat and woman in my collage. This is a personal interpretation of what I think cat-like female sexuality might resemble. The image from popular culture that first came to my mind was Cat-woman, a female character that is villain to Batman.

Next, I drew live gesture drawings of cat observations (See Figure 3.2-3.4). I wanted to capture how cats move, play, sit, and lay. When the word ‘pussy’ is used to describe female sexual attitude, it contradicts the true nature of cats and the complicated nuances of female sexual desire. For this project, I decided to dress in costume to take on the persona of a cat and the implied sexual persona of female sexuality as it relates to felines. Next, I drew myself in a cat costume in, what I perceive to be hyper-sexual poses, (see Figure 3.5-3.6) and I began to design the actual costume to be worn in the photographs. Rather than create a cat-costume, I decided to use actual articles of clothing (a one piece black jumpsuit and a fur vest as a head piece). This decision is a comment on how women are seen as sexual creatures in everything they do and all day long. The persona is meant to exaggerate the awkwardness of the ‘pussy’ as female sexual identity. I also wanted the cat-creature to resemble a caricature of female sexuality, and in this way, comment of how shallow this understanding of sexuality actually is. I decided to show this aspect through make-up that resembled more of a theatrical style than a realistic style.





Figure 3.1: Sample collage from sketch book



Figure 3.2: Sketch of cat from memory



*Figure 3.3: Sketch of cat from live observation*



*Figure 3.4: Sketch of cat from live observation*



*Figure 3.5: Sketch of body positioning for photograph*



*Figure 3.6: Sketch of costume idea*

At this point, I had to address the question of nudity and the female nude in my photographs. Mostly guided by my self-awareness as an art educator, I purposefully shied away from taking naked pictures of myself. However, I did want to create a clear sexual theme in the photos and I decided to address the theme in body positioning, costume choice, and the use of raw chicken. I further explored how I was going to take on this persona through facial expression and body language. Facial expression was very important because it could convey a message in and of itself (see Figure 3.7-3.10). If my face was mean or aggressive, it could convey sexual aggression or a 'bitchy' female character, and if the expression was too passive, it could be read as the 'damsel in distress' narrative. At this point in my initial creative process, I became again painfully aware of the censorship, in particular, the self-censorship that I was participating in. Specifically, I was becoming increasingly aware of the male-gaze.



*Figure 3.7: Photo of 'Normal' cat face*



*Figure 3.8: Photo of 'Happy' cat face*



*Figure 3.9: Photo of 'Sexy' cat face*





*Figure 3.10: Photo of 'Aggressive' cat face*



*Figure 3.11: Photo studio set-up*



*Figure 3.12: Editing process in Photoshop*



*Figure 3.13: Editing process with emphasis on food and expression*



*Figure 3.14: Editing process with emphasis on food and body position*





*Figure 3.15: "Two Pussies Are Better Than One"*



*Figure 3.16: "It's Okay to Eat Pussy"*

During the photo shoot, the raw chicken that I had safety pinned to myself fell off. Considering that I was using the raw chicken to imitate vagina lips, it seemed frisky yet awkward that the chicken would fall off. Performance art introduces new problems and solutions to my studio practice. By adding filmed movement and live movement, I hoped to further create moments that uniquely question the use of the word ‘pussy’ as it refers to female sexuality.



*Figure 3.17: Action shot from photo shoot*



*Figure 3.18: Action shoot from photo shoot*

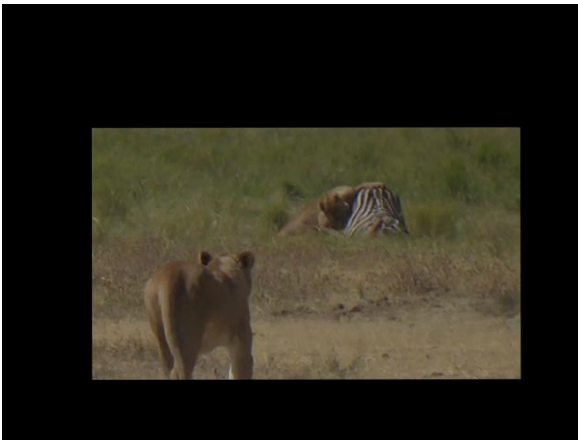
#### 4 Chapter Four: Performance

In the following paragraphs, I will be describing what happened during my performance. My performance occurred in a studio space at Georgia State University and the audience consisted of my art education cohort and our studio professor. I performed on our last day of class and it was considered my last critique for the semester. As such, there was time for discussion, questions and answer time, between my audience and myself, the performer. However, I did have to transition between my role as art educator, teacher, artist, and researcher during and after the performance. I wanted to reflect on my second studio research question: *How can performance art enable me to explore my identity, specifically sexual identity and help me reframe and reclaim the word 'pussy'?* Using performance as an artist to explore identity, specifically sexual identity, I was able to engage the audience in a different type of experience than I had previously been able to accomplish with photography. Through performance, I was able to alter the time of the audience's presence, the audience's participation, and the vulnerability of both the audience and myself, as performer.

At the onset of my performance, I was laying on my side, on a platform, while the projector shows a video clip of group of lionesses chasing a zebra and then pouncing. The audio clip for 'Cat's Meow' is playing (See Figure 4.1-4.2).



*Figure 4.1: Performer at the beginning*



*Figure 4.2: Video clip at the beginning*

Next, the projector shows a black screen and the performer turns onto her back and begins to slowly move her arms and her legs, as if waking up. The projector then shows a video clip of lionesses grooming themselves and the audio clip for *Pussy Control* by the Artist Formally Known as Prince begins (Figure 4.3).



*Figure 4.3: Lionesses grooming*

Then, the first layered video clip appears. Three layered video clips are shown from the projector, translucent enough to see all three images. One video continues to be the lioness grooming herself. The second video is of a woman, dressed in regular clothing, doing a backbend on her bed, in her room. The third video is of a cat-like creature that is also on a bed (See Figure 4.5). The audio continues to be the song ‘Pussy Control’. The performer has also moved into a back bend (Figure 4.4). The body language from the video is echoed in the performer.



*Figure 4.4: First body position on stage*



*Figure 4.5: First layered images from projector*

A fourth translucent image is added. The fourth image is a bigger image of the cat-like creature, thrusting its hips into the air. The fourth image begins to move across the screen from left to right. Four transparent images are on the screen (See Figure 4.6). The cat-like creature can now be heard moaning in the background. The audio continues to be the song 'Pussy Control' and the moaning and groaning of the cat-like creature. At this point, I am trying not to make any noise. I am trying to focus on my breath and on maintaining the backbend position. My focus is a bit distracted because I am thinking about my skirt. Even though it is long and I am wearing shorts underneath, I am concerned that someone might see the chicken under my skirt. I use my breath to focus back on my performance.



*Figure 4.6: First moving image from projector*

While the video clips continue, I move into a rest position and then I move back into the back bend position (See Figure 4.7-4.8). As a new song begins, 'PU\$\$Y' by Iggy Azalea, the video images change again.



*Figure 4.7: Rest position*



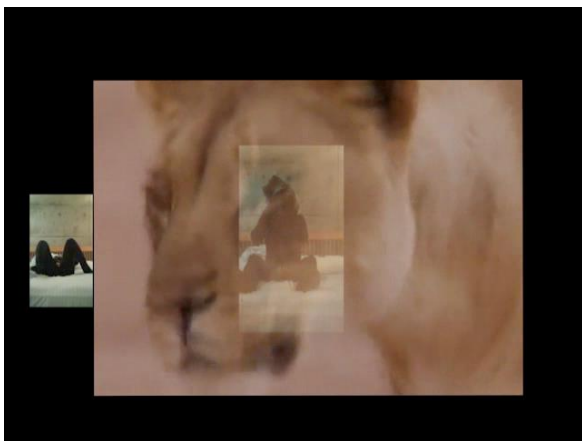


*Figure 4.8: Back bend position*

The image of the close up of the lioness's eye is replaced by the image of a lioness slowly prowling. The smaller image of the cat-like creature goes away and a new image begins to slowly scroll from the top of the screen towards the bottom. The new image is of the cat-like creature in a back bend with one leg up. The cat-like creature is hopping on one leg while in a back bend, while remaining on the bed (Figure 4.12). The cat-like creature's moans get louder. At this point in the video clips, the images of the cat-like creature become clearer and the images are not a layered. I wanted the audience to clearly see the cat-like creature and its body movements. Also, because the song is more explicit the images from the video clip and the moaning from the cat-like creature also become more explicit and rawer (See Figure 4.9-4.10).



*Figure 4.9: Beginning of 2nd song*

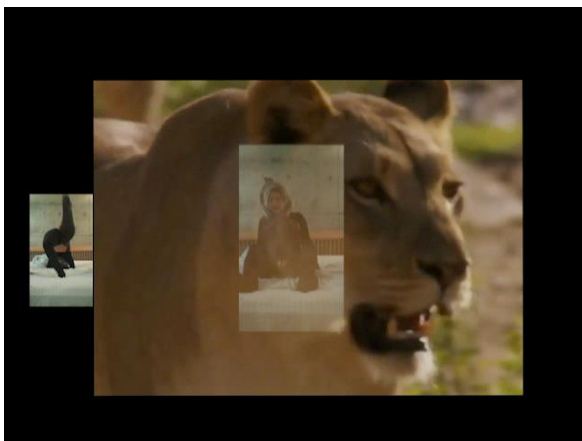


*Figure 4.10: More explicit images of cat-like creature*

While the cat-like creature continues to become more explicit, the performer continues to mimic the body movement of the cat-like creature. Both the performer and the cat-like creature are in a back bend and the crotch area for both is facing the audience.



*Figure 4.11: Explicit image of cat-like creature*



*Figure 4.12: Cat-like creature with leg up*

The images of the cat-like creature now become the only image projected in the video clip. This images consist mostly close ups of the raw chicken that resembles an exaggerated and enlarged vagina lips (See Figure 4.13-4.15). A new song has started playing, *Pussy* by Lords of Acid and the moaning and groaning are just as loud and audible as the song. The body position of the cat-like creature and its continued hip thrusting make the experience very erotic and sensual.



*Figure 4.13: Close-up of cat-like creature*



*Figure 4.14: Close-up of raw chicken*

The images become very layered and the raw chicken is the only image that is seen. (See Figure 4.15) This image borders on pornographic and highly erotic. Until a human face is seen layered in the shot (See Figure 4.16). When the face appears in the scene, the audience is reminded that this is in fact a person dressed as a cat. There is a moment of return to reality and a move away from the awkward closeness and rawness of the images and sounds of desire experienced in the video clip.

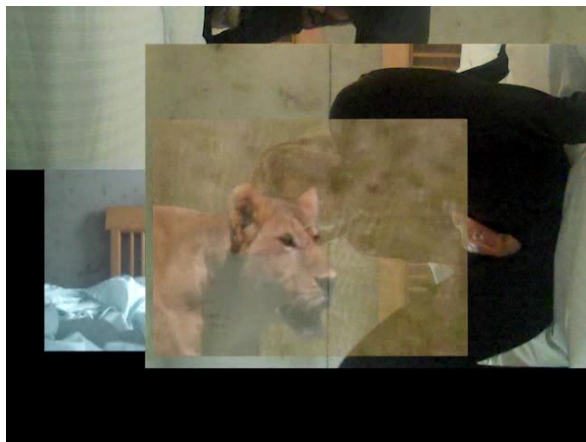


*Figure 4.15: Close-up of raw chicken*

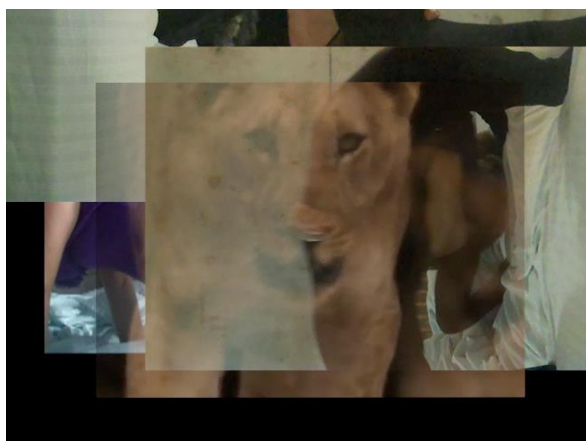


*Figure 4.16: Human face layout*

The last song begins to play, *Cola* by Lana Del Rey, as the images on the video clip begin to get layered again. As the layers become more complex, the audience is reminded that the meaning and language associated with ‘pussy’ is complex and constructed (See Figure 4.17-4.18).



*Figure 4.17: Image during last song*



*Figure 4.18: Layered image near end of Performance*

During this time in the performance, the performer has continued to move further into the backbend. As the video clip has become more explicit, the performer has moved further into the backbend by proceeding to stand on her tip-toes and moving down to her elbows. Still trying not to make much sound while moving further into the backbend, I do take breaks by resting on my back and taking deep breaths. The audience can see that I am getting tired and that moving

further and further into the backbend is exhausting work for me (See Figure 4.19- 4.22). Lastly, I end up in the deepest part of the backbend (Figure 4.23).



*Figure 4.19: Resting position*



*Figure 4.20: Backbend on tiptoes*



*Figure 4.21: 2nd Resting position*



*Figure 4.22: Working towards elbows*





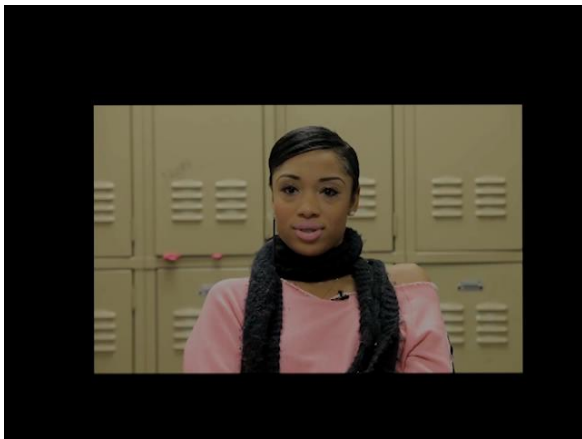
*Figure 4.23: Moving into the deepest part of the backbend*



*Figure 4.24: Last rest position*



*Figure 4.25: Video Clip from P.O.P.*



*Figure 4.26: A woman being interviewed about being a stripper*

I am creating a space that would otherwise not exist and this can be incredibly awkward for both the audience and performer. I purposefully opted to move into performance art because it requires the audience to be present while I dealt with my deconstruction of the word ‘pussy’ and I present the metaphors that I have found for the word ‘pussy’. My exploration into this realm may otherwise seem like a private matter by allowing the audience to be present, I also invited them to experience their own deconstruction and possible reconstruction of the word ‘pussy’. A

stripper is seen dancing on a pole and a young woman is heard sharing her story. In the video clip, the young woman describes herself as knowing how to perform but not knowing how to seduce. ‘You just have to be yourself (while on stage), and buff the edges out a little.’ (Figure 4.26) While she is sharing her narrative, I sat on the floor in the middle of the audience and I said the same words she was saying. Again, I wanted the audience to experience the space between performance and reality.

During most of the performance, I did not make eye contact with members of the audience. Instead, I was preoccupied with my breathing and maintaining the backbend body movement, which requires physical strength and balance. While I am sitting in the middle of the audience, I try to make eye contact with most of the audience. This was the most vulnerable I could be and I felt it as such (See Figure 4.27). Everyone in the audience was looking down at me, as I was on the floor and they were sitting in chairs or standing. Also, when I was able to make eye contact, I was able to see body language and facial expressions. For a second, I felt myself wanting to disengage as performer and go back to being, well, myself. Rather than choosing to disengage as performer, I decided to turn around, move away from the audience and continue to further question the construction of the word ‘pussy’.

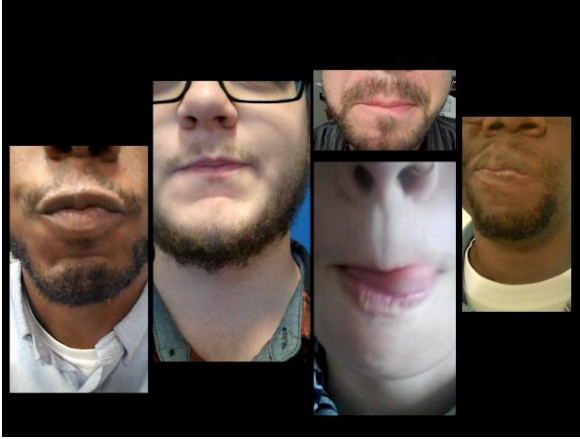


*Figure 4.27: Performer has moved into the audience*

After returning to the stage, I start to remove the raw chicken from under my skirt (See Figure 4.28). A video of 5 different close-up shots of mouths are seen behind me (See Figure 4.29). Each mouth also has its own audio clip, and the licking, moaning and chewing of all five mouths can be heard at the same time.



*Figure 4.28: Removing chicken from under skirt*



*Figure 4.29: A video clip with five zoomed mouths chewing and moaning*

Next, I place a small plate between myself and the audience and I lay the chicken on the plate. I continue to remove all the chicken and I arrange the remaining three plates in a row, again between me and the audience. (see Figure 4.30-4.32)

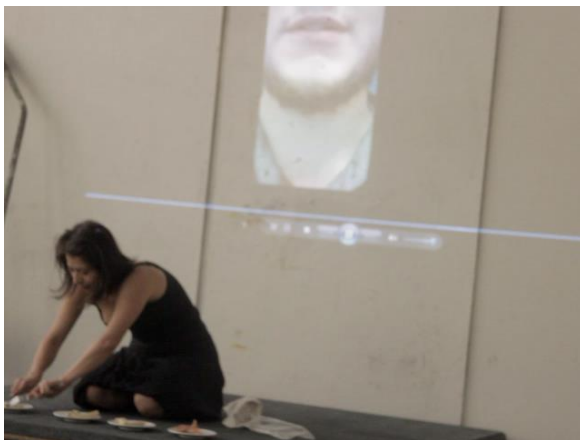


*Figure 4.30: Placing raw chicken on plates*



*Figure 4.31: Preparing chicken and plates*

Next, I begin the ritual of serving the raw chicken. I use a dinner fork and knife to cut the raw chicken into bite size pieces. While I am occupied with the ritual of preparing and serving, the mouths behind begin to disappear. One by one, the mouths disappear and the audio that was playing with each also stops playing.



*Figure 4.32: Cutting raw chicken*



*Figure 4.33: Stage after the performer has left*

Finally, the room is quiet and all four plates have chicken on them. The fork and the knife are placed on one of the plates, awaiting someone to use them to eat (Figure 4.33). The performer slowly gets off the stage and walks out of the room. My performance was followed by a time for questions from the audience. I will share the questions, comments and answers that were shared in Chapter Five.

## 5 Chapter Five: Reflections and Implications

*"We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others  
that in the end we become disguised to ourselves."*

*-Francois de La Rochefoucauld*

In the following paragraphs, I will be sharing the comments and reactions of the audience after my performance. I will also share my responses and analysis to the reactions and questions from the audience. Finally, I will address personal insight into my last research question: *how creating a performance piece and documenting an extensive creative process has benefitted or hindered my teaching philosophy?* Some of the questions I reflected on after the performance were: *Would the performance have been less introspective if I had only focused on the social construction of the word 'pussy' and would that have allowed the audience more space to interact and interpret? Did I give the audience enough think/breathing space during the performance? Should I make the performance two separate performances? Was it too much information for one performance? Does this deconstruction truly make a comment on identity or are we (the audience and myself) left the same? Was it TMI (too much information) for me to share?* I thought over these questions immediately after the performance and in the months that followed. Within these are remnants of censorship and vulnerability that have feed into my teaching philosophy.

When I began my exploration into the word 'pussy', I neglected to address how it is used to describe 'weak' or effeminate men. However, I quickly realized that not only is this definition relevant to women's sexual identity, it actually helps to construct the definition of female sexual identity. A clear correlation is to say, 'A man that is weak is called a 'pussy. A woman's vagina can be called a 'pussy. Therefore, a woman's vagina is weak, or a woman's sexuality is to be weak and vulnerable.' When my performance ended, a woman in the audience said 'When I



think about the word 'pussy', I always think of (you know) a weak man. Someone that gets pushed around and can't stand up for himself. It is not a compliment. I don't really think of women!' Within this lateral framework the need for a strong versus weak paradigm between men and woman helps define roles and create identities that come into play. By using the word 'pussy' to describe both women sexuality as weak and men as weak, gender roles of strong men and vulnerable women is generated and accepted. In response to her comment, another woman spoke up and said 'Exactly! That is exactly what Zully is trying to say. If the word pussy is associated with weak men and also with women, it implies that women are weak.' To this implication of relationship, more people commented as some agreed and a few disagreed. To these comments, I was able to affirm the audience that it is not my ambition to create a definition of the word 'pussy' for them but it was my intention to invite them to question the definitions for 'pussy' that are culturally accessible. Yet, another reaction was shared by a young woman from the art education cohort. Her reaction was, 'I thought you were celebrating the word 'pussy'! I have always been taught that you don't mess with the 'pussy'. In your images, I saw a lioness hunting and being fierce. I thought you were saying that you can't play around with 'pussy''. After hearing her comment, I was surprised that anyone would have had this experience with the word 'pussy' I was pleased to learn that there were different definitions and associations to the word and ,therefore, different experiences. Initially, I interpreted an association between a fierce predator hunter and the word 'pussy' as source for empowerment and a possible reclaiming of the word 'pussy'. However after further discussion and reflection, I realized that assigning a predator attitude to female sexuality is not truly empowerment. Rather, by associating a woman experiencing desire as someone that needs to be feared and not trusted, women as less likely to

explore their desire and sexual identity. Female sexuality is then also linked to violence, and the illusion that women can invite or warrant sexually violent acts against themselves.

As an A/R/Tographic study, I did not collect quantitative data, however, I do have feedback from the audience that reflects their introspective thoughts both directly after the performance and in the weeks that followed. One of the most profound pieces of feedback I received came in the form of an email. The email was from one of the three male audience members and also a male colleague in the art education cohort. In the email, he expressed that he respected my decision to make a performance piece about something that was controversial and taboo. He also expressed that he felt that he too wanted to make artwork that was personally meaningful and satisfying for him but sometimes felt afraid to do so and share it with others. However, after seeing my performance, he felt compelled to push his work and, in turn, himself, to make the work that he needed to make regardless how the audience may react. After reading his email, I felt honored and respected. He was able to see how vulnerable I was during my performance and he felt inspired and not repulsed. Within my performance, I purposefully focused on the word 'pussy' and saturated the performance with visual images and audio that explicitly reference it. By using the word 'pussy', a controversial, sometimes offensive, word to depict a vagina and female sexuality, I was able to evoke a wide range of reactions. In my performance, not only am I openly questioning the metaphors and definitions associated with the word 'pussy' but I also invited the audience to become a part of the questioning and construction of 'pussy'. Ultimately, I hoped that the audience would begin to question other words that inform female sexuality and behavior. While 'pussy' was my word of choice, other words to consider are bitch, cunt, and slut. Most of these words inform both sexual attitudes and behaviors for men and woman. In the introduction of my thesis, I suggest that questioning, deconstructing and reconstructing sexual

identity is seen as a private venture and that it is therefore reserved for closed-door conversations with oneself. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges was getting over my shyness and trusting that my success would not be measured on everyone's approval but my own growth.

Another response that I received from the audience, mostly from the women viewers, was that they wanted to know if I was questioning my sexual orientation. I wasn't. I shared with them that I understood my sexual orientation as a heterosexual woman only interested in men. At my response, most of the audience was surprised. The audience was not surprised that I consider myself a heterosexual woman but they were surprised that I was so confident in my sexual orientation. A woman asked me, 'Why do you want to do this work if you are straight?' She was assuming that because I ascribe to a heterosexual, normative narrative in my life then all the answers to my questioning are easy. I am a woman and I like men and there was nothing complicated about that. However, to dumb down sexuality is to also dumb down identity. More importantly, if identity is oversimplified, it becomes harder for me to empathize with another's complexity. Also, I did realize that within my performance privilege was also becoming a topic of contention. More so, I have found that marginalized groups are more likely to explore and question their sexuality while privileged groups are less likely to question their sexual identity. This phenomena is coupled to normative sexuality. According to Schutte (1997), normative sexuality can be understood as the following:

By a "normative" model of sexuality I mean a model of sexual behavior that is taken as exemplary for defining the propriety or impropriety of any particular instance of sexual activity. For example, heterosexual intercourse with a procreative aim as it takes place exclusively within a life-long marriage constitutes a model of normative sexuality in the teachings of the Catholic Church. (p. 41)

Privilege, as part of a power struggle, can be threatened and it has to be maintained. A group can use and the construction of meaning to help maintain a group's privileged status. As noted by McConnell-Ginet (2011):

Because ideas about gender and sexuality are often presupposed, seldom explicitly asserted, and thus hard to challenge, presupposition and the sometimes contentious status of word meanings are very important for understanding such ideas and for contesting them. (p. 22)

Privileged groups, such as heterosexuals, are less likely to question or analyze their sexual identity and therefore, maintain their privilege status. However, knowing the 'rules of engagement' that are acceptable and being a part of a privileged group doesn't necessarily make the construction of sexual identity easy. The attributes of desire remain complicated. Despite of a lack of questioning, gender roles, sexual attitudes and desires pervade and effect identity. I also encountered a privilege struggle because of my ethnicity. Being a Latina woman, I have become increasingly aware that my sexuality is expected to be exotic or hyper-sexual. To counter the expectations on my sexual behavior, I have tried to be an informed, empowered feminist. However, the definition that I have encountered for feminism is one that is defined by a white, liberated, enlightened Western woman. As such, the ability to question, investigate and recreate sexuality becomes a matter of privilege, into which only a few women can endeavor in such recreational before passing the liberation baton on to other women. I have not yet found how to remove this layer of censorship because it is not self-imposed. It seemed that the message I was getting was 'you are a part of the accepted group, is that not enough?' I found it very satisfying to question my privilege because questioning privilege has awarded me a clearer

understanding of my sexuality. I have a better understanding of what I truly find to be sexy and sexual.

Within a classroom, how then does privilege play a role? On a broad view, curriculum and lesson plan information is based on groups of power or privilege. More specific to my art classroom, I am a part of that group of privilege and I can invite my students to partake in the decisions of topics of conversation and questions. However, to do so will potentially open me to being in a space of vulnerability because I may not be well-informed about the topics they want to discuss. Language is an agent for power relationships. In my artwork, woman is the oppressor while the person using the word 'pussy' holds power. I am learning about the process of using metaphor for creating identity. As an art educator, is helping my students explore, question and create their identity possible for me? Does the empathy needed to help students create identity require that teachers explore their own identity? Embedded in this question is a question with greater social implications. Do those of us that subscribe to the heterosexual normative narrative need to question our own sexuality to better understand or empathize with marginalized groups? Would this sort of introspection eradicate power struggles and oppression? My students also have identities to perform and process and as a teacher, I have come to a deeper sense of empathy for students that are asked to explore their identity. A safe space will never be created if teachers are not only permitted to but also encouraged to be vulnerable in front of their students. They must create trust and allow for genuine exploration. Can we safely broach subjects such as sexuality, gender identity, and violence against women in an art curriculum? How do we create a safe space for such discussions while valuing community standards? The answer to these questions is: depends. It depends on the age of the students, the communal values, the support from the administration, and numerous other factors. Censorship

and communal values are unique to a community and the relationship between censorship and values are interrelated and dependent upon each other. Censorship and community values within a specific community are also not permanent; rather they fluctuate depending on the members of the community. My studio work was accepted, even applauded, within the community of my photography class at Georgia State University while at the same time denied by the members of the exhibition space. Each community uniquely defines what is deemed as taboo and how it addresses it. However, this is not to say that art education can't address contemporary art. Practices in art education, in comparison to contemporary art practices, are described by Desai (2007) as:

More about illustrating or analyzing existing knowledge rather than a practice from which new forms of knowledge about our world are constructed that ask the critical questions...School art is extremely different from contemporary art practices in form and content. (p.7)

It is both my experience and my belief that art allows us the freedom to explore, question and recreate. Yet, as an art educator I have come to realize that while art can allow me the platform to explore identity, it does not guarantee me students will experience the same. Art educators must be intentional about the curriculum and lesson plans that we use with students.

As an artist, I exist with freedom, while as an art educator I exist with constraint. However, I did learn a few lessons in my studio practice that have changed my approach to my teaching philosophy. First, an artist must be responsible for what they decide to put out into the world. As such, I quickly had to learn how to defend my choices, in different communities and for different reasons. I have gained a deeper understanding of what it took for me to create art that pushes me into ignoring the censorship around me and inspired me to create art that is personally

meaningful. I have grown to appreciate a strong artist community because they can help me feel free in my creative process by sustaining a safe, supportive space to create. However, I want to emphasize the fact that creating artwork on taboo or controversial issues is not required for personal growth. Several instances during my performance, I remind the audience that this is my fantasy, my thoughts, my interpretations, and my sexuality. Identity is both a reality and a dream, both genuine seduction and carefully crafted performance. It is created by testing dreams in the world of reality. Is this really love? Is this what love feels like for me? Is this real? Is this my reality? Empathy is an essential piece within my teaching philosophy and in my ambition to incorporate social justice art education into my teaching practice. As such, I have reflected on my understanding of empathy in both my performance piece and my teaching philosophy. In the video projected during my performance, I am creating an identity of desire, pleasure and sexuality that can only exist through ritual and through the gaze of the viewer and through the meaning constructed by the music (popular culture). In my actual physical being during the performance, my presence shows a different reality of identity that is shy, strained and tired continuously moving deeper into a backbend, a body position that is so vulnerable because I have little control. It is within this terms that truth and fantasy bump into each other and they define and redefine each other. Who am I, really? What do I really think is sexy, sexual, sex? Ultimately, I do want my students to feel compelled to ‘push’ themselves beyond measuring their work against the assumed perceptions’ of the audience. More importantly, I want to be able to model a vulnerable, risk taking attitude without being inappropriate but tactful and supportive.

The following are a list of questions that remain unanswered within the realm of this thesis: How to support someone’s personal growth? Can we safely broach subjects such as sexuality, gender identity, and violence against women in an art curriculum? How do we create a

safe space for such discussions while valuing community standards? Is this the type of honest vulnerability that is needed to inspire students? I hope to further explore these themes, which branch off of this work like ripe fruit on a vine, in my future research

From my research and exploration into identity, more specifically sexual identity, more specifically female sexual identity, more specifically a heterosexual, Latina--but not really because I was born and raised in the states, and more specifically in Atlanta--and a teacher that works with young children, it is clear that identity is complicated. However, identity is worth exploring because it is a web of the realities that we create. We are either constructing layers of it, or choosing to stay with the old layers.



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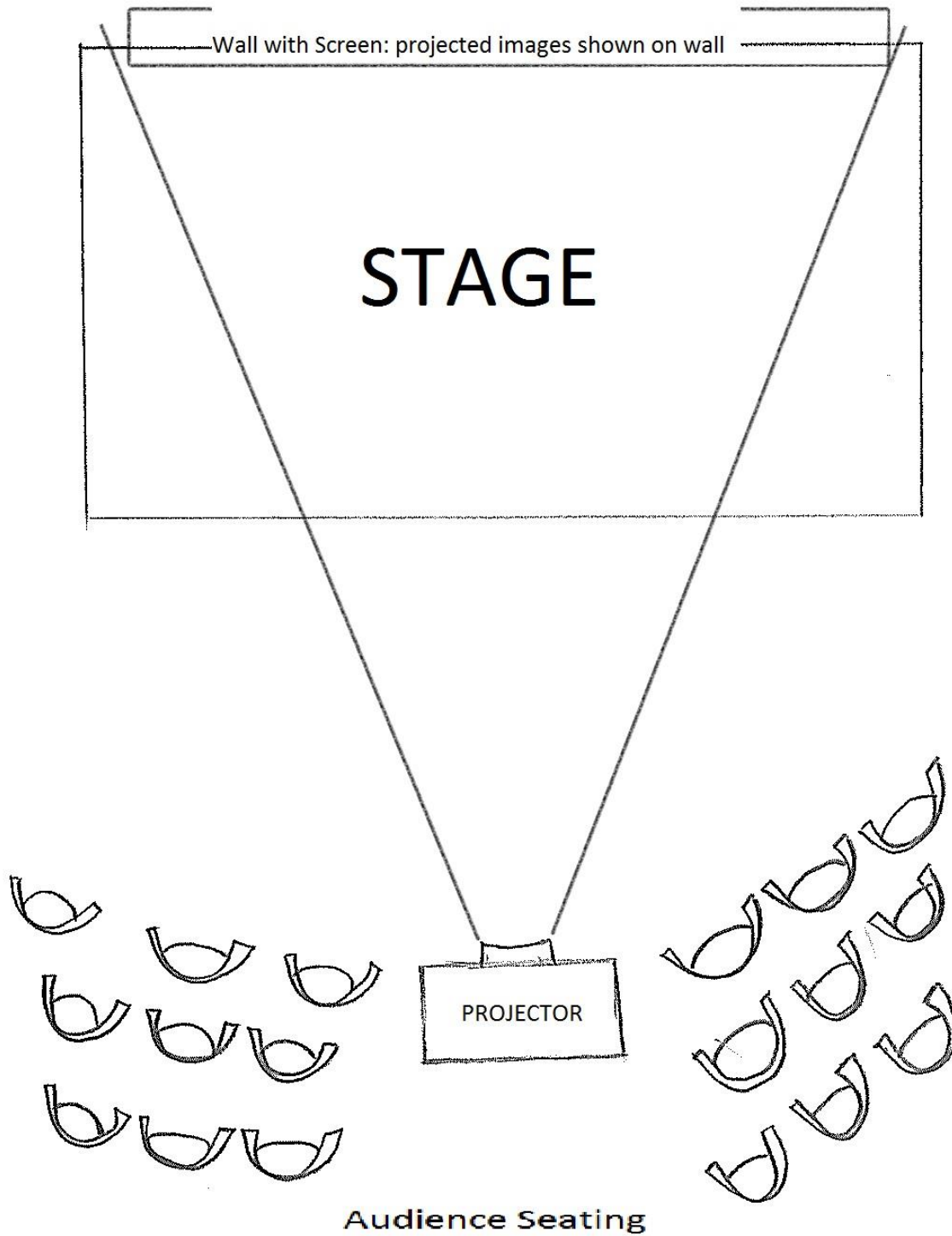
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Space Plan of studio during Performance





## Appendix B: Song Lyrics of songs used in performance

Artist: Artist Formally Known as Prince, Song: 'Pussy Control'

Nuestra presentacion especial comenzara en breve

(Our special presentation will start shortly)

Pero antes un mensaje de nuestros auspiciadores

(But first a message from our sponsors)

Uh, yeah

Uh Boys and motherfuckin' girls ("319, 319" "Cool")

This is your captain with no name speakin'

And I'm here 2 rock your world

With a tale that will soon be classic

About a woman U already know

No prostitute she, but the mayor of your brain

Pussy Control (Are U ready?)

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

Our story begins in a schoolyard

A little girl skipping rope with her friends

A tisket, a tasket, no lunch in her basket

Just school books 4 the fight she would be in

One day over this hoodie

She got beat 4 some clothes and her rep  
 With her chin up, she scolded "All y'all's molded  
 When I'm rich, on your neck I will step"  
 And step she did 2 the straight A's  
 Then college, the master degree  
 She hired the heifers that jumped her  
 And made everyone of them work 4 free? No! Why?  
 So what if my sisters are triflin'?  
 They just don't know  
 She said "Mama didn't tell'em what she told me  
 'Girl, U need Pussy Control'" (Are U ready?)

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

#### Verse 2

Pussy got bank in her pockets  
 Before she got dick in her drawers  
 If brother didn't have good and plenty of his own  
 In love Pussy never did fall  
 And this fool named Trick wanna stick her  
 Uh, talkin' more Schick than a Bic  
 'Bout how he gonna make Pussy a star

If she come and sing a lick on his hit  
Pussy said "Nigga, U crazy if U don't know  
Every woman in the world ain't a freak  
U can go platinum 4 times  
Still couldn't make what I make in a week  
So push up on somebody wanna hear that  
Cuz this somebody here don't wanna know  
Boy, U better act like U understand  
When U roll with Pussy Control" (Are U ready?)

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

#### Breakdown

(Are U ready 4 the best Pussy U ever felt?) [x2]

With one more verse 2 the story  
I need another piece of your ear  
I wanna hip U all 2 the reason  
I'm known as the player of the year  
Cuz I met this girl named Pussy  
At the Club International Balls  
She was rollin' 4-deep

3 sisters and a weepy-eyed white girl drivin' her haul

I pulled up right beside her

And my electric top went down

I said "Motherfucker, I know your reputation

And I'm astounded that U're here

I fear U're lonely and U want 2 know

A 12 o'clock straight up nigga

That don't give a shit that U're Pussy Control

Well I'm that nigga, at least I wanna be

But it's gonna be hard as hell

2 keep my mind off a body

That would make every rich man

Want 2 sell, sell, sell (75, we need another.. 85, 85 here, sold!)

Can I tell U what I'm thinkin' that U already know?

U need a motherfucker that respects your name"

Now say it, Pussy Control (Are U ready?)

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

Aaah, Pussy Control, oh

And the moral of this motherfucker is

Ladies, make'em act like they know

U are, was, and always will be Pussy Control (Are U ready?)

Peace and be wild (Aaah, Pussy Control)

Say what, huh? (Oh)

Oh no, don't U think about callin' her a ho (Are U ready?)

U juvenile delinquent

Best sit your ass down

Talkin' about Pussy Control

Huh, can U dig it?

Aaah, Pussy Control (Are U ready?)

Oh (Are U ready?)

Aaah, Pussy Control (Are U ready?)

Oh (Are U ready?)

Artist: Iggy Azalea, Song: 'Pussy'

*[Verse 1]*

Iggy Iggy pussy illy

Wetter than the Amazon

Taste this kitty

Silly Billy poppin' pilly's

Smoke it like a swisher

Lick this Philly

Mold em ah! Soak em ah!

Hook em like crack, after shock

Molten ah! Lava drop

This should be outlawed, call me Pac

(Pu\$\$y pu\$\$y)

The illest on the planet

Better play ya cards right Mr. Gambit

If you wanna hang here, ain't no Hammock

Never, no better, law should ban it

Never, no better, law should ban it

I do it right, wit drugs understand it

I do it right, now please sir pan it

*[Hook]*

Left right back to the middle

Head on swivel neck till I quivel

Open ya mouth

Taste the rainbow taste my Skittles ah!

*[x2]*

Pu\$\$y pu\$\$y pu\$\$y

*[x4]*

*[Verse 2]*

You know bitches envy me

Cause you won't get rid of me

When you cum, I run

This cat got you missin' me

Bad Boys get a mouth full of pussy aka Listerine

Here to make you lose your mind

Gonna need a Sherlock Holmes

To solve your mystery, I'm nasty

Baby what you thinking? Aka Titanic

So much wet will have yo ass sinking

Treat that tongue like a bullet

Give me head, Abe Lincoln

This is so out this world

But no you not dreamin'

*[Hook]*

Left right back to the middle

Head on swivel neck till I quivel

Open ya mouth

Taste the rainbow, taste my Skittles ah!

*[x2]*

Pu\$\$y Pu\$\$y Pu\$\$y

*[x4]*

Artist: Lords of Acid, Song: 'Show Me Your Pussy'

I wanna see your pussy

Everybody says it's nice

Can I can and come and visit?

I'll be at your house tonight

They tell me it's soft to touch and really smooth

I can hardly wait to feel that pussy too

You wanna play with pussy all the time

To hide that kind of pussy is a crime

You say you're pussy's clever and so slick

But I think your pussy's kind of sick

I wanna see your pussy, show it to me

Let me see your pussy, show it to me

Show me your pussy, show it to me

I want to see your pussy, show it to me

I want to bet your pussy ain't as pretty as mine

I don't hide my pussy like you do all the time

My pussy's just the sweetest thing you've ever seen

Compared to mine your pussy's really ugly and mean

I bring my pussy everywhere I go (m-hmm)

To watch my little pussy is a show

You say that your pussy really clever and slick

But I think your pussy's really thick

I wanna see your pussy, show it to me

Let me see your pussy, show it to me



Show me your pussy, show it to me  
I want to see your pussy, show it to me  
She turns into a tiger when she's ready to eat  
My pussy's always hungry for a big chunk of meat  
So lay your little pussy right next to mine  
You can bring her over around dinner time  
My pussy is the hippest thing around (that's right)  
She's always been the talk of the town  
You say your pussy's clever and so slick  
But I think that your pussy's mighty think (me-ow baby)  
I wanna see your pussy, show it to me  
Let me see your pussy, show it to me  
Show me your pussy, show it to me  
I want to see your pussy, show it to me  
(x2)

Artist: Lana Del Ray, Song: 'Cherry Cola'

My pussy taste like Pepsi-Cola,  
My eyes are wide like cherry pies.  
I gots a taste for men who're older  
It's always been, so it's no surprise.

Ah, he's in the sky with diamonds and he's making me crazy (I come alive, alive)  
All he wants to do is party with his pretty baby.

Come on, baby, let's ride

We can escape to the great sunshine.

I know your wife, and she wouldn't mind

We made it out to the other side [3x]

Come on, come on

Come on, come on

Come on, baby.

I fall asleep in an American flag

I wear my diamonds on skid row

I pledge allegiance to my dad

For teaching me everything he knows

Ah, he's in the sky with diamonds and he's making me crazy (I come alive, alive))

All he wants to do is party with his pretty baby

Come on, baby, let's ride,

We can escape to the great sunshine.

I know your wife, and she wouldn't mind

We made it out to the other side [3x]

Drugs suck it up

Like vanilla icies

Don't treat me rough,

Treat me really niceys

Decorate my neck

Diamantes ices

Why, come on, come on

Ooh, ooh, ooh,

Ooh, yeah

Come on baby, let's ride

We can escape to the great sunshine

I know your wife, and she wouldn't mind

We made it out to the other side

Come on baby, let's ride

We can escape to the great sunshine

We made it out to the other side

We made it out to the other side

Come on, come on

Come on, baby

Come on, come on

Come on, baby

Whoa ah

My pussy taste like Pepsi-Cola

Oh... ah

My pussy taste like Pepsi-Cola

Oh....

My pussy taste like Pepsi-Cola

Oh... whoa...yeah

### Appendix C: Timetable of Performance (with photographs)

Video can be watched at: <http://youtu.be/xx-wPWmw3qc>

All video shots are projected on a white screen behind the performer while audio plays moaning and music. During the opening scene the artist is laying on her side, passive and not moving.

(Time indicates hours: minutes: seconds)

00:00:00

Woman is lying on her side, with her back to the audience and facing the screen. The screen is black and there is no audio.



00:00:05

An image of a Sahara Desert appears with a group of lionesses hunting a zebra.













The audio from the commercial for “Cat’s Meow” begins to play while the lionesses are shown hunting and attacking a zebra.

*“Your cat gets bored and wants to play but that can spell trouble when you’re away. Introducing Cat’s Meow, the exciting new cat toy that keeps your kitty entertained to play both night and day. Just press the button and watch Cat’s Meow silently attract your pet instantly as she tries to catch the peek-a boo wand. No more what their age, cats love to stalk and pounce on prey. It’s a natural instinct that won’t go away. Just like a scurrying mouse, Cat’s Meow swings back and forth, peeking in and out of the carousel cover. With random movements, it speeds up and slows down. Then, it surprises the kitty by changing direction when you least expect it so your cat will never get bored. Now you see it, now you don’t. Come one or come all. It’s so crazy. Your cats will go crazy for Cat’s Meow. Older cats get fat and lazy and that’s not healthy. With Cat’s Meow, your cat is so active, you’ll turn lazy kitty into crazy kitty. No matter how old or slow, your cat will be as playful as a kitten. Made of durable nylon Cat’s Meow will last for years. Even when your cat catches the mouse, Cat’s Meow just keeps on running. Battery operated Cat’s Meow operates anywhere your cat likes to play. You’ll enjoy hours of fun watching your cat and mouse. Cat’s Meow gives kitty a place to play and stops them from tearing away. Now order your very own Cat’s Meow for the special t.v. price of just \$19.99” ... (audio and visual fade)*

The woman has remained passive and has continued to lay on her side facing the screen, with her back to the audience.

No audio and black screen

00:01:41

Song 'Pussy Control' by the artist formally known as Prince begins to play. The screen continues to be black.

“[Synthesizers play] *Nuestra presentacion especial comenzara en breve. Pero antes, un mensaje de nuestros auspiciadores. [guitar riff]*”

00:02:16

The screen shows a group lioness grooming themselves, using their tongue to clean their paws

“[drum beat] *Ughhh...yeah...ughhhh...Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Boys and motherfucking girls*”



Woman begins to slowly sit up and to slowly move arms and legs, as if slowly waking up from a deep sleep.

*00:02:27*

Three layered images are shown from the projector, translucent enough to see all three images. One image continues to be the lioness grooming herself. The second image is of a woman, dressed in regular clothing, doing a backbend on her bed, in her room. The third image is of a cat-like creature that is also on a bed.

*“This is your captain with no name speaking and I am here to rock your world.”*





A fourth translucent image is added. The fourth image is a bigger image of the cat-like creature, moaning and thrusting her hips into the air. The fourth image begins to move across the screen from left to right.



00:02:39

Four transparent images are on the screen. The cat-like creature and the woman dressed in street clothing have both moved into a back bend while remaining on the bed. The cat-like creature continues to moan in the background.



The image of the lioness grooming herself goes away and is replaced by a close up of a lioness's eye.









00:02:50

The image of the close up of the lioness's eye is replaced by the image of a lioness slowly prowling. The smaller image of the cat-like creature goes away and new fourth image begins to slowly scroll from the top of the screen towards the bottom. The new image is of the cat-like creature in a back bend with one leg up. The cat-like creature is hopping on one leg while in a back bend, while remaining on the bed. The cat-like creature's moans get louder.



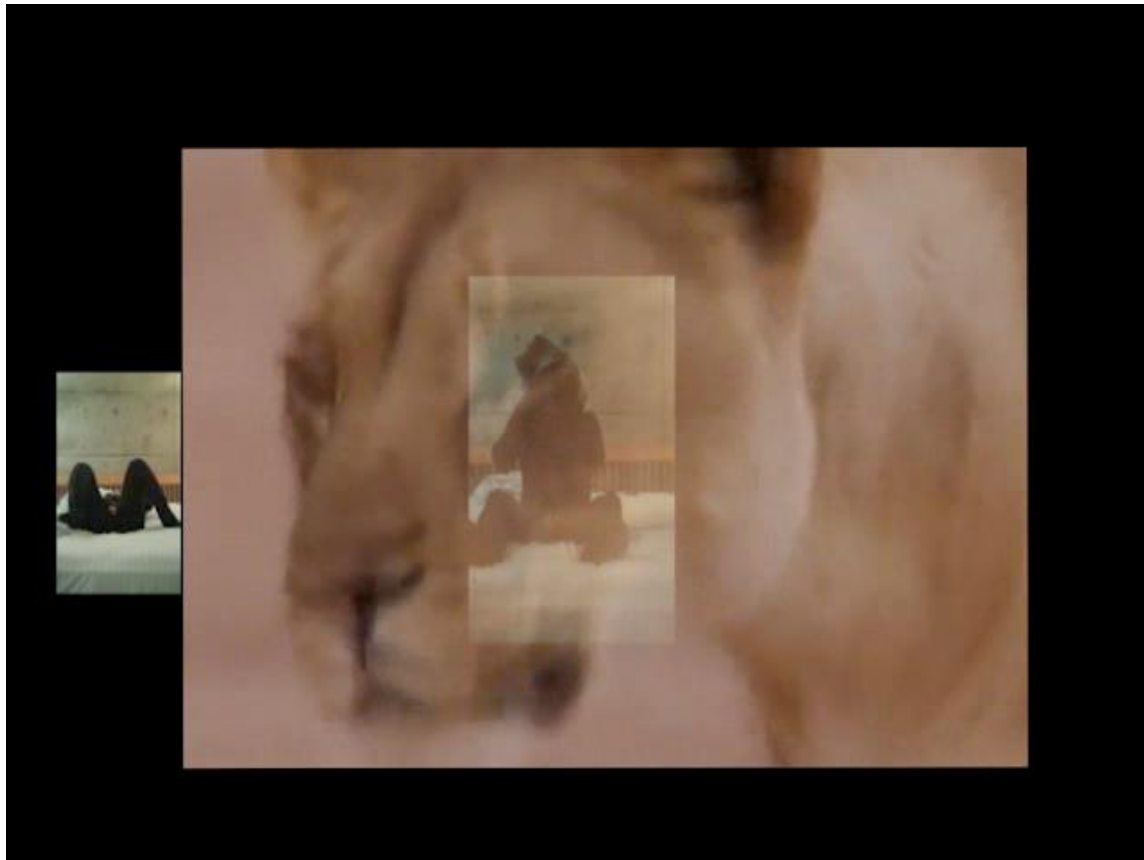






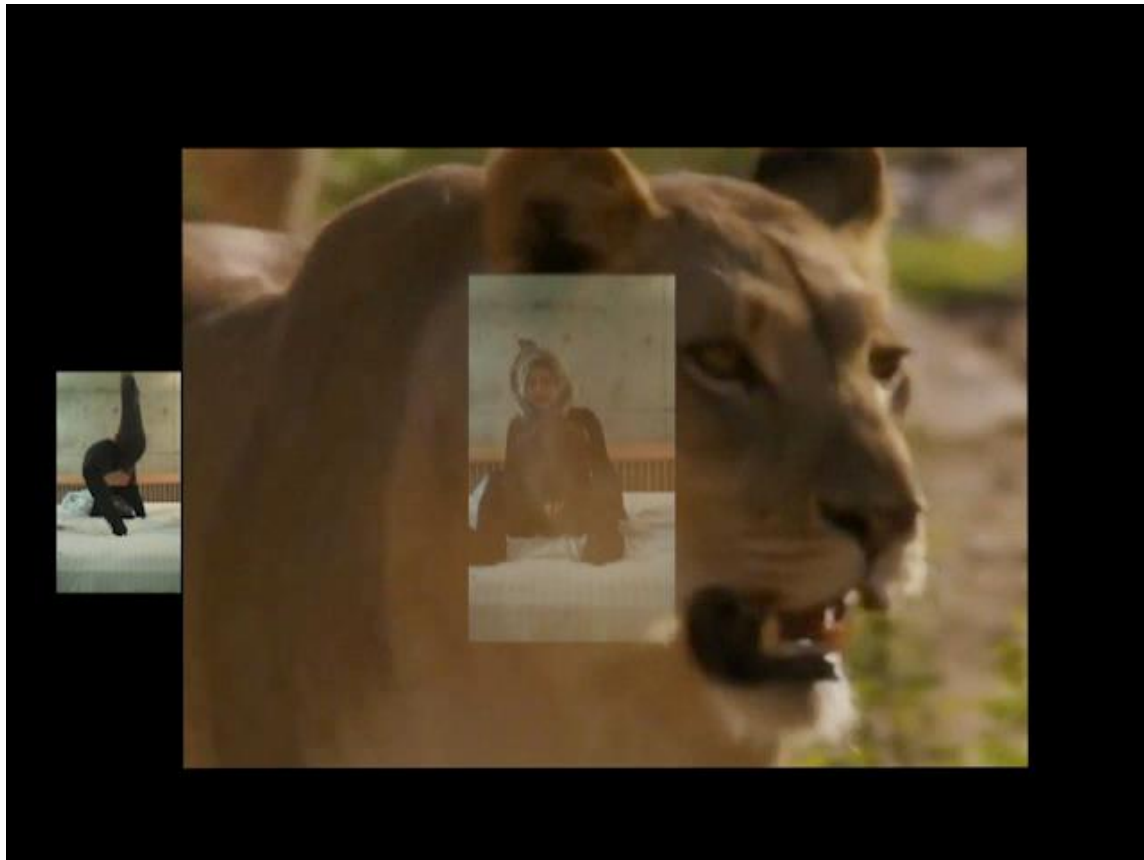






















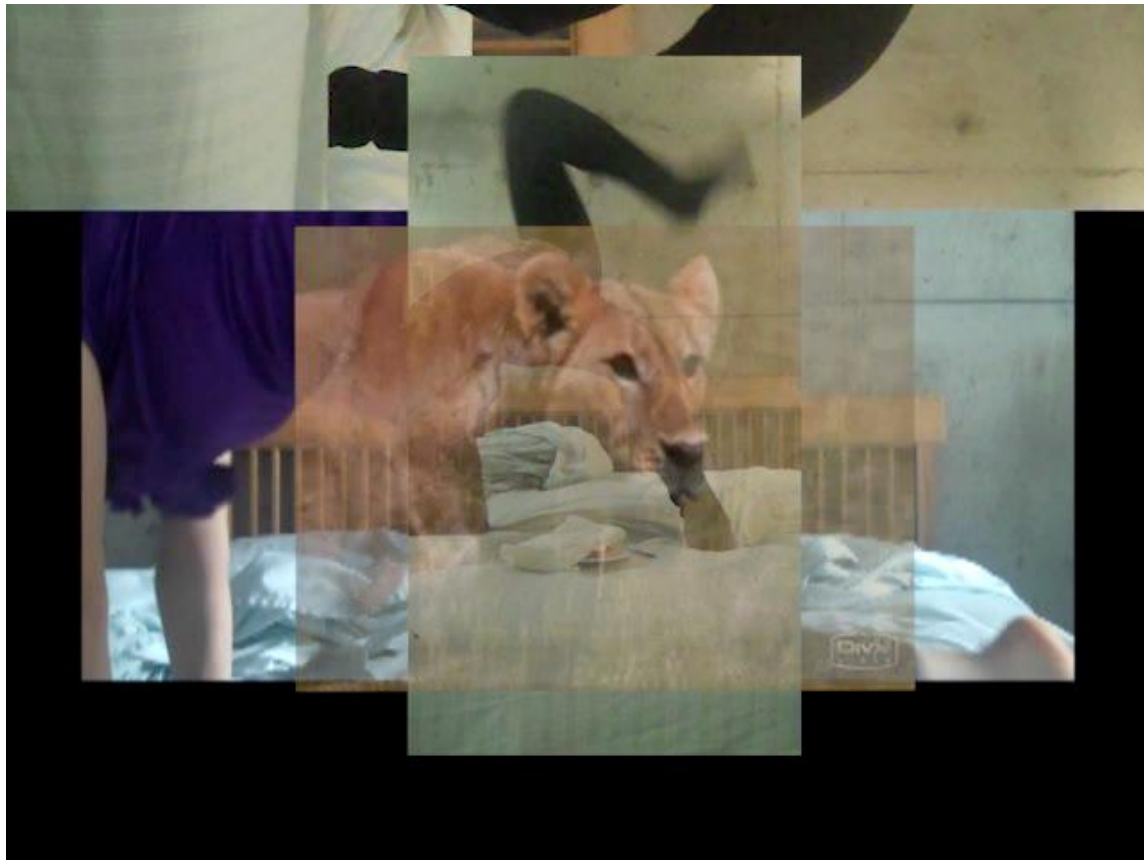


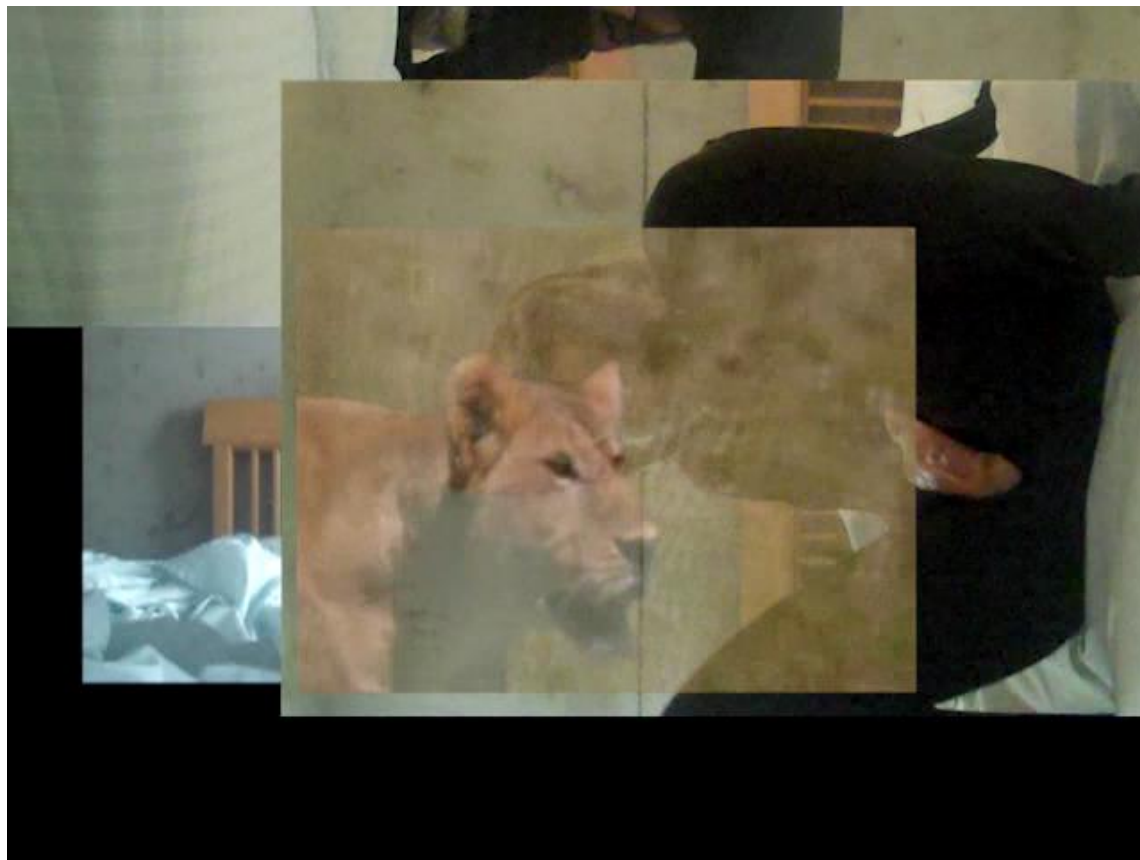








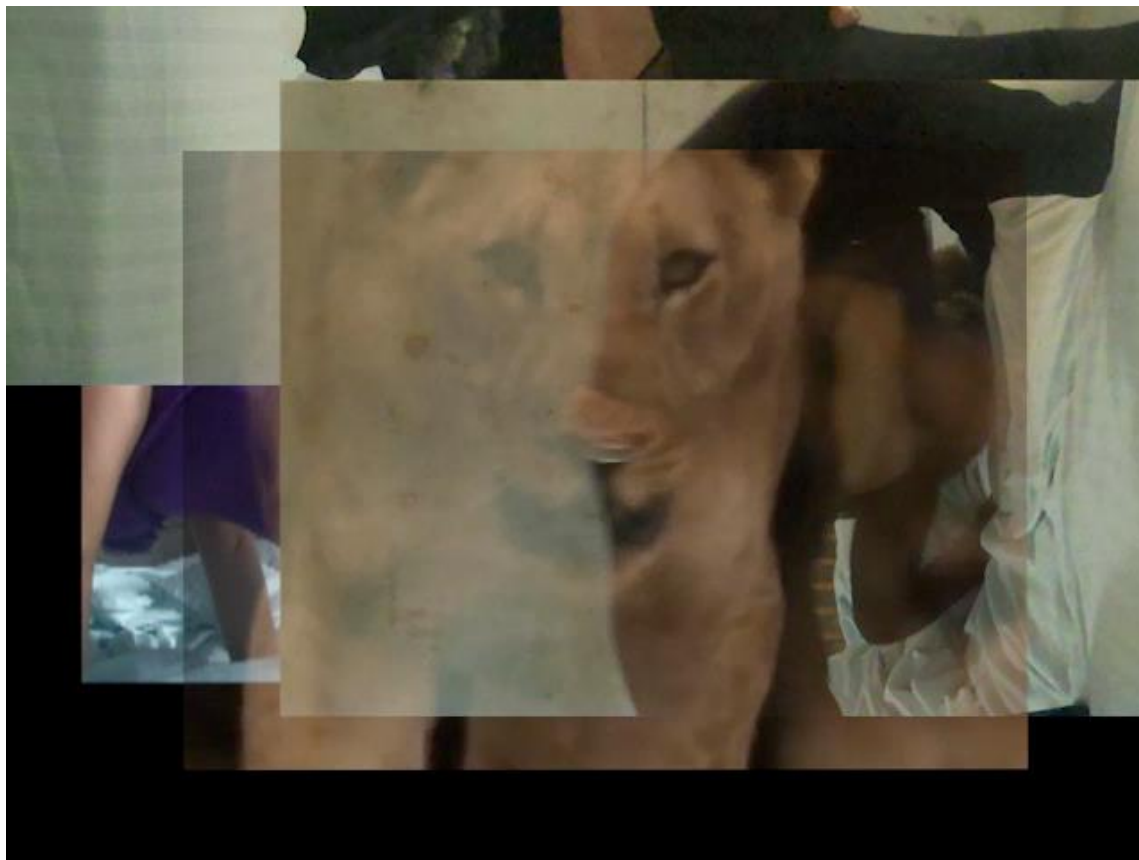




00:02:58

Sound clip from movie “Boomerang” (1992), a dialogue between Eddie Murphy and Grace Jones. The image of the cat-like creature continues to scroll from top to bottom. An image of a lioness prowling and of a woman in regular clothing continues to show on the screen

*“[Grace Jones] You are going to turn down pussy like this? ...staring you smack in your face...no man can turn down this pussy.[Eddie Murphy] Will you stop it?”*



00:03:04

A new image is introduced of a close up of the cat-creature. The image shows a fleshy exaggerated or enlarged vagina on the cat-like creature. The cat-like creature is shown thrusting and moaning as it tries repeatedly to get into a backbend. The image of the lioness prowling remains on the screen. The image of the woman in clothing remains less visible and disappears.

*“[Grace Jones] I don’t know any man that can refuse this pussy. [Eddie Murphy] Will you stop saying pussy? People are trying to eat in here. [Grace Jones] Pussy! Pussy! Pussy! Puss-y! Pussy! Puss-puss-pussy! [Eddie Murphy] Trying to find our cat. Where is that cat?”*

00:03:23

A song by Iggy Azelea ‘Pu\$\$y’ begins playing as the audio. The cat-like creature continues to moan in the background. A video clip of the cat-like creature in a full backbend scrolls from bottom to top and a video clip of the cat like creature, with legs spread and resting after completing a backbend, scrolls from top to bottom. A video clip of a lioness prowling continues in the center and disappears. A video clip of a lioness attacking a zebra as prey is shown in the center. All images are translucent.

*“[bass beat] Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy...”*

00:03:30

A video clip of a lioness attacking a zebra as prey is the only image on the screen and it is in the center of the screen.

*"Pussy. Pussy. Pussy".*

00:03:35

The video clip of the lioness attacking the zebra continues to show. A video clip of the cat-like creature in a backbend, is in the center of the screen and both images are transparent.



The video clip of the lioness attacking a zebra disappears and a video clip of a lioness prowling towards the audience is shown. Both images are translucent.

*"Iggy Iggy pussy illy. Wetter than the Amazon. Taste this kitty.*

*Silly Billy poppin' pilly's. Smoke it like a swisher. Lick this philly. Mold em ah! Soak em ah!*

*Hook em like crack, after shock. Molten ah! Lava drop. This should be outlawed, call me Pac...Pussy...Pussy. The illest on the planet. Better play ya cards right Mr. Gambit.*

*If you wanna hang here, ain't no Hammock. Never, no better, law should ban it.*

*Never, no better, law should ban it. I do it right, with drugs understand it*

*I do it right, now please sir pan it*



00:03:

*Left right back to the middle. Head on swivel neck till I quivel. Open ya mouth.*

*Taste the rainbow taste my Skittles ah!... Left right back to the middle. Head on swivel neck till I quivel. Open ya mouth. Taste the rainbow taste my Skittles ah!... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy.*

*You know bitches envy me. Cause you won't get rid of me. When you cum, I run. This cat got you missin' me. Bad Boys get a mouth full of pussy aka Listerine. Here to make you lose your mind. Gonna need a Sherlock Holmes.*

*To solve your mystery, I'm nasty. Baby what you thinking? Aka Titanic So much wet will have yo ass sinking. Treat that tongue like a bullet Give me head, Abe Lincoln. This is so out this world. But no you not dreamin'*

*Left right back to the middle. Head on swivel neck till I quivel. Open ya mouth.*

*Taste the rainbow taste my Skittles ah!... Left right back to the middle. Head on swivel neck till I quivel. Open ya mouth. Taste the rainbow taste my Skittles ah!... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy... Pussy. Pussy. Pussy.*









'Pussy' by Lords of Acid begins to play for the audio.

*I wanna see your pussy. Everybody says it's nice. Can I can and come and visit?  
I'll be at your house tonight*

*They tell me it's soft to touch and really smooth. I can hardly wait to feel that pussy too  
You wanna play with pussy all the time. To hide that kind of pussy is a crime  
You say you're pussy's clever and so slick. But I think your pussy's kind of sick*

*I wanna see your pussy, show it to me*







‘Cola Pussy’ by song begins to play for the audio.

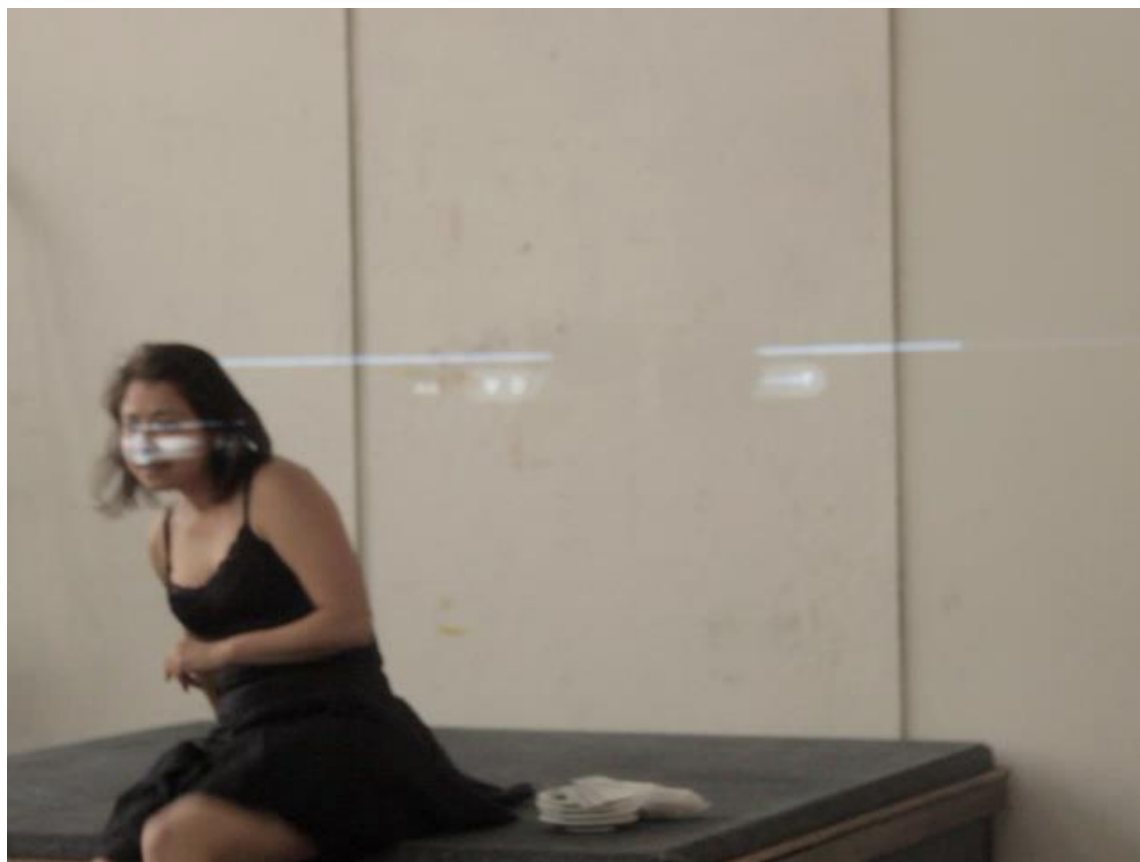
*My pussy taste like Pepsi-Cola*





00:05:29

Black screen. The woman on stage has stopped trying to finish the back bend. She lies on her back out of breath and visibly exhausted.



00:05:36

A video clip from the web series “P.O.P (Power of Pussy)” (2012)

*“I think I know how to perform...I guess. But I don't know how to...seduce. You hear what I'm saying. I don't know how to.. be that way. I can just be myself. So...I mean...you have to do you but just kina' ... buff the edges a little bit.”*





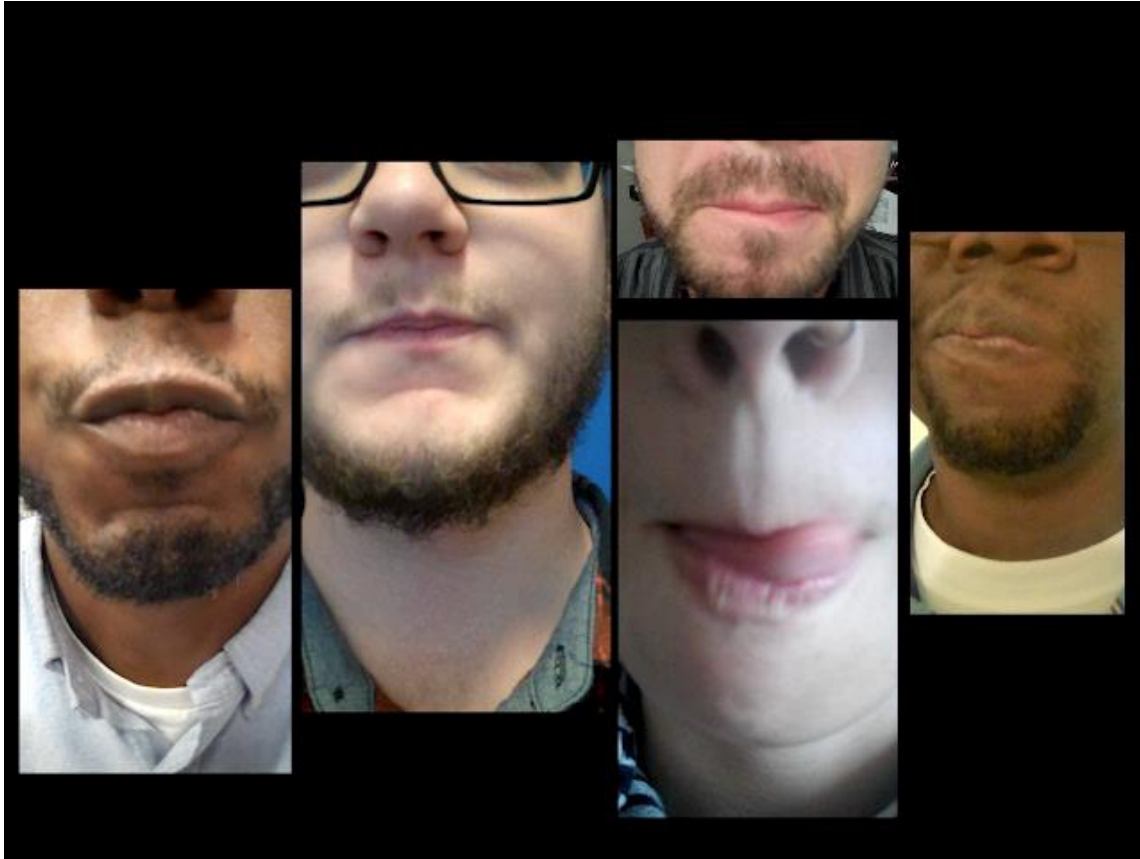






00:06:05

A video clip with five zoomed mouths chewing and moaning.

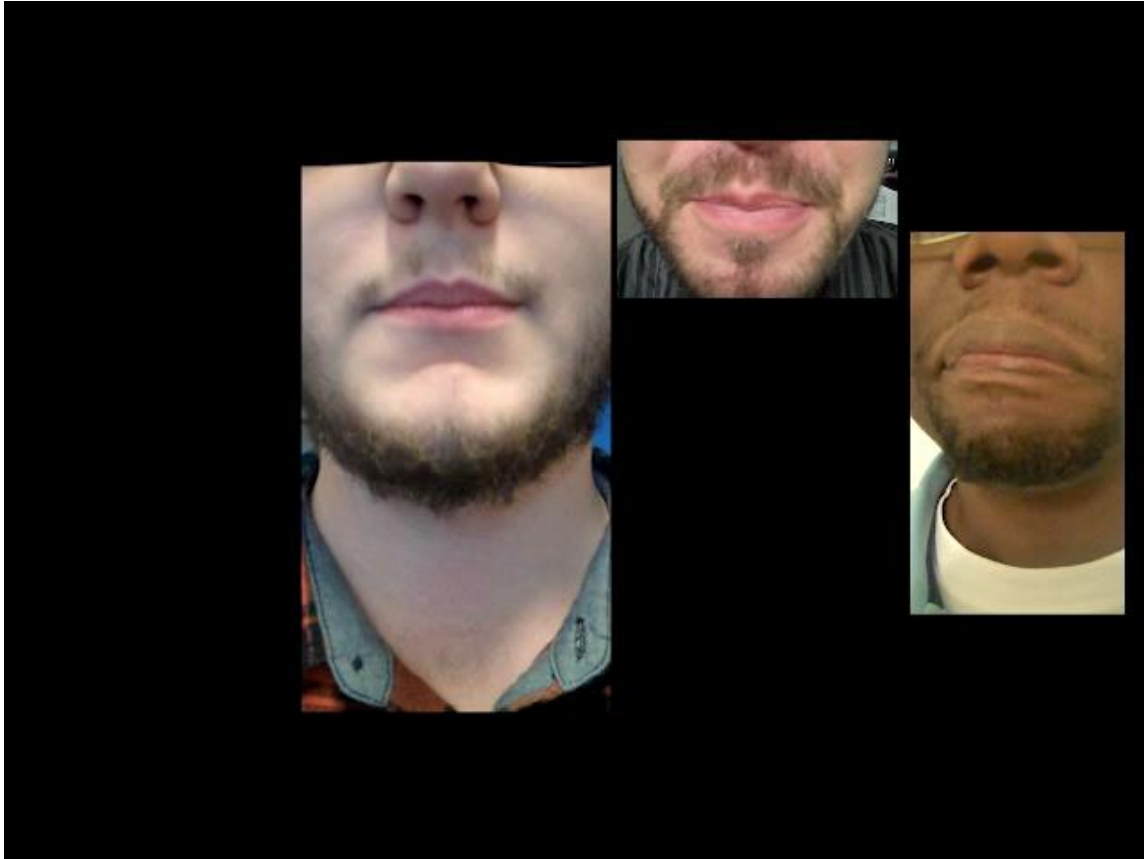


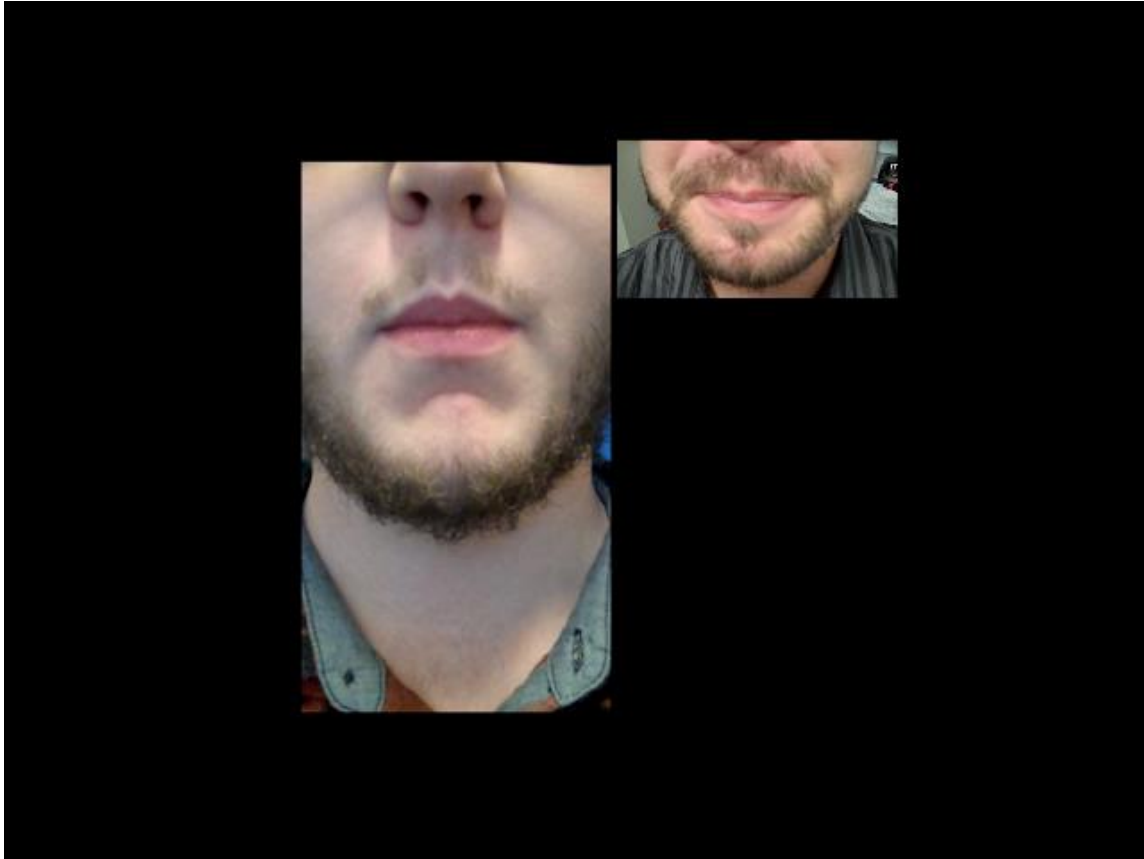
The woman performer is seen facing the audience with the screen of moaning mouths behind her. She sits center stage.

The woman performer removes the raw chicken that has been safety pinned to her underwear throughout the performance. She places it on a plate.



She also retrieves cooked chicken from a plastic bag and places it on a plate. The woman performer ritualistically cuts all the chicken in bite size pieces, using a fork and knife. This continues until all the moaning mouths have disappeared.













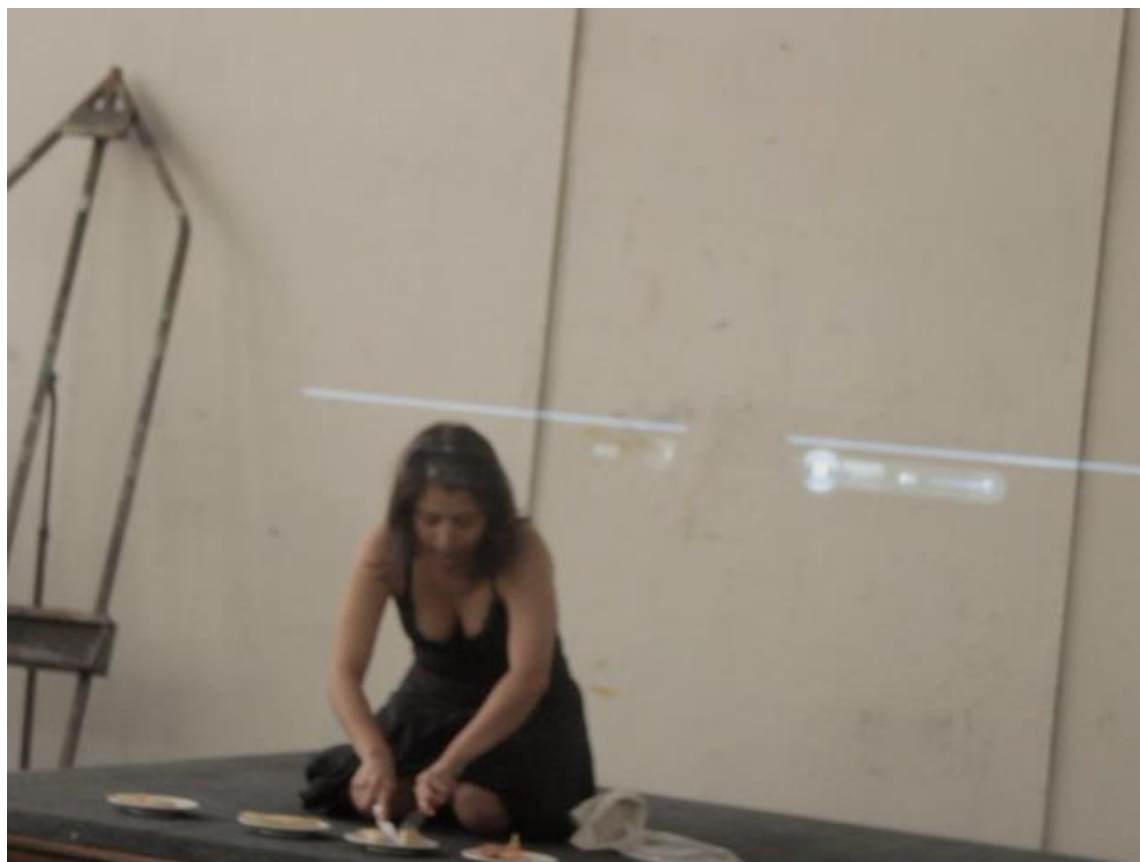
The woman performer ritualistically cuts all the chicken in bite size pieces, using a fork and knife. This continues until all the moaning mouths have disappeared.











She places the fork and knife beside a plate as if inviting someone to eat the chicken.





Woman  
The woman performer exist off stage left.



