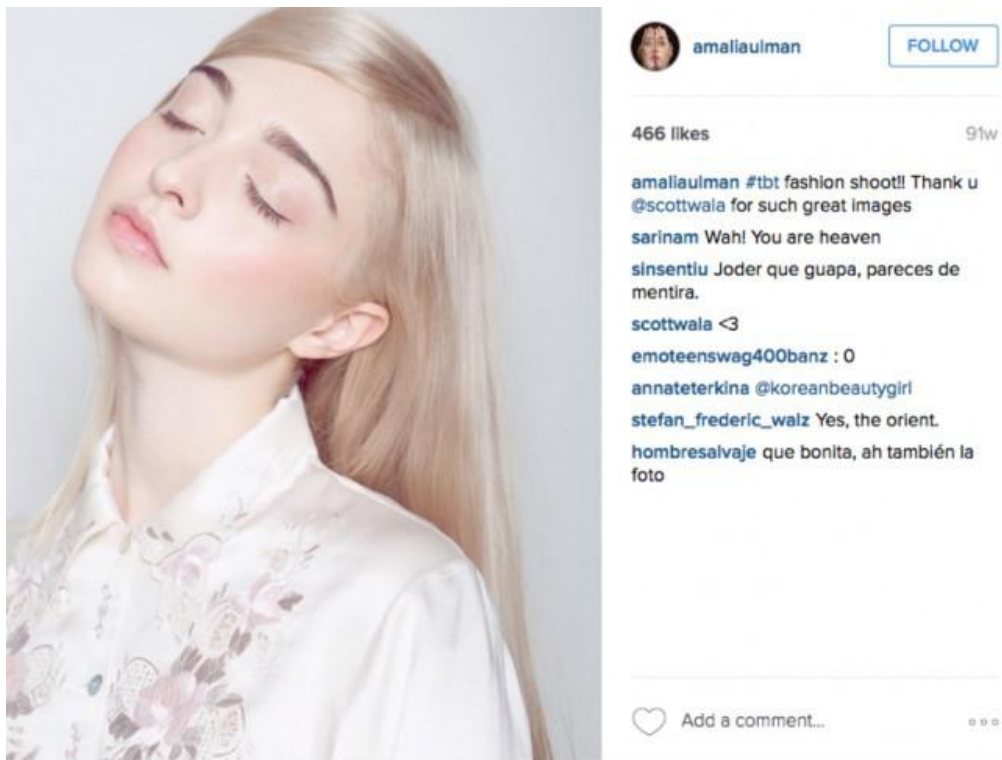


The Truth Behind The 'Celeb' Instagram Account on Display At The Tate

Jenny Proudfoot 13:01 | 16 Mar 2016

Apparently it's all a comment on modern day narcissism...

Attention everyone, the Performing For The Camera exhibition is now at the Tate Modern, and you're not going to want to miss it. The gallery is showcasing work by none other than Amalia Ulman: Instagram celebrity and young contemporary art sensation.



You may recognise her name or even be one of her 100k+ Instagram followers worshiping her every move. But if that's the case, we're sorry to break it to you - turns out, her account is a hoax and you have just fallen for a very elaborate (and very 21st century) digital art experiment. Confused? Let us explain...

In April 2014, young artist Amalia came up with an idea for a large-scale digital art project to comment on the state of current society. Through '*Excellences & Perfections*' Amalia focused on how women present themselves online and highlighted the narcissism of social media, creating a stereotypical Instagram persona and posting photographs on the app in character for the next 5 months.



amaliaulman

349 likes

amaliaulman So so happy bo session today it was soooooo and crazy workout

view all 6 comments

stefan_frederic_walz U shoul

poople_deluxe ^lol ya

emoteenswag400banz kill er

tagtagtagmag 🤖

amaliaulman @mindbodypole



Add a comment...

The character that she adopted was an LA It girl, raking in almost 90,000 followers in just five months. She filled her newsfeed with overly-posed heavily-edited snaps, mimicking the clichéd wording of a social media sensation and documenting the public reaction. To the naked eye, Amalia was another rich trendsetting socialite taking ‘candid’ snaps of her ‘perfect’ life but in reality, the London-based artist had planned the project from beginning to end, even dying her hair and changing her wardrobe in preparation. The sepia filtered pictures of her coffee and black and white snaps of her in luxury bathrobes were all for show, which as Ulman's project shows us is what Instagram is all about: showing off.



amaliaulman

491 likes

bcev You are cute gal

thereisaball 美

dmarquesina Que elegancia t

julie8artx Your work is interes

justingilanyl @natology

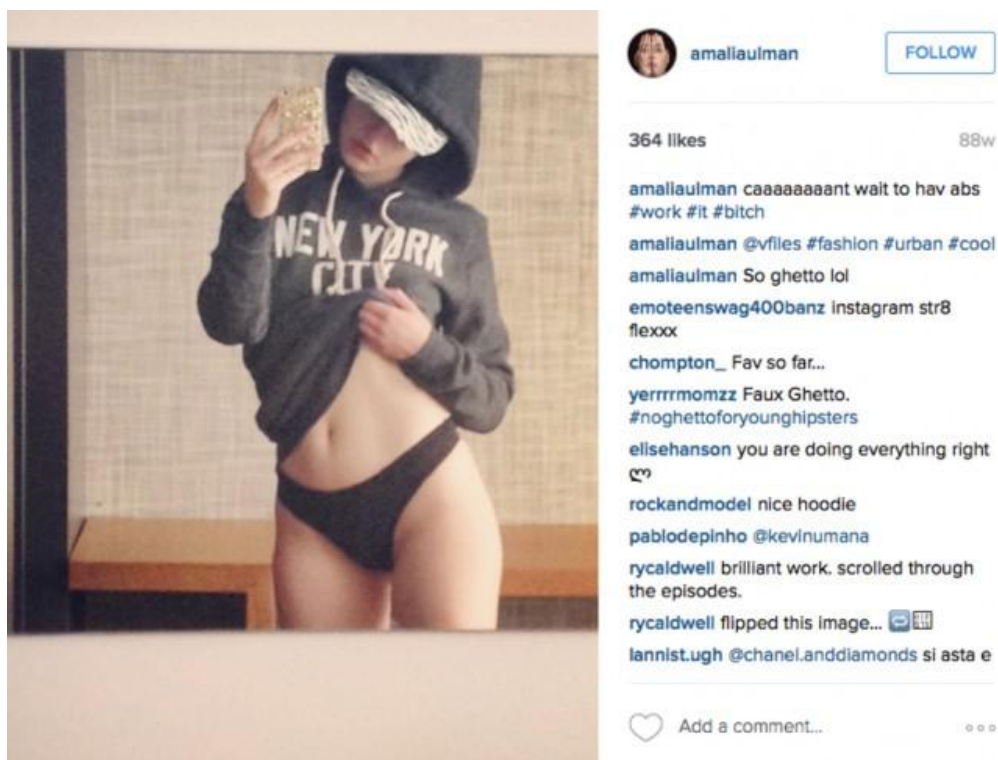


Add a comment...

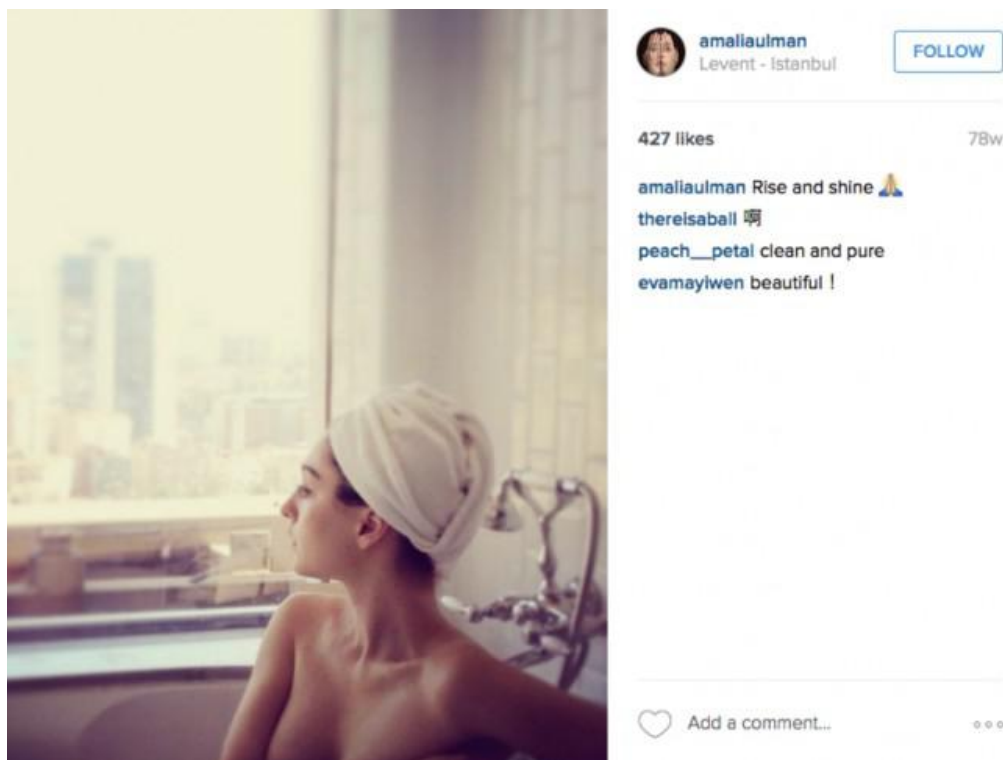
Furthering her project, Amalia incorporated two other stereotypical Instagram personas: the bad girl and the yoga goddess, making her character transition through the different roles.

The project opens with Amalia as a young doe-eyed LA It girl: an American ‘Zoella’ if you will, posting posed photos of stencilled lattes, pastel clothing and bathrobe selfies. Her character then transitions to ‘bad girl’, developing a bit of edge and adopting a no fucks attitude, rivalling Miley and Rihanna. Her photos get a lot darker, uploading half naked selfies

and using a more sombre filter (our guess is Lo-Fi or Brannan). She even pushes her character to the brink, turning to cocaine and documenting an 'alleged' boob job.



After her character has a breakdown and goes to rehab (yes we told you she had planned every detail), Amalia transitions into her third and final phase: the yoga goddess. Adopting a Gwyneth Paltrow-esque persona, her character becomes a devotee to cleansing, posting filtered snaps of avocado on toast, juices and yoga poses.



Amalia's tongue in cheek social media artwork has received an overwhelming response, making her an overnight artist to watch. Her work is not only original and witty but also incredibly relevant. In a technological world where too much power is put in the 'like' button and too much time put in our online profiles, it is important to step back and appreciate as Amalia shows us that social media is not real and that there is much more to life.

The exhibition will be at the Tate Modern until 12 June featuring work from Martin Par, Romain Made and also Masahisa Fukase - see you there.

Read more at <http://www.marieclaire.co.uk/blogs/552295/instagram-celebrity-exhibition-at-the-tate-modern.html#6qkZ8xJTFqdlCYk.99>

theguardian

Where have all the art punks gone?

Every generation of artists has defined itself by rebellion. So where are the Generation Y revolutionaries? Our writer enters a world of corporate hijacks, Instagram breakdowns and fake frat parties

Hannah Ellis-Petersen

Wednesday 16 March 2016 18.45 GMT



[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Pinterest](#)

Amalia Ulman's Excellences & Perfections, at Tate Modern until 12 June

Staging the work on Instagram, says Ulman, confronted her audiences with their own fabrications and personas, the ones they had adopted on social media, often unconsciously. "The work made people into internet trolls without them even realising. People hated the character but would still follow, make comments and share with their friends. It then forced them to think about why they were enjoying the suffering of this girl they didn't even know, using her as entertainment."

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/16/generation-y-young-british-artists-punk>

Bum cracks and jailbait: Instagram has warped the way women see themselves and it stinks

'Being a woman is not a natural thing': scenes from Excellences & Perfections, Amalia Ullman's selfie-based art work CREDIT: CREDIT: ARCADIA MISSA/AMALIA ULLMAN/ CREDIT: ARCADIA MISSA/AMALIA ULLMAN

[Emma Barnett](#), women's editor
14 MARCH 2016 • 12:05PM

When was the last time you asked a friend to put their hand in your arse? I want to know because of a wondrous spectacle I recently witnessed at close range, on holiday in Miami.

Hungover, glugging on a Bud Light, while getting my sweaty tan on, I watched as two stunning women approached the pool. My husband was not alone in lowering his Robert Harris tome, as these twenty-somethings, decked out in neon orange swimsuits (with more material missing than present), heavy gold jewellery and psychedelic nail art, commandeered two sunbeds.

But it was what they did next that really arrested the attention of anything with a heartbeat. As one rolled over onto her stomach, bottom pushed out as far as Kardashianly-possibly, the other stood over brandishing a phone, biting her lip.

"Honey it's not in enough," the photographer tutted, before swooping down and expertly tucking her friend's swimming costume into her crack. With her bare hands. No gloves required.

Her grateful chum reciprocated by pulling a pose so sexual that Ron Jeremy would have approved - and with that, their work was done. They sat back, applied Insta filters and grammed that perfect belfie (bum selfie, keep up at the back).

Queen of the belfie - Kim Kardashian CREDIT: KIM KARDASHIAN INSTAGRAM/KIM KARDASHIAN INSTAGRAM

Within seconds, three grinning frat boys sloped over with a bucket of dodgy-looking fizz for the pair, creating enough noise for me and my husband to wonder aloud which of our pals loved us enough to risk brown finger.

Selfies and extreme vanity were inescapable in the Magic City. Regrouping in the toilet after arse-gate, I gawped at three skinny 11-year-old girls, sporting string bikinis, striking jail bait poses in the mirror until they captured the consummate selfie. Completely unaware of anyone else, they nailed what's become the textbook pose – hand on hip, chin down, bums, tums and non-existent boobs out, and rictus grin on.

It was while chowing down at Soho House, though, that I observed the professional narcissist at work. Walking into what's essentially London-on-sea, dirty-looking paparazzi were hiding in the trees, long lenses primed. That was our first warning. The next; the squeals of Nick Grimshaw, Rita Ora and Alexa Chung 'having just like the best time eva!!!'

Rita Ora and Nick Grimshaw on Miami beach CREDIT: SPLASH/SPLASH

As I wolfed down my lunch, I watched this excitable crew come and go from the beach (never eating), hearing them before I saw them, each time the women donning a different outfit or oversized accessory. The aim? To be papped frolicking of course. The husband and I began a game: guess how long before said photos appeared online. It was minutes.

I'm not against selfies. A quick scout of my Twitter feed and you'll see I'm partial to the odd one with guests on my radio show. But couldn't more women break the mould and subvert what's expected of them?



'People started hating me': Uman's selfie artwork affected how she was perceived CREDIT:

CREDIT: ARCADIA MISSA/AMALIA ULMAN/CREDIT: ARCADIA MISSA/AMALIA ULMAN

That's why [Amalia Uman is my new hero](#). A struggling artist who's now become the hottest ticket in town. And all because she spoofed the gullible Insta crew. Savagely. During the course of a year, the 26 year-old posted all the photos a 'hot young blonde' is meant to.

First came the loved up shots with her man – cocktails at sunset, blah blah. Then, during their predictable break-up, the despair pictures – showcasing booze, drugs and her bandaged boobs, after a breast enlargement op. Natch. And finally, for the third act, her sanctimonious rebirth - Gwynnie Paltrow style. Cue oodles of green juice, raw food and lots of feeling #blessed.

Except none of it was true. She gamed the game and [now has a show at the Tate Modern](#).

What Uman exposed is how formulaic being deemed a desirable woman still is – despite all of the glorious options Western women enjoy today.

"I wanted to prove that femininity is a construction and not something biological or inherent to any woman," she explains. "The joke was admitting how much work goes into being a woman and how being a woman is not a natural thing. It's something you learn."

But if only more women were in on the joke, this synthetic world would have a chance of being cool. Except I fear most of them aren't - especially when you read [babies are being unironically named after the most popular Instagram filters](#). Might as well get little 'Lux' and 'Valencia' started with their own Truman Shows nice and early, I suppose.

Frida Kahlo shown with her painting 'Me Twice' in 1939 CREDIT: REX/ REX

Of course wanting to put yourself in the picture is nothing new. Artists have been creating their own likeness since cave and clay days. But the self-portraits of Frida Kahlo et al were anything but an exercise in vanity. They were attempts to show the creators' true selves – warts and all; where they'd been and where they'd ended up.

By stark contrast, selfies are often the least honest portrayal of people.

Too many girls aren't playing leading roles in their own lives. Instead they are fulfilling those they think women should play – all of which revolve around how hot they look and being sickly sweet.

Not only does this façade negatively impact women's view of themselves, leading to confidence and ambition loss, but it also limits how men see us too.

Disappointingly not enough of my fellow females are using the best public technology we've ever enjoyed to resist convention, or the bizarre notion that our true value stems from appearance. That's why we see armies of women around the world striking the same identikit poses, against changing backdrops, in a bid to zealously conform.

Rita Ora endorses Adidas



INSIDE THE COVER AMALIA ULMAN HER BODY, HER SELF

Text by
Travis Diehl







In a tree outside my living room window in Los Angeles, two doves are building a nest. The mother dove sits on her eggs while the father runs errands back and forth, gathering sticks and grubs: the nest slowly fills the crook of a branch. To have all this activity play out at eye level, for weeks on end, starts to erode the notion that we, human beings, are the only ones to “make things.” Birds certainly practice artifice, and some are very good at it. The latest season of the BBC’s *Planet Earth* features bowerbirds decorating their sculptural mating-grounds with attractive bits of human trash. One has found a small, red plush heart; another steals it. It’s not ritual nor aesthetics nor trickery that make us unique—if, indeed, we are.

Our own species’ seductive efforts, in turn—from clothing and makeup to social media profiles and sexting—start to seem birdlike, like a layer over and above our bodies that acts and is acted upon in a way that extends and delimits the body itself. A nest is an example of what biologists call the extended phenotype: whatever an animal does to alter its environment. Take for example Amalia Ulman’s gauzy pornographic video *International House of Cozy* (2015), which captures the rites and accoutrements of two mating hipsters: the scented candle on the dresser, the rind concentrate body balm from Aēsop, the shallow bowl of fresh fruit on the modern-white credenza. This is commodified intercourse in a well-feathered nest. It is an alien and documentary ritual. One has the feeling that there are no bodies here at all, only elaborate shells—extensions of, but not, “The Body.” Such a coupling approaches a sort of prearranged, recursive intimacy, like watching someone watch themselves on YouTube.

What does it mean to stage the extremes and epitomes (excellences and perfections, even) of millennial self-care? In other words, to affect concern for a body that isn’t exactly there? Ulman’s *Excellences & Perfections* (2014), her most famous performance, did exactly this for an unsuspecting audience of Instagram followers. The term *lifestyle porn* goes beyond raw depictions of sex to include pictures of avocado toast and green juice and walks in Griffith Park. *Excellences & Perfections* is peppered with shots of fresh fruit and glistening,

barely-touched desserts like periodic statements of bodily health. Her outfits are costumes, the hotel mirrors are sets. But the series’ most salacious moments come when Ulman points this artificial artifice towards her own flesh. In *E&P* Ulman gets a breast augmentation that is as real as any photoshopped cover girl’s; her pregnancy shown throughout *Privilege* (2016) is an online one, an Instagram gestation, where each image of Ulman’s pregnant belly says more about the mother than about whatever child. If art is embodied meaning, then this is art, regardless of whether it’s a baby or a prosthetic, a performed pregnancy or a private one. When Ulman provokes this irreconcilable ambivalence, she is simply stating what we already know, but rarely admit—that a selfie is more like a search than a record.

So Ulman performs the things we do to find ourselves, or—with great capitalist realism—to brand our selves. People don’t collect colorful bottle caps and straws, they gather labels: Miu Miu, Prada, Gucci. A handful of clips posted as part of *Privilege* are actual endorsements.¹ The Gucci logo overlays a video of Ulman kicking a red crepe paper ball and repeatedly mumbling the brand’s name. One Prada ad is nothing more or less than a view of Ulman’s feet as she rides an escalator in a pair of their shoes. In 1999 Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe began their project *No Ghost Just a Shell*, in which they co-own the rights to an anime character named Annlee; in 2003 Bernadette Corporation completed a video manifesto for disaffected activists titled *Get Rid of Yourself*. These projects hug the turn of the millennium; it’s no accident that violent anti-globalization demonstrations surrounded the G8 summit in Genoa, and that Annlee was made to embody the polyvalent emptiness of the branded self, at just the moment when a teenage Amalia Ulman was first exploring the Internet. Now it’s 2018 and corporations are legally people, just as they are also made of people, just as they are also lifeless shells.

It’s a short step from “you are what you wear” to “you are what you post.” But before virtual bodies transacted on Myspace and Instagram, Pornhub and Chatroulette, the interface was text only. The chat rooms Ulman frequented had no imagery,

no avatars, and no bodies—which is why she could be anybody. It was salad days. Yet part of that imageless freedom persists in Ulman's most recent work, in her insistence that the self is not structured like a pit in the body's peach, but flows like a centerless juice.

Ulman's ambient relationship to her own embodiment sometimes presents in her work as ambivalence, sometimes as antagonism. Ulman's *Privilege* photos use red and gray almost exclusively, a palette that is color-pop one minute, gore the next. The lo-fi crackle in shots of Ulman riding the LA Metro's escalators, for instance, makes the walls look blood-spattered. In other posts, the artist's body seems damaged. One shows her legs splaying out of an office doorway; her arm holds a corded phone to her head, which juts into view at a broken angle.² In another, Ulman in a pencil skirt and blouse leans against the office wall, grimacing and clutching her knee, which glows a painful red.³ The only other color is the red of her high heels and bag. For *Privilege*, Ulman took up an office-worker persona, but also worked in an office. In another Instagram post, Ulman digitally multiplied her outstretched arms into the posture of a multitasking Hindu goddess [Kālī], holding coffee, scissors, a clock, two roses, and indicating, with two hands, her pregnant-presenting belly.⁴ Both powerful and servile, creative and distressed, she represents the dual nature of the precariat: we can do it all, and it hurts.

Shortly after the conclusion of *Excellences & Perfections*, Ulman debuted *Stock Images of War* (2015), a series of open wire sculptures of tanks, wheelchairs, and bicycles, placed around a gallery draped in black fabric. She first imagined these skeletal machines before *E&P*, while recovering from a bus accident in a Pennsylvania hospital. This pain is real and chronic, even if the body suppresses its memory—and even if the pain of others is among the most difficult things to feel. Instead, like a nightmare antiseptic, air fresheners on little shelves spurted sickly apple-scented mist into the room; the video on the wall, with a voiceover punctuated by gunfire sound effects, was turned up way too loud. Physical pain morphs into the pain of Ulman's frustrated attempt to commodify a

compound image of suffering. It is like the poet W.S. Merwin writes in *For the Anniversary of My Death*: “Then I will no longer / Find myself in life as in a strange garment,” as if the flesh, too, is something we put on, like a pair of rhinestone-studded heels. Just as easily, we slip it off.

Viewing *Excellences & Perfections* and *Privilege* in their native form, on Ulman's Instagram feed, you start to notice the many flavors of disillusionment expressed in the comments section by her followers. Some are in on her jokes, others feel cheated or offended, but perhaps the most misguided are those comments that urge Ulman to be true to herself. This, for example, after she dyed her brown hair blonde as part of *E&P*, and again after she changed it back. Whether such reactions express genuine concern, or are more like the cathartic cries of the audience at a horror film, the implication is that any of these images, consciously performed or not, might overlay and obscure a true inner self. In a more complete analysis, however, Ulman proposes a stickier truth: that this whole extended phenotype—art, clothes, décor—doesn't express the self—it is the self. Ulman's followers wonder aloud if her body is art, or if it's artifice. The answer is yes.

Philosophers call it *pure semblance*—like an illusion, but not an illusion; an image through and through. And when you can't tell if it's an illusion or not, you must act as if it's both. Given the circumstances, it's understandable that it's sometimes difficult to know how to take Ulman's work. The response, like the work, is both at once, oscillating like a high velocity update of Jasper Johns's flags and targets: both pictures of things and the things themselves. This also makes it difficult to decide exactly where the work ends and the body begins. Like an intricate nest or dam, Ulman's artwork is an extended phenotype inseparable from her other ways of living. There is, for instance, a tendency for Ulman to guide the press towards her own ends, using magazine photo shoots to produce new work, or interviews to undermine old interviews. Her work is her lifestyle and her lifestyle is her work; she is never not working.

For *Privilege*, Ulman introduced a supporting character, a pigeon named Bob. At first the pigeon was an animatronic, and appeared this way when a version of *Privilege* was installed for the 9th Berlin Biennale. But soon Ulman replaced the model with the real thing. Like Ulman, Bob has a job portraying an office worker, going daily to an office, doing what office workers do. This much is the saccharine conceit of a children's book Ulman produced, thick cardboard pages and all, in which Bob in suit and tie simply takes the bus to work. But even this whimsical story sinks, past parody, into an honest telling of an artist's white-collar precarity. Bob is a pet, but one that is optimized for work, for labor—for production, and specifically for the production of images of himself working. He is also a representative of pigeonkind, as if this strange relationship—between human and bird—mirrors that between artist and image. Whatever drives are specific to Bob, he also possesses avian motivations common to all pigeons, individuals all, but also nodes of some greater entity, a flocking, undifferentiated mass.

The *Privilege* collages and photos, again, are desaturated save red accents—red, among other things, the color of sex worker solidarity. Ulman puts her body to work in a kind of digital emotional labor, no less emotional or laborious for being digital, yet still somehow virtual, made-up, like that of a pole dancer or a cam girl. Who is truly surprised that the image, any image, is partly disingenuous, a fantasy for hire? When is it ever otherwise? The expectation of sincerity clings to the online world, just as it does to art, in a way that doesn't apply to meatspace—or rather, the online and art audiences cling to their expectation. Perhaps this is why Ulman plans to direct a film—to work in a medium where artifice is only natural.

In 2015, Ulman took a trip to Pyongyang, North Korea.⁵ She doesn't consider the trip an artwork as such, although she did post a few tourist shots on Instagram. (They're still there, a brief interlude between *Excellences* and *Privilege*.) The trip is documented in greater detail in a travelogue published this year as *Pyongyang Elegance: Notes on Communism*. The essay's tone is drifty, over the

shoulder, as if Ulman is watching her own body travel. The country is infamously restricted; the Internet is censored and so is the television, and Ulman can only visit sites approved by the three local men assigned as her guides: tourist restaurants, gift shops for foreigners, a larger-than-life replica of the Arc de Triomphe. But what seems to bother her the most in this cold communist paradise is how little time she has to herself. The climax of the essay comes when she convinces her handlers to take her for a massage, and she spends an hour—one hour—in the company of one woman, naked, not talking, finally “herself.” Ulman notes that wherever she goes there are bowls of fresh fruit: to some the sign of a stage-managed dictatorship, but to her simply a performance of plenty that is common to the world's poor.

If our buildings express a certain regional character, the city is our kind's ultimate extended phenotype. Of her hospital stay, Ulman writes cryptically, “My confinement is the victory of the skyscrapers over my bones.” Of Pyongyang, “I took the city off me like a Band-Aid.” To make the completion of *Privilege*, Ulman and her husband opened Bob's cage, a wood and wire box attached to their apartment window. A short, closely cropped video shows him hop out of frame and into Los Angeles. Ulman tells me that pigeons pair for life; in order to train them as messengers, they are separated from their mates. It's not their homes, exactly, that they seek out, but their mates.

1. See Ulman's Instagram feed, August 24, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJf9SubhZzq/>; May 29, 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BF_ifkGIV5w/; April 12, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BEGu8fLIV4Z/>.
2. *Ibid.*, January 14, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BAG-pu3FV2x/>.
3. *Ibid.*, March 30, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BDIKY-CuFV30/>.
4. *Ibid.*, September 15, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BKZjer-kAkF9/>.
5. Amalia Ulman, “Pyongyang Excellence: Notes on Communism,” *affidavit*, February 12, 2018, <https://www.affidavit.art/articles/pyongyang-elegance>.

Privilege 5/4/2016, 2016 (opposite page) *Privilege* 3/12/2016, 2016 (p. 54) *Dignity* 01, 2017 (p. 55) *Privilege* 2/20/2016, 2016 (p. 56) *Privilege* 11/01/2016, 2016 (film still) (p. 58) *Privilege* 9/27/2016, 2016 (film still) (p. 59) *Intolerance*, 2017, installation view, Barro, Buenos Aires (p. 60) *Privilege* 8/9/2016, 2016 (p. 62) *Privilege* 4/29/2016, 2016 (film still) (p. 63) *Privilege* 7/27/2016, 2016 (p. 66) *Privilege* 6/17/2016, 2016 (film still) (p. 67) All images Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London



Only the chosen few make any actual cash out of this egotistical existence (note Rita Ora's loyalty to her incongruous Adidas trainers in her 'casual' snaps – yep she's being paid to wear dire Nineties footwear). In their wake they leave a trail of dissatisfied folk, hungry to replicate their unrealistic verisimilitude. And the world thought lads' mags were a bad influence.

Because for every sexy selfie taker out there, yearning for validation courtesy of a few smiley-face emoji, there's a thousand other invisible women behind screens, scrutinising and zooming in on their bodies, too depressed to share their own imperfect reality.

Having just turned 31, I am still pretty young. And yet I felt ancient navigating the Miami Instagram show. But my overriding sentiment? Relief. Because if I'd been born just 10 years later – I too could have been a selfie addict, inviting my best pal to get uncomfortably close to my derriere - without seeing the funny side.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/bum-cracks-and-jailbait-instagram-has-warped-the-way-women-see-t/>

Andy Warhol's
Interview

Wer bin ich?

Selfiemanía 2.0 – Künstlerin Amalia Ulman im Interview über die Unkultur sozialer Netzwerke und deren Illusion von Authentizität.



EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS

Besser könnte das neue Jahr für Amalia Ulman nicht anlaufen. Gerade erst wurde die junge Künstlerin vom Forbes-Magazin in die begehrte Liste der 30 under 30 gewählt; ihre Arbeiten sind zeitgleich bei James Fuentes in Los Angeles und in der Tate Modern in London zu sehen. Ihr Thema: sie selbst. Ihre Vergangenheit, ihre Gefühlslage, ihre Rolle als Frau.

Diese Auseinandersetzung gipfelte 2014 in einer Studie zur Selfiekultur. Ulman legte ein Instagram-Konto an, inszenierte Bild für Bild eine komplette Typveränderung – inklusive gefakter Schönheitsoperationen. „Die Menschen haben ein ganz bestimmtes Bild von dem, was sie als real erkennen“, erzählt die 27-jährige Argentinierin. „Sie glauben immer noch, das Internet wäre ein Ort der Authentizität.“ Ein Trugschluss, wie sie findet, den sie sichtbar machen wollte. Also studierte sie eifrig die Erfolgsparameter von Instagirls, wie man zu Social-Media-Stars sagt, und stellte deren millionenfach geklickte Fotos nach. Mit Erfolg. Innerhalb weniger Monate gewann sie mit ihrer Performance *Excellences & Perfections* mehr als 72 000 Follower und landete auf der Art Basel Miami neben Hans Ulrich Obrist und Klaus Biesenbach in der Paneldiskussion *Instagram as an artistic medium*.

Dieser Aufstieg grenzt an Zauberei. In ihrer Wahlheimat, den USA, verunglückte sie vor einigen Jahren schwer mit einem Greyhound-Bus und war für Wochen an den Rollstuhl gefesselt. Sie begann, aus dünnen Drähten kleine Rollstühle zu formen, und träumte von einer überdimensionalen Version im öffentlichen Raum. Der Traum wurde Realität: Seit vergangenem Jahr befindet sich im Skulpturenpark in Köln ein monumentaler Ulman-Rollstuhl. „Diese Arbeit repräsentiert die Schmerzen, unter denen ich bis heute leide, zeugt aber auch von der Widerstandsfähigkeit, die ich mir erst beweisen musste.“



„STOCK IMAGES OF WAR (HOSPITAL)“, SKULPTURENPARK KÖLN

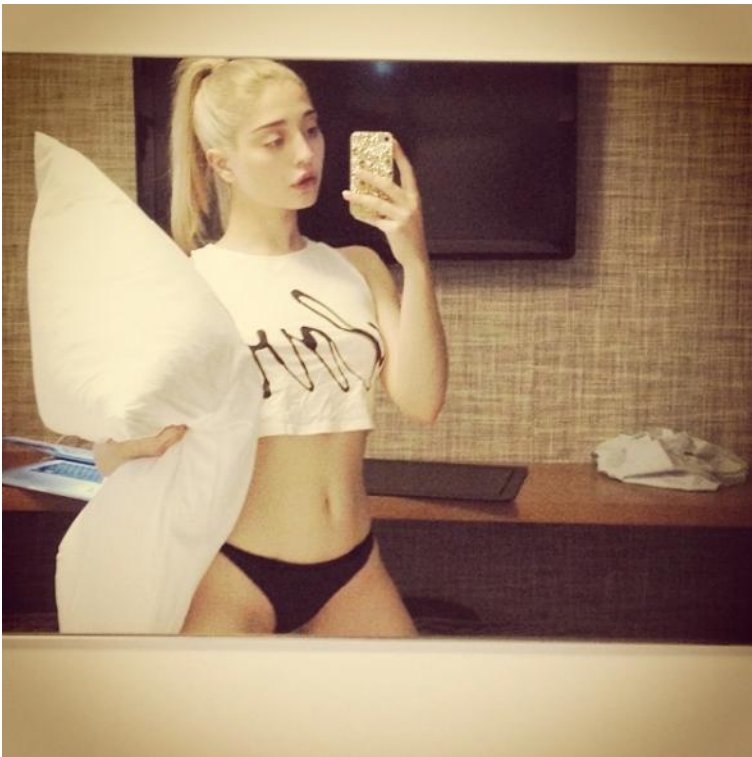
Bei ihrem nächsten Projekt widmet sich Ulman wieder der Frage nach Authentizität. Es soll um das überzeichnete Ich gehen: „Ich werde eine Perücke tragen, die wie mein Haar aussieht, Kontaktlinsen, die meine Augenfarbe haben. Es geht um ein Fabrikat des wirklichen Ichs, denn das Wirkliche gibt es nicht.“ Für Ulman ist es nur eine Illusion.



EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS



EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS



EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS



EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS



EXCELLENCES & PERFECTIONS

Alle Instagram-Bilder [@amaliaulman](#)

Von:
11/03/16

Anneli

Botz

spotlight

Artist Amalia Ulman brings the 'selfie' portrait to Tate Modern. By Victoria Woodhall

WHO? The 27-year-old Argentinian-born Central Saint Martins graduate fooled everyone when she posted a series of spoof selfies on Instagram that were in fact a piece of performance art. This month she becomes the first artist to have a work on social media exhibited at Tate Modern.

WHAT'S THE IDEA? Over four months in 2014, Amalia, who initially dyed her dark hair for the part, uploaded 175 photos of herself as a blonde, sugary small-town girl whose life comes crashing down when she moves to LA and discovers pole-dancing and plastic surgery. She then charts her 'recovery' with yoga selfies, gratitude slogans and the obligatory snaps of avocado on toast, before coming clean that it was all an act - or rather a work of art entitled *Excellences and Perfections*.

THEY SAY 'Amalia's work fits into a long-established tradition of artists who have made work that explores their own identities,' says Tate Modern senior curator Simon Baker. 'Many Instagram accounts contain images that look like real, intimate insights into the lives of celebrities and members of the public, but which are in fact carefully constructed versions of reality.'

■ Amalia's work is part of the *Performing For The Camera* exhibition at Tate Modern until 12 June, tate.org.uk



BBC - Culture - The Instagram artist who fooled thousands

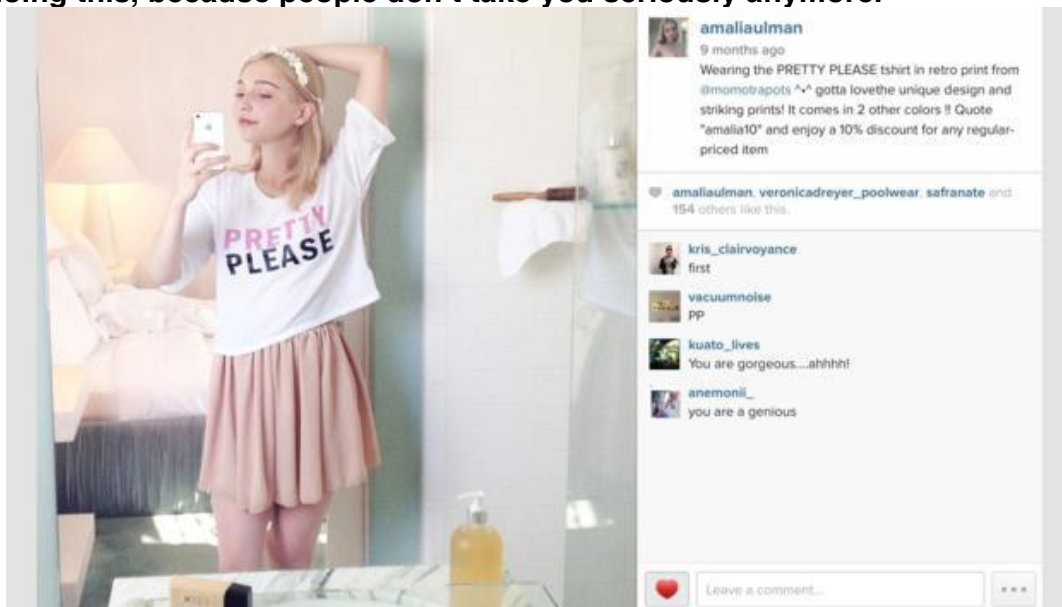
Artist Amalia Ulman created an online persona and recorded it on Instagram to ask questions about gender online. Cadence Kinsey asks what her project tells us about our own social media identities.

By Cadence Kinsey
7 March 2016

Between April and September 2014, the Argentine-born artist Amalia Ulman presented herself online as an 'Instagram Girl'. Using popular hashtags from micro-celebrities on the popular social network, Ulman created a three-part performance work that explored how women present themselves online. Entitled *Excellences & Perfections*, the project saw Ulman take on the roles of 'cute girl', 'sugar baby' and 'life goddess'. These characters were chosen, Ulman says, because "they seemed to be the most popular trends online (for women)".

Arranging them into "an order that could make sense as a narrative", Instagram Amalia moved to the big city, broke up with her long-term boyfriend, did drugs, had plastic surgery, self-destructed, apologised, recovered and found a new boyfriend. By the final post of the project on 19 September 2014, Ulman had amassed 88,906 followers (the account now has more than 110,000). It was only then she revealed the whole thing had been a performance, a work of art, rather than a record of real life.

Presented concurrently at two major exhibitions in London – Electronic Superhighway at Whitechapel Gallery and Performing for the Camera at Tate Modern – *Excellences & Perfections* has received widespread attention for its manipulation of social media platforms and its replication of gendered stereotypes. The Telegraph asked "Is this the first Instagram masterpiece?", while Slate described the piece as "an art-world sensation". At the heart of the work is the relationship between online and offline identity. As Ulman told the art critic Alastair Sooke, when she first began posting, "People started hating me. Some gallery I was showing with freaked out and was like, 'You have to stop doing this, because people don't take you seriously anymore.'"



Amalia Ulman explored the 'cute girl' role in her *Excellences & Perfections* project: this was her Instagram update on 1 June 2014. (Credit: Amalia Ulman/Arcadia Missa)

Frequently described as a 'hoax', Ulman's project attracted criticism from users of Facebook and Instagram. The revelation was a surprise to many users because Ulman

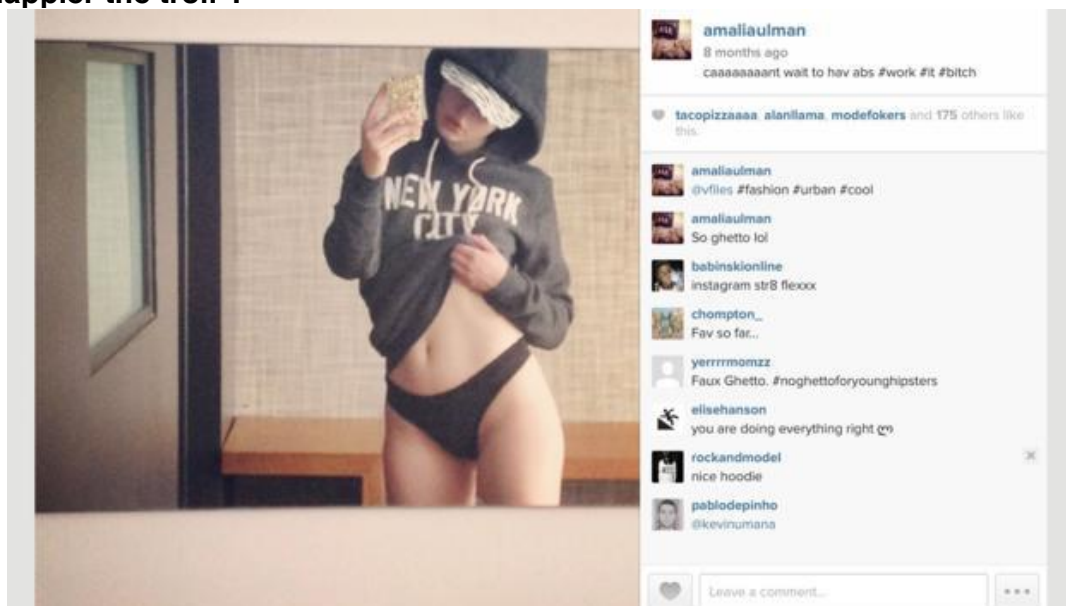
had ensured that the posts would fit with her usual social media output, at least initially. Ulman “went for the artsy-tumblr-girl aesthetic first”, she tells me, “because it was closer to home and wouldn’t look like too suspicious of a transformation”. Even the ‘sugar baby’ persona was rooted in real life: Ulman has revealed that she worked as an escort when studying fine art in London. For the artist, accusations of playing a trick on her followers illustrate what she has called a “glitch” in social media: the gap between how we live our lives and present them online.

Keeping up appearances

Authenticity is a central idea in the culture of social media, with phrases such as ‘be yourself’ and ‘do what you love’ familiar to most users. These ideals are reinforced by technology, as social media platforms now generally require – or at least encourage – the use of real names and a single identity across profiles. This contrasts with the early web, which offered greater opportunities for anonymity. As the anthropologist Daniel Miller noted in a review from 2013 commissioned by the UK government, “The Internet initially appeared to expand the field of anonymity, which meant people could explore new forms of identity, shift identity, or secure multi-identities with relative freedom. By contrast, Facebook has been associated with not just the loss of anonymity but as a threat to all aspects of privacy.” Yet despite the extent to which authenticity is promoted on social media, we still know that profiles are manipulated or massaged to one degree or another. In other words, they are always performative. Under this lens, Ulman navigates the same balance of performing authenticity as everyone else.

The sadder the girl, the happier the troll – Amelia Ulman

This raises questions about what we expect art to look like and what we expect art to do. *Excellences & Perfections* has angered some for the way that it reproduces stereotyped images of women. As a work of feminist art, it is markedly different from those of the cyberfeminists of the 1990s who used the web to explore ambiguous identities. Instead, taking inspiration from the very public meltdown of female celebrities such as Amanda Bynes, *Excellences & Perfections* replicates a narrative of breakdown, apology and rescue that fuels an economy of likes and shares. As Ulman has stated, “the sadder the girl, the happier the troll”.



With her Instagram update on 4 July 2014, Amalia Ulman displayed a darker tone, taking on her ‘Sugar baby’ persona. (Credit: Amalia Ulman/Arcadia Missa)

Excellences & Perfections sets the idea of gender as a performance in the specific context of how we reward and value images of women online. By playing to type, Ulman’s Instagram character became popular online. But it was also what lent the project a degree of credibility. It felt believable because it was familiar. Relying on a character and a

narrative that had been seen before allowed “people to map the content with ease”. The more someone performs according to prescribed behaviours, the more ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ they will receive.

Drop-down identity

Rewarding behaviour in this way is fundamental to the business model of social media. Today’s web funnels our opportunities for self-representation through increasingly standardised templates (just think of the options for customisation on a site like MySpace compared to Facebook), and frequently converts aspects of our identity into a single category on a drop-down menu. Sites such as Facebook and Instagram rely on selling information about their users and drop-downs are important mechanisms for improving data capture. As José van Dijck, a professor of comparative media studies at the University of Amsterdam, argued in an article from 2013, “standardising data input guarantees better results”. Far from being a place to escape traditional narratives, behaviours and forms of expression, the web frequently reproduces them. This is an important reminder that the web is not a ‘virtual’ realm, separate from the everyday world.



For the final phase of her project, Ulman emerged as a ‘life goddess’ – posting this Instagram update on 5 September 2014. (Credit: Amalia Ulman/Arcadia Missa)

Although this is not the first time that Ulman has explored the way in which certain images gain popularity online (her 2012 essay ‘f/f’ looked at the South American social networking sites Fotocumbia and Fotolog), *Excellences & Perfections* also presents a sharp reflection of her own role as the artist *ingénue*. Launching the project as part of the New Museum New York’s First Look program in October 2014, Ulman asked: “How is a female artist supposed to look like? How is she supposed to behave? The price of artworks grow in relation to your looks.” Given the global interest in this work, *Excellences & Perfections* shows what little difference may lie between how power, privilege and prestige are constructed on the online networks of social media and those of the art world.

Cadence Kinsey is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at University College London, where she is working on a book project about Art After the Internet.

<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160307-the-instagram-artist-who-fooled-thousands>

Ed Young, Your Mom Balloons (2016).

Photo: Rain Embuscado for artnet News.

What can you get for your money at the [Armory Show](#)? It depends on what you're looking to spend, but it turns out there's something for someone on every budget, even if you're only walking away from the fair with a glass of the bubbly. (For the record, your best bet might just be the \$4 Balthazar croissant at Breads Bakery cafe—visiting the fair is the art equivalent of a marathon, and you may as well carbo-load!)



Amalia Ulman. *Excellences &*

Perfections (Instagram Update, 8th July 2014), (#itsjustdifferent). 2015. Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

Bringing together performance and photography, *Performing for the Cameraruns* at Tate Modern through to June 12th, 2016. For more information, [click here](#).

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By Catherine Chapman

Mirror
WEBSITE OF THE YEAR

The artist who fooled the world into believing she was an Instagram star undergoing a boob job

- 16:55, 23 FEB 2016
- UPDATED 20:08, 7 MAR 2016
- BY STEVE MYALL

Amalia Ulman was badly injured in a car crash and as she started to recover she began to embark on on a transformation into a Internet selfie star but all was not as it seemed

A young woman fooled more than 100,000 people online by using social media to post details of a fake jet set lifestyle involving luxury hotels and designer clothes.

Amalia Ulman was in fact a performance artist who instead of living the high life said she was exploring the impact of the new wave of "celebrity instagramers"

Thousands of people were drawn into the deceit and Ulman has now revealed she wasn't having the enviable life she presented but instead it was a carefully constructed hoax.

The images she created were strikingly similar in style to those posted by the likes of reality TV socialite turned fashion blogger [Millie Mackintosh](#) and [Ella Woodward](#) who has created the Deliciously Ella brand.

The story starts in 2013 when the young artist, who was born in Argentina, raised in Spain, and attended St Martins in London was in a car crash.

She suffered a horrific compound fracture to her leg but as she began to rehabilitate herself she started to take on a new persona.

Using an Instagram account she began to post glamorous pictures on Instagram and selfies in mirrors of her lifestyle of hotel rooms, expensive shops and sunshine holidays.

She posed in outfits and posted pictures of food which led her 100,000 followers to believe she was living a particular lifestyle.

In one instance she even posted pictures purporting to show her going for breast enlargement surgery.

She even faked a drug habit and relationship break-ups.

Amalia's Instagram - the name she used - was, it turned out, not a society wannabe but instead a work of art, and now she has a gallery show of her creations.

She told the [BBC's Front Row programme](#) : "It was planned from the beginning, a loose script where I knew what the beginning and end would be and the climax and the images that would come along depending on how people connected with it.

"It was a performance that depended on how people reacted to it.

"I used to use [Instagram](#) as my own name and I wanted people to think it was me going through that transformation.

"What happened during the performance was the most important part because they were the real reactions to it.

"I was shocked by the reaction of people, especially in the art world and instead of being outraged women approached me to ask for the name of the surgeon.

"I expected people to criticise people more.

"It reminded me how powerful images are whether they are real or fake."

She brought the project to an end with a picture of a bunch of roses and says she is pleased with how the project worked out.

She said: "It used the cadence and rhythm of the daily posts and changing the story in reaction to the audience.

"It is not a satire but I am playing with it.

"I don't like calling it a hoax.

"For me it is like a prostitute and client and the client being disappointed she is not in love for real."

She said that being a car crash and getting injured made her think of her body more as a tool that could be used, broken and fixed.

She said: "My scars are photo-shopped out and in the videos you notice I am not moving very much." The artist has revealed the story she successfully created in an [interview with Vice magazine](#), saying: "It's the story of a provincial girl with the dream of becoming a model," she begins, "who's scouted by a photographer and ends up doing just that and living in LA."

"She's running out of money and splitting up with her boyfriend, and falls into this loophole of becoming a sugar baby [a young woman who is financially cared for by a sugar daddy] but feeling ok because she has money."

"Then things turn darker and she starts taking drugs, she goes to rehab, and eventually she goes back to her family."

Ulman's work features as part of the [Performing for the Camera](#) exhibition at the Tate Modern.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/artist-who-fooled-world-believing-7419242>

SPOTLIGHT: Artist Amalia Ulman brings the 'selfie' portrait to Tate Modern

By [VICTORIA WOODHALL FOR YOU MAGAZINE](#)

PUBLISHED: 00:02, 21 February 2016 | UPDATED: 00:02, 21 February 2016

The 27-year-old Argentinian-born Central Saint Martins graduate fooled everyone when she posted a series of spoof selfies on Instagram that were in fact a piece of performance art. This month she becomes the first artist to have a work on social media exhibited at Tate Modern.

What's the idea? Over four months in 2014, Amalia, who initially dyed her dark hair for the part, uploaded 175 photos of herself as a blonde, sugary small-town girl whose life comes crashing down when she moves to LA and discovers pole-dancing and plastic surgery. She then charts her 'recovery' with yoga selfies, gratitude slogans and the obligatory snaps of avocado on toast, before coming clean that it was all an act – or rather a work of art entitled *Excellences and Perfections*.

They say 'Amalia's work fits into a long-established tradition of artists who have made work that explores their own identities,' says Tate Modern senior curator Simon Baker.

'Many Instagram accounts contain images that look like real, intimate insights into the lives of celebrities and members of the public, but which are in fact carefully constructed versions of reality.'

Amalia's work is part of the *Performing For The Camera* exhibition at Tate Modern until 12 June, tate.org.uk



© Amalia Ulman







Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-3442782/SPOTLIGHT-Artist-Amalia-Ulman-brings-selfie-portrait-Tate-Modern.html#ixzz42X0TSmHM>
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Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie, Steven Isserlis, Amalia Ulman

Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie discusses the band's new album *Chaosmosis* and why they have returned to 'immediate' pop songwriting.

Cellist Steven Isserlis tells John Wilson about his new recording of the Elgar Cello Concerto, and his fear of performing the complete Bach Cello Suites from memory.

Amalia Ulman, the social media-based artist, discusses her work in *Performing for the Camera*, a new exhibition at Tate Modern in London, which examines the relationship between photography and performance, from the invention of photography in the 19th century to the selfie culture of today.

Presenter John Wilson

Producer Jerome Weatherald.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b070dq8c>

Amalia Ulman, “The Bling Ring” i simulacija životnog stila

[Ljilja halić](#) | 25/02/2016 08:30 | [mediji](#), [tv / film](#), [umjetnost](#)

Utemeljen na istinitim događajima iz 2008. i 2009. godine, film *The Bling Ring* redateljice Sofije Coppole snimljen 2013. prikazuje skupinu tinejdžera koji odluče, motivirani željom da pripadaju velebnom kultu hollywoodskih *celebrityja*, provaliti u kuće nekih od najbogatijih i žutom tisku najpodložnijih zvijezda Los Angelesa te ukrasti odjeću i nakit u vrijednosti od 3 milijuna dolara. Jedan od najintrigantnijih likova u filmu zasigurno je djevojka imena Nicki, čiji je karakter izgrađen na osnovi identiteta [Alexis Neiers](#), u izvedbi britanske glumice Emme Watson.

S druge strane, svjesna potrebe mladih ljudi da se prikazuju najzanimljivijima, najautentičnijima i najbogatijima iskustvom novog doba, Amalia Ulman, mlada umjetnica rodom iz Argentine, započela je svoj Instagram projekt *Excellences & Perfections* 2014. godine, kada je stvorila novu Amaliju Ulman, djevojku „poput Mirande Kerr“, koja živi zdravo, jede zdravo, voli jogu, nosi brendiranu odjeću, odsjeda u luksuznim hotelima; još jednu slavloljubivu glumicu i manekenku koja teži usponu na društvenoj ljestvici kroz strukturu [društvenih mreža](#), ali opet ne glupavu ni suviše zainteresiranu za razmišljanje o idejama, nego osobu za koju bismo mogli iskoristiti termin Virgine Woolf: [middlebrow](#). Umjetnica, ne *personality*, Amalia Ulman za potrebe svog performansa odselila se u Los Angeles i provodila vrijeme u luksuznim hotelima za čije se financiranje pobrinula ranije radeći kao eskort djevojka. Pisati o ovim karakterima i/ili osobama zapravo znači pokušati dati odgovor na pitanje koje je postavila i sama Amalia Ulman: konzumiramo li mi stvari ili stvari konzumiraju nas?

Instagram Amalije Ulman

Jean Baudrillard na početku svog eseja *Potrošačko društvo* piše: „Strogo govoreći, imućni ljudi više nisu okruženi drugim ljudima, kao što su bili u prošlosti, nego objektima.“¹ Naše su potrebe podložne beskonačnom umnažanju i njihovo zadovoljenje moguće je kroz konzumaciju bezbroj usluga koje se na tržištu nude, usluga koje bismo prema odabranom načinu života i ukusu. Gilles Lipovetsky u svojem djelu *Paradoksalna sreća* pak kaže: „Hiperpotrošač više ne žudi za materijalnim blagostanjem, nego se pojavljuje kao eksponencijalan tražitelj psihičkog komfora, unutarnjeg sklada i subjektivnog razvoja, o čemu svjedoči cvjetanje tehnika proizašlih iz *Razvoja osobnosti*, kao i uspjeh orijentalnih mudrosti, novih duhovnosti, vodiča sreće i mudrosti. Materijalizam prvog potrošačkog društva izašao je iz mode: svjedoci smo širenja tržišta duše i njezine preobrazbe, ravnoteže i samopoštovanja, dok istodobno bujaju lijekovi sreće.“² Osviješteni potrošač shvaća neumjerenost tržišta, no nalazi se u poziciji u kojoj, i kad bi želio birati najautentičniji život, taj život uopće ne bi bio autentičan jer je kapitalistički sustav hipertrofirao do te mjere da je nezamislivo iščupati ga iz funkcioniranja društva.³

Filozofija mnogih mladih ljudi izvire iz životnog mota koji se često vidi u opisima fotografija na društvenim medijima: *Work hard, play hard*. Taj moto govori o prihvaćanju uloge konkurenta na tržištu i natjecateljskom duhu mladih radnika, ali i o ulozi slobodnog vremena u koje se ulaže zarađen novac. Marketinški stručnjaci počeli su svoje ideje usmjeravati prema iskustvenim mogućnostima proizvoda ili destinacija. Osobe velikog potrošačkog apetita imaju široku lepezu iz koje mogu izabrati iskustvo koje bi najviše željeli uramiti na zidu svog Facebook profila, jer kao što sad već ustaljena uzrečica kaže: „Ako se nije objavilo na Facebooku, nije se ni dogodilo.“

“The Bling Ring”

Lipovetsky tako piše: „Više nije toliko riječ o isticanju vanjskog znaka bogatstva ili uspjeha, koliko o stvaranju ugodne i estetske životne sredine ‘koja nam nalikuje’ – personalizirano i prijateljsko gnijezdo.“⁴ Doživljaji u takvom potrošaču brzo blijede i moraju se istog trena nadoknađivati novim

senzacijama kojima pojedinac oživljava svoje *ja*. U nastavku Lipovetsky piše: „Nema gubitka putokaza i miješanja stvarnosti i iluzije: samo očaranost koja proizlazi iz viška spektakularnog i obilja efekata, divljenje pred hipertrofijom obmana, užitak vezan uz stvaran svijet koji u potpunosti strukturiran od imaginarnog ukida stegu realnog u samom vremenu potrošnje. Opojno opuštanje u kojem se zabavlja vjerovanjem da je lažno postalo istinskim, da je drugdje ovdje, da nekoć zamjenjuje sada.“⁵

Jezik i struktura društvenih mreža poput Facebooka i Instagrama dopuštaju svojim korisnicima da o sebi izgrade sliku kakvu god žele, uz određena pravila cenzure. Polje mogućnosti predstavljanja nevjerovatno je široko, ali se ipak profiliraju određeni tipovi persona čije objave fotografija ili tekstova dobivaju najviše srca ili palčeva gore. Jedan od takvih tipova profila uočila je i Amalia Ulman koja je, prije nego što je odlučila konkretizirati svoju ideju na Instagram profilu, proučavala najpopularnije djevojke na toj društvenoj mreži, koje su nazivane *sugar babies* i *ghetto girls*. Iskoristila je način njihovog izražavanja na internetu, koncept njihovih *hashtagova* i [selfija](#) da stekne što više *followersa*, čiji je broj u nekom trenutku dostigao čak preko 72 000. U intervjuu za [Dazed Magazine](#) izjavila je kako joj je prijateljica spomenula da neka njezina poznanica odlazi u luksuzne hotele i tamo se fotografira jer je puno bolje u pozadini imati dotjeran interijer nego običnu spavaću sobu, jer to prolazi na Facebooku, jer je to novi kapital. Kako bi prikazala fotografiju kao označitelja društvene klase i tog novog kulturnog kapitala koji se reflektira u selfijima, njezin je lik pratio određen [narativ](#):

„Provincijalka se preseli u veliki grad, želi biti model, želi novac, prekine sa svojim dečkom iz srednje škole, želi promijeniti cijeli životni stil, uživa biti sama, ostane bez novaca jer nema posao, jer je previše opijena vlastitim narcizmom, odlazi na dogovorene spojeve s muškarcima, nađe *sugar daddyja*, postane depresivna, često se drogira, napravi plastičnu operaciju povećanja grudi jer ju *sugar daddy* čini nesigurnom u sebe, *sugar daddy* plati operaciju, ona doživljava slom, želi se iskupiti za sve, ispričava se, glupa plavuša postaje brineta i vrati se kući. Vjerovatno odlazi na rehabilitaciju, a onda se u primiri obiteljskoj kući.“

Od svibnja do kolovoza, fiktionalna Amalia Ulman na svoj je Instagram profil stavljala dopadljive fotografije svoje svježije dotjerane manikure, *selfije* iz spa centra, romantične fotografije s dečkom i onu najzapaženiju, fotografiju nakon operacije grudi ispod koje napisala:

Im safe n happy !! Soz for nsfw material and #frankenboob lol lookin forward to take bandages off; i really wanna help all girls out there considerin ba, really worth the pain lol keepin a diary in my fb.

Jezik je specifičan za društvene mreže, naročito za Instagram gdje je važno pokazati pozitivne misli uz fotografiju na kojoj se očigledno zabavljaš i odlično izgledaš. Tako je Ulman ispod fotografije na kojoj je u gaćicama i kratkoj majici s natpisom *Love* napisala:

ive realised that ive been reducin my worth by being self destructive. no more smoking, bad eatin or bad thoughts, i can still follow my desires without givin into every whim. #no #excuses #workout #strongisthenewskinny

Ispod fotografije na kojoj se prvi put pojavljuje s obojanom kosom u tamniju boju, napisala je:

ok done bak to #natural cuz im sick of ppl thinkin im dumb cos of blond hair.,,,, srsly ppl stop hatin !!how u like me now???

Ulman očigledno fotografijama i njihovim opisima želi komentirati reprezentaciju i manipulaciju ženskog tijela na društvenim mrežama. I muškarci i žene fabriciraju fotografije putem kojih se prezentiraju drugačijima nego što zbilja jesu, ali iza fabriciranih fotografija žena i njihovog tijela stoji mnogo više rada na izgledu tijela, kose, šminke, odjeće, svjetla... Sama je umjetnica utrošila sate i sate rada na vlastitom tijelu vježbajući ples na šipci kako bi dostigla ideal lijepe figure. No nije stvar samo u fizičkom izgledu, nego i u heteronormativnim stereotipima koje nam pružaju popularne romantične komedije. Ulman kritizira takav stav koji se često zauzima prema ženama bez bračnih ili partnerskih odnosa, a koji je pun sažaljenja i proizlazi iz uvjerenja da muškarac treba spasiti ženu i postati njezinim doživotnim zaštitnikom, dok je nasuprot njemu žena krhko biće kojoj je to potrebno. Zanimljiva je također i činjenica da je velik broj ljudi, nakon što im je obznanjeno da su sve prijašnje objave fotografija zapravo internetski performans, nastavio vjerovati da su one istinit prikaz života kakav vodi Amalia Ulman. Baudrillard u eseju *Simulacija i zbilja* piše: „Pretvarati se znači glumiti da nemaš ono što imaš. Simulirati znači glumiti da imaš ono što nemaš. Jedan podrazumijeva prisustvo, drugi odsustvo. Ali stvar je nešto kompliciranija, jer simulirati ne znači jednostavno prurušavati se (...). Dakle, glumiti ili pretvarati se znači ostavljati princip zbilje netaknutim: razlika je uvijek jasna, samo je zamaskirana; dok simulacija prijeti razlikovanju 'istinitog' od 'lažnog', 'zbiljskog' od 'zamišljenog'.“⁶ Ulman je izvrsno iskoristila mogućnosti društvene mreže kako bi izvela simulaciju

dopadljivosti fotografija i samim time pokazala simulacijsku narav društvenih mreža i opasnosti takve naravi.

Nije neobično što je Ulman smatrala da se za potrebe realizacije svog projekta mora preseliti u SAD, a pogotovo nije začudno što je izbor grada pao na Los Angeles. Za Los Angeles više se ne može reći da je Grad anđela, osim ako ti anđeli nisu *celebrityji* koji su se spustili među smrtnike kako bi propovijedali politiku konzumerizma i *lifestylea*. U tom slučaju Los Angeles nije toliko grad velevažnih zvijezda o čijim životima imamo prilike čitati na svakom koraku, već grad svih onih siromaha koji pokušavaju dostići taj status. Siromaha uvjetno rečeno, jer ako promotrimo financijske mogućnosti maloljetnika iz skupine kradljivaca u filmu *The Bling Ring*, možemo uočiti da se u kriminalne aktivnosti nisu upuštali zbog uvjeta u kojima su živjeli.

Dapače, svi potječu iz dobrostojećih obitelji, a neki su i školovani kod kuće. U filmu *The Bling Ring* Marc u intervjuu kaže: „Mislim da smo samo htjeli biti dio *lifestylea*. *Lifestylea* koji svi nekako žele.“ Tinejdžeri iz losanđeleskog Valleyja odlučili su nakon mnogih večeri provedenih u klubovima u koje su dolazile poznate osobe poput Paris Hilton i Leonarda DiCapria iskusiti još neisprobanu senzaciju provaljivanja u domove takvih zvijezda te ukrasti njihovu odjeću i nakit. U Marcovim pokušajima da odgovori Rebeccu od nauma da pljačkaju kuće, ona mu odbrusi: „U L.A.-u smo. Nemoj biti takva mala kuja.“ Možda odgovor na pitanje zašto su se odlučili na taj pothvat ne leži toliko u vrijednosti robe, već u činjenici da su ti predmeti bili izbor njihovih vlasnika i tako postali njihovim personaliziranim objektima koji su se pojavljivali u časopisima jednako često kao i njihovi vlasnici. Opsesija više nije bila posjedovati predmet nalik onom koji imaju Lindsay Lohan ili Orlando Bloom, već posjedovati točno taj predmet.

Homeschooling u filmu „The Bling Ring“

U filmu Sofije Coppole intrigantno je gledati lik Nicki i njezine dvije sestre Sam i Emily tijekom njihove svakodnevne lekcije koju im drži majka Laurie. Obrazovanje im se temelji na raširenoj i vrlo popularnoj knjizi *New Age* filozofije *Tajna* čija autorica Rhonda Byrne tvrdi da se vizualizacijom mogu dobiti sve stvari koje poželiš. Laurie s djevojkama izrađuje plakate poznatih osoba koji su dobri primjeri kako voditi kvalitetan život, među kojima se nalazi i Angelina Jolie, a kada ih pita kojim karakteristikama glumice se dive, one odgovaraju: njezinom mužu i dobrom tijelu.

Nicki ne preuzima odgovornost za svoje postupke, čak ni kad joj dokažu provalu videom s nadzorne kamere i pronalaskom ukradenih stvari u sobi. U stilu svojih uzora Lindsay Lohan i Paris Hilton, ona na suđenje dolazi u odjevnoj kombinaciji koju je unaprijed smišljala, s predimenzioniranim naočalama na licu i drhtavim glasom. Ne libi se dati ni izjavu za medije: „Čvrsto vjerujem u Karmu i mislim da je ova situacija privučena u moj život kao velika lekcija da bih mogla rasti kao spiritualno ljudsko biće. Želim voditi veliku humanitarnu organizaciju. Želim voditi državu jednog dana.“ Zvučeći kao prava *celebrity*, Nicki i dalje gaji potrebu za slavom. U intervjuu koji daje nakon odsluženih trideset dana zatvorske kazne, novinar ju pita o situaciji u ćeliji koju dijeli s Lindsay Lohan, a Nicki odgovara: „Čula sam je kako plače prvog dana što je jako teško kada pokušavate biti jaki. Ja sam se samo držala po strani i pokušavala izgurati kroz dan. Teško je kada vas bude u pet i trideset ujutro. Ona je mogla zadržati ekstenzije u kosi (...), ali bila je u narančastom kao i svi mi.“ Ni tada ne priznaje krivnju i poručuje gledateljima da prate njezinu internetsku stranicu.

Nicki iskorištava medijske postupke i pretvara ih u sredstvo svojih želja – a upravo u tome leži ironija: mediji su ti zbog kojih je postala grabežljiva za zvjezdanim *lifestyleom*, zbog kojeg je krala, zbog čega se pojavila u medijima, koji joj mogu pružiti željeni životni stil. Čini se da se uzroci i posljedice naprosto spajaju u krug koji se pakleno vrti bez prestanka, na jednak način na koji opstaje grad iz kojeg su se rodili i mediji i zvijezde i pokretne slike.

Moje je prvo pitanje bilo konzumiramo li mi stvari ili stvari konzumiraju nas. Čini mi se pomalo nesmotrenim tvrditi kako je nemoguće da nas stvari konzumiraju, ali je s druge strane isto tako teško čovjeku u potpunosti uskratiti volju izjavom da mediji kontroliraju svaku našu želju i potrebu.

Alexis Neiers (Nicki) svojim je postupcima sebi osigurala kratku slavu. Pratili su je internetski portali ekvivalenti žutom tisku poput TMZ.com, snimane su reportaže za zabavni program *E!* koji prikazuje i *reality show* sestara Kardashian, čak je poslužila i kao vrlo konkretna podloga za dugometražni film. Njezina se simulacija životnog stila nakratko prometnula u sam taj životni stil. Jednako bi se moglo reći i za Amaliu Ulman, koja je ipak u simulaciju krenula iz oprečnih razloga. Ulman također danas daje izjave i intervjue za različite umjetničke časopise i portale, a umjetnička joj je karijera krenula uzbrdo izložbama u renomiranim galerijama u New Yorku i Londonu. Možda pitanje o relacijama konzumacije mora stati u sjenu mnogo važnijeg pitanja: konzumiramo li mi simulaciju i postajemo li kroz tu konzumaciju i sami simulatorima *lifestylea*?

1. Baudrillard, Jean, *Selected Writings*, ur. Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1988, str. 29.
2. Lipovetsky, Gilles, *Paradoksalna sreća. Ogled o hiperpotrošačkom društvu*, Izdanja Antibarbarus d.o.o., Zagreb, 2008, str. 7.
3. Fisher, Mark, *Capitalist Realism. Is there no alternative?*, Zero Books, London, 2009.
4. Lipovetsky, str. 27.
5. Lipovetsky, str. 39.
6. Baudrillard, str. 168.

<http://muf.com.hr/2016/02/25/amalia-ulman/>

Performing for the Camera review – pain, passport photos and genital panic

4/5stars

Tate Modern, London

From a femmed-up Marcel Duchamp to Joseph Beuys in a fisherman's vest, there is plenty of humour in this survey of artists acting up for the lens – but it's the theatre of ordinary life that moves the most



Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 8th July 2014, (#itsjustdifferent), by Amalia Ulman. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa

Adrian Searle

@SearleAdrian

Monday 15 February 2016 17.34 GMT Last modified on Sunday 21 February 2016 23.47 GMT

Some 17 years ago, [I sat in a chair](#) and watched the artist Jemima Stehli undress. There was a camera watching, and I held the shutter release. As Stehli stripped, I took photo after photo. The camera was on me, and Stehli could only be seen from behind. There I am in my suit – dressed for the occasion, in sharp straight-man drag, thinking this would dramatise the discrepancy between the undressing artist and the male voyeur. There's the artist, shrugging herself out of her top and jeans.

Here at [Tate Modern](#) are those images again, of me and a number of other male critics in our one-on-one encounters, the male gaze captured along with the sweat, the self-consciousness and the sometimes awkward body language. Stehli's Strip is still redolent of the moment, its intimacy and distance, its artifice and uncontrived affect. Who, one asks, is being exposed here, and who is in control? And who is the photographer – even though I'm the one clicking the shutter?

[Performing for the Camera](#) is less a survey than a slice through the thousands and thousands of images produced between artists and the camera. There's no end to it. It's about self-exposure and self-dramatisation, the dynamics of confrontation: between photographer and subject, image and spectator. Photographic space becomes a theatre. Sometimes the photographer is witness, sometimes collaborator, sometimes the one in front as well as behind the camera. When we are photographed – mugshot, passport photo, press shot, selfie – we are all performing, for ourselves and for other people, if not for the camera. Nowadays we do it on YouTube and Instagram and Twitter, too, and any other platform you can think of. Which of my avatars shall I show you today?

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Yves Klein's Leap into the Void, 1960. Photograph: Shunk-Kender/J Paul Getty Trust.

[Yves Klein](#) was certainly performing when he was photographed both as he directed naked women to cover themselves in paint and press their bodies to a canvas and when he jumped from a ledge in 1960, not into the void but on to a waiting mattress. The mattress was montaged out of the artist's famous [Leap into the Void](#), under a grey suburban sky. Klein was careful of his public image, saw it as part of his art.

Other artists are less guarded and more self-parodic, delighting in the absurd and the abject: the wonderful [Boris Mikhailov](#), gleeful with a dildo, bleak and comic with the rubber bag and enema tube; Marcel Duchamp, femmed up as demure coquette [Rose Sélavy](#) in Man Ray's portraits; [Joseph Beuys in his fisherman's vest and trilby](#). But wait, Beuys's habitual comedy act uniform wasn't meant as absurd, any more than Andy Warhol's wig. And the poster of Beuys and Jeff Koons just makes me roll my eyes at all that boy-artist attitude.

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There is a great deal of humour and inadvertently stupid self-aggrandisement in [Performing for the Camera](#), but there is also much that is poignant, touching, confrontational, painful and joyful. Here's [Yayoi Kusama](#) painting spots all over everything and everyone around her. Here's Keith Haring, [covering Grace Jones in aboriginal designs](#), and Stuart Brisley getting all gooey and grisly, fecal and smeary in a 1975 performance for the camera. The wild gender plays of Eikoh Hosoe and Tatsumi Hijikata's Kamaitachi, in which Hosoe dances, leaps and poses in the fields and streets, sometimes to the consternation of a group of children, is full of joyous abandon and abjection in a series of gorgeous images.

The photographs of Klein – including that famously orchestrated leap – were taken by Harry Shunk and János Kender, who became court photographers to the art world in the 1960s and 70s, working in Paris, New York and farther afield. They photographed everyone – from New York conceptualist Dan Graham to dancer Trisha Brown – and their story is a kind of subtext to the early part of the show, much of which consists of gallery after gallery lined with black and white images mounted in black frames, and is exhausting to the eye.

There are too many photographs of Klein marshalling his naked models, the images as impeccable in their mounts as Klein was in his formal dress. And the best photographs of Brown and her dancers are actually those taken by Babette Mangolte, especially her record of the dancers performing among the water towers, ladders and asphalt of downtown New York rooftops. These ravishing images are filled with angles, planes and bodies in the sunlight, and they're all the better for being in black and white.

Mangolte's photographs have a deftness and concision that goes beyond documentation. Her shots of [Yvonne Rainer's](#) performance piece Boxes, in which bodies are clustered together in a shallow, vertical box, are sculptural in their complexity and dignity. She is more than a witness. Primarily a cinematographer, Mangolte memorably collaborated with Chantal Akerman in a number of films, including the 1975 feature [Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1030 Bruxelles](#).

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Untitled, 1975-80, by Francesca Woodman. Photograph: Estate of Francesca Woodman

But here's [Claude Cahun](#) in her check shirt, turning towards and away from us in a shot probably taken by her partner and artistic collaborator Suzanne Malherbe. However powerful, one image by

Cahun is insufficient, except to remind us to what degree the artist played with self-image and gender in the 1930s and 40s, was a forerunner to so many others, from [Eleanor Antin](#) to [Carolee Schneemann](#), Cindy Sherman to Hannah Wilke. Not to mention to VALIE EXPORT, whose adopted name is a kind of capitalised logo and whose [Action Pants/Genital Panic series](#) is also at the Tate, the artist posing with a gun, open-legged, her vagina exposed.

There is a mix of vulnerability and aggression here – and in the work of Antin, Schneemann and Wilke – that pushes you away as it drags you in. These images are traps for the unwary. A whole room (one of [Anthony d'Offay's Artist Rooms](#)) is devoted to Francesca Woodman, whose body appears and disappears, comes and goes in shadow and in light. It's still difficult to look at Woodman's precocious and delicate images without projecting the knowledge of her 1981 suicide at the age of 22 on to them.

A wonderful series of self-portraits by the Japanese photographer [Masahisa Fukase](#) sees him in the bath, smoking, submerged and reflected, a lonely divorced man performing that loneliness. And at the end of the show, we see a second series of photographs in which Fukase peers down at the street from a fourth-floor window as his wife departs every morning for work. She looks up, grins, sticks out her tongue, laughs, fixes him with a baleful look. It is the theatre of ordinary life, the best performance there is.

- At [Tate Modern](#), London, from 18 February until 12 June. Box office: 020-7887 8888.
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/15/performing-for-the-camera-review-tate-modern-exhibition>

Socialist Worker

Tue 9 Feb 2016, 16:51 GMT

Electronic Superhighway—how the internet has transformed art



Excellences & Perfections (2014-15) (Pic: Amalia Ulman)

Electronic Superhighway showcases over 100 artworks that look at the impact of computer and internet technology on artists from the mid-1960s to today.

The exhibition includes film, painting, photography, drawing and sculpture by more than 70 artists. Artists explore as digital image manipulation and authenticity.

A series of photographs from conceptual artist Amalia Ulman look at the impact of social media on attitudes towards the female body (above).

International artists and collectives examine the dot-com boom from the late 1990s.

The works are arranged in reverse chronological order. As the exhibition travels back in time, key moments in the history of art and the internet are revealed.

The gallery is hosting a series of free related projects, displays and events on various dates until June.

<https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/42133/Electronic+Superhighway%E2%80%94how+the+internet+has+transformed+art>

ART NET ART WORLD

Amalia Ulman Strips Visitors of Shoes and Phones At Frieze London

Lorena Muñoz-Alonso, Friday, October 16, 2015



Amalia Ulman

Photo: @amaliaulman Instagram

Operating a strict no shoes and no mobile phones policy, [emerging art world sensation Amalia Ulman](#) is screening her latest video work at the Live section of Frieze London 2015.

Entitled *The Annals of Private History*, the video explores the enduring appeal of private diaries as a space where female consciousness has traditionally been constructed, expressed, but also enclosed.

For this project, Ulman, [who gained notoriety last year thanks to *Excellences and Perfections*](#)—in which she uploaded over 200 selfies to her [Instagram account](#), presenting herself as a semi-fictional character in a variety of guises, from the sexy ingénue to the health goddess—has now turned her gaze towards North Korea, where she had traveled to for preparing *The Annals of Private History*.

"I'm interested in facades and propaganda, and Pyongyang is the best and most simplified example of that. I just wanted to see it with my own eyes," she told [the Guardian](#) of her research trip.

Still from Amalia Ulman's *The Annals of Private History* (2015).

Photo: Courtesy Arcadia Missa.

The result, an animated video-essay that plays with PowerPoint aesthetics and kitschy girly clichés, doesn't address the political and economical situation in the impoverished and oppressed country. It focuses instead on a fictional history of the private diary to address questions of repression, desire, and introspection.

These concerns are also echoed in the act of forcing viewers to remove their shoes and leave their phones (perhaps one of the most treasured markers of conspicuous consumption owned by the average art world denizen) in a bucket at the entrance to the screening booth.

"The act of making the viewer do something is the performative element of the piece," [Rozsa Farkas, director of the young London gallery Arcadia Missa](#), told artnet News of the inclusion of Ulman's film as part of the live art section of the fair. "But Amalia also wanted to play with ideas of authority, making viewers do something they might not necessarily be comfortable with."

Amalia Ulman's installation at Arcadia Missa, Frieze London 2015.

Photo:Linda Ny Lind. Courtesy of Linda Ny Lind/Frieze.

The piece, in typical Ulman style, is playful and subversive, keen on frustrating viewers' expectations. It is, according to Farkas, a "feminist piece," and yet, the narrator, voiced by Ulman herself in a flirtatious saccharine tone, is more femme fatale than bra-burner, alternating whimsically between innocence and perversity.

Another aspect that Ulman explores is the contemporary manifestation of the diarist: the vlogger. By using found sound footage from YouTube vloggers, Ulman probes our insatiable need to share our innermost issues with a faceless crowd. As with her Instagram posts, Ulman is cunningly prodding at the ways in which the Internet has become the ultimate arena where our private and public worlds collide and feed off each other.

By inhabiting the realm of online oversharing and by never establishing where the boundary between fiction and self-representation lies, Ulman cleverly mirrors and challenges our very current need of documenting and archiving our own existence, and of constructing and branding our own identities.

Interestingly, despite Ulman's relentless explorations of acts of disclosure (hers and others'), we learn very little of the artist herself in the process. The more Ulman seems prepared to give us, the more she becomes an unattainable mystery. And that is, perhaps, the secret of her growing success.

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/amalia-ulman-frieze-london-2015-340673>

Whitechapel Gallery: Exhibition Electronic Superhighway Shows Impact Of Technology On Artists

12-11-2015

In January 2016 the Whitechapel Gallery presents Electronic Superhighway, a landmark exhibition that brings together over 100 artworks to show the impact of computer and Internet technologies on artists from the mid-1960s to the present day.

New and rarely seen multimedia works, together with film, painting, sculpture, photography and drawing by over 70 artists feature, including works by Cory Arcangel, Roy Ascott, Jeremy Bailey, Judith Barry, James Bridle, Douglas Coupland, Constant Dullaart, Lynn Herschman Leeson, Vera Molnar, Albert Oehlen, Trevor Paglen, Nam June Paik, Jon Rafman, Hito Steyerl, Ryan Trecartin, Amalia Ulman and Ulla Wiggen.

The exhibition title Electronic Superhighway is taken from a term coined in 1974 by South Korean video art pioneer Nam June Paik, who foresaw the potential of global connections through technology. Arranged in reverse chronological order, Electronic Superhighway begins with works made between 2000 – 2016, and ends with Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T), an iconic, artistic moment that took place in

1966. Spanning 50 years, from 2016 to 1966, key moments in the history of art and the Internet emerge as the exhibition travels back in time.

As the exhibition illustrates, the Internet has provided material for different generations of artists. Oliver Laric's painting series Versions (Missile Variations) (2010) reflects on issues surrounding digital image manipulation, production, authenticity and circulation. Further highlights include a series of photographs from conceptual artist Amalia Ulman's four-month Instagram project Excellences & Perfections (2014-2015), which examines the influence of social media on attitudes towards the female body. Miniature paintings by Celia Hempton painted live in chatrooms go on display alongside a large scale digital painting by Albert Oehlen and manipulated camera-less photography by Thomas Ruff.

The dot-com boom, from the late 1990s to early millennium, is examined through work from international artists and collectives such as The Yes Men who combined art and online activism in response to the rapid commercialisation of the web.

Works by Nam June Paik in the exhibition include Internet Dreams (1994), a video-wall of 52 monitors displaying electronically-processed abstract images, and Good Morning, Mr. Orwell (1984). On New Year's Day 1984 Paik broadcast live and pre-recorded material from artists including John Cage and The Thompson Twins from a series of satellite-linked television studios in New York, West Germany, South Korea and Paris' Pompidou Centre to an estimated audience of 25 million viewers worldwide. Paik saw the event as a counter response to George Orwell's dystopian vision of 1984.

The birth of the World Wide Web in 1989 provided a breeding ground for early user-based net art, with innovators such as Moscow-born Olia Lialina adopting the Internet as a medium, following earlier practices in performance and video. In My Boyfriend Came Back from the War (1996) the artist presents a love story enacted via an interactive black and white browser screen.

The emergence of net art is explored through a curated selection of interactive browser-based works from the Rhizome archive, a leading digital arts organisation founded online in 1996 by artist Mark Tribe, and affiliated with the New Museum in New York since 2003. In 1999, Rhizome created a collection of born-digital artworks which has grown to include over 2000 and in recent years, it has developed a preservation programme around this archive.

One of the first ever major interactive art installations, Lorna (1979-1982) by Lynn Hershman Leeson presents a fictional female character who stays indoors all day watching TV and anticipated virtual avatars. Also on show is Judith Barry's video installation Speed flesh (1998), which lures viewers into an interactive computer-generated world.

A proliferation of experiments from the 1960s - 70s pushed the boundaries of technology. Artists such as Manfred Mohr, Vera Molnar, Frieder Nake and Stan VanDerBeek adopted computer programmes to create abstract and geometrical works while Roy Ascott, Allan Kaprow, Gary Hill and Nam June Paik used various new media to connect across multiple sites globally.

The exhibition concludes with artefacts from the formation of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T) in New York in 1966 which saw performances over nine evenings from artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage and Yvonne Rainer working together with engineers from American engineering company Bell Laboratories in one of the first major collaborations between the industrial technology sector and the arts.

Image: Surface Tension - Paris Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Surface Tension (1992) Courtesy the artist and Carroll/Fletcher, London. Installation photograph by Maxime Dufour © Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

Electronic Superhighway (2016 - 1966) - Whitechapel Gallery - 29 January to 15 May 2016

<http://www.artlyst.com/articles/whitechapel-gallery-exhibition-electronic-superhighway-shows-impact-of-technology-on-artists>

The Instagram artist taking on North Korea

Amalia Ulman went to the famously secretive Pyongyang for her latest art project – and this time it's genuine

News

20 days ago

• Text Dominique Sisley



via @amaliaulman

Amalia Ulman in North Korea





North Korea isn't exactly known for being a country of bold artistic expression. It's probably down to that whole "tyrannical regime" thing. In fact, nowadays, it's more about human rights violations and eerie silence – a mysterious land that probably won't ever make it onto your top ten list of prospective holiday spots.

Conceptual artist Amalia Ulman wasn't going to let that put her off though. In a feature published on *The Guardian* today, she revealed the details of her latest project – and somehow, it involved a trip to the country's famously secretive capital, Pyongyang. "I had found out about tourism in the DPRK by watching a

documentary on Spanish TV,” she told *The Guardian*. “As soon as I knew that (going there) was a possibility, I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I planned the trip for half a year, and there was not one day when I wouldn’t look at Korean content or read books about life in Pyongyang.”

The Central Saint Martins' graduate put together photographs, sounds and videos of her trip for new project, “The Annals of Private History”, which is being shown at London's Arcadia Missa gallery this week.

“I’m interested in façades and propaganda, and Pyongyang is the best and most simplified example of that,” she added. “I just wanted to see it with my own eyes.”

Ulman, who famously duped the internet with her “Excellences and Perfections” project, initially had her Instagram followers skeptical over the authenticity of the trip – though it's now been officially confirmed. However, she's quick to point out the difference between her Instagram shots and the project itself. “Korea was in the back of my mind but definitely not the main focus,” she adds. “It definitely connects to the regime in the DPRK but also to any sort of propaganda machine, totalitarian regime or abusive relationship.”

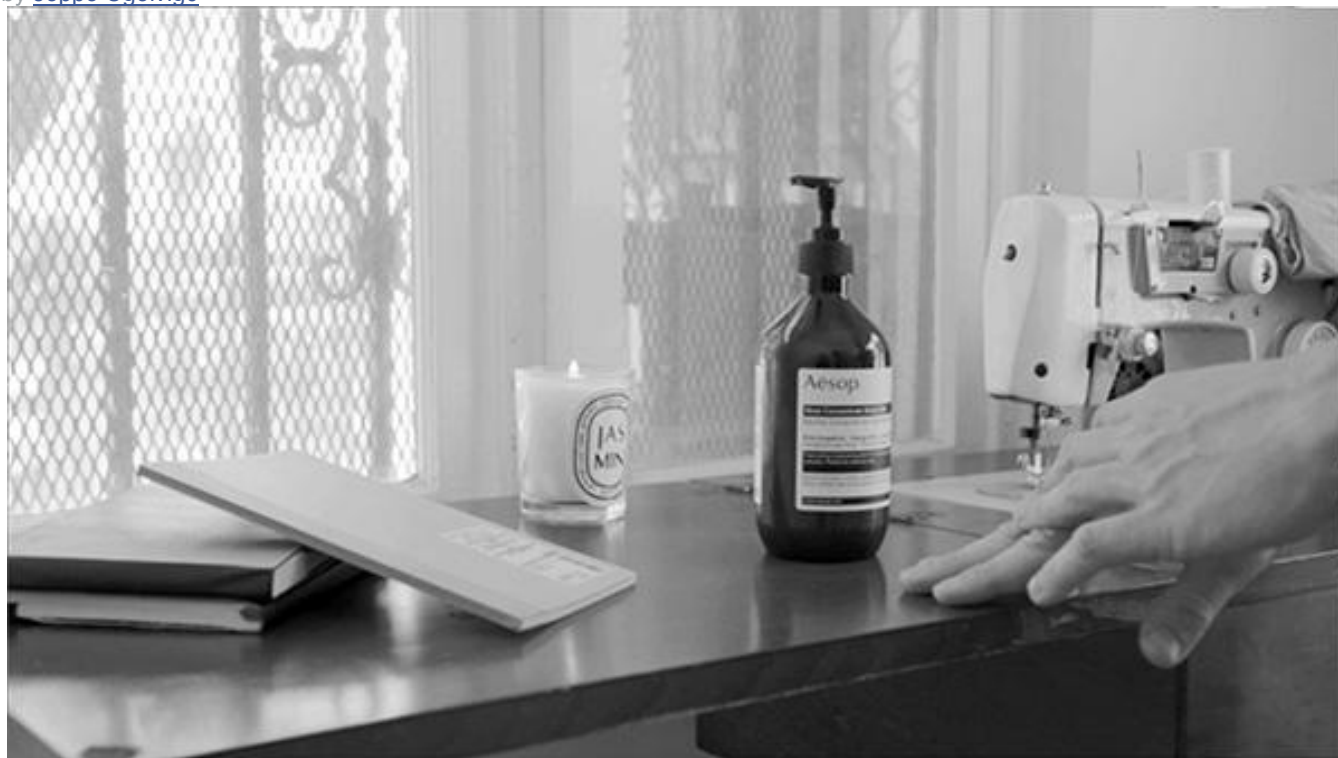
You can see more of Amalia's Pyongyang trip on her Instagram [here](#), or you can catch “The Annals of Private History” at London's Frieze Live festival this week. Follow Dominique Sisley on Twitter here [@dominiquesisley](#)
<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/27008/1/the-instagram-artist-taking-on-north-korea>

DIS MAGAZINE

How to Sleep Faster #6: Sex

September 17th, 2015

by [Jeppe Ugelvig](#)



Amalia Ulman.

The 6th issue of *How to Sleep Faster*, the critical theory/poetry journal published by Arcadia Missa, continues HTSF’s investigation into contemporary sociopolitical and philosophical issues through the prisms of feminism, queer theory and Marxist critique. For this issue HTSF attempts to grapple with the most intimate of all subjects: sex. As a response to the mainstreaming of much identity-political discourse on sex (#heforshe, Everyday Sexism, No More Page Three, to mention a few), ‘the act of fucking’ is tackled in various formats and from various angles: poetry, history, politics, labour, aesthetics, protest and reflections on everyday life. As its editorial note expresses, the issue explores “sex that has formed us for better and worse; (...) the sex we still have not done, but wish

to imagine.” What has motivated this group of contributors, ranging from historians, artists, poets and composers, to write or make art about sex today? What can we learn from the sexual? Below are a series of excerpts, as well as comments made by some of the many individuals who took part in the creating of *How to Sleep Faster* 6.

your kitchen is clean. i get undressed, climb up on the table. you tell me,
take that silly look off. you tell me, raise your arms above your head,

hold on to that **cupboard door.**

you say, your rib cage is magnificent.
you say this 3 or 4 times.

you invite me to admire your **big money.**
you ask me intellectual questions about more money.

i am bending over the table, **vomiting**
poetic nail bombs.



Penny Goring.

Brooke Palmieri is a London-based historian specializing in 17th century England, its ideas and mythologies and radical communities. In her essay *Sex & Alchemy* she problematizes the conceptualization of historical sex, that is to say the archeological investigation into sex of the past. How was sex before capitalism, for example? Or sex without representative governance?

“It’s a pretty safe space to think about sex in, say, the seventeenth century. Sex that is 100% conceptual is 100% consensual, it stops when you get bored imagining how fucked up it all used to be for people 300 years ago.”

Focusing on the 17th century, Brooke carefully reviews historical sources of the time – like the 1680 book [The School of Venus, or the ladies delight](#), which can vaguely be described as a sex guide written in the peculiar literary style of ‘Whore Dialogues’, a historical form of erotica typically written by straight men in the form of liberal conversations between imagined female prostitutes. Rather than the truth, accounts of intercourse found in such performative literature should be read as intricate layers of mediations, narrations and representations, continuously redefined as the text travels through changing forms of owner- and censorship.

Adam Saad.

Jeppe Ugelvig: Why do you think it is important to discuss sex today?

Brooke Palmieri: I think sex is the ultimate moving target within embodied human experience, so there will never be a word or image precise enough to really pinpoint what happens during sex and what that will come to mean for the people involved. You’re always fucking in three tenses: past, present, and future; you have your precedents, you have an immediate experience, and more murkily you have a future identity you’re aiming toward that this experience will come to populate. Like any transcendental experience it’s important to keep talking and producing documentation of it as a way to grapple with its shifting nature. My ideal would be to replace scripture with sex: give it endless traditions of exegesis and commentaries on what it means, endless schisms and heresies that take on cults of their own. Excessive documentation and discussion of sex requires the realisation that it’s always changing. Which brings me to your second question:

JU: What about sex do you feel still requires urgent addressing, and in what way can sex be a scope for us to discuss current social, political or philosophical climates?

BP: I think that it's important to distinguish the need to talk about sex from the need to legislate or discriminate based on it. A whole lot of ideas about sex over the centuries have hardened into rules that have harmed people. In this way there should be endless talking about sex to avoid getting too complacent with what has already been said.



HIS CORPORATE CUNT ART, Sidsel Meineche Hansen; Credit: Nikola Dechev.

My piece was about dredging up some historical representations of sex that show it to be just as elusive, fun and troubling for people to describe 300 years ago as it is now. Examining rare surviving historical representations of sex disrupts any kind of progress narratives we've come to appreciate about sex in society –there is no universal progress, only progress for some, depending on the time and place.

As Palmieri rightfully points out in her essay, talking about sex in the 17th century can only ever be a talk of its representation. However, the representation of sex, and particularly, sex' image, is saturated with a multiplicity of symbols that tells us how we might think about, idealize, fear and (mis)use sex today. This is precisely the interest of British artist Ruth Angel Edwards, another contributor to HTSF, as she explains in an e-mail:

I'm interested in the way sex, or imagery that symbolises sex (in an established mainstream sense) has become a ubiquitous part of visual culture. It's to me the most raw, exposed example of the way out desires are co-opted into and exploited by the machinery of late Capitalism. What interests me in particular is the way the same reproduced images and image 'types' are so prevalent that their proposed function as something actually sexual is undermined. We are almost immune. So what is left is a kind of gesture towards something which is in itself abstract. You could argue that images of women in this context are not actually 'about' women at all, or even about sex. This area is an obvious space for discussion, rebellion and subversion at this point in time. Sex is intrinsically linked to the language of consumerism and induced mass distraction through constant mild titillation. We need to invent a new language, exposing the power structures at play, imbuing existing images with new meaning and creating our own.



Amalia Ulman.

Sex' presence in contemporary visual culture is undeniable, from advertising's embrace of pornographic tropes to the the fetishistic overtones of much fashion. Ruth's digital collage Pornstep sources its visual components from various music and video-sharing websites as it tries to decipher the phenomenon Pornstep; "a form of Dupstep so filthy and whorelike it's part of a whole new sub-genre." Real and animated fetishistic images of supposedly lustful women are superimposed with track titles like "D'n'B/Dubstep Rape Mix" and "special dedications to a Bitch" – reminding us that pornographic appropriations most often advances to straight up misogyny and/or female violence.

In her work *No Right Way 2 Cum* (2015), Danish artist Sidsel Meineche Hansen breaks the recent ban of female ejaculation in UK produced pornography– by extending it to the virtually immersive. Through the use of Oculus Rift, Hansen captures the 3D model 'Eva v.3.0' in a female-ejaculation scene in a CGI format. Her piece was shown at Temporary Gallery in Cologne and Kunsthaterhaus Bremen earlier this year, and confronts the viewer with the reminder that even in the virtual, which once promised utopian abstraction from the hegemonies and normativities of real life, sex (when commercialised) is maintained in a gendered, binary representation. Nonetheless, the piece is distinctively sex-positivist with regards to 'female' sexuality – and will hopefully be disseminated eagerly as a virtual form of sex-activism vs mainstream 3D porn planforms like *X Story Player*. In an e-mail, Sidsel describes her approach to the project:

With the neo-liberalisation of feminism and queer happening, I firstly had to think about if and how I was complicit with this development. I pass as: European, white, female, (currently) heterosexual and able-bodied, and therefore I can only address queer politics theoretically in order not to appropriate queer identity. I think this question of appropriation and by extension – the question of how technology can be used to appropriate sex and gender – is important. Capitalism has always appropriated sex both for reproduction purposes and surplus value. But currently, under advanced capitalism both biological and (predominantly female) virtual bodies are accumulated through the gender binary, and I'm interested to know how the latter complicates identity politics. The female avatar, it seems, is becoming an incubator for patriarchal 3D sex and therefore a cyberfeminist analysis and exploration of sex in VR is important, I feel.

As *How to Sleep Faster* quickly establishes, sex is a site of political conflict – a site of violence and suppression, but also debate and protest. With the emergence of communication capitalism (read: commercial social media) co-opting the sexual affect we previously kept private sex becomes an even more pressing issue in contemporary critique of society.

... and we have realised we may have to backtrack, as we never began with the way that we may be able to see our own sexuality as distinct from capital's assembled mantra of 'sexy' – instead, we took certain freedoms to 'have' sex as meaning that sex was not a valid site for resistance. We think we were

wrong. For one, whilst sex is still used as a violence, it cannot ever be fully a freedom, which is why we must renegotiate the sex we are doing, and the terms we are doing it on. (Editorial note)

Specifically, due to sex' constant and at the same time liberating and suppressing appropriation of already-established power and gender roles, sex is always-already political and must be deconstructed in relation to its actors, its motivations and its effect.

Aurorae Parker.

Rozsa Farkas's essay on reproduction rights and patterns in the US and UK demonstrates how neoliberal capitalism haunts the sexual, as it does all aspects of our lives. Feminism, she argues, has wrongly been blamed to be the cause of stagnating birth rates since the '60s, while in fact such a development is more intricately entangled in the violent societal structures imposed by neo-liberal capitalism's post-Fordist production systems. Discussing the writing of radical feminist thinker Shulamith Firestone and Foucault, she dissects the gendered labour of human re-production.

"If our technological development wasn't harnessed by capitalism, to enable more women to produce children or not (we're still waiting for the male pill to actually come – 2020 apparently), but rather, to produce children in situations not only outside of gender roles, but outside of sex itself, then maybe reproduction wouldn't continue the gendering of labour, and thus be so tied to it."

Once sex is considered within a labour/political paradigm, it can similarly become a weaponized form of agency, and even of protest:

"Non-reproduction is a refusal to recreate the apparatus of capital (which involves much unpaid labour). Sometimes non-reproduction involves not so much 'no babies', but a demand to not reproduce certain relations, rather than to simply stop making more people."

In fact, even sex's very negation – celibacy – has, if released from its association to conditioned life-praxis dictated by oppressive belief systems, the "potential to perform as as a political statement against a capitalist, repressive society." In her contribution to the issue, Hatty Nester explores the argument of celibacy as protest and as the ultimate declaration of sexual autonomy, targeting the misogynist overtones in the concept of 'sexual freedom'.

Elsewhere in the issue, James La Marre, a poet and digital designer based in New York, reflects obsessively upon aquatic analogies of the body: water as symbol for the body's fluidity. In an e-mail he explains his motivations for discussing 'the sexual' today:

Since at least the beginning of an epistolary history, sex in mainstream, popular culture has largely been relegated to the technologies, which fuel the pursuit and eventual rendezvous of bodies in space. The use of these technologies has become more and more dangerous, however, as sex remains hierarchized along ideological, political, and party lines — nudes and dick pics leak more often than their corresponding body parts, and end up stored on more than just a fragment of paper. Foregrounding the act of bodies converging in space and time, sometimes within/around/through hierarchies, marginalized communities actively subvert or bloat passages in the pyramid, like water rushing through the sinking mecca of Atlantis.

In his contribution to the issue, entitled Dammed Bodies, he recalls fragmented experiences and observations of the liquids of the human body in relation to its surrounding spatial infrastructures. "Can damming occur in the body?" he asks in the beginning of his text. Through time and experience, 'the body' is collected, distributed, rushed, replenished, modified, left stagnant, and dammed, just like the highly-structuralized water supplies it lives off.

Standing still, just for a moment, trying to anoint this moment with permanence, yet fluidity. Attempts to move, on, fast, but to cling all the while

These are my thoughts in a VIP booth at MiArt, using a bored look grazing over the other singular man in the area. Although now I look up and see he's gone. Maybe he thought I was sketching him.

Anyway I don't give a shit about that guy, just occupied by a feeling — I will go and look at more art and a desire to go back to the park and sleep there. It's d odd though — I don't feel safe here.

Does more than fifty percent of my water come from a single source? Does it go to a single source? Who aligned the tributary, pointing sometimes toward the moon — sometimes toward you, so much I have to drink water continuously all day or I start heaving, deserts forming at the dams, air passing over dry parts as water rushes anywhere else, anywhere but my heavily modified water body.

Sex, while problematic in many ways, continues to exist as a window to a utopian fantasies wherein we imagine new possibilities of social, political and physical (infra)structures — and perhaps, targeting its embedded problematics may lead to a better future.

Cristine Brache.

<http://dismagazine.com/blog/78385/how-to-sleep-faster-6-sex/>

Can art exist on social media?

TOM JEFFREYS

[From the December issue of Apollo: preview and subscribe here](#)

Can artists and the wider art world use social media for more than marketing or self-promotion? The most exciting practitioners now working across digital platforms certainly think so

The arrival of a new passport is not usually newsworthy. But, in July 2015, when the Chinese artist and activist [Ai Weiwei posted a photo of himself with his new passport](#) to image-sharing website Instagram, the world responded with barely contained excitement. The story was covered by the New York Times, CNN, and Time among others.

The photo was newsworthy for a number of reasons: the first was that since his 81-day detention by the Chinese authorities, Ai had had his passport confiscated and was denied foreign travel. The arrival of a new passport therefore seemed to suggest a softening of the government's stance on Ai's art and activism. The second is that Ai Weiwei has become something of a cause célèbre in the West. There are cynical reasons for this, for while his activism is widely praised, his art has often been criticised as simplistic or shallow. But by fêting an artist whose work has been banned in his own country, Western art institutions are able subtly to trumpet their own liberal humanist beliefs without offending anyone important closer to home.

Arguably, museums stand to gain more from an exhibition of Ai's work than Ai does himself. His online reach is huge: he has 297,000 followers [on Twitter](#), 175,000 followers [on Instagram](#), and, as that passport photo showed, his every move is eagerly followed by the world's media. With this kind of impact, it's hardly surprising that global art institutions – many of which are struggling to come to terms with wholesale cuts in public funding – should seek a little of Ai's mass allure. The fact that his only involvement in these exhibitions was from a distance seems not to have been a deterrent. During his confinement within China, exhibitions of his work were held in Washington, New York, Berlin, and San Francisco. Since the return of his passport, Ai has attended openings at Helsinki Art Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and been appointed professor at the Universität der Künste Berlin.

The excitement around Ai Weiwei's every move is great news for digitally savvy art institutions. The Royal Academy has held an hour-long question-time with the artist on Twitter, held a successful Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign to bring his tree sculptures to its Burlington House courtyard, and programmed a special late-night opening entitled [‘Digital \(Dis\)connections’](#), featuring sensory installations, workshops on artificial intelligence, and classes on how to counter government surveillance. ‘The response has been extraordinary,’ says Nick Sharp, the RA's head of digital. ‘Our audience changes for each show at the RA, but you can definitely see a different sort of visitor for Ai Weiwei. ‘Digital (Dis)connections’ placed the show at the heart of a lively evening full of innovative programming. Nearly half the visitors to the Late were aged 18–29, which is quite a departure for the RA.’

Such initiatives demonstrate the art world's growing enthusiasm for all things digital. In recent years, museums and galleries have come to see the internet not simply as a useful marketing tool, whose aim is solely to increase visitor figures or online sales. Rather, the digital realm has become another environment in which institutions can realise their aims. Digitisation has been widely championed as a way of presenting pieces from a collection or archive that are not on public display for reasons of space, fragility or budget. While this often involves launching custom-made websites, social media can make it simple. In October, for example, Tate posted *Pitheads* (1974) – nine black-and-white photographs by Bernd and Hilla Becher – on various digital platforms. It received over 4,000 'likes' on Instagram alone.

What museums have realised, the market has realised too. There has been much [furore of late around Stefan Simchowitz](#) – art collector, Hollywood producer, and co-founder of MediaVast, a photo-licensing website that was sold to Getty Images for \$200 million in 2007. Simchowitz uses Facebook and Instagram to promote young artists, discuss their work with other collectors, and boost the value of these works by exposing them to a mass audience (Simchowitz has more than 73,000 Instagram followers). An early champion of art-market star Oscar Murillo, Simchowitz currently favours sparse, abstract paintings, by the likes of Lucien Smith and Jacob Kassay. Art critic Walter Robinson has christened the genre 'zombie formalism' for its lack of originality. In a process that has come to be known as '[flipping](#)', the works are then sold on for quick and sizeable profits. Lucien Smith's painting *Secret Lives of Men* was sold in 2012 for \$10,000 and then resold a year later for \$319,135. As Katya Kazakina pointed out in Bloomberg Business, that's an increase of more than 3,000 per cent.

Artists themselves have responded to the rise of social media sites such as Instagram in creative ways. Since closing her East London gallery La Scatola in 2013, curator Valentina Fois has used the gallery's website as an online platform for a series of digital residencies under the title [#Post](#) and [#Post2](#). Some 24 artists, including Sarah Maple, Emilie Gervais, and Lawrence Lek, have now produced works for the site. These have included videos, animations, images, and text – many of which could only ever exist online. 'Contemporary art derives from conditions and influences particular to our society,' says Fois, who recently curated a 'pavilion' for The Wrong – the world's largest digital art biennale. 'In Western societies many of these parameters are formed by digital technology. It is therefore unavoidable that artists are influenced by the internet and digital technology.'

A number of the artists taking advantage of new platforms are unashamed tech-enthusiasts, uncritically championing the latest technology. The more interesting, however, take up a position of ambivalence. Several of this latter group share an interest in exploring the performance of identity, and how this is being shaped by new technologies. Helen Carmel Benigson makes rap videos and appears on Twitter as Princess Belsize Dollar. On Instagram, Amalia Ulman launched *Excellences & Perfections* – an online performance in which the artist pretended to be an aspiring LA actress undergoing cosmetic surgery. In reality, she was recovering from a serious bus crash. Ulman is one of the 'post-internet' artists

loudly championed by Simchowitz. Fois cites her work as ‘a great example of how to use social media as a canvas’.

In some ways, Ulman’s work is typical of a new generation of internet-savvy artists, for whom social media is one means of self-expression among others. Characteristic of such works is the blurring of the lines between fact and fiction. Ulman was not the person she pretended to be; nor did she undergo breast augmentation, as her Instagram posts claimed. But she did attend pole-dancing lessons, and, according to a feature by Michael Connor on rhizome.org, she did strictly follow the ‘Zao Dha Diet’. Further investigation, however, suggests that even this diet may be the work of an artist: its website is defiantly old-fashioned (a common characteristic of ‘post-internet’ art) and the only event associated with the diet was programmed as part of ‘Bold Tendencies’ – an annual art exhibition in a multistorey carpark in Peckham, south London.

Such tricksiness may be a recurring attribute of this kind of art, but this is not simply postmodern game-playing for its own sake. Certain common themes have emerged: alienation, community, the constructed nature of identity, our relationship with technology, our always-mediated understanding of truth and reality, and the fetishisation of appearance. Much of this work is highly political – bound up with a feminist, anti-racist critique of neoliberal economics (something entirely missing from, for example, [Richard Prince’s appropriation of Instagram images](#) for an exhibition at Gagosian).

In 2015 Benigson had a solo show at Carroll / Fletcher gallery in London entitled ‘Anxious, Stressful, Insomnia Fat’. Across video and installation, the artist repurposed online imagery in order to explore both the way that the internet exerts normative pressures on the individual and the relationship between the virtual and the physical body. The internet is often hailed as a safe space for empowering self-expression. What such work, and comparable projects by the likes of Sarah Maple and Tamsyn Challenger demonstrate is rather how existing structures of power are played out again and again online.

Particularly instructive here is the work of Jesse Darling, whose online output – across Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr – has sometimes overshadowed an artistic practice that includes sculpture and installation as well as a version of Antigone for the Serpentine. Last year, for example, Darling was described by Steph Kretowicz on dazeddigital.com as best known for her ‘unmediated, self-revealing Twitter performance’. The artist quickly rejected that description. ‘I see my “social media activity” as pretty typical for someone roughly of my age and demographic,’ she told me via email.

But Darling’s rejection is more complex than it may first seem. ‘The only way to survive Facebook is to see it as a stage of sorts,’ she said in 2012, ‘and to see yourself as a performer.’ That such activity is a performance is widely acknowledged. But does that make it art? Darling no longer believes this to be true. Instead, she compares the social media use of today’s artists to the diaries of Andy Warhol or the notebooks of David Wojnarowicz: ‘read and distributed among peers, partially immediate and partially archive, and seen – crucially, and with no real ambiguity – as ancillary to the work itself’.

So why is there so much confusion around Darling’s own online activity? Partly perhaps it’s the role-playing of artists such as Ulman. Partly, it’s Darling’s own

public output, the register of which varies dramatically, from Twitter idiom to the formality of the lecture theatre. Darling herself has a more interesting explanation: she argues that the 'persistent reading' of her social media activity as art is 'a sexist trope that collapses the "low work" of the social media user into the idea that alterity [women, queers, anything beyond whiteness] can only self-autobiographise, because all it can understand with any authority is itself'. Nobody makes the same assumptions about, say, Gilbert and George.

On the RA's website is a list of Ai Weiwei's most memorable aphorisms. At the top is one from a 2011 Der Spiegel interview: 'Life is art. Art is life. I never separate it.' What the work of Ulman, Darling, Benigson et al. demonstrates is that Ai is too glib here. Indeed, while his art was travelling the world, Ai's physical body was placed under house arrest. An artist's life and their work have never been simply separate or simply the same. Because our lives are now lived through images that, formally at least, are indistinguishable from art, this relationship is now harder to read than ever.

<http://www.apollo-magazine.com/can-art-exist-on-social-media/>

Krayola Juice Visual Thinking 1 - Spring 2015



"Excellences & Perfections" by Amalia Ulman

I was sort of excited to see that, as food for thought for our Instagram gallery assignment, our professor shared with the class an article about Instagram as Art which mentioned Amalia Ulman. But, well, maybe not that excited, after I hear a classmate talk about how Ulman's Instagram performance was such bullshit and should not be regarded as art. Well, it made me chuckle that she did say that, because I do understand how someone can think that, and I even have two other friends who have expressed a similar opinion about Ulman: they say her Instagram and Facebook persona's aren't art, that they are at best a well done personal style, but that she is overreaching in wanting to be taken seriously. I don't know very easily how to respond to these criticisms I hear. I think Amalia Ulman is an artist, and not just because she's done more conventional pieces like paintings and installations.

<https://instagram.com/amaliaulman/>

From April to September 2014, Amalia Ulman staged a performance on Instagram titled "Excellences & Perfections", but it was not publicly known to be a performance until after it ended. In this performance she took photos of herself going through various phases which were both stylistic phases and ones which told a narrative. At first her fashion was that of an Urban Outfitters / Tumblr type of girl conveying a docile Precious Moments pink pastel femininity. She hurt her leg once, and portrayed this with a gentle cuteness. After this she became an Iggy Azalea type of girl with a sugar-baby ghetto or "hoodrat" style. She took more selfies in classy hotels and photos with a man sleeping in the hotel bed, and even took videos of herself pole dancing and shaking her behind. She also posted numerous photos of herself getting several plastic surgeries, most notably breast implants. Following an emotional breakdown, her third phase was one with a minimalist IKEA simplicity reminiscent of a soccer mom or girl next door, healthy and into yoga.

It turns out she did not actually spend her nights in hotels, but merely sneaked into hotel rooms for the sole purpose of taking selfies, which is something she heard some girls actually do, unironically for their selfies and not their artwork. She did not have an emotional breakdown either. Ulman's surgery was the most controversial part of this all. It seems to have been real. Some concepts behind her performance are: how cultural capital is expressed through social media, femininity as performativity, the female body in general as a construction, and the allures of our cultural notions of beauty, vapid allures which range from banal to gaudy.

Though Ulman's art is undoubtedly conceptual, it is all the more captivating for its soft beauty. This is above all most noticeable in her Facebook selfies and some of her earlier Instagram selfies, which are artsy and elusive, often having her camera zoomed in to increase compression artifacts, sometimes showing only her face or part of her face in a mirror or reflection. Her aesthetic throughout her performance is very much intended to be bland and stereotypical, but in a way her portrayal of this mediocrity finds a kind of refined poetry that would be lacking in the middlebrow femininity she means to parody. Is this refined poetry even there, or is it an emperor's-new-clothes illusion caused by my perceiving her to be an artist? Of course, this beauty I speak of is so subtle that many people do not see it. I am aware of the possibility that, if

I am really enamored by what I perceive to be beautiful here, then it only says of me that I have internalized the societal standards dictating that this kind of femininity is the ideal and most beautiful kind, as this art is surely meant to be only a parody of femininity, right?

When I first stumbled upon her Instagram and Facebook profiles I was instantly enamored, even not knowing then that her photos and their captions are supposed to be "performance art". She had not outed it all then as being a performance, yet I did understand instinctively that there was a tongue-in-cheek playfulness in the way she exaggerated her lifestyle, but that even amid this it was beautiful. I would have described it then as a post-ironic fashion: similar to the accelerationist (ultra-capitalist) tendencies of the contemporary artists she is frequently grouped with (artists featured in DIS Magazine and Rhizome) she approached an aesthetic and subject matter which is unprecedented in its near-tackiness such as to almost be perceived as ironic or a joke, but approached so carefully and deliberately and immersed in its beauty so sincerely that it cannot be ironic. It blurs the lines between irony and sincerity.

With her Instagram performance, and arguably her Facebook persona as well, Ulman has kind of perfected into an artform the beauty many American women strive for. Once we have familiarized ourselves with more academically valid opinions, once we have divorced ourselves from bourgeois expectations, we consider this kind of beauty vapid, and not a beauty at all. Ulman confronts us with this vapid beauty, with her subtle artistry, her very accelerationist and very contemporary deliberateness, and it causes a kind of cognitive dissonance. This is what I mean by post-irony: it is a kind of parody, but it is not done at a distance as with irony; it is channeled sincerely, as if unironically, that it begins to exude the kind of appeal it would exude if it were not a parody, and it is all the more richer for this. Even if one still reads it as a parody, her performance can still at least prove that the kind of feminine beauty she is parodying is very real in how bewitched by it we still are. But wait! I want to be bewitched by art. That's what I like about art! I want to be bewitched by art, and that's why I do not even feel ashamed for having fallen for this conventional, bland, stereotypical, middlebrow, basic beauty. I even daresay that this tug of war between viewing it as a satire and taking it in for its beauty could even be interpreted as actually making her art challenging, in a good way. Ambivalence and ambiguity give depth to the beauty; Ulman herself even said of her performance: "I felt very uncomfortable with the idea of self-branding, so my anti-capitalist approach to this was to destroy my online persona, to the point of creating this fake truth that I couldn't even fight with. It was all about the power of the image. I was also sick of the stereotype of the young female artist, so I was playing around with self-destruction and becoming the opposite, becoming a persona that would bring up mixed feelings: on one side attraction and on the other deep repulsion, even nausea."

For another very good example of accelerationist post-irony in contemporary art I want to recommend the music label PC Music. They make pop music that is very sugary and vapid and bubblegum, but also subtly surreal and original and playful, that you get this same kind of reaction of cognitive dissonance, or tug of war. You don't know if it's sincere or a joke but you love it anyway, all the more because it is so surprising to you that an artist has found a way to make you like an aesthetic which you normally dismiss as being too banal. This post-irony is what I feel sums up our present generation perfectly. We are torn between an ongoing intellectual progress and the bombardment of consumerist pop culture. As artists we can no longer satirize our consumerist pop culture in simplistic postmodern or Warholian ways. We have driven ourselves so deeply into pop culture itself that we cannot escape it. And even irony has soaked our mainstream culture that we no longer feel witty or artistic when using irony, and we can't communicate to each other about almost anything without at least some trace of tongue-in-cheekness. And we are buried so much beneath irony, that how else can we reach any kind of sincerity or authenticity than by working with what we know: irony? And lastly, as artists inspired by the avant-garde century before us we want to make something new and original; irony in itself is so commonplace it is no longer new, so it must be stretched into new forms and made more complex in our art.

A notable difference between the post-irony of PC Music and the post-irony of Amalia Ulman is that PC Music is done with a foundation of sincerity, while I'm not sure if the same can be said about Amalia Ulman. I'm almost certain I read in an article that Ulman was a tomboy when she was younger and did not even care for societal ideas of feminine beauty. But I can't find where she said this so I'm not sure if her saying this is real or if I imagined it. If it is real, I find it to be a wonderful bit of information, and reminds me of how I perform masculinity in my own art. Anyway, I did find articles in which she explained that she seemed out-of-character during her Instagram performance, but that she herself was fascinated enough by things like body modification and the culture of Instagram celebrities, so with this fascination her art cannot have been entirely insincere. But anyway, Excellences & Perfections can certainly be interpreted as a playful exercise in post-irony in its portrayal of aesthetic beauty (as I like to interpret it), but it can also be interpreted simply as a purely conceptual satire effective at mocking the grim truth of our contemporary culture.

- Claudio Urbina

<http://krayolajuice.tumblr.com/post/112382039138/excellences-perfections-by-amalia-ulman-i-was>

La artista que convirtió los clichés de Instagram en una performance

Amalia Ulman colgó un tópico tras otro en las redes sociales durante cuatro meses. Su idea era confundir al mundo del arte y denunciar los estrechos estereotipos a los que se reduce a las mujeres.

BEGOÑA GÓMEZ URZAIZ

30 DE OCTUBRE DE 2015



Amalia Ulman, a lo Kardashian con el clásico selfie sexy de baño.

Foto: Cortesía de Amalia Ulman y The Influencers.

En persona, la artista Amalia Ulman, nacida en Buenos Aires hace 26 años, criada en Gijón y con residencia entre Londres y Los Ángeles, parece ir caracterizada para una versión *amateur* de *Bitelchús*. Es pálida, pequeña, morena y viste de negro. **Si uno mira las fotos de su Instagram de aproximadamente un año, parece otra persona: melenón rubio, escotes, moño de bloguera, manicura japonesa.** Por entonces colgaba fotos de sus meriendas cromáticamente organizadas, con fresas y aguacates, de sus jarrones con hortensias y de tazas de té en plano picado, más alguna que otra cita inspiracional. Hasta puso un gatete con una corona de flores muy Coachella'2008. Y no faltaron las poses de yoga y los dibujitos que se hacen con la espuma del latte. Durante cuatro meses, **Ulman encarnó a una supuesta “mujer básica de Instagram” y lo hizo en nombre del arte.** Se trataba de una performance titulada *Excellences and Perfections* que utilizaba esa red social como soporte y que consiguió engañar incluso a sus amigos cercanos.

Ulman, que prefiere hablar en inglés de su trabajo –el castellano lo deja para los gatos, dice– estuvo la semana pasada en el Centre de Cultura Contemporània Barcelona hablando de su trabajo en *The Influencers*, el festival que lleva más de una década celebrando la confusión digital en el arte, la comunicación y todo lo que queda en medio. El proyecto, cuenta, surgió

de un autoexamen muy crítico de su propia cuenta de Instagram. **“Sin darme cuenta, me había convertido en el sueño húmedo de todo profesor de filosofía.** Aparecía como la clásica artista indie de pelo negro que cuelga fotos de su gato. No es que tratase de construir un personaje pero siendo yo misma, que es lo más cliché que se puede ser, lo estaba haciendo y lo odiaba. Así que la idea era autodestruirme creando un estereotipo que no fuese bienvenido en el mundo del arte. Quería representar a todas esas mujeres a las que no se les permite formar parte de él”.

Avisó tan sólo a cuatro personas, entre ellas su galerista en Londres, y se puso a “transicionar” en tres fases, que hoy siguen siendo muy fáciles de distinguir en su Instagram (@amaliaulman) porque tienen cada uno su propia paleta de colores. **“El primer personaje era el de una chica arty que podría llevar un tumblr –explica–, el segundo una sugarbaby a la que le encanta el hip hop, el lujo y las marcas, que pasa una crisis, se recupera y pasa a encarnar el tercer estereotipo femenino, el de una chica Goop, a lo Gwyneth Paltrow, promotora de las velas aromáticas y las terapias alternativas”.** Ulman se metió a fondo en el personaje, fingió incluso que se había operado el pecho (en la etapa *sugarbaby*) y cambió su manera de escribir: **“Investigué qué tipo de expresiones usaban estas chicas y qué emojis son sus preferidos. Básicamente, se trata de hablar de manera infantil”.** Vivir en Los Ángeles, una ciudad en la que uno no se encuentra a sus amigos por la calle, le ayudó mucho a dar credibilidad al proyecto. **En el mundo del arte, como ella había previsto, creyeron que se había vuelto loca.** “Podría haberlo hecho con un nombre falso, pero ese no era el objetivo. Mi pregunta era: ¿cómo artista, puedo permitírmelo?, **¿mis videoensayos pierden valor si enseño el culo en Internet?** Y que respuesta es que sí, que perdieron valor. **Una galería con la que trabajo pero no es la que me representa me pidió que dejara de hacer eso, que la gente me odiaba y estaba destrozando mi reputación”.**

Cuando dio por finalizado el proyecto, ofreció una conferencia en el Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo de Londres en el que lo contaba todo. Por si acaso, porque temía que hubiese desconfiados, se aseguró de que algunas instituciones tenían el guión de su trabajo antes de empezarlo y un comisario del New Museum de Nueva York catalogó todas las fotos. **“Sabía que la gente sería tan misógina como para pensar: oh, mírala, ahora dice que es arte”. ¿Hubiera podido hacer lo mismo un artista masculino?** Según Ulman, la hipótesis ni siquiera es plausible. **“¿Qué hubiera hecho? No existe una construcción así para hombres. Para las mujeres todo es una construcción.** Tú no naces y decides qué tipo de chica quieres ser, es algo que viene de fuera. Por eso las mujeres entendieron mejor esta *performance*. **Los hombres no entienden cuánto trabajo supone ser una chica.** Son una serie de rituales, desde vestirse a teñirse el pelo, que se dan por hechos y que los hombres pueden escoger hacer si quieren, pero no están obligados a seguir”.

Después de aquello, cuando Ulman **colgó una foto en su Instagram localizándose en Pyongyang, sus seguidores pudieron pensar que se trataba de otro montaje. Pero sí que estaba en Corea del Norte, preparando su último proyecto, *The Annals of Private History*,** relacionado con los diarios femeninos, del que también habló en su charla en Barcelona. **La artista quedó fascinada por un reportaje de TVE sobre el país que le envió su madre y pasó seis meses “obsesionada” con Corea del Norte y su estética,** “que tiene mucho que ver con la mía”. Le fascinan, dice, **esas habitaciones limpias y ordenadas hasta el delirio en las que cualquier baratija hecha en China recibe el tratamiento de obra de arte.** Viajo hasta allí sola, con la ayuda de una agencia especializada, y asegura que **no es tan difícil entrar en Corea del Norte, sólo “muy, muy caro”.** Lo primero que le sorprendió del país fue lo “aburrido” que resulta. “Estamos tan sobreexpuestos a estímulos de todo tipo, de arte, de diseño

gráfico, de publicidad, moda. Todo eso es de alguna manera creativo e irónico. Y **no estamos preparados para soportar un lugar sin ironía, en el que todo es lo que es**". En cambio, le alivió ver cómo incluso en la sociedad más uniformada, las personas transparentan su diferencia incluso sin quererlo. **"Allí puedes ser subversivo sólo por tu manera de moverte. Ves andar a la gente por la calle y ya sabes quiénes son prorrégimen y quienes simplemente sobreviven"**, dice. La postura y el movimiento están en su radar, sobre todo desde que sufrió un grave accidente del que se está recuperando. Ahora barrunta utilizar una barra de *strip tease* en su próxima *performance*, que tendrá un formato "casi de Hollywood, con baile y efectos especiales". De una manera extraña, dice, la barra le recuerda a las muletas que usaba hasta hace poco. Habrá que estar atento a su Instagram.

<http://smoda.elpais.com/articulos/amalia-ulman-convertir-topicos-de-instagram-una-performance/6905>



Amalia Ulman at a Pyongyang shooting range. Photograph: Amalia Ulman

Charlotte Jansen **The Guardian**

Thursday 15 October 2015 06.00 BST Last modified on Friday 16 October 2015 11.03 BST

North Korea is known for many things – but rarely is it contemplated for its aesthetics.

While some international artists have addressed the politics and human rights abuses of Kim Jong-un's regime, few have travelled to the country to experience their effect firsthand.

But Amalia Ulman has. The 26-year-old graduate of Central St Martins has been outspoken about the suffering inflicted by social and political structures, and recently travelled to the secretive country as part of a new art project. The result is a surprising and personal portrait of the capital city, made up of photographs, video and sounds titled The Annals of Private History, presented by London gallery Arcadia Missa as part of Frieze Live in London this week.

Ulman's work is known for sparking controversy. Last year the artist fooled the internet with her "Instagram performance", Excellences and Perfections. Over four months, she constructed an alternate identity through semi-fictional, staged posts. Sneaking into high-end hotels and luxury apartment buildings to pose for perfect selfies, she posted images of familiar consumer clichés (avocado toast, latte art, yoga) often captioned with trite text and hashtags as a comment on how identity can be constructed through commodities.

So when images of North Korea began to appear on Ulman's [Instagram](#) feed, it seemed at first that it might be another hoax: the first post, location tagged "Pyongyang", was a picture of the artist doing the splits in a hotel room. More images followed from the [famous Koryo Hotel](#), then a shooting range, a department store and a restaurant, along with videos of Ulman accompanied by a Spanish-speaking tour guide. Though published when the artist was back in the US, they turned out to be genuine documentation of her recent tour.

'I didn't want to be cynical'

Speaking about the trip, Ulman explains that she became obsessed about the country after watching a television programme. "I had found out about tourism in the DPRK by watching a documentary on Spanish TV. As soon as I knew that [going there] was a possibility, I couldn't get it out of my mind. I planned the trip for half a year, and there was not one day when I wouldn't look at Korean content or read books about life in Pyongyang.

"For the same reason I live in LA, because I'm interested in façades and propaganda, and Pyongyang is the best and most simplified example of that. I just wanted to see it with my own eyes."

Having given a lecture in Beijing on 6 September, Ulman took an [Air Koryo flight into Pyongyang](#), as part of a trip facilitated by the tourism company Koryo Tours.

From her previous work, it's easy to see why Ulman became fascinated with the artificial image that North Korea presents to the outside world – but to visit is audacious, not only for safety reasons, but for the ethical questions it raises.

Some of Ulman's followers on Instagram asked about [how the money from tourism might be used to fund the regime](#), while others were keen to know about Ulman's experience of poverty, famine and repression.

"I didn't want to be cynical about it. But as soon as I assimilated the famines, the gulags, the violence, I decided, while not forgetting about all of this, to focus on the people and their individual stories, on how it felt to be there, the quality of the air, the routines, the presence of the stars at night."

Restrictions on creative production are tight in North Korea. There is barely any access to the internet, and all art must be endorsed by the government, most being [produced by the Mansudae Art Studio](#) – a giant art factory employing 1,000 artists.

Yet Ulman's atypical documents of Pyongyang, which she shot with permission from her guides, present North Korea from a different perspective.

"Everyone that I had met was really great," she says. "They have an incredible attention span and can remember everything you say. I felt a thirst for knowledge in all of them.

"They are encyclopaedic about everything, because that's the only way for them to know about the outside world.

"After we got to know each other, my translator and I became friends, and I tried to explain to him my life and how it was structured. He was very curious and tried to make sense of it all using what he knew about art in his country, which is mainly used for the production of propaganda. So he'd ask me: 'Who do you make art for?'"

Exploring the capital and daily life, Ulman gathered rare information on the North Korean relationship to fashion, aesthetics and culture.

"Watching documentaries on the DPRK I realised how their aesthetics were so similar to my art in many ways.

"I've been doing a lot of research on the idea of 'cute' and the way the regime there is always sugar-coated with flowers and sentimentalism always fascinated me."

I've been doing a lot of research on 'cute', and the way the regime there is always sugar-coated always fascinated me

Amalia Ulman

Ulman says she also found many connections between the DPRK and her upbringing in Europe. "In many ways it was exactly the same as I had expected, but in others it was way more relaxed than I thought, especially when it came to security controls. It was surprising to me to have so many flashbacks of the post-dictatorship mining town I grew up in, in Spain.

The power in Ulman's work is that it draws parallels, and connects us in provocative and humanist ways

"As a socialist place where no one has more than anybody else and everyone is equally poor, one thing that I found in common: bad food and an extreme feeling of boredom."

Though the final work – a fictional history of women and diary writing – is not directly about the DPRK, it addresses the impact of repressing emotion and freedom of expression on individuals and groups.

"It definitely connects to the regime in the DPRK but also to any sort of propaganda machine, totalitarian regime or abusive relationship. So Korea was in the back of my mind but definitely not the main focus."

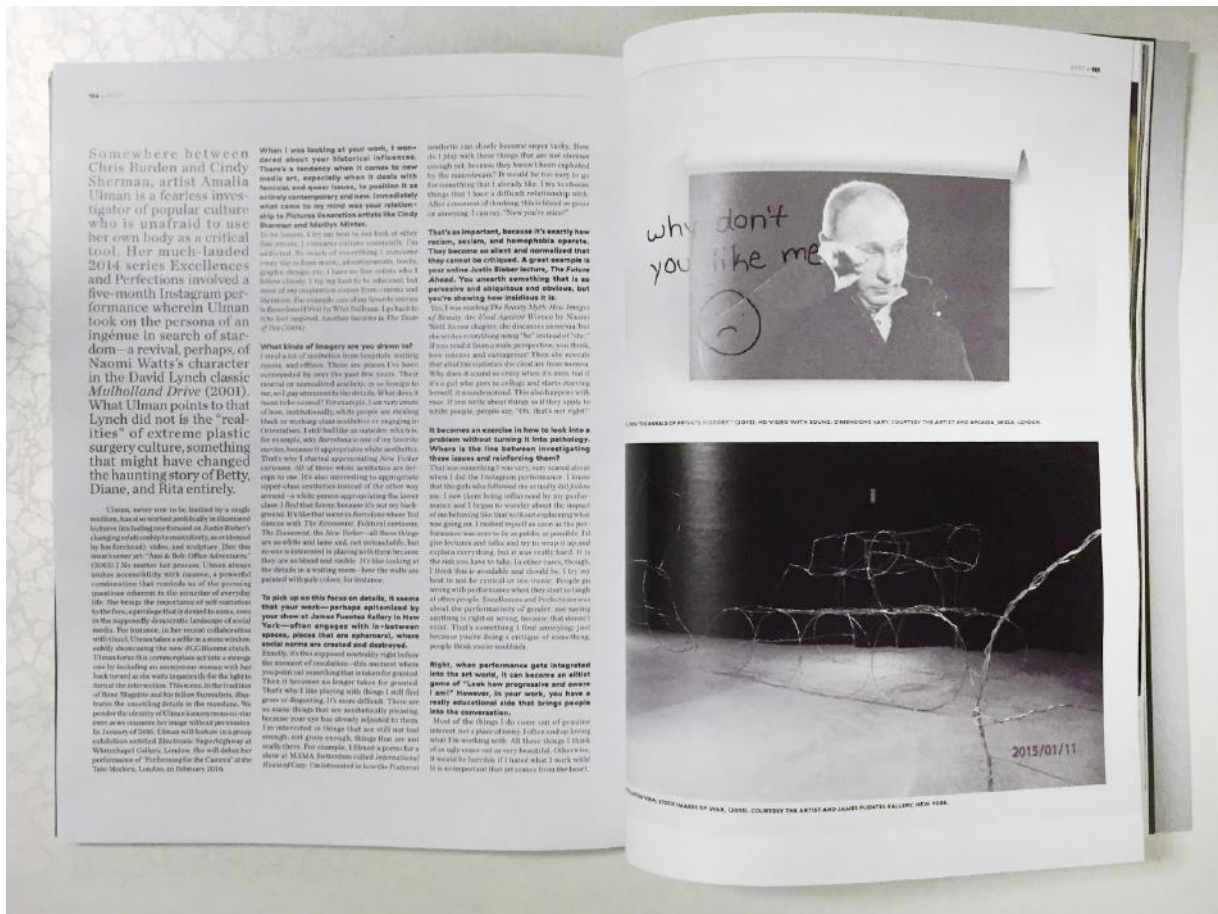
Kim Jong-un wants two million foreign visitors a year by 2020, but debate rages over whether travellers are a force for good – or merely prop up the regime

Read more

Like much of Ulman's work, critique is oblique: through the troubling truth embedded in a perfect surface, a commentary on the brutality of underlying systems and structures emerges.

Often when an audience looks at a place like the DPRK, it seems removed, far from our own values, but the power in Ulman's work is that it draws parallels, and connects us in provocative and human ways.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/15/amalia-ulman-in-north-korea-instagram-hoax-frieze>



AMALIA ULMAN

By RACHEL SMALL
Photography SEBASTIAN KIM



AMALIA ULMAN IN NEW YORK, JULY 2015.

Last year at Art Basel Miami Beach, a little-known artist named Amalia Ulman appeared on a panel called “Instagram as an Artistic Medium.” Instagram was for real selves, real insight, real art, and

◀ | ▶ 1 of 5 ✕

Amalia Ulman

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Photography **SEBASTIAN KIM**
Stylist **MICHELLE CAMERON**

AMALIA ULMAN IN NEW YORK, JULY 2015. DRESS:
CHRISTOPHER KANE. SKIRT: DIOR. RING: ULMAN'S OWN.

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Amalia Ulman

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Photography **SEBASTIAN KIM**
Stylist **MICHELLE CAMERON**

DRESS: ALEXANDER WANG. COSMETICS: NARS,
INCLUDING AUDACIOUS LIPSTICK IN BETTE. HAIR
PRODUCTS: SACHAJUAN, INCLUDING STRAIGHT AND
SHINE SPRAY. HAIR: HIRO + MARI FOR SALON87/BRYAN
BANTRY AGENCY. MAKEUP: FARA HOMIDI FOR NARS
COSMETICS/FRANK REPS.

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above all, selfies, according to her esteemed co-panelists Simon de Pury, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Klaus Biesenbach, and the company's CEO, [Kevin Systrom](#). Their points, however, were somewhat compromised by the fact that the then-25-year-old Ulman spoke first. In a slideshow presentation, she explained how she spent five months crafting a falsified persona under her handle [@amaliaulman](#). In 186 posts, the Instagram artwork *Excellences & Perfections* chronicled her character's move to "the big city," initial elation, a nervous breakdown, and eventual self-acceptance. Taking cues from popular users, Ulman played up gendered symbols of luxury (selfies in posh settings; softly lit frothy cappuccinos and rose petals; a breast augmentation) all tuned to her fictitious emotional roller coaster. She wound up with 89,000 followers. "It was funny to have other panelists saying, 'Instagram is a place where you can be yourself,'" Ulman reflects. "People love believing in things, and people still think the internet is a place of authenticity, but everyone is selecting, or even fabricating, what they post."

Ironically, many first learned of Ulman through the Miami presentation, and soon after, she went viral in her own right as a promising young artist. Last January she had her first New York solo show at James Fuentes gallery, an installation of desolate wire sculptures as a meditation on violence, partly inspired by her hospitalization after a bus crash in 2013. (It is now on view at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art.) In a show this past spring at Showroom MAMA in Rotterdam, she directed an adult film with porn stars playing creative-industry hipsters. This month at Frieze London, she's looking beyond selfies to a more surreptitious form of feminine expression for a piece entitled *The Annals of Private History*. Through a fictionalized video essay about the history of diaries and women, she ponders "cute" journals with locks given to girls and contrasts them to anonymous online spaces where people detail taboo experiences like fasting, plastic surgery, and prostitution. "Everything is so public now, so everyone self-censors," she says. "It's only within these diaries or forums where that's not the case." She plans to trap viewers in a cushy white room without their phones, where they will be subjected to the video's infantilizing voice-over until their pre-assigned number is called and they are permitted to leave.

Ulman's practice may seem enigmatic, reflecting the messiness between real and digital identity, but specific themes have emerged: in particular, she riffs on millennial narcissism, teasing out performative displays of "pretty" and "cute" that serve to mask conspicuous consumption and self-involvement. Growing up in the north of Spain, she made virtual friends in chat rooms and is still curious about the nature of human connection on the internet. Ulman has also taken up pole-dancing classes for exercise since her injuries from the bus crash left her unable to jog, and will choreograph pole-dance scenes for a play she's working on. She's even built a dance studio into her new home in Los Angeles. Notably, Ulman has decided against having access to the internet in the apartment. "I like having some sort of restraints," she says. "I need a space where I can be bored and look at the ceiling and think."

We spoke with Ulman over lunch when she was visiting New York.

RACHEL SMALL: So, does your apartment even have a bedroom?

AMALIA ULMAN: Yes. It's a one-bedroom apartment, just for me. Half is a ballerina studio: I have mirrors, the pole, the barre, the stretch rope. I don't need the internet. I never did ballet, but my mom used to dance, and I think she never saw me as [suited] for ballet because I was kind of clumsy.

SMALL: How did you get into pole-dancing?

ULMAN: I started doing it for the pictures for *Excellences and Perfections*, and then I started doing it because I cannot run anymore. I used to run every night and I love that buzz. It takes a long time to get into it because the first months are really boring, because there's a lot of training, and then you get to the point where you spin around and it's like, "Whoa—what did I just do?" That's when people get addicted to it and keep on going because there's so much to learn.

I'm very interested in including pole-dancing into my work, especially because of the background it has and how it's tied to pornography, to prostitution, to strip tease. I know a lot about the sex industry, but I've never been to a strip club. It's not like I don't like it, but I'm just interested in the technicality, how the body relates to that. For women that do pole-dancing, their bodies are different,

way more muscular, and they're not feminized at all. So it's a weird contrast. Yeah, it's sexualized, but still, they look really strong, you know?

SMALL: It's, theoretically, traditionally for someone else's entertainment but actually you have to be pretty powerful to do it.

ULMAN: It's confusing because it's tied to the sex industry. There's ignorance about the history of it, like circuses and all these kinds of performativity.

SMALL: So, in *Excellences and Perfections*, there are pictures of you pole dancing?

ULMAN: Just holding the pole. But that's the studio I still go to.

SMALL: Did you research that location, or the others that you photographed yourself at, or was it coincidence that you found them?

ULMAN: I have to say, I really do plan out most of my locations, but I also get really lucky, to be honest. I leave a lot to chance. I like putting myself in situations where things will happen, instead of planning everything...I feel like I'm very stubborn. I will insist, "It's not working! It's going to work!" And then something really bad happens and I think that I shouldn't have insisted so much. I should have let it go. So, in my work I like when things keep on flowing.

Forcing things or trying to manipulate them too much, in the end, that doesn't work for me. I need to be around someone a few times to remember their names; it's the same for lived experiences. That's why I travel a lot because I can't just read or research something. I have to go through it to be able to understand it. Which makes things interesting, but it is kind of dangerous sometimes. But, I can't work otherwise.

SMALL: Wait, how is it dangerous?

ULMAN: I mean, less so now, but when I was younger I would put myself in slightly dangerous situations because I felt I needed to go through them instead of just reading about them. I would travel by myself a lot—too much—without any experience. I don't regret it because it was obviously a good learning experience, but now it's like...what was I doing?

SMALL: But it is so important to throw yourself into situations where you don't know what is going to happen. Because when there is a situation that you don't expect, and you don't choose, then you're better equipped to handle it, I feel.

ULMAN: That's why I still enjoy libraries. I was a librarian [at Central Saint Martins] and I always liked that way better than the internet. There's that chance [element]—you can just walk around and find something and it's not determined by your previous searches. That's why I sometimes find the internet very limiting. Everything starts getting smaller and smaller and smaller, whereas if you go to an analog place, like in a library, or if you travel somewhere, something will happen in front of you that will change your research, your direction. That's something I appreciate. One of my favorite things was putting [other students'] books back. There would be books that I would know, and then there would be another book I would have never thought [to look for], because it's one step outside of my field. I find that very interesting in terms of fate and research and leaving something up to chance and not having absolute control.

SMALL: Everyone talks about how "the internet is so limitless," but most people just go on Facebook, check Twitter, and check Instagram. It's a cycle. Moving to your piece for Frieze Projects, *The Annals of Private History*, which you are doing in collaboration with Arcadia Missa gallery, can you walk me through the concept?

ULMAN: I'm very interested in this idea of women writing diaries and how all that information gets lost. The internet has all of these anonymous diaries that *remain* sources of information for this kind of knowledge that is not published anywhere, [because it is] looked down upon, or taboo. For example, as an escort, you can get guidelines and tips. There are also fasting diaries—people who go on fasting retreats and start writing diaries—and you can see the progress of them losing spark...some of them are transcripts from paper and [they write things like], "I can't hold a pen anymore because

I'm so weak." There are anonymous diaries for plastic surgery. It's knowledge in the form of diary, anonymous diaries, that build these parallel histories that are not a part of the mainstream. But, at least they're not lost. Before, I'd say that these diaries would be written in a notebook and be forgotten. Now, I believe they have relevance.

SMALL: And it's in the service of others.

ULMAN: I think in a place as social as the internet, right now, these spaces are still old school, anonymous sources of information. It's purely about knowledge, instead of creating this cultural capital through your image or whatever. It's in the anonymous, hidden blogs where these people will post all the information, and all the frustration, tears. [For] other people, all these feelings and emotions [are hidden] because everything is so public now. So [they act as if] everything is fine, because we're being photographed all the time. Everyone self-censors. I think it's also because so much pressure, or value, has been put on branding and monetizing that there's the mindset, "Oh, it's not worth it if no one's going to see it."

SMALL: And your self-brand can't be nuanced. Everyone wants to know what to expect. Maybe a tiny surprise, but nothing actually shocking. You have to give people what they want without offending them or boring them.

ULMAN: With *Excellences and Perfections*, people got so mad at me for using fiction. That was the main critique: "It wasn't the truth? How dare you! You lied to people!" Well, that's because you should learn that everyone is lying online. I'm not the first one! There are so many girls that go to hotels to take a better selfie, or another expensive place. If they're trying to be a social climber or whatever, that's what they do. It's normal. It's becoming more and more normal to be conscious of those things. It's funny how people still take it with this value of truth.

SMALL: Seriously. How will *The Annals of Private History* installation be set up?

ULMAN: I'm thinking about it as a video essay. The environment is inspired by a visit to the American embassy in Madrid, and also to my recent visit to North Korea. Continuing my interest in waiting rooms and "non-places," we are creating a claustrophobic space and a series of guidelines to make the visitors uncomfortable; we're taking away their phones and shoes. The idea is for people to focus and follow the video's instructions, given by the narrator, which are directed to the audience. The script

FLAUNT



10 NOVEMBER 2015

AMALIA ULMAN

This Reality Is a Fantasy Is Not a Test

Somewhere between Chris Burden and Cindy Sherman, artist Amalia Ulman is a fearless investigator of popular culture who is unafraid to use her own body as a critical tool. Her much-lauded 2014 series *Excellences and Perfections* involved a five-month Instagram performance wherein Ulman took on the persona of an ingénue in search of stardom—a revival, perhaps, of Naomi Watts’s character in the David Lynch classic *Mulholland Drive* (2001). What Ulman points to that Lynch did not is the “realities” of extreme plastic surgery culture, something that might have changed the haunting story of Betty, Diane, and Rita entirely.

Ulman, never one to be limited by a single medium, has also worked prolifically in illustrated lectures (including one focused on Justin Bieber’s changing relationship to masculinity, as evidenced by his forehead), video, and sculpture. [See this issue’s cover art: “Ami & Bob: Office Adventures,” (2015).] No matter her process, Ulman always unites accessibility with nuance, a powerful combination that reminds us of the pressing questions inherent in the minutiae of everyday life. She brings the importance of self-narration to the fore, a privilege that is denied to some, even in the supposedly democratic landscape of social media. For instance, in her recent collaboration with Gucci, Ulman takes a selfie in a store window, subtly showcasing the new #GGBlooms clutch. Ulman turns this commonplace act into a strange one by including an anonymous woman with her back turned as she waits impatiently for the light to turn at the intersection. This scene, in the tradition of René Magritte and his fellow Surrealists, illustrates the unsettling details in the mundane. We ponder the identity of Ulman’s anonymous co-star even as we consume her image without permission. In January of 2016, Ulman will feature in a group exhibition entitled *Electronic Superhighway* at Whitechapel Gallery, London. She will debut her performance of “Performing for the Camera” at the Tate Modern, London, in February 2016.

When I was looking at your work, I wondered about your historical influences. There’s a tendency when it comes to new media art, especially when it deals with feminist and queer issues, to position it as entirely contemporary and new. Immediately what came to my mind was your relationship to Pictures Generation artists like Cindy Sherman and Marilyn Minter.

To be honest, I try my best to not look at other fine artists. I consume culture constantly. I’m addicted. So much of everything I consume every day is from music, advertisements, books, graphic design, etc. I have no fine artists who I follow closely. I try my best to be educated, but most of my inspiration comes from cinema and literature. For example, one of my favorite movies is *Barcelona* (1994) by Whit Stillman. I go back to it to feel inspired. Another favorite is *The Taste of Tea* (2004).

What kinds of imagery are you drawn to?

I steal a lot of aesthetics from hospitals, waiting rooms, and offices. These are places I’ve been surrounded by over the past few years. Their neutral or normalized aesthetic is so foreign to me, so I pay attention to the details. What does it mean to be normal? For example, I am very aware of how, institutionally, white people are stealing black or working-class aesthetics or engaging in Orientalism. I still feel like an outsider, which is, for example, why *Barcelona* is one of my favorite movies, because it appropriates white aesthetics. That’s why I started appropriating *New Yorker* cartoons. All of these white aesthetics are foreign to me. It’s also interesting to appropriate upper-class aesthetics instead of the other way around—a white person appropriating the lower class. I find that funny, because it’s not my background. It’s like that scene in *Barcelona* where Ted dances with *The Economist*. Political cartoons, *The Economist*, the *New Yorker*—all these things are so white and lame and, not untouchable, but no one is interested in playing with them because they are so bland and visible. It’s like looking at the details in a waiting room—how the walls are painted with pale colors, for instance.

To pick up on this focus on details, it seems that your work—perhaps epitomized by your show at James Fuentes Gallery in New York—often engages with in-between spaces, places that are ephemeral, where social norms are created and destroyed.

Exactly, it’s this supposed neutrality right before the moment of revolution—this moment where you point out something that is taken for granted. Then it becomes no longer taken for granted. That’s why I like playing with things I still find gross or disgusting. It’s more difficult. There are so many things that are aesthetically pleasing, because your eye has already adjusted to them. I’m interested in things that are still not bad enough, not gross enough, things that are not really there. For example, I filmed a porno for a show at MAMA Rotterdam called *International House of Cozy*. I’m interested in how the Pinterest aesthetic can slowly become super tacky. How do I play with these things that are not obvious enough yet, because they haven’t been exploited by the mainstream? It would be too easy to go for something that I already like. I try to choose things that I have a difficult relationship with. After a moment of thinking, this is bland or gross or annoying, I can say, “Now you’re mine!”

That’s so important, because it’s exactly how racism, sexism, and homophobia operate. They become so silent and normalized that they cannot be critiqued. A great example is your online Justin Bieber lecture, *The Future Ahead*. You unearth

something that is so pervasive and ubiquitous and obvious, but you're showing how insidious it is.

Yes, I was reading *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* by Naomi Wolf. In one chapter, she discusses anorexia, but she writes everything using "he" instead of "she." If you read it from a male perspective, you think, how intense and outrageous! Then she reveals that all of the statistics she cited are from women. Why does it sound so crazy when it's men, but if it's a girl who goes to college and starts starving herself, it sounds normal. This also happens with race. If you write about things as if they apply to white people, people say, "Oh, that's not right!"

It becomes an exercise in how to look into a problem without turning it into pathology. Where is the line between investigating these issues and reinforcing them?

That was something I was very, very scared about when I did the Instagram performance. I know that the girls who followed me actually did follow me. I saw them being influenced by my performance and I began to wonder about the impact of me behaving like that without explaining what was going on. I rushed myself as soon as the performance was over to be as public as possible. I'd give lectures and talks and try to wrap it up and explain everything, but it was really hard. It is the risk you have to take. In other cases, though, I think this is avoidable and should be. I try my best to not be cynical or too ironic. People go wrong with performance when they start to laugh at other people. *Excellences and Perfections* was about the performativity of gender, not saying anything is right or wrong, because that doesn't exist. That's something I find annoying; just because you're doing a critique of something, people think you're snobbish.

Right, when performance gets integrated into the art world, it can become an elitist game of "Look how progressive and aware I am!" However, in your work, you have a really educational side that brings people into the conversation.

Most of the things I do come out of genuine interest, not a place of irony. I often end up loving what I'm working with. All these things I think of as ugly come out as very beautiful. Otherwise, it would be horrible if I hated what I work with! It is so important that art comes from the heart.

Written by William J. Simmons

<http://flaunt.com/art/amalia-ulman/>

purple ART

[OCTOBER 15 2015)



Amalia Ulman at Arcadia Missa Gallery

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FRIEZE ART FAIR 2015 (PART I), LONDON

Photo Sasa Stucin

<http://purple.fr/diary/highlights-from-the-frieze-art-fair-2015-part-i-london/>

amalia ulman: meme come true

After her ‘cosmetically enhanced’ selfies hoodwinked the internet, the conceptual artist behind the Insta-scam of the century speaks out

- Text Trey Taylor
- Photography Dario Catellani
- Styling John Colver

Taken from the spring 2015 issue of Dazed:

How would you feel if the last picture you double-tapped on Instagram turned out to be a booby trap? You might try asking the tens of thousands of people who followed the ‘fake’ social media account of Amalia Ulman, a radical conceptual artist whose work examines a post-#nofilter, post-Rich Kids of Instagram world where all social is aspirational and the self is something to be performed online.

The idea of deconstructing the tyranny of smug social network bragging came to Ulman during a period of forced incapacitation. It was October 2013, and she was lying in a hospital in rural Pennsylvania after surviving a horrific Greyhound bus crash on her way from New York to Chicago, which left bones sticking out of her leg. "It was like a weird rollercoaster," says Ulman of the experience. "Up and down – my mind was trying to erase it all. But I'm very good at dealing with trauma."

Thousands of miles from her family and friends, the 24-year-old had nowhere to turn but the comforting glow of a hospital-loaned iPad. Here, in her regulation patient's gown, she began to sow the seeds of her latest project in a prescription drug-addled haze, as she Instagrammed a series of risqué selfies and snaps of her hospital-prescribed diet.

In the spring of 2014, her thoughts crystallised with the launch of her *Excellences & Perfections* project, which she announced via a simple text-based image on Instagram stating "Part 1". Taking social media as her canvas and 'basic bitch' selfies as her muse, she reinvented herself as an aspiring actress who relocates to LA and undergoes a series of cosmetic procedures in a quest to experience life beyond the velvet rope. For four months, she fooled her growing army of followers with her counterfeit luxury lifestyle as she fanned crisp \$100 bills, flashed her embellished manicures and posed at her spa-day downtime. The project climaxed with her cosmetic surgery hoax, which she termed #frankenboob. She counted down the days to her silicon gel implants in each consecutive upload. When the day finally came, she bound her breasts with the same kind of surgical tape used to treat her genuinely life-threatening wounds in hospital just a few months previously. Next she applied a flattering filter and published the discomfiting – and highly misleading – image to her online followers.



By bringing the commitment of hardcore method acting to her art, Ulman's aspirational selfies raised serious questions of how images of beauty are used against women and how social media can manipulate our attitudes towards the female body. That might sound straightforward, but keeping 72,000 followers entertained on Instagram takes real skill. So how did she do it?

On a pit-stop in London, Ulman suggests we meet at Sheer Bliss, a budget beauty salon in a weary east London brick building. In the flesh, the artist is slight and unimposing – she can't be more than 5ft 5in. Wearing a simple beige button-down and crotched cardigan, she's a far cry from the babelicious vision you see online – in fact, you'd hardly notice her if you weren't paying attention. Settling back for a foot massage, Ulman explains her motivations behind her project. By exposing the gulf between image and reality, she says, her aim was to make people reflect on the artificialities and unthinking 'likes' of online social interaction. "A friend of mine told me about this girl she knows who goes to luxury hotels to take selfies because that's what goes on Facebook; that's the new capital," she says. "Better to have her selfie in an environment like that than just in her shitty bedroom." In December of last year, Ulman neatly summed up the question underlying her approach on a panel at Miami Art Basel with Instagram founder Kevin Systrom: "How do we consume things and how do they consume us?" In this simple axiom – and woven throughout her nearly-nude selfies – was hidden a plain truth: even when you show it all, you reveal very little.

The real Amalia Ulman was born in Argentina in 1989 to a Gen-X mum and tattoo artist dad, and grew up in Gijón, Spain. Most of her time was spent milling about the skate park or getting inked by her dad, until she picked up a camera. "I was secretly mesmerised by body modification when I was little," she says, sipping a cucumber water. "I grew up in a tattoo shop. My dad pierced me as well when I was younger. Mostly I was just bored, I guess. When I was growing up I was an anarchist, whereas all my friends were communists. I grew up in an expat community and was always seen as the 'other'. I was too utopian, too artistic." That artistic bent led to her first solo photography show, *Lost Between Books*, featuring a model whose face was obscured by an open book. She bagged several local art prizes and eventually chose to study at London's Central Saint Martins after Googling 'art school London'.

"Most of the people who got it were women. Men were like, 'What? I don't get it, she just looks hot!'" – Amalia Ulman

Tweet this quote

Ulman's work recalls that of other female artists who have gone to extreme lengths to explore perceptions of women in society. There's French artist Orlan, who underwent (for real) a series of grotesque, Picasso-like body modifications in an emphatic rejection of the pressures women face to conform to an expected standard of beauty. And there's Cindy Sherman, who wrestled back control of her body through her multi-personality, staged self-portraits, in much the same way that Ulman's work mimics unrealistic images of women the media spoon-feeds us. Through provocative, exaggerated selfies of her slinking down a dance-pole, Ulman critiques the pressures women face to achieve a dancer's bod and what it legitimately takes to get there. She's the first to admit it was a slog – twice a week for an hour and a half she worked the pole. "I had a regime," she says. "I went to the gym, pole dancing classes, got my hair and nails done – it was hours and hours of work."

Ulman has other peers, like LA artist Petra Cortright with her YouTube self-portraits, and Alexandra Marzella, better known as @artwerk6666, who keeps her online viewers lapping up crotch snaps and nipple-pinching portraits. "I think they have the same issue that I do," Ulman laughs of her friends. "Either people fall for them or feel really uncomfortable." Together, this trio are shifting their body-positive, anticapitalist agenda closer towards their target market: generation selfie. "This is not a joke. This is very serious," Marzella told us back in July, speaking about the intent behind her seemingly tongue-in-cheek dance videos.

As Ulman's project drew to a close, some of her Instaciples caught on to the fact that something was amiss. "Is dis real? Soooooo confuzed," wrote one of her stumped followers. But she concealed her intentions to the end. She knew the project served a deeper purpose. Did she feel pangs of guilt that her following was buying in to this counterfeit dream? "Kind of – at the very end because it was so long; it was four months and it was like, 'Come on...'. My aim right after I finished the performance was to contextualise and detox and explain what was really going on." And when she did? "Most of the people who got the performance and were attracted to it were women. They really got it. They saw the amount of work it took to build up the body while men were like, 'What? I don't get it, she just looks hot!'"



Amalia Ulman wears all clothes by Dior

The future for Ulman is looking a little less bootylicious. She's just wrapped her first solo exhibition in New York, Stock Images of War, at the James Fuentes gallery. Billed as "an immersive installation exploring themes of deconstruction, confinement, fragility and war", the show presents a series of wire sculptures in a room filled with the cloying scent of baked apple strudel. But despite the real-world concerns, narcissism is never far from the surface in her work: "We need mirrors to learn our poses," she writes cryptically on her website of the exhibition.

As Ulman removes her feet from the bubbling bath, she takes another sip of her cucumber water while the nail technician starts to apply a clear gloss. It's a more natural look than she's been accustomed to lately. As her focus turns away from body image to the frontlines of warfare, perhaps it's all the armour she needs. With her gaze no longer fixed on her iPhone camera, her work is beginning to speak for itself, even as her subjects become more difficult to grasp. "I don't want to make things easy for people to understand," she says. "The point is making something good." Now that's worth a double-tap.

See more on Amalia's projects on her website, and watch her "Buyer, walker, rover" lecture here. Her latest project, "The Future Ahead" is also viewable here

hair Brian Buenaventura at Management; make-up Ralph Siciliano at D+V; management using M.A.C; nails Geraldine Holford at The Wall Group; photographic assistants Brian Hahn, Marion Grand; styling assistant Beatriz Maues; digital operator Andrew Lawrence; production ArtList NYC

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/23700/1/amalia-ulman-meme-come-true>

New Rhizome tool preserves net art for future generations

*Colloq archives conversations and art created on
social media platforms like Instagram*

- Text Zing Tsieng



"Excellences & Perfections" (2014) Amalia Ulman

How do you preserve art created on social media? As more artists start experimenting with social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, the question has taken on new urgency. Some, like Richard Prince, quite literally print out their work to hang in galleries. But something inevitably gets lost in transferring art from the digital realm to printed matter – which is why Rhizome have created Colloq, a new online tool to help archive net art.

The non-profit arts organisation was concerned that online art could disappear at the whims of its host site or went through a dramatic redesign (think Friendster or Myspace). Colloq works by replicating the basic interface of apps such as Instagram with a few modifications – you can't, for instance, scroll past the first image of the piece.



amaliaulman

Amalia's Instagram The past is my lesson. The present is my gift. The future is my motivation. #blessed #grateful

475
posts

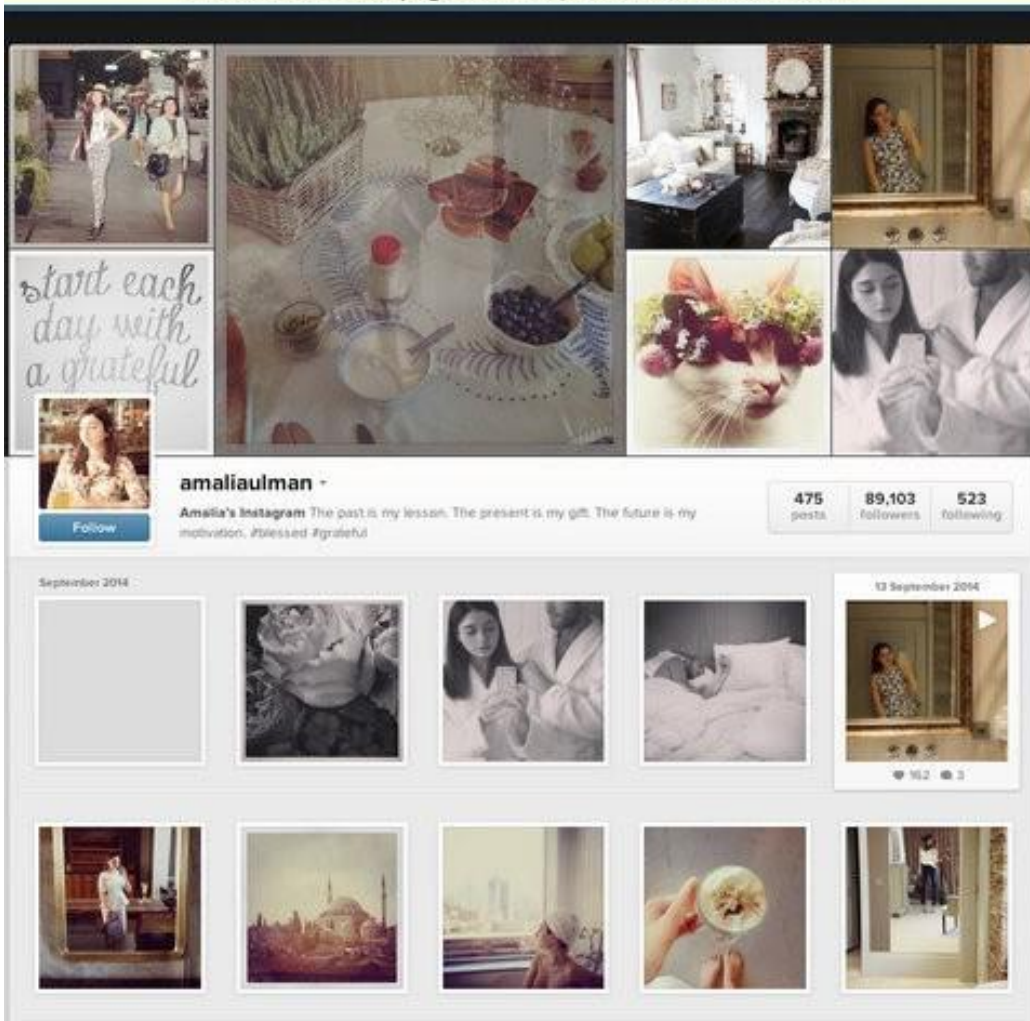
89,103
followers

523
following

September 2014



"Excellences & Perfections" as preserved by ColloqAmalia Ulman



That means that artists are able to preserve the way their art was originally presented, regardless of whether the site changes in future. Artist Amalia Ulman's Instagram-based photographic series "Excellences & Perfections" is the first work to be archived with Colloq.

"Social media platforms change their design and mode of operation frequently, and when they do change, they distort carefully constructed narrations or compositions within the platform," explains Rhizome digital conservator Dragan Espenschied. "'Content is king' is not totally true – the real king is more often than not the grid or the template that decides where the 'content' ends up."

Rhizome has yet to run into any legal trouble with reproducing Instagram's site. It says that Colloq can work on a wide range of web sites, and has applications beyond art preservation.

"Any kind of conversation or interaction on social media can be archived using this tool," executive director Heather Corcoran told us. "It would have been useful to have during #Ferguson... There are rich conversations happening on the web that will be lost."

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/22272/1/new-rhizome-tool-preserves-net-art-for-future-generations>

Celebrate commerce with Amalia Ulman

An artist-poet playing with brands speaks about the celebration and subversion online

- Text Noam Klar



Amalia Ulman





Amalia Ulman is a 24-year-old Argentinean-born, predominantly Spanish-raised artist who presently divides her time between the cities of London and Gijón. A self-described transatlantic expat child, a spirit of national nomadism and outsider cultural inquisitiveness inform her practice.

Her works, encompassing graphic design, photography, installation, web and video art, are primarily voiced in the first person, often blurring the distinction between the artist and object of study. The aesthetic is clean, minimal and translucent. The dominant hues are white and grey. The recurring imagery - pearls, butterflies, hearts, flowers, ripped jeans, coffee art, household ornamentation, embroidered motivational slogans, hygiene and cosmetic products in their deglamorized domestic habitat – a montage of prosaicism, budding sexuality and kitsch – evoke the iconography of teenage beauty magazines, a coming-of-age femininity and the language of relationship advice columns, with their undertones of possession, seduction, anxiety, insecurity, and crassness. Ubiquitous, everyday objects are observed as unearthed treasures concealing exotic truths, viewed from a furtive, almost voyeuristic vantage point. Taken together, they chart a soft-toned exploration of the relationships between consumerism and identity, class imitation and social deception, altruism and orientalism, with a particular focus on the signifiers of Southern European and Latin American 'chav' culture.

Her latest piece 'Buyer, Walker, Rover' is the first of four live Skype lectures presented at Regional States Archive in Gothenburg. Via a stream of consciousness, first-person narrative of an 'urbanite', it introduces the notion that connections and interactions can be drawn between world metropolitan centers via the

simultaneous presence of graphic design patterns and replicated goods in them as stemming from cost-efficient, outsourced production and the constant flow of imports.

I was unsure as to how to view the piece - was it an impenetrably toned satire on the 'Occupy Generation', raised in prosperous times on the ethos of the pursuit of creativity, individualism and self-fulfillment as means of success, and emerging into a reality of joblessness, debt, cyclical education and terminal practice in test academic environments, an ultimately status-fixated, politically conservative class that utilizes 'cultural capital' and lifestyle culture as tools of preserving social hierarchy and dominance? Or was it channeling something more ambiguous and sincere - a fascination with the discrete beauty of esoterically produced, cheaply available commodities, the transcendent anonymity afforded by the inner laws of the retail sphere, and the quiet romance of window-shopping? Amalia answered some questions on the piece, consumerism, nationalism and the way she approaches her work.

'Buyer, walker, rover' was presented in the form of a Skype lecture. How did this format come about and how did it work? Are there elements in this medium that communicate with the piece, or was this more a matter of functionality?

I feel the need to put in words what I'm doing to explain my work. Last year I wrote an essay, but after having a hard time following the rules of standardized essay writing and Harvard system of referencing, I decided to stop limiting myself to any sort of guideline. I got invited to give this Skype lecture for the Regional State Archives in Gothenburg, and it became the perfect excuse to put together all the material I had in mind.

I feel that giving a Skype lecture worked because I was able to reach an audience very directly in despite of being in another country, which also made sense with the content of the lecture itself. Also, because of this format, the interaction with the audience was more intense, felt more like a wound in my daily life, with a very precise starting and finishing point. It would have been different if I had been there: there would have been a pre-lecture tea, a post-lecture dinner, an obligation to meet and greet etc. In this case, when the lecture ended, my cat jumped on me and everything was like "what just happened?"

The exposure felt more intimidating than a stage, I remember saying that I felt like a cam girl.

The lecture veers between lucidness and a dream like state, interspersing the main narrative with overtures of poetry, 'keywords' and abstract reflection. How did you approach its structuring?

I think it reflects the way I work. I've been thinking of all this material for a long time but I don't do sketches or write notes, so when it comes to producing something I have to make it on the spot and vomit all the words in one sit, no matter how many days it takes, how many hours awake it requires.

Especially here, in this lecture, it is very apparent how I start lucidly and end up in a dream-like estate. This is not the only work I made this way, it is just more obvious in this one.

"I've seen you before, yes. I've seen this same wallet somewhere else. We have the same wallet! And I'm here while you are there. There is something we can share."

You point to a recurrence of design patterns across world commercial capitals and seemingly disparate areas of retail. How did you come to take notice of these patterns? Are there any common parallels that could be drawn between the themes - culturally, aesthetically, industrially, or otherwise?

I once had an addiction to euro-store shopping. I must have been eight or ten years old, and Spain still had Pesetas. These places were called 'Veinte Duros'. I would go with so little money and buy so many things. I ended up going every two days until my mother told me to go back and return what I bought because the situation had turned ridiculous: Selfishly, I would buy her the most horrible presents, just to experience this consumerist satisfaction. Since then my approach to commerce has been determined by that guilt and shame experienced back then. I don't buy many things and I'm definitely not an impulsive buyer: sometimes I think too much about objects: I even have clear memories of objects I never had. I'm a spectator, a peep; it is enough for me to watch, I don't need to possess these objects.

I pay attention to design, to patterns, to the shape of clothes, to the distribution of the furniture around me; it wasn't difficult to start recognizing patterns after some years visiting these sort of stores in different countries. Moreover, the newspaper pattern is very much an attempt to represent an idealized idea of western culture. There's a stereotyped idea of beauty (fashion magazine covers imagery), there are references to capitalist fastness (mention of world capitals) and the dream of success (inspirational messages in English or bad-English). I decided to focus on these patterns in particular, against other recurring ones, as they made sense for me by being directly related to my work.

"The fear of provinciality and the anxiety derived from the need of staying connected to those world capitals a-lá American Apparel bag: London, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, Tokyo, Seoul; makes me avoid nationalism, makes me escape from any distributor of native production. I walk towards imports like a moth flies towards the light "

To what extent in your opinion has the proliferation of imports, omnipresence of international brands and homogenization of production design blurred aesthetic and cultural boundaries between urban capitals? Does this have an influence on our national identity and sense of belonging to a cultural collective? Does it encourage a sense of mobility and possibility, or rather a loss of distinction and oppressiveness?

Maybe before the bubble burst, the proliferation of information and a wider scope of options made people decide what they wanted to be in a very individualistic way, leaving behind any sort of characteristic determined by a specific background.

Now, after doing a workshop with high school students in Spain, I noticed changes in this regard, and that this behavior might be in decline due to the current economic situation, recession and general limitations. There was an atmosphere of collaboration and a sense of community in which these teenagers felt a need to restructure their own environment instead of escaping from it –there was also a feeling of provinciality and in a way it felt like nationalism was flourishing again.

I'm an immigrant baby; not from where I was born, not from where my parents moved to. I don't feel I'm from anywhere and I never experience a defined sense of nationalism. My mental map is definitely constructed from all these bits and pieces; what I consider home is made out from all the rooms I felt comfortable in, from all the streets I walked at night.

I'm optimistic, and even though I am conscious of the oppressive and damaging effects of globalization, and that there is always a critique intrinsic to my work; I personally feel a sense of mobility, an idea of future with open ends or a tunnel with a light at the end. I constantly escape from feeling trapped, and by being connected I avoid that sensation. That's why airports are my favorite places, because they are nothing and everything at the same time; sort of non-places that at the same time are a container of all possible destinations, of all countries.

As an absolute foreigner localisms make me feel very uncomfortable.

"The wavy willow makes its appearance, with little differences, in London's The City at the lobby of some headquarters, as well as it presents itself at the front desk of the local hair salon."

The Wavy Willow is brought as an example of a recurring decorative item that seems to embody both democratic and capitalist characteristics: adaptive, innocuous and versatile, and on the other hand rootless, opportunistic and artificial. Do you feel that certain forms of design are more adaptive and universal than others in embodying objective aesthetic truths and transcending cultural boundaries? Or is the Wavy Willow a metaphor for the hollowness and alienation of commercial and corporate interior spaces - of ready-made, cloned objects lacking a human imprint?

This question made me wonder how I started being interested in the Wavy Willows, how they became part of my life/practice. Sincerely, I cannot remember: there's a blank in my memory right now. In some way I guess that's how it works, it suddenly is in your house, in your office space and you don't really know how it got there; but also you don't mind, because it is a quiet companion.

I'm very romantic, and even though I objectively and actively know that I want to address certain subjects, like that of class divide, corporate coldness, seduction etc., I do feel a personal connexion to this item. Can't deal with my practice from a cynical or ironic perspective; when I approach things I really have to have fallen in love with them.

The Wavy Willow is a metaphor for the survival technique of mediocrity, the theory that implies that mediocre humans would be able to survive for longer just as they are not noticeable, while charismatic personalities have more chances of being attacked.

"Walking the city I am the master of my hodological space: I decide, I become the entrepreneur of my own existence. Visiting these stores I can widen my mental map. I'm closer to everything and very quickly, I don't feel lonely anymore."

The walker in the piece is simultaneously an active, self-willed entity and a conditioned consumer, "anonymous sponge", that absorbs and reflects the commercial environment surrounding it. How do you see the relationship between a city and its walker - is the walker merely a passive spectator that is defined by its navigational choices, or is it an active participant in shaping and informing the landscape it roams?

Walkers are definitely active; it is very difficult to be a flâneur with no output. Even a commentary regarding the things seen can turn into feedback capable of modifying another person's opinion and maybe future purchases. Everything counts: shoplifting, buying, seeing, window-shopping. Every single transaction contributes to or boycotts the system. Not accepting that is a lazy position that diminishes the power of democracy, that weakens every opportunity of change.

Cities and industrial environments are natural for me, while nature feels completely alien. The way I walked the cities I've visited is very similar to the way someone would go to the countryside to bird-watch or to do botanical drawings.

I am an active participant, but in a discrete manner, because of my personality. But also, as a visual artist, my responsibility is, I think, to be plastic and aesthetic about these matters; I can analyze and question anything, but I'm not in a position from which I could provide with answers –at least not for now.

Do you think there is a danger of potential crossover of the escapist, 'global' mentality into the political realm, making us more prone to passiveness and dormancy, reluctant to challenge fundamental orders or be attached to any greater political collective in the sake of not compromising our individuality?

For some reason, I believe that we are the last generation with an enthusiasm for high connectivity. Younger people take that, as well as information overload, for granted and therefore focusing their attention to a new order of things, like trying to sort out the roots of the problem instead of just playing around with the fruits of it. I think there has been a revival of the concept of community. Not that I am part of that, but I perceived so from people born in the 90's.

"Stuck in austerity and forced to the slowness of recession, there is time for meditation, time for analyzing the content that was never meant to be scrutinized. With eyes wide open I now stare at what was meant to be consumed in a state of blindness. "

The British philosopher Nick Land introduced Accelerationism, the idea that rather than resist dehumanizing capitalist processes, we should capitulate and submit to them to bring forth their inner contradictions and encourage their demise. What are your thoughts about this brand of commentary on capital, technology and consumerism, simultaneously critiquing and celebrating it?

It sounds good; but seems like one of those things that are better as a concept, something that fails when put into practice. Capitalism thrives on creative destruction; accelerationism would only accelerate the process intrinsic to it, which wouldn't be useful when trying to abolish this system, taking into account that crisis is needed for the continuation of it: If a temple is to be erected a temple must be destroyed. Economic collapses are far from being a sign of decline, but a symptom of regeneration part of a cyclical development –like a woman having her period.

Personally, I'd go for an anarcho-capitalist system or minarchism, with an economy ruled by laissez-faire; but maybe out of laziness. Utopically I'd fight for a global collectivist anarchism.

Text by Noam Klar

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/16293/1/celebrate-commerce-with-amalia-ulman>

16 artists to look out for in 2016

These are the young and talented artists we're tipping for big things this year.



Amalia Ulman

Maybe the most deceptively talented artist of her generation; Amalia Ulman's most well known piece, *Excellences and Perfections* initially flew under the radar, as the artist engaged in a five month long Instagram-based piece of performance art. Part fairy tale, part dystopian fantasy, images from *Excellences and Perfections* are going on display at the Tate Modern and Whitechapel galleries this Spring. Amalia also recently made Forbes 30 under 30 list, alongside Petra Cortright and Athena Papadopoulos, and exhibited new video works during Frieze London last year.

https://i-d.vice.com/en_gb/article/16-artists-to-look-out-for-in-2016



Amalia Ulman, Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 18th June 2014), 2015

Over the course of several months in 2014, Amalia Ulman conducted a scripted online performance over her Instagram and Facebook profiles. Mirroring the narratives in extreme makeover shows, Ulman pretended to get breast implants, altered her features via Photoshop, and followed a strict diet. A contemporary example of using the latest tools to navigate a new media landscape, Ulman's project critiques a cultural obsession with Instagram celebrities and carefully curated online personas. Above is an Instagram post from the project.

[All Images: courtesy Whitechapel Gallery]

<http://www.fastcodesign.com/3055176/5-pioneering-artworks-that-trace-the-rise-of-digital-art>

Is this the first Instagram masterpiece?

Amalia Ulman's spoof selfies tricked thousands – and made her the toast of the art world. She talks to Alastair Sooke

In April 2014, a young Argentinian-born artist called Amalia Ulman uploaded an image on her Instagram feed. It

consisted of the phrase "Part I", in black letters against white, accompanied by an enigmatic caption that read "Excellences & Perfections". Although 28 of Ulman's followers quickly "liked" the post, few of them realised that it signalled the beginning of one of the most original and outstanding artworks of the digital era. Before long Ulman was uploading a series of images – mostly preening selfies taken on her iPhone – that seemed to document her attempt to make it as an "It girl" in Los Angeles. In some of them she posed in lingerie on rumpled bed sheets in boutique hotel rooms. In others she offered cutesy close-ups of kittens, rose petals, and strawberries and pancakes captioned "brunch".

So far, so banal: Ulman, who studied fine art at Central Saint Martins in London from 2008 to 2011, had apparently succumbed to the narcissism of social media. She was mindlessly bragging about her supposedly enviable lifestyle in LA, as she attended pole-dancing classes and underwent breast-enlargement surgery.

"People started hating me," Ulman, 26, told me recently, speaking via Skype from her studio in downtown LA. "Some gallery I was showing with freaked out and was like, 'You have to stop doing this, because people don't take you seriously anymore.' Suddenly I was this dumb b---- because I was showing my ass in pictures."

A promising young artist – selected a year earlier by talent-spotting curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, co-director of the Serpentine Galleries, as one of the leading lights of the YouTube generation – was swiftly wrecking her career. Except that, unbeknown to the tens of thousands of people who started following her, she wasn't. Almost five months later, Ulman posted a black-and-white image of a rose, which she captioned "The End". Soon afterwards she announced that she had been staging an elaborate performance called *Excellences & Perfections* via her Instagram and Facebook accounts. All those "dumb" pictures of Ulman, half-naked, staring rapidly into the lens of her smartphone camera? They were a joke. The shot of her bandaged breasts, after her operation to have them enlarged? It was faked. Ulman, it turned out, had been playing a role – or, indeed, several roles. And almost all of the 89,244 followers she had amassed by the end of the performance had been fooled. "Everything was scripted," explains Ulman, who grew up in Asturias in north-west Spain.

"I spent a month researching the whole thing. There was a beginning, a climax and an end. I dyed my hair. I changed my wardrobe. I was acting: it wasn't me." Now, a year and a half on, several of the 175 photographs that Ulman created for *Excellences & Perfections* will be shown in two new

exhibitions: *Electronic Superhighway*, at the Whitechapel

Gallery in east London, which will trace the impact of computerised technology on artists from the Sixties to today; and Tate Modern's *Performing for the Camera*, which will examine the relationship between artistic performance and photography. Ulman first had the idea for *Excellences & Perfections* while she was at college, but she "never had the budget to do it properly, because I was on the dole when I was living in London, which is a very elitist place". Towards the end of her time in the city, she tells me, she earned money as a "sugar baby" – an escort. "I'd rather not talk about it," she says. "It's too dark. It was out of necessity: I wasn't playing around. But being an escort is how most of my female peers are paying for their student fees. It's very common during these s----- times of recession."

The experiences of her escort friends, she says, informed the narrative of *Excellences & Perfections*, which Ulman finessed while recovering in hospital after her legs were "destroyed" in a coach crash in 2013. "I still can't run, and suffer from chronic pain," she says.

Planning her comeback on Instagram, she decided to divide her performance into three distinct "episodes", inspired by stereotypes of how young women present themselves online. To begin with, in the finished piece, Ulman plays the part of an artsy, provincial girl who has moved to Los Angeles for the first time. This fictional version of herself breaks up with her boyfriend and becomes a "sugar baby" to make ends meet.

This marks the start of the second episode, which offers a pastiche of the "ghetto aesthetic" popularised by American celebrities such as Kim Kardashian. At this point, Ulman says, her anti-heroine self "starts acting crazy and posting bad photos online". She "gets a boob

job, takes drugs, has a breakdown, and goes to rehab".

This initiates the denouement of Ulman's social-media satire, as she devotes herself to "recovery", and uploads pictures inspired by Gwyneth Paltrow's blog Goop: "Kind of girl next door," Ulman explains. "I liked yoga and juices. That was the end."

When I first heard about *Excellences & Perfections*, I assumed that it was a spoof lampooning the self-regarding way we all behave on social media. It seemed like a modern-day, digital version of Hogarth's

Rake's Progress: a sharp diatribe against vacuity.

Not so, says Ulman, who had something more specific in her sights. "It's more than a satire," she explains. "I wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, and not something biological or inherent to any woman. Women understood the performance much faster than men. They were like, 'We get it – and it's very funny.'" What was the joke?

"The joke was admitting how much work goes into being a woman and how being a woman is not a natural thing. It's

something you learn.”

In this respect, Ulman was following in the footsteps of important older artists who have explored the fluid nature of female identity, from the 20th-century French photographer Claude Cahun to the American Cindy Sherman. Yet, from the beginning, Ulman knew that she should stage her performance online. She wanted to play with the conventions of Instagram, such as labelling images with hashtags. This was her masterstroke:

the fact that Excellences & Perfections exists in the very form that it simultaneously deconstructs is a sleek, sophisticated, intelligent move. It also explains why the performance created such a buzz. As a result of Excellences & Perfections, Ulman is now feted as one of the sensations of contemporary art. “The idea was to experiment with fiction online using the language of the internet,” she explains, “rather than trying to adapt old media to the internet, as has been done with mini-series on YouTube. The cadence and rhythm were totally different.”

Is this why the work was so successful? “Yes,” she says, before laughing. “But I also know that photos of half-naked girls get a lot of ‘likes’.”

Electronic Superhighway (2016-1966)

is at the Whitechapel Gallery, London E1 (020 7522 7888), from Jan 29. Performing for the Camera is at Tate Modern, London SE1 (020 7887 8888), from Feb 18

‘Being an escort is how most of my female peers pay their student fees’

The Daily Telegraph (Review 2016)

‘Being a woman is not a natural thing’: above and left, scenes from Excellences & Perfections, Amalia Ulman’s selfie-based

Daily Telegraph, Saturday 16th January 2016

Tate Modern Taps Instagram Sensation Amalia Ulman for Its Next Major Show

Henri Neuendorf, Thursday, January 21, 2016

SHARE



Amalia Ulman, Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 3rd June 2014).
Photo: Courtesy Temporary Art Review.

Should social media have a place in today's museum landscape? The question has been raised by the controversial inclusion of [Amalia Ulman](#)'s Instagram-based work in Tate Modern's upcoming exhibition *Performing for the Camera*, which examines the relationship between photography and performance.

The exhibition, at the most-visited modern and contemporary art museum in the world, brings together over 500 works spanning 150 years, and ties together academically rooted photographs of performance art as well as humorous, improvised poses, and snapshots.

The role of social media in the art historical context of photographic performance is examined via [Amalia Ulman](#)'s [Instagram-based selfie project](#).

Should Instagram be in museums like the Tate Modern?
Photo: Better Bankside.

Her snaps of kittens, striped pajamas, and post-shower selfies [turned out to be a performance art piece](#) titled *Excellences and Perfections*. "Everything was scripted," Ulman told [the Telegraph](#). "I spent a month researching the whole thing. There was a beginning, a climax and an end. I dyed my hair. I changed my wardrobe. I was acting, it wasn't me."

Some 18 months later, her [Instagram feed](#)—with which she "wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, and not something biological or inherent to any woman"—is going to be exhibited at a major institution.

"Although Ulman used Instagram to make the work, its destination was always the gallery/museum context," Simon Baker, Tate Modern's senior curator of photography, told *artnet News* in an email.



Amalia Ulman.

Photo via: @amaliaulman Instagram.

"The exhibition is about performance and the many ways in which artists have used photography to record and exhibit their performative works. Ulman's work is an example of recent practice in the same tradition," Baker added.

Also in the exhibition are key performative works such as [Yves Klein](#)'s *Anthropometrie de l'époque bleue* (1960) a live painting event in which the artist used bodies of naked women and seminal 60s performances by [Yayoi Kusama](#), Eleanor Antin, and [Niki de Saint Phalle](#), which were documented by the important performance photographers Harry Shunk and János Kender.

Yves Klein, *Anthropométrie de l'Époque bleue* (March 9, 1960).

Photo: Yves Klein Archive.

Photographic self-portraiture and its relationship to self-identity is examined with the inclusion of works by artists such as [Cindy Sherman](#), an artist to whom Ulman is often compared.

The medium also played an important role for [Andy Warhol](#), and [Jeff Koons](#) in their own marketing and promotional photography. However it is the inclusion of Ulman's work that is the most divisive.

It's not the first time that Instagram has been made into art. [Richard Prince](#) controversially sold [enlarged prints of other people's Instagram posts](#) for \$100,000 at Gagosian, New York in 2014. At least Ulman is using her own photography.

"[Performing for the Camera](#)" will be on view at Tate Modern, London, from February 18 – June 12, 2016.

https://news.artnet.com/art-world/amalia-ulman-instagram-tate-modern-410375?utm_campaign=artnetnews&utm_source=012116daily&utm_medium=email

Could Amalia Ulman have produced the first Instagram ‘masterpiece’?

JANUARY 21, 2016 7:56PM



Many consider their Instagram photos a work of art but Amalia Ulman's were, quite literally.

Charis Chang news.com.au

WHEN Amalia Ulman started posting Instagram photos of her new life in Los Angeles, some people loved it, but others were confused and embarrassed for her.

The Argentinian-born artist seemed like the last person to be caught up in living the vacuous life of an “It girl”.

Over the course of five months Ulman documented her move to Los Angeles, the excitement of moving to the “big city”, coffees, hotels and many, many selfies.

Pretty Please

Small presents

Her images were similar to many others posted on Instagram by girls who have gained thousands of followers for their inspiring lifestyles.

Ulman took photos in beautiful hotel rooms, wearing lingerie, at poledancing classes, in foreign countries and images of her breakfast, coffee, flowers and cute animals. Her account grew to 89,000 followers.

But Ulman had a secret — she was faking it for the cameras.

Less nervous today

Ulman announced her project with a post “Part 1” on her Instagram account, following up with sweet images of herself dressed in pink.

Over five months fans follow her through a dark period where she breaks up with her boyfriend, becomes a “sugar baby”, gets a boob job, takes drugs and has a breakdown.

Ulman has said the project was inspired by actress [Amanda Bynes](#) and the public reaction to her breakdown, which she saw as a “collective trolling experience”.

Back to natural

This dark period eventually ends with rehab, photos of yoga and juices seemingly inspired by Gwyneth Paltrow’s blog Goop.

One of the last photos Ulman posts before she declares her project over is a black and white image of herself with a handsome man captioned: “Isn’t it nice to be taken care of”.

Isn't it nice to be taken care of

Her entire “journey” from being a cute young girl dressed in pink, to a sophisticated LA local complete with fake breasts, was part of an art project that could one day be considered the first Instagram masterpiece.

Sweet

Boob job

Srsly mercury retrograde

When Ulman first started the project in 2014 many of those who began following her had no idea she was a promising young artist who studied at Central Saint Martins in London. She was just another girl on Instagram whose life they envied, or who they found attractive.

But Ulman’s posts were tightly controlled images that mimicked stereotypes of how young people were presenting themselves online.

Date yesterday

Nice breakfast before gym

Meditating

A selection of photos from her work, which she has named Excellences & Perfections, is currently being shown at London’s Whitechapel Gallery and will also be displayed at the Tate Modern, as part of the exhibition Performing for the Camera.

Forbes has also named the 26-year-old in its “30 under 30”, a list of the 600 brightest young entrepreneurs, breakout talents and change agents.

While many say they understand that Instagrammers present an idealised version of themselves, Ulman said her deliberate image makeover still annoyed a lot of people.

Firstly, it annoyed those who were fans of her art. They thought she was selling out.

“People started hating me,” Ulman told [The Telegraph](#), “suddenly I was this dumb b**** because I was showing my ass in pictures.”

No more smoking

Her point was to prove that “femininity is a construction”, Ulman explains to The Telegraph, and that it’s not something biological. “The joke was admitting how much work goes into being a woman”.

That's awesome

Not everyone was happy about being fed false images, but that was the point.

“With Excellences and Perfections, people got so mad at me for using fiction,” she told [Interview Magazine](#).

“That was the main critique: ‘It wasn’t the truth? How dare you! You lied to people!’ Well, that’s because you should learn that everyone is lying online. I’m not the first one!

“There are so many girls that go to hotels to take a better selfie, or another expensive place. If they’re trying to be a social climber or whatever, that’s what they do. It’s normal. It’s becoming more and more normal to be conscious of those things.

“It’s funny how people still take it with this value of truth.”

Back to being Amalia

<http://www.news.com.au/technology/online/social/could-amalia-ulman-have-produced-the-first-instagram-masterpiece/news-story/366f6dc00db28a46cfe6ca3870d928cc>

Tate Modern: London art museum to host first exhibition of Instagram posts

By [Mary Papenfus](#)

January 20, 2016

Tate Modern Art Gallery

The first-ever Instagram series presenting as art will make its controversial museum debut at London's Tate Modern.

The intriguing series documents the life through photos of a young woman named Amalia Ulman who moved to Los Angeles from a small town and tries to make it big. Bizarrely, she talks of pole-dancing and breast-augmentation surgery. But her [Instagram](#) site, with more than 80,000 followers, is a fiction created by artist Ulman.

Her photos of kittens and striped pyjamas and post-shower selfies were created as part of performance art in a piece Ulman calls Excellences and Perfections. Now several of the photos will be featured at the Tate's upcoming show Performing for the Camera, running from February to June 2016, and also at

London's Whitechapel Gallery's exhibit entitled Electronic Superhighway (2016-1966).

Excellences and Perfections is intended to be an examination of "constructed femininity," according to the artist. Over the course of the five months, Ulman portrayed three stereotypes of women she believes are common on Instagram, including a small town girl in a big city, and what Ulman calls a "ghetto aesthetic" popularised, she believes, by celebs like Kim Khardashian (she wears a hat with the word "bae" on it). Then her persona slips off the rails, ends up in recovery, and turns into the "girl next door" who likes "yoga and juices," she told the [Telegraph](#).

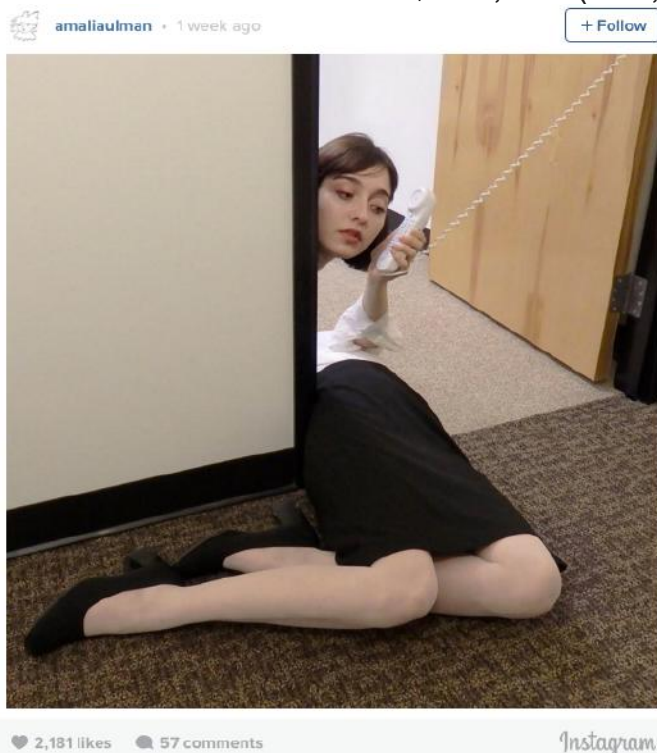
"Everything was scripted," explained Ulman, an Argentinian who grew up in Spain. "I spent a month researching the whole thing. There was a beginning, a climax and an end. I dyed my hair. I changed my wardrobe. I was acting. It wasn't me."

"It's more than a satire," Ulman added. "I wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, and not something biological or inherent to any woman."

Some have criticised the performance piece as nothing special because it's the kind of thing that's presented on Instagram every day.

In 2015 Ulman had a photographic exhibit documenting her trip to North Korea, called the Annals of Private History, at the London gallery Arcadia Missa. The photos also appeared on her Instagram account in another fictional presentation. "For the same reason I live in LA: because I'm interested in façades and propaganda. Pyongyang is the best and most simplified example of that," she told the [Guardian](#). "I just wanted to see it with my own eyes."

Ulman's not the first to turn Instagram into art. Artist [Richard Prince](#) exhibited other people's Instagram photos at a show at New York's Gagosian Gallery in 2014. Some sold for more than \$100,000 (£71,000).



<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/tate-modern-london-art-museum-host-first-exhibition-instagram-posts-1538902>

The Dawning of the Age of Amalia Ulman

Four Six One Nine, Los Angeles, January 8 to 30, 2016

JANUARY 25, 2016

BY [FIONA DUNCAN](#)



amaliaulman
Los Angeles Intern...

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amaliaulman 🍷🍷

Want a better 2016?

Try thinking more about your impending demise.

newterritories Heart so hard

whypatterns Good p

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#installationgoals

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seanyeazy Are you the weirdo from pulp fiction?

softcircle Love this

paulsikivie Always worthwhile

annaviannavi this photo and 2016 doesn't even suck as much anymore trnx <3

jan.appel The caption 🙌🙌

[Log in](#) to like or comment.

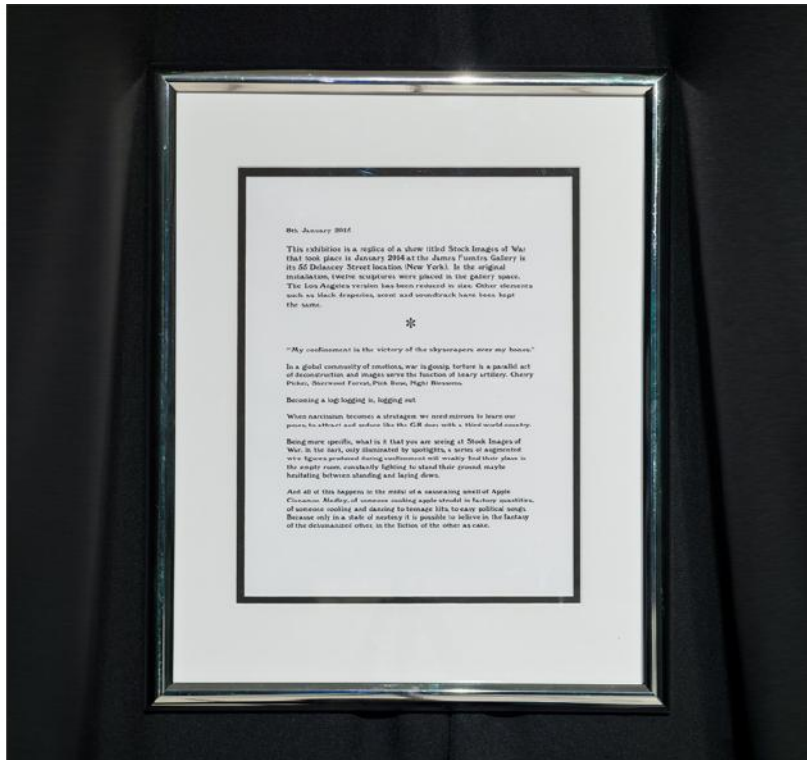


An Instagram post by Amalia Ulman (@amaliaulman).

Amalia Ulman, "Stock Images of War," (installation view at Four Six One Nine), 2016. Courtesy James Fuentes Gallery, New York.



Amalia Ulman, "Stock Images of War," (installation view at Four Six One Nine), 2016. Courtesy James Fuentes Gallery, New York.



Amalia Ulman, "Stock Images of War," (installation view at Four Six One Nine), 2016. Courtesy James Fuentes Gallery, New York.

Proselytizers of the New Age popularly advise that you stop consuming mass media, especially the news. The news, it is said, is a downer—designed to keep you in fear. And fear is to be avoided as it *lowers your vibration*, keeping you from: Source, God, clarity and truth. From your Divine Right to *feel good*. Do you feel good after reading the news? So, stop. Now. While I haven't completely taken to that counsel, I abide by some of its wisdom. I am wary of what I take in, as I am aware of how, as poet Ariana Reines puts it in her chapbook [Thursday](#), "Everything your eye touches is the content of your kingdom."

Today is Monday, January 11, 2016, and I am, as usual, in a mood for making and breaking patterns. Of media. Of diet. And patter, my writing. This mood, or mode, is so usual, I realize, it itself is a pattern; can I change it? (I meditate on it. Return with the phrase "same difference.") I'm in LA, of course. I'm in LA on a Monday afternoon aware, for the first time in weeks, of what day of the week it is.

To live in Los Angeles, Claire "[@TheUniverse](#)" Evans told me, as I was readying to move here, involves *a reconfiguring of one's relationship to space and time*. (I'm paraphrasing, as that was shared in a Facebook chat, and I dare not open the page today, 'cause David Bowie died.) When Claire said that, I thought, I got it. Sprawl. Nine hours of rush hour. Subtlest seasons, etc. The more I'm here, though, the more I get how—it's not the longer I'm here, it's the *more*—the more present I am to Los Angeles, I get—space is far out, and time is not a clock.

Capitalism sucks clock. It's a symbiotic relationship. One sign system stimulates the other, in turn. Fucking with our inner rhythms. Our need for free—that is, forgetting—time. This is increasingly so, what with our work in our emails on our phones faced with clocks. All this saleable data time-stamped. Apple supervision. iCan't forget me not. Yet, iChoose to use these tools. 'Cause—how cool—I can always go into my iCloud and see, e.g. (from my Notes app), that on *this very day*, one year ago, Amalia Ulman's solo show "Stock Images of War" opened at James Fuentes Gallery in New York's Lower East Side.

Last Friday, at Ulman's opening of the same show, represented in LA at Four Six One Nine in Mid-City in collaboration with James Fuentes Gallery, attendees kept asking the

artist what she did on New Year's. I watched her blank, repeatedly, at the question. She tracked back from the moment. *What day was it? January 8. Oh, a week ago. What did she do? Nothing. Or, she was working up to this show.*

Ulman is actually, presently, obsessed with timekeeping. Or, the icons thereof. Clocks and calendars. Her apartment, office and business cards are covered in them. Staples—standard grids and rounds. You can spy some of that on her [Instagram](#), where Ulman is ongoingly performing [corporate life](#)—in too-cute red-white-and-blue—to her 78.1K followers.

Ulman is most quantitatively known for a work executed on Instagram. Her performance [Excellences & Perfections](#), which will be exhibited next month at the Tate Modern alongside work by Jeff Koons and Andy Warhol as part of group show titled “Performing for the Camera,” pissed me off. Girl totally trolled me. What a success. Basically, Ulman performed, on Instagram, from April 19 to September 14, 2014, then-trending tropes of [Young-Girl](#)dom. She performed kawaii, a sugar baby, a white bae and la Lohan self-destruction. There was latte art, avocado toast, Agent Provocateur, a boob job, self-help mantras and many hotel selfies. Ulman gained many followers, plus [lots of glossy press](#).

She performed what's expected. What pop media wants from us. Us conventionally attractive enough to groom ourselves more so young women. I didn't totally get it—that it was a performance. (It wasn't declared such until the end.) I was one of many upset voyeurs. Triggered. Obsessed. I watched Ulman enact a means to power accessible to a body like my own; a means I'm hyperaware of, that I resist and consider. There's pleasure in the feminine rituals she broadcast. I've considered a boob job. How good it might feel to be stacked like that. And that's how I met Ulman. Insecure, emboldened, seduced and enraged, tripping on the power-knowledge-pleasure bio-cultural paradoxes of contemporary femininity, I wrote her.

*

It was only yesterday that I got the gravity of *Excellences & Perfections*. Its global relevance. I was researching the year 2015. I hadn't done that yet, your expected year-end survey, 'cause LA's let me let go of chronic time. But capitalism—this pitch, a deadline. (It's Tuesday now, by the way.) I'm back on the clock. And lo have I learned: *Instagram is the medium of the Young-Girl*. The top 10 Instagram accounts of 2015, based on follower numbers, are as follows: Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez, Kim Kardashian West, Beyoncé, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Kylie Jenner, Kendall Jenner, Nicki Minaj and Khloe Kardashian. Combined they gained, in 2015, a total of 6,669,419,418 likes. Swift has an estimated net worth of \$200 million. Google on down the line.

*

Wednesday. Synchronicity is a sign of enlightenment, that you're perceiving Reality Clear, so says Terence McKenna. So get this: Ulman's “Stock Images of War” show contains 12 sculptures, titled *War in January*, *War in February* and so on through every month of the year. She showed them first in January 2015 in New York. Then, surprise, they were booked to show *12 months* after that, in January 2016, here in LA. The same night that Ulman's show opened in LA, fashion designer/artist Susan Cianciolo also celebrated a launch. At [356 Mission](#). It's a performance/installation titled “*Though I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not Love, I am nothing*” *‘Corinthians,’*” and it is *also* a representation, or refiguring, of a work previously and first shown in New York *last year*. That original New York show was called—ready for it?—“if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite).”

“Oh really wow!” Ulman said when I told her about the Cianciolo synchronicity. “The stars work for everyone.” Because: it is Mercury Retrograde. That’s when Mercury, a planet that represents all things communication (language, logic, technology, *art*) appears to be going backwards (it slows), and so all things communication-related are slowed, or stalled, with it. During this time, which happens three or four times a year for three or four weeks each, it is advised that you don’t start new projects or buy new devices. It’s a wondrous time to revise and revisit, though. And, you may have no choice—Mercury Retrogrades tend to bring back ghosts from your past, like exes, unresolved traumas and dated work.

In New York, Ulman’s “Stock Images of War” sculptures had more space. You could walk around them, study their precarious curvature. In LA, my friend Anastasia accidentally bumped into one of the tanks, then a bicycle. I was delighted by their shake. Like a Slinky, or like Ulman’s pet pigeon [Bob](#), they vibed for a while after impact. Except for the gallery size, “Stock Images” in LA and NY is set up the same, with black funereal curtains along all walls, and white aroma diffusers on little pedestals that spray apple-strudel smell into the air. It’s a plastic scent. Faint for the music blasted from loudspeakers. A soundtrack of songs the American military uses to pump bodies up for combat, like the Clash’s “Rock the Casbah” and Linkin Park’s “Hit The Floor.” The music crowds your senses, so you might not notice the smell if you missed the show’s release, which states:

And all of this happens in the midst of a nauseating smell of Apple Cinnamon Medley, of someone cooking apple strudel in factory quantities, of someone cooking and dancing to teenage hits, to easy political songs, because only in a state of neoteny it is possible to believe in the fantasy of the dehumanized other, the other as cake.

“All of this” is the soundtrack, scent and curtains, plus 12 sculptures of war vehicles made out of fine warped wire. They are cute things, not quite life-sized. Wheelchairs, tricycles, bicycles and tanks. Cartoonish, they exude a liveness that’s anthropomorphic and absurd. They remind me of the absurdity of humanity. We are So Dumb sometimes. Often, when I hear the news, I can’t help but laugh.

*

2015 was the year I embraced a Higher Power. It was also the year I cut out most visual news. No TV, little text. I opted to keep up with the world aurally. Mostly via *Democracy Now!* podcasts and conversations with friends and Uber drivers. I could say I did this to re-sensitize myself to the reality of current events, to the reality of every life involved, lives—each one of yours—as chaotic and holy as mine; hearing Amy Goodman’s voice crack, I’m reminded of this, gentle humanness. I did just say that and it made me feel—as the New Agers encourage—*good*. Safe and pleased, ordered, conclusive, this equals that.

But 2015 was also the year I sought to transcend all that. Story. Boundaries. Time and space. My body. Rote philosophy. I meditate. I’m so LA.

It is Thursday, January 14, 2016. 11:11 a.m.

Context is everything, in that everything is everything.

“Everything your eye touches is the content of your kingdom.”

How do you look?

Given the synchronized representation of Ulman’s “Stock Images of War”—two cities, one year apart—one is tempted to compare and contrast. How has our geopolitical context changed in the last year? For one, Isis is no longer foremost a goddess. For two, droves of creatives are moving here. LA is the New Art Capital. Does work look different here? Ulman’s sculptures do. In New York, I shivered at their resonance. How war is image to me. How so much is. New York now is a city of signs. World centre of:

Financial capitalism. Cultural capitalism. Bad art selling well. I have a personal value system. It makes me love Ulman's work, as she makes me think, feel and see anew. As she creates new forms for eternal human concerns. Like Amy Goodman's voice, "Stock Images of War" re-sensitizes me to the gravity of war, power, politics, lives, matter. But LA. Politics in LA. It's like, we can forget about it. Mine and Ulman's friend Dean said this recently. He was at Whole Foods in downtown LA last November, on Friday the 13th (!), when news of the Paris attacks were first streaming. There he was, he said, eating delicious readymade dishes, cool as an organic cucumber. Here is where New Agers thrive. Here is, people call it, "a bubble." You feel safe. And also like you're about to slip into the underworld. Ocean and mountain. Delusion and grandeur. *Maps to the Stars* Down to Earth. Everything is everything.

*

Tuesday, January 12, 2016. Water on Mars—that was big. And September's lunar eclipse. *Homo naledi* (meaning: star), our latest ancestor, was discovered. Trump announced his running. More mass shootings. Cuba and the U.S. performed peace. Ulman made *Forbes*'s "[30 under 30](#)" list. *Love Yourself. What Do You Mean? I'll Show You*. Bieber was never not on the radio. *Sorry. Where Are Ü Now*. Chantal Akerman died. And Sandra Bland. Conventions hold. Chrono/logic. Break. It. Up. Yesterday, @amaliaulman Instagrammed a heart-shaped balloon floating into an airport departures gate. "Want a better 2016?" she captioned the animation. "Try thinking more about your impending demise."

Witness me as I draw this X

Everything your eye touches is the content of your kingdom

The crown slides down over my eyes

The world exposes its egg to the Sky man

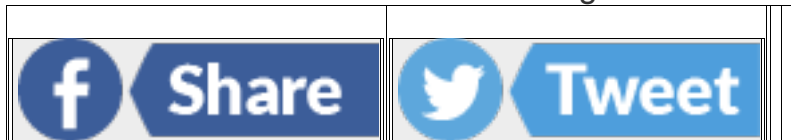
It will be Thursday again

– Ariana Reines, excerpt from *Thursday*

<http://canadianart.ca/reviews/amalia-ulman/>

Instagram hottie who posed for half-naked selfies was just doing it for ART

A WOMAN who tricked nearly 90,000 people into following her on Instagram by posing in her undies has revealed the whole thing was an ARTWORK.



By [Chris Summers](#) / Published 22nd January 2016



For months Amalia Ulman, 26, posted dozens of selfies while posing as a self-obsessed blonde living a life of good food, shopping and socialising.

In some of them she posed in lingerie on beds in various boutique hotel rooms. Others were close-ups of kittens, rose petals, strawberries and pancakes.

At one point she posed in bandages and suggested she had had a boob job.

But it was the sexy selfies that drove up her follower numbers.



“Everything was scripted...I was acting. It wasn't me”

Amalia Ulman

She said: "The idea was to experiment with fiction online using the language of the internet, rather than trying to adapt old media to the internet."

"But I also know that photos of half-naked girls get a lot of 'likes'," she added.

Five months after she started she posted a black and white shot of a rose, captioned The End and revealed the whole thing had been an "art performance".

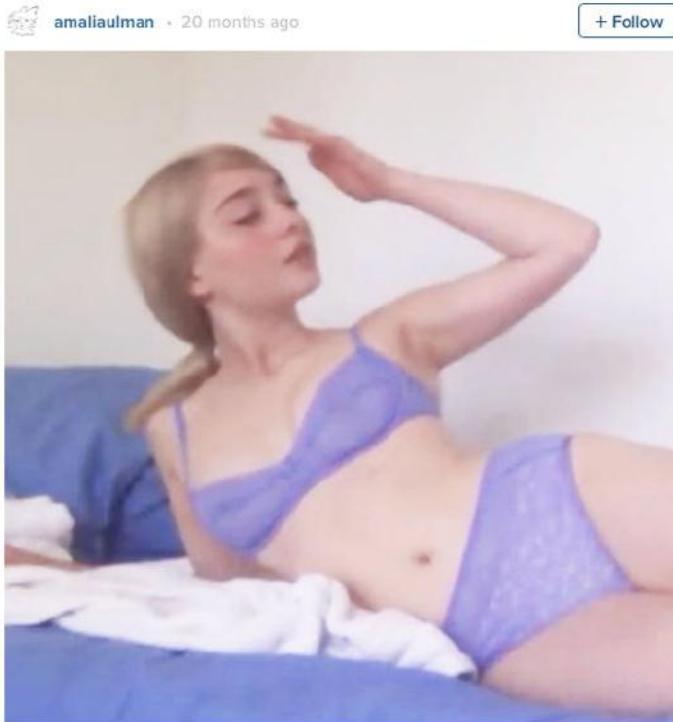
She told the Daily Telegraph: "Everything was scripted. I spent a month researching the whole thing. There was a beginning, a climax and an end. I dyed my hair. I changed my wardrobe. I was acting: it wasn't me.

"It was more than a satire. I wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, and not something biological or inherent to any woman. Women understood the performance much faster than men.

"People started hating me. Suddenly I was this dumb b**** because I was showing my ass in pictures."

Ulman, it turned out, had been playing a role – or, indeed, several roles. And almost all of the 89,244 followers she had amassed by the end of the performance had been fooled.

"Everything was scripted. I spent a month researching the whole thing. There was a beginning, a climax and an end. I dyed my hair. I changed my wardrobe. I was acting: it wasn't me," she said.



So happy i received this set from #PeachJohn

The experiment ended in 2014 but Ulman is showing some of the 175 photos she posted at an art gallery in London next week.

Despite outing herself as a fake, Ulman's Instagram account now has 92,000 followers.

<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/489442/Selfies-Underwear-Instagram-artwork>

The Instagram Hoax That Became an Art-World Sensation

How one savvy artist found a new format for an age-old line of feminist critique.

By [Nora Caplan-Bricker](#)

It's a story you've heard before: Fresh-faced twentysomething moves to Los Angeles hoping to break into the modeling world; loses herself in the hedonistic dazzle; develops body dysmorphia and a drug habit; breaks up with her boyfriend and takes a job as an escort; hits rock bottom and goes to rehab; and eventually moves back home to rebuild with the help of her family and her renewed appreciation for life.

That's the arc that Argentina-born artist Amalia Ulman seemed to be traversing in 2014. Her [Instagram account](#) amassed thousands of followers (100,037 as of this writing), many of whom were clearly there for the vicarious thrill of watching an attractive girl crash and burn. Then, in September of 2014, Ulman revealed that, for the last five months, her social media accounts had been an extended performance project, which she named "Excellences & Perfections." Now, the Tate Modern has announced that it will include parts of Ulman's project in its upcoming show, "Performing for the Camera"; London's prestigious Whitechapel Gallery will exhibit pieces of the work as well. "It's more than a satire," Ulman, now 26, [told the Telegraph](#) recently. "I wanted to prove that femininity is a construction, and not something biological or inherent to any woman."

That's not a new insight, but Ulman's approach is impressively novel. She describes her project as a "triptych," with each act representing one of the narrow personas that govern the self-presentation of women online. The first was a dewy ingénue who posted photos of kittens and brunch and appeared almost exclusively in frilly whites and pinks. Ulman faked a boob job and a breakdown for her second storyline, which was inspired by Kim Kardashian and what Ulman [regrettably](#) calls the American "ghetto aesthetic." The third character, an aficionado of meditation and avocados who used hashtags like *#healthy* and *#namaste*, owed a debt to Gwyneth Paltrow's *Goop*. Ulman says she had time to think about these three versions of femininity—and about how to weave them together into a single, tabloid-worthy redemption narrative—after her legs were severely damaged in a bus crash in 2013.

The comments on Ulman's photos are a mess of envy, disdain, and schadenfreude.

Enthusiasts are comparing Ulman's work to that of artist [Cindy Sherman](#), who has been photographing herself inhabiting other identities—often with the aim of highlighting society's narrow expectations of women—since the 1970s. "Excellences & Perfections" also has an obvious resonance with this fall's public service announcement from Essena O'Neill, an 18-year-old model who [annotated her Instagram account](#) to show how she'd painstakingly

orchestrated the effortless-looking shots. The thing that sets Ulman apart is that she presented her account as real, albeit while hinting—with her over-the-top transformation and her clearly demarcated plot points, such as the breakup that ends Part I—that it was art. The reactions of Sherman's audience members are tempered by their awareness that what they're seeing is art; the reactions of O'Neill's followers were shaped by her efforts to please. Ulman's pictures are highbrow provocation in a lowbrow milieu where viewers feel free to rate her performance in the crassest, and most representative, of terms.

The comments on Ulman's photos provide a clear view into the mess of envy, disdain, and enthusiastic schadenfreude that the construction of femininity evokes in its audience. As Ulman starts hinting that she's working as an escort (something that she claims she really did to make ends meet in art school), her followers seem more interested in figuring out where she goes to get her hair done, and, most importantly, "Have you experienced any breakage with your hair since bleaching?" Further along her downward slide, a post about her "self destructive" behavior and her desire to lose weight inspires a follower to pronounce, "You're beautiful,...but borderline boring. #kindawhiney!" At rock bottom, a pixelated video of a bruised-looking Ulman weeping bears the comment, "Cry me a river."

But the Instagram hordes are even less complimentary about Ulman's celebrity-style renewal. "Whatever Bich u boring now," complains one. "You're an idiot with way too much money and no real interests," gripes another. Ulman told the *Telegraph* that the antipathy extended beyond the Internet to her real life. "People started hating me," she says. "Some gallery I was showing with freaked out and was like, 'You have to stop doing this, because people don't take you seriously anymore.' Suddenly I was this dumb b---- because I was showing my ass in pictures."

Of course, Ulman gets the last laugh now that "Excellences & Perfections" has turned her into an art-world darling. No matter how many museums decide to exhibit her images, though, Instagram will likely remain the best place to see them. Ulman herself says she was drawn to Instagram because of its unique "cadence and rhythm": "The idea was to experiment with fiction online using the language of the internet." Her critique of femininity may be familiar, but the characters she uses to advance it—and her platform for telling their stories—are acutely contemporary.

http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2016/01/the_instagram_hoax_that_became_an_art_world_sensation.html

<http://www.monopol-magazin.de/anika-meier-amalia-ulman>

monopol

MAGAZIN FÜR KUNST UND LEBEN

Amalia Ulman "Excellences & Perfections", 2015

Courtesy the Artist & Arcadia Missa

Anika Meier über Amalia Ulmans fiktive Biografie

"Jeder ist online ein Lügner"

Amalia Ulman inszenierte sich monatelang auf Instagram als vermeintliches Dummchen, das in der Großstadt zum Hot Babe wird, sich von einem Sugar Daddy aushalten lässt und am Ende Läuterung im Yoga findet. Dann löste sie auf: Die Erzählung vom Aufstieg und Fall eines Mädchens war reine Fiktion. Fast zwei Jahre nach ihrer Entstehung wird die Performance noch immer heftig diskutiert und in Ausstellungen gezeigt

Mädchen aus der Provinz findet kleine Häschen zum Sterben süß, zieht in die große Stadt, um Model zu werden, hätte gern blassere Haut und dünnere Knie, trennt sich von ihrer Highschool-Liebe und merkt, dass das Leben Geld kostet. Sie schlägt sich durch, lässt sich auf Dates ein, wird selbst zum Häschen eines Sugar-Daddy – größere Brüste müssen her. Die lassen sich in L.A. schnell machen, auch wenn es weh tut. Das blonde Mädchen in der großen Stadt will nicht mehr für ein Dummchen gehalten werden und geht deshalb wieder als Brünette durchs Leben. Sie wird depressiv, drogenabhängig, tanzt zwischenzeitlich an der Stange, Nervenzusammenbruch, Rehab, Yoga, Avocado-Toast, neuer Boyfriend. Alles gut, ausatmen.

Was nach dem Drehbuch einer Netflix-Serie klingt (oder doch eher wie deren Adaption im deutschen Privatfernsehen) ist in ungefähr das Skript zur Performance "Excellences & Perfections" der Künstlerin Amalia Ulman. Die Arbeit ist schon etwas älter, bedenkt man den Ort, an dem sie zuerst gezeigt wurde. Zwischen dem 19. April und dem 14. September 2014 postete Amalia Ulman auf Instagram und Facebook knapp 180 Beiträge, die den vermeintlichen Aufstieg und Fall eines Mädchens dokumentieren, das auszog, um ein It-Girl mit Modelvertrag zu werden. Erst als die Geschichte zu Ende erzählt und damit auch die Performance abgeschlossen war, löste Ulman auf. Über das Bild einer Rose, ein Schwarz-Weiß-Foto, schrieb sie "The End – Excellences & Perfections", darunter postete sie ein blaues Herz. Und wenn sie jemand gefragt hätte, wofür sie steht, hätte sie sicherlich Amore gesagt. Aber das hätte ihr nicht geholfen.

Einige ihrer Follower reagierten verständnislos, waren empört und schrieben später in Magazinen, wie wütend sie gewesen seien, dass sie von ihr erfolgreich getrollt wurden. Sie sahen zu, ohne Verdacht zu schöpfen. Weil die Performance so nah an der Lebensrealität der sozialen Netzwerke war, sich ihrer Verhaltenscodes, Ausdrucksweise samt passender Hashtags und Bildsprache bediente. Die Leute waren sauer, weil sie einer Fiktion erlagen, weil die Geschichte, die ihnen vier Monate lang erzählt wurde, nicht der Wahrheit entsprach. Dabei, und das ist die Kernaussage von Ulman: Jeder ist online ein Lügner. Den Voyeuren vor den Smartphones wäre es lieber gewesen, Amalia Ulman wäre nur ein weiteres der *hot babes* auf Instagram. Dann nämlich wäre alles weiter gegangen wie bisher. So aber endete das Drama nach drei Akten, der Vorhang fiel, das Licht ging an und der Zuschauer war auf sich selbst zurückgeworfen.

Ulman hatte ihre Performance tatsächlich als Dreiakter angelegt, sie selbst spricht in Interviews von Episoden. Auf Instagram markiert den Beginn ein Posting, das in Großbuchstaben "Part I" ankündigt, in der Bildunterschrift steht "Excellences & Performances". Vielleicht war zu irgendeinem Zeitpunkt geplant, auch auf Teil zwei und drei hinzuweisen, aber damit wäre sie sicherlich aufgefliegen. Ihr virtuelles Alter Ego

macht in den vier Monaten all das durch, was in den sozialen Netzwerken sonst auch passiert, nur eben nicht in so kurzer Zeit und nicht unbedingt einer einzigen Person. Während der Entstehung der Arbeit war das Atelier der Künstlerin ihr Smartphone, sie sah sich auf Tumblr, Facebook und Instagram um, beobachtete, wie Mädchen und Frauen sich in den sozialen Netzwerken präsentieren und griff all die Stereotypen auf, die sie ausmachte.

Das brave Mädchen von nebenan, das ständig seine frisch lackierten Finger ins Bild hält, nach dem Aufstehen verschlafen vor dem Spiegel im OOTD, dem Outfit of the Day, steht und allen einen ganz zauberhaften guten Morgen wünscht, den Kaffee fürs Foto mit Blüten und Blättern verziert und im Bett nur ein kleines putziges Kätzchen liegen hat. Nach dem Umzug in die große Stadt wird aus dem lieben Nachbarskind ein *hot babe*, das etwas zu lang Kim Kardashian auf Instagram folgte. Das Geld für den entsprechenden Lifestyle und Körper fehlt? Dann müssen eben ein Sugar Daddy und eine Brustvergrößerung her, den Rest bringt regelmäßiges Workout.

Dass das nicht lange gut gehen kann, ist zumindest in dieser fiktiven Biografie programmiert. Denn schließlich muss sich der Konflikt zuspitzen und zur Lösung führen. Also stürzt das *hot babe* ab, das sich irgendwann zwischen den vielen Dates, dem Posen vor dem Spiegel und dem Hantieren mit einer Waffe vor der Kamera selbst verloren hat. Auf den Nervenzusammenbruch folgt ganz Hollywood-Klischee Rehab und die Umkehr zu einem bewussten und gesunden Lebensstil samt Yoga, Meditation, Holz im Wohnzimmer, Kaffchen mit der Schwester und grünem Smoothie zum Frühstück. Das Kätzchen im Bett wird durch einen süßen Boyfriend ersetzt, der im Schlaf lächelt wie ein Engel. "So cute! #cutegasm"

Und plötzlich, fast zwei Jahre nach ihrer Entstehung, wird die Performance überall diskutiert. Zwei Ausstellungen in London nämlich zeigen die Arbeit. "Electronic Superhighway" in der Whitechapel Gallery, die gestern eröffnete, und "Performing for the Camera" in der Tate, die ab Mitte Februar läuft. Jetzt, wo die Tate betroffen ist – anders kann man es nicht sagen –, eines der wichtigsten Museen der Welt, werfen auch die großen Zeitungen und Kunstmagazine Fragen auf. "Is this the first Instagram masterpiece?" Der Telegraph möchte es wissen. Und artnet fragt, ob die sozialen Medien überhaupt einen Platz in der heutigen Museumslandschaft haben sollten. Gegenfrage: Warum eigentlich nicht? War es erst die Fotografie, die man lange nicht als künstlerisches Medium gelten lassen wollte, ist es heute ein Kanal, den Künstler wie alle anderen nutzen – und da liegt vielleicht das Problem –, um Arbeiten zu zeigen. Alltag und Kunst liegen inzwischen gelegentlich so nah beieinander, dass das eine untrennbar mit dem anderen verbunden ist.

So funktionierte zumindest die Arbeit von Amalia Ulman, die am wunden Punkt der sozialen Medien ansetzt. Authentizität, das sei die Stärke der sozialen Medien. Instagram, dort kann jeder er selbst sein. Dass dem nicht so ist, das weiß längst jeder Teenager in Amerika. Die unterscheiden indes sehr genau zwischen ihrem öffentlichen Instagram-Account und ihrem Finsta, dem Fake-Instagram-Profil, dem nur enge Freunde folgen und das sie für #suglies, ihre häßlichen, sprich uninszenierten Selfies nutzen. Auf ihrem richtigen Account promoten sie sich selbst, als Marke, zeigen sich von ihrer besten Seite, schielen nach Likes, warten nach dem Posten minutenlang auf bestätigende Kommentare. "OMG", "You're so beautiful", "Pretty", "Gorgeous". Wenn nicht minütlich neue Kommentare und Likes folgen, war das Foto nicht optimal genug inszeniert.

Wenn über die Performance von Amalia Ulman gesprochen wird, geht es auch immer darum, wie viele Follower zugesehen und ihr vielleicht geglaubt haben. Es kursiert eine Zahl um die 90.000, mal sind es 89.244, mal sind es 89.103. Nur kann die Künstlerin selbst nichts dafür, dass ihre Follower-Zahl in die Höhe schnellte. Im Oktober 2014

kaufte der Konzeptkünstler Constant Dullaart für 5.000 Dollar 2.5 Millionen Follower, die er auf verschiedene Protagonisten der Kunstwelt verteilte, so dass alle auf 100.000 Follower kamen. Und damit in Zeiten von Social Media, wo die Bedeutung einer Person oder eines Künstlers an den Zahlen der Menschen, die in den sozialen Medien folgen, bemessen wird, plötzlich alle gleich wichtig waren. Darunter waren Ai Weiwei, Richard Prince, Klaus Biesenbach, die Gagosian Gallery, Brian Droitcour, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Jerry Saltz, er selbst und viele mehr. Wem er Follower kaufte und wie viele, zeigt er in einem Video samt Screenshots.

Amalia Ulman findet sich auch unter den unfreiwillig Beschenkten. Tatsächlich verfolgten ihre Performance, die bereits im September 2014 endete, also einen Monat, bevor Dullaart aktiv wurde, die damals 4264 Abonnennten ihres Instagram-Accounts. Sieht man sich die Kommentare unter den Fotos an, die Teil der Performance sind, ist schnell klar, das live darauf tatsächlich kaum reagiert wurde. Viele kommentieren erst jetzt, da in den Medien anlässlich den Ausstellungen darüber berichtet wird. Einige sahen sie auf einem Podium, während der Art Basel Miami Beach 2014, gemeinsam mit Kevin Systrom, dem CEO und Mitbegründer von Instagram, Klaus Biesenbach, Hans Ulrich Obrist und Simon de Pury zum Thema "Instagram as an Artistic Medium". Und Amalia Ulman durfte sich darüber freuen, dass sie mit Leuten zusammen saß, die die ganze Zeit darüber sprachen, wie authentisch es doch sei, dieses Instagram.

Zwei Jahre später ist Amalia Ulman einige Arbeiten, Galerie-Ausstellungen und ein Sponsoring von Gucci weiter. Auf ihrer Homepage hat sie die Ausstellung in der Tate mit ihrer Beteiligung angekündigt. Und wieder freut sie sich: "Isn't this great :-)"

<http://models.com/Work/under-the-influence-magazine-under-the-influence-of-amalia-ulman/viewAll>

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ART Felix Petty 25 April, 2016

beyond instagram with amalia ulman

Amalia Ulman turned Instagram into a site of performance art, in a five month long performance she documented the life, love and nervous breakdown of a girl who'd just moved to LA, casually taking apart the image-obsessed world we live in. Now, the most exciting artist of her generation is breaking out into new forms to continue to explore the aesthetics of power.



I can't remember when I first realised Amalia's Instagram account had become the home of a piece of meticulously scripted performance art, when I realised it was no longer Amalia in the pictures, but "Amalia". Amalia had recently moved from London, where she'd graduated from Central Saint Martins, to Los Angeles, and I thought, well that's what Los Angeles does to people, isn't it? Turns everyone into selfie obsessed narcissists, posting pictures of latte art, banal motivational slogans, and videos of themselves dancing sexily to Iggy Azalea. I think I'd definitely realised around the time Amalia went to hospital to "have" breast enlargement surgery.

Excellences and Perfections, the title of that performance, was conducted on Instagram for five months in mid-2014. In it "Amalia" moves to LA, gets a boyfriend, has plastic surgery, has a breakdown, gets better. The end. Amalia's got a Flaubertian eye for finding beauty in banal detail, uncovering the romantic idealism that springs from such banality, and picking apart the fall out when the romantic bubble gets popped. *Excellences And Perfections* might be satire, but it's hard to say just where the blow falls. It takes aim as much at the performance the character undertakes as it does the viewer-voyeur who can't tear their eyes away from the unfolding spectacle. There's a honed vacuity to the images that implicates us all.

"I was fascinated by the moodboards these kind of girls curated online, and the way they'd write as a sort of accessory." Amalia explains, when asked about how she came to start *Excellences and Perfections*. "The original idea was to use that same strategy and apply it to a fictional scripted narrative, but I wanted to use the language of the internet to make the audience feel uncomfortable when confronted with their own desires, guilty pleasures and prejudices. How would an art audience react to a character they are entertained by, but supposedly meant to critique and condemn?"

Excellences and Perfections is on display at the moment in two very different exhibitions; one, at the Whitechapel, is an overview of the last fifty years of digital art, it places Amalia alongside contemporaries like Petra Cortright and Katja Novitskova as experimenting with new technology to see what territories art can find itself inhabiting. The Tate exhibition instead places it within a line of artists like Cindy Sherman, Hannah Wilke, and Francesca Woodman, who mixed photography, portraiture and performance. The lasting power isn't so much in the images themselves, or even the story that it tells, but in the reactions the performance generated, and continue to generate.

"Some reactions were unexpected, like women asking for advice about surgeons and not suggesting me to think twice about the surgery. Other reactions took place as I had planned, like slut shaming, trolling and a strong feeling of disappointment by people who wanted to believe the story was real... The same deception a client suffers when their favourite prostitute reveals she's actually not in love."

Excellences and Perfections seemed to touch a nerve, it's take on that feminised Instagram culture opened her up to criticism of the *is it even art?* variety from outside the art world, and a sort of sneering low-browness from members of the art world, who believe she actually *is* the character from the performance, or who can't see the performance piece as a piece of work, but mere *Instagram Art*. "People don't tend to question what they've seen," she explains, "All photographs are true because we want them to be." The fact that their was no vindictive, nasty streak, to *Excellences and Perfections*, and that its humour was so deadpan, means it's hard to pull apart the realness of the reality Amalia created.

"We are all characters in a play but no one wants to think about it or find themselves as a caricature or a walking cliché. It's the same discomfort anyone experiences when a friend imitates them perfectly well, realising how obvious their signifiers are."



Since *Excellences and Perfections*, Amalia has taken on wildly different forms in order to express a similar unease with the surfaces, aesthetics, and power relationships of modern life. *Stock Images of War*, exhibited in New York, featured work made during her recovery from a life-threatening and leg breaking bus accident, and, in a series of metal wire sculptures, turned the instruments of war into delicate and precarious objects that mirrored the fragility of her situation. Then *International House Of Cozy*, made for Rotterdam's MAMA, pulled apart the various signifiers of hipster life via a short pornographic film. Set to light strummed muzak, a couple talk about their life, Soho house, Aesop moisturiser, their art careers. It's a rather twisted and humorous take on the truism that "sex sells" and the rather horrific use of "porn" as a signifier: lifestyle porn, interior porn, food porn, etc. "I like porn as this big chunk of pop culture everyone looks at and no one really talks about," Amalia says. "It's a big blanket that covers the world like the Ozone layer." At the film's climax the actor cums on a Muji notebook.

"I want to be 'figuring things out' till I die," she explains, of her diverse style and forms "Some ideas will work, some won't. I guess I have no sense of ridicule, which protects me from overthinking." The thread that runs through much of her work, that makes its approach so singularly satisfying, is the way she uses narrative to explore modern life.

Part of this, as she says, is to explore the use of cliché. We're all meant to be building our personal brands now, rewriting our lives to make ourselves look perfect, broadcasting our perfect jobs, hobbies, friends, dinners, coffees, we're all characters in a play, just Amalia's work often reveals we're simply caricatures. Alternatively, it's a kind of hypocrisy, another kind of cliché, in the way society is structured; the simple dichotomies between powerful and powerless, female and male.

"I'm fascinated by con artists (at my core, I guess I'm Argentinian!) and by how people pass for others, through performance, poise, clothes etc. The same way as when people get surgery, look prettier or younger, and they are treated better because they have a sweeter look."

At Frieze she unveiled a new video installation with Arcadia Missa based around the history of diary keeping and unwritten female histories, as well as a holiday she took to North Korea, to enter the booth you had to remove your shoes and hand over your phone. The film used cutesy aesthetics and stereotypically girly language as a way of discussing larger issues around media representation, often using that cute tone-of-voice to slip in forceful, powerful statements. "You can only escape that manipulation, political and personal, by recognising the language." She explains. "Most of the script was made from emails men have sent to me in the past."

Credits

Text Felix Petty

Photography Renata Raksha



T THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

The Next Generation of Artists' Studios

By
APRIL 12, 2016

EMILY

STOKES

Once, an artist holed up in her paint-spattered loft and created in solitude. These days, the idea of where an artist makes her work has changed — and so, too, the very nature of art itself.

Photo



Amalia Ulman in her mundane workspace in a downtown L.A. office tower. Credit Photograph by Sean Donnola. Produced by Romain Dauriac.

Amalia Ulman

Amalia Ulman, 27, works in a bland, ready-furnished office on the 17th floor of a 21-story building filled primarily with lawyers and accountants. She admits that collectors and artist friends — who mostly work in shared warehouses — find her setup a little odd. And yet Ulman likes her studio in downtown L.A. for the same reason she likes hotel rooms: She can't get distracted by trying to personalize the space. She feels obliged to keep the office tidy, to avoid potential awkwardness when the cleaner comes at 6 p.m. And she feels pressured to keep her schedule. "Everyone is working," she explains, "so I feel like I have to do the same thing."

Of course, this is only part of the story. Ulman is best known for the five-month performance "[Excellences & Perfections](#)" (2014) that told, through a series of carefully crafted selfies on Instagram, the story of a narcissistic young woman's coming of age and descent into drugs. Followers of Ulman's Instagram feed, [@amaliaulman](#), have recently watched the unfolding of a mysterious new series: Here are photos of Ulman sitting in her office wearing Mary Jane shoes; homemade advertisements for Shiseido; New Yorker-style cartoons featuring a woman with a pigeon sidekick. The idea behind the new works, she says, is to explore the way "we become caricatures of ourselves online."

The office itself has become an important character in the new photographs, in which she exaggerates, among other traits, her workaholic tendencies. (In one short Instagram video, she films her reflection in the building's elevator doors as she chants, exhausted, "It's been a long day," until the doors open.) She makes these videos and photos spontaneously as she works. "Instead of planning the photograph, I plan the whole scene, and just spend some time there," she explains. "They're always better if they're actually selfies," she continues, "and if I'm like, actually tired."

Photo

Jared Madere in a Bronx warehouse alongside the retrofit RV in which he used to work and live. Credit Photograph by Sean Donnola. Produced by Romain Dauriac.

Jared Madere

Jared Madere's studio — a large garage filled with free Craigslist furniture and curious artifacts opposite a building site in the Bronx — is, in some ways, exactly what one might expect for a young artist trying to make it in New York City. And yet the space is also a rebellion for Madere, 29, whose entire career has been spent fleeing the very idea of permanence and stability, both in the materials he uses and the spaces in which he lives and works — which, until recently, included the RV that is now parked inside, awaiting its next adventure.

Madere bought the van in 2014 after he learned his Bed-Stuy landlord might raise the rent on his apartment, and it became not only his home, but a kind of trademark: He drove it to Miami Basel in 2013 and, for a party at the Whitney last year, parked it outside the museum, inviting visitors inside a mobile exhibition space.

Until his [commission](#) for the Whitney earlier in 2015, Madere had bypassed having a studio by making most of his installations in the gallery spaces in which they were to be shown. He likes to work with organic, delicate materials — flowers, cherries, dripping wax, motor grease — that behave in unpredictable ways. Starting out as an artist, he discovered another advantage of working with unlikely media — that the more outlandish the request (for “three kilos of raspberries,” say), the more likely it was that a curator or gallery would leap to his aid, helping to source and transport the necessary materials.

The Bronx space represents a maturation for the artist, who has since moved on to more conventional living quarters, and who has been working on a series of metal figures. Still, there are signs everywhere of Madere's love of things that move, decompose and shine: a TV set playing a looping tournament of the hooversled game Wipeout, a rolling projection of medieval manuscripts on the wall, flowers in glittery vases. “My friend recently told me that the reason why humans like shiny stuff is because they're always trying to locate a water source,” Madere says, and points to a back wall, where shimmering Mylar drapes ripple under an electric fan, a waterfall of fabric.

Photo

Neil Beloufa on the film set he built in a former factory outside Paris. Credit Photograph by Sean Donnola. Produced by Romain Dauriac.

Neil Beloufa

The Algerian-French artist [Neil Beloufa](#), 31, sometimes jokes that he can no longer work in his own studio because it has been gentrified. He is, of course, responsible for its transformation. Two years ago, having taken over an entire former factory building in the Paris suburb of Villejuif that he had been sharing with other artists for the previous four years, Beloufa decided to make “Occidental,” a film he had been contemplating for almost a decade. To transform the vast warehouse into the film set, he and a team of 16 constructed over two stories a series of interiors including hotel bedrooms, corridors, a kitchen, an office and a lobby, replete with potted plants and ubiquitous waiting-room furniture.

Beloufa is known for sculptures that employ technological devices such as surveillance cameras and videos, and for films that merge documentary and fiction, often starring nonactors. “Occidental,” his first real feature, is different, starring professionals and made with a bigger budget. The film's complex narrative begins when a hotel receptionist becomes suspicious of two men who present themselves as an Italian couple but who seem neither Italian nor gay. For this Hitchcockian thriller of identity politics, Beloufa wanted the décor to be '70s and drab, evoking the look of what he calls “postcolonial tourism.”

And yet the project is, one senses, more than a film. Beloufa, who characterizes himself as “very analytique,” likes the idea that he is creating an alternate, miniature art world — one in which he isn't pressured by “the institution.” (He used the proceeds from his own past sales to fund the film rather than taking a commission from a museum.) Beloufa's studio is a self-sufficient society; he works on all his projects with the same team, which includes high-school friends and fellow artists who are paid the same salary as he pays himself: It is studio as cooperative. Last fall, after filming

wrapped, he tore down half the set, mounting an exhibition — partly on the set, partly in a series of newly constructed white cubicles — for the artists who had, at one time or another, passed through the warehouse, celebrating the community it had nurtured. “Transforming the studio into an arts center was a way of saying, ‘I don’t need the institution,’” he explains. “The institution needs us.”
Photo

Darja Bajagic’s atelier in Long Island City is part artist’s studio, part office space. Credit Photographs by Sean Donnola. Produced by Romain Dauriac.

Darja Bajagic

Just as there are two sides to [Darja Bajagic](#)’s haunting, peculiar art, so there are two sides of her studio. First, there is the traditional paint-spattered atelier with shelves of cans of latex wall paints and canvases piled on the floor. Then there is the office, clean and tidy and a little hidden away. It is here that Bajagic, 26, finds the images that she appropriates in her paintings: photos from 1990s horror-porn magazines with names like Draculina, murderabilia, pictures from barely legal websites, portraits of murdered and missing women. “I do sometimes worry about my Google search history,” she admits.

The juxtapositions of old and new media and spaces are a result of Bajagic’s splintered artistic influences. In her first months as a student at Yale, Bajagic made formally disciplined, near-monochromatic paintings in grays and whites and hyperlink blue, works so muted that her tutors repeatedly asked her what they were all about. At the same time, almost as a hobby, Bajagic was collecting images she found online of women — a habit she had developed as a lonely teenager, using them to create false profiles to chat to men online. Her solution to the problem of how to animate her paintings was to combine her two interests, literally pasting images from her online research on top of the canvases she had been working on. “I’m not trying to annihilate the history behind the pictures that I use,” she explains. “I’m trying to recontextualize them.”

A version of this article appears in print on April 17, 2016, on page 272 of T Magazine with the headline: Studio Visit.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/12/t-magazine/art/artists-studios-amalia-ulman-jared-madere-neil-beloufa-darja-bajagic.html>

<http://bon.se/article/amalia-ulman-by-popular-demand/>
Bon Magazine #70 S/S 2016

By popular demand



AMALIA ULMAN

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Amalia Ulman became both revered and pilloried for her Instagram performance *Excellences and Perfections* in 2014. Some people are now calling it the first social media masterpiece. With a clear feminist agenda, the Los Angeles-based artist is dissecting modernity in a way that resonates with people all over the world.

Words Daniel Björk
Images by Amalia Ulman

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BON S/S 2016

FOR ANYONE FOLLOWING SOCIAL MEDIA, it is painfully clear that an expression of individuality can look remarkably unoriginal.



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Amalia Ulman: The tasteful and the bland seem almost interchangeable as authenticity rules the day. We look for the unique, we find it, we appropriate it - and then turn it into cliché.

While previous generations of artists have been more interested in the sheer force of unmeasured, Amalia's aesthetics have become mainstream - or "corporate" as she has labelled it previously. Last year, she exhibited *International House of Cery in Rotterdam*, a "more movie" filled with products from Acne and Driessche, along with a fixie bike and stacks of Ardenne.

But her most well known work is a performance that played out over three months on Instagram, called *Excellencies and Perfections* (2014). The work was divided into three parts, each portraying a different type of contemporary femininity. The first, a Tumblr girl, posing pretty selfies and a Tangle of pink cakes, the second a "sugar baby ghetto girl" writing haters' gross love style captions and getting a boob job.

The final act, after a couple of posts supposedly portraying some kind of breakdown, showed a girl

over those type into meditation and healthy eating. Amalia's stated goal was to show that femininity is nothing inherent to being a woman - instead, it takes a lot of effort and work.

During her performance, Amalia insisted herself in Los Angeles, where she had just moved (and still currently lives), so that even though the work started with a post saying "Part 1", it would be slightly unclear what was fiction and what was reality. And even though Amalia was an artist involved in a public performance, she was told by a gallery she was working with that her Instagram selfies and behaviour were putting her career in danger as people wouldn't take her seriously.

Born in Argentina, Amalia grew up in northern Spain, then escaped to London to study art at Central Saint Martins, and was later singled out by the powerful curator Hans Ulrich Obrist as a young artist to watch a year before her breakthrough in 2014. Her work has been connected with so-called post-internet art - meaning art by people who grew up after the internet went mainstream - but could just as easily be linked to an artist such as Cindy Sherman, who also has used self-portraits to deconstruct womanhood. (*Excellencies and Perfections* is currently on show at Tate Modern in London with Sherman, among others.)

Amalia's works span a wide variety of practices - from sculpture to installations to video pieces and Instagram - but certain themes emerge. For example, an interest in gender roles, their expression and construction, a fascination with what she calls middlebrow aesthetics - those things, trends and styles that are neither low- nor highbrow. And finally, the questioning of aesthetic hierarchies.

At the Friseur art fair in London last year, she invited visitors to enter a room to watch her latest video piece, *Annals of Private History*. Going in, you had to take off your shoes, hand in your mobile phone, then sit on a red, carpeted floor while the video played out. A voiceover proceeded to tell a fictional and didactic history of diaries and how boys are given notebooks while girls' diaries come with padlocks in order to keep their thoughts and emotions far away from public life. It reminded me of those YouTube videos where you get a summary of the philosophy of Nietzsche in seven minutes.



"Be sending invoices like..."

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Amalia's work is relatable to anyone vaguely aware of current pop-culture, but its brilliance lies in the fact that she more or less treats popular culture in general, and hipster culture in particular, as a brand aesthetic, then plays with it in a way that makes you see the power hierarchies within – mostly white, male and Western. As the aesthetic spreads over the world (I recently discussed the hipster coffee scene in Krakow), Sobieraj with a friend, for example, you can't help wondering what this globally shared taste says about our current times. There is no simple answer, but Amalia Ulan is at least asking the right questions.

Are you still interested in "middle-brow aesthetics"?

No. How would you then define them?

The invisibility of "normal". With this, do you mean that what's actually normal is now posing as "unique", "individual", "original"?

No, I mean that when something is very widespread as an aesthetic, it is difficult to see. And I have the challenge: this poses when making art piece. Like, for example, a normal pair of jeans in the 80s is now a pair of very obviously 80s-style jeans. Time makes that easy to see, but I like working with the now, with what's around me.

You've spoken of choosing or preferring analogue things – travel, libraries, a flat without internet – is there something

FOR ME, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IS TO STUMBLE UPON SOMETHING. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT WAS KILLED ON THE INTERNET BY CUSTOM-MADE CONTENT AND NEWSFEEDS.

about the infinite choice in the digital realm that brings out the homogenised side of our culture? Exactly, because there is actually not infinite choice, but more of a running in circles situation. And I think there's a limit to what a brain can take out at once. I love choices. For me, the most beautiful thing is to stumble upon something. That's something that was killed on the internet by custom-made content and newsfeeds. Also, something that I find annoying about the internet is that everything is quantified by popularity – using algorithms. So it is not about quality but about numbers... and that's not very good for culture.



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Do we run the risk of creating a culture where everything becomes an exercise in branding or something to consume?

I think this already happened a long time ago. We are now here into a

sometimes wonder if people are interested in experiencing new things. Or rather, they seem interested in experiencing new things in the same category: whatever's trendy, or considered hipster. So you have people going to faraway places and ending up in, say, Jakarta's version of Shoreditch. Is this something you've experienced?

Totally, in many places. And I dread it, but I'm guilty too, because I do enjoy being able to drink a soy latte in a remote place. If I was in Hong Kong and had to reply to this interview, I'd most possibly be sitting at the Agnes B cafe, with my laptop, enjoying the wifi and the smell of croissants. But afterwards, I'd escape to a place with no signal, some place where I don't know what I'm being given for dinner.

You love to travel. What have you observed recently?

I think my most recent trips (not including London, New York City, etc) were North Korea, Beijing and Texas. All of them were shocking. In Beijing, it was "cool" to wear a plastic spoon on the top of one's head. I thought it had a celebratory meaning, but no one



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"What I do as an artist is to take an ordinary object — say a wheelchair — and by drawing on it, transform it into something that is uniquely my own."

the beginning, I thought it was cool, then I realised it was just a bunch of white men being patronising.

Do you find that being a young female artist comes with specific challenges?

As said previously being labelled. When an artist has a female name, there's more chance [she will be] googled to see how she looks.

It seems more and more women are speaking up and calling things out, though. Are we living in a feminist moment right now?

But there are also more and more MGTOW [Men Going Their Own Way] speaking up and calling things out. And people like that make a shit ton of noise. Look at [Donald] Trump.

But it's interesting that the biggest Instagram accounts [not including Instagram's own account] are, in descending order: Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez, Kim Kardashian West, Beyoncé, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Kylie Jenner, Kendall Jenner, Cristiano Ronaldo and Nicki Minaj. What is your take on this?

The image of a beautiful woman sells.

On one of your recent Instagram posts, someone called

rob4317834 posted this: "I'm doing an art project and need 50 pictures of your bare feet. Thank you." This seems like trolling, especially since the account has no followers. Being a woman in the public eye today often means being a target for abuse. Have you had any bad experiences?

Because I don't take my thing personally, not really. But sometimes I fear I am too open and that it might play against me one day.

Do you interact with people commenting these days? I saw you did during *Excellences and Perfections* at some point.

Not really, not if they are not friends. Generally, I have something better to do, such as feeding my pet pigeon Rob.

Hashtags are an essential part of your Instagram account, appropriating and mocking them at the same time. Do you have any favourite hashtags?

My favourite is #EggplantFriday. I got a picture removed because of it. #CIA is a weird one, too.

Can you tell us anything about what you are working on now? I can never really expand on what I'm working on because I keep things for myself, to think over until

they are released, but I'm deeply invested in a new fiction and I'm re-searching a lot on the aesthetics of whiteness as the aesthetics of legitimacy: hospitals, lobbies, courts, offices, cashmere jumpers, etc.

With over 160,000 followers, as well as showing in traditional art venues, who do you see as your audience?

Right now, newspapers, and the fact that I'm being shown at the Tate, has made this go out of control. I couldn't think of a more varied set of followers, but I have to say, it really entertains me to look at the notifications. Sometimes, it is a teenager from Trinidad and Tobago, other times a single mum from South Korea. It is never-ending and fascinating.

Do you think you have any responsibility when reaching people who don't know what you do is art?

I'm not a politician. I'm an artist and art is about freedom. My only responsibility is to try my hardest to make good work. That being said, I refuse to be harmful for the sake of my art, but some things escape my reach.

In fashion, the amount of Instagram followers you have can transform a normal girl to a street style star. For models, it is more and more important to have a big following. Does this have an impact in the art world, as well?

I think it has a very negative impact. The art world hates the popular, and I don't think this is ever going to change. O



All photographs by Amalia Uman & Ula Overhult for Bon. Cartoons courtesy Amalia Uman and Amalia Mosa Gallery.

Intervista con Amalia Ulman, la performer su Instagram

Argentina, ma anche spagnola e americana, classe 1989. È Amalia Ulman, l'artista che ha fatto parlare molto di sé un paio di anni fa per una performance su Instagram. Ora è in mostra alla Tate Modern di Londra. L'abbiamo incontrata.

Scritto da [Sonia d'Alto](#) | mercoledì, 6 aprile 2016 · [2](#)



Amalia Ulman, Excellence&Perfection

UN SUBLIME ORDINARIO

Amalia Ulman è argentina, cresciuta in Spagna, vive a Los Angeles e Gijón. È giovanissima, è nata nel 1989. È un'artista che lavora sull'identità, tema che utilizza per sondare aspetti e questioni legati al sociale. Attualmente uno dei suoi lavori è in mostra alla Tate Modern di Londra, [nella collettiva *Performing the Camera*](#). I suoi lavori, che spaziano dalle installazioni ai video, dalle performance alle poesie, dal graphic design agli *iOS mobile upload*, mostrano l'aspetto narcisistico della nostra contemporaneità, in cui le donne sono inserite e si inseriscono come intrattenimento.

Amalia è femminista e veicola il suo credo identitario su un'attenta esplorazione del corpo. Il suo lavoro si concentra su un'analisi sociale incentrata sul concetto di bellezza, esplorata con particolare attenzione al rapporto intercorrente tra estetica e classi sociali, in particolare il ceto medio, di cui l'autrice segue quell'"ordinario sublime" che ne caratterizza il gusto. Il suo modo di fare ricerca artistica ed esperienza assomiglia a quello di un flâneur che vaga e cammina per la città, nei centri estetici, negli aeroporti, nelle sale d'attesa e indaga l'ubiquità dell'immaginario di un'ordinaria bellezza. Perle, cuori, arte del caffè, ondulati salici cinesi, glitter, slogan motivazionali costituiscono l'iconografia delle donne di classe medio-alta che l'artista esplora dalla sua prospettiva femminista.



Amalia Ulman, Excellence&Perfection

UN PROFILO INSTAGRAM COME PERFORMANCE

Lo sguardo, nella nostra società post-capitalista e post-internet è una costruzione culturale che co-dipende dal bisogno di vedere ed essere mostrati. I corpi, per essere “made in time”, devono guardare “a”, “verso”, in quella che si mostra sempre meno velatamente come *téchne* del prossimo, come scrive **Jean-Luc Nancy**.

L'esibizione del corpo nell'era multimediale è diventata un'abitudine, l'identità risulta accessoria e finalizzata solo alla riflessione nello schermo. Questa tendenza popolare e virale nell'estetica e nei comportamenti è stata cristallizzata dell'artista, a partire dalla sua performance *Excellence&Perfection* (2014), dove incarna per cinque mesi, attraverso un profilo Instagram da fiction, l'epopea di una giovane ragazza che dalla periferia si trasferisce in città, e vive tutti gli stadi della sua nuova vita, fino alla redenzione e il ritorno a casa. Una sorta di biografia antropologica che sviluppa attraverso un estremo rinnovo culturale, ispirato a quegli standard di media bellezza che contempla e interroga durante il suo lavoro.

Le immagini eccessive ma anche familiari (colazioni sontuose, foto di shopping e di orsacchiotti griffati, scatti ammiccanti, slogan sulla forza personale e la cattiveria della gente) le permettono di ottenere in pochi mesi più di 65mila follower. I social media sono un mezzo per vendere il proprio stile di vita, di costruire la propria etichetta



Amalia Ulman, Excellence&Perfection

L'INTERVISTA

Qual è il tuo rapporto con i social media? E quale quello con Internet?

Non mi importa dei social media. Per questo che posso giocare, come faccio sin da piccola. È solo un altro media, come tanti altri, è un new media, e rispetto agli altri puoi utilizzarlo in maniera molto meno naïf, ma non penso sia spaventoso. Può solo manipolare, ad esempio attraverso l'illusione di diventare popolari. È una cosa vecchia: le persone, come già in passato è capitato con gli altri mezzi emergenti, pensano che sia tutto vero, ma il primo piccolo step è realizzare che tutte le informazioni sono manipolate.

Riguardo al mio rapporto con Internet, invece, devo dire che quando sono a casa non ce l'ho internet, non lo uso.

Com'è nata l'idea dell'app *Ethira*? Perché questo sistema anonimo e di cancellazione? Pensi che il peso del carico informatico potrebbe generare in futuro una generale scomparsa della presenza? O piuttosto potrebbe, al contrario, essere legato al mercato?

Ethira è un progetto del 2013, un iOS mobile upload, un'applicazione per smartphone e tablet disponibile su iTunes alla voce "social network". Il progetto è stato presentato presso Arcadia Missa a Londra, abbinato a oggetti della cultura orientale e a gocce di rugiada, ed esprime un desiderio personale: che qualcuno possa lavare questo mondo in deperimento. Si tratta di una app con un sistema molto semplice, e soprattutto agli antipodi dei social network: il suo funzionamento prevede che le frasi scritte dall'utente – massimo 140 caratteri – scompaiono dopo pochi secondi, generando un sistema che funziona solo come autentica espressione personale, senza l'ipocrisia di una pubblicazione, come invece accade con altri social network.

Facilità d'espressione, "morte dell'autore", zero feedback, se non la possibilità di leggere dei testi legati alla posizione geografica. C'è quasi un'intenzionalità Zen, e l'idea dell'anonimato, dell'espressione non filtrata e spontanea, che scompare per sempre, poco dopo, come il flusso degli eventi nella vita. La cosa che mi interessava è la mancanza di archivio, il fatto che tutto sparisse. È proprio in virtù di questo che non ha funzionato: è stato ritirato dal mercato perché le persone non erano attratte da qualcosa che non permetteva la pubblicazione. No feedback come Twitter, non popular.

Ciò che ti ha resa celebre è *Excellence&Perfection*, la performance via Instagram.

È una live performance sul modo di vivere. Non si trattava di una performance pianificata ma di qualcosa che è profondamente legato alla vita di ogni giorno, più che al contesto delle gallerie o dei musei.

Ho notato un ampio impiego di grigio e nero nell'estetica del tuo lavoro. Ad esempio la grafica della schermata iniziale della tua app, la rosa nera con cui hai fatto terminare la tua performance *Excellence&Perfection*, il trailer *Stock image of war...* Una combinazione di ansia e seduzione?

Non direi che deriva dalla seduzione, piuttosto dall'ispirazione della Spagna, dagli ospedali, dalle sale d'attesa, luoghi che ben raccontano il mio immaginario.

Perché hai scelto Instagram per la tua performance? Qual è stata la reazione più interessante tra i follower?

Ho scelto Instagram perché era il modo più semplice per seguire le narrative di qualcuno, incontrare persone che non avrei incontrato, ad esempio sudcoreani che ho seguito per anni, di cui non sapevo nulla, ma di cui vedevo ogni giorno le immagini.

Riguardo alle reazioni, le più interessanti sono emerse nei momenti più difficili della ragazza che incarnavo sul mio profilo. Nel momento in cui dicevo *“scusate se non mi sono fatta sentire”*, le persone che non mi avevano mai scritto e non dicevano mai niente scrivevano *“oh, spero che ora ti senti meglio”*, e questo è molto intenso. Ed è interessante vedere anche come molte persone ti seguano in silenzio.

Hai notato una reazione particolare da parte delle donne?

Una delle reazioni più sorprendenti e confuse consiste senza dubbio nel fatto che le donne si avvicinano perché hanno paura. Privatamente mi chiedevano com'era andata l'operazione chirurgica... Per me è stata una grande rivelazione vedere come molte donne di questa sfera così addicted allo sguardo pubblico in realtà non siano libere di fare cose del genere. È stato molto interessante, e doloroso.

Sonia D'Alto

<http://amaliaulman.eu/>

<http://www.tribune.com/2016/04/intervista-amalia-ulman-performance-instagram/>