

Amalia Ulman: why I staged my own Instagram meltdown

What a fictionalised online performance revealed about the way we view women online



1st June 2014 © Amalia Ulman

Amalia Ulman JANUARY 3 2020

“Excellences & Perfections” was a scripted performance I did [on Instagram](#) from April to September 2014. It showed the evolution of a young woman living in Los Angeles.

I adopted three personas in turn: first, cute Tumblr-loving ingénue; next, a basic sugar baby who’s into streetwear; and finally, a post-rehab wellness freak.

Because it was an experimental format, I stuck to clichés that the audience would recognise. I decided to keep the story simple.

I had been online for many years when I started the artwork. As a young woman, I was very aware that the internet was not a fun, beautiful playground. I knew how easy it was to get attention through objectification alone.

So after many years of having worked on being genderless and invisible, I decided to use the way women are fetishised online as a way of telling a story.



17th May 2014 © Amalia Ulman

At the time I was doing a lot of work online, and years before that I had posed in my own photographs. So I just combined the two.

But I hated the world of performance art: I was an autistic girl hiding behind a screen, not an extrovert dying to get on stage. It was a very scary thing for me to do, but I felt compelled to do it.

I'm proud of how reckless I am in my work. As a teenager I was interested in movements like Dada, punk, cyberpunk, Arte Povera and the anti-fascist art movements. These influences are there if you look closely.



8th July 2014, (#itsjustdifferent) © Amalia Ulman



8th August 2014 © Amalia Ulman

I was born a woman: that's the life I've experienced so far, and I try to talk about what I know. But I feel that femininity has never come naturally to me. For years I've felt that I had to "perform" a role in my everyday life just to fit in. So this project was an extension of that in a way.

By the conclusion of the performance in September 2014, I had gained thousands of new followers on [Instagram](#). I didn't find that thrilling — I never really cared about the numbers. I was only satisfied that the experiment was going according to plan.



24th August 2014 © Amalia Ulman



I think Instagram popularity, when it comes to images of women, depends on where you are in the world. It seemed that in the US the formula, for a while, was to have a huge ass with surreal Brazilian butt-lift proportions.

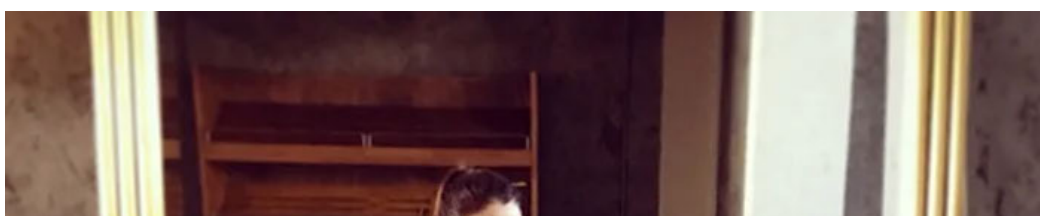
Ultimately, though, I don't think social media has changed much since 2014. People still like being lied to.

When I revealed that my Instagram character was a creation, some of my followers were angry. A lot had left sexist comments on my profile. The work was holding up a mirror and they didn't like what they saw.

But that was the point: media is deceptive. When things become images, they become fiction.



10th September 2014 © Amalia Ulman





13th September 2014 © Amalia Ulman

Photographs courtesy Arcadia Missa, London

[Amalia Ulman](#) is an Argentine/Spanish artist. She is making her first feature film, 'El Planeta', a dark comedy about eviction

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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, Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 1st June 2014), 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 – Amalia 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”.



Amalia Ulman, Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 4th July 2014), 2014 (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.



Amalia Ulman, Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 5th September 2014), 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**.

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Amalia Ulman: 'I learn things from the performances that I wouldn't have otherwise'

Having presented her fictionalised personas on her Instagram account and at the Tate Modern, the artist goes back to the gallery space to present a new installation that continues her ongoing performance, *Privilege*

by ALEXANDER GLOVER

It was April 2014, and Argentinian-born artist Amalia Ulman uploaded to her Instagram feed the first in a series of posts that marked a notable shift in her public persona. Over the course of the next few months, images of the 25-year-old's new life in Los Angeles began to confuse her audience with tales of breast surgery, hotel bathroom selfies, escorting and drug-consumption. In September that year, Ulman announced that it had all been a performance piece entitled *Excellences & Perfections* (2014). The performance became known globally and brought with it a mixture of anger and adoration. Simon Baker, curator of photography and international art at Tate Modern, was one of those who adored it, and he included Ulman's work in the Tate's extremely popular exhibition *Performing for the Camera*, earlier this year.

Ulman's next performance, in February this year, commissioned by the 9th Berlin Biennale, saw the artist post a picture of a pregnancy test with the caption "BOOM haha". The performance, entitled *Privilege* (2016), would go on to spark even more outrage. The artist's new exhibition, *Labour Dance at Arcadia Missa* (London), continues the work of *Privilege* but within a new installation. We sat down to discuss the exhibition as well as the past two years that have led to the artist's extraordinary rise.

Alexander Glover: Could we start by talking about the title of your new show, *Labour Dance*?

Amalia Ulman: It's in relation to a show that I'm doing in Paris. Both are related to my previous performance called *Privilege* (2016). The thing that ties up the duration of the performance is pregnancy. It's what gives it a beginning and an end. When I was researching things for the performance, I found all these videos of women dancing their babies out in order to make the labour process faster. It's called labour dance and I thought it'd be a great name for a show in the UK right now [given the current UK political landscape]. I also found it very interesting because it was something that started directly because of YouTube.

AG: Did this not exist before YouTube?

AU: To be honest, yes. With a natural birth, you always have to move around doing stretches and squats. But I think it's fairly new as, before, you would just go to the hospital, get an injection, become sedated,

and push the baby out, etc. So it always existed, but now there's a thing where you do #labourdance and upload your video.

AG: How has your view of pregnancy changed over the past year?

AU: With regard to that last performance [Privilege], everything came from my own personal experience and it's definitely informed by my feelings in relation to that. With pregnancy, I was seriously considering going through it myself. Not now, but for the past two years. My situation was much more unstable in the sense of travelling around a lot and not really having enough money – to start a family, at least. So you know, things like that. I was also in an accident and I've been disabled since then. I get tired very easily and, you know, how would I be able to look after a kid at the moment? So, I guess it came from that, and from my roleplaying being pregnant. But I used the "baby bump" more as an object rather than anything to do with a baby.

AG: So you saw the baby bump [in Privilege] more as a separate entity than as an extension of your body?

AU: Yeah, I saw it definitely more as a "thing". And the more I did the performance, the less interested I was in it. But it was part of the script, so I had to keep going. I find that, as the performances go on over time, they become less personal to me. But when that happens, it means I can focus on other things, like aesthetics and the overall picture. So it takes on a secondary level in that sense. So characters like Bob...

AG: Ah, who is this Bob, and what's the story behind him?

AU: It's basically what I wanted to do from the beginning of Privilege. I wanted to lay out a path to be more creative because I felt the language was/is too new to understand and might put people off. It was a conscious decision to use Bob as a means of coherent communication between the work and the audience. I want people to understand that there is a script, for example.

AG: Do you have a team that helps with the script?

AU: No, I do the whole thing myself. But it's not all in stone. One of the things that was in stone was the pregnancy, because it created a necessary timeframe [nine months]. My art very much depends on audience involvement and how audience reactions change the works over time. It shapes itself in a way.

AG: Does it shape itself, or do you shape it in reaction to what you see?

AU: I guess both, actually. Something I couldn't ignore, for example, was how people were reacting online to the US elections. The kind of language that is used throughout the campaign is definitely something that I incorporated into the performances. They [the performances] were supposed to end now, but will now end when the election ends. All this crazy behaviour just can't be ignored. But going back to the performance ... having a sidekick [Bob] is useful in the performance. Having characters, including an exaggerated version of myself, is what interests me at the moment.

AG: In Labour Dance, what was the symbolic purpose of having some balloons suspended in the air, and some deflated on the floor?

AU: I like working with really cheap materials. Like, really cheap materials. I think that comes from necessity rather than anything else. I'd rather make poetry with objects that have already been made and

are surplus.

AG: Found objects?

AU: Well, I buy most of them, so not quite. I'm attracted to buying objects that are surplus rather than making something myself. It got to the point where I could definitely afford to produce everything myself. For example, I could definitely have made the American wallpaper in Labour Dance, but I just don't see the point. It's much better to use what's around me. It's also good because it's easier to replicate, which is useful for exhibiting abroad.

With the balloons, I like how alive they are. Most of the objects I have used previously are in the room and don't change. The balloons will change over time and it adds this sort of life/death dynamic to the show. A beginning, middle and end. It's like a cheap trick; I like it when things are simple.

AG: You've got references to New York in this show, and the location for your previous work has often been in Los Angeles. What about America is drawing you in at the moment?

AU: Well, it's not really about myself, per se, but more about mainstream depictions of how the world is. It wasn't really about New York City, it's just about cities in general.

AG: A lot of your performances for Excellences & Perfections (2014) took place in LA. Does what you have just said mean that those performances could have taken place in any major city? Or was there something about LA that allowed you to get into that role more?

AU: Not particularly. Some of the same performances took place in London, too. It was more about where the fashion worlds gravitated towards, I guess, for those previous performances. But what LA did help with, on a practical level, was that you could hide. You can go for months in LA without seeing anyone. When it comes to becoming someone else, it's much easier because you're not going to regularly bump into people you know in the street. I couldn't have done the same in NYC. You have to make a huge effort if you want to socialise in LA. You have to plan in advance, so it's very easy to hide away.

I did the third episode of the performance in my hometown (Asturias, Spain), with mixed materials from other places.

AG: Did you uncover anything when you went back to your hometown with these personas?

AU: Not really, as the only people I interacted with were my mother and my best friend and they've seen me making art since I was 16. So there was nothing really new going on when I went back. But they did help me with the work. One example would be when I needed a baby and they found one for me to take photos with for the performance.

AG: Some people got angry about that online. What was it about it that angered some people?

AU: I feel like it was mostly men who got upset about those first few performances. I don't think they liked the feeling of, like, when you find out someone isn't actually in love with you. It's a similar kind of feeling, I think. People don't like feeling stupid. It's quite similar with the new performance. But you can easily find out that these performances are not real. I'm not trying to lie to people.

AG: What do you find more interesting: the people who were angered by your performances, or the people who go along with it?

AU: I was surprised by the anger. But I understand the reaction to the pregnancy, as it's such a taboo subject. It feels like some sort of sacred topic that couldn't be funny. It's like Rosemary's Baby!

AG: Bearing in mind that particular reaction, how did you react when you found out that you were going to be included in Performing for the Camera at Tate Modern earlier in the year?

AU: I was really happy, especially with how it was curated. For me, that was the best part. I have a personal connection to the Tate, more so than any other big international museum, because I studied and lived here in London. So it was very special. I enjoyed the curation because I was sick of being considered post-internet all the time and the things surrounding that. Yes, it's a work on the internet, but it's not just that. It's a performance. I was really happy that they framed my work within a performance/photography context.

AG: Going back to your time in London, what kind of art were you drawn to while studying at Central Saint Martins?

AU: A lot of net art, which I still like, but I definitely went through an "Ugh, 'I'm sick of this'" phase. I never looked at, what they call, feminist art. I just make what comes naturally to me.

I've recently looked towards cinema a lot – Spalding Gray in particular. I love him so much.

AG: And with Excellences & Perfections (2014), were there any moments when the line between the role and reality got blurred? Or was it quite easy to compartmentalise?

AU: It was quite easy because I just made room during the week, two or three days, to devote to performing. Before I did that, yeah, it was confusing and quite messy. I couldn't get anything done, doing it that way. But now I set aside specific time and days for performances, so it's much easier.

I learn things from the performances that I wouldn't have otherwise, and that's how specifically it influences my life, I guess.

AG: We touched on it briefly earlier, but could you expand on what you have planned for your next show in Paris?

AU: This show in London is more about the female body – as represented by the balloons. Many women on online blogs have described their bodies as "deflated balloons" as a result of pregnancy.

The show in Paris is all about Bob (a pigeon). It's about him being something disgusting that everyone hates. But he's an art object, so he assumes a certain level of respect with some even finding him cute. So there are references to him in that sense, but there will also be bootleg material. For example, there are going to be a lot of fake shoes that I used in the performance. This is because at the very beginning [of the creative process for this show in Paris], I endorsed Gucci, for real. I was even paid for it. But then I bought a bunch of fake Gucci shoes from South Korea and made fake adverts with the fake shoes. I'll be doing the same with Chanel because they saw what I did for Gucci and want the same thing. It's kind of crazy.

AG: Really? Even though it's publicly known that you used fake shoes previously?

AU: Yes!

Amalia Ulman: Labour Dance is at Arcadia Missa, London, until 5 November 2016.



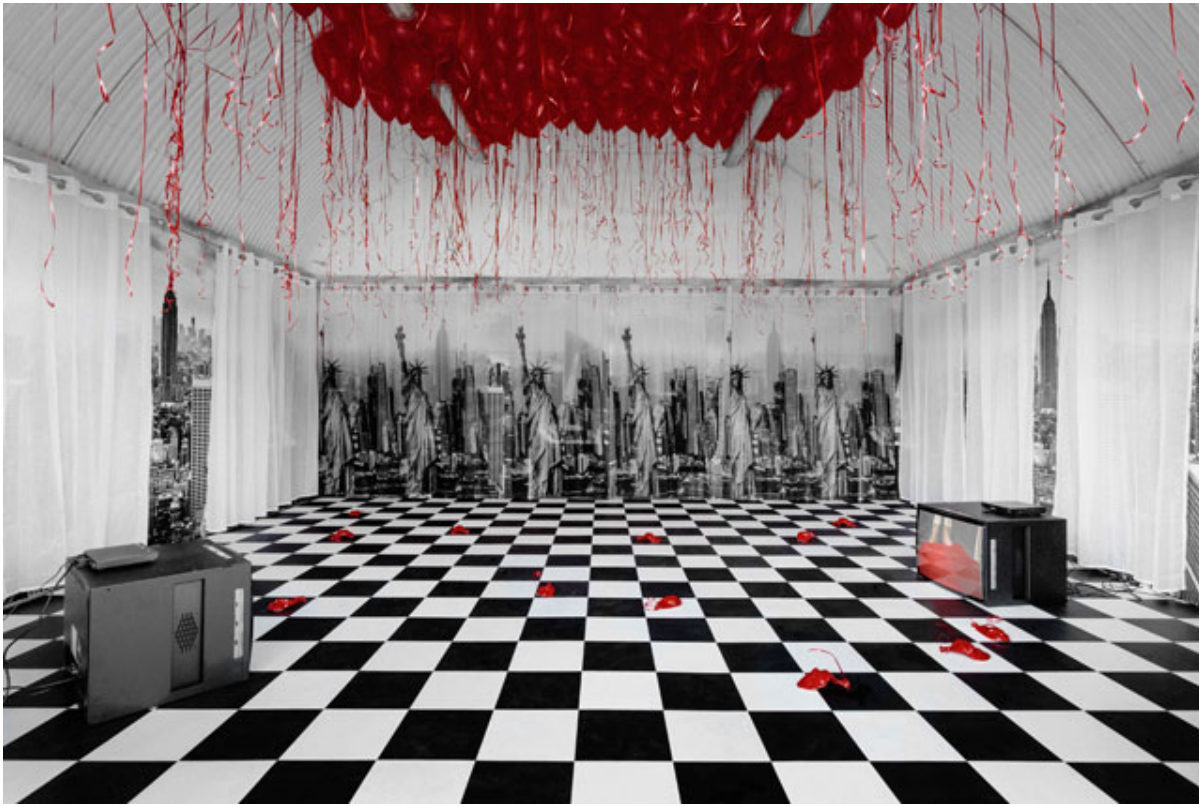
Amalia Ulman, Excellences & Perfections (Instagram Update, 8th July 2014), (#itsjustdifferent), 2015. Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.



Amalia Ulman, Privilege. Image courtesy @amaliaulman Instagram.



Amalia Ulman and Bob the Pigeon. Image courtesy @amaliaulman Instagram.



Amalia Ulman. Labour Dance. Installation views at Arcadia Missa. Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.



Amalia Ulman. Labour Dance. Installation views at Arcadia Missa. Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

18 Mar 2018

Excellences and Perfections

The now-iconic Instagram performance by Amalia Ulman has been published as a book by Prestel, but how much of its original interactivity can a print publication truly capture?

Words by Rosalind Duguid



My spam box is a swamp of sex and desperation. Scrolling through it, I wonder what mailing list I signed up to that warranted this abuse of messages offering me “Free V1agra”, “Love/Sex” and invitations to “Find Me and F#ck Me” (a tempting offer from a lady who goes by the name of Bad Medina). I know it was one list that unlocked the door to these emails because they all began at once, and there has been such an onslaught since that their initial novelty has truly worn off. What does still catch my eye, though, are those scam emails that stand on their tip toes and politely call

might, fall for them.

These type of emails are the subject of Hito Steyerl's essay *Epistolary Affect and Romance Scams: Letter From an Unknown Woman*, one of five texts published in the Prestel book of Amalia Ulman's somewhat iconic Instagram performance *Excellences & Perfections*. In the work, which ran from 19 April 2014 for five months, the LA-based artist kept an Instagram account where she posted selfies with shopping bags, inspirational quotes and still lifes of coffee and pancakes, all wrapped in hazy filters. Through her banal lifestyle shots Ulman's persona lived a dramatic story arc of female stereotypes, morphing from sweet small-town girl to badass LA bitch to reformed clean-living health guru until her last post in the series on 14 September 2014. The captions and comments that made up the (vague) details of the aesthetic tale are, in the book, cut from their respective images and logged in the back pages. Thus this printed version affects the work in a slightly unexpected and maybe unfortunate way—fragmenting it as one might expect the internet to do.



Whilst Steyerl's essay in the book focusses on the catfish element of Ulman's performance, notes from the Google Doc correspondence between Ulman and Real Life editor Rob Horning riff off the idea that social media turns existence into a new kind of constant performance. "Performing the self on the internet sometimes seems like an endless interview with no interviewers and competing interviewees projecting the questions they want to answer onto an audience that may already be entirely preoccupied with questions they were wishing to be asked," writes Horning, who argues that the kind of narcissism that makes social media so successful is an anxious narcissism, of wanting to blend into "what Baudrillard called the 'silent masses'."

is actually less a route to self-expression or self-definition and more a way of giving up some of this power to our networks of friends and followers”

Everyone knows that everyone else is performing normality, and so self-performance on social media is maybe the easiest way to be no one. Horning argues that social media is actually less a route to self-expression or self-definition and more a way of giving up some of this power to our networks of friends and followers, to whom you can appear in images without ever actually being there in the moment. “Virality buys a temporary break from the ongoing work of self-construction.”



Performances of friendship and celebrity are also explored in a funny short story by writer and V Magazine editor Natasha Stagg, titled *Is Anyone Listening To Me? I Love It*. It recounts the time she met Catherine Keener and Sarah Jessica Parker at a party, as the two actors were on their way to meet hockey player Sean Avery, and poses questions around those feelings of half-knowing the people that haunt others' social media-filled lives, as lingering eye contact and almost-smiles often become the limit of these follower/followed relationships in real life.



Nestled between the middle pages, however, is perhaps the most interesting part of this oddly fractured documentation: Ulman's own Ananda Letters, previously unreleased texts written to an anonymous correspondent about her stay at the Ananda Meditation Retreat in California, which she found online after a Greyhound bus crash damaged her legs and sent her to hospital for two months. I feel uneasy reading these letters as "truth" in the context of Ulman's work, but I think that's not the point. There is a real tenderness in them, the kind that would make the subjects of Steyerl's essay fall in love with them, regardless of whether their sender was Ulman or an organized scamming unit. "Funny how people want to believe. And they'd believe anything, believe me!" she writes.



Ultimately, this book seems least useful as an immortalization of *Excellences & Perfections*; as Arcadia Missa's founding director Rózsa Farkas notes in her foreword, the original posts and their various copies on the internet "continue to speak—the work is up there live, not catalogued post-partum". They are archived at rhizome.org and can still be found on Ulman's Instagram (after a lot of scrolling). Obviously the book can also not reproduce the few short videos in Ulman's work. However, the texts included extend the conversation around truth started by *Excellences & Perfections*, into one about the nature of performance and existence on the internet itself.



All images © Amalia Ulman & Arcadia Missa, London

Excellences & Perfections by Amalia Ulman

Published by Prestel

Exhibitions (<https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions>)

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

Does Instagram-based art belong in a museum?

Henri Neuendorf (<https://news.artnet.com/about/henri-neuendorf-205>), January 21, 2016



Amalia Ulman
Photo via: @amaliaulman Instagram



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Should social media have a place in today's museum landscape? The question has been raised by the controversial inclusion of [Amalia Ulman](http://www.artnet.com/artists/amalia-ulman/news) (<http://www.artnet.com/artists/amalia-ulman/news>)'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](http://www.artnet.com/artists/amalia-ulman/past-auction-results) (<http://www.artnet.com/artists/amalia-ulman/past-auction-results>)'s [Instagram-based selfie project](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/meet-artist-cum-instagram-star-amalia-ulman-203861) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/meet-artist-cum-instagram-star-amalia-ulman-203861>).



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](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/meet-artist-cum-instagram-star-amalia-ulman-203861) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/meet-artist-cum-instagram-star-amalia-ulman-203861>), titled *Excellences and Perfections*. "Everything was scripted," Ulman told [the Telegraph](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/photography/what-to-see/is-this-the-first-instagram-masterpiece/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/photography/what-to-see/is-this-the-first-instagram-masterpiece/>). "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](https://www.instagram.com/amaliaulman/?hl=en) (<https://www.instagram.com/amaliaulman/?hl=en>)—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.

Its 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.