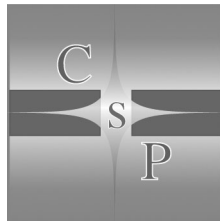


Feminism Reframed

Edited by

Alexandra M. Kokoli



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CHAPTER EIGHT

“FORWARD VIA A FEMALE PAST”: PAULINE BOTY AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHIC PROMISE OF THE WOMAN POP ARTIST

SUE TATE

In 1991 the Royal Academy held a major retrospective exhibition of Pop Art in which, although women were obsessively pictured, only one out of two hundred and two Pop works was *by* a woman: *My Lover* by Nikki de Saint Phalle. A number of women had made names for themselves as Pop artists at the time (Marisol, Jann Haworth, Evelyne Axell, Rosalyn Drexler, Chrysta, Marjory Strider and Pauline Boty, among others) and while their exclusion from a male dominated movement might be expected, what is more surprising was that this gross gender imbalance was not taken up as a feminist *cause célèbre*. There seemed to be an assumption that Pop was irredeemably masculinist, if not misogynist, so the exclusion of the women artists did not really matter. Yet surely, coming from a differently gendered cultural position in relation to mass culture, women would offer a distinct and differently gendered contribution that needed to be given cultural visibility. My case study, the British Pop artist Pauline Boty (1938-1966), was one of those excluded without feminist comment. A student at the Royal College of Art, friend and colleague of Peter Blake and David Hockney, she was active and recognised on the Pop Art scene before her tragically early death from cancer aged only 28. Although dying young, beautiful and talented, she did not become an iconic figure and disappeared, almost entirely, from cultural view for nearly three decades. In 1993 David Alan Mellor located some of her paintings mouldering in a outhouse on her brother's farm, and restored and exhibited them in his Barbican show *the sixties art scene in london*, the first time any of her work had been seen in public since 1966. He recognised that she was engaged with issues of “[i]dentity, pleasure, critiques of patriarchy, and the problematic task of

the establishment of a distinctly female iconographic programme”, and described *It's a Man's World I and II*, taken as a diptych, as “one of the most important (and prophetic for the course of feminist art) paintings produced in London in the decade.”¹

I was intrigued by Mellor’s framing of a practice still notable by its absence from the feminist art historical canon and began researching Boty’s life and work. With the support of an Arts Council grant I tracked lost works and had them photographed for an archive in the Women Artists’ and Arts Council libraries and, in 1998, co-curated with Mellor a retrospective exhibition in London.² Gathered together for the first time ever, the vibrant, colourful and witty collection of paintings and collages could be seen to give expression to a female response to mass culture, finding form for a woman’s affective experience and celebrating an autonomous female sexuality whilst also offering a cognitive engagement with the politics of gender and a gendered politics. Informed by an awareness of the way in which desire, pleasure and subjectivity are constructed within the representations of mass culture, it seemed extraordinary that this radical combination of celebration and critique, that might be read as a “feminist Pop”, was not embraced by feminist art historians and has continued to be problematic to established feminist art historical understandings. Recently Boty’s work has made a historiographical return, but as a divided oeuvre, split between Pop and feminist histories in a manner that prevents its truly radical potential from being appreciated.

In this chapter I will consider why feminist art history, understood as part of a historically located political project negotiating the cultural field of the last third of the 20th century, has been unwilling (or unable) to offer visibility to Pauline Boty and other women Pop artists. I will then explore the ways in which Boty’s work, as an integrated oeuvre, positioned within certain reconfigured art historical genealogies, enables a re-framing of women’s problematic relationship with mass culture and addresses feminism’s current needs.³

¹ Mellor, *the sixties art scene in london*, 136.

² *The Only Blonde in the World*, 23 November-18 December 1998, jointly hosted by The Major Gallery and Whitford Fine Art; catalogue essays by the author under my previous name, Sue Watling, and by David Mellor.

³ An argument that develops and reframes, in a broader theoretical and historiographic context, ideas raised here in Tate, “Re-Occupying the erotic Body: the paintings and ‘performance’ of Pauline Boty”, which focussed specifically on issues of sexuality.

Negotiating the Great Divide

Pop Art straddled what Huyssen has termed the Great Divide between high art and mass culture: defined in “categorical distinction” to each other the volatile relationship between the two, he argues, has characterised the culture of modernity.⁴ Significantly, he demonstrates, in a chapter entitled “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other”,⁵ that this was an absolutely gendered dynamic. The masses and mass culture (inferior, hysterical, engulfing, destabilising) were consistently gendered feminine, a gendering that “goes hand in hand with the emergence of a male mystique in Modernism (especially in painting)”;⁶ the core features of the Modernist aesthetic⁷ he describes as anxious “warding off gestures” against the contamination of this feminine mass culture. Until relatively recently the discourse of the Great Divide has fundamentally informed the debate of Pop itself and, more particularly, the predicament of the woman Pop artist. Although Pop quickly gained commercial success, in the context of the Modernist strictures of Greenbergian formalism that were dominant in the 60s, its relatively unmediated use of vulgar, mass cultural imagery (gendered female and described as “despised” and “a most soiled and damaged currency” even in its own literature) caused problems with critical reception. Many critics wondered if it was art at all, Greenberg himself dismissed it as trivial, Kossloff wrote of delinquents invading the galleries. In order to achieve a firm foothold in the institutions of high art, Pop needed to gain distance from its (feminine) mass cultural sources and it is fascinating, historiographically, to observe the “warding off gestures” conducted in the literature. The formal qualities of the work were, for example, fore-grounded,⁸ often with almost laughable disingenuity, as when Melville asks his readers to see Allen Jones’ *Chair* (made from the sadomasochistically contorted body of a woman) as “pure sculptural invention.”⁹ There was also an insistence on a cool “detachment”¹⁰ which

⁴ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, vii.

⁵ *Ibid.* 44-64.

⁶ *Ibid.* 50.

⁷ I.e. the “autonomy” of the artwork, privileging form over content, the pseudo-scientific characterisation of “experimentation”, etc.

⁸ For example, Lucy Lippard in *Pop Art*, 9, argued for Pop’s “formal validity”, “heir more to an abstract than a figurative tradition”. Russell and Gablik’s “primary intention” (in *Pop Art Redefined*, 1969) was “to assert the stylistic affinities of Pop Art with certain contemporary abstract art.”

⁹ Melville, “English Pop Art”, 190.

¹⁰ Livingstone, *Pop Art: A Continuing History*.

remained the key defining characteristic for Livingstone (the curator of the RA show) as recently as 1990. In fact, the only possible explanation he can see for the absence of women from Pop is their inability to maintain the required detached stance. In this (gendered) context, women artists were either excluded from the narratives of Pop or used to define a stridently male core.¹¹

The feminist art history that emerged in the 70s also had to negotiate the cultural territory informed by the values of the Great Divide. Part of a feminist political project that confronted the extreme cultural marginalisation of women, and that needed to gain acceptance and respect in academe and elsewhere, it was more deeply invested than Pop historians in gaining distance from the de-privileged side of the mass culture/Modernist divide into which, because of its gendered nature, there was the ever present risk of being subsumed. There was an acute political need, met in a number of 80s texts and artworks, to expose and subvert the ideologically influential and detrimental effects of demeaning, trivialising mass cultural representations of women. As Griselda Pollock asserted in *Framing Feminism* (a defining text for the second wave, published in 1987, to which this volume is a response), artwork “is feminist when it *subverts* the normal ways in which we view art and are usually seduced into a *complicity* with the meanings of the dominant and oppressive culture.”¹² Feminist art history’s “warding off gesture” against mass culture was the insistence on subversion rather than anything else, which, in the harsh terrain of the Great Divide, risked being complicitous. Pop Art’s constant reiteration of reified, objectified and commodified images of sexualised women (the rawest markers of woman’s deprived position *as* mass culture) was an obvious target and, led by Laura Mulvey’s devastating attack on Allen Jones’ portrayals of leather clad fetishised women, it was anathematised and dismissed as irredeemably misogynist. However, the problem with this blanket opprobrium was that artwork, like that of the women Pop artists, that engaged with and explored women’s subjective, lived, and often pleasurable experience within mass culture was placed beyond discursive visibility.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault argues that “objects of discourse” are formed within delimiting “grids of specification”, provided by defining authorities,¹³ for example medicine, the law, or art criticism. It is only when something conforms to the given “grid” that it is visible as an

¹¹ See Whiting, *A Taste for Pop*, the only sustained feminist analysis of Pop to date.

¹² Pollock, *Framing Feminism*, 93.

¹³ Foucault, Part I.3 “The Formation of Objects”.

object of discourse and, “placed in a field of exteriority”, can become “manifest, nameable, describable”. Second-wave feminism’s “grid of specification”, particularly when dealing with mass culture, was predicated on and shaped by the need to challenge and subvert the phallogocentric imagery within which women conducted their lives, and only work that conformed to this specification became manifest. The operation of this “grid” can be seen in Whitney Chadwick’s authoritative *Women, Art and Society*, published in 1990. Marisol and Nikki de Saint Phalle were already “objects of discourse” in Pop, but, in order to register in feminist discourse, they are “described” in *contradistinction* to it, being seen “in retrospect” as “pointedly *at odds with* [...] the slick media-derived female imagery of Pop art”. Marisol, Chadwick acknowledges, was “immediately linked to Pop Art, but her work *in fact* has sources in Pre-Columbian art, early American folk carving and Surrealist dream images”. Nikki de Saint Phalle, the only woman in the 1991 Pop show, is described as making work that “*ran counter to*...Pop art[’s]... slick nudes, pin ups and sex objects”.¹⁴ Safely defined as “not-Pop”, their work can then be described in terms of a disruption of patriarchal ideology that fitted the feminist grid of specification: Marisol’s attack on “stereotypical representations of women living our circumscribed roles” offered a “chilling picture”,¹⁵ and Saint Phalle “refused the myths and romantic fantasies projected by men onto women”.¹⁶ The ways in which the work of these two artists engaged *with* women’s subjective experience of mass culture, however, could not be considered,¹⁷ and other women Pop artists are not mentioned at all: there is a blank space, where the expression of a female subjectivity might potentially reside.

Pauline Boty and Evelyn Axell, who, among other things, explored female sexual pleasure, Rosalyn Drexler, whose edgy acerbic wit was hard to place, or Jann Haworth, with her delight in pop cultural pleasures, expressed for example in her hugely enlarged charm bracelet, or 3D rendering in cloth of a hunky cowboy, are all excluded from Chadwick’s account. Destabilizing to the second-wave political project, they were not given a “field of exteriority”. Pauline Boty’s own espousal of the term and her historiographical presence in Pop (she was one of four artists featured

¹⁴ My italics.

¹⁵ Similarly, Parker and Pollock in *Old Mistresses* make a point of contrasting Pop’s celebration of consumer society to Marisol’s “searing commentary”, 151.

¹⁶ Chadwick, *Women Art and Society*, 310-12.

¹⁷ See, for example, Whiting, 187-230, on Marisol’s exploration of the identity of the fashionable woman.

in Ken Russell's innovative film *Pop Goes the Easel*,¹⁸ a definitive document for British Pop which is always listed in Pop Art literature) made her particularly difficult to define as "not-Pop";¹⁹ until recently she has not been taken up as a subject for feminist research and is only just becoming "nameable and describable" within feminist discourse. In the historical circumstances of the emergence of feminist art history, this shaping of the discursive field is understandable and might, indeed, be seen as a political necessity, but it came at a high price. In abandoning Pop to a monocular male vision it wrote women out of one of the key episodes in what Varndoe and Gopnik convincingly argue is "one of the most important aspects of the history of our epoch", that is "the story of the interplay between modern art and mass culture".²⁰ The distinct contribution that women could make from their differently gendered cultural position was excised. Furthermore, women's subjectivities and desires have always been shaped within mass culture's tropes and representations, and their lived experience of it often was, and is, pleasurable, even erotic. The insistence on subversion and critique disallows an exploration of the expression of the affective and the pleasurable, and thus of the contradictory complexity of the relationship of women *with* mass culture, the derogatory effects of which cannot be ignored. Engagement with this complexity, I will argue, has now, in changed circumstances, become not only possible but also politically necessary for women, and can be approached "via female past" through the work the woman Pop artist.

A Feminist Pop

Pauline Boty makes an illuminating case study. She was a well-educated, knowing and sophisticated artist who, as a beautiful and sensuous woman, found pleasure in embracing and performing a pop culture identity. She danced on *Ready Steady Go* (a generation-defining pop music TV programme), was an habituée of trendy Portobello Road haunts and the satirical club 'The Establishment'. She read Genet, Proust and de Beauvoir and was highly knowledgeable about both New Wave and Hollywood cinema. She was also politically active and highly aware,

¹⁸ Made for BBC Monitor series in 1962. The other artists featured were Peter Blake, Derek Boshier and Peter Phillips.

¹⁹ She was also briefly discussed by Livingstone, 49.

²⁰ Varndoe and Gopnik, *High and Low: Modern art, Popular culture*, 19.

in a remarkably prescient manner, of issues of sexual politics.²¹ After her appearance in *Pop Goes the Easel* she was drawn into acting roles in TV thrillers and on stage: literally performing a mass cultural role she was featured in the popular press as a “starlet” in the mass media. However, in 1963, the year of her solo exhibition in London, posing for top photographers Lewis Morley and Michael Ward, she took over and managed the sessions²² to produce images that explore issues of cultural identity in a manner that allows me to treat them as “work” along with her paintings and collages to support the claim that her oeuvre offers a “feminist Pop”.

In student work, Boty can be seen experimenting with avant garde Modernist styles in painting whilst also exploring her mass cultural sensibilities in collages: concerns she was to bring together in confident colour-saturated abstracts whose sweeping curves were designed to echo the shapes of extravagant '30s musicals.²³ In these works, the mass cultural allusion is cryptic, but as she found her mature Pop voice in works like *The Only Blonde in the World* (Fig. 8-1) she overtly breached the Great Divide: appearing to split open a “flat” Modernist abstract painting she reveals Marilyn Monroe, *the* archetypical icon of “feminine”, sexualised mass culture, shimmying across the space in a PR photograph from *Some Like to Hot*. A number of witty plays on Modernist strategies around the depiction of pictorial space and the representation of the figure demonstrate the knowingness of her gleeful transgression of Greenbergian aesthetic certainties and are also used to communicate something of the affective experience of the movie fan. For example, a tiny trompe l’oeil corner on the upper edge of the top diagonal band on the right is peeled away to reveal raw canvas (a reminder that this is just paint on cloth) and an arc of grey, in the lower centre, conducts a cubist “passage” confusing the spatial relationship between foreground abstract and the illusion of depth beyond. These devices make a play on pictorial space that reflect the ambiguous relationship between fantasy and reality, encouraged by the mass media and indulged in by the fan. The Futurist technique of multiple outlines animates the black and white still from which the image

²¹ Her proto-feminist awareness is evidenced in both a long interview with Nell Dunn, published in *Women Talking* in 1965, and in a series of witty, often scathing monologues that she wrote for and delivered on a fortnightly BBC magazine-style radio programme, *The Public Ear*, between October 1963 and March 1964.

²² Evidenced in interviews with both photographers.

²³ E.g. *Gershwin* and two other untitled works, discussed in *Pop Goes the Easel* and shown at the AIA gallery in London in 1961, in a group show that included Peter Blake.

of Monroe is derived: using a painterly style and further enlivening the figure with touches of colour to flesh and hair, Boty offers an empathetic tactility. The figure is partly obscured by the abstract panels to utilise the Impressionist cut off technique, suggesting the flow of time and space beyond pictorial view: the illusory world of Hollywood glamour which the desiring imagination of the movie fan strains to reach.



Fig. 8-1: *The Only Blonde in the World*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 127cms x 158cms. Tate, London 2007.

Boty always stressed the affirmative quality of the shared experience that popular culture offered. “Our fears, hopes, frustrations and dreams” she asserted in one of the witty radio monologues she delivered on *The Public Ear*, “we can pin them on a star who shows them to millions, and if we can do that we’re no longer alone”.²⁴ And as a sophisticated artist she was clear of her role:

Film stars [...] are the 20th century gods and goddesses. People need them, and the myths that surround them, because their own lives are enriched by them. Pop Art colours those myths.²⁵

²⁴ *The Public Ear*, broadcast 17 November 1963 (unpublished transcript).

²⁵ *Men Only*, March 1963, 98.

Boty herself deeply identified with Monroe²⁶ and while most women artists shied away from Pop's problematic subject matter, she worked with rather than against the over-identification of women with mass culture, eschewing the detachment so highly valued by the literature of Pop. This is not the cool, detached exploration of a media sign with its slick closed surface that typifies much male Pop (for example Gerald Laing's rendering of Brigit Bardot using black and white benday dots or Joe Tilson's *Diapositive Lips*), but the picturing of the affective experience of mass cultural pleasures is testament to Boty's refusal to relinquish either her pleasure in a mass cultural identity or her serious intention as an artist.

In a number of works Boty found affective expression for the pleasures that women did (and do) experience within mass culture. These pleasures might be melancholic, as are captured in *My Colouring Book* (a line by line visualisation of a song about lost love covered by Dusty Springfield in 1963), but are also erotic as in the sexual arousal experienced dancing to the latest pop music on *Ready Steady Go*. Below cheerful Pop fairground lettering in *5-4-3-2-1* (Fig. 8-2) (the title of the programme's Manfred Man theme tune) a girl, possibly Cathy Magowan the programme presenter, throws her head back in abandoned, Dionysian laughter: behind her, further into the pictorial space, a tactile, painterly swirl of pink and black that might be a rose and a fur coat. Throughout her work Boty used the red rose as a symbol for female arousal and sensuality, but here, the flesh tones that she has deliberately over-painted on the red combined with the elongated form bring the (pleasurable) shock of realisation that this rose is vulvic: surely labia, clitoris and pubic hair are suggested, the smooth areas of the canvas left and right the thighs, the thrusting head of the girl taking on phallic implications. In case there is any doubt about the sexual connotations, a bright yellow banner to the left transgressively declares "O for a Fu..."²⁷ As a desiring sexual subject, and in a reversal of the usual sexual economy of Pop, Boty turned her attentions to (male) objects of desire, notably in *With Love to Jean Paul Belmondo*. Describing this new wave French film star in a letter to a friend as "the dish with a ravey navel" she crowns him with a huge, quivering red rose of her lust, surrounding, almost submerging, the grisaille of his PR image (a knowing engagement with mass cultural sources) with bold strokes of saturated red. Gleefully she posed naked, for Lewis Morley, with this depiction of the

²⁶ Evidenced in interviews with friends, her memorable performance as Monroe in RCA student reviews, and a number of photographs in which she adopts Monroesque poses.

²⁷ A very real transgression: when Tynan used the 'f' word on TV two years later, questions were asked in the House.

object of her own desire. Mimicking famous nude poses (the Rokeby Venus, or Louise Murphy in Boucher's painting of Louis VX's mistress) she disrupts the established art historical understandings of the female nude to collapse the normatively opposed subject positions of sexual woman and artist and to occupy the stereotype of artist as sexually energetic being, which had been the prerogative of men.²⁸

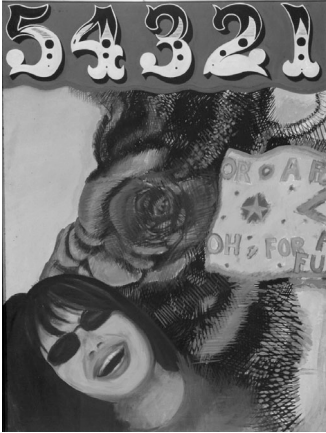


Fig. 8-2: 5-4-3-2-1, 1963. Oil on canvas. 125cms x 100 cms. Courtesy of the Pauline Boty Estate.

Reified depictions of the commodified, sexualised woman were to be the central reason for feminist art history's unconditional anathematisation of Pop, but in fact, in the early 60s Boty had already broken the debate wide open, re-occupying the sexual body as artist and circumventing male scopisic demands to find a visual language to express the *subjective* experience of an autonomous female sexual pleasure and arousal within

the tropes and representations of mass culture. For Boty the suppression of women's sexuality was an integral part of their social and political oppression²⁹ and re-inscribing "woman" into the visual economy of mass culture as active sexual subject, rather than passive object, is hugely important—reason enough to make a claim for a feminist Pop.³⁰ However, while she flamboyantly enjoyed her upfront performance of a sexual identity,³¹ she was well aware of the dangers. Student friends remember that, even as a teenager, "she was aware of being a thing to men, not a soul, brain, potential",³² and was "often saddened by the way men seemed to forget the person behind the looks".³³ She believed, however, that

²⁸ See Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, 48.

²⁹ On *The Public Ear*, 9 February 1964. Also in anecdotal evidence in interviews with friends.

³⁰ For a fuller consideration of the exploration of female sexuality in Boty's work and the implications of the issues raised for feminist art theory, see Tate, 2007.

³¹ Evidenced in a number of interviews with teachers, colleagues and friends.

³² Beryl Cotton, Boty's student colleague at Wimbledon Art School, interview with the author, January 1997.

³³ Jennifer Carey, friend and wife of Boty's Wimbledon tutor Charles Carey, interview with the author, June 1998.

“women should fight back”, and rather than denying her sexuality she explored the problematics it presented, demonstrating that it was possible for a woman artist to be simultaneously a sensuous and an intellectual being. In 1962, before the celebratory works discussed thus far, Boty chose to make stage designs for Genet’s *The Balcony*,³⁴ in which she engaged with a gendered politics and the politics of gender. Genet’s play is a searing articulation of issues of sexuality, duplicity, performativity and power that takes place in a brothel at the time of revolutionary unrest. In the designs, Boty juxtaposed images of political uprising and male military power, on vertical panels at the side of the stage, with horizontal banners, sometimes almost choked in swathes of lace, depicting the pouting faces of models taken from the media. The following year, astutely recognising the interplay between party and sexual politics in the Profumo affair, she painted *Scandal 63*. Christine Keeler dominates the composition while, in a panel at the top of the picture, two lesser known black protagonists, falsely accused of assault, are given the same weight as Profumo himself: issues of power, race, gender and class are all addressed.



Fig. 8-3: Pauline Boty with work in progress. Photograph Lewis Morley, 1963.

Boty conducted these critiques not from a detached position outside mass culture but, believing that the “dolly bird” role had truly radical potential, from within. On *The Public Ear* she argued that the new

³⁴ For submission to an Arts Council competition.

generation of young women in their bold, attention-grabbing, provocative fashions, would break up the old, sexually repressed, male dominated order: “A revolution is on the way [...] All over the country young girls are starting and shaking and if they terrify you, they mean to and they’re beginning to impress the world.”³⁵ She occupied the “dolly bird” identity with relish exploring it her in performance to camera while always posing, as “artist”, with her own work. For Morley, wearing a flowery dress and white ankle boots (Fig. 8-3), she arranged herself in her studio, with the tools of her trade and artwork in progress around her, *Scandal 63* in one hand, *5-4-3-2-1* in the other: the identities of mass culture model girl and serious artist, commenting on mass culture and contemporary politics, are compounded, high and low meshing with a grinding of semiotic gears. Working with Ward, she also posed with her paintings: she reclines by *July 27*, or mimics the subject matter of other work, for example lifting her blouse as does the woman in a rather disturbing painting, *Tom’s Dream*.



Fig. 8-4: Pauline Boty with *Celia and her heroes*. Photograph Michael Ward, 1963.

Standing with *Celia with some of her heroes* (Fig. 8-4), surrounded by collaged mass media sources, she conducts a subject/object conflation that exposes and explores the construction of identity, comparable to and no less effective than the *Untitled Film Still* series produced by Cindy Sherman nearly two decades later. In knickers and knee-high boots, a lacy blouse open to expose an uplift bra, a red rose of desire held casually against her naked thigh, Boty the artist looks remarkably like the subject of her painting, Celia Birtwell, the textile designer. A rich layering of levels and sources of representation reverberate against each other: the actual collage on the wall, the painted collage in the painting, the magazines spilling over the floor, some with pages already cut out and ready to collage. In her studio, with her brushes in view (indexical signs for the artist) Boty knowingly inscribes herself

³⁵ *The Public Ear*, 15 December 1963.

into the operation of visual discourse and exposes the construction of a sexualised female identity in popular culture.

In 1963 Boty was also working on *It's a Man's World I* (Fig. 8-5), the title anchoring its feminist intent, in which a range of masculinities are depicted in a grid of painted and actual collage, some in grisaille, some in full colour, drawn from mass media imagery. They include the intellectual (Proust, Einstein, Engels), the sexy and glamorous (Elvis, The Beatles, the matador known as El Beatle) the strong and idealised (Muhammad Ali and a classical sculpture) and among them her red rose of desire (its clitoral bud prominent) finds a place. Playing on shifting levels of representation, the grid is set against the grand palaces and bombers of male public power and, in the lower centre of it, Kennedy's assassination is pictured—a paradigm moment in the violence of that world. Despite the declamatory title there is ambivalence; an acknowledgement of intellectual respect and sexual desire residing with a gendered political critique.

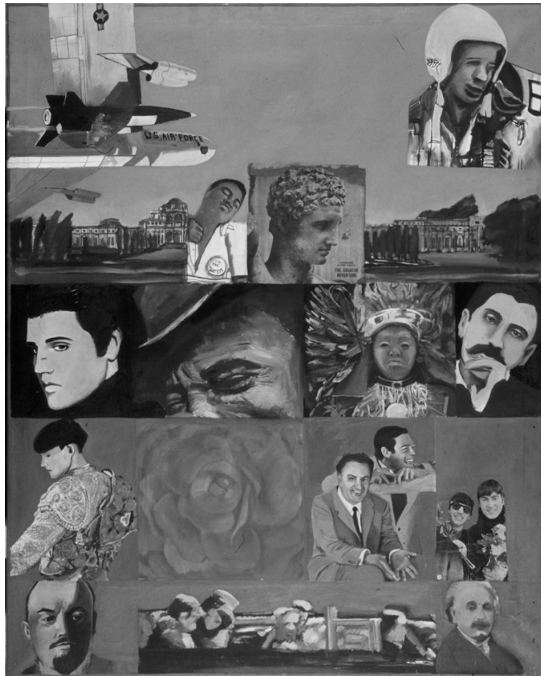


Fig. 8-5: *It's a Man's World I*, 1964, 153cms x 122cms. Courtesy of the Pauline Boty Estate.

Boty was politically active in a number of ways: she was the secretary of The Anti-Ugly Campaign (demonstrating against the aesthetic poverty of post-war architecture), went on nuclear disarmament Aldermaston

marches and was keenly concerned about political developments in Vietnam and Cuba (the latter the subject matter for two paintings in 1963, *Cuba Si* and *July 27th*). *Count Down to Violence* (Fig. 8-6) uses a Pop iconography to respond to contemporary politics and conduct a searing, gendered, attack on male violence. Within a proscenium arch stark numerals count down, not to the release of the weekend (as in *5-4-3-2-1*, to which this painting might be seen as a dark partner) nor the ejaculatory lift-off of space travel, but to the ground “ZERO” of male violence operating across time (the assassinations of both Lincoln and Kennedy) and space—a Buddhist monk burns in Vietnam, a grisaille rendering of a newspaper image depicts racist violence in Alabama, USA. Dealing with the same issue that Warhol addressed in his *Race Riot* screenprints, Boty makes it clear this is a gendered critique: in the very centre of the composition a beautifully manicured female hand wielding secateurs (an image drawn from an earlier collage) is about to sever a red rose, Boty’s emblem of female sensuality.

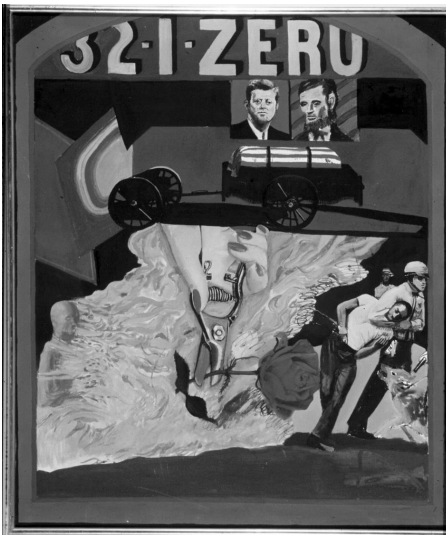


Fig. 8-6: *Count Down to Violence*, 1964, 98cms x 83cms. Courtesy of the Pauline Boty Estate.

Within the lexicon of mass cultural imagery, Pauline Boty gave expression to a female subjectivity and autonomous sexuality, explored the complexities of the construction of identity within mass culture and articulated a gendered politics. Expressive of both the affective and the cognitive, her oeuvre might be seen as transcending the Cartesian mind/body binary, so damaging to women, and long of concern to feminist cultural studies. A feminist Pop, surely, articulated not from a detached position of subversion but from a subject position within mass culture.

Considering the use of “the explicit body” in feminist performance Rebecca Schneider employs the term “binary terror”: “the terror that

accompanies the dissolution of a binary habit of sense making³⁶; binary oppositions that are not merely identified and exposed but collapsed, are too threatening to the signifying system to be accommodated. Boty's transgressive practice might be seen as provoking this kind of "binary terror". When, for example, she posed for Ward and Morley with her own work she did so with radical, liberational intent, challenging the gendered terms of the Great Divide by collapsing the binary oppositions between mass and high culture and between sexual woman and serious artist. But Morley's photographs were not used and, falling outside feminism's grid of specification, until now no feminist scholar was motivated to track them down. And when Ward's pictures did get published in 1965 (without his knowledge, after he had placed them with a picture agency) it was in mass culture soft porn magazines of the day, *Men Only* and *Tit Bits*. In *Men Only* there is no text to anchor Boty's identity as an artist, and in *Tit Bits* (Fig. 8-7) the picture editor has sliced the paintings out of the photographs: in this way Boty could be safely subsumed back into the deprived side of the Great Divide as no more than a sexy pop culture girl performing for the titillation of the magazines' male audience.

Fig. 8-7: Page from *Tit Bits* c. 1965. © IPC+Syndication.

The *Tit Bits* images alone demonstrate the necessity to critique the operation, in visual culture, of phallogentric discourse, and, in the year the article appeared, Boty painted *It's a Man's World II*: unambiguously critical, the red rose of female desire is banished and nudes, appropriated from soft porn and the life class, are boxed in a phallic, upright space, within the landscaped estate, with classical follies of the "the man's" land. But there was no discursive visibility for this statement either. It is a large, eye-catching painting (1.25 meters square), the pubic hair of a standing woman, her head obscured so she is reduced to no more than her sexual parts, is demandingly placed at the very centre of the composition. Although exhibited in 1966,³⁷ no critical comment was



³⁶ Schneider, *The Explicit Body In Performance*, 13.

³⁷ *Spring Exhibition*, April/June, 1966, Cartwright Memorial Hall, Bradford.

made on it and, perhaps even more significantly, in the dozens of interviews I have conducted with Boty's friends, colleagues and acquaintances, no-one remembers this piece or any discussion of its radical sexual politics. Boty was discursively silenced and became very depressed in the year or two before her diagnosis with cancer. Her very last painting, however, was *BUM*, made for Kenneth Tynan for his taboo-breaking stage show *O Calcutta!*, a play on the French pronunciation meaning "O what an arse you have". A delicately rendered woman's bum is pictured within a proscenium arch painted in vibrant colours straight from the tube. Although very ill by this point, Boty was still at the heart of Swinging London zeitgeist and, as ever, the celebration continued along with the critique. On her death there was talk of an exhibition but it came to nothing, and a further twenty-seven years passed before any of her work was exhibited.

The Historiographic Return

In the 1990s the shift into a postmodern episteme redrew the gendered boundaries between high and low culture reconfiguring the landscape of the Great Divide to open up new understandings of Pop³⁸ within which the work of women Pop artists might be seen. Furthermore, the impact of feminism had left historians and the institutions with a queasy awareness of the male domination of Pop³⁹ that needed addressing.

The Barbican show of 1993 had brought media and art journal attention to Boty's work:⁴⁰ she was becoming an object of discourse and the Tate were quick to reserve three pieces from the retrospective exhibition I curated in 1998. Being given a "field of exteriority" in the major institution of British modern art was a vital turning point in Boty's historiographical return, but the final choice of work purchased raised the issue of how she was to be "named and described". *It's a Man's World I*

³⁸ In the forum during the Royal Academy 1991 show, Livingstone reassessed his earlier insistence on detachment, finding "tragedy" in Warhol's work, "humanity and intimacy" in that of Oldenburg. In *The Return of the Real*, Hal Forster highlights Crow's identification of "the realities of suffering and death" in Warhol's work and writes of *traumatic realism*. In 2002 David Hopkins asked, in *Art Monthly*, "What if Warhol really cared?"

³⁹ In the 1990s both Madoff (*Pop Art: A Critical History*, xvii) and Livingstone (*Pop Art: A Continuing History*, 13) noted the absence of women, but are at a loss to understand or explain it.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Sabine Durrant in *The Independent on Sunday*, and Thomas Crow in *Artforum*.

and *With Love to Jean Paul Belmondo*, which reversed the gendering of the desiring gaze and suggested a feminist critique, were reserved but not, in the event, purchased: it was *The Only Blonde in the World*, celebrating that most established of Pop icons, Marilyn Monroe, that joined the collection. When petitioned to buy the other works, the curators justified their choice on the grounds of “the context in which it could be shown”:⁴¹ presumably the established narrative of Pop into which *The Only Blonde in the World* fitted most comfortably, placed in Tate Liverpool’s permanent display. In *Artforum* in 1993 Thomas Crow had noted the “silent demolition” that *It’s a Man’s World II* has dealt to adjacent Pop pieces by Blake and Jones in the Barbican show. Works that expressed such a gendered and disruptive radicality fell outside the Tate’s authoritative “grid of specification” and the opportunity to bring this “other” voice into the institution was lost. In the last decade Boty has become “naturalised” in accounts and exhibitions of Pop and British art in the 60s, but almost exclusively through the works that offer a celebration rather than a critique of (gendered) mass culture.⁴² For example, *The Only Blonde in the World* has been shown in special exhibitions at Tate Liverpool and Tate Britain⁴³ and will appear in a National Portrait Gallery exhibition on Pop Portraits in 2007; *5-4-3-2-1* was used to represent the 60s “youth quake” in the *Imperial War Museum’s* 1999 exhibition *From the Bomb to the Beatles*; and it was these two works that were, in 2000, reproduced in colour in Tate Publishing’s book on Pop in their *Movements in Modern Art*.

Feminist art history, with more at stake in the treacherous territory of mass culture, has been slower to embrace Boty. In 1997, forty-one years after her death, Sarah Wilson finally brought a serious, but ambivalent, feminist attention to her work. Her understanding of it is set firmly within the terms of second-wave feminism’s “grid of specification”, as is clear when she wonders “[t]o what extent was [Boty] genuinely *subversive*—to what extent *complicitous* with the essentially phallogocentric constructions of Pop Art.” It is a debate still shaped by the gendered dynamics of the Great Divide: “[t]he raw material of Pop Art itself was of course the world of mass culture”, the reader is reminded, “for which woman herself

⁴¹Letter to the author in response to my petitioning them to buy more than *The Only Blonde*, 22 February, 1999.

⁴²Livingstone now includes women, e.g. Boty, *my Colouring Book* exhibited in *British Pop*, Bilbao, October 2005- February 2006 (Haworth also included).

⁴³*Pin-up Glamour and Celebrity Since the Sixties*, Tate Liverpool, March 2002-January 2003. *Art and the Sixties This Was Tomorrow* Tate Britain, October 2004-April 2005.

functioned as the impotent sign". Within this framing of the field, as Wilson succinctly notes, "the 'liberated' woman was caught in an impossible dilemma. As participant in the carnival, she enjoyed the masquerade that signified her own subjection".⁴⁴ The 1998 retrospective show allowed the full range of Boty's work to be seen. In the catalogue, I argued that perhaps now "we can fully appreciate the unique contribution made by Boty in her brief but vibrant life".⁴⁵ However, when she finally entered the feminist art historical canon in Phelan and Rickett's compendious *Art and Feminism*, published by Phaidon in 2001, it was still within the imperative to subvert and critique mass culture that the work is "named and described". Pieces that explore and celebrate the affective pleasures women experience within mass culture are given no space, as those reproduced are *It's a Man's World I* and *II*, which, echoing Chadwick's framing of Marisol and St Phalle, are sternly described as "a critical portrayal of the spaces of male power".⁴⁶ They appear on a double page spread opposite Nikki de Saint Phalle's *Hon* and Monica Sjoo's *God Giving Birth*, well-established as canonical feminist works of the decade, where they fit as comfortably as *The Only Blonde in the World* does in the Tate Liverpool, or in the pages of the Tate's *Pop Art* alongside work by Warhol and Hamilton: very different bed fellows.

Finally "an object of discourse", Boty's oeuvre has found a "field of exteriority", but only as a divided oeuvre. It is split between the mainstream, in works that celebrate mass cultural experience and allow Pop to tick the equality box, and a feminist art history that can only really give discursive space to a critique, that is to works that fit a "grid of specification" established in response to the political needs of the 70s and 80s.

A role for contemporary feminist art history

Foucault argues that objects of discourse exist under "the positive conditions of a complex group of relations [...] established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms".⁴⁷ Over the last 40 years there have been very real changes in that complex group of relations. Legislative, institutional, social and discursive shifts, instigated by second wave feminism, have radically

⁴⁴ Wilson, "Daughters of Albion: Greer, sex and the Sixties", 78. My italics.

⁴⁵ Watling, *The Only Blonde in the World*, 18.

⁴⁶ Phelan and Reckitt, *Art and Feminism*, 54.

⁴⁷ Foucault, 45.

altered gendered relations bringing real change to lived experience. The redrawing of high/low cultural boundaries, undermining the gendered investments of the Great Divide, also provides an opportunity to reconfigure the problematics of the relationship between women and mass culture, reframing the debate.

A younger generation of women, therefore, move in a very different cultural landscape from their feminist mothers: taking hard won victories for granted, they are increasingly occupying public spaces as of right and have changed expectations of how they might perform their personal and sexual identities. However, they are also living under the ideological pressures of an ever greater media saturation of society which presents very real difficulties and dilemmas. An acute awareness of the way in which gendered identity, subjectivity and desire are constructed within the representations of mass culture and of the dangers of the constant reiteration of an impossible idealisation of the female form are staples of my undergraduate Art and Design students' essays. Yet, unwilling to relinquish mass cultural pleasures and unable to step outside the regime of representation, they can feel helpless in the face of these understandings. Ariel Levy has highlighted the detrimental effects for young women of the increasing sexualization of society; although wishing to achieve sexual enfranchisement, under a bombardment of images designed to fulfil male fantasies they are unable to identify, and become alienated from, their own desires and perform affectless rituals of sexual behaviour. Angela McRobbie has recently exposed and poignantly enumerated "young women's post-feminist disorders" (self harm, low self esteem, eating disorders, etc.) which she characterises as the manifestation of an "illegible rage" at a time when feminist gender understandings are normalised yet seen as superseded. "[C]onfined to the topographies of an unsustainable selfhood", enforced by the mass media that only offers individualised solutions (try harder, get thinner), she sees young women as "deprived of the possibility of feminist sociality."⁴⁸

However, second-wave feminism might be seen as partially culpable in rendering that rage "illegible", the performance of female sexuality "affectless." "Warding off" mass culture by shaping the response to it around the subversive/complicit binary, with its insistence on critique, severs women from an exploration of the affective, lived experience within it: a kind of self harm that blocks the occupation of an integrated (if contradictory) subjectivity and occludes the possibility of women

⁴⁸ McRobbie, "Illegible Rage: Reflections on Young Women's Post-Feminist Disorders", paper given at the London School of Economics, 25 January 2007.

identifying and enacting their own needs and desires. Boty, fully occupying and celebrating a mass cultural identity while conducting a critique and a gendered politics from that cultural locus provides a very different model; one that offers “the possibility of a feminist sociality.” It is time to look into the dark heart of Wilson’s “impossible dilemma” where Boty’s work resides and grapple with the complexity and contradiction to be found there.

Certainly Boty’s work is already striking a chord with a younger generation. She is, for example, cited as an influence by Stella Vine and is referenced as a “hero” 12 times on MySpace. 19-year-old Angie asserted, in e-mail correspondence with me, that Boty has an “undeniable message and appeal to young women”, an appeal elaborated on by Christina, a 20-year-old art student at Kingston University. Citing both fashion and dancing *and* reading Kundera and Camus as her interests, clearly a woman in Boty’s mould, she is drawn to Boty’s ability to combine an “It girl image, being beautiful and hanging out with rock stars, with being a critically acclaimed and extremely talented artist. That is why she is my hero! I want to be both of those things too!”⁴⁹

Some of the My Space hits were triggered by a lead feature on Boty in *Latest Art*,⁵⁰ which describes itself as “the UK’s newest and hippest art magazine”. *It’s a Man’s World II* was the cover image of an issue dedicated to women artists, but while giving this visibility and recognition to Boty’s work is to be applauded, there are problems with the article by Bill Smith. While nodding to the concept of feminism, much of the text is given to an account of her looks and lifestyle and to an unproblematised, neo-liberal acclamation of celebrity culture in her work. The import of *It’s a Man’s World II* and the complexity of her engagement with a gendered politics and the construction of mass cultural identity are not discussed at all, leaving young women like Christiana with no more than the (constructed) pleasure of the It girl image, severed from the “possibility of a feminist sociality”. Furthermore, the whole issue of *Latest Art*, despite wanting to bring women artists to public attention, reflects the problematic relationship that younger women have with second-wave feminist art practice, characterized (and rejected) by one writer in terms of “disturbing images of yoni worshipping earth mothers, moulding vagina shaped teapots from menstrual laced clay”.⁵¹

In order to address Wilson’s “impossible dilemma” and be useful to young women, a properly feminist reading of Boty’s work, reaching

⁴⁹ E-mail correspondence with the author, 14 January 2007.

⁵⁰ *Latest Art* February 2006, 10-14.

⁵¹ Katie Glass, *ibid.*, 7.

across the generational divide, needs to be articulated. To do this, it must be historiographically re-framed as a re-integrated oeuvre. In *Gender and Genius*, Christine Battersby considers how a *feminist aesthetics* might be achieved and argues that the woman artist must be “positioned in two different, but overlapping patterns: the matrilineal and patrilineal line of influence and response”. She “needs to be slotted into the context of male traditions. But to understand what that artist is doing [...] she will also have to be located in a separate female pattern that, so to speak, runs through the first in a kind of contrapuntal way.”⁵² So far, Boty has been “slotted into” the male line of Pop and into an established feminist canon, but to really “understand what the artist is doing” she needs to be located in other “contrapuntal” patterns of women’s work that are yet to be fully identified and explored.

First, there is the pattern of women working within Pop, until now denied visibility in feminist art history. Their work is heterogeneous, yet, produced from a differently gendered cultural position, it collectively articulates that “other” voice within Pop, the missing expression of a female subjectivity that, once fully recognised, will challenge and broaden Pop’s limited monocultural male view. Looking closer, a feminist politics can be found in the Pop work of both Nikki de Saint Phalle and Rosalyn Drexler which, with Boty’s political work, forms a critical mass that dislodges both mainstream and current feminist art historical understandings. However, perhaps the notion of an expanded Pop is too sanguine; the work of these women exceeds Pop’s male defined borders and points to other lines of enquiry to be pursued. Boty, for example, can be placed in another synchronic pattern that could include the Fluxus women (notably Carolee Schneeman and Yoko Ono), Jay de Feo, the Beat artist, and Yayoi Kusama, only tangentially connected with Pop, all of whom (in Schneeman’s words) “used the nude as myself—the artist”⁵³ with or as their work in order to challenge the male gendering of the paradigm of “the artist”. Located in this contrapuntal pattern, her engagement with gender politics is thrown into higher relief.

Penny Sparke, at least in part in response to Huysen’s view of the postmodern reconfiguration of high/low boundaries, has argued, in the context of material and popular culture, for the recognition and validation of a “feminine culture formed over the last century and a half [...] linked with the everyday, the commercial and the aesthetically ‘impure’ [that] had been relegated to the margins”,⁵⁴ and trivialised by masculine culture.

⁵² Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, 152.

⁵³ Schneeman, *More Than Meat Joy*, 52.

⁵⁴ Penny Sparke, *As long As It’s Pink: The sexual politics of taste*, ix.

In this way women might “at least experience the pleasure of being at one with their constructed tastes”.⁵⁵ Concomitantly, a similar continuity needs to be brought to light in fine art in a third, diachronic, pattern of women artists who engaged with mass culture, in which Boty and the other Pop women would be pivotal. Battersby makes a call to feminist art history to go “forward via a female past”⁵⁶ by “trac[ing] new patterns of inheritance” in order to “construct a new tradition”.⁵⁷ Such a pattern might be traced from Hannah Hoch, via the Pop work, through Sherman, Kruger and Sylvie Fleury in the 80s and 90s to the contemporary practice of artists like Stella Vine, Ghadar Amer, Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas. Heterogeneous in style, medium and intentionality, this body of work would offer a female response to Varnedoe and Gopnik’s “most important issue of our era”, namely the relationship between art and mass culture, which would look very different from the one they offer. This art historical work would facilitate the construction of a new feminist tradition, providing a matrilineal continuity to which the present generation could turn.

There is, currently, (as could be seen in *Latest Art*) a very real danger of a generational divide, risking a rupture in what is clearly the unfinished project of feminism. In “Undutiful Daughters”, published in 2000, Betterton recognises an ambivalence in the changing relationship of younger women with mass culture which is more complex than a simple opposition of complicity to subversion, yet concludes, critically, that Emin’s work, which “draws on an affective experience largely shaped in mass culture”, “does not change the sexual politics it lays bare”: an undutiful daughter indeed.⁵⁸ However, re-working the article in 2002,⁵⁹ she notes that “conventional wisdom”⁶⁰ has placed Emin, among others, in a generational opposition, at the opposite end of the artistic spectrum from the critical, deconstructivist work typified by Mary Kelly. Constructed in terms of feminism versus post-feminism, this opposition implies that the feminist political project is either achieved or no longer relevant to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 235.

⁵⁶ The title of a chapter in Battersby, *Gender and Genius* (155-162), to which this essay is responding.

⁵⁷ Battersby, 161.

⁵⁸ Betterton, “Undutiful Daughters: Avant-gardism and Gendered Consumption in Recent British Art”, 27.

⁵⁹ “Why is my art not as good as me? Femininity, Feminism and ‘Life-Drawing’ in Tracey Emin’s Art”.

⁶⁰ Typified by a long article on the “young British Artists” by John Roberts, “Mad For It! Philistinism, the Everyday and the New British Art”, 1996.

“‘ordinary’ women”. Betterton rejects this positing of Emin against “a negative stereotype of feminist political rectitude” and cogently demonstrates resonances in her work with ’70s feminist art practice, finding in it a sexual politics, which would not have been possible “without the histories of feminist debate and practices proceeding it”.⁶¹ But the difference in strategy, the challenge and subversion of ’70s work versus the experiential and “affective” style of Emin’s, remains problematic.

However, there are marked congruencies between Boty’s and Emin’s work. Both display a “loss of guilt in front of popular culture”,⁶² which has been seen as definitive in British art of the 1990s. Both artists identify positively with its values, draw on affective experiences shaped within it to perform an artistic identity constructed within its gendered experiences. They express a female subjectivity, embedding/embodying it in their handling of their different but equally considered and conscious use of media, style and iconography. A feminist reading, placing both in a re-shaped feminist art history, can bring their work together, closing the generational gap to mutual advantage: isolated from a feminist continuity artists like Emin are vulnerable to misogynist attack, while her work can give Boty’s retrospective visibility. Significantly, though, Boty went on to use that subjective position to explore a gendered politics, which Emin has been castigated for eschewing and, by refusing to relinquish the affective, perhaps offers the current generation a way into a critical analysis.⁶³

Paulina Olowska is a young Polish artist making her name on the international biennial scene with recent solo exhibitions in London and at *Metro Pictures* in New York. Growing up in Poland with extended visits to the USA, she is keenly aware of the intersection of politics and identity and has explored in her work constructions of fashion identity and her relationship with a range of 20th century women artists and writers. Drawn to Boty’s work, which she discovered through a piece held at the Lodz museum, she visited me, as the art historian, in the UK to learn more and we collaborated on an article in *Swingset* (a trendy New York arts magazine). In *Hidden Treasure*, Olowska conducts a complex layering and relayering of collaged elements from *It’s a Man’s World II* with her

⁶¹ Betterton, “Why is my art not as good as me?”, 26.

⁶² Roberts identifies this as the key change in 1990s culture, 30.

⁶³ More recently, however, Emin has proclaimed her self a feminist and used her celebrity status to expose the (ongoing) exclusion of women artists, (cf., for example, in *What Price Art?*, Channel 4, 15 March 2006) further closing the gap between the two artists and indicating that a current audience might be ready for Boty’s mix of pleasure and politics.

own appropriation of mass cultural images, the title suggesting that Boty, historiographically buried, is a bounty ripe for rediscovery. For another piece, *Pauline Boty Poses for a Popular Magazine*, 2006 (see book cover), Olowaska re-appropriates, hugely enlarged in this ten-foot high work, the already appropriated and mediated *Tit Bits* spread in front of which she places a young, fashionably dressed and coifed woman artist, palette and brushes in hand, straddling an anonymous modern city. Calmly and competently, the figure applies strokes of white paint to obliterate all but the nearly life sized, smiling image of Boty, liberating her from the magazine's phallogocentric mediation into a vivid new dialogue with a contemporary audience.

Conclusion

Women are not just outside cultural traditions. They structure the spaces that lie between the bold lines picked out by previous generations of art critics [...] we are at last learning to see the depth of those spaces.⁶⁴

Boty's work, and that of other women Pop artists, structures one of those deep (and deeply problematic) spaces, and this is the nature of their historiographic promise. However, to recognise and appreciate their achievement requires what Battersby calls a "switch in perspective"—in the terms of this argument, a shift in feminist art history's "grid of specification". In the '70s and '80s, subversion and deconstruction of mass cultural imagery was an urgent political necessity in the negotiation of a cultural field shaped by the gendered investments of the Great Divide. But it placed an exploration of women's affective, lived experience beyond discursive visibility, blocking an engagement with the "impossible dilemma" that Wilson so cogently identified. However, as Griselda Pollock pointed out in 1996, feminism is "a critical practice not a doxa; a dynamic and self-critical response and intervention."⁶⁵ To widen the "grid of specification" beyond the imperative to subvert and thus transcend the complicit/subversive binary, is not to renege on hard won understandings and positions (subversion must remain *a* tool in feminism's armoury); rather it is to recognise that changed circumstances require a changed response. And indeed the discursive field is already changing: in 2003, for example, Sarah Wilson threw off her doubts to claim that, in the

⁶⁴ Battersby, 152.

⁶⁵ Pollock, "The Politics of Theory", 5.

celebratory and overtly sexual work of Belgian Pop artist Evelyn Axell, “[w]e have a feminist artist here, without a doubt.”⁶⁶

In 1961 David Hockney’s confidence was undermined by the hostility his proto-Pop work was receiving in the RCA School of Painting, where he was a student. Then Richard Hamilton, a “father of Pop” and at the time a tutor in a different school at the RCA, paid a visit to the studio to offer encouragement and advice, and with huge relief Hockney thought “O, it is alright what I am doing, it *is* an interesting thing and I should do it.”⁶⁷ Boty’s work, in which she demonstrated that, as a sexual woman, she could be intellectually potent from a subject position within mass culture, can offer just such an affirmation to a current generation of women as they confront current political needs. In her re-integrated oeuvre, critique and affirmation of mass culture are inextricable, and an embodied, affective picturing of female subjectivity is inseparable from an awareness and critique of its cultural construction and the exploration of a gendered politics; as such, it allows an engagement with the contradiction and complexity that are in the very nature of lived experience. Returned by feminist art history to discursive visibility, it re-frames understandings of the relationship women have with mass culture and allows us, in Battersby’s words, to “go forward via a female past”.

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⁶⁶ Wilson, *Erotomobiles*, 5.

⁶⁷ Stangos, *N David Hockney By David Hockney* 34.

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