

## **Tearing and Wearing the Skin: Negotiation Beyond Genders**

By Yu-Chien Wu

### **Abstract**

Judith Butler argues that it is on and through bodily surface that gender identification sediments and consolidates as an imaginary morphology; Judith Halberstam, meanwhile, stresses the metaphor of an identity mask in relation to skin. While their ideas continue to be important to the discourse of gendered identity, I assert the need for reconsidering the role of skin as 'mirror/screen' that goes beyond an invariable topography or a superficial mask. Didier Anzieu's theoretical work, *Skin Ego*, departs from the notion of seeing skin as a two-dimensional interface and, instead, it asks the reader to view it as the screen of sensations received and also as a projection of the psyche. Through the medium of skin, notions of gender and the sexed body intersect with each other. In this article, I will be discussing the failed surgery of the transsexual artist Nina Arsenault, and also the projects of two heterosexual artist couples, Breyer P-Orridge and SUKA OFF, who attempt to break down gender categories with the idea of 'becoming one'. By analysing these works, I demonstrate how the unmaking of gender identity is approached through the skin as a nexus that, on the one hand, is configured by social norms and, on the other, reflects a possible glitch in the process of normalisation once the skin is seen as the crossover where the senses and self-identification collide.

Judith Halberstam traces the notion and trajectory of horror through her readings of Gothic texts, covering nineteenth-century fiction and contemporary horror films. Horror was once constituted by the monster whose physical traits would carry and communicate the readers' imagination of racial, class, gender, and sexual deviants, but now it reflects 'an identity crisis' (6). The identity crisis today, which is staged on and through the skin, turns skin into the site of fear and danger. It is the surface whereupon the power relations between institutions and criminals, as well as the border between body and mind, are crossed.

Despite the fact that, for Halberstam, the colour and shape of skin 'mean everything within a semiotic of monstrosity' (7), its significance in the history of making monsters has changed. It was the ultimate boundary between inside and outside, as explored by Gothic fiction; in late twentieth century Hollywood splatter movies, the idea of the monstrosity of surface eating into the depth or essence of humanity has been exposed. According to Halberstam, *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) marks this shift. The serial murderer, Buffalo Bill, tailors a woman-suit with pieces of skin stripped from his female victims, and tries it on before a mirror. Halberstam claims that in this scene Buffalo Bill's outfit is a 'sutured beast, a patchwork of gender, sex, and sexuality, [which] becomes a layered body, a body of many surfaces laid one upon the other' (1). Identity here is understood as nothing more than 'skin deep' (1). Halberstam's rendering so far resonates with Judith Butler's theory of the performative, according to which no ontological core stands behind gender expressions; rather, gender is the 'stylized repetition of acts' (*Gender Trouble* 34 and 191).

In alignment with this viewpoint, it might be suggested that the woman-suit signifies a desired gender and it is, in fact, a gendered performance which does not correspond to a hidden interior; it resembles a mask concealing no face behind it, but, instead, becomes the face itself. Butler connects the foundation of her gender identity theory to Freud's notion of melancholia in the development of ego in which one overcomes loss by an act of identification with the loved other, carried out by internalisation. From this point of view, it is understood that the idea of putting on a mask is to go through the process of incorporation by which the attributes of the loved one, who was once desired but now refused, are inscribed *on* the body (Butler *Gender Trouble* 78-89). Halberstam parts from Butler regarding the mask as result of incorporation when she moves on to her examples of the 'face-off' scenes in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986) to present the equation between gender and skin-as-mask in a metaphorical sense; here, she exposes the mobility and permeability upon which the concept of gender is based. For example, regarding the scene where the chainsaw murderer, Leatherface, holds the face of his male victim and asks Stretch, the woman who eventually survives the massacre, to wear it, Halberstam argues that Stretch is not male

under the mask of a man; rather, 'her gender becomes ambiguous' for the reason that 'she becomes literally a "stretch" between genders' (151).

In fact, the association between skin/mask and identity against the background of performativity is well noted in the history of performance art. Between 1990 and 1993 the French artist ORLAN had her face reconfigured in reference to five Western art history icons. The project was carried out over nine surgeries entitled *Reincarnation of Saint Orland*. Kate Ince connects the relevance of performativity to ORLAN's work, pointing out the 'action and transformation with material effects' in her successive surgeries (113). ORLAN launched a radical revolution in terms of the conception of identity; however, there are also misgivings concerning her work.

In response to her assertion that 'by refiguring my face, I feel I'm actually taking off a mask', Jay Prosser argues that 'if skin is a mask, where is the self in relation to the body's surface?' (61-2).<sup>\*</sup> Having identified some of ORLAN's work and the issues she raises, in this article I shall add something new to previous discussions by looking at the works of a Canadian artist called Nina Arsenault, and the artist couples Breyer P-Orridge and SUKA OFF. I intend to revisit the issue of skin structure to frame the repetition that constitutes the power of performativity in the distance between the field of vision and the grasp of sensation. I shall also identify a spatial-based scheme of performativity in my analysis of life-long performance projects and short stage performances. If ORLAN's *surgical project* enacts what Parveen Adams calls 'emptiness of image' because 'ORLAN uses her head quite literally to demonstrate [...]: *there is nothing behind the mask*' (145), it also echoes Butler's ideas about identity, which she compares to a mask. Yet, from the viewpoint of Butler, the skin is merely the site where identities flow in the process of (re-)incorporation; any further aspects of skin are left untouched. As I shall go on to demonstrate, the gender fixities are disturbed through the levels of sense overlapped in the skin. I read Butler and Halberstam juxtaposed to illustrate the emergence

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<sup>\*</sup> C. Jill O'Bryan tries to allay Prosser's suspicions and emphasises the double-edged function of a mask: 'although the mask is generally an object that can be worn or removed at will, it invents a complex register of identity; it conceals one identity at the same time that it reveals another' (89).

of the subject as the synthesis of layers of skin masks, and the palpable agency found in-between.

### **The Failure in ‘A Laborious Stitching’**

It should be noted that I am not suggesting skin bears various identities in terms of race, class or gender; instead, I view layered skin as the intersection of the appearance in visual representation and the marker of somatic experiences. As will become more evident in the course of this paper, the debate between Shimizu Akiko, an exponent of Butler’s theory of the performative, and Prosser, who places more importance on the realm of sexual identity in the secured referents of bodily sensations, derives from a lacuna, where either the body is reduced to an unitary bodily surface, or the skin as a sense organ is relegated to the body that anchors the sexed feelings. Their conflict forms an endless circle since the ontology of a pre-discursive body, which is implicit in Prosser’s text, is central to what the performative criticisms have been attacking.

Prosser, trying to draw attention back to the embodied experiences in transsexual narratives, criticises Butler’s theory for the way it is ocularcentric and prioritises visual images of the body in a manner informed by Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic articulation of the mirror stage. Prosser also suggests a misinterpretation of Butler’s in her reverse reading of a passage in Sigmund Freud’s *The Ego and the Id*, where she ‘conflates corporeal materiality with imaginary projection’ (Prosser 41).<sup>\*</sup> In so doing, Butler is able to theorise sex, through her thread of melancholic identification, as being a ‘phantasmatic’ effect encoded or sedimented on the surface of the body. Following on from this point, Prosser claims that ‘any *feeling* of being sexed or gendered [...] is designated phantasmatic’ (43).

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<sup>\*</sup> I cite Prosser’s passage in full here: ‘Butler replaces the reference “it” in the subsequent part of the cited sentence, *which in Freud clearly refers back to the ego as bodily ego* (“The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it...”), with the word (square bracketed, demoted – in my citation of Butler’s note – to parenthetical) “body”. [...] The body itself becomes commensurable with the psychic projection of the body. Whereas Freud’s original assertion maintains a distinction between the body’s real surface and the body image as a mental projection of this surface (a distinction between corporeal referent and psychic signified), Butler’s recitation collapses bodily surface into the psychic projection of the body, conflates corporeal materiality with imaginary projection’ (41).

He therefore tries to disclose a weakness in Butler's theory which seems to suggest that transsexuals are those 'girls who *look like* boys and boys who *look like* girls', and then adds that the experience of '*feel[ing]* differently gendered' identifies the transsexual better than the visual result that surgical change might result in (Prosser 43). From another point of view, Shimizu Akiko criticises Prosser's intention to return to Freud's perspective, by which he assumes that bodily sensations are real and 'un-phantasmatic', or outside symbolic signification (13-15).\*

Based on what Kaja Silverman calls 'a laborious stitching', which is an act of integrating the visual image seen in the mirror and the perceived body form in order to bring the 'unified bodily ego' into being, Akiko further argues that the visual image 'locates itself' in the body with reference to the pronoun 'I'. The moment of this locating thus forms the subject, who contains an 'I' as always an Other (24-25). In addition, Silverman resituates Lacan's theory of the gaze back onto the relation between the visual image and the perceived body, where she argues that the 'image/screen' in Lacan's scopic field should be reconceptualised as 'the site at which social and historical difference enters the field of vision' (Silverman qtd. in Akiko, 27). In other words, to see means to become subject to the 'image' of an object, while the object is the 'site of social intervention on the gaze that enables the look of the "I"' (Akiko 27). On this ground, Akiko lays the precondition for understanding the mirror stage as a 'three-way transaction' (29), which means social prohibitions are involved in this pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic stage (27). Although the visual bodily ego proposed by Akiko does not directly add to my analysis of the performances, her methodology inspires me to revisit Didier Anzieu's idea of 'skin ego' in order to take the social gaze into account. Furthermore, I will unpick the theory on skin in relation to the complex process of deconstructing gender identity.

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\* In response to Prosser's critique, Akiko asks: 'if what is felt [according to Prosser] is phantasmatic, how can the feeling be real?' (13). By way of this cogent question, Akiko rejects the ontological position of bodily reality, arguing that the 'material reality of the imaginary' that is subjectively experienced by not only transsexuals, but also any others, is not different from the 'imaginariness of material reality' (14).

### **Skin that Mirrors**

Transsexual artist Nina Arsenault has undergone more than sixty surgeries but has retained male genitals. A series of her portraits, entitled *Transformation* (2006), exhibit the combination of three Greek mythological icons: Aphrodite, the Goddess of Beauty, who arose from the sea foam into which the god Cronus had thrown his father's castrated genitals; Artemis, the Goddess of the Hunt, whose image with a breast cut off was represented by her Amazonian worshippers; and Hecate, the Goddess of Magic, who was imagined to be invisible and cloaked in darkness (Arsenault 'Transformation'). The portraits were shot after a failed breast augmentation resulting in sensory loss, which prompted another surgery in order to remove the implant. As a consequence, the scar on the flattened left breast is a disturbing image, which topples the authenticity of both the perfectly round right breast and the penis lower down. If cross-dressing in drag shows disrupts the continuity of gender manner and gender identity by the double inversion,\* Arsenault pushes the issue even further to challenge the transcendent status of appearance as well as the authority of the body parts with which feminine or masculine identities are associated. Similarly to how Halberstam describes the gender performance of Stretch in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, these portraits ignite an 'intense blast of interference that messes up once and for all the generic identity codes that read femininity into tits and ass and masculinity into penises' (160). However, unlike the figurative expression of putting on another's face in the film, the artist shakes gender fixities with the image of the wounded body against bloody red splashes on the wall. The emptied left breast records the struggle toward the 'ideal' feminised body while the successfully implanted right breast attests to the fabrication therein; the penis gives as little clue to the anatomical sex as the breasts.

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\* Butler quotes a section from Esther Newton's *Mother Camp: Female Impressions in America* to argue that the subversive power of drag performance consists in the contradictory juxtaposition of appearance and illusion. The original text reads: 'drag says "my 'inside' appearance is feminine, but my essence 'inside' [the body] is masculine". At the same time it symbolizes an inversion; "my appearance 'inside' [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence 'inside' [myself] is feminine"' (Newton qtd. in Butler, *Gender Trouble* 186).

Skin tells Arsenault's transsexual narrative, as the scar tears the gender mask.

Considering how gender mask has manipulated the body, we shall turn to Butler's rewriting of Lacanian imaginary morphology whereby body surfaces are not limited by 'prohibition and pain' as 'the forcible and materialized effects of regulatory power' (*Bodies that Matter* 64). As a result, the hegemonic heterosexual matrix, based on the prohibition of homosexuality, produces a sexed morphology which is thus incorporated as a 'fetishistic mask', and so it becomes an imaginary scheme which appears to determine the bodily contour (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 65). In spite of the Freudian influence that can be detected here, Butler links the notion of bodily contour to the ego in Lacan's mirror stage, stating that the mirror offers the self with a 'frame' or 'the spatial delineation' dividing what belongs to it from what does not (*Bodies that Matter* 74). Since it is for the purpose of refiguring sexual signification, Butler needs to emphasise the aspect of ego as the result of identification with a social signifying system in order to call for alternatives to the dominant imaginary schemes (i.e., those of Freud and Lacan) which gain their power from the reiteration of heterosexual norms. Therefore, the formation of ego is channelled through the mirror which is already disrupted by the Symbolic order. The mirror produces the paradigm, the ideal morphology as a 'delirious effect', which the subject is forced to live up to during their lifetime (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 90-1). From this perspective, we tend to identify with the mirrored image which naturalises and valorises our belief in the bodily contour, as if it had been the gender mask we were born with.

Butler rejects the idea that we may find a subversive force in the Imaginary order.\* However, I question her perspective since the bodily surface, as the mediator between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, is far more productive than she assumes. For instance, the role of skin in the phase of 'skin ego' is both the inner envelope, the infant's bodily surface that sends off signals, and a place receiving feedback from the mothering figure.

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\* For Butler there is no space which can be at the same time representable and outside of symbolisation, including the 'semiotic' proposed by Kristeva to refer to the poetic language that resists the domination of the Symbolic (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 70).

Julia Kristeva, not unlike Akiko or Elizabeth Grosz, highlights the protean condition of the Imaginary in connection with the Symbolic by adding a 'third pole' to the 'mother/child dyad'. Hence she reads the mirror stage against the model of 'skin ego': 'Skin as a surface of perception and projection of the ego is the substrata of the mirror, the first container able to reassure, to calm, to give the child a certain autonomy, on which the narcissistic image may be supported and without which the mirror will smash into pieces' (53). I suggest that the gaze is at the place where the mother stands so that the 'I' the child can feel as itself is nothing more than a gestalt formed by the feedback that the maternal environment provides.

More precisely, the skin serves as simultaneously the 'image' and 'screen': if I *feel* like anything as what I am, it is always in the form of how the (m)Other treats me.\* If the mirror stage happens on the bodily surface, social conditioning can be considered via the skin as it is the site where the (mis)recognition takes place. Thus, the sexed morphology is not as singular and static as it appears in Butler's vision.

To challenge Butler, I would like to return to the example of Buffalo Bill's woman-suit, now departing from Halberstam's emphasis on how Buffalo Bill presents gender as a 'sewing job', in order to address its unfinished status that the mechanism of incorporation fails to reflect. In the film, the last victim is rescued by the young FBI agent Starling before she is flayed, thus leaving the murderer without his desired piece of flesh. In this respect, the woman-suit is more than simply a stitched cloth design, ready to dress any given body. Rather, the missing part confers on the woman-suit a sense of instability lurking in gender categories that, according to Butler, are sedimentary effects. The wound found in the portrait of Arsenaault lends itself to a rendering of the woman-suit as a sexed morphology that shows her endeavour to sustain the tension between how she should and is expected to feel or look like (i.e., the 'screen'), and the ideal morphology which makes her body real (i.e., the 'image'). Skin, in her artistic practice, warrants a distance for mediation that cannot be *skinned* over.

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\* To put into perspective how I apply Lacan's 'image/screen' to the model of *Skin Ego*, I rephrase Lacan's text, which reads: 'if I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen, which I earlier called the stain, the spot [the gaze]' (*Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 97).



In reply to the question regarding her penis, Arsenault says 'it's not something I think about getting rid of. I believe I am a woman *inside*, there's no doubt about that. It's more important to be socially accepted as a woman and *look like* a woman' (Arsenault 'Sexy transsexual', my emphasis). The most compelling part of this statement is that if skin is both the 'screen' and 'image', the two pairs of binaries – inside/outside and body/morphology – will inevitably collapse because skin is both the internal layer of the 'skin ego' emerging as an 'image' and the 'screen' projected from an external point, the gaze. By juxtaposing the 'inside' and the 'look like', the penis and the breast, the breast and a wound, a series of multiple inversions and displacements are set up. Arsenault plays with an endless circuit concerning skin: the outside is feminine, constructed and ideal, the inside is masculine, real but bruised; the outside is made of the penis but it is real, too. Between what she has crafted and what she continues to desire, in accordance with the desire of the Other (meaning the socially accepted woman she is expected to be) there is an ongoing mediation. Within this mediation the artist runs the risk of being unwittingly captured by the trap of the 'screen' – as the socially ideal morphology – once she ceases to construct and deconstruct femininity. Arsenault has stated, 'I know that because I came into the world in a biologically male body I was born with a spiritual wound. I don't know what to name that wound, but I believe that out of this wound springs many things – ideas, images, masquerades, fashion, self-portraits, stories I want to tell, performances I want to do' (Arsenault 'Fey'). Does the wound here not imply the fraying edge of the woman-suit, which Buffalo Bill never got the chance to sew up? Rather than the failed surgery represented on the picture, it is the spiritual wound that reminds us of, and maintains, the disharmony involved in the (mis)recognition of 'I' and the 'not-I'.

Breyer P-Orridge is so named to refer to the couple Jacqueline Breyer, who are individually known as Lady Jaye and Genesis P-Orridge. As recalled by Genesis P-Orridge, the initial idea for their projects *Breaking Sex* and *Pandrogeny* (1996-2007), came into existence so that they could be 'each other's other half and only together (...) whole' (P-Orridge, 'Meaning of the Universe' n.p.). When taken at face value, the statement seems to reinforce the heterosexual economy of exchange or desire, which bolsters

its binding power; however, the idea of their symbiosis raises another question: can the traces of crossing and construction of gender become visible without appropriating the experience of transgender? The theme of drag ball in the film *Paris is Burning* is taken up by Butler, who states that agency might emerge during the slippage within the repetition (*Bodies that Matter* 137). Venus Xtravaganza is one of the leading figures in the film who strives for a sex transformation which, she thinks, promises a new social place free of poverty, racism and sexual discrimination. But she is killed before her dream can become a reality. In her analysis, Butler claims this death is a direct result of the character's 'tragic misreading of the social map of power' that deceives her into believing that a sex reassignment leads to a liberation from the social repression (*Bodies that Matter* 129-33). According to Prosser, the death of Venus is used by Butler as a powerful lever to articulate the key to unlocking the normative technique of heterosexuality. He departs from Butler's work when stating that 'in her desire to complete this trajectory (to acquire a vagina), [...] Venus would cancel out this potential and succumb to the embrace of hegemonic naturalization' (49). Thus, Prosser accuses Butler of misappropriating the transsexual for her syllogism that 'transgender = gender performativity = queer = subversive,' and its antithesis: 'nontransgender = gender constativity = straight = naturalizing' (33). I would like to examine the project of Breyer P-Orridge in the light of Prosser's criticism.

During the course of the project, Lady Jaye and P-Orridge decided to undergo surgical procedures so that they could work towards resembling each other such that a third entity, requiring both bodies, might come into being (see Doorne). The precarious status of the project, one revealing double exclusion (neither Lady Jaye nor P-Orridge, but both of them), makes it difficult to subsume this work to current threads of understanding. Their work cuts across the binary syllogisms that have been mentioned above. Like a two-way turnstile, their project can be read from either direction: it has potential to contest the limits of gender boundaries but it also runs the risk of reinforcing hegemonic constraints. Although both of them are committed to achieving the phantasmatic image of the third being, it cannot be achieved by either couple in their efforts to imitate one another. What Breyer P-Orridge look for, in a certain sense, is an imagined idealisation which wields its power

to carve out the body that it would inhabit. Lady Jaye had her nose and chin altered, Genesis P-Orridge had his cheeks changed, and both of them had breast implants to look more alike. The more alike they looked, the more integrated they felt, and the more difficult it would become to define where the skins of the couple ended and where that of Breyer P-Orridge began. What we see in the project is a common skin upon which the 'screen' and 'image' perpetually reflect each other; as P-Orridge recalls, 'she told me she saw me as a mirror image of her' ('Ballad of Genesis' n.p.). As such, both Lady Jaye and P-Orridge are elements of the image of Breyer P-Orridge, whilst they are situated at the mirror position, or the gaze, and in doing so are reflecting each other. Furthermore, their skins also embody the mirror image of Breyer P-Orridge which they can identify with, while at the same time it pushes the 'I' and 'not-I' of the couple towards indeterminacy in the identification process. There is no predictable outcome.

### **Skin in depth**

*tranSfera* (2011), produced by the Polish performance group SUKA OFF, is a live performance representing a ritual of self-alteration through which 'the man and woman try to become one' (*tranSfera*). At the beginning of the show, the two performers, Piotr Wegrzynski and Sylvia Lajbig, appear covered by a layer of transparent latex which gives their bodies a gloss effect. They slowly walk toward each other, caressing their own faces, neck and arms in a peaceful atmosphere, the two bodies falling into a deep embrace, twisting together. The separation that follows stretches the latex before it is partially torn, and subsequently each performer begins picking scraps of the membrane off the other's body and putting them into their mouth. When the mouth is full, they sit back on chairs situated at opposite ends of a long table, where the scraps of latex are pulled out piece by piece and thrown into two glass containers, which look like formalin jars. They share the second skin, while the act of stuffing the rags into their mouths and spitting them out shows their refusal to incorporate another into oneself. Like the two-layered structure of 'skin ego', their common skin is the inseparable material that makes a more intense fusion possible, although its presence as an interface divides the two subjects in a literal sense.

In the following scenes, Lajbig stays in the darkness, and Wegrzynski sits in the spotlight behind a monitor which conceals his groin, transmitting the image of Lajbig's hand rubbing her labia. After a while, they exchange the seats as Lajbig takes the place of Wegrzynski, whose act of masturbation is projected on the monitor as being carried out upon Lajbig's body. As Wegrzynski sits under the spotlight, he slides his hand from the neck across the chest, tilting the head up; Lajbig repeats the same movements when she takes her turn to sit before the audience. The use of synchronic recording and projection in this scene causes a redistribution of sensual investment; the mechanism of (mis)recognition one goes through with the mirror image is divided into two parts on the monitor. As long as the performers intend to become one, they shall logically recognise the body – whether as a whole or as parts – of the other as themselves; however, the transmission of the images is interrupted by the time-deferral because they show up by turns. As one performer comes into the light, half of the procedure is shown. From the perspective of the audience through the monitor, a man is caressing himself and *his* labia is subject to masturbation; or a woman touches herself and *her* penis is being rubbed. Thus, the monitor is the point of identification for the audience's gaze. The performer receives the pleasure of touch on the skin where the audience may well project sites of 'erotogenisation' and, if the performer recognises their body through the gaze of others, they must experience the sensation of being touched upon the body (face, neck or chest) and their sexual organ which is not their own becomes a part of them and they feel aroused.

Lajbig and Wegrzynski cross sexual and gender boundaries insofar as they invert two sets of identificatory relations, between the pre-social, visual or tactile ego, and the symbolised self, by using the skin as the nexus. The skin remembers the fantasy of union during their hug at the beginning of the show as the latex is ripped, and thereby registers a re-identification. Elizabeth Grosz argues that during the mirror stage the image that is seen by one is, or can be, the 'object of another's perspective' and to adopt the image as one's self means that one 'has adopted the perspective of exteriority on itself' (38). The artists' skin functions as a mirror that reflects both the gaze and the touch from the outside – the 'not-I' – and thus crosses the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

I want to return here, by way of conclusion, to the portraits of Arsenault. Each shot, before and after the surgeries, marks a significant turning point in the trajectory that Arsenault struggles through; at the same time, new elements are put into play in the circulation of signifiers that she creates in the course of her career as an artist, on which she has commented: "These cultural signifiers have lost most of their sexual implications to me now and they represent an aesthetic puzzle I assemble daily. This body, although I am ageing, is primarily an image I built years ago. It does not speak to the interior "fantasy woman" I want to be currently' (Arsenault, 'Fey' n.p.). She is always in a deferral. Taking the view that skin is the mirror, I have identified in all three performances an enactment of the potential that can be achieved during the mirror stage, which Grosz defines as something 'partial, wishful, anticipated, *put off into the future, delayed*' (40). The delay rejects symmetrical or identifiable relations between the subject that the skin represents and any already gendered body that it enacts. Furthermore, the artists show their efforts to negotiate with the skin, which is implicated with the feelings and the images of the self and others. The issue of gender is not skin-deep, but it is deconstructed and represented through skin in-depth.

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