

Athena Thebus & Dana Lawrie
by Kate Mackenzie

Feminism, as defined separately by the works by Athena Thebus and Dana Lawrie, is explicitly different. Thebus' art and practice has an outwardly brash way of confronting the audience with feminist discourse, whereas Lawrie's work – as revealed by her practise – is a product of personal rituals, which deals with feminism on an implicit level. Considered in tandem, the two artists' dissimilar approaches to their practice, and feminism, can understandably define a 'contemporary feminism' that is disjointed, or confusing.

On an individual level, however, both Thebus and Lawrie present clear definitions of their own feminisms. For example, Thebus' work puts forward concepts found in popular culture, such as the individual's personal image versus popular culture, and how she sees herself fitting into popular culture. But it is less a case of 'fitting in,' and more a case of forging an original space for herself, and in doing so altering the status quo. Her work can then be understood as the way by which she forges a kind of future self-portrait to aspire to, outside of current realities. It creates an image framed within what Athena sees as missing from either popular culture or herself.

In the context of a feminist exhibition, by presenting and positioning herself as a 'pop-culture' version of herself, or an airbrushed alternative, Thebus in a way reveals what is and isn't included in her notions of feminism, and pop-culture. This can also be understood as Thebus pushing the audience to either identify, or not with her image of herself, forcing them to confront their own limits of what is, and isn't of their own pop-culture – or their own feminism.

Dana Lawrie's work, and practice as an artist, as mentioned above, can be described as ritualistic. Unlike Thebus's work, Lawrie's works come from a desire to alter the internal, not the external. Lawrie's practice aims to use aspects of life that are intangible – for example, the unalterable passage of time from one moment to the next, a feeling or emotion – to create a tangible object. In this way, her work is also about creating a space for internal reflection, by once removing the intangible, and inherent. For example, the personal ritual of creasing paper is changed from its origin as feeling of anxiety to something solid, able to be reflected upon as it is removed from experience.

Her feminism, in the same way as her work, is internal, coming out through the work from an implicit place.

A feminist exhibition such as this allows the works to be understood for an entirely different reason than the one they give themselves. And this is where something valuable within the exhibition can be found. Addition 3 presents seven individual feminisms, and in doing, so forces viewers to address what makes up the limits of their own individual feminisms. In this way the exhibition is important, in that it brings contemporary feminism into examination – forcing it to take shape for the audience in the works of the artists.

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