

Shvarts explains her 'repeated self-induced miscarriages'

BY ALIZA SHVARTS

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For the past year, I performed repeated self-induced miscarriages. I created a group of fabricators from volunteers who submitted to periodic STD screenings and agreed to their complete and permanent anonymity. From the 9th to the 15th day of my menstrual cycle, the fabricators would provide me with sperm samples, which I used to privately self-inseminate. Using a needleless syringe, I would inject the sperm near my cervix within 30 minutes of its collection, so as to insure the possibility of fertilization. On the 28th day of my cycle, I would ingest an abortifacient, after which I would experience cramps and heavy bleeding.

To protect myself and others, only I know the number of fabricators who participated, the frequency and accuracy with which I inseminated and the specific abortifacient I used. Because of these measures of privacy, the piece exists only in its telling. This telling can take textual, visual, spatial, temporal and performative forms — copies of copies of which there is no original.

This piece — in its textual and sculptural forms — is meant to call into question the relationship between form and function as they converge on the body. The artwork exists as the verbal narrative you see above, as an installation that will take place in Green Hall, as a time-based performance, as a independent concept, as a myth and as a public discourse.

It creates an ambiguity that isolates the locus of ontology to an act of readership. An intentional ambiguity pervades both the act and the objects I produced in relation to it. The performance exists only as I chose to represent it. For me, the most poignant aspect of this representation — the part most meaningful in terms of its political agenda (and, incidentally, the aspect that has not been discussed thus far) — is the impossibility of accurately identifying the resulting blood. Because the miscarriages coincide with the expected date of menstruation (the 28th day of my cycle), it remains ambiguous whether there was ever a fertilized ovum or not. The reality of the pregnancy, both for myself and for the audience, is a matter of reading.

This ambivalence makes obvious how the act of identification or naming — the act of ascribing a word to something physical — is at its heart an ideological act, an act that literally has the power to construct bodies. In a sense, the act of conception occurs when the viewer assigns the term "miscarriage" or "period" to that blood.

In some sense, neither term is exactly accurate or inaccurate; the ambiguity is not merely a matter of context, but is embodied in the physicality of the object. This central ambiguity defies a clear definition of the act. The reality of miscarriage is very much a linguistic and political reality, an act of reading constructed by an act of naming — an authorial act.

It is the intention of this piece to destabilize the locus of that authorial act, and in doing so, reclaim it from the heteronormative structures that seek to naturalize it.

As an intervention into our normative understanding of "the real" and its accompanying politics of convention, this performance piece has numerous conceptual goals. The first is to assert that often, normative understandings of biological function are a mythology imposed on form. It is this mythology that creates the sexist, racist, ableist, nationalist and homophobic perspective, distinguishing what body parts are "meant" to do from their physical capability. The myth that a certain set of functions are "natural" (while all the other potential functions are "unnatural") undermines that sense of capability, confining lifestyle choices to the bounds of normatively defined narratives.

Just as it is a myth that women are "meant" to be feminine and men masculine, that penises and vaginas are "meant" for penetrative heterosexual sex (or that mouths, anuses, breasts, feet or leather, silicone, vinyl, rubber, or metal implements are not "meant" for sex at all), it is a myth that ovaries and a uterus are "meant" to birth a child.

When considering my own bodily form, I recognize its potential as extending beyond its ability to participate in a normative function. While my organs are capable of engaging with the narrative of reproduction — the time-based linkage of discrete events from conception to birth — the realm of capability extends beyond the

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bounds of that specific narrative chain. These organs can do other things, can have other purposes, and it is the prerogative of every individual to acknowledge and explore this wide realm of capability.

Aliza Shvarts is a senior in Davenport College.

Comments

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danielle · 5 years ago

i think u should really take a look at what u have done to baby. you have murder another humam. they should put sick people like you in prison...

hope you burn in the deep dark hole of hell..... jesus help her...

2 | · Reply · Share ›



chynadoll · 5 years ago

one can only hope this monster will soon die or complications due to her idiocy.

This is no real women...maybe for her next "art" project she should demonstrate how wonderful it is to take her own life.

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confused az · 5 years ago

those who say you are entitled to your "artistic creativity"...HA! I say any one of those potential children who you "miscarried" is entitled to a heartbeat and a life. So what did you prove? What else is the uterus "meant" for?? art??? isn't having a baby art in itself?? maybe you do not understand how beautiful it is to be pregnant and give birth. how miracuous it is to see this child who is of your own flesh come alive. i can understand that and i have never been pregnant! this a disgusting display of self mutilation and you lack any empathy for women who have experienced true miscarriages. it is extremely painful physically and emotionally. as a woman reading this i am utterly shocked and disgusted. i would love to be able to attend such a prestigous college as Yale, however instead of wasting everyone's time by doing an "art" project which has absolutely no value, i would use the knowlege i gained to find a cure for cancer, or feed starving children in africa, or bosnia or anywhere else in the world or try to bring an end to VIOLENCE!! what a waste of an education you are. out of all the wonderful things you could have done for an "art" project, you chose the ugliest.

1 | · Reply · Share ›



Liliana · 5 years ago

I think that is a stupid idea because you are hurting a baby its a real person too. I think you should be sent to jailblankets

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613 · 5 years ago

What a stupid idea. Doesn't sound very healthy.

1 | · Reply · Share ›



Amram · 5 years ago

Tagidi, at mefageret?

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Shelby · 6 years ago

I am so sick of this 'MURDER!!', 'AGAINST GOD!!' 'YOU'RE INSANE!!' crap.

If this was a real work of art, I would have viewed it from the angle that I believe that Aliza saw it from; a form of discovery of what the human body is capable of, a mix on the feminist views and a whole crapload of controversy.

Everybody is entitled to their opinions, no doubt, but it shouldn't be a group to control the masses.

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