Aliza Shvarts. Cite/Site. *2020.*
Installation view, Art in General, 2020.
Photograph by Dario Lasagni.

A Conversation with Aliza Shvarts*

EMILY APTER

This conversation took place following the opening of Purported, *an exhibition of work by Aliza Shvarts at Art in General in 2020, curated by Laurel Ptak as part of the organization's New Commissions program. The exhibition was Shvarts's first New York solo show and surveyed over ten years of her practice. Shvarts's work uses performance, video, text, and installation to examine reproduction, from processes of biological and social maintenance to visual and discursive generation. She first came to widespread attention when her* Untitled [Senior Thesis] *(2008), consisting of a yearlong performance of self-induced miscarriages, was declared a "fiction" by Yale University and censored from public exhibition. That controversial work, which was on view for the first time in New York at Art in General, continues to frame the areas of inquiry Shvarts explores: how the body means and matters and how the subject consents and dissents. Recently, her work has focused on testimony, specifically on how the capacity to speak (and be heard) is gendered, raced, and classed.* Purported *was open to the public for approximately two weeks before closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*[1]

Emily Apter: In Sara Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* we find the assertion that "the repetition is the scene of a feminist instruction."[2] Ahmed is referring specifically to her reliance on a "citational policy" that pays homage to feminist memory and affirms an alternative genealogy for theory. Would you say your work pays homage to feminist memory and affirms an alternative genealogy for theory? If so, which feminisms? What kind of alternative genealogy?

Aliza Shvarts: Yes, I'd definitely say much of my work is invested in creating a feminist genealogy, one informed by critiques of the white, Western, heteropatriarchal nuclear family as a vehicle for colonization and the race-based inheritance of property. For me, genealogy becomes a way of imagining collective

* We thank Hallie Ayres, Erin Farro-Murray, and e-flux for organizing this discussion. The podcast, moderated by Ayres, was published on May 5, 2020, https://www.e-flux.com/podcasts/. Minor edits have been made for this publication.

1. For a full description of the exhibition, scheduled for February 21–May 9, 2020, see Laurel Ptak, "Aliza Shvarts: Purported," exhibition text, http://www.artingeneral.org/exhibitions/697.

2. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 12.

OCTOBER 176 Spring 2021, pp. 84–110. © 2021 October Magazine, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
https://doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00428

resonances across time and space. It can be a creative way of positing one's own lineage outside the "proper" lines of patrilineal inheritance.

Citation—as a technique for creating genealogies—allows for a kind of lateral or wayward reproduction. As an art-making strategy, it's a useful way to articulate a relationship to the practices that have sustained you, a way of recognizing belonging outside of normal kinship relations, as well as outside the implicit metaphor of patriliny that structures "artistic influence." In my work, citation also has a pointedly queer ethic: It becomes an expanded field through which to rearrange desires, connections, and affinities beyond what's allowable or available in the here and now, which has long been a strategy for queer subjects. It's a way of imagining that you are not alone.

Something else that's always interested me about citation is that it's nonconsensual. It can be a celebratory way of calling on or giving voice to feminist figures that have made your life and work possible, but it can also be a critical way of re-mobilizing some of those anti-feminist figures, discourses, and histories that have made it impossible. It can be a way of rebalancing power. You can use citation to call on people who might not recognize themselves as sustaining you—but from whom you insist on drawing sustenance nonetheless.

I have two pieces in particular that center on citation and come out of a similar impulse, which is the desire to consider oneself as part of something larger. One is *Banners* (2018), which consists of continuous digital screengrabs printed on commercial banner vinyl. Each of these materializes a moment of overexposure, where someone has written something, tweeted something, or filmed something that has gone viral. At the top of each one is the original content—the article or tweet or video, etc.—and then below are the thousands of comments or retweets precipitated by that content. I think

Shvarts. Banner (Aliza Shvarts, Yale Daily News). *2018. Installation view, Art in General, 2020. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.*

Shvarts. Banners. *2018. Installation view, Art in General, 2020. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.*

of the banners as a kind of archive of "found" digital monuments. They are memorials to a moment frozen in time, and yet they are still out there, "live" on the Internet, so to speak.

Banners began with my own experience of overexposure. The first banner is an article I wrote in 2008 for my college newspaper explaining my senior thesis project for the Art major, *Untitled [Senior Thesis]*. The piece had gone viral on the Internet and was being widely reported on by various national and international media outlets—usually sensationally and incorrectly. I wrote the article in the midst of all this, naively thinking that I could clarify what the piece actually entailed, which was exactly this:

From the 9th to the 15th day of my menstrual cycle, I used semen samples (collected from "fabricators") to privately self-inseminate; on the 28th day of my cycle, I would ingest an herbal abortifacient, after which I would experience cramps and heavy bleeding. This bleeding could have been either a normal period or a very early-stage self-induced miscarriage—the work was intentionally crafted so that not even I knew which. As a result

of these formal constraints, acts of biological reproduction were collapsed onto acts of reading (my own reading no more authoritative than that of any spectator). I intended this piece to exist in its telling—a telling that was to take textual, visual, spatial, temporal, and performative forms, opening onto questions of material and discursive reproduction. Yet because the video and final installation for this work were censored and deemed a "creative fiction" by the Yale University administration, the piece only exists as a narrative circulation, which has largely taken place online.[3]

The article received so many comments when it was posted that it actually crashed the newspaper's website. For years after that, whenever I was asked to lecture about my work, I would distribute this article since it was a pretty straightforward description of my project, but every now and then I would forget to cut off the comments and accidentally end up with this monstrously large PDF that contained the vitriol of thousands of strangers. For years this PDF was an enormous source of shame for me—the enormous weight of this overexposure felt very palpable—until I realized that in the twenty-first century, a lot of us probably have or will have a moment of overexposure like this. One could update the Warholian axiom to say that it's no longer the case that everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes: Everyone will go viral for fifteen seconds. I started looking online for other instances, searching for these monuments or memorials to overexposure. There's something calming—at least for me—in materializing this kind of event, which usually is entirely dematerialized. And when they're printed and hung together, you realize these moments of overexposure don't exist in isolation. They become banners of commonality rather than shame.

The second piece is *Cite/Site* (2020), which consists of seventy-two highly circulated fragments of images or text installed in a site-responsive way. Each image or text has a life in circulation, many of which far predate the Internet but are perhaps precursors to its networked logic. They address the idea of someone, usually a woman, trying to speak on behalf of herself or on behalf of another and not being believed. What you see across the fragments is on the one hand an enormous amount of difference—each is irreducible as a unique event and context—and on the other hand a repetition, the repeated experience of not being heard. The fragments become a visual poem of feminine interdiction. At my show at Art in General, *Cite/Site* is installed as translucent vinyls on the windows that wrap around the entire gallery space. You see the work from the outside, and it becomes a kind of citational matrix that frames the work on the inside.

Some of the citations are just single words that encapsulate this idea—words like *malinchista* or *bobbitize*, where a woman's name has been

3. Aliza Shvarts, "Shvarts Explains [. . .]," *Yale Daily News*, April 18, 2008, https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2008/04/18/shvarts-explains-her-repeated-self-induced-miscarriages/.

turned into an epithet or an action. Or *purported*, which the curator, Laurel Ptak, brilliantly took from this piece to be the name of the entire show. "Purported" isn't a citation, but it's a useful word because it speaks to the "subjunctive mood" in language, which is a way of communicating from a space of unlikelihood, such as when you express a wish or doubt. The subjunctive is a way of expressing things that cannot be corroborated, which I think feels familiar for many of us. A lot of us live here in this subjunctive mood. We must speak from a state of irreality because our capacity to deal in truth or make meaning is constantly undercut; at the same time, this state (and grammatical case) allows us to articulate a utopian aspiration—a wish for an unlikely collectivity, community, or future not yet here.

EA: Women artists like Mary Kelly, Adrian Piper, Andrea Fraser, Coco Fusco, Suzanne Lacy, and Ana Mendieta figure in a piece like *Cite/Site* as reference points or "tiles" in a mosaic dealing with assault stories by women that were not believed. (I was struck by how this piece looked in the installation on the windows of the Art in General gallery space. When I initially saw it exhibited in an interior gallery in New Haven, the engagement with the public was less evident.)

Shvarts. Cite/Site. *2020. Installation view, Art in General, 2020. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.*

My question here builds on the previous one relating to your engagement with citation and historical/theoretical reference. *Cite/Site* not only hails the past work of feminist artists, it amplifies its critical reach through a bibliography that pays homage to writers and theorists whose work has been central to your own—Hortense Spillers and José Esteban Muñoz, to name but two. As someone who recently completed a PhD in Performance Studies and is familiar with the academic milieu, you are fully aware of the theoretical debates and the kinds of social contradictions they can produce in the context of the academic milieu. A piece like *Disconsent*, for example, draws from interviews with artists, curators, students, and teachers, many of whom are actively working through the implications of theory for their own lives and work. I'm thinking specifically of the section titled "Pedagogy," in which several students grapple with passages from Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter*. *Disconsent* explores the embarrassing stumbles and exploratory failures of critical/theoretical forays as they relate to self-formation, professional training (which involves dealing in micropolitical ways with power dynamics, class warfare, structural racism), and the liberatory potential of nonconforming modes of thought. How have you worked with theory over the years? Especially queer and feminist theory, or media and performance theory?

AS: In art contexts my use of theory has often been a source of punishment. People eye it with suspicion—especially critics who assume, somewhat condescendingly, that even though they understand such things, it couldn't be anything but alienating to the average viewer. In one way or another, I'm constantly told to "use my own words," as though the language of theory could never be mine (which I think is an experience many other women artists who use theory have had in their careers). It seems to be taken as evidence of a kind of double monstrosity: My work is horrifying not only for its "radical" bodily interventions but also for the fact that I use dense theoretical language to describe what I'm doing.

But I've found an enormous sense of possibility in theory. I really love it—not just for the pleasure of learning to think in new ways, but because it meets a deeply felt need in me. What I find so valuable about theory is the very thing a lot of people hate about it: It uses complicated language and difficult jargon to make everyday things strange, which, if you're the kind of person who has felt yourself to be unaccounted for in the everyday language we use to talk about life, feels liberatory. Theory exists always in dialectical tension with praxis, which is perhaps another reason I find it useful. And my use of theory in the work comes from a somewhat earnest desire to share this thing that has been so enabling for me—but I've come to accept that it's not for everyone, and that's ok. I don't need people to like it. It's taken me about a decade to get to this point, and it's not without an immense amount of shame—shame that I like something, that I find something liberatory, that so many people find off-putting. But I've come to accept that a lot of people

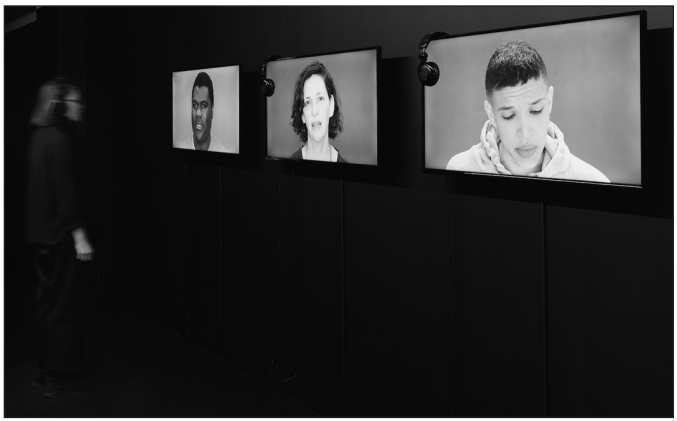
don't need theory like I need it, they don't use it like I use it, just as a lot of people don't need feminism. Neither theory nor feminism is a universal good; they are tools for engaging the world.

In a work like *Disconsent*, you can see the overlaps of art and academia very clearly. The piece consists of three videos (two of which were new commissions by Art in General for the exhibition), in which people tell a narrative to the camera of a time they consented or dissented in a particular context. They then take someone else's narrative and "flip" it, which can range from changing "yes" to "no," or inventing entirely new details—it's up to the participant. The videos are then looped so you can't tell which are the original narratives or to whom they belong. For the first video, *Disconsent: Pedagogy*, I asked four of my former students to relate narratives where they consented or dissented in the context of school. For the second one, *Disconsent: Labor*, I asked four people I've worked with in some capacity to relate narratives in the context of work. And for the last one, *Disconsent: Care*, I asked four curators who've put my work in shows to relate narratives in the context of care, since "curate" comes from the Latin *curare*, "to take care of."

Even though I'm not in them at all, the videos are a kind of self-portrait through others. They depict, as you point out, my milieu and the complicated relations therein. The world I live in is one where art and academia converge not only as practices of labor but also as modes of relation and structures of care, which can be violent or reparative. I was interested in these three contexts because we normally think of consent in relation to sex, but actually, consent is asked or demanded of us, listened to or ignored, in our relationships to institutions, which mediate our relations to each other. And I was thinking about the connection between consent—which is often a speech act or something that happens in language—and its imperfect opposite, dissent, which is often acted out or performed with the body. When you're a student or employee somewhere, you might not have the option to not consent, but you can perform dissent in creative and compelling ways. And it's perhaps those performances that allow us to feel alive to each other again.

EA: Let's turn to the issue of modes of address and the status of the prefix dis- in many of the exhibition's works dealing with labor, pedagogy, and care. On the one hand, it's hard to resist the authenticity effect of narrative voice-overs or subjects who speak while directly facing the camera. On the other hand, the works employ a host of distancing effects; disavowals, displacements, dissociations from immediacy. The famous Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* is fully enjoined. How is this estrangement effect further amplified by your use of narrative devices of intimacy—video diaries, the dramatic projection of an autobiographical "I"?

AS: That's such an interesting question, and it gets to what I've always really liked about how *Disconsent* turned out, which is that it presents personal narratives



Shvarts. Disconsent. *2018–20. Installation view, Art in General, 2020. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.*

as moving across multiple bodies through telling and retelling. The narratives are at once personal and not, authentic and not; it becomes a collective rather than individual concern. Because the piece is designed so that you don't know which narratives are original or to whom they belong, there's always a plausible displacement between the words you hear and the person you see speaking—and yet, it is them speaking. Even if the narrative the performer is telling is not theirs, they still take it into their body and make choices about how they will relate it back.

You're right: The autobiographical "I" you hear isn't identifiable as an authentic "I" or an inauthentic "not I"—it is a performative "not not I." And when voiced this way, consent and dissent become something more than individual narratives of trauma or triumph. Instead, we can understand the narratives together as collective testimony to a condition that we share: the condition of having to make choices in conditions not of our choosing. This form of testimony is only possible through a recourse to fiction rather than fact: the ability to experience someone else's story as your own. Perhaps it gets to the way performativity is always at the heart of empathy, and empathy is necessary for political collectivity.

Certainly the narrative filmic devices of the work amplify all this. The confessional talking head and the use of the first person produce a sense of authenticity, which is immediately complicated by the repetition of the same narrative by a different performer. Yet there's something about the technique of performance that also smooths over this disruption: You watch the narrative, which might or might not belong to the person telling it, become theirs in the telling. I think this is true for the performers, some of whom became quite emotional in retelling the narratives of others; and I think it's true for the viewer, who might feel something while watching despite none of these narratives belonging to them.

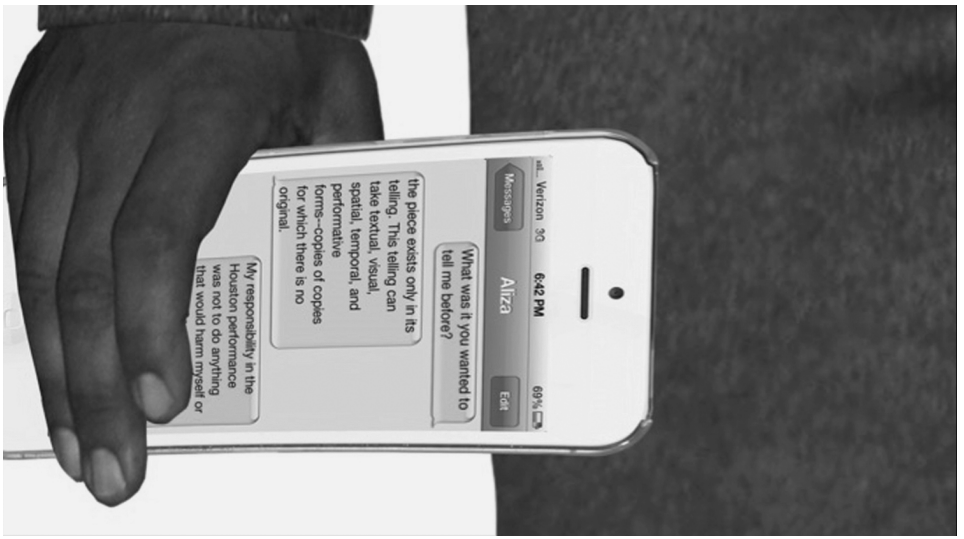
EA: Your work is highly collaborative, but it also constantly exposes the disingenuousness of any pretense of disinterested relationality. It examines the terms and conditions that transform friend into frenemy. It flushes out subterranean affects: hostilities, slights, injuries, and traumatic triggers. All these mechanisms are shown to be part of the infrastructure of collaborative work and its collateral damage. The investigation of psychic violence within social relations extends to your treatment of the relationship between artistic practice and real-world jobs in art institutions, the education sector, the health industry, the gig economy. These are not disconnected worlds, of course, they are complexly interdependent and mutually exploitative. The subjects of *Disconsent* all describe complex relays among different kinds of labor, much of it underpaid and emotionally taxing on creative aspiration.

A number of pieces in the show take up the political question of who gets to insist on the separation between aesthetic and social life. This question echoes a feminist one, also posed throughout the show: Who gets to determine the right to sex? (This last question jibes with Amia Srinivasan's essay "Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?")[4] The answer given: "Certainly not most women."

AS: A lot of the strategies in my work, such as citation and collaboration, come from an impulse to understand my own experiences as part of something shared. They extend from the way I've metabolized that feminist axiom that the personal is political. For me, this means that personal experience is itself a fold of a larger structural condition. So personal experience is powerful not just because it happened to you; it is powerful because what happened to you is an iteration of what is happening to others. Of course, there is also something incommensurate between self and other. We are all iterations of the same social and historical conditions and yet we cannot ever really know each other; whether it is illusory or not, we cannot surmount subjective interiority. This is the difficulty of relation, which is always the other side of collectivity.

This contradiction is really the subject of *Nonconsensual Collaborations*, which is where I draw that conclusion "Certainly not most women." It is a work I made as a young person trying to navigate the exploitative labor conditions and predatory social scene of the art world, as well as its possibilities for creative and political solidarities. It is a video that documents various encounters I had with older, more powerful artists between 2012 and 2014, which I re-narrate through the voice-over as "collaborations." The video consists of the remnants (texts, video clips, Word documents, etc.) from those encounters, and my voice-over flips the narrative so that I position myself as the aggressor in each vignette. Most of these encounters were such that I couldn't really demand justice in the moment because I was worried for my

4. Amia Srinivasan, "Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?," *London Review of Books* 40, no. 6 (March 2018), https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n06/amia-srinivasan/does-anyone-have-the-right-to-sex.

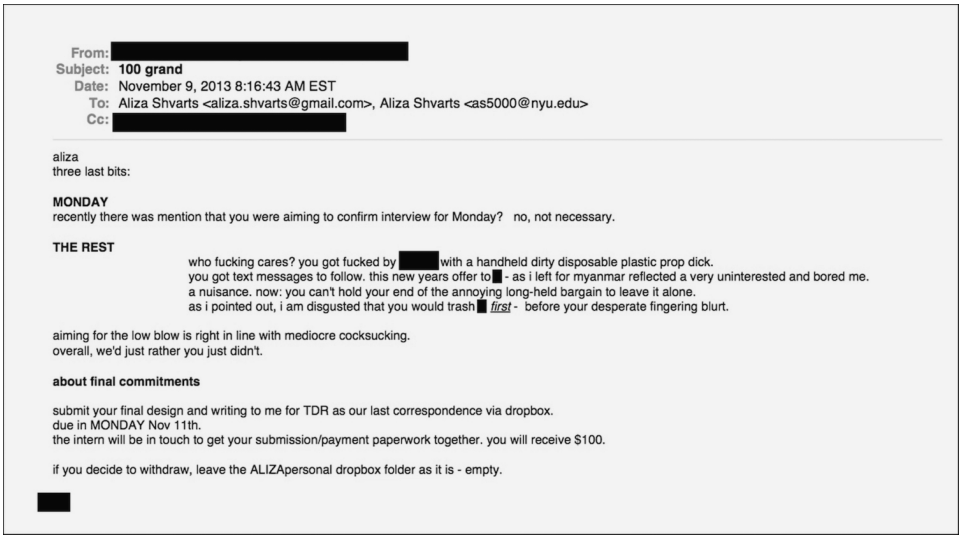


Shvarts. Nonconsensual Collaborations. *2014.*

job, my reputation, the other person's feelings, etc. But by deciding retroactively that these encounters were art—collaborative performances, in fact—I am able to imagine and enact a kind of repair.

This was an important early work because I discovered a feminist capacity in the ability to insist that something can be art, that is, in being able to set for oneself the boundary between art and life—and to intentionally move it. Women don't often get to set that boundary for themselves. We see this art historically in how often works by women artists are overdetermined by their biographies. We see it also as a core idea in a lot of feminist practices that deal with the body as a site of intervention or center acts of maintenance, labor, and care.

In the same way, women often don't get to set the terms of sex. I mean this not in the sense of personal agency or individual consent, but again, historically and structurally. What marital rape (which was declared a human-rights violation by the UN only in 1993) and incel culture have in common is an imagination of women as the object rather than subject of sex: Her body is the ground upon which the agency of another is figured. The most difficult parts of the video are probably the parts that have to do with sexual encounters. In the real-life version of these encounters, I might not have been able to set the terms of sex; yet I am able to retroactively posit the terms of the collaboration. So again, in these narratives, moving that boundary between art and life becomes a strategy for reparation.



From: [redacted]
Subject: **100 grand**
Date: November 9, 2013 8:16:43 AM EST
To: Aliza Shvarts <aliza.shvarts@gmail.com>, Aliza Shvarts <as5000@nyu.edu>
Cc: [redacted]

aliza
three last bits:

MONDAY
recently there was mention that you were aiming to confirm interview for Monday? no, not necessary.

THE REST

who fucking cares? you got fucked by [redacted] with a handheld dirty disposable plastic prop dick.
you got text messages to follow. this new years offer to [redacted] - as i left for myanmar reflected a very uninterested and bored me.
a nuisance. now: you can't hold your end of the annoying long-held bargain to leave it alone.
as i pointed out, i am disgusted that you would trash [redacted] *first* - before your desperate fingering blurt.

aiming for the low blow is right in line with mediocre cocksucking.
overall, we'd just rather you just didn't.

about final commitments

submit your final design and writing to me for TDR as our last correspondence via dropbox.
due in MONDAY Nov 11th.
the intern will be in touch to get your submission/payment paperwork together. you will receive $100.

if you decide to withdraw, leave the ALIZApersonal dropbox folder as it is - empty.

[redacted]

Shvarts. Nonconsensual Collaborations. *2014.*

EA: You often project a woman's body as a landscape of the social where value is created or canceled. You are interested in the "hole that speaks." What does the hole say? With this question we become alive to your efforts to militate against the control society's assertion of legal and political jurisdiction over women's bodies, as manifest in the abrogation of abortion rights and in the forms of sexual violence reproduced in the medico-legal management of rape and sexual assault. Apropos, in *Player* (2018), you revisit your Yale senior thesis, which notoriously involved using an herbal abortifacient to induce cramps and miscarriage. This is the first time this work has been exhibited since the "scandal" it caused. What's been the reaction?

AS: Honestly, I'm not really sure the hole ever gets to speak—or at least, if it is speaking, I'm not sure it's ever really heard. As you mentioned, this show at Art in General was to be the first time I showed the footage from *Untitled [Senior Thesis]* in New York. Because of the scandal surrounding the piece in 2008, the university declared the entire work a "fiction" and banned it from exhibition at the year-end thesis show. For about a decade after that, I decided to withhold any visual documentation of the piece. I became interested in the work's nonvisual life, and what it would mean for me as a visual artist to be known for a work that no one had actually ever seen but only heard about. This decision (and the issues of visibility, overexposure, narrative circulation, and testimony at its core) really set the parameters for my practice for over a decade. Being banned and declared a "fiction" became an unlikely

Shvarts. Player. *2008/2018*.

opportunity to interrogate more deeply what it might mean to be seen or heard in the first place.

In 2018, I was invited to have my first solo show, at a nonprofit gallery called Artspace in New Haven, where I had actually been a work-study intern when I was in college. I thought this was a good occasion to lift my own moratorium on the visual documentation of *Untitled [Senior Thesis]*; yet I wanted to show the work in a way that troubled its status as mere documentation. So I worked with a programmer to make *Player*, which is a custom-speed media player that plays the original footage from *Untitled [Senior Thesis]*. It is the only way that footage will ever be shown. *Player* calculates the exact duration of the exhibition and speeds or slows the footage so it plays through exactly once and never loops. The duration for that show in New Haven was 1,231 hours; the duration for this show at Art in General was to be 1,632 hours—though the custom software actually calculates the speed based on

when the end of the show is, so right now, with the exhibition suspended because of the pandemic and the end date undetermined, the actual duration will potentially be much longer.

The show was open at Art in General only for about two weeks before everything closed, so I unfortunately don't have a great sense about what people's reactions were to seeing the footage—or whether it even mattered that I was finally showing this documentation that had once been the source of such speculation and fury. Though I keep returning to something Laurel Ptak reminded me of a couple weeks ago: Even though the gallery is closed and all the other videos are off, *Player* is actually still on and running—and you can actually see it through the windows on the front door. So this footage (which was already about challenging narratives of biological and aesthetic reproduction) is now doomed to its own ever-slowing extended reproduction, playing twenty-four hours a day in a closed gallery for an unknown duration of time.

Doom is an idea I've been thinking a lot about in relationship to this question of holes that might or might not be able to speak, and what it might mean to be held in this reproductive extensity. (My dissertation in Performance Studies was about doom.) As a speech act, *doom* derives from the Old English word for judgment (*dom*) and describes a kind of reproductive condition and labor; it's not the act of judgment, but the world that judgment creates. For that reason, it became a useful framework through which to examine queer and feminist performance-based artworks that negotiate biological, linguistic, and imagistic reproduction. Unexpectedly, that image I have in my mind's eye of *Player* still playing in the gallery sums it up quite nicely: Doom is reproduction without representation. But as such, it becomes a useful way for thinking beyond representational frameworks in art and politics.

EA: One of the most powerful works in the show for me is *Anthem*, which treats rape kits as political symptom and medium. Can you explain what the work consists of? What does the rape kit perform?

AS: *Anthem* is a comparison of the different sexual-assault evidence-collection kits, or "rape kits," used in the fifty states. These kits are widely different in the number of steps they involve, the way they used medical or legal or sexual language, etc., and even within a single state there can be multiple kits used. Like a lot of artists, I've been thinking over the past couple years about how my particular skills might be useful in an immediate political sense. As an artist, I am trained in formal analysis, and as part of my doctorate in Performance Studies, I specialized in speech-act theory. Rape kits are speech acts par excellence. They turn bodily experience into legally legible language—often with transformative consequences. I've been working with rape kits in different ways for over a decade (my MA thesis in Performance Studies was actually on the rape kit as a tool of reification), and with the resurgence

of talk about sexual assault following the 2016 presidential elections and the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation hearings, I saw an opportunity to use my specialized training. I see this piece as a way to do something that could have an impact beyond art or academia. The physical installation is part of a larger comparative analysis, which has grown into quite a large undertaking and will eventually take the form of a searchable database. The goal is for this to be an open resource for researchers in other fields that might be used to help transform policy.

EA: I keep mulling over the different associations attached to the word *kit*, especially since the news is full of references to COVID-19 "testing kits." *Kit* means "drugs" or "outfit" in British slang, or "supercute gay boys" in cruising parlance. A "full kit" can refer to a heavy or exciting experience. As an Internet acronym KIT stands for Keep in Touch. On the face of it a kit is a banal object with low-count object ontology. It's an instrument of legal and medical bureaucracy that in and of itself would seem incapable of producing imagined narratives of sexual violence or discursive regimes that oppose "victim" (legal discourse) and "patient" (medical discourse). And yet of course it does both these things, and much more, including theatrical scenarios that gender-stereotype the characters involved in processing evidence of assault testimony or negotiating grounds of consent and believability, or the intermediary force of law particular to specific states and jurisdictions. There is also a sense in which a "kit" is a stand-in for the body that has been deposed: already inert, agency-less, and subject to experimentation; like animal prey or the cadavers of criminals, slaves, prostitutes, vagabonds, soldiers, the colonized, and the moribund harvested by medical science. Grégoire Chamayou refers to this class of bodies with an old expression—*les corps vils* (bodies that are abjected, infected, depreciated, from *vilis*, meaning cheap goods).[5] The experimentée—or subject of medical technics—emerges as a figure of necro-subjectivity. It is offered up to science, on its way to morbidity, docilely accepting of invasive instruments like the speculum, the intubator, the ventilator, or the kit. These may be life-saving devices, but they belong to an economy of clinical trials and experiments on the poor. Kits, I would say, presume a sub-personal corpus; one that has forfeited its right to bodily integrity and that can be violated, purchased, and organ-trafficked.

In light of this complex referential range, but in a slightly different vein, I'm prompted to ask: What's your kit—in the sense of, what are your materials? Of what do you consist? Of a self that is trying at once "to be and "to unbe" according to differing orders of ontology? Of the matter and part-objects of your own body, with its fluids, erogenous zones, hair, flesh, lips, folds, fingers, and orifices? Of body parts and internal organs that are increasingly legible (as Jack Halberstam would have it) as post-binary,

5. Grégoire Chamayou, *Les corps vils: Expérimenter sur les êtres humains aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).

transvariant, disaggregated forms of embodiment, functionally defined by what they do or say, and capable of slipping in and out of gender-assigned symbolization?[6] Of the legal and political technologies that regulate freedom of speech, exert political control over women's bodies, and adjudicate sexual violence? Does your tool kit include the unconscious? Or the physical and virtual matter of social media and digital transformation? How would you define the limits of materiality, and your work's relation to embodied social material?

AS: Yes, the "kit" strikes me as such a weird word! In the context of sexual-assault evidence-collection kits, I think it comes from the FDA guidelines. The FDA doesn't approve each state or company's version of a rape kit; instead, they are all covered by a broader temporary provision from the 1990s for "convenience kits," which basically states that the FDA doesn't need to individually review something that consists of parts that are already approved.

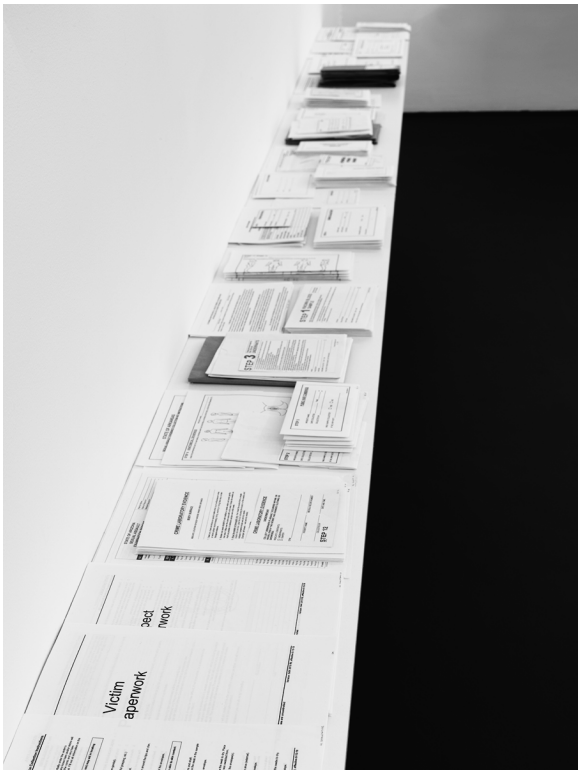
6. Jack Halberstam, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Guide to Gender Variation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

Shvarts. Anthem. *2019. Installation view, Art in General, 2020. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.*

More abstractly, though, the language of kits promises this vision of self-contained solutions—and in this sense it fits really well into the current tech-solution trend of turning bodily maintenance into a matter of kits (i.e., meal kits, ancestry/DNA-testing kits). The kit, as a discrete body, solves the problem of relation, of the interdependency of the body on larger systems and practices of care.

This is actually what's at the heart of the bureaucratic banality of the rape kit, which as an object can never really attend to the social, historical, and bodily complexity of the crime it is supposed to capture. Yet the kit seems to assure us that if we can isolate and contain or excavate the evidence of a crime from the body, which becomes the crime scene, there's a promise of legibility that's assumed not to be available to that body directly. This has everything to do with the legal history of who was able to testify on their own—which has been a raced, gendered, and classed history in the US. It's a legal fact, for example, that not everyone was able to bear witness in court, that not every woman was able to give consent. Enslaved women specifically were assumed to have their consent always-already given—or really, their capacity to give or withhold consent was obviated because they counted as property rather than subjects before the law.

Incidentally, this is what makes it so difficult to design a "better" kit. I've been involved in lots of conversations since I started this research about whether there could be a "design solution" to the problems of the rape kit—perhaps it's part of this general "big kit energy" that's in the air right now, this desire to compartmentalize and privatize these messy parts of life. Certainly there are things that could easily be made better. For example, most of the kits still involve a pulled-hair step, which calls for ten to thirty (though sometimes as many as fifty, depending on the kit) head hairs and pubic hairs to be pulled at their root and collected. This is something that has been recommended against by the guidelines in the National Protocol (which is not legislation, but a set of best-practices guidelines) for a number of years now. Yet the step remains a part of many kits. Given that those guidelines are already out there, the question is perhaps not one of design but one of infrastructure and ideology. What infrastructures break down so that guidelines are not followed? What ideological assumptions about sexual-assault victims, or fears of liability on the part of the state, prevent steps toward harm reduction from being immediately enacted? These issues go to the central question for me, which is: Who are these objects really for? Who do they represent, and whom do they serve? And I always think it's useful to remind ourselves that the one thing a rape kit can never definitively discover is the very thing at the root of the crime of sexual assault, which is the presence or absence of consent. That can only be testified to by the survivor. And



Shvarts. Anthem. *2019. Installation view, Art in General, 2020. Photograph by Dario Lasagni.*

no kit can cover over the fact that the kit itself exists because we cannot believe survivor testimony directly.

The many different materials I use in my practice are manifestations of what is a constant material in my work: embodied social material (that's such a succinct phrase—thank you for it!). This is true in two senses. My material choices reflect the ways our bodies are produced through the social. At the same time, they interrogate the way dematerialized social forms like law or language are produced through bodies. So the rape kit becomes a material for me in the same way the body becomes a material, or the law or technology become materials: All of these are sites where I can trouble the illusion of autonomy. I unsolve the problem that a kit logic solves, so to speak, as each of these sites reveals itself to be a tangled matrix of historical and social interdependence.

In a strange way, this approach actually grew out of a fairly traditional formalist discourse. When I was in college, my concentration was in sculpture, and central to a lot of that training at the undergraduate level was this

question of what the "talents" of the body were. Did you, for example, have a "feel" for clay, wood, or steel? It only occurred to me several years in—and only after seeing for the first time queer and feminist work from the 1970s that centered the female body and its capacities as a site for art-making—that this language of "talents" was a fairly masculinist discourse. I began to ask myself: What could the talents of my body be? What could my body do? And perhaps more to the point, how do disembodied things like language or objects like rape kits implicate or mobilize the body?

These questions about the techniques and materials available to me led me to make *Untitled [Senior Thesis]*, which, as I've already described, followed a very precise score that ensured I never knew if I was pregnant or not—indeed, that was the whole point. For the piece, I did quite a lot of research into conception and pregnancy, learning things like one in three conceptions end in miscarriage, many women have miscarried and don't even know it, etc. I was reading a lot of medical journals at the time and became really interested in a debate between doctors about whether hospitals should set guidelines to distinguish miscarriage from stillbirth—that is, whether there should be a rule for when such biological matter is classified as medical waste (and disposed of accordingly) as opposed to the remains of someone who has died (and released to the parent). A lot of these doctors were arguing for something that I was shocked needed saying, which was that, rather than setting a strict temporal cutoff, the hospitals should ask parents and let them decide. What if we left that decision—or that interpretation, really—up to the people directly involved? I was really interested in the question of who gets to define the edges or boundaries of what is a meaningful or meaningless, remarkable or unremarkable, bodily experience—and whether that was something a woman could decide for her own body. What if the act of interpretation was framed as exactly that? What if we took one of the many indeterminate states in the process of reproduction and paused our attention there and had to think about whether what we were seeing—or what we decided we were seeing—was something we were co-producing in the moment? Because of that, I've always called that work one of "self-induced miscarriages" rather than abortion. I was interested in carrying something "wrongly," in using my body not for the reproduction of people but for the reproduction of an idea—for an art practice.

I guess what this says about my own tool kit is that it certainly includes these medical, legal, and discursive technologies of language and gender, and it certainly takes up embodied social material as its site of intervention—though it perhaps also comes from a place of desire, which I think is often quite unconscious for me. In a lot of ways, what I desire from the rape kits is what I desired from my senior thesis project, which is to be able to claim that the way we apply language to a body matters: It's transformative. Language produces reality for the body. That's true when you are watching the long,

boring video footage from my senior thesis of me sitting in a bathtub bleeding and deciding whether you are witnessing a period or a self-induced miscarriage. It's also true when you look at a body that's been assaulted and use a set of banal objects to decide or adjudicate the reality of that assault—thereby producing the reality for that person. It all speaks to the fact that there's a sleight of hand to the way we think about materiality and embodiment: Dematerialized concepts like value, meaning, and justice obscure the histories of laboring bodies on which they depend. Those bodies are at once material for those discourses and, at the same time, immaterial to them. As "mere matter," they cease to matter. Through different materials and strategies, I try to examine that mystery. I'm caught in an ambivalence between wanting to expose its mechanisms of occlusion and wanting to use those mechanisms in order to imagine new kinds of feminist possibility.

EA: Let's extend the question of matter and materialities to medium. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I find in your work a kind of democracy of media—a gesture of "anything will do" as a form of material agency. You adopt a nonhierarchical approach to the choice of what to work with and an openness to what is at hand, be it a vinyl scroll or set of screengrabs of digital windows. In whose voice does the object speak? What kind of interaction between object and viewer is being staged or performed? I'm thinking specifically of the way in which the public is invited to handle and compare the contents of the rape kits, thus transforming the status of the rape kit as a medical protocol, storage unit of forensic evidence, or instrument of invasive auscultation.

AS: That's a great way of putting it. In a way, everything I use has a life as a tool of articulation in its own context: The rape kits are meant to articulate a bodily experience to the law; commercial vinyl banners are meant to articulate a short, succinct, public-facing statement, like an advertisement or a protest slogan; the digital screen is meant to function as a window into a limitless elsewhere space. And then I tend to try and turn these articulating capacities back on themselves to expose the implicit content already at their core—or what we might call their ideological formation.

In the example of the rape kits that compose *Anthem*, I take objects that are meant to be neutral, almost invisible containers of bodily testimony (which most people have never really seen, including people who have undergone rape exams), and make them visible to public scrutiny. When you are able to see the kits side by side and pick up and handle their contents, you can begin to see the implicit ways the different kits presume who might be the victim of a sex-based crime and how that person's injuries will manifest.

Similarly, when I print out continuous digital screens on commercial vinyl to make *Banners*, I am making visible the limits of these two forms of public speech. By materializing the endless digital scroll of a viral event, I return that speech to a tactile and experiential context. I make it so viewers can feel the weight of these words. At the same time, in terms of fabrica-

tion, the piece extends commercial printing to its extreme by putting thousands of words on a material that is only usually used to display a handful. The objects themselves embody a contradiction in the way public discourse takes shape in the twenty-first century: We find ourselves between a succinctness of slogans and an infinitude of online speech, which give us very different messages about what it might mean to articulate oneself in a broader sphere.

EA: Let's go back to questions around feminism and the law, and more specifically to issues of sexual contract and consent. You were dealing with this subject matter well before the current era of #MeToo. Nonconsensual collaboration, dissensus and consensus, are ambivalently treated in scenes of sexual encounter and partnering in many of your works. As we've already mentioned, you broach sensitive areas relating to the definition of sexual violence and the limits of social harming within the micropolitics of labor, pedagogy, and art-institutional management. In your text version of "Nonconsensual Collaborations, 2012–Present: Notes on a Shared Condition," you explicitly explore the terrain of risk in relations of sex and power. You note that for a feminist, it is "a dangerous move to critique consent as a mechanism of agency, especially when the elaboration of consent as a legal measure has been a necessary tool in enabling women to make both visible and prosecutable some of the more violent interpersonal expressions of misogyny before the law." You go on to argue that "within lived social relations and performance practice, the issue of consent" can be shown to exceed "the rarefied court-bound sphere of legal action. . . . The subject able to give consent, to exercise will, and to demonstrate injury before the law is neither timeless nor universal, but materially and historically produced." Finally, you pose these difficult questions: "What truths can be discovered, but what harms cannot be voiced? What complicated entanglements cannot be understood in terms of harm?"[7]

It seems to me that your staging of the impossibility of "just sex," or sexual justice, or justified power over the other, punctures the fantasy of judicable safety. There's a suspension of belief in the fiction of a right or proper administration of sexual justice. Would you say this specter of an impossible sexual safety serves as an incentive to discover new forms of feminist empowerment or techniques of self-defense? How would these new forms be legislated, or could they be within actually existing legal frameworks of justice?

AS: Honestly, I've kind of stopped believing in justice. The more you examine the history of certain legal concepts like sexual consent, the circumstances through which they came to be written into law, and whom they were and were not meant to protect, the clearer it becomes that this idea could simply never protect most of us—indeed, it was never meant to. Even the successful

7. Aliza Shvarts, "Nonconsensual Collaborations, 2012–Present: Notes on a Shared Condition," in *Off Scene* (New Haven: Artspace, 2018), p. 23. This text closely follows the script of a video work of the same title.

adjudication of sexual crimes relies on implicit understandings of the body as property, which is inextricably grounded in the historical reality that some people were property. So when you receive justice in this framework, it is through a set of terms that will never really serve you, terms that tacitly reproduce, even as they address, your dehumanization.

This is actually the very problem in the question of how we might design a better rape kit. It gets to this more foundational question of what justice means, and what justice means if you don't embody the historical subject position that has always been able to demand and receive justice. This is particularly important around sexual justice because we don't have a great imagination of what that means in its realization, because the law has historically been a tool of sexual subjugation rather than justice. The kits fold that question of sexual justice into a framework of justice in general, which shapes what we assume victimhood and violence look like. Problematically, these assumptions often end up reproducing the same racial and gendered biases that structure legal history itself—not least of all the legal history of consent. Such bias not only doesn't serve the survivors, it often compounds violence insofar as it reproduces racist and classist logics of perpetration. Or, to put it another way, the problem of the kit that cannot be solved through the kit is that it leaves us turning to the law to guarantee our safety, which in its historical formation and premise was never meant to keep us safe.

For me, what becomes more hopeful than the idea of justice is reparation, which is a term I take from psychoanalysis. From what I understand of the theory, we are born into this world a screaming ball of flesh, radically vulnerable and completely dependent on our caretakers. Sometimes we cry, and the breast appears right when we need it, and all our needs are taken care of; other times, we cry and the breast doesn't appear, and we are left without recourse. It's too much to imagine that the breast that always appears on time is the same as the breast that doesn't, so we psychically split it into the part-objects of the "good breast" and the "bad breast" as a self-defense mechanism, protecting ourselves from the horror of our own dependency on a breast that might or might not come, that in not coming might kill us. This initiates a process of psychic splitting that continues throughout our lives, a kind of paranoid thinking that separates the world into "good" and "bad" so that we might protect ourselves.

Reparation is the process of putting part-objects back together. It's a process of building provisional wholes—and not necessarily out of those parts that originally went together. Justice will always be wrought through the historical terms of the law, whereas reparation can be constructed through your own terms—through, for example, an artwork, as in the case of *Nonconsensual Collaborations*. What I like about the idea of reparation is that it doesn't require a perpetrator, so it can also be a way of imagining collective repair—of voicing injury that is the result of a structural condition, one that

all parties involved suffer from in different ways. That's perhaps where a feminist possibility for self-defense lies. By positing a provisional whole out of these part-objects, you don't avoid but redistribute injury. Counterintuitively, I think this allows for the development of an ethical position. The question is no longer how you might punish those that have done you harm, but rather how harm and intimacy are part of the same relational entanglement. There's no justice in that entanglement, but there is repair.

EA: Sara Ahmed writes (in *Living a Feminist Life*) that "intersectionality is army." Her concern seems to be to elevate #blacklivesmatter as "a movement with a hashtag" that allows "self-care to become warfare" within a broader repertory of feminist tactics of self-preservation.[8] Would you say your work has operated in the intersectional framework of movement politics with a hashtag?

I guess I'm also opening the question here of how your work has engaged with the process of fabricating (and critiquing) the art of political memes. I have in mind your collaborative piece with Carmelita Tropicana and filmmaker Ela Troyano (you work together as trshARTS) called *Crossings/Cruzandos*. The project invokes humor as a "vehicle for crossing: crossing generations, crossing cultures, crossing languages, crossing meaning, crossing the line, etc." From *choteo* (a Cuban form of mockery and joking that systematically undermines all authority) in the streets to camp (a queer tool of mimicry and critique) on the stage to irony on the Internet (specifically meme culture, which has become a vehicle both for marginal communities and their oppressors). Lauren Berlant and Sianne Ngai (in their essay "Comedy Has Issues") maintain that "comedy helps us test or figure out what it means to say 'us.' . . . What lines we desire or can bear."[9]

How have memes informed the "us" of your work's community of addressees and collaborators? This question of *la communauté élargie*—a much-debated topic in contemporary ecosophy and a goal of molecular revolution—takes on new urgency in the context of refighting all the old feminist battles in the age of Trump. Memes can be useful here: I think of Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's piece *To Be Without Choice* (featured in the recent *Abortion Is Normal* show at the Arsenal Contemporary in New York), which fully endorses the art of direct messaging. Much of Fazlalizadeh's oeuvre involves crossing street art with meme slogans, as in posters set into the urban landscape captioned MY NAME IS NOT BABY or WOMEN DO NOT OWE YOU THEIR TIME OR CONVERSATION. Fazlalizadeh has no problem with using a commercial medium like the Internet to disseminate political memes, it's simply a means to maximize audience outreach. Are you on the same page?

AS: I think I am definitely on the same page conceptually, especially in regard to turning away from the traditional materials of fine art to places like the Internet as

8. Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, p. 239.

9. Lauren Berlant and Sianne Ngai, "Comedy Has Issues," *Critical Inquiry* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2017), p. 233.

sites of intervention, but in practice I tend to be too seduced by the performativity of discourse to stick with direct messaging. What interests me most about memes is their movement. They have two lives as representational forms: One is situated in their visual or linguistic content, but the other (perhaps more significant) is found in reproductivity. Regardless of their content, memes tell us something about the ways we reproduce ourselves through spontaneous lateral connections with one another (which we talk about through viral metaphors) outside of the more orderly hierarchies of lineage, as well as the way we reproduce ourselves through shared ideologies, beliefs, or ideas (which can cohere into political movements). You might even say that memes are citations gone wild—so wild, in fact, that their original referent quickly matters far less than the perpetual forward motion of citationality.

The memes I've been making as part of trshARTS take up the theme of reproduction explicitly as their content. We use English/Spanish puns and "archival" image macros to stage a relationship between this very new thing—Internet memes—with a very old thing, the techniques queer subjects have always used to reproduce ourselves across generations, which has always involved a mix of biological metaphors, representational affinities, and mobilizations of a shared politics. It's worth pointing out that memes and their metaphor of virality and capacity for movement politics are predated by concepts like the "image virus," which was used by queer artists and activists as agitprop to bring awareness to the AIDS epidemic.

This way of working together comes out of lived experience. Ela and Carmelita are my "art mothers." I met them when I first moved to New York through my PhD advisor and mentor, the late queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz. He used to throw these fantastic parties in his NYU apartment where he would invite artists, academics, and, luckily for me, a few of his grad students. Ela and Carmelita complimented me on my shoes at one of these gatherings, and we've been friends and collaborators ever since. We were all really affected when José died suddenly in 2013—as were a lot of people who knew and loved him. And it was in that moment that they "adopted" me officially. Carmelita has this hilarious bit she does when she introduces me as her "daughter," noting how I "was such a painless birth, complete with an Ivy League degree and everything."

In our work together, José is a touchstone for the ways we think about queer possibility, as is the artist and filmmaker Jack Smith, who was a deeply influential mentor figure for them. And even though I never knew Jack in life (I was three years old when he died in 1989), his theories about art-making are an integral part of the queer genealogy we share. One of my favorite memes we made as trshARTS is a GIF of an image Ela took on the set of one of Jack's performances that shows Carmelita, her mother, her grandmother, and Jack all in costumes. When it plays, you see the words *carmX*, *momX*, *abuelX*, and *papiX* pop up over each of them. It's a family portrait of sorts, extending the term *Latinx* to

name an extended relation between the people in the picture, the person who took the picture, and the person who turned it into a GIF, queering the dynamics of both reproduction and representation.

That said, in my own practice, I'd say I'm more focused on the afterlife of memes, which is probably related to my experience of having "gone viral" at such a young age. A lot of the work I make by myself deals with circulated images and speech but is not meme-able. It's very dense, wordy, or slow. It doesn't necessarily look that great on Instagram. Works like *Banners* or *Cite/Site* take ideas, images, figures that have already had a life in circulation and slow them down by rematerializing them and putting them into different relationships with each other. My impulse is usually not to create something slick but to reintroduce the friction of relation into the slickness of viral spread.

EA: Virality. I can't but be struck by the way in which a work like *How Does It Feel to Be a Fiction? New York Virus II* resonates with the moment of COVID-19. It's almost a case of predictive processing! What, by the way, was *New York Virus I*, and will there be a *III*? How might your future work take on virality as a political condition? You have some new thoughts, I believe, on the concept of virus as reproductive vehicle: A virus exists to reproduce itself, it's reproducibility as such, and as such a consummate pathogenic fiction, a story of leak and spread, like gossip, capitalism, or email worms. Do you see your work contributing to pandemia theory, playing out much like autoimmunity theory did in the wake of 9/11?

AS: Yes, it is certainly a strange coincidence! A little bit chilling, honestly. I've thought a lot about the virus as a metaphor for several years now, not only in relationship to queer-activist history but also iterability and the flows of digital speech. It characterizes not only phenomena like memes but also "fake news," which was the original content of *How Does It Feel to Be a Fiction*? This work, now in its sixth

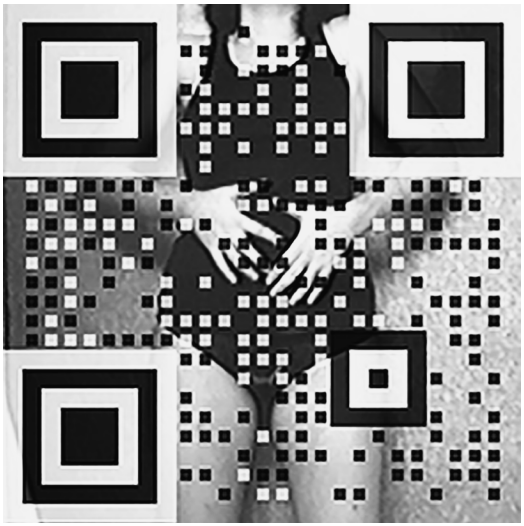
trshARTS (Aliza Shvarts, Carmelita Tropicana, Ela Troyano). Crossings/Cruzandos: Familia. *2019.*

iteration, started as a writing commission from Recess following the 2016 US presidential election. They asked me to write a piece that somehow touched on "fake news," and after I thought about it for a while, it occurred to me that perhaps the reason I got this commission was because I once was "fake news."

Again, this relates back to my controversial 2008 senior thesis. In the midst of the flurry of media coverage surrounding the project, the university released a public statement calling the work a "creative fiction," which shifted the coverage from the content of the piece itself to whether or not it was a "hoax." I got to thinking about how a lot of us live as "fictions" in ways that are far more consequential than an artwork. Women's bodies are "fictions" to the elected representatives discussing curtailing reproductive rights; Indigenous bodies are "fictions" to the logic of settler colonialism; undocumented bodies are "fictions" to nationalist fantasies of border walls. So the first version was responding to the divisive discourse of the 2016 presidential election and how it felt to be a "fiction" in this context. Rather than opting for a hard copy of the text to be available in the gallery, I wanted to distribute the text in a way that mirrored the viral spread of fake news, so I worked with a programmer to create what is essentially a consensual "email worm."

The piece works like this: You receive an email from the name of someone you know "@afiction.org," which is an invitation to participate in the performance. If you open the email and click on the link inside, you are taken to a page that explains that if you consent to participate in the performance by signing up with your Gmail account, you will be taken to a theoretical text that examines "how it feels to be a fiction." At the same time, that email invitation you received will be sent to every contact stored in your Gmail account. Since *New York Virus I*, versions of the piece have been commissioned by spaces in New Haven, Bogotá, Athens, and Zurich. Each one is "site specific" insofar as it responds to the question of "being a fiction" in relation to the hosting institution's location. For example, *Athens Virus*, which was a commission for the sixth Athens Biennale, explored the "fiction" of self-representation in relation to the history of democracy (born in Athens) and attempts by groups like Cambridge Analytica to undermine it though malware disguised as personality tests.

New York Virus II was commissioned for my show at Art in General (and is actually still "live"). Since the piece was returning to New York, I took the opportunity to respond to the idea of "return," so the text is a reflection on iterability itself and recursive time—that feeling that "it's happening again." I was thinking about the way I keep returning to that formative moment of my senior thesis project (which becomes a literal reference in the work, as one way you can access the piece is through an image QR code which uses a still from the thesis footage), as well as how I was again writing in the context of another US presidential election. We can figure such recursive temporality through certain kinds of speech acts like curses and certain specters of reproduction like the virus. The virus, like the curse, is at its core an indefatigable reproductive vector.



Shvarts. How Does It Feel to Be a Fiction? New York Virus II. *2020.*

It does nothing but return. It doesn't eat or sleep or have any of the other trappings of life—all it does is reproduce. That's its terror: It keeps going, keeps working, and seems to work preternaturally well. For that reason, I thought I would use *New York Virus II* to theorize how the virus is not only a metaphor for the way speech spreads in digital life but also as a form that highlights reproduction's immense power, which is usually associated with monstrous feminine bodies or maleficent figures—like the witch who speaks the curse, an utterance that reproduces itself across bodies, working all too diabolically well.

As a biological entity and as a metaphor, the virus confronts us with a question: What if reproduction were the seat of agency rather than representation? And insofar as the feminine body has been historically consigned to a kind of inexhaustible reproductive labor, which serves as a background against which the productive labor of the masculine subject can be figured, this becomes a feminist question about the terms of aesthetic and political visibility. This was in fact the very question I asked in my senior thesis and continued to ask around its viral aftermath. Rather than trying to "make visible" misogynist understandings of women's bodies as nothing more than vehicles for reproduction, I posited that wayward reproduction could itself be a tool. Or, if not a tool, then at least an alibi that allows you to slip the trap of those representational frameworks that could never contain you.

I'm not sure if there will be a *New York Virus III.* The iterative structure of the piece requires that it be a response to an invitation (which I realize makes it slightly vampiric), so I suppose it depends on whether anyone invites me to make another one. But I am glad I had the opportunity to work on this piece over the past couple years, and to make *New York Virus II* for Art in General. I had no idea that it would turn out to be so timely.