



The Animated Female Body, Feminism(s) and ‘Mushi’

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Contemporary animation artists are increasingly engaging with non-traditional cinematic platforms that can offer complex and imaginative experiences to the viewers of these presentation modes. In this chapter, I focus on a growing cohort of women artists working in animation whose films are not limited to cinema screenings and can be experienced in art galleries, as public installations or during live performance; many of their works are imbued with themes of gender, social relationships and an undercurrent of spatial politics. I introduce a feminist framework to locate these politics, followed by a comparative analysis of the installation and performative animation of five animation artists. Focusing specifically on psychoanalytic concepts and the Japanese gendered cultural behaviours of ‘mushi’, I first undertake a comparative analysis of Suzan Pitt’s seminal feminist work *Asparagus* (1979) and the young Japanese artist Tabaimo’s recent animation installations. This is followed by examinations of Rose Bond and Marina Zurkow’s site-specific works that demonstrate how the transformation from the cinematic into site-specific

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21 installation recasts feminism as postfeminism by transforming ‘the per-
22 sonal is political’ into a shared politics of the everyday. Then, after dis-
23 cussing Miwa Matreyek’s interactive animation performances, I establish
24 resonances and distinctions between these five artists, proposing that the
25 trope of inside/outside specific to their animated and gendered worlds
26 is a postfeminist strategy. I conclude with reflections on the viewer’s
27 response to the works and observations about animation curatorship.

28 As a widely used artistic practice that lends itself to the visualis-
29 ation of ideas, intimate personal experience and imagination, animation
30 shares what Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra describe as postfeminism’s
31 ‘increasing ubiquity and political and cultural ambiguity [which means]
32 that a good deal more concerted scholarly work in the field needs to be
33 undertaken’ (2007, 16). In the media and the public eye and ear, and in
34 most Western societies, postfeminism has abandoned much of feminist
35 politics so central to identity politics since the 1960s; they have become
36 subsumed into what we could call ‘liberal humanism’ or attached to
37 emerging and so-called third-world political agendas. Tasker and Negra
38 suggest: ‘postfeminism broadly encompasses a set of assumptions, widely
39 disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the “past-
40 ness” of feminism, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted,
41 mourned, or celebrated’ (2007, 1). Many of the feminist issues of the
42 1960s and 1970s have not abated. On the contrary, Tasker and Negra
43 suggest, ‘while feminism is constituted as an unwelcome, implicitly cen-
44 sorious presence, it is precisely *feminist* concerns that are silenced within
45 postfeminist culture’ (2007, 3; original emphasis). This may be the case
46 in specific postfeminist debates, but embedding feminist debates within
47 postfeminism is effective in removing the ‘pastness’ of feminism. In classes
48 on feminism I have taught over the years, the majority of students living
49 in the current postfeminist environment were unfamiliar with feminism
50 initially. They became enthralled by its histories, activism and achieve-
51 ments, and a good deal of them, men and women, went on to engage in
52 feminist politics later in life. Many students today are aware of feminism,
53 but largely only as a kind of rumour told them by feminists of prior gen-
54 erations, rather than originating in their own experiences or guided read-
55 ings. Angela McRobbie succinctly describes this condition as the ‘new
56 [postfeminist] female subject [who] is, despite her freedom, called upon
57 to be silent, to withhold critique, to count as a modern sophisticated
58 girl. Indeed this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom’
59 (McRobbie 2009, 18). As observed by Jayne Pilling (1992), animation



60 made by women has long been an art form of imaginative critique, fem-
61 inist and otherwise. This chapter explores specific works of animation that
62 continue this tradition to challenge McRobbie’s condition of the female
63 subject withholding critique within postfeminism.

64 In light of all this, reviving feminist agendas now is more important
65 than ever. I revisit a theoretical framework now often maligned as essen-
66 tialist: psychoanalytic theory—which was extremely generative for fem-
67 inist film studies—to explore issues of creativity, desire and gender, of
68 cultural specificity, critique and difference. Related to these, one of my
69 emphases is on the depiction of the experience of alienation in the works
70 I discuss. While animation can and has also generated many compelling
71 works that explore these issues that affect men and women, alienation
72 is one of the defining experiences of the human in today’s postindus-
73 trial information age, also an age of postfeminism. It is here that some
74 forms of animation can assuage individual alienation with its figurative
75 and symbolic depiction of a vast range of subjective, physically impos-
76 sible figures, situations and ‘worlds’ that visually express the often inex-
77 pressible: thought, experience and imagination. While I am noting the
78 ‘pastness of feminism’, I will also show how some of psychoanalytic
79 theory’s impact remains implicit, in a new form, in more recent artists’
80 animations.

81 I now turn to the spatial politics in specific animation installations of
82 Suzan Pitt and Tabaimo, who challenge the boundaries of representation
83 of sexuality and the perverse, through an application of psychoanalytic
84 concepts of the unconscious, abjection¹ and libido seen through lenses
85 of cultural difference. My analysis suggests they evoke/provoke abjection
86 and offer visual and thematic challenges and alternatives to this in line
87 with Julia Kristeva’s ‘purifying the abject through art’ (Mey 2007, 36),
88 as well as through generating feelings of cognitive dissonance in their
89 works. I examine abjection as a cultural phenomenon expressed through
90 the opportunities animation presents to artists, in particular women, to
91 engage us visually through animated scenes, narratives and metaphors
92 of abjection, revulsion and illness. Kristeva, who regards the abject as
93 being closely tied to art, writes in *Powers of Horror*: ‘It is thus not lack
94 of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity,
95 system, order’ (1982, 4). I demonstrate how these works disturb iden-
96 tity, systems and orders in their evocation and provocation of abjection,
97 through the artistic and expressive art of mainly painted and drawn ani-
98 mation. And since the abject is almost always located in women, the



99 animated body is a central performative locus for cultural taboos and
100 their transgressions.

101 INTO THE DOLL'S HOUSE: LIBIDO AND DESIRE IN *ASPARAGUS*

102 Suzan Pitt, who has made over 20 films since the early 1970s, is an art-
103 ist of her generation, a second-wave feminist committed to explorations
104 of the human psyche and creativity. Her work is informed by knowl-
105 edge of psychoanalysis and patriarchy, which she deftly and suggestively
106 questions and undermines. While Pitt is best known for her animation
107 films, she also makes installation works, was involved in the Expanded
108 Cinema movement, has done performances, had solo exhibitions, and
109 she designed operas that include some of the first animated projections.
110 Much of Pitt's visual work originates in a childhood spent with a doll's
111 house kept in an attic; her narrative 'worlds' are notably erotic, meta-
112 phorical and intellectual, and reflect upon the inner life of the woman
113 artist and the experience of dreams. In 1979, she completed *Asparagus*,
114 a 20-minute 16 mm animated film she had worked on for three years
115 while at Harvard. Although it is mostly screened in cinemas, the film was
116 initially conceptualised as an installation. Pitt describes its premiere in
117 1979 at the Whitney Museum, New York, which included the puppet
118 animation set (used in the latter part of the film) as an integral part of
119 the installation:

120 The film was rear-projected through mirrors onto a screen which was
121 placed across the proscenium area of the actual theater which appears in
122 the film. A full-time projectionist ran the film for two weeks behind a black
123 screen—in front, looking into the theater, were seats for about 15 people to
124 watch the film. (Email correspondence with Suzan Pitt, December 2010)

125 This multiplication of stages allowed visitors to doubly locate themselves
126 as 'viewers' in the miniature theatre space while watching the film that
127 was projected into the set's proscenium stage, which included animated
128 sequences of this very set with dozens of puppet figures in a seating
129 area.² Discussing the film in 2007, Pitt describes her concept:

130 *Asparagus* was the culmination of my childhood and all that I had assem-
131 bled in terms of a worldview: the nature of the creative process portrayed
132 as psycho-sexual intimacy ... the searching for contact and ultimate



133 realization of pure existence. ... I feel the same about it now as I did when
134 I made it. (Pitt et al. 2007, 30)

135 *Asparagus* had a mostly positive but varied critical reception. Laura
136 Kraning suggests that ‘Pitt boldly affirms the sometimes overwhelming
137 power of female creativity. This “visual poem” communicates ideas
138 through images, textures, and gestures that cannot be expressed with the
139 mundane logic of words’ (Pitt et al. 2007, 29). Sharon Couzin under-
140 takes a feminist reading and considers *Asparagus*, along with Joanna
141 Priestley’s *All My Relations* (1990), as ‘solid examples of avant-garde
142 feminist films ... embedded with numerous political issues’ (1997, 73).
143 Writing on *Asparagus* sixteen years earlier than Couzin, Joan Copjec
144 locates her argument in a psychoanalytic framework of Freud’s construc-
145 tion of sexuality as lack, and Ernest Jones’ argument that she summarises
146 as desires that are ‘the naturally different expressions of an essential, a
147 biological difference and penis-envy can then ultimately only be a girl’s
148 revulsion at her sex’ (1980–1981, 239). Copjec regards Jones’ position
149 as ‘politically regressive’ and detrimental to feminism, and critiques Pitt’s
150 film as articulating this regressive position. She suggests Pitt’s woman
151 figure’s inside (herself, her garden) and outside (of society) as problem-
152 atic: ‘[t]o begin by placing her *outside* society, *in* nature, is to extract
153 her from, and forever deny her entrance to, the very site of [feminist]
154 struggle’ (239; original emphases). This anticipates McRobbie’s postfem-
155 inist stance that the female subject’s withholding of critique is a condi-
156 tion of her freedom, and I will show how Pitt transcends both of these
157 exclusions.

158 I begin by briefly describing and interpreting central motifs in the
159 film’s animated visual surface. A phallic snake—also a sign of the devil
160 and of seduction of the biblical Fall—twines down around a woman’s
161 leg with a red high heel on its foot. The camera takes us to a feminised
162 domestic interior, moving slowly in close-up to explore elements of the
163 furnishings—the spatial layering is a sign of unconscious depths.³ A mir-
164 ror reflects modes of identity construction, and hands hold an object
165 that is a minaturisation of the film screen—cinematic self-reflexivity in
166 the form of a flower-phallus. We then see a woman hovering over a toi-
167 let and, after a moment, she defecates asparagus spears; she then leaves
168 the frame and as they begin to flush in a spiral, more spears appear to
169 form the film title’s letters as they float upwards from the toilet basin,
170 surrounded by flowers. Rina Arya summarises the ‘ambivalent nature



171 of abjection ... [as] both compelling and terrifying ... Fascination pulls
172 the viewer in, while we remain at arm's length because of the danger
173 the abject exerts' (2014, 5). We are both drawn to, and alienated by,
174 an uncomfortable, but not terrifying, cognitive dissonance that arises in
175 the vegetable forms floating in a vessel normally reserved for excrement.
176 Christopher Schmidt suggests that George Bataille considered the anus a
177 liberatory body zone—shit is an element of what he calls the 'informé ...
178 which does not so much subvert the categories of pure and impure, but
179 productively confuse[s] them' (2014, 19). Pitt's animated asparagus shit
180 conflates fresh organic matter with its digested version of waste, confus-
181 ing our expectation of shit with the visual beauty of Pitt's art, and with a
182 rarely seen moment of private pleasure that usually evokes public disgust.

183 The next sequence is of a faceless woman in a domestic interior, and
184 a twine of flowers from the title crosses the frame past a doll's house,
185 a construction of a girl-woman's imaginary. She pulls aside a heavy red
186 curtain—Copjec interprets the film's use of red on drapes and cush-
187 ions as uterine (1980–1981, 238)—to reveal a plate-glass window that
188 looks onto a phantasmagorical, nocturnal 'Garden of Eden'. The cam-
189 era 'pans'⁴ very slowly to the right and comes to rest on an apocalyp-
190 tic, lunar dirt patch of huge, dark green asparagus spears as tall as the
191 still faceless woman voyeur passively observing from inside through the
192 window; then, two enormous bare-footed legs step carefully into the
193 patch and hands sensually caress the spears. This initiates what Couzin
194 calls 'the basic binary structure Pitt uses throughout: inner/outer'
195 (1997, 76): Copjec's *outside* society, *in* nature. The next sequence centres
196 on a doll's house, a miniature version of the woman's home. Four
197 'descents' into the doll's house—a combination of animated zoom, pull
198 back and dissolve—bear relation with Lewis Carroll's Alice going 'down
199 the rabbit hole'. As the woman leans over the doll's house, the image
200 begins to scintillate in vivid colours, and she fades out and disappears.
201 An enormous red-finger-nailed hand reaches into pick up a settee, and
202 in her hand its upholstery changes from lush red velvet (Copec's uterine
203 colour) to curved asparagus and back to velvet. In the final descent, we
204 see the woman leaning into the doll's house, and a set of masks appears
205 in a revolving circle. The camera then takes us into a different space,
206 and moves slowly through a room of theatrical and grotesque fleshy
207 masks and costumes, coming to rest on one mask. The woman covers
208 her unknowable, featureless face with it, fills a handbag with glowing,
209 floating and textured objects, then walks alone through a city street, past



210 iconic sexual-pathological scenes: a window display of dildos (masturba-
211 tion and narcissism, suggesting phallic pleasure is the only possibility);
212 the violence of a display window of guns. A window with two naked
213 baby dolls on a bed precedes a neighbouring display of pills in bottles,
214 implying that the only identity option for women—motherhood—causes
215 pain and needs pharmaceutical relief.

216 Pitt confronts her figure, and us, with the dark sides of patriarchal
217 order, and childbearing, and sex, and with the punishments implied
218 when women step outside of that order. The masked woman stops to
219 look at a poster outside a theatre, then she, and we, are relocated to a
220 theatre. Its interior and audience are created with objects and puppet
221 animation, distinct from the cel animation used up to now. An opulent
222 curtain rises, then another, an unfolding of layers like vaginal labia—peel-
223 ing away every layer only to reveal another. As the woman enters the
224 community of the theatre, blue waves, a waterfall and ice-cream ships
225 float on and off stage, an orgasmic, liquid *deus ex machina*, an infinite
226 descent and regress of interiority, but the interiority is empty, the womb
227 barren. After a close-up of her mask, the camera pulls back to show a
228 huge spiralling tube form, a vaginal pulse.

229 She slips backstage, a Brechtian revelation of the exposed set that
230 demystifies patriarchal mechanical workings of the orgasmic, yet bar-
231 ren *deus ex machina*, where, hidden from the audience, she lets loose
232 the wondrous objects from her bag—floating glowing worm-like ropes,
233 a snake, a toothed insect whose wings unfold the red settee, flowers,
234 toys and dolls that increase in size and drift into the audience and the-
235 atre space. This is a release of the childhood feminine made visible and
236 tangible by a creative act of the woman artist, reshaping and recon-
237 structing the status quo public imaginary of the (empty) feminine. The
238 reverse vaginal flow exudes a creative act of sexual power into the the-
239 atre, challenging the notion of the feminine as only a receptor, and show-
240 ing that something other than the phallic child can be produced for the
241 community. The audience marvels at the floating objects, reaching up for
242 them as they drift through the now gender-politicised space. Contrary
243 to Copjec's assertion, Pitt's figure has not remained in nature, outside
244 society. She has imbued the latter—the public theatre space—with graph-
245 ically reified feminine creativity as a swarm of animated forms.

246 Returning home to the room full of objects released in the theatre,
247 she removes the mask (which has a woman's face painted inside it), and
248 her blue coat dissolves to reveal her nakedness. She enters the night



249 garden of asparagus, and the remaining minutes of the film are ‘close-
250 ups’ of a red-lipsticked mouth in her otherwise featureless face, and
251 her lips sensually, erotically envelop and fellate, first, and last, a spear of
252 asparagus. Discussing George Bataille’s ‘reconfiguration of the human
253 body’, Arya notes his argument that the mouth ‘should not be sim-
254 ply thought of as the organ of speech and language that separates us
255 from animals, but as the organ of consumption and violence ... [and
256 he] also emphasizes the animalistic aspects of the human mouth, how
257 it communicates violent emotion such as anger or disgust’ (2014, 78).
258 Yet with each upward movement, the phallic form is transformed into
259 a waterfall, flexing metal, pastel-coloured lozenges, sparkling jewels,
260 which flow *from*, not *into*, her otherwise faceless, lipsticked mouth.
261 These reverse flows are similar to the objects she released in the the-
262 atre, connoting instead of the abject bodily secretion—sperm—the
263 creative imaginary. In performing another ‘animalised’, sometimes vio-
264 lent sexual act—fellatio—with its purpose to pleasure men to the cli-
265 max of ejaculation, again, through a cognitive dissonance, Pitt’s faceless
266 ‘everywoman’ reclaims the cinematic ‘money shot’ as the eroticised
267 red-lipped female mouth pursues her own pleasure. Pitt also exposes
268 and flips how the feminine is socially constructed on an unconscious
269 level. In claiming Pitt’s objectification of a woman, Copjec’s critiques
270 are, in my view, not the only ways of understanding *Asparagus*. The
271 female figure becomes an active, desiring subject, a faceless imaginary,
272 an imaginary that is the creative source for Pitt’s art when the film was
273 made.

274 TABAIMO: INTIMACY, ABJECTION AND ‘MUSHI’

275 I now make a cultural and temporal transition from the space, and femi-
276 nist spatial politics, of Pitt’s 1970s doll’s house to the animation installa-
277 tions of the Japanese artist Tabaimo (one of her recurring themes is also
278 the doll’s house). After Tabaimo’s graduation piece, *Japanese Kitchen*
279 (1999), was shown at Kyoto City Art Museum in the same year, her
280 animated works have entered the domain of animation as ‘art’; they are
281 rarely screened in cinemas or festivals. Much of her work centres on per-
282 sonal isolation in intimate interiors occupied by women: domestic set-
283 tings (*Japanese Kitchen*), a public toilet (*public conVENience*, 2006), a
284 woman’s home (*yudangami*, 2009). Others take the body’s fragility
285 as their theme: a man’s body covered with Yakuza tattoo-like designs



286 (*hanabi-ra*, 2003), and wringing hands (*guigunorama*, 2006). I read
287 her films in part through what Arya describes as ‘Bataille’s understand-
288 ing of abjection [that] does not involve psychoanalysis and is rooted in
289 the socio-political where it accounts for the dynamic of rejection and
290 exclusion in relation to the socially disenfranchised’ (2014, 72). There
291 is a shared psychoanalytic theme in Tabaimo’s and Pitt’s works: abjec-
292 tion and libido, or sexual desire. Pitt’s align to Carl Jung’s (also prob-
293 lematic) definition of libido as the free creative—or psychic—energy an
294 individual has to put towards personal development; for Pitt, this energy
295 is expressed in the erotically informed creativity of the woman artist as
296 an individual. In the ensuing discussion of Tabaimo, I will present libido
297 through a more Freudian lens, as an instinctive energy of force contained
298 within the unconscious, introducing a libido-related concept in Japanese
299 culture of behavioural tradition: ‘mushi’ (虫).⁵

300 My focus is on *public conVENiENCE*, shown as part of *Tabaimo*.
301 *Boundary Layer* at Parasol Unit, London, in 2010. It was projected onto
302 three walls in a large, dark rectangular room, with a polished black floor
303 for observers to stand on or walk around. The three-channel installa-
304 tion had a very light, almost ephemeral narrative structure, mostly based
305 in actions and changes of setting, with a subtle soundtrack that under-
306 pinned the disturbing invasion of (male) voyeurism in this public, yet pri-
307 vate, women’s space. The viewer experience was of full-sized animated
308 women figures carrying out private actions centred around their bod-
309 ies, and their bodies’ expulsions, in a space where the open fourth wall
310 negates their privacy.

311 A number of motifs appear in Tabaimo’s works—for instance, the
312 moth. While butterflies are a popular Western symbol that symbolises
313 emerging beauty and grace, Tabaimo’s choice of the moth carries a much
314 darker meaning in Japan; moths are included in a zoological and soci-
315 o-cultural taxonomy and typology called ‘mushi’ (虫), which is usually
316 translated as the Japanese word for ‘insect’. As described in a semantic
317 analysis by anthropologist Eric Laurent, the “ethncategory” *mushi*
318 collectively refers to insects, larva and small animals in Japanese culture
319 (Laurent 1995, 61).⁶ While it has clear zoological and entomologi-
320 cal meanings, the word *mushi* also means a second soul or heart within
321 one’s heart and is used idiomatically as ‘mysteries of the heart’ (Itonis
322 Humanities 2010). It has a range of cultural meanings in Japan that are
323 much closer to the depths of being and the unconscious, and it has been
324 compared with Freud’s concept of libido (*ibid.*).



325 Examples of *mushi* include its reference to a series of illnesses, such as
 326 stomach aches or nervous complaints (*guigunorama* features two hands
 327 that fall apart and reassemble with vivid and changing colours, and can
 328 be considered autobiographical, as Tabaimo suffered from dermatitis). It
 329 is linked to the concepts of mind or spirit and also refers to unconscious-
 330 ness in general, to psychological states not fully actualised, or related
 331 to hidden or suppressed feelings, and this is relevant when considering
 332 some rather strict social rules in Japanese culture. Laurent provides some
 333 examples of a variety of expressions that use the word *mushi*:

334 ‘my *mushi* are painful’ (*mushi ga itai*) to signify ‘abdominal pains;’ ‘to calm
 335 down one’s *mushi*’ (*mushi ga shizumaru*) to mean ‘to appease one’s tem-
 336 per;’ ‘my *mushi* does not like him/her’ (*mushi ga sukanai*) to mean an
 337 instinctive antipathy for someone hardly known; ‘my (his, your ...) *mushi*
 338 are in the wrong place’ (*mushi no idokoro ga warui*) meaning ‘to be in a
 339 bad mood;’ and so on. (1995, 64)

340 *Mushi* also polices Japanese tendencies of gender difference, and it is a
 341 term largely limited to the world of males. Young boys are encouraged to
 342 play with tangible forms of *mushi*—insects, worms, small animals—while
 343 young girls are taught they are dirty and disgusting. In Japan, a girl’s fear
 344 of *mushi* is considered sweet, pretty, lovely or delicate. When Laurent
 345 questioned Japanese women about *mushi*, he often got the response ‘I’m
 346 a woman, I can’t understand that type of thing’ (67). He describes a
 347 fourth semantic level where *mushi* refers to ‘a person who is passionately
 348 fond of something [i.e. someone is ‘*mushi* about something’], or else
 349 to denigrate someone’s habits’ (64). Laurent writes that while ‘[f]unda-
 350 mentally, a *mushi* is a thing that crawls and creeps there are also flying
 351 *mushi*, and when shown a dead *mushi*, ‘many Japanese will ask whether
 352 it flies, crawls, creeps or swims ... one of the *mushi*’s most feared features
 353 is its sudden and unpredictable movements. This is true for butterflies
 354 and moths’ (69–70).

355 Against this non-Western cultural background, it is crucial to under-
 356 stand symbolic *mushi* forms in Tabaimo’s *public conVENIENCE* that
 357 appear at different points in the projected animation. The locus of
 358 Tabaimo’s subject—a women’s public toilet—clearly associates moth
 359 *mushi* with the Japanese male’s *mushi* sexual passion for the scatologi-
 360 cal—that is, the interest in defecation. We see a moth, that flies around
 361 a naked woman’s hips, then others being released by four pairs of male



362 hands that flutter around and fill all three screens; viewers hear the click
363 of a camera and, 'illuminated' by the camera flash, a huge moth seems
364 to flutter across the illusion of the rectangular central void framed by the
365 triple screens. This is followed by a prone male figure, in birthing posi-
366 tion, apparently defecating, but not quite, as it is a mobile phone that
367 appears from under his left leg—that is also the camera we have heard.
368 This presents a case of *mushi* in Laurent's fourth semantic sense, and
369 the passion is voyeurism, a staple of Tabaimo's works, here specifically of
370 Japanese male scatological obsession with young girls' toilet habits. Pitt's
371 figure defecates too, but rather than the abject, shameful product of shit,
372 asparagus spears flow from her body to later reappear in the garden, an
373 iterative, circular fecundity of the pleasures of production, creation and
374 return.

375 *Mushi* also refers to Japanese women's own unconscious—or per-
376 haps self-suppressed—feelings and desires, and partially actualised psy-
377 chological states. A sequence in *public conVENIENCE* depicts the schism
378 between a young woman and her autonomous reflection in the mirror,
379 which uses a hammer to break the glass, representing the breaking of the
380 male imposition on the female gaze—and to psychosomatic illness, as the
381 woman stands still, head bowed, as though distraught or perplexed. In
382 another sequence of a young woman behind the closed bathroom stall
383 door, she gives birth through her nose, through the abject fluid of nasal
384 phlegm, and flushes the homunculus down the toilet on the back of a
385 turtle—an unmistakable example of fauna *mushi*. An obvious reference
386 to secret abortion, surely some of which are really flushed down such
387 public conveniences, Tabaimo here refers perhaps hopefully to longev-
388 ity, which is what the turtle also symbolises: here is a promise of life for
389 a discarded foetus. Or the reference is bitterly ironic, and signifies the
390 long-lasting memory of the tragedy for women who discarded such foe-
391 tuses. Pitt's woman escapes both tragedies by avoiding motherhood alto-
392 gether in favour of her own creative fecundity.

393 These are just a few of many examples of ambivalent and polyvalent
394 abject meanings for the figures, things and creatures in Tabaimo's instal-
395 lation works; shame and abjection can be read in her images and cog-
396 nitive dissonance evoked when watching them. What is simultaneously
397 compelling and unsettling in her works is how she presents the frustra-
398 tion and suppression of sexual desire in her psychosexual explorations
399 of *mushi* and abjection in wider Japanese social and behavioural sys-
400 tems, where the individual must succumb to the group, and the libido



401 is subdued by consciousness, shame and guilt. Front projection and
402 proportions of the life-size female figures and installation environ-
403 implicate the visitor, who oscillates between non-participatory observa-
404 tion and implication as a voyeur/witness to intimate personal events—
405 for instance, when we are ‘standing’ across from a woman in underwear
406 washing herself at a sink (Fig. 1). We experience Arya’s ambivalence
407 here: ‘[f]ascination pulls the viewer in, while we remain at arm’s length
408 because of the danger the abject exerts’ (2014, 5).

409 For Pitt, while there is only one distinct figuration of the ethno-
410 category of mushi in her film—a type of bee—her symbolic forms of
411 mushi are a positive, empowering ‘gut feeling’. She creates psychosex-
412 ual imagery that reflects on the individual, and her mushi—not a set of
413 internalised objects of erotic suppression—are defecated asparagus, float-
414 ing forms and neon lozenges, sparkles, coloured ‘candy’ and writhing
415 mushi ‘fur’ in the woman’s mouth. Besides cognitive dissonance, these



Fig. 1 Installation view displaying intimacy of human scale and proximity of a gallery visitor in the space. Tabaimo, *Public ConVENience* (2006). The Parasol Unit, London, 2010. Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York



416 can also evoke a sense of the uncanny: Laurent suggests one of the most
417 salient characteristics of mushi as a category is that it 'refers to the multi-
418 titude, the undefined, the unnamed, unspecialized, as opposed to the well
419 known, the precisely named' (1995, 69). Pitt's mushi symbolise sup-
420 pressed creativity of the unnamed, faceless woman artist. Couzin inter-
421 prets these objects as a 'relation of objects to self', that effect a shift from
422 narcissism to one of 'spectacle and power ... through unusual objects
423 and bizarre relationships, we are consistently asked to see the protagonist
424 as filmmaker or creator of the film' (1997, 76). Yet Pitt shifts this nar-
425 cissism, also of the woman's domestic interior, to the outside, by instru-
426 mentalising mushi in the public community in the theatre—distinct from
427 Tabaimo's intimate 'public' toilet—releasing the flying objects from her
428 bag. She joyfully constructs the shared experience of a new unconscious,
429 flowing creative feminine, and not what Copjec describes as 'a world of
430 feminine interiority ... severely distanced from an exterior social world—
431 the clay people at the theatre' (1980–1981, 241). Pitt also challenges
432 gender's status quo as the patriarchal iconicity of fellatio and its abjec-
433 tion are reinterpreted and translated into a lingual, tactile self-pleasuring:
434 jewels, colours and liquid gush *out from*, not *into*, her mouth. She
435 remains faceless because she has chosen to remain outside the patriarchal
436 constriction of creativity.

437 What Tabaimo's and Pitt's works share is that both clearly also intend
438 the second contrary connotation of the fourth semantic meaning of
439 mushi: to denigrate someone's habit. For Pitt, this is expressed in her
440 critique of the patriarchal, pathosexual exterior world (guns, dildos,
441 pills) that she joyfully undermines by literally (at least graphically) fill-
442 ing the theatre with objects that captivate the (puppet animation) audi-
443 ence. Tabaimo's more sobering, and unsettling, critique is of voyeuristic,
444 scatological Japanese male toilet fetishism, and she uses a critical voice to
445 visually articulate women's private fears and abject experiences in a wom-
446 ens' private, yet public, space, and this animated space is located in the
447 public gallery space of her installations. Pitt and Tabaimo, and the ani-
448 mated styles and techniques they work with, confront the viewers with
449 abject situations where they can engage empathetically and critically with
450 the animated figures. Abjection in these works is less punitively framed
451 by the filmmakers as they work with the abject strategically, to a wider
452 advantage to women generally, by also undermining stabilities of cultural
453 discourse in the West and East.



454 FROM THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL TO THE POLITICS OF THE
455 EVERYDAY: ROSE BOND AND MARINA ZURKOW

456 Moving from the isolation and alienation of the individual as found
457 in Pitt's and Tabaimo's works, I now reflect on two important figures
458 working in contemporary non-cinematic exhibition: Rose Bond and
459 Marina Zurkow, whose animated installations play with, challenge and
460 question spatial politics by incorporating site-specific and urban building
461 exteriors and interiors. I will comparatively describe (post-) feminist and
462 other strategies in their works in thematics of community, social politics
463 and participation.

464 Rose Bond is a highly engaged artist and performer working across
465 a band of moving-image media, and she has been creating installations
466 for close to two decades. While she has made films since 1982, her more
467 recent work contributes to an emerging recognition of animation as
468 a viable exhibition form for museum and galleries and for a variety of
469 other venues. As with Tabaimo and Pitt, the thematics of the majority of
470 Bond's creative output originate in personal experience—of the everyday,
471 of struggles during the creative process, of solitude and observation—
472 transmuted into works that are accessible to a wide range of audiences.
473 With affinities to Pitt and echoing second wave feminism's 'the personal
474 is political', her work shows great artistic awareness of the power of the
475 animated image to convey subjective experience and personal interpreta-
476 tion. Bond's approach and methods are deeply collaborative in nature,
477 and the participatory element of her work often lies in her research pro-
478 cess, which includes engagement with people living in and affected by
479 her choice of installation sites. She can be considered a third-wave fem-
480 inist, in that she celebrates difference, individualism and community,
481 and much of her work draws on autobiographical experience. Her *Intra*
482 *Muros*, also presented at the Platform Festival in 2007,⁷ was installed at
483 the Utrecht Stadhuis in Holland during the 2008 Holland Animation
484 Film Festival. The animated images, created by drawing and painting, are
485 unspectacular: over a series of window frames, a self-portrait moves back
486 and forth, pausing in front of a computer, vacuuming, chasing a chicken
487 (a nod to Norman McLaren) that escapes from a box. The framing shifts
488 from perspectively correct shots of her form in the window to medium
489 and large close-ups of her face; we see her at a table, bowed over her
490 computer as ideas emerge like white thought bubbles from her head
491 (Fig. 2). Against the proportions of the building's architecture, these

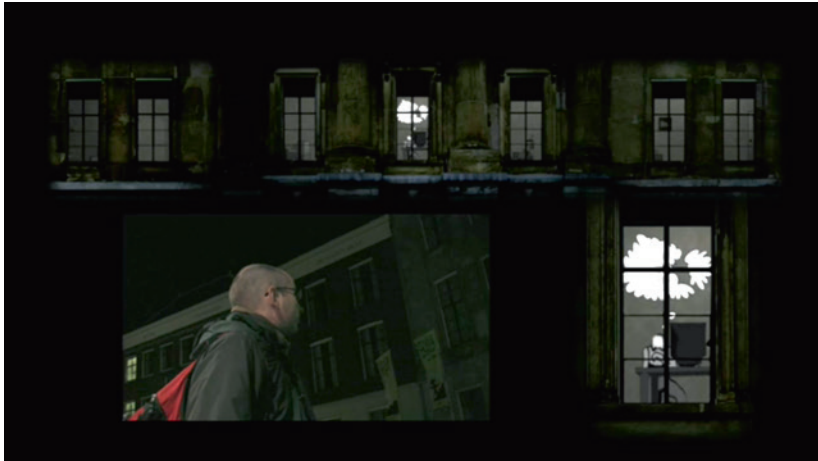


Fig. 2 Composite image of installation view with a passer-by watching and detail of one of the projections (lower right). Rose Bond, *Intra Muros* (2008), Utrecht Stadhuis, Holland. Courtesy of Rose Bond

492 intimate images become gargantuan, simultaneously retaining a commu-
 493 nicative, personal appeal, and these scenes are followed with segments of
 494 abstract colourful animations. *Intra Muros* (within [city] walls) ‘delivers
 495 a personal and voyeuristic glimpse into an artist’s struggles with creative
 496 malaise’ (*Intra Muros* 2012).

497 Bond is increasingly supported by public art projects, such as the
 498 site-specific *Broadsided!* (2010) in Exeter Castle in the UK. She suggests
 499 the installation, ‘sparked by [her] research in the city archives of Exeter
 500 in County Devon, takes a tale of petty crime and juxtaposes it against
 501 images of power, class and luck to question the very premise of just-
 502 ice’ (Biggs 2010). Almost all of her installations work with an inside/
 503 outside motif and use extant architectural exteriors and interiors, often
 504 seen through actual windows. This permits spontaneous engagement
 505 with passers-by, who are unexpectedly confronted with disturbing visual
 506 narratives in the nine-window installation: the arrest and execution of a
 507 sheep thief, a lateral panopticon of jailers with dogs, military parades, a
 508 trio of white-wigged judges ‘remind’ observers of the castle’s historical
 509 infamy as a jail. An earlier example of this revision of history is *Gates of*
 510 *Light* (2004), an eight-channel installation on and in the 118-year-old



511 Eldridge Street synagogue on an urban New York Lower East Side
512 street, which also marked the 350th anniversary of Jewish life in the
513 USA. Supported by the non-denominational Eldridge Street Project
514 based in the synagogue and by Bloomberg, Bond herself describes the
515 project as a ‘multi-windowed animated projection that exists at the juncture
516 of history, architecture and public art. It is cinema situated in the
517 neighborhood and referencing the specific experiences of those who
518 inhabited the site’ (Eldridge Street Project Press Release 2004).

519 The projected films reflect on multicultural and multid denominational
520 residents of the area, including Chinese-language street signs and inter-
521 play with the synagogue’s architectural features. The soundtrack, an element
522 of her work to which Bond pays especial attention, is heard on the
523 street and includes a variety of voices and languages that add emphasis
524 and character to the presence of the contemporary population of this
525 part of Manhattan. In this way, Bond’s installation achieves some of
526 her artistic and philosophical aims of celebrating difference, inclusion
527 and observation of the everyday. This range of concerns reflects Tasker
528 and Negra’s conception of ‘postfeminist culture [that] works in part to
529 incorporate, assume, or naturalise aspects of feminism; crucially, it also
530 works to commodify feminism via the figure of woman as empowered
531 consumer’ (2007, 2). Bond’s appropriation of public space for private
532 expression is similar to both Pitt’s and Tabaimo’s, in that all include a
533 public space—animated or otherwise. But Bond’s installations are also
534 a sustainable form of non-conspicuous consumption; the stages for her
535 works require little or no new materials. She usurps highly esteemed
536 public buildings for her art, adding new secular, communal meaning to
537 their original use as sacred places of worship, aristocratic seats or locales
538 of local government and power. Effecting a subtle shift from third wave
539 to a positive form of postfeminism, Bond leaves the confines of the
540 cinema behind, and with it the powers of curators, programmers and
541 commercial production and distribution hegemonies. Her site-specific
542 installations are independent artworks, open to all who pass by; no belief
543 system, aristocratic title or party membership required.

544 Marina Zurkow is an artist whose creativity is in part focused on
545 animation and the cartoon, and her installations are often multiscreen,
546 have unusual formats and are sometimes site-specific.⁸ Like Bond, she
547 has also made performance pieces that emphasise audience participation
548 and is also an educator.⁹ Her loose narratives share with Pitt, Tabaimo
549 and Bond a focus on community, but they are significantly expanded to
550 thematise human relationships to flora, fauna and environments (Marina



551 Zurkow website). Zurkow is also interested in turning the often infan-
552 tilising iconography of (postfeminist) culture—including ‘sophisticated’
553 girls, fetish objects, labels and cartoony characters—into occasionally
554 grotesque and often beautiful schisms that destabilise viewers. Some of
555 her works could be considered feminist, in that they play with gender-
556 bending and escaping sexualisation: her figures are often strange yet
557 endearing combinations of animal, vegetable and human. For example,
558 the exhibition of *Nicking the Never* (2004) at FACT, Liverpool, UK,
559 consisted of a set of seven animations linked by the presence of a young
560 girl in a range of situations, from superhighway flyovers and underwa-
561 ter worlds to bizarre, burlesque barnyards and megalopoli. We see her in
562 various physical and emotional states—headless, a skeleton, clothed, or
563 almost naked, boxing with herself and a shadow: the images ‘luridly and
564 vividly describe the emotional taxonomy of human struggle with need,
565 jealousy, complacency, aggression, desire, and ego’ (Marina Zurkow
566 website). Zurkow’s work is often participatory, in that she offers the visi-
567 tors opportunities to directly interact and intervene: in a previous version
568 of *Nicking the Never*, motion sensors on the screens allowed users to col-
569 lectively ‘play’ them.

570 *Slurb* (2009) is an 18-minute film commissioned by the City of
571 Tampa, Georgia, for ‘Lights on Tampa’ 2009 and was later widely
572 screened internationally. Projected on a large exterior wall of the St Pete
573 Times Forum, perspectival layers of flat, cartoon-like stylised figures and
574 objects floating in semi-opaque water lead the eye to distant, apocalyptic
575 backgrounds of a more sombre, monochrome stylisation. The colourful
576 design and discreet soundtrack is a seductive strategy; it initially belies,
577 then reveals, environmental and social critiques. The slow and persistent
578 passage of the foreground objects—mostly facing left on screen (from
579 the observer’s point of view)—as the camera ‘moves’ slowly but relent-
580 lessly to the left of the frame insinuates an exodus of a disconnected
581 community, floating on murky water full of rubbish and half-sunken cars,
582 from and towards an unknown place (Fig. 3). If the backgrounds can
583 give us any indication, the world of *Slurb* (a portmanteau word of ‘burb’
584 (suburb), ‘slum’ and ‘slur’) is a cautionary tale of climate change, mass
585 migration and the dissolution of social groups. Megan Voeller suggests:

586 In contrast with its tremulous sweetness, *Slurb* weaves a dystopian nar-
587 rative about the real possibility of environmental cataclysm ... These
588 ‘freaks’ – some social outliers seemingly native to the region (mermaids,
589 a carnie, a ranting evangelist), others truly hybrid creatures with animal

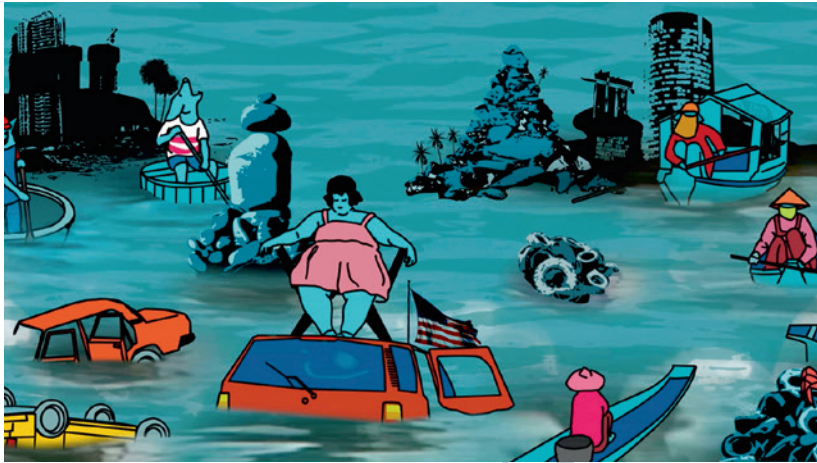


Fig. 3 Apocalyptic flow of rubbish, destruction and human and animal forms. Marina Zurkow, *Slurb* (2009). Courtesy of bitforms gallery and the artist

590 heads and human bodies – become survivors. In a role reversal that
591 upends conventional power structures, they endure. (Voeller 2009)

592 Zurkow's agenda is oriented to humanist and environmental concerns,
593 a significant strategy in the postfeminist vacuum that has elided feminist
594 activism, and she is also a playful and fierce advocate of open source poli-
595 tics and of shared knowledge. In an interview with Ruth Ozecki, Zurkow
596 makes sensitive distinctions between ethics, morals and personal interest:

597 I actually do not think I am making morally responsible work. I may be
598 making personally responsible work, and hope that through exploring
599 some of these questions, I end up offering alternatives to the status quo
600 that is useful to people. I am not a feminist or any other 'ist' per se; I am a
601 woman who addresses issues that concern me – independence, body image,
602 social interactions – because they are the questions that can be asked over
603 and over, and when put to oneself make for a more interesting and con-
604 scious (though not necessarily conscientious) world. (Ozecki 2008)

605 Rather than formulating questions of gender, race and privilege, or
606 invoking psychoanalytic or symptomatic meanings, Zurkow manages to
607 force us to formulate our own questions about these and other themes



608 her works present us with. Some do critique and reflect on highly con-
609 temporary issues of global warming, the information society overload and
610 isolation and alienation of the individual. While *Slurb*'s colourful imagery
611 and its themes are less about the individual and more about collec-
612 tive responsibility for environmental and human *Schicksal*, it shares with
613 Bond's work a strategic use of public architecture and local communities:
614 Voeller observes that '[t]he conditions of mediated representation sur-
615 rounding Hurricane Katrina are worth noting here as a particular context
616 for *Slurb*—and for viewers in Tampa, a city situated, like New Orleans,
617 on the Gulf of Mexico' (2009). The viewer was invited to consider how
618 the animation relates to the buildings it is projected on and to reflect on
619 metaphor-laden relationships to the urban location and other viewers and
620 passers-by: a lit car park, rubbish bins, a neon-topped office building.¹⁰
621 By incorporating contemporary themes that are not gender-specific and
622 (will) affect us all, Zurkow further achieves a politics of the everyday by
623 confronting us with environmental research and post-Katrina cautionary
624 imagery. Her film is less science 'fiction' than science 'fact', notably since
625 the 2017 flooding disasters on the west coast of the USA.

626 Bond's and Zurkow's shifts from Tabaimo's and Pitt's interior exhibi-
627 tion spaces and screens to exterior, site-specific installation are strategies
628 in thematics of community, social politics and participation. These strate-
629 gies can concurrently be regarded as a strategy to shift from feminism
630 to postfeminism by transforming the personal as political—as demon-
631 strated in Pitt's work—into an encouragement towards a shared poli-
632 tics of the everyday. This is a politics also found in Tabaimo's unsettling
633 work, but with a focus on the isolation and alienation of the individual;
634 Tabaimo's and Pitt's films are different from Bond's and Zurkow's com-
635 munity-building thematics. Yet in *Asparagus*, women figures are not
636 abject nor are they objects of voyeurism, and in this way Pitt does bear
637 comparison with Bond and Zurkow, both of whom are working in a
638 postfeminist context that, however, is not concerned with a 'pastness' of
639 feminism.

640 MIWA MATREYEK: PERFORMING THE ANIMATED FEMALE BODY

641 Moving from the community, I now return to the individual, and shift
642 the focus from architectural and urban installation to the (animated)
643 body in contemporary performance.¹¹ Miwa Matreyek is an artist who
644 uses her body to interact on a stage with her animated films. I had the



645 good fortune to see Matreyek's *Myth and Infrastructure* (which was
646 performed at the prestigious TED Global 2010 to enthusiastic acclaim)
647 in 2015 at the Museum for Design, Zurich. As it has an especial focus on
648 the body, here I will address *Dreaming of Lucid Living* (2007), awarded
649 the Student Grand Prize at the Platform Festival. Minimal use of light
650 on the artist's body, mainly visible as a black silhouette, and meticu-
651 lous rear and front projection on a central screen result in an illusion of
652 her occupying projected animated interiors and urban architecture and
653 engaging with real forms (a chair, curtains, a milk carton behind the
654 screen that appear as silhouettes) and animated objects (a table, an oven
655 mitt, a microscope, a cat, an egg in a cup). By also positioning herself
656 on either side of the screen (with animated front and/or rear projec-
657 tion), and moving between the light source and screen, the relative size
658 of her body also changes, 'growing' larger or smaller. In another scene,
659 Matreyek places a number of knee—and ankle-high box forms on stage.
660 Animations projected on their blank frontal surfaces transform them into
661 an urban cityscape, and the artist into a gentle giantess. At the start, in a
662 kitchen with projected stove, Matreyek is a dark silhouette who then sits
663 on a chair positioned in front of the screen, peering through a micro-
664 scope that magically emerges and grows into a complex steampunk tel-
665 escope. She 'places' her hands on one of the graphically animated tubes,
666 and simultaneously we see what she sees: in a round telescopic portal top
667 left of the frame, coloured forms and biological development at cellular
668 level seethe and flow. By reframing and reconfiguring her actual physical
669 position on the stage, Matreyek is embedded in the animated world, a
670 world subordinate to the live performer. In most scenes, the animated
671 world's actions and changes are instigated and controlled by her in two
672 significant ways: the animation is fully a product of single-frame artworks
673 she created, and the timing, proportions, movement and metamorphoses
674 of these spaces and objects are designed to be a choreography with her
675 living body during projection.

676 Like Pitt, Tabaimo and Bond, in Matreyek's performance the female
677 figure is central, but it is not a simulacrum or drawn figurative rep-
678 resentation. The artist's *corporeal*, real-time presence and actions inter-
679 act in a careful choreography with projected animated spaces, shapes
680 and forms. With this control she claims, occupies and engages with
681 them in a way not possible in the animated installation works of Bond,
682 Zurkow, Pitt or Tabaimo.¹² In one sequence, Matrayek's physical pres-
683 ence is invaded and covered by projections of a fantasy of animated



684 interior body parts: a connected set of lines projected on her torso
685 becomes a construction of laboratory vials and tubes, then a skeleton,
686 first simple white lines, then colour, then filled with white flowers, a
687 clockwork brain. Motherhood is also a theme shared with Pitt (creativity
688 instead of procreation) and Tabaimo (the ambivalent act of abortion),
689 but here it is less political, more light-hearted and more indicative of
690 (postfeminist) choice. In the same animated sequence, her silhouette
691 torso now filled with a ribcage, flowers and leaves, a blue egg appears
692 in a nest of twigs in the womb’s location, cracks and becomes a fried
693 egg, identical to one we have seen in a previous scene in a kitchen that
694 dropped from a cracked heart into a frying pan; the audience watches
695 as the performer interacts with the animation (Fig. 4). Matreyek artic-
696 ulates ambivalence of female reproduction with a musical soundtrack,
697 specifically during a segment of a female voice (Anna Oxygen) singing
698 about a ‘biological crush’ that takes the audience through contemporary
699 postfeminist conundrums of motherhood, biology and gender: ‘There’s
700 no difference between me and you, the light falls on us the same.
701 There’s no difference between me and you, you know the sky holds
702 us the same,’ reinforcing the imagery with *logos*, but not in a patriar-
703 chal understanding of the term. This is distinct from Kopjec’s framing
704 of *Asparagus* as a politically regressive expression of gender-biological
705 essentialism. Matreyek’s playful, beautifully animated works and themat-
706 ics are close to Zurkow’s *Slurb*, and both Zurkow’s ‘enduring’ hybrid
707 freaks and Matreyek’s animated biological crush break free of the con-
708 straints that McRobbie proposes are imposed upon the (postfeminist)
709 female subject to be silent and ‘withhold critique, to count as a modern,
710 sophisticated girl’ (2009, 18).

711 A trope prevalent in all five artists’ works—domestic and urban,
712 inside and outside—is played out in Matreyek’s performance via intimate
713 graphic stylisations projected on her body and urban cityscapes located
714 in the same (proscenium and projected) frame. While the performer is
715 ‘located’ mostly in domestic interiors, the collaboration between her
716 physical self and her projected, imagined animated world complicates a
717 feminist reading of her being ‘outside’ society for a number of reasons. It
718 is in front of this very society (the audience) that she performs her works;
719 her animated realms of urbanity, creativity, nature and domesticity, and
720 simultaneously appearing combinations of these, are completely of her
721 making, and she can effortlessly move between them, eliminating inside/
722 outside boundaries. Matreyek:



Fig. 4 Miwa Matreyek in silhouette interacting with projected animation as she performs *Dreaming of Lucid Living* (2007) on a stage in front of a seated audience. Image provided by artist

723 with my work, it's very much about the body being a part of the animation
724 and cinematic experience. Animators are control freaks. We can control
725 every frame, every pixel—and my solo work is sort of an extension of that,
726 where every thing is very choreographed and precise. (quoted in Denny
727 [2010](#))

728 Like the other artists discussed in this chapter, Matreyek harnesses the
729 'ability' of animation to visually depict thought, personal experience and



730 subjectivity and merges these with the lived phenomenal world. But
731 Matreyek takes this further than the gallery and site-specific installations
732 of Bond, Tabaimo and Zurkow, because the performative aspect intro-
733 duces a self-reflexive and self-referential interaction between the artist,
734 her animated world and the physical world she is present in. This phys-
735 ical, performative presence connects the disparate world of drawn pro-
736 jection with the palpable world around us. It allows viewers to be in
737 the artist's physical presence as she experiences a self-created, and con-
738 trolled, 'exploration of shadow and animation and themes of domestic
739 spaces, dream-like vignettes, large and small cities, magical powers'
740 (Matreyek, in Denny 2010): a floating blimp and skyscraper top bill-
741 board proclaim 'YOU' in bold red capitals.

742 CONCLUSION

743 In the visual surfaces of their films, animators can have as much, if not
744 more, to say not only about art, media and the moving image, but can
745 also challenge, critique and subvert patriarchal and postfeminist ide-
746 ologies in the narratives that are embedded, obliquely or not, in their
747 works. The five featured artists are receptive to these opportunities, and
748 some formal and aesthetic convergences and distinctions observed in
749 their works, a set of dichotomies and tensions, relate to observations I
750 made at the start about feminist concerns. In the predominantly disen-
751 franchising current climate of third-wave (post- and pseudo-) feminism,
752 what these works—and some works of other animators, both men and
753 women—maintain of feminism is a commitment to a larger heteroge-
754 neous community. By transforming the second-wave position that the
755 personal is political into a third-wave feminist politics of the everyday,
756 with representations of both strong and sensitive, celebratory and abject
757 animated female figures, this animated (post-) feminism is less personal,
758 but more embracing and inclusive of the wider audience it addresses.
759 The political aesthetics of the artists I have discussed rely on the tensions
760 between the figurative and the symbolic. What is really at stake is how
761 the symbolic is used to critique the figurative's significations. Matreyek,
762 like Bond, Zurkow and Pitt, undermines paternity with its own weapons
763 and celebrates, actively makes and transforms the feminine object into a
764 proactive subject. Bond and Matreyek's works are less psychoanalytically
765 and negatively loaded than the works of Tabaimo or Pitt, in part because
766 of the formers' implementation of objects and constellations with the



767 self—as animated or living, interacting performer—and also because they
768 are not furtive or would otherwise be hidden from sight. Tabaimo, rely-
769 ing more on the symbolic, and the constrictions, morals and social rules
770 of Japanese society, is postfeminist in Tasker and Negra’s disempower-
771 ing, silencing sense. But by using a strategy of observation rather than
772 self-representation, by animating intimate events to expose and critique
773 voyeuristic behaviours that document her own personal observations,
774 the viewer/visitor position is both unwilling voyeur and silent witness to
775 Japanese women’s abject experiences. Tabaimo presents figures of fem-
776 inine abjection to critique patriarchy and Japanese sociocultural norms,
777 but she leaves the uncomfortable questioning to us.

778 For these and other artists, the technique of animation offers an
779 advantage over live-action film for the interface of personal/public,
780 in that it permits a moving-image representation of otherwise invisible
781 personal experience and subjectivity, and it can give the viewer access to
782 artistically generated and fully controlled animated spaces and places.
783 Perhaps more importantly in terms of this chapter’s underlying femi-
784 nist concerns, animation offers a creative medium that they can use to
785 visually and critically articulate observations and experiences of oth-
786 ers. While we may have left behind what Jayne Pilling describes as the
787 ‘agit-prop impulse of the Leeds Animation Workshop’ (1992, 5), in the
788 25 years since her *Women in Animation* was published, what remains
789 unchanged is that

790 animation can also give voice to the intensely personal – in content as well
791 as in terms of production; unhampered by the constraints of naturalism or
792 the organisational complexities of live action feature filmmaking. The ani-
793 mated short film can provide, quite literally, a blank page on which to draw
794 forth an imaginative vision which can communicate, and can do so also
795 without words. (Pilling 1992, 6)

796 The sometimes joyful, occasionally serene and often unsettling works
797 discussed in this chapter also address concerns that have universal con-
798 temporary currency, ranging from new modes of perception and cul-
799 tural commodification to issues of the urban and natural environments.
800 Commercial theatrical animation films mostly do not want to draw atten-
801 tion to the ‘otherness’ of the world they create. They want to engage
802 the audience in familiar rituals and conventions of human behaviour that
803 live-action film also deploys. I would suggest that animation experienced



804 as (site-specific) installation and performance such as I have described
805 makes viewers collectively conscious of a mediation of the very act of
806 seeing. The artists' handling of the female subject evades postfeminism's
807 critique of feminism as 'past' and censorious, and offers a mediation of
808 taking into their own hands a positive commodification of the female
809 body. The animated figures in these five artists' works not only bear relation
810 to our own through an array of aesthetic, cultural and behavioural
811 schemata, themes and symbols. The spaces they 'inhabit' in projection
812 are complicated and enriched by the shared experience of multiple view-
813 ers, whether in a lit gallery space, at an installation's site-specific loca-
814 tion, or in the performative physical presence of the artist on stage. This
815 shared experience is distinct from cinema reception, where the viewer,
816 in a dark room, can engage in isolation with the large-format screen of
817 the filmic world. The spectator must not only find the cues that relate to
818 her own experience of the world and of the experienced 'worlds' of these
819 works, she must also actively engage with the artists' animated realms
820 and the architectural spaces they are located in. This is, indeed, one of
821 the great attractions of the form for viewers, as these animated 'worlds'
822 can assuage individual alienation and offer a positive, community-
823 building critique of the increasing isolation of the contemporary individual.

824

NOTES

- 825 1. I thank Nic Sammond and Maggie Hennefeld for encouraging me to
826 work with the concept of abjection in an (unfulfilled) invitation to con-
827 tribute to their anthology on the subject.
- 828 2. *Asparagus* continues to be exhibited and screened internationally, includ-
829 ing at the 2017 *Bodymania* programme, with Suzan Pitt in discussion at
830 Tate Modern, London.
- 831 3. With the exception of some shots of puppet animation, any reference in
832 this chapter to camera movement, lighting and effects are to formal ele-
833 ments created by the design and animation of the artist's drawings, and
834 not achieved by technical means.
- 835 4. As animation is shot with a static rostrum camera, all camera movements
836 are created by movement of or within a series of drawings or puppet ani-
837 mation set.
- 838 5. I thank Mark Bartlett for introducing me to this concept.
- 839 6. Laurent describes an ethnocategory as 'a category of thinking bound to a
840 specific culture or peculiar traits of a given culture, as much as the criteria
841 for an object to belong to this criteria are culture-dependent' (1995, 62).



- 842 7. The Platform Festival in Portland (OR) USA, curated and directed by
843 Irene Kotlarz, promoted exhibition and installation to a central event of
844 the festival, including a prize for Best Installation that was awarded to
845 Gregory Barsamian for *No Never Alone* (1997). A highlight of the festival
846 was the animated installation event in Portland's Pearl District, which fea-
847 tured works by established and emerging artists.
- 848 8. Zurkow is prolific, creating interactive mobile phone and web works, pop
849 objects and sculptures and icon-based non-animated art; she also designs
850 software and participatory climate and environment workshops.
- 851 9. Zurkow teaches at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University in the
852 graduate-level Interactive Technology Program, an interdisciplinary pro-
853 gramme with a focus on interactivity and art informed by and conferred
854 through technology.
- 855 10. For details on the film and the installation, see [http://www.o-matic.com/
856 play/slurb/](http://www.o-matic.com/play/slurb/).
- 857 11. It should be noted that describing performance is complicated by its lack
858 of reproducibility—as in theatre, every performance with living bodies is
859 different and ephemeral, unlike the screening of images captured in pho-
860 tochemical imagery.
- 861 12. As I have not seen performances from these artists, they cannot be dealt
862 with in this chapter.

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