Mika Rottenberg's Video Installation *Mary's Cherries*: A Parafeminist "dissection" of the Carnivalesque

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"People might say that my work is absurd, but reality is even more so."[1]

Argentinian-born israeli artist, Mika Rottenberg, came to prominence in the New York art scene during the mid-2000s with a cohesive body of video- based work that complicates notions of agency and exploitation surrounding the commodification of women's bodies. Usually shot within constructed sets in the studio, but more recently outdoors, she invented and filmed illogical and highly imaginative systems of production orchestrated by mostly women labourers. For example, one of her early works, *Tropical Breeze* (2004), takes place inside a truck where scented moist tissues are manufactured from the sweat of the driver, champion bodybuilder Heather Foster. To play these characters she hired non-actors with extraordinary attributes—hyper-muscularity, excessive obesity, or exceptionally long hair—who professionally rent out their bodies. The website of Queen Racqui, for example, the main character in *Squeeze* (2010), offers a range of erotic services including "Squashing, Wrestling, Crushing & Trampling." Mika Rottenberg has described her working process as inspired by the extraordinary physiques of

her cast of characters, whom she calls her "talents." In a recent documentary produced for *ART21*, Rottenberg revealed this: "Meeting the person is part of developing the concept… A lot of the time the main characters are my inspiration."[2]

The central concern of the literature about Rottenberg's work is her motif of the factory, and associated themes of labour and capitalism. This includes Hsuan L. Hsu's essay "Mika Rottenberg's Productive Bodies" (2010), which is the only scholarly analysis of Rottenberg's work published to date.[3] Hsu draws from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's influential account of immaterial labour to argue that Rottenberg's assembly lines derive value from the labouring body itself rather than the products it manufactures.[4] In this article I articulate the way in which this 'labouring body' is costumed and exaggerated so as to be presented as carnivalesque: a parody of the normative body that unfolds to reveal an expansive parody of femininity, fetish, and feminism. My case study is Rottenberg's early work *Mary's Cherries* (2004) which, despite acquisitions of editions by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and, more recently, the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Brisbane, has not yet been the subject of academic analysis.[5] I suggest *Mary's Cherries* depicts a cyclical relationship between food, growth, renewal, and excessive female bodies that affords a new feminist articulation of carnivalesque imagery.

To do so, I analyse the carnivalesque imagery in *Mary's Cherries* beginning with the central motif in the video—the transformation and regrowth of Mary's long, red, fingernails—through feminist interpretations of Mikhail Bakhtin's influential theory. The embodied mode of vision produced by such imagery is, I argue, offset by the spectatorial politics of *Mary's Cherries* as part of the broader parafeminist project that employs strategies that function to distance the viewer. These strategies, herein referred to as 'distancing strategies,' include the evocation of the uncanny and the appropriation of fetishistic modes of representation. The dialectical

parafeminist approach presents a significant shift from the way in which feminist artists of the 1980s and 1990s employed carnivalesque imagery, and enables Rottenberg to squeeze in a multitude of references that lead to an ever expanding proliferation of meanings: more than can be dealt with in the scope of this article.

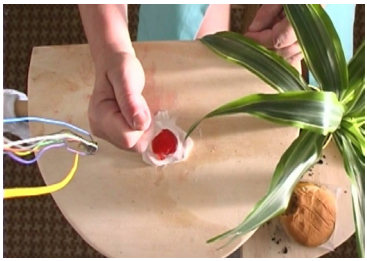
The paradoxical, parodic, and manifold logic(s) of *Mary's Cherries* contributes to my reworking of Amelia Jones's theory of parafeminism: an intersectional form of feminist art practice that refutes coalitional identity politics and adopts a "rethinking" and an expansion of second wave feminist methodologies.[6] I interpret Jones's theory of parafeminism as enabling feminist practitioners to own the history of feminist art through strategies of homage and citation that can be read through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's concept of parody as "repetition with critical distance."[7] Parody, as I use it in this article, often involves a dialectic of proximity: it is produced by a "critical distance"[8] but provokes a bodily response of laughter that in times of carnival, Bakhtin argues, unifies communities as it "embraces all the people."[9] My approach repurposes the carnivalesque as offset through the former aspect of parody, "critical distance," which in the works analysed often takes the form of spectatorial tools appropriated from phallocentric modes of representation. The juxtaposition of paradoxical visual politics, through parody, enacts a parafeminist approach that belies a sophisticated understanding of the political purchase of historical and physical context.

Mary's Cherries is a single-channel video installation in which a CRT cube monitor displaying the film is encased in a self-contained wooden box structure that has been covered with stucco and custom carpet recycled from the film set. The box is usually suspended from the ceiling so the monitor hangs at the viewer's eye height, which combined with the analogue cube monitor, creates a viewing system that is at once nostalgic and reminiscent of surveillance arrangements.[10] The 3:50-minute looped video content of *Mary's Cherries* is set in a claustrophobic factory in which three small rooms are

Mika Rottenberg, *Mary's Cherries* (2004), video installation, 3:50 min., dimensions variable. Installation view, exhibited at FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier, 2012. All images copyright © Mika Rottenberg. Images courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

vertically stacked. In each of these rooms a middle aged Caucasian woman, dressed in a low-cut, pastel-coloured work uniform and visor, sits on a cyclopad at a multi-layered wooden workstation.[11] The bizarre assembly line begins in the highest room where an unidentified woman, of whose face we rarely catch a glimpse, but who is presumably Mary, sits. Mary wears a different hat to the others, one with an in-built fan, and thus is both vertically and symbolically superior to the other two women. The first shot of *Mary's Cherries* is

a close-up of Mary's desk, where she is cutting a long red fingernail onto a circle of white clay; a substance visually repeated in the film through the stucco white plaster which covers the walls of each room. Mary undertakes this process with utmost precision, despite wearing a clunky, yellow dishwashing glove on her cutting hand, picking up the nail clipping before dropping it down a small hole in her workstation.



Stills from *Mary's Cherries* (2004)

Barbara, who has been waiting expectantly, catches the clipping. She has sandy brown hair, tanned skin, and hard features, such as broad shoulders and a strong jawline. She presents as androgynous: she wears a pale-blue uniform with minimal make-up and jewellery, has a husky deep voice, and her unpainted fingernails seem stumpy in comparison to Mary's brightly decorated talons. With her fist, Barbara pounds the clipping into a lump of clay she has prepared earlier. As a result, the red cutting takes on a different form, appearing as a soft and viscous jelly when Barbara picks it up between her forefinger and thumb. Calling out to Rose, Barbara drops the object down to the next floor.

Rock Rose, as her nametag identifies her, can comparably be identified as "hyper-feminine." Wearing lipstick and mascara, she has dyed-blonde hair, manicured, pink nails, and gigantic breasts, unbridled by a bra, which topple from her unbuttoned pink dress. She vigorously rolls the red substance between her hands to form a ball. As she holds it up we realise it is a maraschino cherry—which she drops into a half-filled container. This is the point at which audi-

Stills from *Mary's Cherries* (2004)

ences usually laugh in recognition of the absurd logic of production.

This process repeats and, amid the boredom of waiting for their turn in the assembly line, the women work collaboratively and quietly: the only sound that emits from the scene is the whirring fan and the labourers' calls. Once all of Mary's five nails have been cut and transformed into cherries, she makes a clicking noise with her mouth, at which point Barbara and Rose start pedalling their cyclopads. The energy produced by the cycling enables regenerative activities to occur at Mary's workstation: a black conveyor belt brings hamburgers for the three workers and, more surprisingly, a buzzing lamp above Mary's hand prompts the regrowth of her trimmed nails to full length. The latter usually provokes the second eruption of audience laughter as viewers realise the incongruous manufacturing rationale. The workers then refresh themselves with wet towels brought by the conveyor belt, rearrange their workstations, and wait for the next round of production to begin.

Once More, Without so Much Feeling: The Parafeminist Female Grotesque

Mary's transformative fingernails enact a cyclical and regenerative growth process which can be read through Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque.[12] However, as will be elucidated in my analysis of *Mary's Cherries* through Mary Russo's theory of the Female Grotesque, Rottenberg firmly positions her performers's bodies within the

Stills from *Mary's Cherries* (2004).

hierarchical viewing politics of spectacle. In this section, I ask: How does Rottenberg negotiate between the embodied mode of viewing provoked by carnival imagery and the spectacular terms of the Female Grotesque?

In the first stage of production, Mary's nails are presented in a state of artificially-induced growth that is comic in its exaggeration. This image can be described, to use Bakhtin's terms, as "grotesque realism": the artistic or literary expression of the material body in a transformative state of becoming, such as eating, copulating, excreting, or decaying. The production of food is intrinsic to the narrative of *Mary's Cherries*, but also features as a nourishing reward to its labourers through the form of hamburgers, delivered on a conveyor belt at the end of each shift. Furthermore, shots of half-eaten burgers recur throughout the video, suggesting an excess of food.[13] According to Bakhtin, images belonging to the category of 'grotesque realism' express that which makes us all human and thus incite an attitude of positive affirmation and revelation at our commonly held material body: a realisation which causes a carnivalesque laughter that can be traced to "the collective ancestral body of all the people."[14] The regenerative potential of carnivalesque laughter is allegorised in *Mary's Cherries* by the transformation of fingernails into food that is ingested back into the body by maraschino cherry consumers. Thus Rottenberg creates an ambivalent space where life (cherries) stems

from death (clippings): transforming abjection into sustenance, and degradation into laughter. As a metaphor for digestion, the cyclical nature of the production line becomes further abjected and carnivalised.

Mary's Cherries revolves around painted fingernails, themselves markers of femininity, which are transformed into cherries by female performers. Therefore the transformation is symbolically located within the same female body that is celebrated by Bakhtin as a strong expression of the grotesque. However, Mary Russo, among others, argues that Bakhtin's notion of the female grotesque is underdeveloped. It was Bakhtin's uncritical insistence on the grotesque as female that prompted Russo's feminist reinterpretation of this theory in her influential *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (1995), which offers a sophisticated analysis of carnival and grotesque strategies in feminist artistic production. Locating subversion in the unruly female body, Russo focuses her analysis on images of female performers who deviate from the norm and "who are, in one way or another, in error."[15] Russo's "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory" (1985), an earlier essay reprinted in the book, undertakes a critical analysis of the female grotesque body in carnival as it is constituted both historically, where Russo draws on Natalie Zemon Davis, and symbolically, where she turns to Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva. Having already discussed Bakhtin's thoughts on the topic, I now turn to the work of Zemon Davis and Kristeva to offer some background about the theoretical bedrock from which Russo develops her claims.

Zemon Davis has analysed the political potential in the figure of the "disorderly woman" in her essay "Woman on Top" (1975), an impressive study of archival material that documents both literary and festive inversions of gender in early modern Europe.[16] Zemon Davis diverges from the scholarly consensus in claiming that such traditions reinforced patriarchal hierarchies and instead valorises the figure of the disorderly woman as a "multivalent image" that

could "widen behavioural options of women" and "sanction riot and political disobedience" for both men and women of lower socio-economic classes whose formal means of protest have been heavily restricted.[17] Suggesting the transformative social potential of comic gender transgression, Zemon Davis writes that

> Play with the unruly women... is also part of the conflict over efforts to change the basic distribution of power within society. The women-on-top might even facilitate innovation in historical theory and political behaviour.[18]

Attributing to the "disorderly woman" the potential for social change, Zemon Davis's account of carnival is thus a productive standpoint for Russo's conceptual framework of the female grotesque.

Bakhtin's treatise on the carnival was highly influential for Kristeva and thus instrumental in her formulation of the abject as encompassing that which we must "thrust aside in order to live."[19] The abject can be individual (bodily fluids) or collective (lower social classes), but evidently functions equally forcefully across all its permutations. To formulate the notion of abjection, Kristeva builds on Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, in which Freud contends that civilisation is formed through two taboos: patricide and incest.[20] Kristeva argues that Freud does not fully develop the incest taboo and, through her analysis, locates abjection within the maternal: an ambivalent space which, in addition to housing horror, is described as "the polymorphic, orgasmic body, desiring and laughing."[21] Kristeva's theory of the abject maternal elucidates the simultaneous response of repulsion and laughter produced by Rottenberg's treatment of Mary's fingernails and thus, symbolically, the feminine. In *Mary's Cherries*, Mary's fingernails are thrice abjected: as long talons, they represent a sinister threat; as regrowing appendages, they are animated as unnatural and monstrous; and as a clipping, removed from the body, they become dead. A reaction of laughter produces the boundary of abjection: as a civilised person we "thrust aside" the clippings, drawing a line through disgust at the thought that these materials could be transformed into food. As argued by Kristeva: "laughing is

a way of placing or displacing abjection."[22] Further, disgust can act as a distancing strategy that ensures that the viewer is not enveloped by the corporeal experience. Instead, as film scholar Julian Hanich argues, the viewer undertakes a "see-saw process" of immersion and repulsion that enables them to "reflect on what [the artist] wants to convince us of."[23]

Incorporating the work of Kristeva and Zemon Davis in her study of carnival and carnivalesque theory in order to compensate for Bakhtin's 'underdevelopment' of the female grotesque, Russo analyses the comic and subversive possibilities of female bodies that are "in error."[24] These are the same kinds of bodies termed "disorderly" by Zemon Davis and framed as "abject" by Kristeva.[25] With reference to feminist theories of female hysteria, mimesis and masquerades, Russo posits laughter—or, more specifically "the laughter of intertext and multiple identifications"—as a potential strategy to "expose and subvert the impasse of femininity."[26] In doing so, Russo emphasises the element of display, positing her analysis in relation to "the spatial and temporal dimensions of modern spectacle."[27] This methodology is developed in the introductory chapter to *The Female Grotesque*, in which Russo complicates naturalised associations of the female body and the grotesque through models of depth and surface. The depth model refers to the epistemological origin of the term grotesque, the "grotto-esque," and the metaphor of the abject, material female body that it evokes—an origin from which, Russo argues, "it is an easy and perilous slide" to "misogyny."[28] The surface model refers to the marginal and superficial positioning of both the grotesque, which emerged in classical Rome "only in relation to the norms which exceeded it," and the feminine, as it is often described by poststructuralist and feminist theorists as "bodily surface and detail."[29] Russo explains: "The late Renaissance and baroque combinations of depth and surface models of the body resurface in the twentieth century to produce the spectacular category of female grotesque."[30] In its location of the female grotesque

in the hierarchical viewing politics of spectacle, Russo's treatise diverges from theories of carnival, which emphasise its unifying and participatory qualities, and thus echo the dialectic of complicity and distance that I argue is intrinsic to parafeminism. As I will argue in the final section, *Mary's Cherries* simultaneously employs these two conflicting politics of vision, embodied and distanced, to produce a parafeminist parody of pornographic tropes.

The insights of Russo's theory, in its insistence on spectacle, become important for my analysis of *Mary's Cherries* when it is acknowledged that in real life the two "characters" in *Mary's Cherries*, Rock Rose and Barbara, are not factory workers but professional erotic fantasy wrestlers who hire out their services on the Internet to clients, most of whom request the women to "win."[31] This form of labour, in which the body itself is the means of production, could be considered as subverting or failing the reproductive value of women (whose traditional means of "production" is indeed *re*production). Furthermore, the ageing bodies of Barbara and Rock Rose are not those typically eroticised in Western culture, and thus, in their occupation, they are fetishised as non-normative. To use Russo's phrase, they are "in error."[32] Rock Rose's size, in addition to her age of forty-five years, doubly mark her as an 'erroneous' sexual body. She is the only character from *Mary's Cherries* whose professional erotic services are discussed in interviews, and an image of her website, WrestlerRockrose.com, is reproduced in Rottenberg's monograph.[33] Thus it is the oversized, bra-less, breasts of Rock Rose, which in real life serve her in her work as a BBW [Big, Beautiful Woman[34]] porn star, dominatrix, and model, that are prioritised as extraordinary in *Mary's Cherries*. Rottenberg's work features two other BBW women (Queen Racqui and Trixxter Bombshell, both of whom feature in *Squeeze)*, and thus this casting choice requires close attention.

Russo locates the display of overweight and ageing bodies within a tradition of a woman "making a spectacle out of herself."[35] "For a woman," she writes,

"WrestleRockRose.com," an image of Rock Rose from *Mika Rottenberg* (New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co. and De Appel Arts Centre, 2011), 48-49.

> making a spectacle out of herself had more to do with a kind of inadvertency and loss of boundaries: the possessors of large, aging, and dimpled thighs displayed at the public beach.[36]

She cites ageing, pregnant, and irregular women as exemplifying taboos that circulate around female bodies in a society where femininity has long been equated with discipline and regulation. But Russo also accords transgressive potential to the display of such bodies, which become "unruly" when "set loose in public."[37] Elaine Aston develops Russo's argument in her analysis of the female grotesque in British performance artist Bobby Baker's piece *Take a Peek!*, arguing that Baker's ageing body is "at a risk of becoming a spectacle."[38] As Aston writes,

> The failure to recognize boundaries is at once a source of humiliation, pain, embarrassment and amusement. It can be used to admonish the woman who 'gets herself wrong' in public, but, on the other hand, it can also yield possibilities, subversive possibilities, of 'bad' behaviour.[39]

Female transgression is therefore located in spectacle: that is, in Rottenberg's display of Rock Rose's body rather than in the physical body itself. Rottenberg is inspired by the bodies of these women and, as such, has described these women as her "muses."[40] She rents them for their films at their usual rate and never asks her characters to act, instead creating "a situation in which their bodies will have to react rather than act."[41] Thus, Barbara and Rock Rose, who also perform in their professional occupations, perform their 'erroneous' bodies for Rottenberg's camera through the distancing strategy of spectacle. In this way, the female grotesque presents conflicting modes of vision, embodied and spectacular, enacting a dialectic of proximity and distance to the body.

Similarly, the video component of *Mary's Cherries* is exhibited in a viewing structure that functions to emphasise bodily sensation but, at the same time, to distance the viewer from it. Of these viewing structures, Rottenberg writes

> I want people to have a physical connection to the work. That's why I create viewing devices, installations around the films that accentuate the relation between body and space. Through the setting I want to make viewers aware of the surrounding architecture and go back to their physicality.[42]

To accomplish her goals, Rottenberg recycles materials from the film set of *Mary's Cherries* to make structures that mirror the architecture on display in the film, and in turn to draw greater attention to the bodies and sensations presented on screen. In *Mary's Cherries*, the video is housed in a small container covered with lumpy, flesh-coloured dollops of stucco that are plucked from the factory walls, and which reflect the pudgy flesh of Rock Rose. Maud Ellmann has argued that the figure of the fat woman, especially if she is working class, embodies the liberatory negation of "everything the prosperous must disavow." As Ellman notes,

> she siphons off this guilt, desire, and denial, leaving her idealized counterpart behind: the kind of woman one sees on billboards, sleek and streamlined like the cars she is often used to advertise, bathed in the radiance of the commodity.[43]

Like Rock Rose, whose body is "in error," the lumpy walls in *Mary's Cherries* reject the sleek texture usually associated with capitalism through commercial architecture. Even the walls are making a spectacle out of themselves.[44]

Forced by the scale of the structure to watch the video alone, the viewer undergoes a viewing experience that mimics the claustrophobic situation of the women on screen, implicating the viewer in the production line. The participatory nature of this experience can be considered carnivalesque: as Bakhtin writes, the "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because the very idea embraces all the people."[45] However, as Hanich argues in relation to the close-up, the enforcing of an "obtrusive nearness" causes a phenomenological distancing for many viewers.[46] This is further emphasised in Rottenberg's video because it is screened on a surveillance monitor: a model that self-consciously highlights the act of viewing itself and thus creates further distance between the spectator and the subject. *Mary's Cherries* presents the corporeal body through conflicting modes of representation, both embodied and distancing. It sees the eye as what Amelia Jones describes in parafeminist terms as a "blood-fueled camera" that subverts the concept of vision as securing knowledge.[47] That is, Rottenberg's representation of the grotesque oscillates between corporeal and sterile: the abject, perpetually regrowing female body is presented through a spectatorial lens that is emphasised by Rottenberg's use of medical tropes, her futuristic, lo-fi construction of the cyclopads, and her installation's appropriation of the sanitising filmic language of advertising. As argued by Hutcheon:

> the pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humour in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual "bouncing" (to use E.M Forster's famous term) between complicity and distance.[48]

In this way, I argue, *Mary's Cherries* repurposes the carnivalesque to enact a parafeminist dissection of the female body, eliciting pleasure through its "intertextual 'bouncing'" between complicity and

distance. In doing so, *Mary's Cherries* instantiates a transgression of received notions of the feminine, exemplifying the continued relevance of Russo's claim that laughter can "expose and subvert the impasse of femininity."[49] In the following section, I will demonstrate this point using the framework of the uncanny.

Femininity as "creepy and uncanny"

> My videos employ clichés about femininity... I'm attracted to how these trite ways of thinking about women offer a kind of bliss, that is, they satisfy a basic desire for resolution and simplicity. I'm a sucker for the related visual images—girls playing with little lambs and bunnies, waterfalls, and long blond hair blowing in the wind. But the fun really starts when I dissect the clichés, turning them inside out and showing them as they really are—creepy and uncanny.[50]

In this section I examine Rottenberg's critique of traditional gender norms through the representation of femininity as "creepy and uncanny." I argue this strategy offsets the embodied mode of viewing encouraged by the installation's carnivalesque imagery. Thus, I further articulate how *Mary's Cherries* presents the body through a dialectic of complicity and distance that is integral to the work's parafeminism.

Mary's Cherries contains images that can clearly be located in Freud's notion of the uncanny. Freud's conception of the uncanny refers to the uncomfortable feeling of encountering something familiar and strange simultaneously. Freud's essay on the subject, *The Uncanny* (1919), attempts to define the "special core of feeling" which enables us to distinguish that which is uncanny from the more general category of the frightening.[51] Some of the examples of objects and occurrences that Freud cites as provoking an uncanny response include: entities that cause us to doubt whether something is an animate being or an object, such as waxwork figures, dolls, and automata; epileptic fits and episodes of insanity that suggest mental activities are in fact mechanical process; damaging or losing one's

eyes (enucleation); doubles, including unintentional recurrences and coincidences; dismembered limbs, severed heads, hands cut off at the wrist, feet that dance by themselves; the experience of being buried alive by mistake; and, finally, the female genital organ.[52] In addition, Freud notes that

> animism, magic and sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, man's attitude to death, involuntary repetition and the castration complex comprise all the factors which turn something frightening into something uncanny.[53]

To develop his treatise on the uncanny, Freud builds on Ernst Jentsch's essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* (1906), an essay that Freud argues offers an incomplete definition of the uncanny as that which arises from "intellectual uncertainty."[54] Freud contrasts the German word *unheimlich* (uncanny) with its base word, *heimlich*, which, in addition to familiar, also means hidden or secre. He then goes on to define the uncanny as that which reminds us of our repressed or infantile desires:

> An uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed.[55]

Freud emphasises the infantile element of the uncanny in his final point of general application, a point which he feels "deserves special emphasis":

> An uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on.[56]

Freud locates the uncanny in these slippages between the real and the imaginary. It is in this conflation, I argue, that Rottenberg's practice delightfully revels.

The physiological experience of watching *Mary's Cherries* evokes the uncanny through disorientation. Exploiting the capabilities of the video medium, *Mary's Cherries* distorts time through quick jump

cuts, magnified sound, and the repetition that appears throughout the entire artwork in looping as well as visual resemblances between the three stages of cyclical production. Disorientation through such "unintended recurrence," Freud argues, can evoke the feeling of "helplessness and uncanniness."[57] Furthermore, through "wild exaggeration," he notes, such situations can become "irresistibly comic."[58] Accordingly, poet Efrat Mishori has argued that Rottenberg's practice employs and exaggerates the conventions of television commercials: "Rottenberg amplifies the grotesque and ludicrous dimension of our space." As Mishori explains,

> Her works are a hyper-realistic deformation of a deformed hyper-realism, a simulacrum of simulacra, a morbid exaggeration of morbid excess. They fake the appeal of fake appeal, they are synthetically synthesized; they are the reworking of a reworked reworking.[59]

Thus, in evoking the uncanny, the strategy of repetition simultaneously functions to parody the filmic language of commercial advertising. Through her dizzying exaggeration of television marketing, which, to use the words of Hutcheon, enacts a "repetition with critical distance," Rottenberg evokes the uncanny to offer a derisive yet playful parody of consumerist tactics.[60]

Rottenberg's enactment of parody through the uncanny re-emerges in her treatment of Mary's astonishingly long red fingernails, which are symbolically located as central in the film's narrative as well as the published literature on the work.[61] Firstly, a seemingly dead clipping is transformed into an edible, animate, maraschino cherry. Secondly, with the aid of a buzzing lamp, Mary's fingernails grow at a comical speed. Thirdly, they grow from her body already painted red, and thus what is artificial is seen to be growing from what is presumed to be organic. In summary, the impossible is presented as truth and, to use Freud's words, "something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality."[62]

This transformation casts into doubt our perception of the border between dead and alive; we are suddenly unsure whether

Still from *Mary's Cherries* (2004).

the labourers are indeed human or whether the architecture is indeed inanimate. As Ellie Buttrose has written of *Mary's Cherries*,

> Everything seems overwrought, from the 'licks' of stucco on the walls of their claustrophobic rooms, to the fleshiness of their bodies on the exercise bikes, to their flimsy plywood workbenches. Rottenberg transforms the factory line from a mechanical space to a feast of flesh.[63]

In his essay on laughter, Henri Bergson avers that anthropomorphism is a key factor to the comic. In fact, Bergson argues that "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly *human*."[64] The small rooms in *Mary's Cherries* are certainly womb-like, which, according to Freud, evokes the uncanny because of the familiarity of the unfamiliar womb. Thus, Rottenberg's transformation of fingernails into cherries, from inanimate to animate, has a comic effect, rooted in the work's evocation of an uncanny effect that contradicts the embodied mode of viewing that is produced by its carnivalesque imagery.

As I have previously quoted, Freud writes that the uncanny occurs when "a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes."[65] Rottenberg consciously provokes and conflates symbolic meaning in accordance with Freud's description of the disarming process in which symbolisation exceeds that which is symbolised. As she writes,

> A maraschino cherry and red fingernails have other connotations, so one thing that looks like something will turn into something else. Each thing that it transforms into will need its own baggage for it to be interesting to me.[66]

Certainly, long painted fingernails are simultaneously a signifier of femininity and womanhood, and in particular of the upper class woman who does not get her hands dirty. They also function as phallic fetish, working to alleviate the castration fears of an assumed heterosexual male viewer.[67] At the same time, cherries are often considered a delectable and erotic fruit through their visual similarity to the body's internal reproductive organs as well as their metaphor for the end-goal of desire. For example, in the phrase "popping the cherry," which signifies the loss of virginity, the hymen is substituted for a cherry. It seems appropriate, then, that this desirable and unattainable cherry belongs to Mary, a woman whose face we never see in the video and whose name recalls the archetype of the sexually unattainable: the Virgin Mary.[68]

Yet the real-life profession of the women handling the nail/cherries—and thus what is responsible for their transformation—is sex work. Rock Rose and Barbara are erotic fantasy wrestlers hired by Rottenberg through the internet. Thus, Rottenberg casts fetish workers as labouring bodies to clip long red phallic fingernails, gleefully inciting the viewer's castration complex, and aggressively pounding a symbol of femininity into a lump of clay, before metaphorically transforming it into a bloody red, juicy cherry. In provoking and conflating symbolic meaning, Rottenberg evokes the uncanny. To repeat Rottenberg's words, this process "dissect[s] the clichés [of femininity],

turning them inside out and showing them as they really are—creepy and uncanny."[69] Furthermore, in rendering symbols of femininity uncanny, Rottenberg enacts an expansive feminist parody of the markers of femininity as well as the fetishisation of women's bodies. The bodies of Rock Rose and Barbara have been hired by Rottenberg, and thus their exhibition does not exert the same transgressive agency as, for instance, Bobby Baker's ageing body might exert. Rottenberg's camera is complicit in fetishistic tropes of representation that exaggerate Rock Rose and Barbara's everyday professions as sex workers. This dialectic of female liberation and exploitation, as well as its implications for Rottenberg's relationship to feminism, will be the subject of the following section.

The Paradox of Parafeminism

> I've always defined myself as a feminist. There is an aspect of misogyny in my work that is a response to the way society in general is. I have to ask myself what it means to be a 'good' feminist. If I use people's bodies and objectify them, then I'm a bad feminist… I keep questioning my own morality.[70]

Rottenberg claims she is a feminist, but acknowledges that her relationship to feminism is complicated by her practice of hiring women's bodies. The relation of Rottenberg's work to feminism is thus centered upon notions of exploitation, both in her casting process and her work's employment of fetishistic tropes of representation. This conflict is integral to the work's meaning, as Rottenberg affirms: "In my videos, I cast women with extreme physical abilities in roles that both exploit and empower them by focusing on their real extraordinary talents."[71] Critics have responded to the work in a number of ways, some arguing that it "empowers" women and others labelling Rottenberg's practice "post-feminist."[72] Others have praised Rottenberg's work for utilising humour to tackle serious themes. Featuring Rottenberg's *Dough* in the "Best in Art" category for their 2006 Culture Awards, *New York Magazine* described Rottenberg's practice as "art about gender politics that doesn't feel heavy-

handed," while Chris Bors wrote in *Art Papers* that Rottenberg's "theory-laden critique manages to avoid the pitfall of didacticism."[73] According to Jones, this debate about feminism forms an integral part of parafeminism, with parafeminist subjectivities themselves often questioning "the meaning, significance, and status of feminist—or parafeminist—visual practice today."[74] Furthering Jones's notion of parafeminism as possessive of a paradoxical relationship to feminism itself, in this section I argue that parafeminist practices engage phallocentric modes of representation in order to politicise objectification and desire. Hutcheon has articulated how parody and parodic strategies serve as distinctly productive for feminist artists, although, as she writes,

> To work it must be complicitous with the values it challenges: we have to feel the seduction in order to question it and then to theorize the site of that contradiction. Such feminist uses of postmodern tactics politicize desire in their play with the revealed and the hidden, the offered and the deferred.[75]

That is, parafeminist parody makes the viewer complicit "with the values it challenges" in order to politicise desire. Following Hutcheon's theory, in this section I analyse the affective and critical effects of the cinematic strategies employed in *Mary's Cherries* in order to "theorise the site of that contradiction." Through this analysis of *Mary's Cherries,* I articulate a parafeminist dialectic of exploitation and empowerment that "bounces" between the complicity and distance of fetish and feminism and, in doing so, I elucidate the way parafeminist parody engages phallocentric modes of spectatorship.

In addition to the embodied and proximate functions of carnivalesque imagery, *Mary's Cherries* simultaneously employs distancing strategies of both fetishistic and parodic modes of representation. Rottenberg's camera observes the bodies of her performers with an intense and lingering gaze, often through the strategy of close-ups, appropriating fetishistic modes of representation. Of the close-ups, Rottenberg herself notes the technical similarity of her videos to pornography:

> The film's cinematic language is rather brutal and, in some ways, it is reminiscent of pornography: in the way the sound is amplified to the different movements of the people, and in the closeness of the camera. But, it's the brutality that helps you accept this reality.[76]

Rottenberg's fetishistic parody is encapsulated by a sequence of three close-ups which occur at three minutes and ten seconds into video, when Barbara and Rock Rose pedal their cyclopads. The first two close-ups examine the women's movements as they pedal: first the camera scrutinises Rose's legs as they pump beneath her pink dress, her ring-laden and manicured hand resting on her thigh. Cutting to the same frame of Barbara's body, the second close-up of the sequence observes her pedalling, and then pans up her fleshy arm. Enclosed in matronly uniforms, the women's body parts are presented as particularly mundane. The third close-up, however, is not of Mary: instead, Rottenberg's camera scrutinises the lumpy dollops of stucco that line the factory's walls. As I will demonstrate, this sequence simultaneously empowers and exploits the bodies it presents in order to present its parafeminist parody.

Hsuan L. Hsu argues that Rottenberg's use of women's bodies is empowering as they enable her characters to "negotiate their own versions of erotic signification."[77] Hsu links Rottenberg's "idealisation of extraordinary bodies" to earlier video artists who similarly enacted a "critique of, and exploration of alternatives to, mass media stereotypes about gender and body image," locating Rottenberg's casting within a feminist celebration of "alternative body images."[78] Having traced a lineage for Rottenberg that includes Joan Jonas, Martha Rosler, Dara Birnbaum, and Joan Braderman, Hsu locates Rottenberg's casting within a tradition of feminist celebrations of alternative body images, a tradition that is, as Hsu writes, even more expansive after the rise of the Internet:

> Whereas Jonas, Rosler, Birnbaum, and Braderman critiqued mainstream television's images of women, the Internet makes some room for alternative body images that video can incorporate in less oppositional ways.[79]

Thus, Hsu suggests that Rottenberg's eroticisation of extraordinary bodies generates a critique of mainstream stereotypes about female beauty unique to a post-Internet age. Agency is a key factor in this argument, in that Rottenberg celebrates the control that her characters have in their self-managed profession: "they are very much in charge," she says.[80] Ellie Buttrose has argued that in this form of agency lies the work's feminist subversion of phallocentric modes of viewing: "Rottenberg is interested in collaborating with exhibitionists in her works; by hiring people who seek an audience, she subverts the traditional power of the viewer's gaze."[81] Empowerment, Hsu and Buttrose concur, arises from the subversion of the male gaze. Hsu develops this line of argument when he argues that the fetishistic gaze that Rottenberg's camera casts on Barbara and Rose's bodies enacts a "displaced and expanded conception of the fetish" in a way that subverts Freud's account of fetishes as phallic substitutes that serve to ease the male subject's fear of castration.[82]

The "displaced" fetish recurs throughout *Mary's Cherries,* most evidently in the subversion of the symbolic function of the long red fingernails which, as noted previously, are clipped and pounded into clay. Rottenberg's light-hearted treatment of this subversion suggests that *Mary's Cherries* delights in evoking the castration complex as a pathway to female liberation and solidarity through laughter. (*Artforum* reviewer Claire Barliant singled out *Mary's Cherries* as a particularly humorous work, describing it as "a rambunctious, absurdist romp involving the manufacturing of maraschino cherries."[83]) In her manifesto essay "Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), Hélène Cixous analyses this type of women's laughter through the myth of Medusa, whose protagonist Freud accuses of symbolising the mother's castration as it is seen from the "terrorized" view of the male spectator. "She's not deadly," Cixous writes, "She's beautiful and she's laughing."[84] From women's laughter, suggests Cixous, emerges a "stormy" powerful force that can break down the systems of patriarchy. In this tradition, *Mary's Cherries*, exemplifies the subversive

feminist potential of gleefully inciting the castration complex and subverting the phallic function of both fetish symbols and modes of representation.

Rottenberg's "displacement" of the fetish emerges as a feminist parody of phallocentric pornography in the third close-up of the previously examined sequence. After close-ups of Barbara and Rock Rose's bodies, *Mary's Cherries* presents a close-up of the stucco: implying the resemblance of the lumpy architecture to the dimpled and excessive bodies which these walls contain. However the relationship between Rottenberg's hired bodies and architecture is slippery: if she simulates bodies through sculpture, she also treats bodies as sculpture. Rottenberg insists she is a sculptor, and thus sees her characters "in dimensions, in size, depth, height."[85] She uses women with extreme physiques because "they have a lot of body, and the relationship between them and their bodies gets amplified."[86] However, read through the lens of Hutcheon's notion of parody as "repetition with critical distance," the juxtaposition of women's flesh and stucco walls parodies such fetishistic close-ups of women's bodies by "repeating" the filmic technique with a "difference" in perspective, focusing instead on inanimate objects. Thus, *Mary's Cherries* employs pornographic conventions to fetishise the mundane (thighs, walls), and in turn enacts a feminist parody of phallocentric modes of representation. Such a strategy simultaneously empowers and exploits the bodies of Rock Rose and Barbara as it also counters earlier feminist disavowals of fetish through the framework of parafeminism.

As a parafeminist work of art, then, Mary's Cherries involves a "rethinking" and extension of second wave feminist strategies.[87] That is, it engenders a simultaneous proximity to, and distance from, history. Rottenberg's emphasis on the labouring bodies of women in her work—on women's bodies that are constantly in motion, sweating, squeezing, growing, and kneading—continues the trajectory of important feminist artists who examined contested notions

of women's labour in the 1970s and 1980s such as *Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Martha Rosler,* Suzanne Lacey, *Annie Sprinkle,* Mary Kelly, and, in Australia, Helen Grace and Jude Adams. Feminist film critic Linda Williams has expanded on the feminist legacy in Rottenberg's work, marking it as a "wonderfully new" form of feminist art:

> This is feminist art that seeks neither to express the nobility nor the suffering of women who squeeze and are squeezed… Women's work, we see in this video, is beautiful and oppressive and strange. Though the women work together and squeeze and get squeezed in a strangely isolated, wordless togetherness, the point is neither union nor revolt. It is sheer wonder at the strangeness and beauty of the labour itself. This is women's work, this is women's time. The elements of Mika Rottenberg's video are all the things feminist artists and theorists of the seventies and eighties used to find important, only here they are made wonderfully new and strange through the surreal insight of "the squeeze."[88]

This evocative passage locates Rottenberg's work within a strong lineage of feminist artists whose practices examine the notion of 'women's work,' a history that interweaves positions of celebration, critique, and ambivalence. In a typically parafeminist manner, *Mary's Cherries* channels this often contradictory history to present paradoxical strategies of empowerment and exploitation that complicate existing notions of what a feminist artist is in the twenty-first century.

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Notes

1 Mika Rottenberg, "Mika Rottenberg: Long Hair Lover," *Flash Art* 255 (2007): 112-114, interview by Merrily Kerr, accessed May 7 2013, http://www.flashartonline.com/interno.php?pagina=articolo_det&id_art=127&det=ok&title=MIKA-ROTTENBERG.

2 See "Mika Rottenberg and the Amazing Invention Factory," *ART21*, *New York Close Up*, prod. Wesley Miller and Nick Ravich, http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/films/mika-rottenberg-and-the-amazing-invention-factory/.

3 In this essay I cite the original publication of Hsuan L. Hsu's essay, which appeared as "Mika Rottenberg's Productive Bodies" in *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 25, no. 2 (2010): 41-73. However, this essay is more recently reproduced in *Mika Rottenberg*, ed. Mika Rottenberg, et al. (New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co. and De Appel Arts Centre, 2011), 94-180.

5 GOMA's acquisition is the first Australian purchase of an artwork by Mika Rottenberg, and its recent exhibition in *H*arvest (Gallery of Modern Art, 2014), constituted the second time her work had been shown in Australia; the first time was in an exhibition that I curated, titled *Backflip: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art* (Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, 2013).

6 Amelia Jones, "Genital Panic: The Threat of Feminist Bodies and Parafeminism," in *Elles@centrepompidou: Women Artists in the Collection of the Musée National d'Art* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2009), 293.

7 Linda Hutcheon, *The Theory of Parody: Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 32.

8 Ibid.

9 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, [1968] 1984), 7.

10 Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, "Mika Rottenberg: Video Fact Sheet," document received by author via post January 3, 2013. I note that this box may also be supported by the ground in accordance with Rottenberg's site-specific decision; this was the case, for example, at Rottenberg's solo exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary, United Kingdom, 5 May–1 July 2012.

11 This exercise bicycle/workstation also appears in a photographic work produced by Rottenberg in the same year, titled "The Cardio Solaric Cyclopad—Work from Home as You Get Fit and Tan," digital c-print, 2004, 152.4 x 127 cm, edition of 3 + 2AP. Thus in my analysis I refer to this structure as a 'cyclopad.'

12 Commentators have often use the term "carnivalesque" to describe Rottenberg's art. See Sharon Mizota, "It's OK for Serious Art to be Funny," *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 2010; Laura Cumming, "Mika Rottenberg; James Gillray—review," *The Observer*, May 6, 2012; Trinie Dalton, "Mika Rottenberg: About the Artist," Whitney Biennial 2008, website, accessed September 25, 2013, http://whitney.org/www/2008biennial/www/?section=artists&page=artist_rottenberg.

13 That these hamburgers arrive from a gap in the wall suggests their production in a neighbouring factory, thus alluding to the necessity of further production lines to create food for further labourers in the hamburger factory, parodying the expansive and generative nature of capitalism.

14 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 19.

15 Mary J. Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 13.

16 Note that "Woman on Top" was published before Bakhtin's treatise on the carnival was introduced to the Western world through Kristeva. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Woman on Top," *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975). On Kristeva and Bakhtin see, for instance, Niillo Kauppi, *Radicalism in French Culture: Sociology of French Theory in the 1960s* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 20, 25.

17 Zemon Davis, "Woman on Top," 131.

18 Ibid.

19 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3.

20 Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, [1912-3] 1974.)

21 For a further elucidation of how the maternal may be figured as horrific, see Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Kristeva, "About Chinese Women," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 141.

22 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror,* 8.

23 Julian Hanich, "Dis/liking Disgust: The Revulsion Experience at the Movies," *New Review of Film & Television Studies* 7, no. 3 (2009): 306. Parenthetical additions are mine. While Hanich's comments are aimed at film director Pier Paolo Pasolini, Hanich's point may be read as broader statement that encompasses the work of Rottenberg also.

24 Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, 13.

25 Zemon Davis, "Woman on Top," 124; Kristeva, *Powers of Horror,* 3.

26 Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, 73.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 2.

29 Ibid., 3, 6.

30 Ibid., 6.

31 Mika Rottenberg, "Mika Rottenberg on Mary's Cherries," *TateShots: Mika Rottenberg*, accessed January 3, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8M9CFHk8P-Q. Also see Rock Rose's website, accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.wrestlerrockrose.com.

32 Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, 13.

33 *Mika Rottenberg*, 48-49. Rock Rose was also cast in *Squeeze* (2010), which may explain why her performance in *Mary's Cherries* is emphasised.

34 The term "BBW" was coined by Carole Shaw in 1979, when she launched *BBW Magazine*, a lifestyle magazine for plus-sized women. However it is now commonly used in the context of fat-fetishism.

35 Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, 53.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 56.

38 Elaine Aston, "Making a Spectacle Out of Herself: Bobby Baker's *Take*

a Peek!" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2004): 279.

39 Ibid., 279-280.

40 Mika Rottenberg, "Simply Fantastic (Realism): Mika Rottenberg responds to FAQS and FPPS," interview by Ann Demeester, in *Mika Rottenberg*, 17.

41 Mika Rottenberg, interview by *Ross Simonini, The Believer* 10, no. 8 (2012): 75.

42 Mika Rottenberg, "Simply Fantastic (Realism)," 16.

43 Maud Ellman, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, Imprisonment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3-4. For more on this topic see Susie Orbach, *Fat is a Feminist Issue: The Anti-Diet Guide to Permanent Weight Loss* (New York: Berkeley, 1987).

44 See Russo, *The Female Grotesque,* 13. Herein lies the queer cinematic lineage of *Mary's Cherries*. For example, it is notable that the cinema of John Waters provides one important example the kind of grotesque and queer camp typology on which Rottenberg's work draws. The arguably camp palette of aqua and pink, together with the dayglo sunshades, stucco walls, and bad carpet, referenced Fordist production lines and the white, working-calls, postwar industrial imaginary in the US. Further scholarship of Rottenberg's work through a queer lens is required, although this work lies outside the scope of this essay.

45 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 7.

46 Ibid.

47 Amelia Jones, *Self|Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 218.

48 Hutcheon, *The Theory of Parody,* 32.

49 Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, 73.

50 Mika Rottenberg, "Mika Rottenberg: Long Hair Lover."

51 Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* vol. XVII, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1919), 217-56. Subsequent page citations are made by reference to the reproduction of this essay in *New Literary History* 7, no. 3 (1976): 619-45, 619.

52 Ibid., 635.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 620.

55 Ibid., 639.

56 Ibid., 636.

57 Ibid., 631.

58 Ibid., 631. Freud uses the example of Mark Twain trying to find the switch in a dark room and repeatedly running into the same piece of furniture. See Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1880), 107.

59 Efrat Mishori, "Welcome to Mika Rottenberg's Video-Actopus Factory," in *Mika Rottenberg*, 88.

60 Hutcheon, *The Theory of Parody,* 32.

61 A close-up of Mary's extended fingernails comprises the first shot of *Mary's Cherries*, and the motif reappears in the monograph, *Mika Rottenberg*. In the latter text, the source material of the section devoted to *Mary's Cherries* is restricted to a series of photographs of long fingernails that appear to have been pulled from the Internet. Thus, an analysis of this image is central to understanding the work. See *Mika Rottenberg*, 57.

62 Freud, "The Uncanny," 636.

63 Ellie Buttrose, "Mika Rottenberg,

Mary's Cherries, 2004," *Artlines* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery), 47.

64 Henri Bergson, "Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic," in *The Artist's Joke*, ed. Jennifer Higgie (London: Whitechapel Gallery; Cambridge: MIT Press, [1900] 2007), 22.

65 Freud, "The Uncanny," 636.

66 Mika Rottenberg, "Fetishizing the Visual: An interview with Mika Rottenberg," by Robert Enright and Meeka Walsh, *Border Crossings* 30, no. 1 (2011), accessed May 4, 2013, http://bordercrossingsmag.com/article/fetishizing-the-visual-an-interview-with-mika-rottenberg.

67 Here I suggest that Rottenberg presumes a heterosexual male viewer because she elsewhere evokes the visual language of mainstream, male-centred pornography. However, taking Laura Mulvey's influential account of the 'male gaze' to its logical conclusion, one could also suggest that all screen-based work presumes a heterosexual male viewer. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18. For a recent examination of paradoxical feminist visual politics (cited as "parafeminist" in this article) that extends Mulvey's theory, see Sarah French and Georgie Boucher, "Viewing the Burlesque Hour: The Pleasures of the Masochistic Gaze," *Australasian Drama Studies* 63 (2013): 6-23.

68 All three characters' names relate to biblical references; Saint Barbara, who was martyred and had her breasts sliced off, and the Rose of Sharon (from Song of Solomon 2:1), which some biblical commentators interpret as symbolising Christ (but this is contested). Roses, of course, are also a flower associated with romance and thus with chaste female sexuality.

69 Rottenberg, "Mika Rottenberg: Long Hair Lover."

70 Ibid.

71 Mika Rottenberg, quoted in Daniel Kunitz and João Ribas, "The ArtReview Twenty- Five: Emerging US Artists," *ArtReview* 3, no. 3 (2005): 121.

72 Chris Bors, "Mika Rottenberg," *Art Papers*, July/August (2011): 41. For a discussion of Rottenberg's work in the broader context of contemporary women's art, see "Mika Rottenberg," in *The Reckoning: Women Artists of the New Millennium*, eds. Eleanor Heartney, Helaine Posner, Nancy Princenthal, and Sue Scott (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2013), 60-67.

73 Mark Stevens and Karen Rosenberg, "The Year in Art," *New York Magazine*, December 2006, accessed 7 January 2015, http://nymag.com/arts/cultureawards/2006/25295/index1.html; Bors, "Mika Rottenberg," 41.

74 Jones, *Self/Image,* 217.

75 *Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 150.*

76 Alida Ivanov, "Brutal Reality: Mika Rottenberg "Sneeze to Squeeze"," *Artterritory.com* (2013), accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.arterritory.com/en/texts/reviews/2033-brutal_reality/1/?action=register.

77 Hsu, "Mika Rottenberg's Productive Bodies," *54.*

78 Ibid., 51, 54.

79 Ibid., 54.

80 Mika Rottenberg, "Mika Rotten-

berg," interview by Judith Hudson, *BOMB* 113 (2010): 31.

81 Ellie Buttrose, "Mika Rottenberg, Mary's Cherries, 2004," *Artlines* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery), 47.

82 Hsu, "Mika Rottenberg's Productive Bodies," *54.*

83 Claire Barliant, "Mika Rottenberg, Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery," *Artforum International* 44, no. 8 (2006): 247.

84 Hélène Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 885.

85 Mika Rottenberg, "Simply Fantastic (Realism)," 17.

86 Mika Rottenberg, "Fetishizing the Visual: An interview with Mika Rottenberg."

87 Jones, *Self/Image*, 213.

88 Linda Williams, "On Squeeze," in *Mika Rottenberg*, 188.