THE BODY & THE BANK

Dorit Cypis &
Nathan Braulick

Pushing the Boundaries of Patronage

The following article is based on a program presented at the Atlanta College of Art in connection with the 1990 "Art in Context" series. Both speakers have had a connection with the First Bank Collection in Minneapolis: Dorit Cypis as an artist and Nathan Braulick as its director of communications. The marginal comments printed along with the article are selected from written audience reactions to the slides shown during the program, which are also reproduced with the article.

What's the point. I'm confused about how to react.

Dorit Cypis: For the last fourteen or fifteen years I have been involved personally with asking questions that deal with sexual identity and the relationship of sexual identity to social relations, both the personal and the public of sexuality. The form of my work is quite often performance and installation, and I quite often involve other people in the work. I'm doing the work because I discovered very early on in my own private life that I didn't have a very strong sense of who I was, on a cultural level, on a gender level, on a class level. And I think I very idealistically came into art at a late stage in my life (I studied sociology first) to discover my many selves and what those selves were in relation to the culture.

Not a clue. Jesus? Penis on a cross? Sort of silly!

During the '80s my work primarily investigated culture and representation, especially of the body, through film and advertising. I did that in Los Angeles for eight or nine years. The further I got into understanding the dynamics of advertising (in the creation of imagery which purports to represent us) the more I understood the nature of desire and the nature of the manipulation of desire and the manipulation of identity. I started to realize that the very same forces that I saw acting outside of me, recreating and distracting me and holding up mirrors to me saying this is who you are—those very same forces lay within my body. I had internalized my own oppression—that I was full of shame, of guilt, of repression: I was afraid of my own difference as a woman. So my work investigates the body in relation to shame, guilt, repulsion. It's essentially about repression and ownership of difference in a proud way, empowerment of the body and sexuality. I might also add that my work has taken me into interactive teaching workshops. I met Nathan through a project that he and Lynne Sowder at First Banks of Minnesota commissioned—it was called "The Body at the Bank," a workshop that I offered to real estate bankers. It was quite fascinating for me to work with non-artists (although they were highly creative) and to ask the same question that I was asking in my own peer group of cultural theory, to bring them into the context of a corporation, and to involve working people in investigating issues of the body—the loss of the body in relation to the workplace.

Nathan Braulick: For five years I directed communications at First Bank System. FBS throughout the '80s collected very adventurous art from both Europe and the U.S. Ultimately there were about 3,500 works in the collection, many of which dealt with social, political, and philosophical issues. It was really quite contrary to what you might think of when you think of a corporate collection (which is typically decoration for the office or some part of public relations enhancement). The mandate for our program was to bring provocative work into the workplace in order to be a catalyst for a kind of cultural transformation of the corporate workplace—transforming a more conservative, traditional, silent corporate culture into one that was about questioning, resourcefulness, flexibility—learning to live in the flux of change. Hence the belief was that this radical material would

A painful image. I'm stumped.

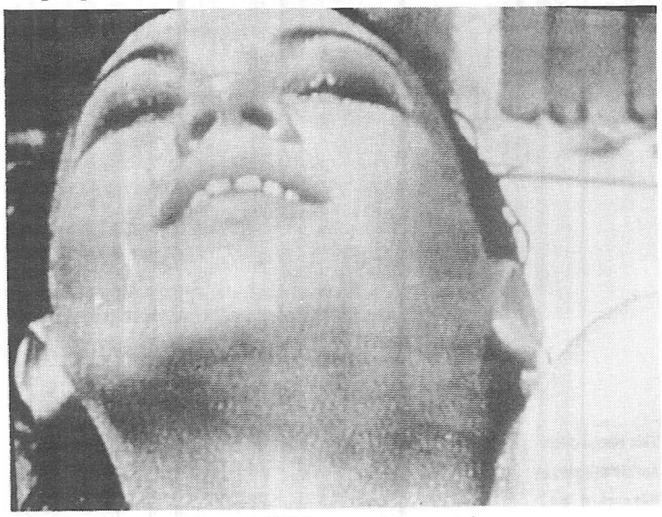
The art represented the relations of power in the organization. The art was purchased by the experts, somebody at the top of the organization. It was one more reinforcement of powerlessness, and the only way to respond to that was to ignore it, to say I don't care, I don't have any control over this situation.

somehow engender another kind of cultural awareness among people that would make them more responsive, more productive.

In 1986 we noticed that although we were using the same art educational devices that you might see in any museum, we weren't really reaching beyond the audience that already had some interest in art—so we weren't really doing what we thought we could do, we weren't really reaching or changing that part of the audience that we were most interested in reaching. So we administered a survey and we found out a lot of interesting things. I think the most interesting thing we found out from that survey was that as much as people disliked the kind of art the bank was collecting, what really bugged them a lot was the way it was being presented to them—that they had no control over its presence in their lives. This was very significant because it's not like visiting a museum. In the corporation, if you have a Cindy Sherman next to your desk it's there ten hours a day, sixty hours a week. You live with it, it's not something you can run away from. The way the collection was administered until '86 was that if you didn't like it, that was tough. The curator made decisions about where the art hung and that was that. Her decisions were based on art historical concerns, concerns about style, space, lighting.... So people weren't having any meaningful encounter with the art because they weren't given any control over it. The art represented the relations of power in the organization. The art was purchased by the experts, somebody at the top of the organization. They decided where it was going to be hung. It was one more reinforcement of powerlessness, and the only way to respond to that is to ignore it, to say I don't care, I don't have any control over this situation. Whatever this art is, what I see is a decision by the CEO to hire this person who buys this art and hangs it in my space. I see the process, I don't see the object. So beginning in '86 we started taking that process apart, trying to find other ways to get people connected, involved with the collection. We did a number of programs. Talk Back was simply a series of questionnaires that were everywhere and people filled them out and sent them back to us all the time. We had questions about the collection, about the way the program was being administered, about the relationship between the program and the larger corporation. We published whatever people said to us in *Talk Back Reports*, and distributed those back to the employees. In effect there was a dialogue going on which we were to call Feedback, Feed Forward. We'd ask a question, people would answer it, and we'd feed it back to them to provoke further discussion. Some of the other programs we did were Controversy Corridor, You Be the Curator, and Employee Art Selection. In the last year of the program we started a process in which people were actually buying work for the collection. That's how far we had moved from where we were in '85.

When management changed at the bank, the program folded. Presently Lynne and I are working as consultants. We're working with public art agencies, with some museums who seem to be very interested in our disposition toward audiences. Philosophically we believe that an audience needs to be empowered for it to have any meaningful relationship to culture. There's an alienated audience but that alienation is the result of the distribution of power, of the way cultural activity has been controlled by a minority of people. That has resulted in alienation as much as anything else. What we're finding is that just as those ideas were an anomaly within the corporate structure, our thinking is quite controversial in the larger art industry, especially the public art arena and the museum world—where clearly there's a motivation and a desire to connect with audiences, but there isn't a mechanism or belief in changing the rules of the game the way we were changing some of the rules.

A



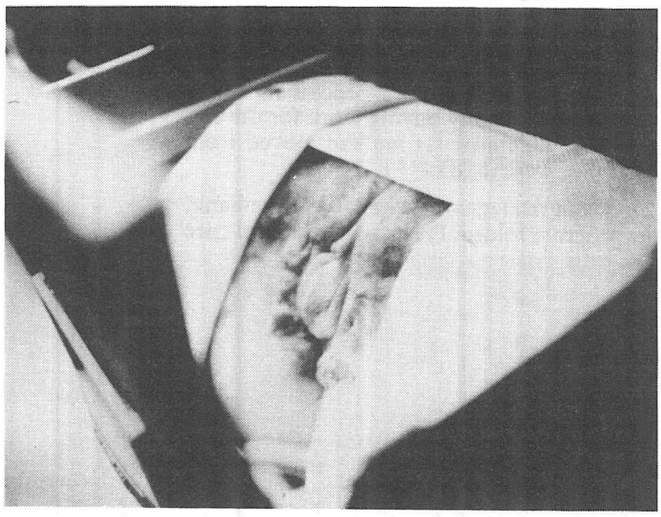
Rude and undisciplined. No respect for the viewer.

dead/hospital/ cold/nausea/ disgust

Cypis: You might ask why the bank hired an artist to talk about the body to real estate brokers. The process itself illustrates what

Nathan is saying. A group of bankers were taking the seminar that Nathan and Lynne were offering on curating their own exhibitions. There was a group of six to twelve bankers, male and female, from all levels of the corporate structure who took an avid interest in the possibility of choosing their own representation to live with. They spent many months curating an exhibition. I got an announcement in the mail for an art opening at the real estate banking division, and I was one of the artists that they happened to choose to hang on their walls. I thought the fact that the exhibition was curated by real estate banking employees was extraordinary. I called them up to congratulate them. I said, is there anything I can do to further your questioning of the work? They said if you wouldn't mind doing a presentation of your current project during the opening, that would be great.

B



This image does not disturb me, in this context, but I doubt if I would hang it over a desk I worked at. Perhaps because people might think about *me* masturbating.

Braulick: She wasn't talking to us, she was talking to the employees that had organized the opening.

Cypis: So I came to the opening with my carousel of slides. At that time I was used to doing presentations to people in art contexts, not used to doing presentations of my work in other contexts. So I didn't realize that the presentation of my work was going to be as provocative as it was in the context of real estate banking. After the opening I was brought into the conference room with fifty or sixty business suited men and women. I was getting nervous—"wait till they see what's in my slide tray." I began my presentation, which was on sexuality, and some of the images were explicit and very specifically about the body. Every once in a while I would hear laughter breaking out in the room. Every time that happened I became sober faced, went up to the screen, pointed to the most provocative area and said, "Oh, you mean this?" and turned around to look at the people who laughed. I got them to talk about what they saw and why they were laughing. This went on for two hours and could have gone on for another two hours. I was amazed that they allowed me to push through some of these issues, and I think they were amazed that I took them through some of these issues. Two weeks later one of the employees called me and said, "Our department is still buzzing about your presentation, and it's

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really changed our working relationships with each other. Would you mind talking to us about doing some more, something else?" They said, "You didn't pretend you were a human resources person who had come 'to help us.' You presented yourself as an artist and we found that non-threatening." Also they felt safe because I was serious about what I was presenting. It wasn't parody or irony. It was really about trying to evoke what was underneath all of our social disguises, what's going on inside. There was a common territory that that we were all entering into. I did not necessarily have more information than they did. I simply was asking the questions. It is a human situation that we are living with, our sexual bodies, and how can you raise that in public in a way that is non-threatening, that acknowledges the fear, the shame, the guilt about those things.

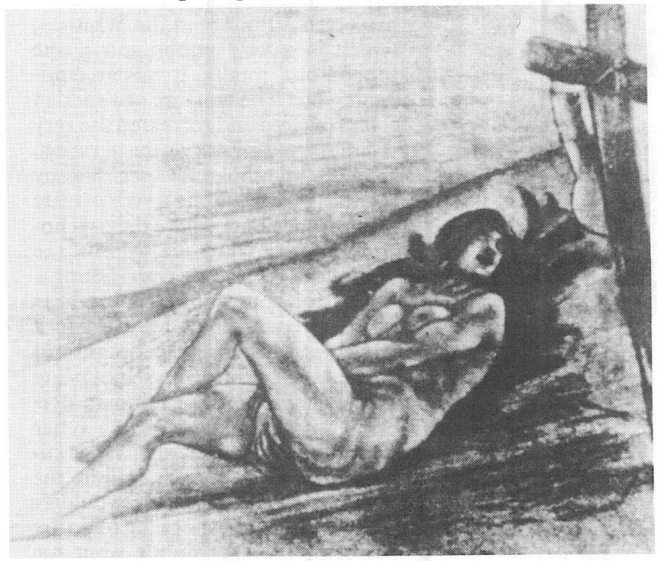
Braulick: One of the things we learned toward the middle of the program was that part of the problem with the art collection was that it was indeed very provocative and in some ways forced people to communicate with each other because they had to respond to this work. They had to crack through a professional veneer which they weren't really equipped to do. There weren't skills in the workplace for them to reveal those other sides to one another. The reason the work was so controversial was that over and over it kept begging people to do that. So we thought if this isn't a safe environment for people to address some issues that are fundamental, how can we make it safer, so that people have a more meaningful dialogue about the ideas in this art collection? We came up with the idea of Controversy Corridor as a way of giving people more control over things that were really freaking them out. Controversy Corridor was a simple concept: if you didn't like a work of art you only needed to get five of your coworkers to agree with you and you could banish it to Controversy Corridor. It didn't go out of sight, it went to a public exhibition space and next to it were hung your comments on why this thing wasn't working for you. If you wanted something that was in Controversy Corridor, six votes would retrieve it. Controversy Corridor became a space where the issues and conflicts could be worked out in a very safe environment. You didn't have to live in Controversy Corridor, no one worked

there. You could visit it, look at the work, read what your coworkers were thinking about it, and decide for yourself what was going on. And you could think about why these issues were provocative and controversial in this context. Most of the first works that went down in Controversy Corridor dealt with sexual politics. They were works about the way women are depicted: works by Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, a work by Jonathan Borofsky called *Male Aggression: Now Playing Everywhere,* which was a hot pink print that showed a guy who instead of a penis had a gun, a sword...and there was a movie marquee with the title on it. It was really useful for people to say, "Why is this a problem here? Why is this work, why are these ideas and the dialogue this work generates threatening here in this professional or business environment?" People would tell us, "I wouldn't mind it if it was in a gallery or a museum. But here we were supposed to be isolated from these things." Which of course we never are. When we are working with other people all these issues come into play. One of the most interesting things for me about Controversy Corridor: We hung a group of works by Ilona Granet, who does fake street signs that deal with sexual harassment. They would show guys whistling at a woman and in English and Spanish they would say things like "Curb Your Animal Instinct" or "Are You a Mouse or a Man." They were making public something that's always there but we sort of forget about: the fact that women are harassed on the streets. We hung these signs in an area we thought they would work in—it was an area with a bunch of women who were traders. They were trading capital currencies in the international market. It's a very fast-paced job that takes a special kind of person who's willing to take risks, move quickly. This is a very respected position in the bank, a scary position. We hung these works and the women who worked there were outraged. They banished them to Controversy Corridor. That seemed like a contradiction. If anyone could get behind this work, it would be these people. But what they wrote about it was very interesting, and it complicated the whole issue for me. What they wrote was, yeah they got the work, they understood the message, but in this environment it wasn't a message they wanted to have to physically, repeatedly get behind. They didn't want to have to make a political decision in this environment by either defending the work or rejecting it over and over every day, so they banished it to Controversy Corridor. Someone else later retrieved the work and brought it to their space. Because they could do that, they could make the decision themselves, it wasn't a problem. They could find the work, bring it to their space because they were willing to live with it. When they had control over the image it lost some of that terror.

Cypis: That incident reminds me of an experience I had at the Whitney Museum in '88. I did a project that was commissioned by the New Filmmakers series at the Whitney. It was called *X-Rayed.* Most often it was misread as X Rated, which it became after the fact. I was using eight slide projectors and a dissolve system with a very complicated soundtrack synched to the slide changes. There were about 300 images; about 1/3 of them portrayed a nude woman exploring her own body. The work took me about six months to make. The woman whom I photographed was someone I know very well, she was an intimate friend of mine. She was a theater performer and very involved with asking questions about her body in her own work. She was used to being in her body. One of the main questions that I was posing in taking the photographs (I was the photographer) was how can a woman allow herself to be looked at while at the same time maintaining possession of her own body. In other words how can a woman not give herself up to the one looking. In my early 20s I learned with mixed signals to hide and resent my own body, and resent and reject my own femininity (which is very problematic for a young woman). In the '80s I caught sight of that, of how my body had internalized the way women had been oppressed socially, and I had perpetuated that oppression within my own body. In that recognition I wanted to step outside of my denial and ask the question that seemed taboo. How can I, a woman, openly look at another woman's body, i.e., my own. In looking at the model, I am looking at a mirror of myself, the artist, a female. So I did a number of works that

Another woman masturbating by the crucifix—well I'm not a Christian so I'm not bothered. Well, maybe I'm bothered a little; I was raised to be a Christian.

C

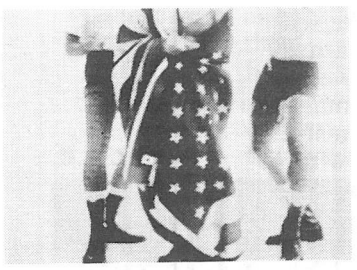


A drawing that contains everything that I always respond to in a piece.

Every once in a while I would hear laughter breaking out in the room. Every time that happened I became sober faced, went up to the screen, pointed to the most provocative area and said, "Oh, you mean this?"

dealt with that question. I photographed her in her home. It took maybe three hours. There was no posing. The question simply was, how can you knowingly be looked at by me, allow me to look at you and still remain present within your own body. That's harder done than said. In the camera, of course, I'm both inside and outside the action. I'm controlling the apparatus that is looking and I'm controlling the apparatus that frames the looking, and I'm controlling the apparatus that captures the looking. I have great empathy with the subject and great identity with the subject, so she wasn't completely outside of what I was looking at, I wasn't completely outside of what my camera was capturing and vice versa for her, identifying with me as a woman looking. The images were edited by us together. When she saw the images projected 10' x 13' in the Whitney, which is a very public space, she flipped out, totally. It was an emotional bottoming out. The work all of a sudden became life. It provoked and recreated the very situation that motivated my asking the question. I raped her with my look, I raped her by framing her body. I made public a very private act. Neither one of us knew where the psychological threshhold was when we were in the process of doing the work. We were asking a volatile question for both of us. I had to bear the huge emotional weight of feeling like a rapist. I had a breakdown myself because of that. I have been in the position myself of being raped so that triggered a lot of my own personal issues. We didn't speak to each other during the installation. In fact, she was commissioned to do a performance within the installation two weeks later and we wouldn't talk to each other. How was she going to do the performance—she didn't want me present. I had two choices. I could have cancelled, or I could surrender, allow her to say what she had to say, which is what I chose to do: because I believe that the image needed a voice, the representation needed to be embodied by the voice of the woman. I had to bear the burden and the consequences of what that voice would say. It was a very volatile performance. In a sense it was successful because it brought to real time, to real space real emotion, real issues. The art was no longer an abstraction in a way which was both frightening and ecstatic. It didn't end there. She threatened litigation. It went on for a year, in and out of going to the court system. The great irony there was that the issue became who owns these images. Who owns the woman's body. The threshhold that I could not cross into was her saying that she wanted the patriarchal court system to decide. I said, "How can you ask the patriarchal justice system that has kept us in the place of this segregation and prohibition to decide who owns the woman's body?" It was full of complications and ironies, in the public art realm.

D



E

Commercialization of Woman's body—a kind of prostitution for gain.

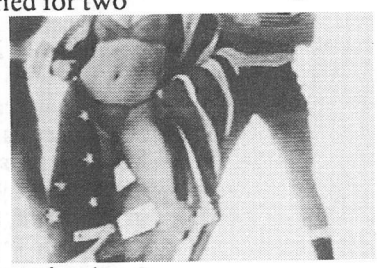
This is another example, perhaps, of what Nathan was referring to: Why did those women traders reject having to look at work that

It was really useful for people to say, "Why are these ideas and the dialogue this work generates threatening here in this professional or business environment?"

referred to their oppression? The representation of her body for her triggered issues of shame and guilt and repulsion. A year later I decided to recreate the work. I had stopped making work for a year. I was totally shattered because I had to take seriously my complicity in triggering this kind of emotional response in another human being. I decided that I could not let the work die. I couldn't take it to court but I couldn't let it die either. For me to allow the issues to live on, I had to substitute her body with my own. So I hired another photographer, a woman, to photograph me exploring my naked body, and substituted me for the model. I have to tell you that when I first got these images back from the photo lab, I cried for two days. What it did for me was push my button of self-repulsion, shame, and guilt. I knew what the original model was confronting on a psychophysical level. What resonates for me in this story is how our bodies perpetuate and incorporate the social oppression. It is in the cells of our bodies, it is in our memory and when we forget we are blocking our identity.

Provocative, suggestive. Forget the martini, let's go to the beach.

F



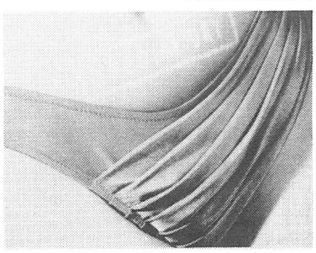
Braulick: I want to describe one other process related to this issue of power, and how the lack of power in relation to cultural representations keeps us away from being engaged with the things that are most important for us to be engaged with. When we started allowing and encouraging employees to decide what art was going to be in their space, some very strange things happened. We finally started from the ground up. Employees were deciding what made art art, what made it good for them. They had to negotiate that criterion. They had to decide, how are we going to work together when we have a chance to make new rules. What will those rules look like, and how are we actually going to make these decisions about what kinds of representations are going to be around us, in our lives. How are we going to decide what they mean to us. If we can't go back to the authorities and say, "Tell us what this stuff means," but we actually have to figure it out for ourselves—how are we going to go about negotiating that meaning?

One of the things we learned was that the context absolutely informed the meaning of the work. It was inescapable. An example of that is, we had a Gilbert & George piece. A group that

went through employee selection selected this Gilbert & George piece for their floor and had to decipher it, and find all of the pieces within it—but only because they were willing to recognize those pieces within themselves. Often when that object had been displayed in other areas there was a reaction against it, there was hostility. Over and over again what we've learned was that they couldn't articulate what they saw in the work. They couldn't articulate that otherness, homoeroticism and desire in the Gilbert & George work—because to articulate it would have been to recognize it. So there was a hostility against it, a rejection of it. When we allowed people to develop from the ground up what they wanted this art to do for them, they were able to articulate those issues and as a result they were able to see what was in those works of art. And it wasn't threatening to them, it was enlightening, it was reaffirming to them. One of the most interesting things about that process was that there was always a number of people who were unwilling to make those decisions, who didn't want to have to decide how they were going to work together, what the new rules were going to be. We had all been imprinted to be successful in a culture where other people were making those decisions for us. To actually take the risk, to make those decisions for ourselves was simply too threatening. There was always a very interesting dynamic going on between the people who wanted to step across that threshhold and redefine what was going to happen and the people who were unwilling to do that, because it was simply too scary. It was something that was never completely resolved.

Cypis: In order to bring to light some of the issues we're talking about, the notion of complicity of the viewer and how one looks and what one sees, what one admits to seeing and what one represses, we each have chosen some images. I've not seen Nathan's images and he hasn't seen mine. We are going to project these images and ask you to respond as candidly as you are able to on the two pieces of paper that were handed out to you—one sheet in response to Nathan's images and one sheet in response to mine. The images were chosen from various sources outside of my own work or Nathan's. What we're trying to do is exhibit in real time the threshhold of the public and the private. We want to ask you to acknowledge for yourselves what judgments come up in your mind that may or may not stop you from feeling or responding to what you're seeing, on a bodily level: to record those judgments as well as whatever feelings manage to get through (and whatever other comments you may have).

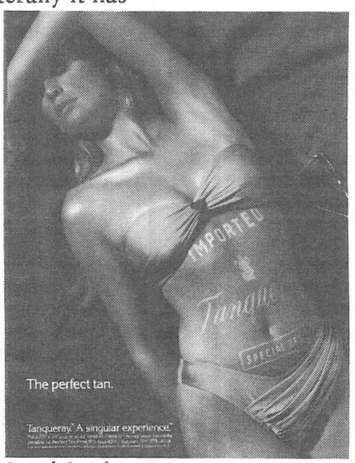
G



Braulick: We're not going to give you any contextual information about the images until later. We haven't seen each other's images and we're going to respond to them as candidly as we can. And we're going to ask you to hand your responses to the person next to you.

Cypis: I'm going to respond to Nathan's images, to start the conversation. What I'm feeling is anger. This woman (Photos G-H) obviously has allowed herself to be tattooed for commercial reasons and to be turned into a commodity, to be consumed. What angers me is that her eyes are closed and she's not looking at me looking at her. My perception or idea of her is that she has not taken any responsibility. She has allowed herself to be put into a very vulnerable, powerless position. She has colluded in allowing that. She could be there in her body in another way. My body would identify with her body if I felt she truly wanted to be there in a self-possessed way. She's not looking at my anger, my shame. There is no one home, no one in that body. It is all a surface, literally it has been tattooed as a surface to be played with. The context of the second series of images (D-E-F) changes completely when I get to the third image because I recognize her as Madonna whereas with the first two images she was unknown so it was another female body to be consumed. As soon as I come to her face I recognize her as a cultural icon and I know from her other work that she has chosen to play that role. I'm not sure that she understands fully what she's doing but I do know that she has made a choice to come out as the femme fatale, the women as destroyer, castrator, consumable object—to place herself as that signal in the face of the viewer. I learn to see her actions with a certain ambiguity. It triggers the same responses in me as the first set of images and it also triggers in me the fact that I know Madonna chose to do that. It reminded me of the two Jessica Hahn articles in *Playboy* about two years ago. What she did, which reminded me of Madonna, is decide to say to the public, "Yes, I'm going to own that I was victimized, that I allowed myself to be victimized, that I was overpowered. My power is that I can say this in a magazine like *Playboy*. I can allow myself to be consumed by men again, because I choose to, not because I'm forced to." The ironies in these articles and in her presentation of her body in this magazine are the same as the ironies Madonna presents: is she truly in power, or is she again appropriated by the same system that victimized her to begin with?

H



I can't really tell what's happening except someone is having a fun time in the bathtub.

Braulick: Someone recently asked Kim Gordon, who's with Sonic Youth, what she thought of Madonna's strategy. She said, "I don't respect her persona, but I do respect her business acumen, because she's the richest female entertainer in the history of the business." You cannot separate her persona from her success. The ambiguity is in the viewer, not in the presentation.

Cypis: But I'm reminded of the question I asked in *X-Rayed*—how can a woman allow herself to be looked at and at the same time be in possession of her own body. Madonna presents a strategy, Jessica Hahn presents a strategy. I don't know if those would be my strategies.

Audience (M): These images are from something Madonna put together to promote voters' registration. My comment was that it was

self-promoting, and self-indulgent, which is my interpretation of her overall strategy. I think she is self-consuming.

Audience (M): Desire is endless, I don't think she can use it up. That's why she is able to make so much money on it. If you're able to package desire, which is what the Tanqueray ad was doing also, the major strategy is to figure out what desire is and how to trade that for money.

Audience (F): Madonna did some interesting things in this tape, because she is not only packages female sex, she is also playing off "gay America loves you"; the two men are dressed alike, and it's almost like they're together and she is separate from them.

Braulick: And she's appropriated the whole "voguing" thing, which is from the subculture of gay black and Latino men.

Audience (F): There's an automatic association of any female exposure with consumerism, and I think one has to allow some vulnerability that must exist between male and female in order for them to access each other as human beings. The question is, where do you draw that line?

Braulick: I guess I'd talk about the images Dorit presented (photos A-B-C) as a sequence since

Our desires have been so manipulated and mediated that we don't know what they are. As an artist, it's my effort to uncover what is underneath the shame—what truly is desire.

I'm sure that's the way she set it up. The first image to me is a wash, it's very ambiguous, it's just there. It's female, and as a gay male it doesn't tug at any sort of sexual desire for me. The second one freaks me out. This is so clinical and direct and intense it's about repulsion and attraction and how those two things are inseparable. It's about the other, for me. There's something about the hardware in the picture that freaks me out.

The third one is back to literary allusion, and romantic ideals about sexuality, putting it back where you can control it, put a category around it, figure it out. This is manageable because it's in the realm of the imaginary. It's about death and sex and religion but somehow it's pretty, too. It's "like art," it doesn't threaten anybody. As opposed to the second image—it's not artful, it's something else entirely. The reason it's unmanageable—I have an idea that controversy is this space where there's slippage. Things are controversial because we haven't created the categories to contain them yet, or because they've transcended their old categories. Art is one of those spaces but the media is another. The second image is so real, so intense, so raw and direct it can't really be put into any of those manageable categories. The third slide is like art and the first is like erotica or pornography, so I get it, I've got labels for them. I don't have a label for the other one.

Audience (M): The first thing I wrote down about that image is "clinical." My wife wrote the same thing. I bet everybody here wrote down "clinical."

Cypis: But what do you mean by clinical? If clinical defines it, what sort of reverberation is underneath that word, which only defines it?

Audience (M): It's so shocking to me that I wrote things like "safe," "cover up," "threatening."

Cypis: Do you know why it's threatening?

Take it off for America!

Audience (M): I felt that it's clinical, that you can't see other parts of the anatomy. It looks like an operation (and not like a pleasant operation). I felt very protective.

Audience (F): The image is very disturbing to me first of all because I'm disoriented. I can't tell what's going on spatially here. Where is the rest of the woman? I can't figure out what position she's in, but it looks uncomfortable. She's exposed, she's vulnerable—either she's boxed or suspended somehow. Something is going on which is not right to me. I find it very disturbing that I don't know where the rest of her is.

Audience (M): I think that what most people find disturbing in this image is the ambiguity. I want to make a connection between the first image and this one, but I don't know what it is. The first image seems to be an advertisement or pornography. The person is involved in some kind of pleasure, but we can't tell what's causing the pleasure, a sexual act, water...The second image seems unpleasant. It seems the opposite of the first.

Audience (M): It has a cadaverish color. It seems otherworldly. I kept thinking, "an MGM prop," because it doesn't look attached to a human: there's no association with the arms and legs and the rest of the body. It could be a plastic form they use in medical school, or it could be a real body. It doesn't seem to exist as a real person.

Audience (M): I think it's interesting that we're all trying to read this as a whole body rather than a part in a filing cabinet. The filing cabinet doesn't appear to us at all. What we first try to do is to read the rest of it, and the rest of her just isn't there. This is a direct presentation of what is encoded as "available" in the Tanqueray image.

Cypis: We can accept the Tanqueray image because we are given the pleasure of flesh, supposedly the whole woman—only to me she's not whole at all. She's not present.

Audience (F): We don't see eyes in either of them. The face is automatically a characterization. When you see the vaginal thing that looks like it has a disease, you see it as an object—because there are no eyes to show emotion. In

the Tanqueray ad, there's no feeling. She's not taking responsibility, she's passive. The second image doesn't even have eyes, it's just an object. The disturbing part is that it's indecipherable, and that it has no emotion attached to it, other than everyone feeling repulsed by the diseased sexual object. Which brings up what Cindy Sherman has done in some of her photographs. In one she showed breasts with pimples all over them—you couldn't tell which were the pimples and which were her nipples. The erogenous zone turns into a grotesque thing.

Audience (F): I think that the second image (photo B) sets up a schizophrenia, because as a female it's viewed and viewer at the same time for me.

Braulick: Why should that be a fragmentary experience?

Cypis: It gets back to the experience of the women traders not wanting to look at the mirror, or my experience at the Whitney—I'm the rapist and identifying with the victim at the same time. That separation keeps us literally away from ourselves.

Audience (M): What I see differing between the Tanqueray ad and the second image is the intention. Here it seems to be a scientific approach and an attempt to objectify the vagina. The Tanqueray ad is essentially about mystification, packaging, desire, turning feelings into a motivation to buy something. The second image is about looking at the physical features that are there in front of your face, no emotion, nothing mystifying.

Cypis: No desire.

Audience (M): Desire clearly comes from the viewer not the person being observed.

Audience (M): This (photo B) is an image a horror film might present. It scares you, but its clinical look is much more realistic, it scares you into reality. You don't want to see that, to think that can possibly be real.

Audience (F): When Dorit expresses her outrage and shame about the Tanqueray ad, are you saying men should feel shame for placing women like that, for having sexual feelings about women?

Cypis: No—shame is a culturally mediated, distorted emotion. It covers up emotion, it's not an emotion itself. I'm not proud of my shame, but it's necessary on a political level for me to take responsibility for where it lies. It is that shame that stops me from acting out of my truth. It does no one good to say "shame on you." That represses the issue completely. The point is more, "take responsibility for what you're doing."

Airbrushed sexist crap.

Audience (F): Sexuality is the prime motivator of human behavior. There are things about the ad that bother me, but I don't think there's something shameful, that there is something negative about desire.

Audience (M): What I find shameful is that people might actually drink Tanqueray because it was printed on a woman's body, that you can allow that clever graphic manipulation to be played on yourself—that there's something in a nice body that you're going to get by buying Tanqueray.

> They got the work, they understood the message, but they didn't want to have to make a political decision in this environment by either defending the work or rejecting it over and over every day.

Cypis: If we were not full of shame, we would have alternatives of how to openly, respectfully, and truthfully desire each other in healthful and constructive ways, and full of pleasure. But because we are full of shame we have to disguise our biological desire for pleasure under the guise of consumerism—and manipulation, domination, control, and power. The desire itself is normal, but we have killed it. Our desires have been so manipulated and mediated that we don't know what they are. As an artist, it's my effort to uncover what is underneath the shame—what truly is desire, or pleasure, and how I can be proud of it.

Braulick: We both selected all images of women, without talking about it. We tried to bring in images that would provoke a certain kind of discussion, and it's very interesting that they are images of women.

Cypis: The second image (photo B) is actually one I photographed in the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. They let me into a back room where there are file cabinets after file cabinets of body parts. They are anatomical models for doctors and medical students to learn the anatomy and physiology of the human body. It's a normal, natural thing. It's normal to have a vagina, too. Sometimes they're diseased, and sometimes they give birth. It's interesting that we were so repulsed by that part.

Braulick: Dorit, what's the cross image?

Cypis: That image is a 16th century drawing by a woman, called *Mary Magdalene Masturbating*. I don't know what that is on the cross.

Braulick: It looks like a penis.

Photographs

A-C: courtesy of Dorit Cypis.

D-H: courtesy of Nathan Braulick.