



Cyberfem. Feminisms in the electronic landscape.
<http://cyberfem.net/>

Feminisms on the electronic landscape is conceived as an expanded territory; a hybrid space of creation and activism constructed using new digital technologies. Since little more than a decade ago, we have been witnessing a profound revolution and a permanent redefinition in questions of feminism, identity politics, art practises and new technologies. We have seen an expansion of the paradigms of theoretical discourses into other disciplines, art practises overstepping their own boundaries, and everything within a context of information technologies in continuous evolution.

The question of identity hovers at the centre of the debate. A categorically political question, grounded in a premise generally accepted as paradigmatic at the beginning of the 21st century: the conception of identity as a “social construct”. A cyborg identity as a visual metaphor of the contemporary subject. Now, more than ever, Donna Haraway’s celebrated claim that “we are all Cyborgs”, is no longer seen as a provocative, shocking declaration. Yet, what are we actually like, what is our face, our gender, our identity, our sexuality, our race, our cultural identity...? The representation of identity is now, like never before, an open territory—a conflictive battlefield.

The construction, redefinition and demand for new identity configurations. Nomad identities that flow in a new social fabric underpinned by technology and the diffusion of information. At the early moments of this new situation, colonising the net, urbanising this expanded territory of computer communications, has engaged the concerns of many artists, critics, political activists and historians. Driven by a last utopian breath, they participate in the cybernetic space with the goal of enabling a true globalization of creativity and the universalisation of freedoms.

In this context, feminism found an open space of possibilities, a net territory openly “seductive” for the intervention of women: cyberfeminism. The origin of cyberfeminism coincided with the development of expanded feminism that characterised the 1990s. A brand of feminism that entered the cultural scenario expanding its theoretical and practical bases. Feminism, like the whole modernist programme, has been driven by a passionate self-critical process, removed from all forms of dogmatism while opening up to a multiplicity of narratives.

Speaking of (cyber) feminism today—feminism, Internet, art, and activism—is to speak of experimental creation, communication, interactivity, research and association. Internet is now consolidated as a space of visibilisation of women from a multifaceted plurality of directions.

This multifaceted diversity was patent from the very beginning of the so-called cyberfeminist movement. A movement based on the foundations laid by Donna Haraway, Sadie Plant, and the scandalous and provocative VNS Matrix, but which was only to achieve the recognition of a movement with the First Cyberfeminist International organised by OBN (Old Boys Network) at Documenta X in Kassel, in September 1997.

The exhibition, **Feminisms on the electronic landscape**, wants to provide an overview of the diversity of possibilities, discourses and narrations behind the increased participation of women in the expanded territory of new technologies. An open territory in which different discourses on gender, sex, the controversies of biotechnology, and intercultural debates, flow together in the global context of new information technologies.

In **Cyberfem** we will explore issues related to questions of identity ranging from reflections on the construction / deconstruction of identity based on the conditions of one's environment (Natalie Bookchin & Alexei Shulguin, Olia Lialina), "being" woman in the fictional spaces created by new communication technologies (Dora García); experiencing oneself as an identity on the net (Identity Runners); and a reflection on the construction of the cyborg body, whether through artificial intelligence (Lynn Hersmann); by incorporating the perception of emotions and sensations (Victoria Vesna) or through the recreation of the real body as a space for multiple identity (Eva Wolhgemuth); to a visibilisation of violence and abuse against women (Annie Abrahams, Margot Lovejoy, Cindy Gabriela Flores). In other cases, they directly explore the issue of sex: the exploitation of cybersex by new multinationals (Shu Lea Cheang); or the formation of desire on the net (Linda Wallace). They also address the consequences of the development of new technologies and advances in science from a feminist perspective: the reflection on "inter-sex" persons (subRosa) or the dangers of the development of modern biotechnology (Critical Art Ensemble).

Likewise, they look at the cross-contaminations of gender and the new technological and mass media society, underscoring the contradictions between the everyday life of many women and current technologies (Jess Loseby); the psychological effects of communication technologies and technologies of control and surveillance (Julia Scher, Kristin Lucas); the experience of videogames and net culture (Anne-Marie Schleiner & Talice Lee); and a critique of stereotypes of representation imposed by the media (Elisabeth Smolarz, Evelin Stermiz).

Also worth underscoring are works co-opting the perspective of globalization and intercultural confrontation for a reflection on the situation of women and new technologies: the issue of the frontier between the USA and Mexico (Coco Fusco), American colonialism (Deb King), the confrontation between East and West (Marina Grzanic & Aina Smid), the exploitation of women in South-east Asia by microelectronic companies (Prema Murthy) and the intersection between local and global politics in relation to emigrant women (Ana Navarrete). Finally, we also find proposals situated at the very core of Internet in order to propose the creation of nets, archive platforms and computer resources for the theory and practise of women (OBN, Cornelia Sollfrank and Salomé Cuesta).

This diversity is mirrored in the selection of the individual and collective participants in **Cyberfem**—artists, critics, and activists—as well as in the formats of the projects, which include installations with various digital technologies, net art—in all its possible variations of programming (Html code, incorporation of photography, databases, search engines, sound, flash films, blogs,...)—plus video, films, performances, conferences, or documentary material.

Similarly, the **www.cyberfem.net** web, created specifically for this exhibition, is conceived with the idea of generating a node of information. An easily interpreted in-

terface from which to access the selected projects and the artists' curricula. But above all else, the Web wishes to act as a gateway to this expanded territory. A connection with the rhizomatous weave of the projects, documentation, texts, and a whole diversity of proposals—of feminisms in the electronic scenario—that multiply on the net.

Finally, the exhibition project **Cyberfem** is determined by the complexity of its mise en scène, the visibilisation of the projects insofar as the combination of different formats of digital image, giving rise to a practically visual occupation requiring the involvement of the spectators. We should also underscore the fact that in the majority of cases, the expanded field of feminist production in the electronic space, encourages an interrelationship of real space and the virtual space of the postmedia condition of our culture. Taken as a whole **Cyberfem** showcases a new conception of the public space as a political space.

Given the present and permanent state of confrontation, conflict and ambiguity, positioning will be a key practice in order to found a cognition organized around the imaginary of the vision. The positioning implies political engagement and responsibility. New technologies are ways of life, social orders, practises of visualization. The conflicts of the world are conflicts about how to see. And how should we look? From where should we look?

Cyberfem wishes to have a bearing on this process and to question its possible future developments. In the context of the present geopolitical economic and cultural conflicts, an extended or expanded (cyber)feminism can, by means of partial politics, help to maintain open the premises of difference in relation to the very social order, and to the visualization of difference.



Annie Abrahams
Natalie Bookchin & Alexei Shulguin
Critical Art Ensemble
Salomé Cuesta
Shu Lea Cheang
Coco Fusco
Cindy Gabriela Flores
Dora García
Marina Grzinic & Aina Smid
Lynn Hershmann
Identity_Runners (Diane Ludin, Agnese Trocchi, Francesca da Rimini)
Deb King
Olía Lialina
Jess Loseby
Margot Lovejoy
Kristin Lucas
Prema Murthy
Ana Navarrete
OBN (Old Boys Network)
Anne-Marie Schleiner & Talice Lee
Julia Scher
Elisabeth Smolarz
Evelin Stermitz
Cornelia Sollfrank

subRosa (Hyla Willis Faith Wilding) &
James Pei-Mun Tsang
Victoria Vesna
Linda Wallace
Eva Wohlgemuth