

The Explicit Weaver

The work of Erin M. Riley and the contemporary body/self

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis the work by weaver and contemporary artist Erin M. Riley will be explored through the writings of Amelia Jones. The main question is as follows:

What can the work of Erin M. Riley tell us about the contemporary body/self? Based on the writing by art historian and theorist Amelia Jones.

Through visual analysis and comparative methods, the thesis tries to open up the work by Riley in new ways, linking her body of work to art history, theories of interpretation, and feminist art. Amelia Jones is a theorist that works with a phenomenological feminist approach, and her theories of an embodied interpretation are influenced by philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. Since her methods of interpreting art often is interlaced by other philosophers and theorists, they also figure in this thesis, as well as some that have made a difference to thesis as it has moved forward.

Having an embodied approach to the work of art means that the viewer and subject brings their own desires, thoughts and feelings to the work, their body and self. Creating an intersubjective exchange with the work, which in this case, and in some of Jones' cases, are self portraits or body art. This thesis looks at Riley's work and discuss the artist's self imaging, representation, how the self portrait tapestries can relate to Jones' writing about body art and how they are related to a history of political textile art as well as dealing with trauma.

FOREWORD

A woman with a pierced navel, wearing a strap-on, leaned back and holding the dildo in a firm grip, her face outside the frame. *Sassy Swirl* (2017)¹ was my first encounter with Erin M. Riley's tapestries, and I was immediately intrigued. I had never seen such explicit content being reiterated through a traditional textile medium. Painting, photography, film, performance, yes - but a tapestry, handwoven on a loom, never. I followed her on Instagram, @erinmriley, told all my friends about her, and crossed my fingers that her work would be exhibited in Norway one day. Lo and behold, in the fall of 2017 not long after my discovery, MELK brought the work to my doorstep.² I brought my roommate with me to see the exhibition, she was also intrigued by this cool new artist. Only having seen the tapestries as digital images on Instagram or Riley's webpage, the size of the tapestries baffled me. I believe I even said; wow, they are huge!

The details and texture of the work drew me in, I felt compelled to touch them, to feel if they were rough or smooth against my hand (since the works are made of a blend of wool and cotton, I imagine them feeling quite rough). We walked around admiring the technique, the labor, and the thought behind the work when more people stepped into the gallery. Three women entered, all dressed in black, they walked over to one of the corners of the gallery, talking - I remember thinking it was a bit strange that they didn't go around looking at the exhibit. When I had finished taking pictures with my iPhone (for Instagram purposes, and documentation), we left the gallery. We continued talking about the content of the work; how she used screenshots from pornography, or cam-girls, was it from her desire (women watch porn too), or was it a comment on internet porn as a big bad, exploiting young women, making their bodies available for the whole world to see and have? Either way, we concluded that this was important work, from our own feminist beliefs and perspective.

A little while later I realized that one of the women that had entered the gallery was Erin M. Riley herself. At the time I didn't know what she looked like, even though I had seen works entitled "Self-portrait" many times - but they were all faceless and seminude.

1 Illustration nr. 1

2 MELK is a artist run space located at Hallings gate 5 in Oslo, between Alexander Kiellands plass and St. Hanshaugen. The leading for new Scandinavian photography: <https://www.melkgalleri.no/>

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INTRODUCTION

What can the work of Erin M. Riley tell us about the contemporary body/self? Based on the writing by art historian and theorist Amelia Jones.

MATERIAL AND SOURCES

The material of this thesis will be original tapestries by Erin M. Riley. The motifs are collected by Riley from digital images she has found, required, or taken herself. She then transports/transforms these images to the tactile world using a loom, hand-dyed threads of wool and cotton, reimagining the images as tapestries. The tapestries she keeps in her studio (rolled up or displayed), travel around the world and are exhibited at galleries and museums. They are shared on Riley's Instagram and webpage as digital images, returning to the digital world from whence they came, back to being a screen image. It is here, in the digital realm, that the analytical work of this thesis will take place. Because of our current global situation (Covid-19), the initial plan to travel to New York and visit with the artist and see the artwork in person has fallen apart and a new plan has formed in its wake. Instagram and Riley's webpage is how she promotes herself and her work, not unlike many other artists do today. This is how she communicates with the world, be it the artworld or the universal world we all inhabit. This is also how I know her work best, only having encountered the work IRL a couple of times when the work has been exhibited in Oslo.³ The digital platforms Riley use also give an insight into her artistic process (postings of work-in-progress, dyeing of wool, her studio space, etc.), and her own personal thoughts and opinions. Social media and sharing of images online are also central themes in Riley's work, which circle back to being shared as works of art on social media.

The medium, handwoven tapestries, will be addressed, but will not be the central focus of this thesis. For this section of the analysis, I will have to rely on my own memory, notes,

³ IRL = in real life

and pictures from visiting Henie Onstad Art center in August of 2020. Riley exhibited two pieces in *New Visions* the Triennale for Photography and New Media.⁴

For the first analysis, I have chosen to interpret *Reflections* (2019),⁵ from this work I will discuss other work that in some way is similar to or different from the work. This tapestry is the main work for the first and second chapter, where I use Amelia Jones' theories on self imaging and body art to access the work.⁶ In the third analysis (chapter three), which will focus on Riley's work related to the world we live in, e.g. political messaging and connections to art history, I will discuss several works that highlight different aspects of her artistic practice. The tapestries I have chosen for the thesis represent something in Riley's work that has potential for further exploration that is in line with the main question; *what can the work by Erin M. Riley tell us about the contemporary body/self?* For example in my discussion of Riley and politics, I will look closer at some of the works she exhibited in her solo exhibition *The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies* at P.P.O.W Gallery in 2021, amongst them is her series of poster/pamphlets for victims of domestic violence, and work she created during the COVID-19 lock-down.⁷

As for sources on the artist, there is not too much to be found. Riley is a relatively young artist in her thirties, so there do not exist any autobiographical books written about her and her work, from what I have found there has been little to no research on her previously. The source material is therefore limited, but not nothing. Riley has done several interviews about herself and her work, both in written and video/audio form. There are art reviews from previous exhibitions, catalogs from galleries and at least one book on weaving that include her work. Riley's Instagram and webpage are also quite informative about what she has done in the past and what she is currently working on. Because of the lack of a complete biographical rendering of the artist, I have chosen to dedicate the final section in the introduction chapter to the artist, Erin M. Riley. The reason for this choice is that I find it important to establish a

⁴ About the exhibition at Henie Onstad: "New Visions," 2020, 2022, <https://www.hok.no/utstillinger/new-visions>.

⁵ Illustration nr. 2

⁶ Self imaging and self representation is often written with a hyphen, Jones does not use this in her writing and therefore I will not do so in mine. The reason for her not using it is not explained, but the way I interpret or believe the lack of hyphen is meant to separate the self from its means of representation.

⁷"The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies," (Webpage), 2021, accessed June, 2021, <https://www.ppowgallery.com/exhibitions/erin-m-riley#tab:thumbnails;tab-1:slideshow> (Webpage for exhibition with Erin M. Riley at P.P.O.W. Gallery in New York, NY Includes press release, photos of exhibition and video).

relation to the artist before plunging into the analytical work. A small biography in essence, that gives some background and creates a context for the work Riley produces.

METHODOLOGY

The method for this thesis on Erin M. Riley's work is visual analysis, with a basis in theory. Applying different theories of representation to expose and discuss Riley's work, by testing the work against theory and exploring different ways of seeing and understanding the work. Feminist theory is the main theoretical field for the thesis, and as with most theoretical fields, you have many viewpoints and directions you can choose to follow. To narrow down the path and create a tighter, more focused thesis, the theories discussed will be based on the work of art historian and theorist Amelia Jones. Her theories of representation related to self imaging, body, sexuality, politics, and technology - with an emphasis on contemporary art. In the theoretical framework section of this introduction, I will explain what of Jones' work I will use for the thesis.

For the initial analysis, the tapestries by Riley will be considered as images, meaning that the emphasis will be concentrated on the visual aspect of the work and the experience in meeting the work digitally, not on the medium of weaving. As explained earlier there are many reasons for choosing to do it in this way. The medium of weaving will be acknowledged and addressed by placing Riley's work in connection to other textile artists. A closer look at textile art's connection to political activism and the women's movement, and how this connection might still be very much intact today, this might also enhance some of the analyses made through other theories related to politics and art history. Riley's process of requiring images from the internet or taking them herself, and turning them into large tapestries, which she then shares on Instagram and her webpage, will figure into every chapter as this an important aspect of her artistic practice.

What issues or discussions will be raised through these analyses? The main question at hand for this thesis is; what can the work of Erin M. Riley tell us about the contemporary body/self? Other questions that come to mind that will emerge in the thesis: What will using Amelia Jones' theories on body art reveal about Riley's work? What themes are central in her

work and how can they be interpreted through feminist theory? What societal, psychological, and artistic issues might the work be dealing with?

Starting with *Reflections* (2019),⁸ I will approach the work using Amelia Jones's theories on self imaging and body art. Using mainly her books *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Self*⁹ and *Body Art: Performing the Subject*.¹⁰ The following chapter will feature analyzes which will feature (as mentioned) several works by Riley such as *WAVAW* (2020),¹¹ *Affair, The* (2020),¹² and *Four Dead* (2018).¹³ These images will connect Riley's work to that of other textile artists, how textile art is weaved into a tapestry of political activism, and how it is a medium that often is used to raise questions about our society. What issues does Riley raise with her work? And how does the work relate to art history?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is multifaceted and is a large part of the thesis. Because of this, every inch of the theories used will not be explained here in the introduction but be weaved into the text and chapters as the different theories appear in the analysis. What follows is therefore an introduction to the central theories and main theorist, Amelia Jones.

Amelia Jones is a professor, feminist curator, theorist, and art historian. She has written several books and essays on art and performance, especially related to body and subjectivity, seen through feminist and queer theorist glasses. Her theories often challenge modernist thought in art history (the Greenbergian, genius white male artist) and question how we *experience* art, not just see it. Amelia Jones will serve as my main theorist, her theories often connect with other theorists/philosophers, therefore these will also be involved in the theoretical framework. Her writing can be, at times, confusing and seem like it is written by someone with a lot of thoughts linking theories and arguments from here and there,

⁸ Illustration nr. 2

⁹ Amelia Jones, *Self/image: technology, representation, and the contemporary subject* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁰ Amelia Jones, *Body Art : Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

¹¹ Illustration nr. 3

¹² Illustration nr. 4

¹³ Illustration nr. 5

which is both a joy and a challenge. The book *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* will serve as the initial source, mainly the chapter on photography.¹⁴ In many ways this could be the title of this thesis since this is very much what I want to explore in Riley's work. In addition to this book, Jones has other books and essays relating to self imaging, the body, and subjectivity - as well as being an editor of books that will give me an insight into other theorists or writers on the topics relevant to this thesis.

In *Self/Image* Amelia Jones examines works of art in different technological media - analogue photography, video and televisual performance, digital images, and even robotics.¹⁵ Jones discusses the history of seeing, interpreting, and critiquing art at the beginning of the book, from Alberti to Walter Benjamin, to the post-structuralists and feminists in 1960-80s - Jones argues that a more embodied perception of art is what is lacking in these theories.¹⁶ Drawing on philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, and other feminist theorists that have reiterated some of their thoughts (e.g. Joan Copjec, Laura Mulvey, Laura Marks), Jones tries to find a new approach to discussing self imaging in media art.¹⁷ Before getting into the actual theorizing Jones makes in the book, the question of why I want to use this for this thesis needs to be addressed. Amelia Jones is a fascinating art historian and theorist that works for an interpretive strategy that is intersubjective, that is inclusive and that is based on how you experience art, that you cannot put aside your own limitations and identity when encountering a work of art. The book *Self/Image* speaks to how I wish to approach Riley's work. Particularly the thoughts surrounding self imaging and self-representation in art. In the book Jones uses photography, video, etc. to discuss this – for this thesis I want to apply the thoughts she articulates to the digital images of Riley's work. Even though these are originally tapestries, I will, as explained, treat them as digital images for the purpose of this thesis.

In the "Prologue" to *Self/Image*, Jones writes about a drive in European and American culture (Euro-American) for visual representation to provide a confirmation of the self.¹⁸ Surrounding ourselves with images of ourselves as if to confirm that "yes, that is me". Since the arrival of analogue photography and till today, with widespread image sharing, we simply don't know how to live without imagining ourselves as pictures. This is a paradox, in Jones'

¹⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*.

¹⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*.

¹⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 1-28.

¹⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*.

¹⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, xvii.

view – we objectify the self in order to prove its existence as a subject.¹⁹ The artworks discussed in the book are not necessarily traditional self-portraits, but all fall under what Jones calls; self imaging - *the rendering of the self in and through technologies of representation*.²⁰ What Jones wishes to explore in the book is;

...artists' inventions into the signifying process...the formations of the self, using technologies of representation. By extension I hope to open up the sometimes terrifying ontological, epistemological, and psychological dilemmas these paradoxes point to... the loss of belief in the real; the collapse of distinctions between the self and other through which Europe used to confirm its supremacy...the blurring of boundaries between what used to be thought of as male and female, and so on.²¹

Jones wants to ask questions that are quite existential, by looking at how the dynamic between technologies of representations and concepts of the self are ever changing. She points out her own limitations in doing this by stating, “I can only see what my mind/body complex (itself deeply and inexorably conditioned by the technologies that permeate, enfold, and extend it) positions me to see”.²² This is what limits us all, isn't it?

Before going into the exploration of the art works, Jones starts with a chapter discussing how self imaging and self representation have been discussed or theorized in art history, from the emergence of self-portraiture to post-modernism.²³ In the renaissance ideas of *the* artist and *the* self were established, the artist being someone in touch with the divine, a truth-teller, and maker of the real.²⁴ Ocular epistemology, springing from an urge to see and know from a single viewpoint. Martin Heidegger wrote about the subject as an individual at the center of knowledge, in the rise of technological invention. How the idea of the genius artist resurfaces in modernism, in a time of pressures placed on individualism by photography and other technologies of representation, such as film.²⁵ The artist is a white hetero male, a centered genius, but also a commodity - as modernist theory, criticism, and practice brought

¹⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, xix.

²⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, xvii.

²¹ Jones, *Self/Image*, xix.

²² Jones, *Self/Image*, xx.

²³ Self imaging and self representation is often written with a hyphen, Jones does not use this in her writing and therefore I will not do so in mine. The reason for her not using it is not explained, but the way I interpret or believe the lack of hyphen is meant to separate the self from its means of representation.

²⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 2-4.

²⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*, 5-6.

the visual arts on the market, the Greenbergian era with Jackson Pollock as the epitome of a genius artist.²⁶ Jones also writes about how Sigmund Freud (psychoanalysis, fear of castration and fetishism), Jacques Lacan (psychoanalysis, mirror stage and desire/drive) Jacques Derrida (the eternal return), and Immanuel Kant (aesthetic judgement) have affected theories in art history.²⁷

Someone Jones keeps going back to throughout the book is the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty.²⁸ His philosophies are based on Descartes' and Husserl's phenomenology. He believed that how we view the world is a connection between the conscience and how the world is known to us through perception. He wrote about the subjective and objective understanding of the world, putting the body in focus and how our body is the primary site of knowing the world. On vision, he wrote about how the seer is always also seen, and that vision is resolutely embodied, taking place in the tactile world.²⁹ "...Merleau-Ponty insistently returns the body to the otherwise disembodied theories of vision and experience developing out of Cartesianism."³⁰ Here is where I believe Jones finds him particularly interesting, the embodied experience. When Jones describes the images she will discuss, she adds a little of herself to the image, how she feels them in her own body when they have an 'encounter'. When writing about Pipplotti Rist, she describes having a synaesthetic experience, which is when more than one of your senses is stimulated and you feel like you can see sound or hear colors.³¹ Jones also says that it is only through embodied desire that our relation to the world (people and things, subjects and objects, if you will) is sustained.³² Embodiment also applies to the artists, entering the images, becoming images – dying in a sense, but continuing to live in the images, as we as viewers breathe life into them, remembering and bringing them back to life. There is a paradox to self-portraits, they give and take the subject from us.³³

In the chapter "Beneath this mask another mask (analogue and digital photography)" Jones has chosen a diverse collection of artists and art works in discussing self representation.³⁴ Some of the main hypotheses she works with relating to these images are the

²⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 6.

²⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*, 6-8.

²⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*.

²⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 67-69.

³⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, 67.

³¹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 23-24.

³² Jones, *Self/Image*, 23.

³³ Jones, *Self/Image*, 50.

³⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 35-79.

binary subject/object, being between the real and representation (is the person in the image *really* that person, or a representation). Jones mentions how Joan Copjec writes that the body returns to us via the photographic image, both to the object and subject world.³⁵ How the self portrait is eminently performative, in writing about Cindy Sherman, and the others, because of the impossibility to capture a subject as she/he truly is/was.³⁶ She also writes that the death of the subject in photography (which can be related to Barthes theories on photography) confronts the viewer with their own mortality. Viewing a self portrait both takes away the subject and brings it back to life through our interpretation and memory, keeping the subject “alive”.³⁷ Jones writes about Jacques Lacan and his concept of the screen, how a subject is always already photographed in the purview of the gaze. The screen can be seen as something that disempowers the subject, flattening it and making it shallow. Merleau-Ponty’s theories of embodiment open the screen image of photography and the rendering of the subject itself – creating a much-needed depth to the photograph.³⁸

Performing or manipulating a self, creating an identity based on stereotypes, fantasy or tropes can be seen in the work of Cindy Sherman and Nikki S. Lee. Self portraits as they are taken in the moment when they are acting out the character or persona – these are not who they *are*, but they shed light on the viewer's internal desires, fears, and prejudices relating to the body, identity, and their own selves.³⁹ Judith Butler and her philosophy can be an interesting addition to this discussion. She believes we are all performing our gender, and that it is through performative actions that we are gendered, not through our biological sex.⁴⁰ These actions can be altered in certain situations, and we adapt our performative actions to how society expects us to respond or act in certain situations.

The chapter “Beneath this mask another mask” in *Self/Image* is the starting point, or touchstone, for the initial analysis. The following analyzes will open the work of Riley up from different angles, using Jones as a springboard to other theories. I wish to discuss how Riley use her own body as art, linking her work to that of body artists (using Jones’ book *Body Art*),⁴¹ also including the nude and female representation in art and how Riley’s work fit

³⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*, 38-39.

³⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 42-50.

³⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*, 46-52.

³⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, 62-69.

³⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 42-67.

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory (1988)," in *The Art of art history : a critical anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi, Oxford history of art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴¹ Jones, *Body Art*.

into these topics. Feminist art or textile art as political is something I will discuss using what I know of Riley's personal statements, as well as look at writings and artists on these topics. For some of the sources I have found on this subject are the works by Hannah Ryggen and contemporary Norwegian artist Veslsmøy Lilleengen. This is also linked to some projects that I've found that specifically use textiles to promote their causes. Because of the time in which this thesis has been written, the pandemic will play a central role in the final chapter, and I have chosen to focus on Riley's work relating to violence against women and the consequences of the pandemic. Ending on a slightly depressive note I will look at the connections between Riley and Andy Warhol, the similarities between their use of images from the news media, and how they are working with trauma through their art.⁴²

ERIN M. RILEY - THE EXPLICIT WEAVER

Erin M. Riley (born 1985) is a contemporary artist that weaves tapestries based on digital images she has taken herself, images she has found or screenshot from the internet. The tapestries vary in size, handwoven on looms using hand dyed wool and cotton. Much of the material Riley uses has been given as donations or she has salvaged it from outlets.⁴³ Her thought behind this is that it is more sustainable, that good material should not go to waste, and by hand dyeing the material she has control of the amount of thread and color needed for the project.⁴⁴ In an interview with ARTnews Riley describes the yarn she uses as her paint, it is what gives colors to her work, and the process of weaving is how she develops her images.⁴⁵ She learned how to weave in high school and continued honing this craft at Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 2007. This was where she really started to develop her direction, using images she found on Facebook or simply searching through the internet, creating collages. The idea of using a medium that has such a long tradition, exhibited in numerous museums and castles, creating her very own contemporary imagery is part of the appeal of weaving for

⁴² Particularly Warhol's *Saturday Disaster* and Riley's tapestries of car-crashes

⁴³ New York Textile Month, "Textile TV: A conversation with Erin M. Riley," in *Textile TV*, ed. Sagarika Sundaram, New York, NY (New York Textile Month: Youtube, 3. september, 2020 2020), Youtube video interview. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w35Gs0RAco>.

⁴⁴ New York Textile Month, "Q&A with Erin M. Riley."

⁴⁵ Ingrid Vega, "How I Made This: Erin M. Riley's Painterly Tapestries," Article, *chronical How I made this: ARTnews* (November 30, 2021 2021). <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/erin-m-riley-tapestries-1234611704/>.

Riley.⁴⁶ At this time, in the early era of social media, privacy settings on the internet were not as established as they are today, meaning anyone could use the images they found, copyright was mostly used by professionals. The tapestries Riley created in this period featured for the most part young girls in compromised situations e.g., intoxicated, using drugs, passed out next to a nearly empty bottle of vodka, or nude/semi-nude. These found images were at the time public domain, they had been posted online and the girls in the images had no control over who used them. This lack of control over ownership of your own body and image is what comes out in these early works, making that violation of privacy become an actuality in the real world, not just online. Riley received many mixed reviews from the audience of this work; some showed admiration for creating work that brought attention to revenge porn and the exploitative use of images online, for showing the darker sides of growing up as a woman, that many could recognize. Others accused her of contributing to the spreading of these images, making art of someone's low point, or stealing their image.⁴⁷ This critique was something Riley later took into consideration and recognized, from there she started using images of herself, instead of using the image of another person.⁴⁸

Riley did her Master of Fine Arts at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, graduating in 2009. Since 2005 she has received several awards for her work and had artist residencies in different places in the US since 2010. She is currently living and working in Brooklyn, New York, and is represented by P.P.O.W Gallery, New York. The gallery features young contemporary artists working in New York, also quite a few of them being fiber/textile artists.⁴⁹ Her art has been exhibited around the world, in both solo and group exhibitions, the latest ones being in England, Germany, South Korea, Norway, Hungary, France, Canada and various states in USA.⁵⁰ Some of the group exhibitions have featured other artists working with selfie culture, photography, textile art, and contemporary women artists, to name a few themes often associated with Riley's work.

The tapestries are a mix of differing motifs, from selfies, screenshots from internet porn, and TV-shows, to images from the news, police evidence, and reports of domestic abuse, rape-kits, and drugs. Often the darker, but also the mundane, subtext of contemporary

⁴⁶ Never Apart, "Head On Erin M. Riley Video Interview," (YouTube, October 2020 2019), Video interview.

⁴⁷ Goat and Arrow, "In the Studio: Erin M Riley," (youtube.com, October 2020 2018), YouTube interview.

⁴⁸ Arrow, "In the Studio: Erin M Riley."

⁴⁹ "P.P.O.W " (Webpage), 2020, <https://www.ppowgallery.com/> (Webpage for P.P.O.W Gallery in New York, NY).

⁵⁰ "erin m. riley - information," (Webpage), 2021, <https://erinm Riley.com/page/1-information.html> (Information about Erin M. Riley).

life in Western capitalist society. The themes Riley weaves into her art are the things we don't necessarily talk about at dinner parties (depending on who's attending, I would guess), but maybe should be brought more into the light. In an interview for New York Textile month Riley had a conversation with Sagarika Sundaram (also a textile artist) about her process, how lockdown has affected her work and what occupies her mind at that time:

I've been thinking about these, like silent things that we sort of hold, like intergenerational trauma, and being survivors. And how these stories can sort of trigger us, but then also like how they build to who we actually are. Our identities, how we experience the world.⁵¹

By creating these, at times, larger-than-life tapestries Riley transports images that would be forgotten or hidden in the millions of other images just like them on the internet, disposable, into our real life and the art world. The work stops the endless scrolling of images and slows down time, making the images tactile, and forcing us to really see them. Exposing content and concerns that are very much of our time, using one of the oldest crafting techniques of image-making, weaving.

Being a contemporary artist, she is affected by the changes and turbulences in society and the past few years of a global pandemic have been influential to the work she creates now. The political scene in the US has been a focal point on her social media presence this past year (2020), whether it is a story on Instagram about the BlackLivesMatter movement or encouraging people to vote during the election. She was a part of a textile artists collaboration to bring attention to the election of 2020. She has done a few tapestries for Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) based on posters and pamphlets they had in the 1970s. As for other tapestries she has produced the last couple of years (2020-22) she has focused on her own upbringing, traumas that have been silenced, and memory and history. In an interview with Dazed Magazine she shares how the election of Donald Trump and how the silence around sexual assault was given a voice, worked as a catalyst for starting a conversation with her mother and sisters about the things they never talked about.⁵²

⁵¹ Month, "Q&A with Erin M.Riley," Timestamp: 5:08-5:39.

⁵² Miss Rosen, "The artist weaving complex, beautiful tapestries about sex and trauma," Feature, interview with Erin M. Riley on exhibition «Used Tape», *Dazed Magazine* (May 30. 2018). <https://www.dazeddigital.com/art-photography/article/40163/1/artist-erin-m-riley-weaves-tapestries-complex-beautiful-tapestries-sex-trauma>.

Growing up, talking about sex and sexuality was always presented as a thing that happens to us as women. My mum had experienced negative things and gave that to us – so I always grew up ready for the time when I would be violated.⁵³

Riley herself says she has not been too affected by the isolation (due to Covid-19), as she usually isolates herself when working in her studio.⁵⁴ This does not mean she shies away from speaking her mind on topics she feels strongly about and sharing her thoughts on topics related to politics, mental health, sexuality, and art when being interviewed. Riley strikes you as an artist who is present in interviews and articulate about her own work and open about her own thoughts/feelings about the world we live in. She cares about and uses her work to support communities that need to have their voices heard, “So much of my work is about dealing with issues that have affected me and looking back on how they have affected women and humans for decades”.⁵⁵

⁵³ Rosen, "The artist weaving complex, beautiful tapestries about sex and trauma."

⁵⁴ Caroline Kipp, Interview with Erin M. Riley about her art and isolation, "17. Erin M. Riley. Brooklyn, NY.," (Blog entry), July 30, 2020, <http://carolinekipp.com/social-distancing-studio-visits/2020/7/30/erin-m-riley>.

⁵⁵ Kipp 17. Erin M. Riley. Brooklyn, NY.

CHAPTER ONE – THE SELF IMAGE

Reflections (2019) meets us with a featureless face - emptiness in shades of pink, blank, where the eyes, nose, and mouth should be.⁵⁶ This patch of color is framed by jet-black hair, and prominent bangs, gently placed around the neck to expose the flower tattoo that is under the right ear. An arm with a tattoo sleeve is stretched out and disappears at the bottom of the frame. It appears large, which is what happens when your arm is holding the camera in selfie mode. In the background, right above the outstretched arm, there is a mirror, reflecting an exposed back and butt, and an indistinguishable tattoo at the shoulder. We see the camera, or phone, protruding from the shoulder. The tattooed body is laid on a black and grey blanket, perhaps a bedcover, the position strikes you as feminine, the breasts and vulva are hidden, in shadow or underneath the outstretched arm. From a distance, the image appears to be realistic but looking closer you notice pieces of the body 'missing'. Where is the other arm? The flowery tattoo on the hip seems to go around to the back, but in the reflection, it is missing. Is it a visual game of can you find the missing pieces, only no original photo? Or perhaps it is simply an artistic choice of removal? A play with expectations in the viewer and artistic freedom.

In the background there appears to be a black clothes-rack, next to it is a large black and grey blob (for lack of a better word). Impossible to distinguish as an object of the real world. The interior or objects in the room are blurred or abstracted, so the sole focal point is the body, the faceless stare and the mirror looking back at the viewer. No distractions, no distinguishing features to let us know if it is a bedroom, living room, closet, or hallway (rooms where one would hang a mirror, there are no tiles on the walls or floor, so it is safe to say it is not a bathroom). It is a space where she can lay down, comfortably, on a bed or a divan, in a private space. The photographic session of this nude is isolated, just the woman and her phone/camera.

This tapestry is the first in a series that at the moment have six pieces, all of them depict the body of a tattooed woman and her reflections in a mirror.⁵⁷ Erin M. Riley has other pieces with the same theme, but they are entitled something else (e.g., *Nudes 40*, *Happy*

⁵⁶ Illustration nr. 2

⁵⁷ In *Reflections 5* (2019) there is also a reflection on the computer. Erin M. Riley, *Reflections 5*, 2019. Wool, cotton, 48''x 49'' (121,92x124,46cm).

Trail)⁵⁸, the interior in these pieces are also more distinct, a bathroom selfie, a messy apartment, following in the mirror-selfie genre of social media. The *Reflections* series have a more staged feel to them, showing different angles, poses and viewpoints, from the same location and in the same mirror (wood, perhaps vintage, with an arch at the top).⁵⁹ In most of the images she is wearing black underwear, but in *Reflections*, she's not wearing anything, the only nude in the series.⁶⁰

For this chapter, and this artwork, there are several topics worthy of discussion as it makes several references to art history, it makes you question who is portrayed and what makes this piece different from for example *Nudes 40*.⁶¹ Is this a portrait of Riley that deliver to us viewers her true self? What does the pose in the image tell us? What I want to explore further in this chapter and the next is what links this work to Amelia Jones' theories of self imaging and body art, as well as other theories that can be associated to this work.

1.1 – SELF IMAGING

The self-portrait genre has a long history and continues to be a major genre in art and society today. In *Self/Image: technology, representation, and the contemporary subject* Jones writes that it is hard to conceive ourselves today without photographic proof that this is *me*.⁶² In many ways this is true, we would perhaps not recognize ourselves as young if there weren't photographic "evidence" of what we looked like, an image of our younger selves. The person you see in the mirror is you, and the changes of ageing are so small and gradual they become most evident when you see an image of yourself from the past. And even though images can be manipulated, you might tweak an image to appear more flattering or you pose so that your good sides are what is shown, that is ever still how the image represents you at the time of capture.

⁵⁸ Erin M. Riley, *Nudes 40*, 2019. Wool, cotton, 48''x 55'' (121,92x139,7cm).

Erin M. Riley, *Happy Trail*, 2019. Wool, cotton, 48''x 48'' (121,92x121,92 cm).

⁵⁹ Riley, *Reflections 5*.

⁶⁰ Illustration nr. 2

⁶¹ Riley, *Nudes 40*.

⁶² Jones, *Self/Image*, xvii.

Amelia Jones uses the term self imaging in her book *Self/Image*, and this term differs from self-portraiture in different ways.⁶³ It is for one not about finding the defining features or perfections of oneself, which can be prescribed to self-portraits, the portrait genre in art history or the selfie you post on Instagram. Self imaging is an *idea* of who the self is or can be. Imagining a self. Secondly, it is about performing a subject, a self. And as a final point, Jones prescribes self imaging as an act of immortalizing the subject. Self imaging is as Jones describes it “the rendering of the self in and through technologies of representation.”⁶⁴ In *Self/Image* the chapter on analogue and digital photography “Beneath this mask, another mask”, explores the photographic rendering of a self, the chapter feature several artists that Jones use to discuss different aspects of the photographic self portrait. Jones brings up Peggy Phelan’s book *Mourning Sex* and a quote she makes about representation as “the deep relationship between bodies and holes, and between performance and the phantasmatical.”⁶⁵ Phelan writes about how the subject relates to and is established via representation in general, and Jones sees Phelan’s arguments as core elements of what she wants to explore in this chapter. The relationship between representations of bodies and the *flesh of the world* (as Merleau-Ponty would call it), between the surface of the images and the “holes” and “depths” of bodies, is captivating when applied to performative photographic self portraits. The model allows for a deeper understanding of the chiasmic link between representations of bodies and fleshed subjects, stepping away from the postmodern arguments that simply deem reiterative representations of bodies as false and pointing to the simulacral nature of contemporary life.⁶⁶ The performative images Jones explores in this chapter are self portraits as they deliver to the viewer the very subject responsible for staging the image, but through the performative dimension of the self, they make us question our conception of what a self portrait and the subject *is*. Through the work of the artists in this chapter, Jones wants to open up the question of how subjectivity is established and how meaning is made in relation to *all* still photographic representations of the human body.⁶⁷ Riley’s *Reflections* (2019) have similar effects as the self portraits Jones discusses in this chapter, in the most simple terms such as conveying to the viewer the subject and artist of the work Riley herself, but also showcasing elements that require further understanding of the image.

⁶³ Jones, *Self/Image*.

⁶⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, xvii.

⁶⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*, 42.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 74.

⁶⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*, 41.

1.2 - BENEATH THE MASK

The phrase “Beneath this mask, another mask”, is found in a photographic collage by the artist Claude Cahun (in collaboration with Marcel Moore).⁶⁸ This collage is Jones’s opening work for the chapter on analogue and digital photography. As mentioned in the previous section and in the introduction, this chapter feature several artists using the technology of photography to explore self representation, a rendering of the self, and performing the self. The mask beneath the mask, beneath this face another face, beneath this self, another self. The work *I.O.U. (Selfpride)* (1929) by Claude Cahun⁶⁹ feature faces revealing multiple layers of faces/masks, the phrase “*Sous ce masque un autre masque. Je n’en finirai pas de soulever tous ces visages*” (“beneath this mask, another mask. I will not stop removing all these faces”) surrounding this part of the work.⁷⁰ Cahun often masquerading as man, more often than woman, was pulling at the seams of gender and sexual identity as this was understood at the time. Cahun’s work and expressed genderfluidity were not acknowledged in the modern era, her own time, but have become readable and brought back to life in the twenty-first century, because what she fought for has in many ways been achieved. Jones attributes Cahun with having a sense of foreboding that the modernist belief in a subject behind every image, the securing of its meaning and value was being peeled away, itself a ‘mask’ headed towards an end due to the increasing pressures of the capitalist, then late-capitalist, Euro-American culture.⁷¹ Walter Benjamin theorized that the photograph not only changed the structures of representation, but also transformed the Western subject itself. The photographic reproduction democratizing the image, making it possible for the viewer to meet the reproduced work in their own situation, and in so doing reactivating the object reproduced.⁷² Photography also created a rise for the portrait in modern culture, this also being connected to capitalism as John Tagg theorizes the cult of remembrance.⁷³ The portrait as a sign; the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity. At the same time the portrait serves as a commodity, an adornment and ownership, status.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, 35-44.

⁶⁹ Jones makes a note that Cahun and Moore are intertwined as lovers and creators, but she speaks of Cahun as the subject/author of the work.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, 35.

⁷¹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 36-37.

⁷² Jones, *Self/Image*, 37.

⁷³ Jones, *Self/Image*, 37-38.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 37-38.

A mask is designed to hide identifying features of a face, whether it is an actual mask or makeup to transform one's face to be unrecognizable, to protect, or to become someone else. The mask in *Reflections* (2019) removes the facial features altogether.⁷⁵ What does this anonymization do to the image and the viewer? A faceless woman on the bed, posed seductively, faced towards the camera, but without eyes that look back at you. With the above-mentioned democratizing of the image and the portrait as a commodity, ownership of the image needs to be prescribed to this work. The original digital image *Reflections* is based on is a self portrait taken by Riley, this image was also sent to someone she was involved with (romantically or sexually), this is at the core of every self portrait of Riley that she weaves. Image sharing is widespread, worldwide and a commodity exchange that everyone that has the internet takes part in. As I see it this is part of the democratizing of the image that Riley takes part in with this work. The digital image is given away, the receiver can then do what they please with it, look at it whenever they want, and show it to whomever they want to see it. The image is no longer just Riley's possession, it has become a commodity, and the exchange of the image is out of Riley's control, as it is for so many that share intimate photos of themselves with a partner. By making a tapestry of the image, the artwork *Reflections* gives a new kind of control back to Riley and the image of her. She is in control of the creation (of how she is represented in the image, of what details to keep or leave out), of the technical and material aspects (size, wool, hanging) and of how it is distributed. It is no longer a digital image floating around in someone's iCloud or e-mail, it is a work of art hanging in a gallery or museum. The collage by Cahun mentioned is called *I.O.U. (Selfpride)*⁷⁶, I.O.U. is an abbreviation of "I owe you", a strong title for this complex and revealing work. The removal of masks and the queerness of it truly speaks of *selfpride*, but what does Cahun owe? Is it meant for Marcel Moore, her collaborator and lover, or is it meant for the viewer, the critics? The reason I bring up this title is that it makes a connection to Riley's actions as an artist, in a way you could give this title to some of her work. For both Cahun and Riley the "I owe you" could be to the receiver or critiques of the images; I owe you for breaking me down, for discriminating me and making me an artist. Which is where self-pride is so fitting, as artists they prevail and keep their head high. Even though they have been violated, they still have their pride and are showing the world themselves and their art. *Reflections* and the other

⁷⁵ Illustration nr. 2

⁷⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 36.

selfies Riley create shows that she has pride in herself and won't let the receiver of the images shame her. Or that the shame is not for them to place on her.

How we view the image changes as it is transported from a digital image to a tapestry and hung in a gallery, it is given deeper meaning and substance. It is no longer just an alluring selfie, it can be read as a representation of all "sexy female selfies". The anonymity, the woman without a face, enhances this feeling of representation, as a viewer you can insert anyone's face where the blank stare resides. It also leaves the body open for examination and viewing. Joan Copjec argues that "the body returns to us - via the photographic image - both to the subject and to the object world."⁷⁷ In the first chapter of *Self/Image* Jones brings attention to Copjec's arguments about the Renaissance painting (which Jones points out is the basis for Western representation, perspectival logic, and construction of the subject "outside" the world and image), to show how Copjec offers an alternate description.⁷⁸ Copjec says that the Renaissance describes "not the visible world but the path of the drive to see or the drive *tout court*."⁷⁹ The drive she speaks of is related to Jacques Lacan's attempt to "bridge the gap between the subjective and the objective."⁸⁰ This drive, or desire of the Other, is used to the "describe the subject in relation to the object world."⁸¹ With this Lacan introduces a new element to the structure of subject formation, that of time and body, recognizing that the object and the subject is a situation of pollution, the desiring (viewing) subject being implicated in every image.⁸² Copjec notes that Lacan with this is writing about an impurity in painting, that it is not just about what the subject sees in the image, but what the viewing subject adds to what it is they see. Meaning that the "objective" world is always already saturated with the bodily (desiring) "subjectivity". Copjec claims that "the Renaissance perspective is the formula for the scopic drive and for embodied seeing",⁸³ the scopic drive immerses the viewer in the image and as the image.

Amelia Jones argues that with Cahun and other radical avant-gardists the body is returned to us via their reiterative self imaging.⁸⁴ She writes that in images such as Cahun's, it is made clear how the body attaches to the image via desire, making a subjective joining of

⁷⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*, 38.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, 7-10.

⁷⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 7.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, 9.

⁸¹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 9.

⁸² Jones, *Self/Image*, 9.

⁸³ Jones, *Self/Image*, 9.

⁸⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 39.

artwork and viewer.⁸⁵ Meaning that through our gazing at the body of Riley in this image we can't help but add our own desires and thoughts to the image. In *Reflections*, as Jones sees it in Cahun's work, the body of the other is both offered and yet denied. Disguised by the mask of facelessness, referring to something that was once there, the subject in front of the camera, but masked, makes understanding and determination of the subject behind the image, Riley, difficult. Roland Barthes speaks of photography as suffering a micro-version of death, of being neither a subject nor object, but a subject becoming an object.⁸⁶ What Jones draws from this and Cahun's work is that as indexical as the photographic self image intends to be, it actually "turns inside out (chiasmically) the bonds that bind us to the world of things by showing us that they are subjects too."⁸⁷

1.3 - THE PERFORMATIVE SELF

A good example of performing a self, which Jones explores, is Cindy Sherman. She uses her own body, but borrows features from others (different wigs, dresses, and both simple and extreme makeup alter her appearance), she portrays stereotypes and the likeness of other characters and people. Whether it is from cinema, mythology, or fantasy, she is not portraying herself. In the moment of posing Sherman "is" or "was" those she performs, a performed self image.⁸⁸ The self portrait has a promise to deliver the subject, the artist themselves, to the viewer. With photography this promise is even more tempting as it is an indexical image of the "real", the viewer seeing the photograph as a document of the truth. What Jones sees in the work she explores is that they disrupt this assumption of true deliverance of the artistic subject to the viewer (the thought of true deliverance has been central to the modernist discourses of art and photography).⁸⁹ As Jones puts it:

Through an exaggerated performativity, which makes clear that we can never "know" the subject behind or in the image (and correlatively that we can never "know" the subject at all), these works

⁸⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*, 39-40.

⁸⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 39-40.

⁸⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*, 40.

⁸⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, 43-56.

⁸⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 43-56.

expose the apparently seamless conflation of intentionality with meaningful visible appearance in the self portrait as an illusion.⁹⁰

Exaggerated performativity and illusion do come to mind when looking at Cindy Sherman's work. Starting with her *Untitled Film Stills* series in 1977 she photographed herself as the female character from films in 1950s and 60's Hollywood, film noir, and European art-house, the photographs mimicking the scale of film stills. Sherman dressed and posed as stereotypes of female characters, e.g. the femme fatale, the housewife, and the working girl. Exploring the theory of the male gaze and the female body in Euro-American culture being objectified through psychoanalytical voyeurism, embodying "to-be-looked-at-ness", which film critic and theorist Laura Mulvey wrote about in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) (an instrumental essay in feminist theory and critique).⁹¹ *Untitled Film Stills* is a large series of black-and-white photographs that Sherman worked with until 1980, not only portraying women in film but also *woman* as a social gender. Later works introduces a more made-up Sherman, she added more prosthetics, props, and fantastical compositions, such as *Untitled #153* (1985),⁹² *Untitled #228* (1990)⁹³ and *Untitled #466* (2008),⁹⁴ still exploring the portrait genre and different perceptions of womanhood. Judith Butler's philosophy that we perform our genders based on societal structures and norms can be applied to Sherman's work.⁹⁵ Butler's essay *Performative acts and gender constitutions: An essay in Phenomenology and Feminist theory*, delves into a discussion of constituting acts in phenomenology and how gender is an illusion following stylized repetition of acts over time.⁹⁶ Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* informs Butler's arguments and the claim that "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman" is a reinterpretation of the phenomenological doctrine of constituting acts.⁹⁷ Both de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty understands the body as an active process of embodying cultural and historical possibilities, de Beauvoir sets the stage to make gender be understood as a historical situation, instead of a naturalistic fact. Butler states in her essay:

⁹⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, 44.

⁹¹ Jones, *Body Art*, 153.

⁹² Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #153*, 1985. MoMa - Museum of Modern Art.

⁹³ Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #228*, 1990. MoMa - Museum of Modern Art.

⁹⁴ Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #466*, 2008. MoMA - Museum of Modern Art.

⁹⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory (1988)" in *The Feminism and visual culture reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, In sight (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁹⁶ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (1988)," 482-91.

⁹⁷ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (1988)," 482.

In order to describe the gendered body, a phenomenological theory of constitution requires an expansion of the conventional view of acts to mean both that which constitutes meaning and that through which meaning is performed and or enacted...My task, then, is to examine in what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts, and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts.⁹⁸

Butler claims that gender is something we perform, that it is “a collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions,”⁹⁹ it is a performance that has punitive consequences if not ‘done right’ by the cultural/historical constructs of society, “...the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all.”¹⁰⁰ Butler suggests that “the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated over time.”¹⁰¹ Having Butler in mind when saying that Sherman, and Riley for that matter, are exploring the perception of womanhood, it is saying that they are performing the gender as a cultural construct. In Sherman’s *Film Stills* she acts as different women that are “approved” by society - the working girl, the damsel in distress, etc., and these are promoted performances through the film industry, mass media, and commercial corporations. Her later work moves more towards challenging these constructs of gender, through more theatrical performances.

Genderfluidity is a more common construct today, there is generally a greater openness to other expressions of gender than strictly the binary man/woman. This does not mean that those performing outside the script are not punished for it. Looking at Riley’s work she is both acting as the woman, and the woman outside the script. Her self portraits and collages are evidence of how complicated it is to be gendered as a woman. They do not show the stylized, stereotypical woman you see in the Hollywood film, but the nitty-gritty parts of being a woman. Trips to Planned Parenthood, menstruation, domestic violence, contraception, masturbation, and mental illness. In *Reflections* I see a universality, an image of a self that could be your own, or your friend, or it could be that girl you follow on Instagram.¹⁰² The blank space where the face would be, is what opens the work to the public, makes it interesting, because it not only is a portrait of Riley, but it is also a portrait of a culture, genre and a multitude of people. Riley has created an image of a self that can be read as any tattooed

⁹⁸ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (1988)," 483.

⁹⁹ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (1988)," 484.

¹⁰⁰ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (1988)," 484.

¹⁰¹ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (1988)," 485.

¹⁰² Illustration nr. 2

(or not) woman in the ages 18 to 45 that share intimate images of themselves with others, privately or publicly.

Another approach to Sherman's work is that of Laura Mulvey and her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". In Mulvey's essay she argues through a "psychoanalytic model of gendered subject formation that Hollywood films function through structures of voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia",¹⁰³ in effect placing the female body represented on screen as an object of the empowered male gaze. Mulvey appropriates psychoanalytic theory "as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form."¹⁰⁴ She explains how the illusionistic narrative film use cinematic codes that, not only place the female body in the purview of the male gaze, but controls *how* she is to be looked at. Through directing, filming, and editing, these tools in cinema creates a gaze, a world, and an object of desire.¹⁰⁵ This mode of female representation in films is still present in Hollywood productions, which is at least noticeable for someone who has read Mulvey. Movies aimed at a male audience (generalizing here), e.g., an action movie featuring a beautiful woman, barely dressed, not always the damsel in distress, but highly sexualized and with little-to-no character arche compared to her male counterpart. In 2007 Alison Bechdel and Liz Wallace introduced the Bechdel Test, listing three principles or criteria to rate a fictional work's inclusion and representation of female characters, 1) at least two women are featured, 2) these women talk to each other, 3) they discuss something other than a man.¹⁰⁶ This test has been criticized and applauded, adapted to test the representation of race, LGBTQAI+, and other minorities. The Bechdel Test does not rate the movie as good or bad, it only points to these criteria of inclusion, it is an interesting aspect to point out because it falls in the same category as Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, and how women are represented in mainstream media today. If I were to view Riley's work *Reflections* wearing Mulvey's glasses it does read as a voyeuristic image, inviting the viewer to gaze at the tattooed female body, curvy and feminine pose, anonymous. This is not something that the image hides, or that Riley, as an artist, shies away from, as she admits that the original image was taken and sent as part of a sexual exchange, *sexting*.¹⁰⁷ As mentioned earlier, most of the self portraits by Riley were sent to someone and were therefore created to please the

¹⁰³ Jones, *Self/Image*. 44-45

¹⁰⁴ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975)," in *The Feminism and visual culture reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, In sight (London: Routledge, 2010), 57.

¹⁰⁵ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975)," 65.

¹⁰⁶ "Bechdel Test," 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Bechdel%20Test#h1>.

¹⁰⁷ Sexting is sending sexually explicit messages, photos or videos using your phone

receiver/viewer of the image. The receiver's gender is not disclosed by Riley, and in many ways, it is irrelevant because the receiver/viewer of this image embodies an empowered gaze because Riley has given them that power. This is a controversial comparison, but Riley could in this situation be the male director placing the actress on the bed and filming as she lays naked in said bed. She has directed herself and posed for the camera to please her viewer, controlled how she is to be looked at. This can also be said about Sherman's images, she is the artistic subject, the director, and the object in the purview of the gaze.

Jones points out in her book that the photographic image of the female body is a double fetish (in her interpretations of Sherman).¹⁰⁸ It “functions as a fetishistic replacement for the woman’s “lacking” genitals”,¹⁰⁹ for the masculine viewer the photograph of the female body then eases the fear of castration and acts as a replacement for the lost body it depicts. Based on Christian Metz’s argument that photographic technology is “a technology of violence and dismemberment”,¹¹⁰ the moment of photographic capture is a splintering of the subject depicted, frozen, immobile, and fixed in time, but accessible as an object of viewing desire, this desire being always already masculine. With a desire to retrieve the past in the present, and with the image of the female body to freeze it as a reassuring fetish, the photograph does fail at the task of delivering a *true* representation of the real, a subject with emotions and feelings. As is particularly apparent with Sherman, because instead of delivering an image of Sherman as she truly “is” or “was”, it rather testifies to the impossibility of this access through a self portrait. Riley has claimed that by transporting the images she sends to the tapestry, she is marking them in time. They are also removed from their original status as digital images that she has, in a way, lost control over. The digital image is where the subject Riley has been frozen, accessible as an object of viewing desire, that can be brought out from the inbox whenever the receiver wants to revisit the image. The act of weaving can, for Riley, bring the digital image back into her control. I would argue that in the transformation of the digital image to the tapestry is where Riley’s self imaging takes place. As mentioned earlier self imaging is about rendering a self out of an idea, performance, action, and decisions using technologies of representation – here the loom. In *Reflections* (2019) Riley has created a different self image, herself only readable through her body and its identifying features. As I read Jones’s arguments the self portrait has a false promise to

¹⁰⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, 45-49.

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 45.

¹¹⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*, 45.

deliver the artist, but as with Sherman and Riley it becomes clear that this accessibility is impossible. Jones writes: “*Our* role, in viewing the artist’s self portrait photograph, becomes one of projection and identification via our own psychic past but becomes further complicated by the artist’s having performed her- or himself actively as the object of our desire.”¹¹¹

1.4 – DEATH OR IMMORTALITY

In *Self/Image* Amelia Jones delves into artists’ work through different theories to further explore how *all* images “work reciprocally to construct bodies and selves across the interpretive bridges that connect them”.¹¹² With this she means to promote a reading of artworks that encourage openness to otherness both within and without the self. Jones’ writes that her interpretations are performative in the sense that she enacts her own desires in and through the bodies she interprets and opens herself up to the embodied desires that the images solicit.¹¹³ When writing about embodied desire and interpretation it relates to the phenomenology philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His writings about vision and our perception of the world swears to include the *body*, in the case of self portraits both the viewers body and the artist’s body.¹¹⁴ For Merleau-Ponty vision is definitely embodied, as all viewing happens in a tactile space, “this tangible space of vision is the chiasm, the “double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible.”¹¹⁵ The photograph of the body is according to his theory a flesh-like screen, this screen assumes the depth and materiality of the body as subject. The photograph is what Merleau-Ponty would call *flesh of the world*, as it is the visible assuming the tangible. Vision is incarnated, it is according to Merleau-Ponty something we are possessed by, as seers and seen, the seer is always also seen. Jones writes this about the subject formation she derives from Merleau-Ponty: “It is our being looked at by the photograph-as-flesh that makes us fully corporeal subjects in vision; this being looked at also substantiates the subjectivity of the person in the picture, but *always already in relation to us, those it views.*”¹¹⁶ She argues that the self images

¹¹¹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 55.

¹¹² Jones, *Self/Image*, 44.

¹¹³ Jones, *Self/Image*, 44.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 67.

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Self/Image*, 67.

¹¹⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 68.

of the artists she has discussed “open into performativity.”¹¹⁷ A performance that is contingent on otherness, it is about the viewer becoming capable of recognizing their own *subjective* investment in the subject that is seen as being captured in the image, at the same time their own *objectification*. Jones explains this as an intertwining in the interpretation process where her body exists as a body through desire in relation to another body, seer and always already seen as a corporeal situation.

Subjectivity, Jones’ explains, ultimately goes beyond visibility. It can be partially accessed in the visible, but the visible is always already a part of the corporeal, tangible realm, “one in which the self always refers in bodily ways to others, and vice versa.”¹¹⁸ The photograph embodies the subject, both within and outside the image, and it is this Jones’ says is the threat of the other. The self images are bodies and their “death” in posing for a photograph, points to our own death and mortality. Christian Metz and Roland Barthes, notes that the photograph is linked to that of loss and absence, of death, and Jones assigns the photographic portrait to be, in a way, like a death mask, a lifeless screen.¹¹⁹ Jacques Lacan’s theory of the screen is explained in his essay “What is a Picture?”, and is an important term in his model of “how subjects reciprocally define and negotiate one another in the visible.”¹²⁰ With this he says that “the subject is always already photographed in the view of the gaze. The photograph is a screen site where subject and object, self and other, intertwine to produce intersubjective meaning”.¹²¹ Intersubjective means dependent upon or subject of change, intersubjective meaning refers to this defining and negotiation of one another. In the photographic self portrait as a screen site it is about how we are both viewing and gazed at subjects, always. It is a self-display that is negotiated and that is performed. Jones points out that the screen is like a mask, and that it is about the paradox of presence and absence, of life and death. Lacan’s screen and Merleau-Ponty’s flesh of the world differ in the way that Merleau-Ponty brings the body into the visible, and this is what Jones aspires to encourage. Because even though the photographic images are linked to death, it is this that makes it so important for Jones to open ourselves to otherness. By closing ourselves off from the other, the loss, or absence, mortality “indicated by the other whips back at us, marking *us* as “dead”.”¹²²

¹¹⁷ Jones, *Self/Image*, 68.

¹¹⁸ Jones, *Self/Image*, 69.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 46.

¹²⁰ Jones, *Self/Image*.

¹²¹ Jones, *Self/Image*, 49.

¹²² Jones, *Self/Image*, 69.

But if we are open to the other's lack or incoherence that we can bring them back to life and as Jones writes about how we can "come/go-back-to-life":

feeling the flesh of the other as our own, immanently mortal, corporeal skin (dimpled, expansive, quivering at the potential touch of the gaze) – is to free ourselves (at least momentarily) in a potentially radically politicizing way from both prejudice and fear.¹²³

It is how we meet the images that keep the subjects alive, breathing, and continuing to communicate with us. Jones ends her chapter on the photographic self portrait by saying that the artists are "not yet" dead, or "not yet" been "...murdered by the fetishizing imperialist and heterosexist gaze that dominate our culture. Through the "not yet," anything is made possible, even an acknowledgment of the inexorability of the eternal return and the mortality it presupposes."¹²⁴ This means that the images will continue to be interpreted, to be perceived. And Jones wants us to be open to the possibilities of future encounters, that openness to otherness and intersubjective engagements will free the artwork from fixity and the final "death" of the subject.

This hope that Jones has is empowering in that it makes not just the visible important in an interpretive process, it engages your own body and mind. It makes the interpretations your own, in communicating with the work, by associations, feelings, knowledge, desires, and subjectivity. Through the course of an education in art history you are primarily taught in the formalist way of interpretation, but when studying new ways to open up the work you find new approaches, and Jones' approach to the works she discusses in *Self/Image* is one of following a train of thought that comes naturally to her, because that is how she communicates with the work. To apply her theory of embodied interpretations to *Reflections* (2019) is to not only look at what associations can be made to the work (which is part of the previous analyzes), but also how Riley is embodied in the work which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

¹²³ Jones, *Self/Image*, 69.

¹²⁴ Jones, *Self/Image*, 72.

CHAPTER TWO – THE ARTIST BODY

A comparison of Riley’s work and body artists is not necessarily the most obvious comparison to make, but on the topic of *the nude*, it can open the work to some interpretations that have not been touched before. In Amelia Jones’ *Body Art: Performing the Subject*,¹²⁵ the artists Jones explores create what she refers to as *body art*, which can be understood as performance art, but for Jones it is important to use the term body art. The artists push their bodies to extremes, confront fears, mutilate themselves, expose their bodies, changing the function of their bodies in the world into an art piece. Body art is related to the changes in conception and experience of subjectivity.¹²⁶ Jones is particularly interested in work “that take place through an enactment of the artist’s body, in a “performance” setting or in the privacy of the studio, then documented so that it can be experienced subsequently through photography, film, video, and/or text.”¹²⁷ This is what makes Jones consider body art to be a “complex extension of portraiture in general.”¹²⁸

Artists such as Yoko Ono, Yayoi Kusama, and Marina Abramovic (often referred to as performance artists) pushed the boundaries of their bodies in relation to the spectator and themselves. Hannah Wilke was also one such artist, using her own body as a canvas, material, and artwork. In *Body Art* Jones discuss how Wilke was under much criticism, often based on her looks and person, rather than her artworks.¹²⁹ Feminists of the second wave criticized her work for degenerating what they worked for, continuing the patriarchal hold, and keeping women as objects and passive subjects in a man's world. Jones argues that Wilke’s work is feminist art, “read” with different glasses than the ones used by the critics of her work. By applying a phenomenological feminist theory, based on Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and sprinkled with some Jacques Lacan and Judith Butler. The body and what Craig Owens call the *rhetoric of the pose* being some of the central arguments.¹³⁰

Rhetoric of the pose refers to the portraiture of the female nude as seen in art history; a feminine pose meant to please the (male) spectator. Owens use Barbara Kruger’s images to discuss posing, referencing her use of stereotypes and clichés, her action of positioning in the

¹²⁵ Jones, *Body Art*.

¹²⁶ Jones, *Body Art*, 10.

¹²⁷ Jones, *Body Art*, 13.

¹²⁸ Jones, *Body Art*, 13.

¹²⁹ Jones, *Body Art*, 50.

¹³⁰ Jones, *Body Art*, 152.

collages she made, as the rhetoric of the pose in her work.¹³¹ Jones states in *Body Art* that “because feminist body artists enact themselves in relation to the long-standing Western codes of female objectification...they unhinge the gendered oppositions structuring conventional models of art production and interpretation (female/object versus male/subject).”¹³² What Jones argues is that Wilke reiterates the pose of a female nude, to challenge or confront the viewer and his desire, making herself object to the gaze willingly and in control. Wilke pulls you in with this seduction and then changes her pose to being somewhat contrasting and ‘masculine’. Not a pose reminiscent of the reclining nude, but challenging it by being standing, vertical and naked – not nude. The difference between a nude and a naked person is a distinction that most of us create in our understanding quite automatically, in differing degrees. As an art historian the reference points are clearer. The nude portrays a person without clothes, where the pose is delicate, sometimes hiding the intimate parts of the body with a duvet, crossed legs or hands. Demure, innocent, not dominating, but inviting the viewer to look. The naked on the other hand is not hiding, it is proactive, liberated, and catch your eye whether you want it to or not. Confronting its viewers to acknowledge their own gaze, desires, and prejudices.

Examples of the reclining nude is multiple throughout history in art, cinema, marketing, literature, and now on social media and the internet. The naked on the other hand is hidden and censored because it is deemed too sexual, too liberated. But the debate around this is whether it is the naked body that sexualizes itself, or if it is the viewer and society that get confronted with their own sexuality and therefore deem the naked body as sexual. With #freethenipple women have tried to fight for women’s freedom to go topless and be topless in photographs without being sexualized. The reasoning is that everyone has nipples, men and women, the difference is that the woman’s breast has been sexualized. It is a fight against censorship, particularly aimed at Instagram, whose guidelines censor images they deem indecent and too sexual. The issue with this is that the screening process deems any topless woman indecent, but they allow an array of other images (e.g. commercial images from large brands) that are loaded with sexual connotations (and sometimes also sexual violence) to post their images. What I would argue is that this mode of censorship continues the sexualization of the female body, which is why we need art and images that show nakedness as the most

¹³¹ Craig Owens, "The Medusa Effect, or, The Specular Ruse*," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture*, ed. Barbara Kruger Scott Bryson, Lynne Tillman, Jane Weinstock (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 192.

¹³² Jones, *Body Art*, 152.

natural thing that it is. Hannah Wilke posed naked throughout her entire career, but she was only criticized for continuing the patriarchal hold when she was “young and beautiful”, this was not the critique with her *Intra-Venus* series.¹³³ The naked female body being a symbol of sex only if someone desires it.

2.1 - MEDUSA

In *Reflections* (2019) the rhetoric of the pose emerges.¹³⁴ A female laying on what is presumably a bed or divan, in the mirror is a reflection displaying an hourglass figure, a shape often attributed femininity. The hourglass has been used by many artists throughout art history to represent the woman/feminine. This horizontal female figure references the reclining nude, portrait of a female nude painted for the pleasure and admiration of men. This reference to art history is challenged by the faceless stare, which dominates about one-third of the image. Instead of being just another image of a female nude, the blank face confronts, and turns the eye of the beholder back on him/herself. Confronting us as viewers on, not just this image, but the culture of these images – created for the pleasure of the male gaze.

In *Beyond Recognition: representation, power and culture* Craig Owens devotes a chapter to the “Medusa Effect”.¹³⁵ The mythological figure of Medusa is well known, a woman with snakes on her head, her stare will turn anyone (any man) who looks at her to stone. Medusa has been subject (or inspiration) for many theories, most famously Sigmund Freud’s writing “Medusa head” (1922-23) and his theories of the myth of Medusa and castration anxiety. Freud use the image of the Medusa as an emblem of castration, as repulsive, a fetish and a displaced representation of female genitalia.¹³⁶ Hélène Cixous, French feminist scholar, wrote “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1976)¹³⁷ as a manifesto to the power of women. Cixous’ manifesto is written to encourage women to write, to speak and change history. She used the Medusa to make the readers step away from the psychoanalytical hold, to show how Freud and others have used the myth of Medusa to associate women with

¹³³ *INTRAVENUS* (1992) series of photographs taken during Wilke’s final stages of cancer

¹³⁴ Illustration nr. 2

¹³⁵ Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 191-200.

¹³⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Medusa Head (1922-23)," in *The Medusa reader*, ed. Marjorie B. Garber and Nancy J. Vickers (New York ; London: Routledge, 2003).

¹³⁷ Hélène Cixous, Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen, "The Laugh of the Medusa," [Le Rire de la Méduse.] *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uio.no/stable/3173239>.

death and darkness, instill fear and bolster oppression of the other sex. She asks if it is not a convenient fear they have theorized:

Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.¹³⁸

Cixous saw a change happening in her time, the second wave of feminism as a tsunami that is promising to break down the phallic monuments.¹³⁹ In some ways the text is quite utopian and idealistic, but it can also be read to be an homage to the power of women, to breaking free, to daring to stand up against systems that are antiquated, and to show the world of man that women are not afraid of lacking, because they simply are not lacking anything. "The Laugh of the Medusa" is inspirational, as it speaks to writing your own history, and in so doing, changing the history of the world. It is good to see someone using the image of Medusa as a symbol of strength and beauty, not as a symbol of fear.¹⁴⁰ In *Beyond Recognition* Craig Owens mentions both Freud and Cixous' interpretations of the Medusa myth, but to him they have overlooked a central point in the myth.¹⁴¹ Owens' theory of the "Medusa Effect" or *specular ruse* is based on the moment in the myth where Perseus is able to decapitate the Medusa, a moment both Freud and Cixous do not examine.¹⁴² In order to explain the theory Owens use Lacanian psychoanalysis and the Imaginary order and aligns himself with the theories of Lacan. The imaginary for Lacan is a dual relationship, a reduplication in the mirror when the conscious meets its opposite other in a reflection. This also relates to how subjects identify themselves in photographs, a capture of themselves, and with this, the ego is constituted (the ego in Lacan being an imaginary construct).¹⁴³ In the myth Perseus use a mirror to capture the Medusa, she sees herself and is petrified, turned to stone. It is after this that Perseus decapitates her. Owens explains this event in the myth as two moments, a moment of seeing, and a terminal moment of arrest. In Lacan these moments are seen as "pseudo-

¹³⁸ Cixous, Cohen, and Cohen, "The Laugh of the Medusa."

¹³⁹ Cixous, Cohen, and Cohen, "The Laugh of the Medusa."

¹⁴⁰ Cixous, Cohen, and Cohen, "The Laugh of the Medusa."

¹⁴¹ Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 197.

¹⁴² Owens, "The Medusa Effect."

¹⁴³ Owens, "The Medusa Effect."

identification” and the word *suture* is used for this concept. Owens proposes to change the word suture to the “Medusa Effect” or specular ruse.¹⁴⁴

This can be applied to *Reflections* as we view the image, the body laid bare, doubled in the mirror, she is frozen, immobile, posed, and in turn we as viewers are immobilized, arrested. As viewers we are also placed where the camera would be, at arm’s length of the body, and we can place our own reflection in the mirror, captured in the same moment as her. Arrested in our own gaze. Lacan proposes a prescription to the Medusa Effect, which inverts the temporal order of the two moments; first, a moment of arrest, then, and only then, a moment of seeing.¹⁴⁵ As Owens explains Lacan, he is basically describing what happens when we look at images – the image as an arrested gesture, then the act of viewing completing the gesture. This also describes the act of posing, “to strike a pose is to present oneself to the gaze of the other as if one is already frozen, immobilized – that is, *already a picture*.”¹⁴⁶ This gives the pose power, as the gaze itself becomes immobilized, “to strike a pose is to pose a threat”.¹⁴⁷ This brings us back to the rhetoric of the pose, where Owens and Jones attribute this act of reiterating codes or stereotypes inflicted upon the female body by society with the power to turn the mirror back on itself.

2.2 - THE NUDE

The pose in *Reflections* (2019)¹⁴⁸ is inviting the viewer to look, it is pleasant to gaze upon. The pose is familiar, not threatening or intimidating. Contrasting to the blank space where a face should be and the looming darkness in the surrounding. A private moment, but not so private that you feel you must turn away from the situation. The familiarity of this image of a reclining nude is palpable. Museums are plastered with female nudes by male artists, and here we have a self portrait reiterating this pose. Is Riley making herself an object of desire? Conforming to heteronormative ideas of what a woman should be, passive and object next to the active and subjective man?

¹⁴⁴ Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 198.

¹⁴⁵ Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 198.

¹⁴⁶ Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 198.

¹⁴⁷ Owens, "The Medusa Effect," 198.

¹⁴⁸ Illustration nr. 2

John Berger famously wrote about the different perceptions of men and women in *Ways of Seeing* (1972).¹⁴⁹ About social presence he writes that a man's presence suggests what he can do to you or for you, what power he can exercise on others. A woman's presence expresses her own attitude to herself, what can and cannot be done to her, she has been born to the small confinements of being kept by men. How she appears to others, men especially, is a constant in her life – she is surveyed and surveyor of herself always. This is how she controls or indicates how she wants to be treated. Berger simplifies by saying that “*men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at... The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.”¹⁵⁰ He goes on to show how the female nude has been a recurring subject in European painting, and that it is here we can witness some of the criteria and conventions that women have been seen and judged as sights. Some important remarks he makes are related to nakedness and the nude. This is a topic that has been touched on earlier in the intro to this chapter. He claims it started with the telling of Adam and Eve. He points out that they only become aware of their nakedness after eating the apple, and after that, they *saw* each other differently – “nakedness was created in the mind of the beholder.”¹⁵¹ From this moment the woman is blamed and punished to be subservient to man, this also becomes the moment of shame in the Renaissance. It is not in relation to each other, but to the spectator, the naked must be veiled, by fig leaves, or carefully placed hands. Other opportunities to paint nudes added the implication that the subject, the woman, is aware of being seen by a spectator. “She is not naked as she is. She is naked as the spectator sees her.”¹⁵² The woman looks back at the spectator. The mirror is also introduced as an object in which she looks at herself, joining the spectators, and Berger argues this makes herself also see herself as a sight, the mirror also became a symbol for the vanity of women. It becomes a sign of submission to the spectator. He also notes that in non-European art (Indian, Persian, African, Pre-Columbian) works of art depicting sexual attraction likely show both participants equally active and captivated by one another. Berger mentions Kenneth Clark's book *The Nude* in which he claims that “to be naked is simply to be without clothes, whereas the nude is a form of art.”¹⁵³ It is a way of seeing that the painting achieves – but as Berger

¹⁴⁹ John Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," in *The Feminism and visual culture reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, In Sight (London: Routledge, 2010), 49-52.

¹⁵⁰ Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," 50.

¹⁵¹ Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," 50-51.

¹⁵² Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," 51.

¹⁵³ Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," 51.

points out the nude is not confined to painting, it is photos, poses, and gestures, the nude is conventionalized through the conventions of this certain tradition of art. Nudeness is to be displayed, to be seen naked by others. "A naked body has to be seen as an object to become a nude."¹⁵⁴ Nakedness on the other hand reveals itself and is without disguise. The painters and spectator-owners of the European nudes were often men and the persons they treated as objects were usually women. This is part of the patriarchal hold that is so deeply embedded in our culture, and why Berger says women survey themselves. Even though we are moving toward a more equal society, the essential way of seeing women and using their imagery has not changed (this is Berger's argument in 1975, and I partially agree with him today, 2022). "...the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him."¹⁵⁵

Even though I agree with several of Berger's arguments, I do believe there is a higher awareness in our society now about the nude and imagery of women. Images of contemporary nudes flourish in social media, and mass media, but there are forces that stand up and fight for a de-sexualization of the female body. In a way you could say it is about undressing of the disguising nude, making them be simply naked instead. Which is what I would argue is part of the rhetoric of the pose that artists enact, such as Wilke and Riley. In the beginning I asked if Riley was objectifying herself in *Reflections* (2019), and if we are to read the image with Berger in mind, the answer is yes. She is posed naked on a bed, but she is hidden under a duvet, her butt exposed in the mirror, and she looks back at the viewer (without looking). We know the image was taken in an intimate setting and sent, given, to someone she had a sexual relationship with.¹⁵⁶ These elements of the artwork align with Berger's arguments of the nude, past and present. But if we add Riley's intention for the work, because unlike the nudes of the Renaissance, the artist is the subject of the artwork, and reading the work as Amelia Jones would, the interpretation is not that it is simply a nude.

In 2020 the work *Self Portrait 3* (2015)¹⁵⁷ was featured in the exhibition "Shag: Provocative Textiles" at the Nashville Scene, an exhibition that focused on themes of sexuality in fiber art.¹⁵⁸ In an interview about the exhibition and her work Riley explains how

¹⁵⁴ Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," 51.

¹⁵⁵ Berger, "Ways of Seeing (1972)," 51.

¹⁵⁶ Laura Huston Hunter, "Three shag artists on eroticism, textile and contemporary art," Webpage article, (2020). https://www.nashvillescene.com/arts_culture/three-i-shag-i-artists-on-eroticism-textiles-and-contemporary-art/article_c19aab51-35c8-5611-a639-ca8ae7304fe7.html.

¹⁵⁷ Illustration nr. 6

¹⁵⁸ Hunter, "Three shag artists on eroticism, textile and contemporary art."

she chooses the images for her self portraits. The images of herself that she weaves are images she has sent to someone, this is the criteria for weaving them. They must have been engaged with, active from her taking the picture, sending it, and the image ending up in someone's e-mail or phone, existing in the matrix if you will. By weaving them she makes them real, as proof of existence and a timestamp. Riley also says that she doesn't think of her work as erotic, but about empowerment.¹⁵⁹ Especially with the images such as *Self Portrait 3*, she is self-publishing, to regain some control of her own image, instead of the image being leaked or used as revenge porn.¹⁶⁰ To remove some of the shame of that happening, to perhaps relieve the anxiety of that happening. Riley is in control of how her image is being distributed, where it is seen, and in what setting it is viewed. The image is a tapestry, a work of art, no longer just a pixilated image sent to someone for their pleasure or usage. This is the intention of the artist; this is what differentiates her from the nudes of the Renaissance and the nudes in museums by famous male artists. In *Reflections*¹⁶¹ she enacts the Western traditional nude, embodying the *rhetoric of the pose*, in *Self Portrait 3*¹⁶² she has a very different pose. The image is from 2015 and features a woman on all fours, her head is out-of-frame, and there is no interior in the image, only the tattooed and topless woman in black underwear. The body in the tapestry is somewhat floating in a space of beige carpet, grounded in the frame by one leg and one arm in the foreground, and the disappearing neck and head in the upper right corner. The body is detailed, with clear colors and tattoos. The beige background reminds me of a carpet, woven to be placed on the floor, with different shades and textures, and vertical lines (horizontal if you turn the image 90 degrees). There is no reflection in a mirror, no bed, and the interior is removed to highlight the semi-nude body. Fully exposed, not hiding, perhaps here naked more than nude.

2.3 - THE EMBODIED ARTIST

In *Body Art* Amelia Jones discusses Hannah Wilke's embodiment in her work as one of the key aspects of what in Jones' reading makes her work feminist.¹⁶³ Wilke's self imaging is, according to Jones, obsessive and her use of the rhetoric of the pose, she both succumbs to the

¹⁵⁹ Hunter, "Three shag artists on eroticism, textile and contemporary art."

¹⁶⁰ Illustration nr. 6

¹⁶¹ Illustration nr. 2

¹⁶² Illustration nr. 6

¹⁶³ Jones, *Body Art*, 151-94.

gaze, reiterating “to-be-looked-at-ness”, at the same time as she is exposing herself as artist, as a gendered female artist, and yet masculine in her authority as artist.¹⁶⁴ The image Jones writes about as a “typical example of Wilke’s obsessive self-imaging” is an image that was created when Wilke exhibited her *Ponder-r-rosa* series at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in 1975. She is leaning against the wall among her labial latex sculptures, shirtless and in unbuttoned jeans, her hands in the straps on her pants, the performalist portrait is called *Art News Revised* (1975), in *Art News* they featured the image of her fully clothed.¹⁶⁵ Jones writes, “Wilke both exposes and makes use of the conventional codes of feminine display to increase her notoriety (and her desirability) in the male-dominated art world.”¹⁶⁶ The image strikes me as both slightly disinterested and powerful, reminding me of the images of Picasso and Pollock in their studios, artists surrounded by their own creations, the genius artist. The performative portrait of her body, and the work of other feminist body artists, that implement the rhetoric of the pose complicates and destabilizes the simplistic logic of gender difference, where women are condemned to a pose understood as passive and at the center of the “male gaze”. Jones brings up *acting* as a central part of the way these images are viewed. Merleau-Ponty meant that physical movement was the effective way to make sure the body/self was torn away from pure objectification. As discussed in the previous chapter acting is also a part of Judith Butler’s philosophy. Jones writes that “...feminist body artists insist on having access to the same (always failed) potential to transcendence that men traditionally had in patriarchy.” Wilke’s naked posing solicits the male gaze, but at the same time, through her performance, merges her body and cognitive selves – shifting the trajectory of the gaze. In Western patriarchy the exterior and interior selves (*corpus* and *cogito*) have been separated as a means of situating women on the side of immanence. Jones interprets the “...feminist body art works produce the female artist as both body and mind, subverting the Cartesian separation of *cogito* and *corpus* that sustains the masculinist myth of male transcendence.”¹⁶⁷

Wilke’s performances play into the rhetoric of the pose and the male gaze, using them in some ways as her weapons of choice. She performs her body as object, already always immobilized by the purview of the gaze. In her project *So Help Me Hannah*, which initially existing as photographs taken at P.S. 1 in New York, in 1978, she poses naked in high heels and holding a gun, the photographs show various poses and are overlaid with quotations from

¹⁶⁴ Jones, *Body Art*, 154-55.

¹⁶⁵ Jones, *Body Art*, 155-56.

¹⁶⁶ Jones, *Body Art*, 155.

¹⁶⁷ Jones, *Body Art*, 157.

texts primarily by male philosophers and artists.¹⁶⁸ Primarily existing as photographs, the project later became a performance, documented on video, and also here it is about the rhetoric of the pose, as Jones writes. One of the images that Jones writes more about is *What Does this Represent / What Do You Represent (Reinhart)* (1978-1984), in the image Wilke is sitting on the floor, in the corner of what appears to be an abandoned room, legs spread and gun in hand, her knees are up and her feet in high heels. The look on her face, and the pose is slouched, on the floor there is an array of toy guns, some which are pointing at her exposed crouch and the gun she is holding. The text “What does this represent / what do you represent” is printed in the foreground (a quote by artist Ad Reinhart). The text points to the way women’s bodies are often the “...unspoken *objects of representation*”¹⁶⁹ In this image Wilke is constructing herself as cornered by the gaze, quite literally in the corner of a room, but the naked pose disrupts it. Her disinterested, slouched naked body, truly naked and revealed, she is unveiling what “beckons and threatens the castration anxious male,” as Jones puts it.¹⁷⁰ Forcing the gaze to surrender, as Ownes writes about, the immobility induced by the gaze, and reflecting its power back on itself. What Jones points out and is an important factor in this image is the crossing of visual codes, she is naked but desexualized (as written about above, the differences of a nude and the naked, she is here the epitome of nakedness), she is deobjectified, and still an “object” to be seen.¹⁷¹ Offering herself up to be viewed, but somehow deflecting what could be a desiring gaze, with her pose. With the title and text in the image she again shows how she is working with the functions of the gaze.

The immobility and posing also feature in the video documentation of Wilke’s performance. In the performance she freezes her movements before moving into the next, as if her picture has been taken. Jones points out here that this aligns with the phenomenological term of body/subject as “always both a picture and a thinking subject at the same time: “The subject poses as an object *in order to be a subject*”.”¹⁷² The body often being linked to the object world, the artists Jones discuss use their bodies to show that the mind and body cannot be separate from the other, as the body is how we present ourselves in the world, how we experience the world and how we are impacted by the actions and encounters our bodies make throughout our lives, this is what makes us who we are, subjects of the world if you will.

¹⁶⁸ Jones, *Body Art*, 157.

¹⁶⁹ Jones, *Body Art*, 157.

¹⁷⁰ Jones, *Body Art*, 159.

¹⁷¹ Jones, *Body Art*, 159.

¹⁷² Jones, *Body Art*, 159.

This is what I take away from Jones as to how the artists, such as Wilke, are embodied in their work, both object and subject at the same time. The exploration of action and posing in Wilke's body art (and other artists) align with this phenomenological thought as Jones has appropriated this philosophy to her interpretations. Jones' use of Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler also outlines how she can use a feminist phenomenological approach to the artworks. These philosophers, and Jones, go against the Cartesian thought of transcendence by showing that it is an impossible goal in essence, because we are tied to the object world, and as de Beauvoir writes about the immanence prescribed to women is linked to the fact that women were viewed as more body/object than self/subject. That society place people in boxes based on their gender, race and class, through politics, norms and laws. The self is formed by the outside factors.

Riley's *Self Portrait 3*¹⁷³ I alluded to as being perhaps on the more "naked side" than the nude. It is stripped down, only showing us Riley's body wearing only panties, on all fours, again her tattoos are the only identifying features in the image. Her head is missing from the frame, only a few strands of jet-black hair is visible. In this sense she is more hidden than in *Reflections*.¹⁷⁴ Here we only see body, almost floating in space, frozen in this pose. This focus on the image of the naked body is repeated in Riley's self portraits, and in Wilke's work. Both artists have been critiqued on this, and have been sexualized. Wilke by male counterparts in the art world, and criticized by her female peers for being too sexual, and in their view aligning herself with promiscuity and on the opposite side of them in the women's liberation cause. What is apparent after reading Jones' interpretations is that this critique is also based in what norms and actions are the feminist, or feminist artist is supposed to follow. As Butler would put it the wrong way of performing your gender will be punished by those who deem it wrong. Riley mainly is applauded for her daring and explicit works, which I attribute to the world moving forward, knowledge and conversations about women's sexuality is more acceptable and acknowledged in Euro-American culture. Even though there are polarizing political views these days on equality, prompted by the far-right conservatives. Riley's tapestries embody her lived experience in this culture, where online-dating and sending intimate images of oneself to strangers have become a common thing. It has also become a common crime to share these intimate images unbeknownst to the person in the images. Riley "self-publish" her nudes as tapestries, not just to be in control, but to make them real or serve

¹⁷³ Illustration nr. 6

¹⁷⁴ Illustration nr. 2

as a time-stamp. This is what for Wilke would be the documented videos or photographs of her performances, and what Jones sees as an important part of body art. They are “evidence” of an event taking place, it is a moment in time, a marker of where your body has been, and where we as viewers can later revisit.

The two artists, years apart and what one would say is a lifetime apart, share the same interest in how they portray themselves, as both artists and as subjects/objects being viewed by others. They both seem to have knowledge of the theory of a *male* gaze, as they both play into the role of being an object and “deflecting” the gaze to make it turn in on itself (e.g., Wilke’s *What Does This Represent / What Do You Represent*, and Riley’s faceless self portraits). Both Riley and Wilke work with actions and posing, freezing themselves in a certain situation in time, space, and body. Their immobility as object/subject of their body art, only becoming mobile, or given life, when it is engaged with. For Riley I would argue there is a double engagement, that of the receiver of the intimate photo sent by Riley, and the viewer of the tapestry she creates from this exchange. In both situations Riley is the artist/creator, she chooses which image to send (my guess is that she has several selfies to choose from, before landing on what she feels is the right image to send), and afterwards she weaves the image, edits, scales and creating a new image. The weaving process that takes place is where she engages with the image of herself, where she sees herself as an object perhaps, and then weaves the image in order to become a subject? As Wilke freezes herself in poses during performances - acting as if she is already a photograph, an object – Riley is even more aware of her own objectification, as being fetishized and victimized by the gaze. She knows that the person she has sent the image to, will use it for their own pleasure, their own viewing. By weaving this image, she not only engages with her own self image, but reiterates it, and changes its meaning, from “naughty selfie” to work of art. She also objectify herself in this process, from artist to object of art, her self image no longer being just a weaved version of this image, but an intersubjective or chiasmic encounter. Doubly immobilizing effect, and at the same time questioning the objectification of herself, and other women in our Western culture. Not unlike what Wilke was doing in her *So Help Me Hannah* project.

The associations I make between these two artists, is based in what has been discussed earlier and what comes to mind when reading Jones’ interpretations, or encounters with Wilke’ work. The chapter in *Body Art* (by Amelia Jones), where she discuss Wilke’s artistic use of the rhetoric of the pose (and her own body in general), and the constant reiterations of

her own body/mind in her artistic practice, is essential to understand, or claim, that Riley is connected to body art.

CHAPTER 3 - THE TRAUMA OF LIVING

Affair, The (2020) is a large tapestry measuring 254 cm x 185cm, created on Riley's big loom the work is full of intricate details.¹⁷⁵ The front and center of the work is a tattooed torso and thighs, laid on black sheets, one breast exposed as the woman lifts her black shirt. This is a video, paused at 00:03, the window frame showing us it is a QuickTime file, and the duration of the video is about nine minutes. The open computer window showing the video blocks the full view of the window behind it, an internet browser page with six tabs – a partial headline reading “2 die in...”, “Search results”, “watch *Affair, The*”, “Just say no”, “lifeline” – a mixture of violence, sex, entertainment and helpline. An instant message is readable in the top left corner “wyd?”, the abbreviation for “what are you doing?”. Is this a day in the life of Erin M. Riley? A tapestry of the everyday roaming on her computer, reading articles, watching TV, research, chatting, going through the content of what she has stored on her computer, or will send to a potential lover online. A millennial woman, living her online life.

The colors of the tapestry are dark greys, and the internet browser window has a similar grey tone to the room in the video, covering the upper level of the tapestry. Below the window of the QuickTime file, we can see the lower part of the internet browser. Red bricks, a person in uniform, a police officer behind yellow tape. An image from the article “2 die in...”. An orange outline frames the image.

3.1 - WAVAW

In Riley's latest solo exhibition at P.P.O.W. Gallery, *The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies*,¹⁷⁶ *Affair, The* (2020) was exhibited in a room that featured other tapestries Riley made in 2020 based on vintage posters and pamphlets from the 1970s.¹⁷⁷ These have a bright orange color and shading, ornate with messaging in black letters about domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the fight against violence against women. The bright orange in these tapestries is reflected in the orange outline in *Affair, The*. The juxtaposition of these tapestries

¹⁷⁵ Illustration nr. 4

¹⁷⁶ P.P.O.W. Gallery, "The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies."

¹⁷⁷ Illustration nr. 3

exhibits an important theme in Riley's work.¹⁷⁸ That of violence, sex, tragedy, and community. The artworks exhibited were made during the COVID-19 pandemic and during the period of lockdown, this room in the exhibition also have a work depicting an improvised testing station outside a hospital in New York. A room curated to show the viewers something familiar, a societal and cultural problem, an increase of violence because of the lockdown, and a history of violence.

A worldwide pandemic has affected everyone, for some in more horrific ways than others, but it has had an impact on all of us. As we move towards better days, with vaccines and our society returning to the new normal, the issue of domestic violence and abuse will continue to be a pandemic the world struggles to handle. Research shows that 1 in 3 women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime (for men it is 1 in 10).¹⁷⁹ For the intent and purposes of this thesis I will focus on women. The United Nations Women fight for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls worldwide. In May 2020 they launched the public awareness campaign "The Shadow Pandemic" focusing on the global increase in domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁸⁰ The goal of the campaign is to raise public awareness of domestic violence and urge the public to support women they know, or suspect are experiencing violence. Since the start of national guidelines to stay-at-home and quarantine lockdown of society, workers in healthcare, police, shelters and support services, organizations, and state-run facilities that work with domestic violence victims and survivors reported an increase in 911-calls and calls to hotlines about domestic violence. Both UN Women and organizations locally urged the governments to implement strategies to deal with this increase in the planning of emergency preparedness and crisis management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the lockdown, many women and children were trapped in their homes with their abusers. The pandemic has led to many people being temporarily laid off or losing their jobs entirely, economic struggle is among the factors that increase the chance of abuse/violence increasing where it is already

¹⁷⁸ P.P.O.W Gallery, "The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies."

¹⁷⁹ UN Women, "Press release: UN Women raises awareness of the shadow pandemic of violence against women during COVID-19," news release, 27. May, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/5/press-release-the-shadow-pandemic-of-violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.

¹⁸⁰ Women, "Press release - The Shadow Pandemic."

happening, or it can be a factor for someone to become abusive/violent.¹⁸¹ Domestic violence is also one of the effects of a crisis, e.g., during a war, natural disasters, pandemics, etc.

Riley's bright orange tapestry *WAVAW* (2020) was made based on a pamphlet by Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW). The tapestry is mostly in orange shades but depicts a woman with her hands in front of her mouth, crying, in black/brown color. Behind her is a framed silhouette of a man, as if he is standing in an open door frame, the light behind him making it so you only see the silhouette. Above the woman's face we can read "Wife" and below her face the word "Beating", wife beating. A scene is about to happen as this man enters the room, or perhaps it has already happened, the fear in the woman's face is palpable either way. Knowing that the situation for many women worsened during the lockdown, and Riley working through similar issues in her family, the creation of this work does not seem like a coincidence. The way I encounter this work and interpret it, is that it can be placed as a clear reaction to what is happening around her. It is a way for her to raise awareness to the shadow pandemic which is not spoken about in mass media or that has everyone's attention. Unlike the work discussed earlier in this thesis, *WAVAW* is not an image by Riley, or an image she has sent to someone. The work is ever still personal and exhibits a piece of Riley, it is embodied with her subjectivity. As a viewer I add my own feelings on the topic, see the connections between this work and *Affair, The* (2020) and put pieces together. This is how this chapter has come to be, it is what I as viewer and interpreter of the work add to what I see.

3.2 - A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Celebrate, *Community Problem*, *WAVAW* and *SOS* (2020) by Riley were all made during the pandemic, and they highlight the message to end violence against women (and children).¹⁸² Not only can they be interpreted to be a direct result of the current events of lockdown and the increase in domestic violence, but they give a nod to history as well. Domestic violence has

¹⁸¹ Brad; McKenney Boserup, Mark; Elkbuli, Adel, "Alarming trends in US domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic," *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 38, no. 12 (2020), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.04.077>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0735675720303077>.

¹⁸² Illustration nr. 3 +

Erin M. Riley, *Celebrate*, 2020. Wool, cotton, 48''x 60'' (121,92x152,4 cm).

Erin M. Riley, *Community Problem*, 2020. Wool, cotton, 48''x 60'' (121,92x152,4 cm).

Erin M. Riley, *SOS*, 2020. Wool, cotton, 48''x 52'' (121,92x132,08 cm).

been a shadow pandemic for centuries, one can almost say it has always been present in our society. SafeNETWORK, is a project of the California Department of Health Services Maternal and Child Health Branch Domestic Violence Section, they aid and provide training for battered women's shelters that are funded by MCH-funded throughout California,¹⁸³ for a conference on domestic violence in 1999 they produced "Herstory of Domestic Violence: A Timeline of the Battered Women's Movement".¹⁸⁴ This document contains a timeline, starting at 735 B.C., and documents the violence against women and the laws that supported the husbands rights to beat (discipline, as it says in the law of 753 B.C.) their wives, and the laws and changes that have empowered women, up until 1999.¹⁸⁵ This document is gruesome to read, the history it tells is one of oppression and blatant disregard for women as humans. It comes as no surprise that in the Middle Ages and under church law women were seen as property, this is well known, but this belief was carried out for so many centuries, and only seeing some true change of events in the 20th century. The patriarchal hold on society in action. When the women's liberation movement started getting some footing in the 1970's they fought for, amongst other issues, the right to divorce an abusive husband and to legally claim compensation for their injuries. In the 1970s the anti-rape movement made some ground, and it became illegal for husbands to rape their wives. In the US women march annually to "Take Back the Night", feeling empowered by the collective fight to walk the streets safely at night. In 1991 female students at Brown University started a graffiti campaign, naming the male students who commit date rape, at one hearing a woman stood up every three minutes to indicate the frequency of attacks on women throughout the US, the university initiated a mandatory date rape seminar and implemented procedures on dealing with complaints. In 1993 the UN recognized domestic violence as an international human rights issue and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was issued. Stalking became a crime in California 1990, first state with an anti-stalking law. This happened after two high-profile cases involving celebrity-stalking, where Therese Saldana was stabbed by her stalker, and Rebecca Schaeffer was murdered by her stalker. In 1994 New York recognized that rapists cannot claim that the victims outfit provoked the attack.

¹⁸³ MCH stands for Maternal and Child Health, a grant program operated by a partnership between federal governments and states.

¹⁸⁴ "Herstory of Domestic Violence: A Timeline of the Battered Women's Movement," SafeNetwork: California's Domestic Violence Resource, 1999, accessed October, 2021, <https://vawnet.org/material/herstory-domestic-violence-timeline-battered-womens-movement>.

¹⁸⁵ SafeNetwork, "Herstory of Domestic Violence."

The Clothes Line Project is a public arts demonstration that originated from Hyannis, Massachusetts, where the Cap Cod's Women's Defense Agenda became aware of the statistics that during the Vietnam War 58 000 soldiers were killed, and at the same time 51 000 women were murdered by their intimate partners in the US.¹⁸⁶ This demonstration was adopted by other universities and is held annually to this day. The Norwegian feminist journal *Fett* dedicated an issue to textiles in 2020, featuring articles and interviews related to different aspects of textiles. One of the articles that stood out to me was about women in South America using embroidery to raise awareness about femicide.¹⁸⁷ The embroideries were created to preserve the memory of the women and girls that were murdered or attacked, either by a husband, father, boyfriend, or stranger. In many of the cases, there has been no justice served for the victims and there is not being done enough to prevent these cases from happening over and over again.¹⁸⁸

This history of violence against women was also the background to many artists in the 1960-80s in the US, in Nancy Princenthal's book *Unspeakable acts* she discusses the artistic production of several well-known artists (such as Yoko Ono, Judy Chicago, and Valie Export) who created art that dealt with violence (sexual or otherwise).¹⁸⁹ I read the book to achieve some insight as to how artists have worked with this theme in the past, and whether or not Riley's work relates to them in some way. One example of an artist that came to mind was Yoko Ono and her work *Cut Piece*, a performance from 1964.¹⁹⁰ In the piece Ono invites the viewers to participate in the performance. Ono sits quietly in her finest dress or suit, with a pair of scissors in front of her. Each member of the audience is invited to cut a piece of the fabric and take it with them. They decided where to cut and how much. What Ono has said about the work is that it was a comment on giving and taking. The reason I wish to discuss this work is that even though it is not said to be a work about violence, it is a piece about trust. Ono places a pair of scissors in the hands of complete strangers, men and women, instructing them to cut away her clothes. Giving and taking, the artist gives, and the viewer/audience takes. As with Riley's self portraits that she has given away, the receiver has taken them in their possession. But as an artist they are both in control of how much they are giving away,

¹⁸⁶ "The Clothesline Project," (Web page), Utah Valley University, 1998, 2021, <http://www.clotheslineproject.info/about.html>.

¹⁸⁷ Ingrid Fadnes, "Brodert feminisme," *Fett* 2, no. Tekstil (2020).

¹⁸⁸ Fadnes, "Brodert feminisme."

¹⁸⁹ Nancy Princenthal, *Unspeakable acts : women, art, and sexual violence in the 1970s* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2019).

¹⁹⁰ "«Cut Piece» by Yoko Ono," (Webpage), 2021, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/yoko-ono-cut-piece-1964/ (About Yoko Ono's performance «Cut Piece»(1964)).

and aware of what they take back from both situations. Both Ono and Riley work with trust, and mistrust. A situation that can be dangerous is subdued by the fact that they are in control as artists.

Another artist and piece that is worth mentioning is Marina Abramovic's performance *Rhythm 0* (1974).¹⁹¹ This piece share some of the elements of Ono's performance, the inclusion of the viewers becoming active participants in the art performance, and the artists laying their body bare and in the hands of strangers. Abramovic's performance had a higher level of danger for her, as the items that were placed for the audience to use ranged from a feather-bow to a handgun with bullets. Putting herself in harm's way, exhibiting trust or perhaps just hopefulness in the good human spirit that no one would shoot her. It also challenges the viewers to confront where their limitations are. With the history I have outlined above the threat of violence to Abramovic was real. Giving and taking. Riley, Ono and Abramovic lays their bodies bare and places the control of what will happen to them in another person's hands. The way they take back that control is by ending the performance, or in Riley's case make a tapestry. She takes back her body, her choice as to how it will be exposed.

3.3 TEXTILE ART IS POLITICAL ART

The vintage poster/pamphlet work by Riley can be associated with other textile artists that use their art for political messaging or activism. Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970), whose work has been seeing some newfound popularity internationally in recent years, was no stranger to political content in her work. Ryggen created her work from her home on Ørland, a farm in Trondheimsfjorden in Norway, inspired by events of her time she created large tapestries that today are exhibited in museums and public places all over Scandinavia, the largest collection of her work resides in Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum in Trondheim.¹⁹² She was the first textile artist to be exhibited at Høstutstillingen (in 1964, this is an annual exhibition of contemporary art in Norway) and the first female artist from Norway at the Venezia biennale (1964). Her work was inspired by the events of her time – fascism and World War II, as well

¹⁹¹ "«Rhythm 0» (1974) by Marina Abramovic ", 2021, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/abramovic-rhythm-0-t14875> (Webpage for the performance «Rhythm 0» 1974).

¹⁹² "Hannah Ryggen-salen," (Webpage), 2021, <https://nkim.no/hannah-ryggen-salen> (Webpage for collection).

as political change, and the lives of women and the working class. The tapestries often feature many figures, with different expressions and positions, some of the figures are portraits of people in her time (such as Hitler, Mussolini, Trygve Lie, Einar Gerhardsen) and she inserted herself in them as well. Red and blue are recurring colors, often combined with earthy tones of brown and yellow. Ryggen worked the entire process herself, mostly self-taught in the material, she did the carding, spinning, and dying of yarn herself, using plants and natural items to add color.¹⁹³ The blue color, *potteblå* (pot blue) was a signature color in her work representing life and dreams. The color was created using urine and Indigo, herself contributing to the pot and she always had a bucket ready for her guests, the pot was referred to as “Pisshinken” (pissbucket). This method of creating the blue color has been used for centuries and has often been contributed to men, along with a myth that men are the only ones capable of creating this color because of their magical piss. The Norwegian artist Veslemøy Lilleengen debuted at Høstutstillingen in 2021 with an ongoing project called *Norsk Bauta* (Norwegian Bauta) which feature t-shirts tie-dyed with different blue tones with a female artists name on them.¹⁹⁴ Inspired by Ryggen and her frequent use of the method to create the color blue, and with a solid dose of feminist rage, Lilleengen has decided to spend the next 11 years of her work to collecting urine from female artists in every county in Norway.¹⁹⁵ She started with her home county (Trøndelag), each t-shirt has a unique shade of blue and person (Hannah Ryggen’s name is featured on one of them).¹⁹⁶ Not only bringing attention to the art world and its favoring of cis white males, but Lilleengen gives a nod to Ryggen and her work, and she shows the multitude of female artists in Norway. There is something personal and collective about this work, a group of women standing together, the t-shirts being a stand-in for their bodies, and at the same time containing a part of their body. In Ryggens work she and her friends/family are an essential part of the work, in the *potteblå* color.

One can question an artist’s intent of producing work that contain political messaging, the question we often ask is whether it is intentional or if it is the interpretation of the viewer or art historian that create the message. Sometimes the message is clear, as with the poster/pamphlet tapestries by Riley, the artist does not have to say what the message is

¹⁹³ Anita Rebolledo, "Hannah Ryggen - Evig aktivist," webpage, *Dypdykk i samlingen* 2021.

<https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/historier-fra-museet/dypdykk-i-samlingen/hannah-ryggen--evig-aktivist/>.

¹⁹⁴ "Veslemøy Lilleengen - «Norsk Bauta - Trøndelag» 2021," (Webpage, catalogue), Norske Billedkunstnere, 2021, accessed November, 2021, <https://www.hostutstillingen.no/2021/veslemoy-lilleengen/> (Artist page).

¹⁹⁵ "Norsk Bauta," (Webpage for artist, project «Norsk Bauta»), 2021, accessed November, 2021, <https://www.veslemoylilleengen.com/norsk-bauta>.

¹⁹⁶ Lilleengen, "Norsk Bauta."

because we can see it. Other times it is what we add as viewers that create the message, or meaning, as with Riley's self portraits or her earlier work (mentioned in the introduction). The motifs do not bear any clear writing or tell you their "purpose" through the name, it is left to us as viewers to see, feel what they are telling us. Riley's work is political because I give it a political meaning. The self portraits bring light to the topic of sexting, online presence and how we conduct ourselves online. It is a comment on this culture of image sharing, and our consumption of media. As with Hannah Ryggen it is also a look into everyday life and what Riley tells us about her life. The slogan for the feminists of the 1970s was "The personal is political", which is true. The everyday, mundane and boring is affected by political change, and disruptions such as war or a pandemic. The personal is also what encourages us to strive for political change, such as with the above-mentioned violence. And the use of textile art has a history in fighting for change, exhibited with Hannah Ryggen, the Clothesline project, more recently the Pussyhat project or Riley's poster/pamphlet works. It is a craft associated with women and the comfort of home, mothers who knit and grandmas who embroider. It is associated with historical representation, and storytelling, as Riley has spoken of the tapestries hanging in museums and castles that tell the stories of great wars or a good hunting trip, a symbol of power. The textile artists such as Lilleengen and Riley (and many others) show that the impact of textile art is still powerful, that it is still a relevant art form, and that it has a place in the contemporary art world, not just in arts and crafts, a fight that textile artists have been fighting for. Textile art is political art, as the personal is political, as art is political.

3.4 CAR CRASH

The 24/7 newsfeed cycle is a form of consumerism, a commodity in a billion-dollar industry – that never stops producing, because the world keeps turning and with-it tragedy and absolute horror. This past year the entire world has experienced collective trauma, that of a global pandemic. It has been a part of everyone's life, for some as an extra burden on top of an already horrifying reality. We have been glued to the news and updates on what is happening, and most likely at some point stopped looking because it was too much. Now that many countries have vaccinated a large part of their population (Western countries), the news of Covid-19 has gone down, in newspapers there is just a small notice on the infection numbers. This does not mean we are out of the loop; this does not mean that it is "over" – but the news

of countries that have not received enough vaccines, where the virus is still spreading and the number of deaths is growing, are overlooked, silenced, or scrolled past. It is no longer a world united to fight the pandemic when the fortunate won't help those that are struggling. This is not a new issue. Desensitization – numb to other people's pain and suffering, "When you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn't really have an effect." Andy Warhol stated in an interview with Gene Swenson in 1963.¹⁹⁷

Unlike Riley's poster/pamphlet tapestries *Four dead* (2018)¹⁹⁸ and *Anxiety* (2020)¹⁹⁹ depicts a horrible car accident, bruises and cuts, tragedy. An accident we as viewers can't know the cause of in *Four Dead*, but only see the aftermath – a totaled car wreck and the title of the tapestry which tells us that four people died in the accident. In *Anxiety* we see a pair of bruised and cut breasts, revealed and vulnerable – pain is the association that comes to mind and an ache in my own breasts materialize when seeing this work. Wounds heal and leave scars, just as we live with sorrow and the scars that leaves inside us. The two tapestries are very different in their appearance and motifs but are related in that they deal with themes that leave emotional and/or physical scars on us.

In *Four Dead* (2018) we see a white car completely smashed on the passenger side, we can see glimpse of the interior of the car, and what seems to be intact is the front of the car.²⁰⁰ Deduced from this we can see that the car was hit on the passenger side by something big or something going very fast. The car is placed on a truck (you can only see the truck bed and chassis of the truck), ready to be taken to the pound. The space around the car is red and grey, like a night filled with the red flashes from emergency vehicles. The tapestry is based on a photograph of the scene, either found in public police records or from a news article. We can imagine the title of the article reading "Four dead in car accident on "so-and-so" highway/road". This is not the only tapestry Riley has made depicting a car crash, in 2021 she weaved *Wrong Way* (2021), in 2019 *Blue Tarp* shows the "remains" of a car on a blue tarp in what seems like a container-like room, and in the years 2014-16 she created work that depicted roads with skid marks leading out of the road, as well as tapestries of cars involved in car accidents. It is a motif or image she keeps coming back to and weaving again.

¹⁹⁷ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (USA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996). 131

¹⁹⁸ Illustration nr. 5

¹⁹⁹ Illustration nr. 7

²⁰⁰ Illustration nr. 5

One of the associations that come to mind when seeing all these tapestries together is Andy Warhol's silkscreen prints of car accidents. Warhol was no stranger to using images and articles from the news, reiterating them as large artworks in bright colors. *White Burning Car III* (1963) and *Ambulance Disaster* (1963), *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times* (1963)²⁰¹ all feature a horrible car accident, where the image has been multiplied on large canvases using silkscreen printing. These works are part of the *Death and Disaster* series that Warhol created in the early 1960's, this series also feature images taken from newspaper articles on race riots, nuclear explosions, *Tunafish Disaster* (1963) and imagery that are associated with death, *Electric Chair* and the *Jackie* series. The dark content of these works is contrasted with the at times bright colors and an equally large side of the canvas being monochromatic, the repetition of the images makes them blur with each repetition. Warhol has been quoted of saying that "...the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel."²⁰² Better and emptier, numbness, distanced, happy it is not you that had that experience. This quote is significant and perhaps the most accurate way to describe our consumption of media. We are surrounded by horrors, the news, social and cultural media feeds us with the tragedy and disasters of the world, and we become numb to it (as discussed earlier). Honestly it might be because we have to, we must shield ourselves from feeling that everything is just a long series of destruction and misery.

In *The Return of the Real* Hal Foster discusses what he dubs the *traumatic realism* in Warhol's work.²⁰³ Foster implies that there are two readings of Warholian pop art that has been the 'norm'. The *simulacral* reading, which is associated with poststructuralism and that the artist's subjectivity is lost, the artwork stands alone and is placed into the political economy of the commodity sign. Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard are amongst the critics associated with this reading of Warhol.²⁰⁴ The *referential* way of reading Warhol is associated with the critics and historians that tie the work to different themes (fashion, celebrity, gay culture, the Factory, etc.). Foster here refers to Thomas Crow's "Saturday Disaster: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol" (1987) as the most intelligent version of this reading.²⁰⁵ Crow disputes the simulacral reading of Warhol, finding "the reality

²⁰¹ Andy Warhol, *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, 1963. 268.9 x 416.9 cm.

²⁰² Foster, *The Return of the Real*.

²⁰³ Foster, *The Return of the Real*.

²⁰⁴ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 128

²⁰⁵ Thomas Crow, "Saturday disasters: trace and reference in early Warhol," Essay, *Art in America*, no. May 1987 (1987), <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/archives-saturday-disasters-trace-reference-early-warhol-63578/>.

of suffering and death” under the glamour and fetishizing of commodity culture. A referential object for Warhol, the subject in Warhol and the criticality of Warhol – Crow places Warhol in the American tradition of ‘truth-telling’.²⁰⁶ What Foster then questions is can both ways of reading Warhol be right, and can the *Death and Disaster* series be read as both? Foster introduces a third reading, traumatic realism.

Foster proposes that the repetitions in Warhol’s work not only *reproduce* traumatic effects, but they also *produce* them.²⁰⁷ In these repetitions there then lies contradictions “...a warding away of traumatic significance *and* an opening out to it, a defending against traumatic affect *and* producing it.”. Referencing Jacques Lacan’s seminar “The Unconscious and Repetition” (ran in 1964, same time as the Death and Disaster series), Foster explains how pop art is related to surrealism as a traumatic realism. Lacan defined *the real* in terms of trauma, the theory of trauma was for Lacan informed by surrealism (Lacan was an associate of the surrealists). In the seminar Lacan defines the traumatic as a missed encounter with *the real*. As a missed encounter the real cannot be represented, therefore this missed encounter can only be repeated, in fact it must be repeated. In etymological reference to Freud on repetition Lacan states “repetition is not reproduction”. Foster argues that this statement could be the epitome of his argument, that repetition in Warhol is not reproduction in the sense of representation or simulation.²⁰⁸ The repetition in Warhol serves to *screen* the real understood as traumatic. This need also *points* to the real, and at this point, the real *ruptures* the screen of repetition. The rupture occurs in a subject that is *touched* by an image, between the perception and the consciousness. Lacan calls this traumatic point the *tuché*, Roland Barthes called it the punctum (“Camera Lucida” 1980).²⁰⁹ Foster explains that the rupture, tuché or punctum is about the confusion of location (where is it located in the image, or is it something brought in from the outside, the viewer) which is “...a confusion of subject and world, inside and outside.”, this is an aspect of trauma, and it may be that this confusion *is* traumatic.²¹⁰

Barthes locates the punctum in the details of content, this is a personal effect and individual, an element that stands out and hits you. Foster writes that his punctum in Warhol’s *White Burning Car III* (1963) is not in a specific detail in the image, but in the repetition of the indifference of the passerby to the victim impaled on the telephone pole. In *Ambulance*

²⁰⁶ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 130

²⁰⁷ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 132

²⁰⁸ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 132.

²⁰⁹ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 132

²¹⁰ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 134

Disaster (1963) the punctum does not arise from the slumped woman in the top image, but the tear that effaces her head in the bottom image. Foster explains that in Warhol the punctum lies less in the details, but more in the technique; the “floating flashes” of the silkscreen process, blanching and blanking, repeating, and coloring of the images. A repetitive “popping” of the image. “These pops, such as a slipping in register or a washing in color, serve as visual equivalents of our missed encounters with the real”.²¹¹ As they seem accidental, they also appear repetitive, automatic, technological – accident and technology is relation that is crucial to the discourse of shock, and a great Warhol subject. Elaborating on our optical unconscious, a Walter Benjamin term on how to describe the subliminal effects of modern image technologies, developed in response to photography and film, Warhol responds to the postwar society of the spectacle, of mass media and commodity-signs.²¹² Warhol has chosen moments when the spectacle cracks, (car wrecks, JFK assassination, the Monroe suicide, racist attacks), moments that leave behind victims of shock. The first order of shock is screened by the repetition of the image, and this repetition may also produce a second order of trauma, and it is here in the level of technique (for Foster), that “the *punctum* breaks through the screen and allows the real to poke through.”²¹³ Because of this, the punctum in Warhol is not exclusively private or public. It is an invitation to rethink.

The question at hand is if we can apply this theory of traumatic realism to Riley’s work? The images by Warhol and Riley are very different, there is not the level of repetition in Riley’s work as Foster argues as somewhat essential to his theory of traumatic realism in Warhol, and yet there are elements that fit into his theory in Riley’s car wreck tapestries. As the punctum, the rupture or tuché in Warhol is both private and public, I would argue that so is the case in Riley’s images. It lies in the level of technique and the moment she has chosen, as Foster argues is where the traumatic real reveals itself. In Warhol the images include the victims of the accidents, and as Foster illustrate the repetition of indifference and the effacing of them is where Foster locates his punctum. In Riley’s tapestries of car wrecks or skid marks that lead out of the road, there are no people included, to me this is the punctum in terms of traumatic realism, a missing piece. The damage to the cars and the indications these (also in some of the titles) is enough to make your gut clench or get a piercing feeling of terror. In *Four Dead* (2018)²¹⁴ not only does the title tell us that four people died, but the emergency of

²¹¹ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 134

²¹² Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 134

²¹³ Foster, *The Return of the Real*. 134

²¹⁴ Illustration nr. 5

the image places you on the sideline, a passerby, to this horrific accident, having arrived a little late in the in the sequence of event. So, unlike Warhol who use images that feature the victims, and others, that have been used in the news media, Riley chooses images that show the moment in closing. The punctum for me in this image is not the car wreck itself, but red dots and blurred background, they pull me in, and I can feel myself shiver as the night surrounds me with emergency lights. It is after the car has stopped burning, the victims are taken away, and perhaps the road has opened so people can drive by and watch as the wreck gets removed from the scene. Slowly you drive by and see the total damage to the car, and after having spent maybe hours waiting to pass by, you sit in silence in your car thinking “I hope someone made it out”.

The images Riley use for these tapestries of car wrecks are also from the news media (or found in public records), and the lack of people present in the images might not be an artistic choice of selection, but a change in the use of images in the news. In Norway we have “Vær Varsom-plakaten” (Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press) which include a code of ethics and standards for the Norwegian press.²¹⁵ This document states that the use of sensitive information and imagery in cases where something criminal or an ongoing investigation is taking place, the journalistic standard is to avoid using images or descriptions that can be used to identify the individuals involved.²¹⁶ The press also don’t necessarily have access or opportunity to see the crime scene until after it has been cleared. This was not the case for the images that Warhol used, here the press had a front-row seat to the accidents, and it was published. Searching the internet for a similar code of ethics in USA, I found that they do have several for different publication media. The National Press Photographers Association have a code of ethics that states “Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see.”²¹⁷ Were the victims and individuals in the photographs Warhol used treated with respect and dignity when published? Thomas Crow (which is mentioned earlier in the text) attributes Warhol with having an attraction to “the open sores in American political life”.²¹⁸ And as

²¹⁵ "Vær Varsom-plakaten," updated 01.01.2021, 2020, 2021, <https://presse.no/pfu/etiske-regler/vaer-varsom-plakaten/> (Code of ethics for the Norwegian press).

²¹⁶ Vær Varsom-plakaten, Pressens Faglige Utvalg (PFU) 4.7 Publiseringsregler (publishing rules) (2020).

²¹⁷ "United States of America: NPPA Code of Ethics," (Webpage, code of ethics), 2016, 2021, <https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/code-of-ethics-national-press-photographers-association> (Code of ethics for press photographers).

²¹⁸ Crow, "Saturday Disasters."

Foster wrote Crow places Warhol in an American tradition of truth-telling with his *Death and Disasters* series.²¹⁹ The essay by Crow focuses mainly on the portraits Warhol made of Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Onassis and Elizabeth Taylor, but also how these are related to the *Death and Disaster* series.²²⁰ These women were worshipped and consumed by the public, Crow aligns these works by Warhol to illustrate that he had a deep understanding of consumer culture and of human pain and suffering.²²¹ The effacement of the woman in *Ambulance Disaster* (1963), the tear in the bottom image gives her anonymity, can't we read this as Warhol's attempt to give this woman some respect and dignity? Her identity is veiled by the tear, not as a slash which can be read as removal of importance or indifference but hidden under a veil to cloak the victim from onlookers.

The ability to depict tragedy and suffering, and make art out of that trauma, is an ability that both Warhol and Riley possess. Even though Warhol never claimed that to be the meaning of his work, we can interpret them as such using the right way of looking. With Riley, on the other hand, she is very clear with her intention. In interviews she is open and articulate about what themes she is working on, and it is important to her to tell a story with her work. She is open about her obsessive compulsion of picking at her skin (trichotillomania), which she depicts in *Anxiety* (2020) and hints at in some of her collages in the form of tweezers.²²² In an interview about her solo exhibition *The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies*, she says this about trauma: "The layers of trauma and the ways in which it heals into us and despite eventually not leaving visible scars it changed us in a way that is irreversible."²²³

²¹⁹ Foster, *The Return of the Real*.

²²⁰ Crow, "Saturday Disasters."

²²¹ Crow, "Saturday Disasters."

²²² Illustration nr. 7

²²³ Sofia Balestrin, "Erin M. Riley - The Wool Mirror," *Metal* (Interview), 2021, <https://metalmagazine.eu/bi/post/interview/erin-m-riley>.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary self is a complex statement, at least that is the realization I've had writing this thesis. The self is constructed of many different components that does not always stem from within the artist, or within us for that matter. As discussed in the first chapter, what the artist does is create a self image, not necessarily fictional, but a self that is not necessarily a *real* representation of who they are. Yet at same time it is a part of who they are in the moment of creation. When we meet the creation, or view the image, we as viewers add our own selves to the image. With all our thoughts, desires, and predeterminations, it can be with knowledge of the artist, with being able to place ourselves in the artwork as it relates to us in some way, or we can have a prejudice that tells us that what they represent is something we don't want to see or be reminded of. Erin M. Riley's tapestries, self portraits, car wrecks, posters, or collages, represent parts of her *self*. At the same time, I contribute to them by engaging with them, writing about them or talking of them, my experience of her work tells me something about the world I live in, because I engage with them.

Through the thesis I have discussed her work through different viewpoints, but mainly that of phenomenology. The philosophy of how we experience the world through our senses, and that the body is the site of experience. How Riley is embodied in her work through her artistic choices (actions) and how she chooses to use her own body image to create works of art. The embodied artist gives themselves fully to the viewer, at least in that time and space in which the creation happened, and when we as viewers encounter the work. For Riley her own objectification aligns with the thought that we are always already a photograph, or always both object and subject at the same time. She is the artist subject, and object/artwork to be viewed.

The final chapter continued the narrative that Riley weaves her own lived experience, her collages (only mentioned), the pamphlet/posters from WAVAW and the car wrecks, are topics that surround her, that she consumes or witness, that she looks for and occupies her mind. With instant and constant contact with the world around, through social media and 24/7 news cycle, we/she become both numb and find the fighting power to protect ourselves and the people that oppression and cruelty violates. Through Riley's artistic production she works through her own trauma and the trauma that has been passed on through generations, that being in her own family or the trauma of simply being alive in a world that has so much suffering. The personal is political, the body /self is the site where political, social, and

cultural changes impact the most. Historically we are already always a picture, we already know that the world will hear, read or write about the past two years. A global pandemic, killing millions, it is frozen in time as it is already becoming history.

Making a definitive conclusion to this thesis seems to me as going against what phenomenology and this approach has taught me. The opinions I have towards the work by Riley might, and mostly, will change within my lifetime. I will change, the world will change. The contemporary artists working today, are held to the standards that will change, the norms and rules of social culture will change and with it we will change. For now this is what writing this thesis has taught me, that nothing is permanent and at the same time it is. Riley's body/self is in this time highly relevant and interesting and might be interpreted as a timestamp, of her current life on earth. What Jones would say about this is that she will forever live on in her work because of her instance use of her own self image, because the work of art will live on when she is gone.

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ILLUSTRATIONS / APPENDIX



ILLUSTRATION NR. 1: *Sassy Swirl* (2017)

Wool, cotton

48''x 45''(121,92x114,3cm)

Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley

<https://erinmriley.com/artwork/4191795-Sassy-Swirl.html>

ILLUSTRATION NR. 2: *Reflections* (2019)



Wool, cotton

100''x 78'' (254x198,12cm)

Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley

<https://erinmiley.com/artwork/4615076-Reflections.html>

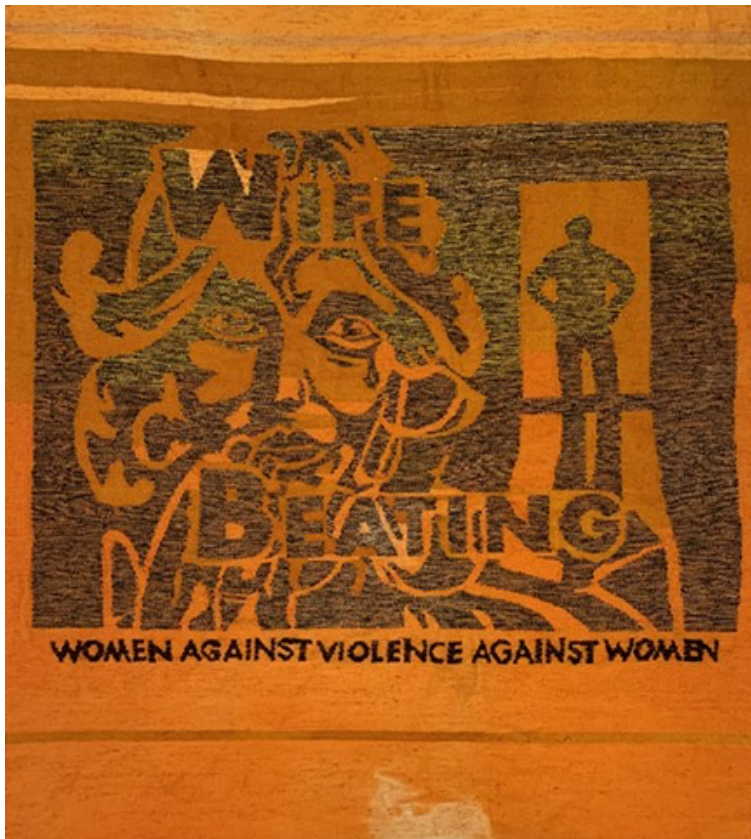


ILLUSTRATION NR. 3:
WAVAW (2020)

Wool, cotton
48''x 52'' (121,92x132,08 cm)
Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley
<https://erinmriley.com/artwork/4741215-WAVAW.html>

ILLUSTRATION NR. 4: *Affair, The* (2020)



Wool, cotton
100''x 73'' (254x185,42 cm)
Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley

<https://erinmriley.com/artwork/4692517-Affair-The.html>

ILLUSTRATION NR. 5: *Four dead* (2018)



Wool, cotton

100''x 62'' (254x157,48cm)

Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley

<https://erinmiley.com/artwork/4466187-Four-dead.html>

ILLUSTRATION NR. 6: *Self portrait 3* (2015)



Wool, cotton

72''x 48'' (182,88x121,92 cm)

Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley

<https://erinmiley.com/artwork/3891535-Self-Portrait-3.html>

ILLUSTRATION NR. 7: *Anxiety*, (2020)



Wool, cotton

100''x 72'' (254x182,88 cm)

Copyright artist: Erin M. Riley

<https://erinmriley.com/artwork/4833114-Anxiety.html>