

It's Big Mouth!

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SOPHIE SWOFFER

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ABSTRACT

The intermedial performance displayed in this video essay, highlights the need to re envisage Laura Mulvey's 1975 theory of the male gaze in relation to the female-identifying ageing woman. The masculinised gaze that Mulvey discusses discards the ageing woman and relentlessly fetishizes the youthful state of femininity. I propose that Mulvey's theory should be revised, along with a focus on rejecting and providing alternatives to the decline narrative that dominates ongoing contemporary perceptions of ageing (Gullette 1997; Mangan 2013). Applying this knowledge, along with methods of practice-based research, I argue that feminist performance art can fruitfully glorify the productive potentials of ageing femininities. This investigation illustrates how I combine digitised media with live performance to interrogate the positioning of the figure of the ageing Hollywood diva. My performative celebration of the diva is rooted in heightened performativity and the grotesque as a means of bursting through the confines of the male gaze, building on the work of performance artists such as Cindy Sherman and Lauren Barri Holstein. Highlighting my creative focus on the face as a medium for subversion, this work displays an engagement with a variety of textures and skins that the diva sheds and outgrows, alluding to the adaptability of the ageing woman. This video essay concludes by exploring the notion of the uncanny cyborgian diva. Using digital software to create an aged cyborgian version of myself, I continue to emphasise the resilient versatility of the diva. Throughout this work I ask; who is the cyborg diva? And what can we learn from her when considering the human problem of ageism? As I am 27 years old, my digital and artificial representations of ageing serve to expose the mechanisms behind my performance of age, highlight the constructedness of my performance techniques, and so challenge the problematically constructed concepts and perceptions of the ageing woman. *This video essay will consist of footage from my live performance of It's Big Mouth! along with the film work that I shot as an accompaniment to it. The piece will also includes a written transcript for readers, along with a link to the video file*.

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KEYWORDS:

Feminst Performance Art;
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Intermedial Performance;
Hollywood; Laura Mulvey

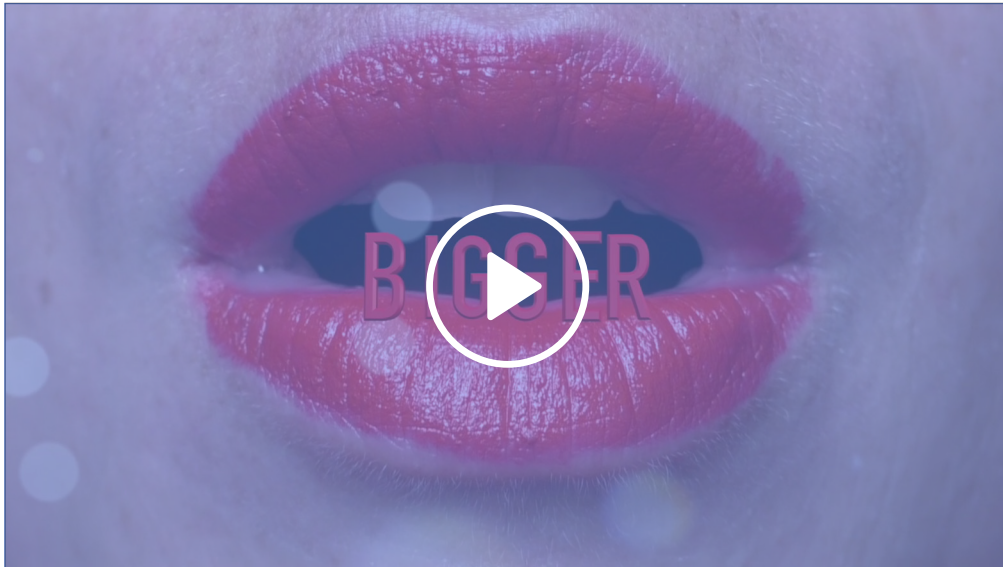
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The Following video is restricted due to its mature content. No one under the age of 64 is allowed to enter... Are you old enough?

Swoffer
Body, Space & Technology
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Clinging, covering, peeling, adapting.

I am a chameleon

White powder and red lips

I smack, pummel and shed

Grey against a backdrop of red

I stretch, rip and rebuild.

The flesh may have sunk around my eyes but I can finally see

Are you experienced enough?

I am a chameleon

I am the mother tongue

I am the Diva

Are you experienced enough?

Weathered and wisened

I am the bigger picture

I continue to taste and consume

Gaining, growing adapting

My skin cannot contain me

I outgrow this home and create another

I stretch, rip and rebuild

I stretch, rip and rebuild

You are losing definition...

Definition, definition, definitions

Losing definitions

Crone, witch, hag

Lose those definitions!

*Wrinkles? Smiling is so good for that
Desire is so good for that
Living your life is so good for that
And you're supposed to live.*

*Knowing who you are
Seeing that bigger picture
Realising your worth
That is SO ageing!
You must continue to overflow
Let your desires overflow
Pissing yourself laughing doesn't sound too bad does it?*

*Your body is not confiscated
Your body is still your home
Break up and destroy
Wave goodbye to smooth skin and damaging conformist attitudes
And welcome the jowls of evolution*

*Bite off that tongue and invent a new language
Old age is all of us and we are all ageing
Open your eyes and see me
Because I am everywhere
Now open your mouth
You will find it will stretch wider
Speak more truth
And taste everything!*

*Let your tongue reverberate
Let your teeth continue to chatter
You are all Big Mouth!*

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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