



*Drawn from Life*

Sarah Oberrauch

*Cover Image:*

*Carrie Mae Weems*

*The Kitchen Table Series*

*20 platinum prints, 14 letterpress text sheets*

*In Untitled (Kitchen Table Series) Carrie Mae Weems staged and photographed a fictional drama, playing the lead role herself. In the context of a simple setting that remains constant—the artist’s own kitchen table—the series explores the shifting roles occupied by the strong central female character: lover, friend, and mother.*

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In their daily life together trouble lurked. He said she was much too domineering. He didn't mind a woman speaking her mind, but hey, she was taking it a tad too far. Accused her of talking too loudly, being a little too wild in public places. No matter what the subject, she had to get her two cents in, ruined dinner parties with her insistent demand that everything — the flowers on the table — be viewed politically. He was tired of that base and superstructure white-boy-book-shit! Arguing til blue in the face bout them theories. Couldn't be cool or back-down just once. Naw!! She had to have the last word, had to be right. Plus she was always in the streets, running. Oh, and the way she was dealing with the kid! He didn't dig it at all. Something had to give.

**Abstract**

Theory has historically been a form of discursive gatekeeping, because of the deliberately complex use of terminology and the insistence on objectivity. It is inaccessible to many who may not be able to afford the resources required in order to practice it, such as time, energy, or money for tuition, making it an exclusive preserve of the already privileged. Beyond who gets to write theory is the question of who is allowed to read, understand, and dialogue with it.

This thesis examines the work of practitioners who counter the exclusivity of theory by puncturing the ideal of objectivity through the insertion of their self-hood, the parameters of which are framed by the marginalised nature of their bodies and perspectives, thus allowing for subjectivity to come through. Specifically my thesis explores the contours of autotheory, a strand of theoretical discourse that relates the personal to the structural, while contextualising it within scholarly research and systems of citation. Authors, such as Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, bell hooks and Hélène Cixous, who pioneered this genre, did so as a way of resisting the white-cis-het-patriarchal conventions that prescribed and institutionalized, for centuries, the way theory ought to be written and proliferated. These practitioners, through their writing and art, incorporate their personal body-shaped lived experience and highlight the extant place of subjectivity, thus dismantling the myth of universality by embracing difference. Commingling memoir and autobiography with theory is the strategy they adopt to subvert theoretical discourse by allowing a body—otherwise excluded from mainstream domains—to enter a text or inform a work of art either materially or conceptually.



## Preface

*“It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting.”  
Simone de Beauvoir*

Since I became a mother my world turned upside down. I have had to struggle to find time and peace of mind to write these pages. The abundance of time and energy that I previously had have become precious resources. The privilege of having a room of my own has gone; I have to write whenever and wherever it is possible. Being a mother means being constantly available, which translates to continual distraction and breaks in thinking. In order to write, however, one needs to shut the door, which is simply not possible within the demands of motherhood. And yet, I do not see or experience motherhood as an obstacle to my intellectual pursuits, rather, my encounter with it has allowed the notion of female subjectivity to enter my field of research.

Since I began my studies in curating I have come across the gendered aspects of the profession. The shared etymology of care work and curating in the Latin word *curare* (to care) emphasizes the kinship between the two. Typically associated with modesty, restraint and a relinquishing of creativity of authorship, over the past decades the practice of curating has undergone a significant emancipatory trajectory; “from invisible agents/stagehands behind the scenes of (representational) economies to the role of protagonist



that takes center stage.”<sup>1</sup> Since the 1970s, the figure of the curator as “authority”<sup>2</sup> has been institutionalized.

Autotheory is a way to reflect upon authority and authorship in order to “counter” the understanding of curator as gatekeeper. I am drawn to autotheory because I see it as a possible way for a critical-creative intervention within a white-cis-het-male-authored understanding of exhibition-making. It offers scope for a multi-authored, collaborative approach to curating, moving beyond the artistic-genius idiom. My ongoing research on autotheory has helped me understand how, for centuries, female subjectivity itself was subjugated and kept outside the periphery of intellectual thought, and how women of colour had to assert their selfhood and identities in order to not be erased in the struggle for female visibility.

My thesis traces certain crucial aspects of autotheory in relation to its evolution. Within my personal curatorial practice, as an extension of my ongoing research and process, I decided to set up a writing workshop series in South Tyrol led by three outstanding practitioners and scholars of the autotheory genre, Rosalyn D’Mello, Nadaj Abt and Lauren Fournier.

1 Nanne Buurman, “CCB with... Displaying Curatorial Relationality in DOCUMENTA (13)’s The Logbook,” ONCURATING, 2017, <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-33-reader/ccb-with-displaying-curatorial-relationality-in-documenta-13s-the-logbook.html#.Yn7TNRNBy3l>.

2 Buurman.

‘Metabolic Art Criticism,’ the first workshop in the series, took place last year and was conceived of and helmed by the writer, Rosalyn D’Mello. It focused on the potential of an autotheoretical genre of art criticism “that embraces the centrality of the self as receiver and synthesiser of the diverse external stimuli that infuse the context within which art is conceived of, produced, exhibited and critiqued.”<sup>3</sup>

The recently concluded second workshop, *Hello, it’s me!*, was conducted by artist *Nadja Abt*. She was from, 2018 to 2020, editor of *Texte zur Kunst*. Within the workshop literature associated with the term autofiction was examined. The function of the first-person narration in autofictional writing and the tensions within a pervasive usage of social media technologies were explored. In a collective writing process, personal experiences were placed in relation to theory and reflections on the socially constructed “I”.

Writer and curator *Lauren Fournier* will hold the last workshop. In her dissertation on autotheory, she engages with artistic practices which fuse theory, its consumption and commodification, into their artworks. In this workshop, participants will be encouraged to experiment with different genres and forms of autotheory in their practices.

3 Rosalyn D’Mello, ‘Metabolism Art Criticism, Eau&Gaz, 2021, <https://eauetgaz.org/article/128>.

The writing-workshops series, held under the aegis of the residency Eau&Gaz, will culminate in the book launch: *The Instagram Archipelago: Race, Gender, and the Lives of Dead Fish*, by writer Elliot C. Mason.

The book is Mason's personal response to the photographs of artist Idan Hayosh. It is a conversation about contemporary culture's logic of gender and race. Working through current thinking in Black Studies and Hayosh's satirical imagery, Elliot C. Mason presents the aesthetics of capitalism as a sea that makes everything the same and transforms the world into a single form. This moving book of cultural theory lays the groundwork for a new method of anti-racism critique.

### Curatorial Concept

The workshop series is premised on centering the 'I' within theoretical and artistic discourse and examines modes within which the self performs, digests, enacts, subverts, and instantiates theory. Using lived experience as the point of departure, participants learn to engage critically with theory as a way to overcome the exclusivity and intimidation it is typically associated with.

The works of pioneering authors like Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Sara Ahmed, Chris Kraus, Deborah Levy and Moyra Davey are carefully read and "metabolized". Writing exercises are performed individually or collaboratively to sharpen a feminist gaze that breaks with patriarchal, racial and capitalist mainstream aesthetics in order for participants to discover and embrace their unique voices and access their subjectivity. Through collective writing processes as well as the practice of self-narration, participants enhance their notions of embodiment, exposing the social and relational subjectivities valued by one's particular somatic experience.

The workshops are invitations for a physical experience of reading theory akin to "swimming in waters that are way, way over your head and yet enjoying the unfathomable deeps."<sup>4</sup> And just as

<sup>4</sup> Genevieve Hudson, "An Interview with Maggie Nelson," Bookslut, July 2013, qtd. Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (London: MIT Press, 2021), 131.

swimming is throughout a physical experience, the role of the body when incorporated in theory is elucidated upon.

The knowledge produced by bodily experiences, themselves the consequence of gender, race, and class differences, creates more complex narratives that embrace the particular and puncture the myth of the universal. Navigating between critical studies and personal essays, one's personal subjectivity is daringly explored.



## Schedule

### Finanzierung

Finanzierungsansuchen öffentliche Stellen  
Finanzierungsansuchen private Sponsoren

November 2021 - April 2022  
Januar 2022 - April 2022

### Kooperationen

Transart, zeitgenössisches Musik und Kunst Festival  
BAW, Bolzano Art Week  
Thun, Ceramic Residency - Bozen

April 2022 - Oktober 2022  
Mai 2022 - September 2022  
November 2021 - September 2022

### Reiseplanung

Schreib-Workshop Rosalyn D'Mello  
Schreib-Workshop Nadja Abt  
Schreib-Workshop Lauren Fournier  
Book Launch Elliot C. Mason  
Book Launch Idan Hayosh

April 2021 - Mai 2021  
April 2022 - Mai 2022  
September 2022 - Oktober 2022  
September 2022 - Oktober 2022  
September 2022 - Oktober 2022

### Marketing & Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Graphik Design für Druckmedien  
Presstexte, Übersetzung  
Content Management Webseite  
Öffentlichkeitsarbeit  
Photo & Video Dokumentation

Januar 2022 - April 2022  
April 2022 - Juni 2022  
April 2022 - Juni 2022  
April 2022 - September 2022  
Mai 2021 - September 2022

## Budget

### Finanzierungsplan

Ansuchen Provinz Südtirol	6.000,00 Euro
5 Promile Ausschreibung	4.000,00 Euro
Mitgliedschaft	5.000,00 Euro
Private Sponsoren	6.000,00 Euro
	<u>21.000,00 Euro</u>

### Honorare für Workshop-Leiter

Rosalyn D'Mello (Workshop-Leiter)	1.200,00 Euro
Lauren Fournier (Workshop-Leiter)	1.700,00 Euro
Nadja Abt (Workshop-Leiter)	1.200,00 Euro
Elliot C. Mason (Book Launch)	500,00 Euro
Idan Hayosh (Book Launch)	500,00 Euro
	<u>5.100,00 Euro</u>

### Produktionskosten

Druck von Künstlerheft Idan Hayosh	2.000,00 Euro
Graphik Design Vincent Grunwald	1.500,00 Euro
Schreib-Workshop Materialien	600,00 Euro
	<u>3.500,00 Euro</u>

### Photo & Video Dokumentation

Dokumentation Schreib-Workshop	400,00 Euro
Eröffnung Bibliothek, Book Launch und Performance	400,00 Euro
	<u>800,00 Euro</u>

### Ausgaben für Marketing & Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Graphik Design für Druckmedien	500,00 Euro
Presstexte, Übersetzung	700,00 Euro
Content Management Webseite	1.500,00 Euro
Öffentlichkeitsarbeit	1.500,00 Euro
	<u>4.200,00 Euro</u>

### Reisekosten & Verpflegung

Nadja Abt (Anreise aus Essen)	350,00 Euro
Lauren Fournier (Anreise aus Toronto)	1.000,00 Euro
Elliot C. Mason (Anreise Stockholm)	600,00 Euro
Idan Hayosh (Anreise aus Essen)	350,00 Euro
	<u>2.300,00 Euro</u>

### Ausgaben für Betriebsstruktur & Beratung

Strom, Heizung & Internet	1.200,00 Euro
Wirtschaftsberater	800,00 Euro
	<u>2.000,00 Euro</u>

### Gesamte Einnahmen im Jahr 2022

21.000,00 Euro

### Gesamte Ausgaben im Jahr 2022

18.500,00 Euro

Rosalyn D'Mello  
*Metabolic Art Criticism*



**Rosalyn D'Mello** is the author of *A Handbook for My Lover*. She writes a weekly feminist column for mid-day, a fortnightly one on contemporary art for STIR, and regularly contributes to OPEN. She is one of the 2021-2022 fellows at Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck, Austria. She was an Ocean Fellowship Mentor for 2021. She is presently working on a book for Oxford University Press based on her visits to South Asian artists' studios, thanks to an India Foundation for the Arts research grant. Her freelance writing has been internationally published and anthologised. She is represented by David Godwin Associates. Having grown up in Mumbai and having lived in Delhi for almost a decade, Rosalyn is now based in South Tyrol, Italy, where she braves harsh alpine winters by harnessing her sensual memories of Goan sunshine.

**Metabolic Art Criticism**  
The course Metabolic Art Criticism attests to and celebrates the empowering potential of a genre of art criticism that embraces the centrality of the self as receiver and synthesiser of the diverse external stimuli that infuse the context within which art is conceived of, produced, exhibited and critiqued. It is rooted in the rigorous practice of continually examining our consciousness as a way of presenting our emotional response to art, thus revealing our individual subjective biases and tendencies. For instance, what compels us to be drawn to or moved by some art, what drives our repulsion towards others? What is the role of patriarchal, capitalist and race-based conditioning in unwittingly determining mainstream aesthetics, inevitably informing our gaze.



Metabolic Art Criticism, Writing Workshop by Rosalyn D'Mello, Hotel Angerburg, 2021



*Nadja Abt*  
*Hello it's me!*

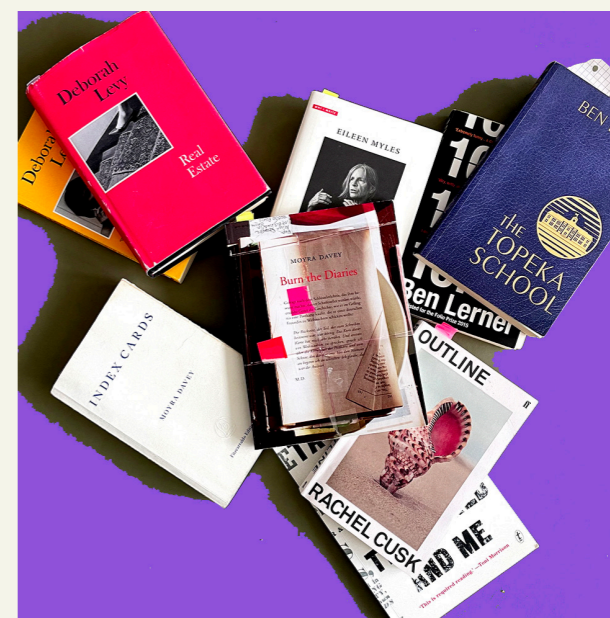


Hello, it's me, Writing Workshop by Nadja Abt, Hotel Angerburg, 2022

**Nadja Abt** Nadja Abt (born in Vladimirovich) is an artist and writer, living between Berlin and Lisbon. Abt studied Literature and Art History at Freie Universität Berlin as well as Fine Arts at Universität der Künste Berlin and the Universidad Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires. From 2015 till 2018 she lived in São Paulo, Brazil. In her performances, videos and paintings, she constructs feminist narratives that reference the world of literature and film. She is part of the artist collective Michelle Volta. Recent exhibitions and performances include Freeport, Porto (Solo Show, 2021); Galeria Diferença, Lisbon (Solo Show, 2021); Galerie Kirchgasse, Steckborn (2021); HUA International, Beijing (2021); Bärenzwinger, Berlin (2021); KW-Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (Podcast, 2021); Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2019); Casa Triângulo, São Paulo (2018) and Pivô, São Paulo (2017).

**Hello it's me**

In recent years, there has been a real boom in autofictional writing, or a trend to call literature autofiction. In terms of content, these books often refer to the visual arts, or their authors come from the art world. Why female\* authors in particular are associated with this genre and why the trend is moving further and further towards first-person narration is one part we will explore. The second part of the workshop will be a collective writing process, using different steps, which will release our own blockades and test new narrative structures, similar to the so-called Writers' Room in the film business. With literature by Moyra Davey, Marguerite Duras, Ben Lerner, Deborah Levy, Eileen Myles and many more.





*Lauren Gabrielle Fournier*  
*Autotheorie*



Audre Lorde, Meridel LeSueur, & Adrienne Rich, in a writing-workshop in Austin, Texas. 1980. , (Photo by K. Kendall) licensed with CC BY 2.0. All Rights Reserved.



Hazel Meyer, No Theory No Cry, 2009

**Lauren Gabrielle Fournier** (she/they, b.1989, Saskatchewan) is a writer, curator, and filmmaker of white settler background. A first-generation student and scholar, her research, teaching, and practice cohere around multi-genre writing and hybrid genres of literary nonfiction and fiction, including autofiction, autotheory, bio-fiction, ficto-criticism, and nonfiction novels. She writes on Anglophone literatures and literature in translation, especially Eastern European, Eurasian, and Slavic literature tied to part of her heritage (Romanian, Turkish, Czech/Bohemian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Scottish, French). Her *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (The MIT Press, 2021) is the first book-length monograph on the burgeoning genre of “autotheory,” and has been featured and reviewed in such venues as *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *High Theory*, *Hyperallegoric*, *Passage*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, and *Art in America*. She has been interviewed in such venues as *The Columbia Journal of Literary Criticism* (NYC), *Outsider Review* (Paris), *Degree Critical* (NYC), *Brand New Life* (Switzerland), and *Art on Trial* (Spain). She has been invited to speak on the book and lead writing workshops at such institutions as the Royal College of Art, the Pacific Northwest College of Art, Ghent, Durham, and Goldsmiths. She is currently writing her second book on autotheory and autofiction.

**Autotheorie** (working-title), in this workshop, writer and curator Lauren Fournier (she/her) will lead participants in experimenting with different genres and forms of autotheoryfictions in their practices. Autotheoryfiction describes the commingling of autobiography or memoir, theory or philosophy, and fictionalization to varying degrees and effects. The workshop will include reading and discussing short texts together, engaging in writing exercises in response to prompts, and exploring modes of processing their stories and ideas.

**Autotheory  
as Feminist  
Practice  
in Art, Writing,  
and Criticism**



*The Instagram Archipelago*  
Elliot C. Mason & Idan Hayosh



Idan Hayosh, Elliot C. Mason, The Instagram Archipelago: Race, Gender, and the Lives of Dead Fish

“**The Instagram Archipelago: Race, Gender, and the Lives of Dead Fish**” by Elliot C. Mason. Set on Idan Hayosh’s peculiar Instagram page of women holding dead fish, The Instagram Archipelago is a conversation with contemporary culture’s logics of gender and race. Working through recent thinking in Black studies and Hayosh’s satirical images, Elliot C. Mason presents the aesthetics of capitalism as a sea that makes everything the same, turning the world into a single form. The Instagram Archipelago brings radical antiracist and feminist scholarship to a general audience, applying a model of thinking beyond gender and race to the strange world of online fishing photos. This funny and fascinating book moves past the liberal celebration of gender and race, towards a tiny island of resistance in a growing archipelago.

**Elliot C. Mason** is a writer, poet, and PhD candidate at Uppsala University. He is the author of two collections of poetry and two non-fiction books, including *Building Black: Towards Antiracist Architecture*, which was short-listed for the Fitzcarraldo Essay Prize 2020. He is also the author of three plays, all political comedies, which have been performed at many London theatres. Having lived in London for over ten years, in 2021 Mason moved with his partner, Eugenia Lapteva, to Stockholm. [www.pennydropscollective.org](http://www.pennydropscollective.org)

**Idan Hayosh** born in 1979 at Tel Aviv, Israel. Lives and works at Essen, Germany. Idan Hayosh constructs installations inspired by found footage of military formations and layouts. An integral aspect of these constructions is the synergy between the image and its own amplified sound. He deals mainly with aggressive and intimidating images that imply danger by their inherent symbolic (and actual) function, or further, through their elaborate arrangement. Inspired by these collected images, he constructs temporary sculptures which ultimately form platforms for confrontational incidents. [www.idanhayosh.com](http://www.idanhayosh.com)



## Introduction

For a long time, artists and curators tended to legitimize their work by referencing canonically validated philosophical and academic material. To be understood as a contemporary artist or curator, there is a perceived need to inhabit certain intellectual traditions in order to establish oneself as “discourse privileged”. Such an attitude within artistic and curatorial practice furthers its academization and perpetuates the aura of exclusivity, excluding those who do not have access to discourse and certain mandated systems of knowledge.

Recalling that the tradition of theorizing the self, or generating theory from lived experience, stems largely from the genealogies of people of colour and queer feminism compels me to understand that the notion of intersectionality emerges from discourses produced by those bodies historically rejected in white cis-het-male spaces. The desire to not be complicit in further reinforcing oppressive hierarchies motivates authors of autotheory to evolve remedial strategies, like the mechanism of citation or self-narration, thus ensuring multi-authored, alternative, and diverse approaches in the fields of art and academia.

Quoting constantly the same white male canon consequently means also attaching oneself to those who had or continue to exercise power and hold privileged positions. Theory is therefore a form of gatekeeping, “inaccessible and a mark of privilege, both because of its advanced discourse and terminology and because of the

resources (time, energy, money for tuition).”<sup>5</sup> And yet, writers and artists working within the genre of autotheory find ways towards pleasure, experimentation, play “and different forms of understanding that might evade or even exceed the ‘mastery of knowledge’ that one commonly finds in an academic class”<sup>6</sup>.

Autotheory qualifies books that fuse memoir and autobiography with theory and philosophy. Lauren Fournier extends the meaning of autotheory by applying it to other disciplines beyond the literary. In her dissertation *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, she investigates artworks that integrate theory and philosophy in relation to personal, lived experience and explicitly subjective modes.

Theorizing from a first-person perspective is well-established within the genealogies of feminism and is associated explicitly with Third-World feminist writers, who attempted to humanise theory. In this way autotheory resonates within feminist practices across media and form. Across diverse practices one can see the self incorporated directly within their work, which marks their bodies as a site of various forms of violence and oppression as well as a site of pleasure, agency and subjectivity.

My aim is not to turn away from theory but to show the potential “to resist, bypass, and refashion the durable structures that have

5 Fournier, 101.

6 Fournier, 132.

historically dictated who has access to discourse and knowledge and to shed light on the variable of power and agency made possible through such knowledge;<sup>7</sup> ways of producing theory that transgress inaccessible academic theories in order to resist reproducing the conventional white-male-knowledge canon.

Impulses are manifest most clearly in those expanded contemporary practices where arts, literature and criticism meet. What is behind terms like auto-criticism, autotheory, or autofiction? What can be added to antecedents such as *critical memoir*, *theoretical fiction*, or *life-thinking*? A closer look at the history of self-narration in theory shows how an embodied and situated knowledge disrupted the prevailing discourse.

### The Rise of Self-Narration in Theory

In *Bringing Feminist Theory Home* Sara Ahmed acknowledges her debt to the intellectual work of Audre Lorde. She recounts how she was encouraged by Lorde to build theory from her own life. “The words, coming out of her description of her own experience, as a black woman, mother, lesbian, poet, warrior, found me where I was; a different place from her, yet her words found me.”<sup>8</sup>

Her words resonate with me too; they have found me in my place,

7 Fournier, 132.

8 Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 12.

so different from theirs. The inputs from Black and Third-World feminists in my academic research shed light on my own position and my long-standing ignorance about my privilege. I understood better how racist patriarchal thoughts have been and can be embedded within feminist theory and I am now more aware of moments when I may have reinforced or re-performed the same.

When I came across *Revolutionary Parenting* by bell hooks, the very first few paragraphs, about black motherhood, dismantled my knowledge about feminism. “Some white middle class, college-educated women argued that motherhood was a serious obstacle to women’s liberation, a trap confining women to the home, keeping them tied to cleaning, cooking, and child care. Others simply identified motherhood and childrearing as the locus of women’s oppression. Had black women voiced their views on motherhood, it would not have been named a serious obstacle to our freedom as women. Racism, availability of jobs, lack of skills or education and a number of other issues would have been at the top of the list—but not motherhood. Black women would not have said motherhood prevented us from entering the world of paid work because we have always worked.”<sup>9</sup>

hooks grounded her feminist writings in anti-racist theory and raised the consciousness that “the enemy within must be

9 bell hooks, “Revolutionary Parenting,” in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1984, 133–46, <https://popperola.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/bell-hooks-revolutionary-parenting-feminist-theory-from-margin-to-center.pdf>.

transformed before we can confront the enemy outside.”<sup>10</sup>

One of driving forces that reconfigured what constitutes legitimate knowledge in academia and especially in feminist writing were movements such as critical race studies. They looked at how racism and intersectional discrimination implicitly or explicitly impact discourses, including that of feminism. The unquestioned privileges of white feminists had silenced and invisibilised the struggles of women of colour.

### **The Personal is Political**

The mantra of the second feminist wave in the 70s, where it was claimed that the personal is political, has been present in my mind. I thought I knew what it implied, that motherhood and household duties prevented women from entering academia, arts, research, and other intellectual fields. At that time, women fought to make their lives and personal experiences, which were filtered by social structures and inequality, understood. Individual experiences were inextricably connected with the greater social and historical context.

Betty Friedan, widely credited with sparking second-wave feminism in the United States, conducted interviews with housewives in the suburbs, as well as researched psychology, media, and advertising. To understand the second-wave it is

<sup>10</sup> bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 2000), 12 qtd. in Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*.



*Martha Rosler*  
*Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975*  
 Video (black and white, sound), 6:09 min.  
 © 2022 Martha Rosler.  
 Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

important to know that it emerged from the American Suburbs, from women who lived in a stable economic situation, college-educated, living in row houses with children. The book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Friedan examines the assumption that women could be fulfilled purely from housework, marriage, sexual lives, and children.

Friedan has been criticized for focusing solely on middle-class white women. Women of colour were completely absent from Friedan's vision, as were white working-class and poor women. bell hooks writes, "she did not speak of the needs of women without men, without children, without homes. She ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure-class housewife."<sup>11</sup>

Martha Rosler's video work *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) critiqued the traditional gender roles of women in Friedan's suburbs. In the six-minute recording of her using an abcedary of kitchen tools, she enacts aggression. For example, when she holds a fork, she suggests the intended action of stabbing someone to death. Rosler relies on the discourse of semiotics, which implies that words are simply indicators of social interactions that human beings

use to describe their world. In the video, however, she not only counters the prevailing male-dominated ordering of society but also channels her anger towards the phallogocentric nature of French structuralism.

The essay *The personal is political* by the American feminist, Carol Hanisch argues that any personal experience of abuse or oppression is located in a power relation, which is best understood by looking at the societal oppression of the same.<sup>12</sup> Hanisch's essay emerged from attending a series of therapy groups in the safety of which women talked about their lives and their struggles under patriarchy. The shared lived experiences within these groups exceeded the personal. Hanisch was right to contextualise these meetings as extremely political acts. The criticism of women getting together in consciousness-raising groups to discuss their own oppression as "navel-gazing", "personal therapy", or certainly "not political" fails to see that personal problems are political problems for which political solutions must be found. Personal problems deserved to no longer be invalidated as self-indulgent and irrelevant, but be recognised as structural and systemic issues.

<sup>11</sup> bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, no. 2000 (1984): 1–17, <https://contentstore.cla.co.uk/secure/link?id=b3719051-dfd0-ea11-80cd-005056af4099>, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political: The Original Feminist Theory Paper at the Author's Web Site," 1970, <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>.

### The Personal is Structural

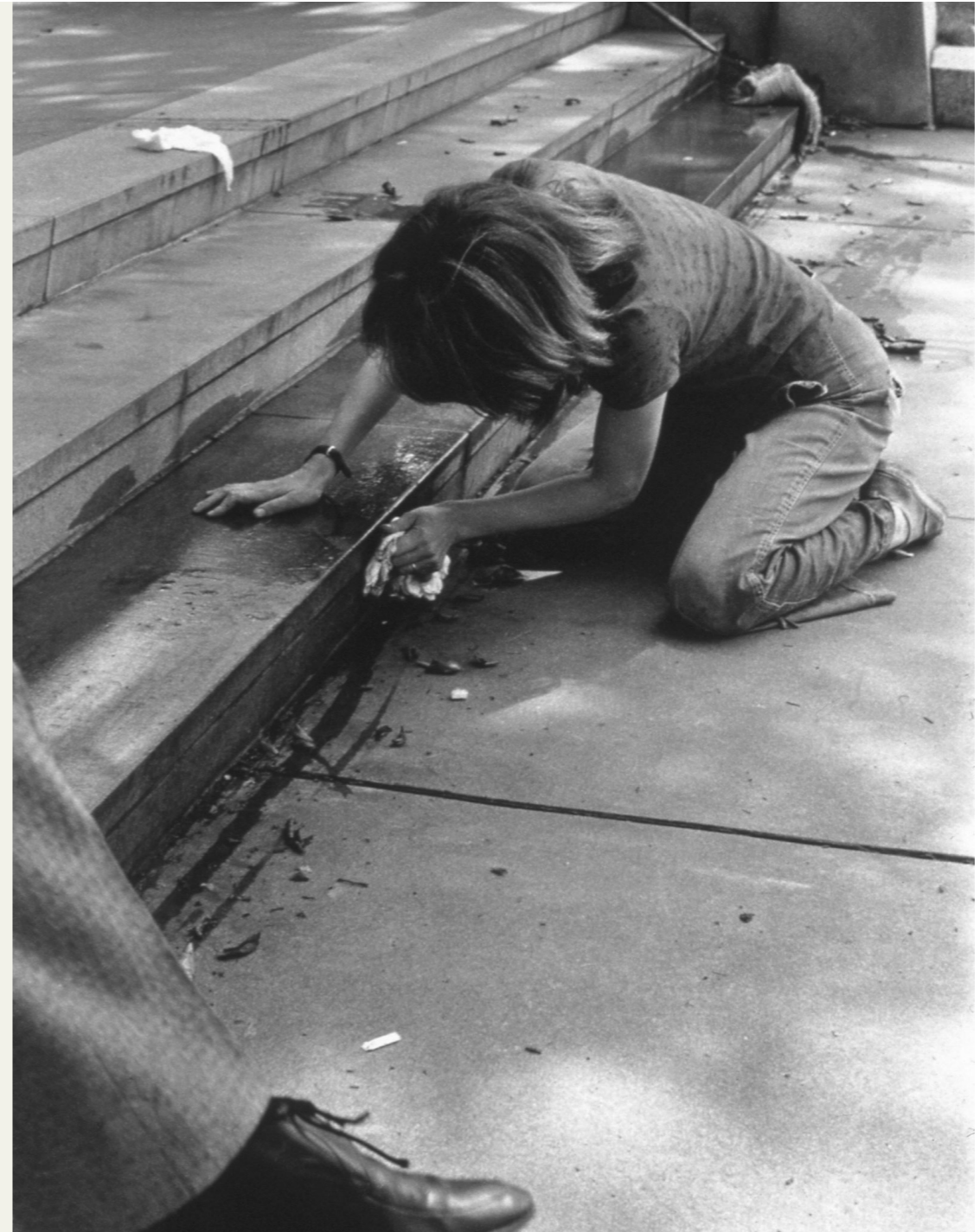
Sarah Ahmed extended the notion of *the personal*. “The personal,” writes Ahmed in *Living A Feminist Life*, “is structural.”<sup>13</sup> Ahmed’s work is deeply interested in lived experience. In her writing she not only analyzes institutional structures but also sees emotion as a result of social structure that dictates the way we lead our lives. “The personal is structural. I learnt that you can be hit by a structure; you can be bruised by a structure. (...) A judge who talks about what she was wearing: that is structure. A structure is an arrangement, an order, a building; an assembly.”<sup>14</sup>

Mierle Laderman Ukeles was another artist who brought the “domestic” life to the forefront. Her work not only critiqued the gendered nature of women’s role in white-middle class surroundings but also the internalised racist behavior of art institutions.

Ukeles became a mother around the same time she was making sculpture. At the time, she felt that her life was “divided in half” between being a mother at home with her children, and being a practicing artist working in her studio while someone else cared for her children. Her self-proclaimed “maintenance art” was a way of terming her ‘maintenance’ work, which included childcare and household, art.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Feminism Is Sensational,” in *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 21–42, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, 30.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles  
 2 Washington Square Village  
 New York, New York 10012

Maintenance Art Activity III  
 Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum, Hartford, Conn, Sat July 22-73  
 Title: "Washing, Tracks, Maintenance" © 1973

Activity: 1. Wash several areas of museum where spectator traffic occurs:

- a. Front entrance steps (Main Street).
- b. Purg Court including fountain.
- c. Hillis Gallery
- d. Stairwell

2. Wait for people to track it up. Washing (dry/mop) will not be too wet to constitute a danger of slipping and artist will warn people anyway to be careful.

3. Re-wash, keep washing all museum closes. Rags used will be accumulated and piled on the site. Maintain for whole day.

4. Area will be stamped with Maintenance Art Stamp

Dear Spectator,

The cleanliness of this area is now being maintained as

**MAINTENANCE ART**

by Mierle Laderman Ukeles, artist.

Please feel free to continue on your way right through the "dust painting" as she will be continuing to maintain it this whole day.

*Mierle Laderman Ukeles*





One of Ukeles's most striking and thought-provoking work is "Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside" (1973); a substantive critique of the way art institutions assign value. It documents, through a set of black-and-white photographs, how Ukeles washes the steps by pouring water and scrubbing the pavement with a rag of the art museum in Connecticut. This work not only shifts the focus to the invisible maintenance work done by women, but also draws attention to the racism inherent to art institutions, the fact that maintenance work is often exclusively performed by people of color.

The usage of a personal lived experience in theoretical reflections has a long-standing feature of the writing of feminists philosophers. Examples range from Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), to Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I A Woman* (1851) to Shulamith Firestone's *A Dialectic of Sex* (1970).<sup>15</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, women's studies departments, or what was later called feminist and gender studies, developed. The numbers of feminist scholars incorporating personal experience into their theoretical and academic writing increased substantially.

In *Getting Personal*, Nancy K. Miller reflects upon the ways in which incidents of identity and location shape the writing of academic argument. She notes, "if one of the original premises of seventies feminism (emerging out of sixties slogan) was that

the personal is political, eighties feminism has made it possible to see that the personal is also theoretical: the personal is part of the theory's material."<sup>16</sup>

Feminism had empowered Miller to take her personal experience as a legitimate source of authority, admitting that scholarly work is not neutral or universal but coloured by beliefs, bias and affinities. Miller's claims for a personal presence in academic texts challenged the former traditional academic mandate for invisibility and impersonality. The personal, autobiographical or self-narrative has to be seen as a shaping force in one's scholarship and theory should be not understood as universal and objective but has to acknowledge its limits, subjectivity and locatedness.<sup>17</sup>

The recognition that the daily and domestic life is political made feminist writers, artists and scholars come to see that their practices need to engage with the particularities of diverse bodies.

<sup>15</sup> Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Nancy K. Miller "Getting Personal : Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts," 1991, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, 17.

### Who Gets to Write Theory?

If one's personal experiences are indeed political, and therefore structural, then who gets to write or theorize about these experiences? hooks experienced that she is more the 'other' than the norm in the University. hooks was aware of the speech about the 'other' as an oppressive talk hiding gaps and absences; if only the 'other' could speak for themselves: "No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject and you are the center of my talk." <sup>18</sup>

In much of the writing about history, philosophy, and theory, the cis-male experience is usually the focus. And yet this perspective tries to hide behind a neutral, objective perspective. Critical race and women studies dismantled these privileged positions and started to talk from an embodied experience.

In *Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers* (1979), Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa asks who is entitled to write;

<sup>18</sup> bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, May 21, 1989, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/10.2307/44111660.pdf?acceptTC=true>, 22.



“Who gave us permission to perform the act of writing? Why does writing seem so unnatural for me? I’ll do anything to postpone it—empty the trash, answer the telephone. The voice recurs in me: Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks, to think I could write? How dare I even considered becoming a writer as I stooped over the tomato fields bending (...). How hard it is for us to think we can choose to become writers, much less feel and believe that we can. What have we to contribute, to give? Our own expectations condition us. Does not our class, our culture as well as the white man tell us writing is not for women such as us? She writes her essay in the format of a letter, urging the reader to “write from the body”, encouraging women of color to make their personal, embodied experiences visible in the text. She states that when women of color write, it gives them power, and a woman with power is feared. And when women come together and share their writing with one another, a community is created.

In Hanisch’s essay the therapy group functioned as base of her writing. But it was only Hanisch who wrote; who theorized others women’s talk about oppression. Anzaldúa, however, is encouraging the reader—third world women of colour—to become writers themselves. She encourages them to write and theorize about their lives, allowing them to think about their race, sex, gender, class realities and histories.

Ahmed recalls in *Living a Feminist Life* the moment she engaged with the embodied voices of black feminists and feminists of colour. “...I still remember in the second year of my PhD reading texts by black feminists and feminists of color, including Audre Lorde,



*Naomi Uman  
Removed, 1999  
6:45min, 16mm film*

*In Removed, Naomi Uman physically erases the female body from old 16mm porn using nail polish remover and household bleach. This gorgeous attack of beauty and domestic product on celluloid results in a series of animated white ‘holes’ writhing orgasmically in the place of porn stars. The leering men are captured in various inadequate poses and the original dialogue tracks remain, complete with badly dubbed exchanges. The hole in the film becomes an erotic zone, a blank on which a fantasy body is projected. This brilliant work is unusually precise: it is politically subversive, pornography in its own right, sassy and extremely funny.*

bell hooks, and Gloria Anzaldúa. I had not read their work before. This work shook me up. Here was writing in which an embodied experience of power provides the basis of knowledge. Here was writing animated by the everyday: the detail of an encounter, an incident, a happening, flashing like insight. Reading black feminist and feminist of color scholarship was life changing; I began to appreciate that theory can do more the closer it gets to the skin.”<sup>19</sup>

Third-wave feminism was a reaction to the exclusion of black women, women of color, poor and working-class women by suburban-feminism. It was black women and women of color who spoke of experiences and identity as intersectional. In terms of discrimination, this means that people are often affected by different forms of discrimination at the same time. The theory of intersectionality began with the question of understanding how different power structures interact in the lives of minorities.

I remember reading about the painful experience described by bell hooks in her text, *Choosing the Margins as a Space of Radical Openness*. The passages where she describes from her own lived experience “how painful it is for Black folks from poor, underclass communities to enter universities or privileged cultural settings unwilling to surrender every vestige of who we were before we were there, all ‘signs’ of our class and cultural ‘difference’.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Bringing Feminist Theory Home,” in *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 1–18, 10.

<sup>20</sup> hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” May 21, 1989, 19.

bell hooks is not only present in the text, but is witness to the absence of other black people at the university. The space she entered was firmly entrenched in white male supremacy. bell hooks couldn’t talk from an impersonal position, her racialized body had to assert itself in order to challenge and transform the predominant white academia.

### Women’s Writing

“Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement.”<sup>21</sup> This is the beginning of Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), which includes the argument that writing is a tool women must use to advocate for themselves in order to acquire the freedom they have historically been denied. Cixous delivers an ultimatum; either read and choose to stay trapped in their own bodies by a language that does not allow them to express themselves, or to use the body as a way to communicate.

Cixous urged women to put themselves into words and not any

<sup>21</sup> Helene Cixous, Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875–93, 875 .

word, but words coming from *écriture féminine* (womens writing). This technique she describes as a writing style aimed to establish a literary genre that deviates from traditional masculinist styles of writing. In *écriture féminine* the relationship between the cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text could be examined. A distinctive mode of writing for women and by women that could the dominant phallogentric language.

To valorize a specific body or voice imprinted by gender, colour, class and national origin is to allow for subjectivity to emerge within a text. This didn't happen always without critique. Feminist writers of colour and queer/trans writers have constantly been accused of solipsism and narcissism within academic spaces, bodies that have been historically over-determined by limiting conceptions of the "personal," as if their work is inherently subjective and embodied or "marked".

If one's particularity of body appears in the text it is often reduced by the mainstream as too specific or marked by identity politics. In the essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984), Lorde attacked what she believed was underlying racism within feminism. Being the only Black lesbian women invited to the only panel at the conference *Instituting for the Humanities, New York University* in which the input of Black feminists and lesbians was represented, Lorde said: "To read this program is to assume that lesbian and Black women have nothing to say about existentialism, the erotic, women's culture and silence,



*Carrie Mae Weems  
The Kitchen Table Series  
20 platinum prints, 14 letterpress text sheets*

developing Feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power.”<sup>22</sup> She argued that by denying difference in the category of women, white feminists merely furthered old systems of oppression.

### Dear Dick

The book *I love Dick* by Chris Kraus subverts in its own way the male-authored nature of French postmodernist theory. The title is itself an allusion to male-centered self-indulgence. This epistolary novel that is in large part constituted by self-reflexive reflections ranging from sex to art to philosophy talks about the erasure of radical feminist voices from art history and how dismissal by art and cultural critics. *I love Dick* engages directly with and is transformed by critical theory.

According to Kraus’ narrative, the writing of *I Love Dick* was born as a result of her personal failure as filmmaker and her relationship with an older and more visibly ‘successful’ man. *I Love Dick* is a “novel” about a woman named Chris Kraus. Chris, an artist who considers herself a failed experimental filmmaker, is married to an older cultural theorist, a professor at Columbia. Childless and inexorably approaching 40, through her husband she meets a cultural critic named Dick. Ironically referred as an academic cowboy, Dick becomes her obsession, a “sexual obsession but more of an ambition desire. The character in the books is just longing to

<sup>22</sup> Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House Audre Lorde,” in *Second Sex Conference*, 1979.





appear, to be present to other people in the cultural world.”<sup>23</sup>

Kraus keeps writing to Dick, even enlisting her husband as a collaborator in her pursuit of Dick, while all the while being rebuffed by him. Dick becomes the object of her overwhelming sexual desire, and, ultimately, her artistic muse. It is a simple shifting of roles, the man as object and muse, the woman as subject and creator. The poet Eileen Myles, who wrote the introduction to *I love Dick* in the first edition published by Semiotext(e), describes Kraus’ self-reflection as “marching boldly into self-abasement.”<sup>24</sup>

Chris uses her obsession with Dick to explore her self-hood and the conditions of what she calls her abjection. “I never had someone shatter in one glance the persona that I spent decades constructing.”<sup>25</sup>

The characters in Kraus bear a resemblance to real-life people. Dick from *I Love Dick* was later identified as Dick Hebdige, a famous media theorist and sociologist. Dick Hebdige took issue with Kraus’s portrayal of him, referring to the novel as being “beneath contempt.” But *I Love Dick* is not a memoir; it is a novel, a fictional narration. And in the end, the man it takes its name from matters not. Dick is above all a projection of ‘Chris’. When Chris,

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23 Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, 236.

24 Chris Kraus, *I Love Dick* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1997), 5.

25 *I Love Dick*, Season 1, Episode 1, “Pilot Serie,” directed by Joey Soloway, 2017, on Amazon Prime (Amazon Studios), <https://www.amazon.de/I-Love-Dick-Staffel-1/dp/B086HVW4N5>

the protagonist of the novel quotes from Hebdige's book, it is actually her own writing she quotes from; she fictionalises his writing.

Also, Kraus's fictional husband, Sylvère is based on her real ex-husband Sylvère Lotringer, a French-born literary critic and cultural theorist. Dick Hebdige, who is famous as writer of the 1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* and her ex-husband Lotringer, founder of the journal *Semiotext(e)*, best known to bring French theory to American readers, are pilloried by Kraus.

This is important because Chris Kraus is settling the score precisely with this left-wing, Euro-American intellectual scene, which they represent, and as it is produced and consumed in the art field.

She exposes the hypocrisies of subculture and postmodern theory by taking to task the lived actions of these men in relation to the politics of their work. She integrates her lived experience in relation to their lives and work.<sup>26</sup> In this way Chris Kraus radically burrs the lines between life and art.

<sup>26</sup> Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, 222.

### Writers Room

*I love Dick*, became a cult feminist work. For many years it was underground, until it finally became mainstream. In 2017 it was adapted for the Amazon TV series of the same name. The outstanding fact was that the writer's room for *I Love Dick* was made up entirely of female and gender non-conforming people, without one single cis-man. "I think a lot of women had been the only woman in other writer's rooms," Soloway said in an interview, "Like the only girl in the car, the only girl in the room, and had been trying to play the role of 'Be game. Be funny. Don't offend. Be careful what you say.'" So, for them to be able to look everyone in the face and say, 'There's another woman,' got things going really loose really fast."<sup>27</sup> According to Soloway, without the male perspective in the room, women start to really relax and really let their guard down. Such a constitution was not deliberate, rather, after looking for people who felt were familiar with the experiences that Chris had, it turned out, "the people who were the most likely to write about this in the most fearless, bombastic, vulnerable human way ended up being all women and gender non-conforming people."<sup>28</sup> Soloway and *I Love Dick* co-creator, Sarah Gubbins let

<sup>27</sup> Ashley Rodriguez, "It Took an All-Female Writing Team Created the Most Complex Men on TV," Quartz, 2017, <https://qz.com/966898/in-amazons-amzn-kevin-bacon-starring-i-love-dick-it-took-an-all-female-writing-team-led-by-transparent-jill-soloway-to-create-the-most-complex-men-on-tv/>.

<sup>28</sup> Emma Gray, "I Love Dick' And The Radical Power Of A Writer's Room Without Cis Men," HuffPost Communities, 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/i-love-dick-and-the-radical-power-of-a-writers-room-without-cis-men\\_n\\_594d2c1fe4b02734df29fa3f](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/i-love-dick-and-the-radical-power-of-a-writers-room-without-cis-men_n_594d2c1fe4b02734df29fa3f).

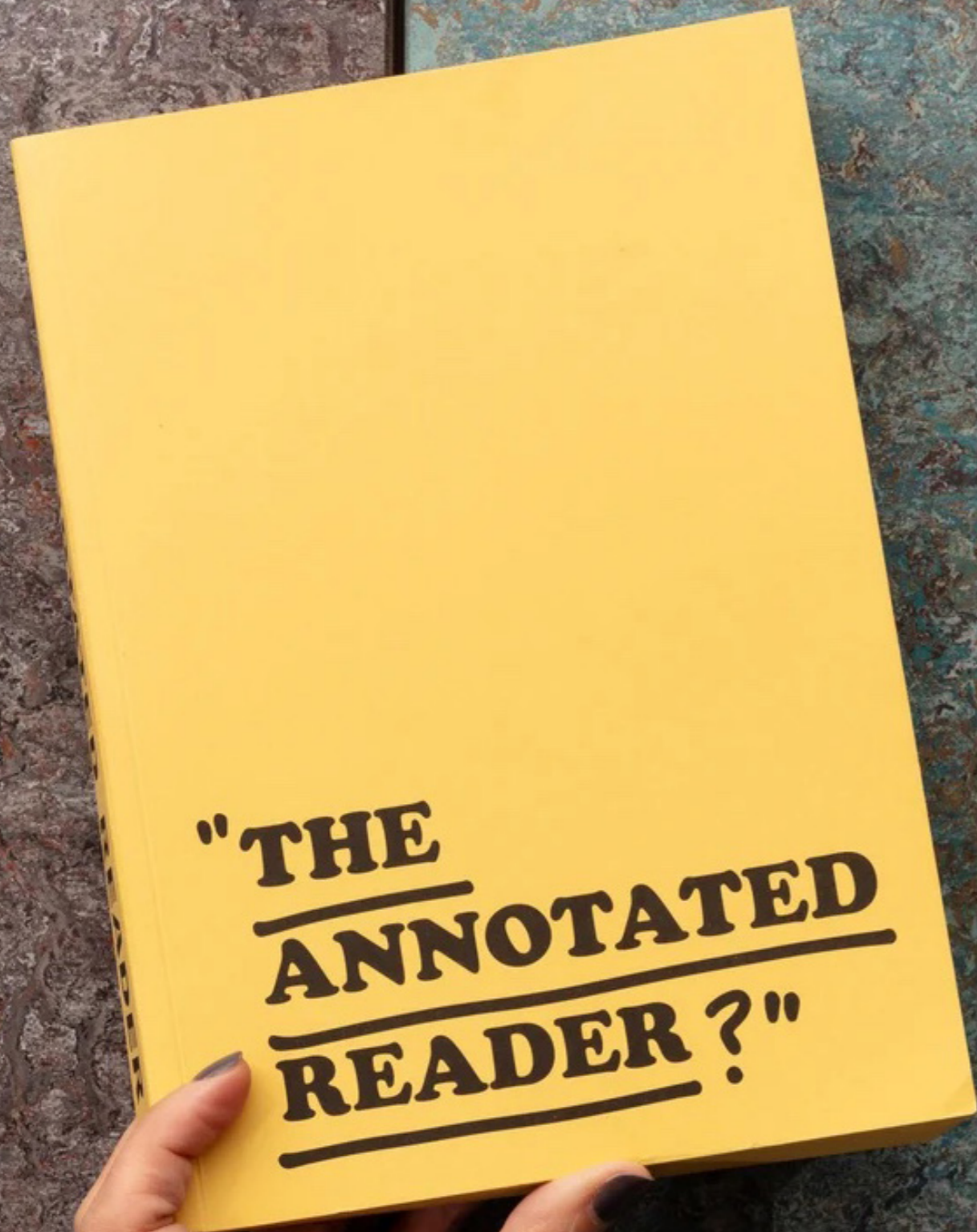




women and gender non-conforming people shape their own on-screen narratives. The members of the writer's rooms, including Chris Kraus herself, started with the book, and responded to the self-abasement and the yearning to make something of oneself while only ever knowing how to criticize this self. The writers of the TV adaption aimed to bring their stories, experiences, and points of view as intensely to the character of Chris Kraus as Chris Kraus, the author, brought her own biography to it. Having all women and gender non-conforming people at the table allowed the writers to work from outside "their oppression." To reference a particularly cringe-worthy line in the show, Dick tells Chris: "I think it's pretty rare for a woman to make a good film, they have to work from behind their oppression, which makes some bumper movies."

### Marginalia

The writer's room of the TV adaption, is, however, not the only objection of Dick's statement. As a response to Dick's assertion, Kraus begins rattling off the names of her cinematic heroines — Sally Potter, Jane Campion, Chantal Akerman, as clips of the filmmakers' work flash briefly onscreen. Throughout the series references to radical voices from the art scene, that, for a long time, were met with ignorance on the part of art critics, are made. The dizzying whoosh of images offers a brief glimpse at the pioneering women who have informed Kraus' artistic point of view. The film clips that appear are thematically linked to what's happening in the show at the times they emerge, highlighting



the real-life artists whose work came before. Taken together, the clips offer a short history of women in film and pays tribute to the women who were dismissed and excluded from the cultural field for far too long. *I Love Dick* can be seen as a curated video exhibition within a TV series. In an interview with HuffPost, Soloway explained her desire to counter the storytelling from a male perspective. “We can do anything with TV we want to,” Soloway said, “including using it as a crucible to show off the work of all these women who have never been known or seen.”<sup>29</sup>

The book, too, is full of references to other artist and filmmakers. This method associates *I Love Dick* not only with autofiction, but also with the notion of autotheory. Assuming that Autotheory has a relationship with citation, the references throughout *I Love Dick* can be seen as scribbling in the margins conceptually.

The mechanism of feminist citation brings the “other” into the text through footnotes, endnotes, marginalia or, as in the case of Kraus, by being incorporated into the text as reference. Citation enables the self to look beyond its boundaries. It follows in an academic tradition with bibliographies and citations while transgressing and transforming it. In this way *I Love Dick* not only opened up what autofictional work could be but also how academic work can be done.

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29 Priscilla Frank, “Your Guide To The Feminist Films And Video Art Featured In ‘I Love Dick,’” HuffPost Entertainment, 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/i-love-dick-feminist-art\\_n\\_590232c9e4b0af6d718cc8b4](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/i-love-dick-feminist-art_n_590232c9e4b0af6d718cc8b4).

At this point, I want to recall Ahmed's method of drawing attention to citation mechanisms. Citation involves referring to other people, text, and artworks as sources of influence and information. Citation is, for Ahmed, however, not only a way to trace the way back from where one came, to honor voices that encouraged and empowered one, it is also a possible way to feminize theory and find space for marginalized positions.<sup>30</sup> Ahmed followed an explicit and strict citation policy for her book *Living a Feminist Life*, stating that no single white man would find space in her text.<sup>31</sup> Citation brings the self in dialog with the "other". Citation is an opportunity to reflect on intersubjectivity, authorship and the relationship between the writing "self" and an "other".<sup>32</sup>

A more intimate engagement happens when notes are done on the margin of the page by a reader. Similar to citation the opportunity unfolds to reflect on the text with one's own voice. The practice of marking up the margins of a book while reading shows a deeper level of engagement with a text. "Adding marginalia becomes a means for writers to elaborate their response to reading or a way to identify notable passages they'd like to return to in the future."<sup>33</sup> In the moment of scribbling on the margins one participates in a dialog with the text, by adding personal notes or highlighting fragments.

30 Sara Ahmed, "White Men," *feministkilljoys*, 2014.

31 Sara Ahmed, "White Men," *Feministkilljoys*, 2014.

32 Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, 137.

33 Fournier, 138.

In contrast to overwriting or disregarding a text, Lauren Fournier sees in the act of marking the margins "a way of writing with it and beside it, possibly subverting it along the way."<sup>34</sup> Through the entanglement of theory and the autobiographical something new emerges, enabling new ways for artists and writers to reflect on their lives and challenge dominant theory or discourse through lived experience and subjective embodiment, especially in feminist, queer, and BIPOC spaces that exist in the margins of mainstream discourse.

The practice of autotheory therefore not only fuses theory with personal experience but also alters and modifies the dominant discourse; disrupting its narrative and reflecting on its race and class biases. It thus holds space for multiple voices to exist.

### The End

Anzaldúa prompts women of all colour and genders to "forget about the room of one's own—write in the kitchen," she says "lock yourself up in the bathroom,"<sup>35</sup> write whenever and wherever it is possible. Having your room of one's own is privileged, but being distracted is a necessity. I can't shut the door anymore, preventing all the voices from entering. Motherhood made me constantly

34 Fournier, 140.

35 Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking In Tongues: A Letter To 3rd World Women Writers\*," 1980.

available and the continual distraction and breaks in thinking became a prerequisite for engaging with others' thoughts and allows me to be influenced by other perspectives.

Sine the figure of the curator as author and authority has been institutionalized it became deliberately placed as a gatekeeper, like a bouncer at the door who decides who gets in and who is denied entry. I see it as my curatorial responsibility to make space for the marginalia, to let other thoughts enter my text.

Autotheory became my way to reflect upon authority and authorship in order to "counter" the understanding of curator as gatekeeper. It helped me accept and value moments of distraction, to recognize them as critical-creative intervention in a given discourse.

Rosalyn D'Mello, Nadja Abt and Lauren Fournier perform, all in their unique way, distractions of their own. D'Mello's ongoing research about motherhood and her endeavor to bring domestic work in a discursive context, what was historical erased through racist and hetero-patriarchal art historical discourses is a form of distraction. She critiques in her practices what was and is allowed to be called art and by whom, and brings those excluded back to the table. In her *Traminer Marmeladen Almanach* (2021), for example, she invited married or unmarried housewives from the town of Tramin in South Tyrol to join in the discussion and value the intellectual and creative abilities that are located in the "privacy" of the home.

Najda Abts own artistic practices counter the world of literature





and film by enhancing a feminist narrative. She is part of Michelle Volta, an artist collective constituting of rotating, silent and active members who perform in a choir. Together they built the body of Michelle VVolta. Reading “her” biography already questions authenticity and authorship. The name which appears constantly slightly different rejects a determined subjectivity. In contrast to a coherent curriculum, contradictory information can be found. During the lockdown “she” wrote collective diary and fused many different personal experiences in one narration and expand in “her” own autofictional writing.

Lauren Fournier provides an account of autotheory, situating it as a mode of contemporary, post-1960s artistic practice that is indebted to feminist writing, art, and activism. Her in depth studies illumined practices that challenge dominant approaches to philosophizing and theorizing while enabling new ways for artists and writers to reflect on their lives. She sees in autotheoretical works the possibility to bring lived experiences together with theory in an energetic exchange of lived experience and the experiences of others, as “lateral citation,” beyond a re-inscription of the hierarchy of knowledge and legitimacy within scholarship.

Her impulses encouraged me to overcome my own feeling of being intimidated by theory and to incorporate it in my life, to reinterpret my own subjectivity and, beyond all, get in dialogue with it. My ongoing research on autotheory has helped me understand how, for centuries, female subjectivity itself was subjugated and kept outside the periphery of intellectual thought and that it has to be my curatorial aim to open the gates for what has been excluded for too

Dü dü dü dü dü  
pay attention, pay attention, pay attention oh to me  
wenn alle immer nur nice sind  
dann kann man auch kein Klassenbewusstsein entwickeln,  
kann man nicht entwickeln

how's it going,  
very good thank you,  
but how's it going,  
very good thank you,  
how is it going

Hallo Optionen  
ich bin so, ich bin so, ich bin so, ich bin so  
unterfordert/ überfordert  
kleine Okkasionen und übergrosse Gelegenheiten  
Opportunitäten

Du hast keine Chance  
You've many chances  
hast keine Chance  
you have no chances  
Aber nutze Sie!

Hör auf mit deinem Geheule  
Geheule

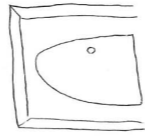
While I'm eating my melon

Na was machst denn du momentan so für Projekte

Hey wie geht's deinem Hund und der Familie

Your complicated situation I understand it  
but still you are a tasty coward

Alles so grau so schrecklich grau  
ich fühl mich ich fühl mich voll beschissen  
dann kommen meine Freunde rein tanzen rum  
ich denk an klassische Werbung - an klassische Werbung  
So viele Fratzen, die mich erschrecken  
und ich frag mich dann, was soll ich denken?  
in meine Höhle!



Ein kleines Glas an Sicherheit,  
Stemmt ein menschliches Gesicht  
geben. Gratifikation und die  
Ordnung gehen gelbe  
Verantwortung

wie der beginnen, wenn's nur so einfach wäre  
why is the gap so wide

Cocktails long Drinks Bier und mal Schnaps  
kipp ich mir hinter die Binde  
dazu noch ein recht dummer Talk  
ich woll ja unbedingt hin geh'n  
es geht immer so weiter  
auch wenn es keinen Sinn macht  
ich komm weiter hierher  
auch wenn es keinen Spaß macht

When I woke up this morning  
language belonged to the liars  
ich lass mir mein Recht auf Angst nicht  
verbieten

Das ist ein günstiger Mo-ment  
eine lohnende Konstellation  
Aber jetzt! schne-eeeell - bevor er/sie gleich entrinnt

Denn Lieder bewirken viel

Aber jetzt...

Michelle Volta

One month of rent was promised  
My text just had to sound smart  
Weeks of work you disliked it  
And in the end called me sweetheart

In forgotten places  
And in present spaces  
Small amount of vision  
A glimpse of decision

Besitz Einkommen Erbe bezahlte Arbeitszeit  
unbezahlte Arbeitszeit in Minute pro Tag  
Gleichheit ist politisch sie zu fordern oft zu explizit  
Keinen Zugang zu Arbeit keinen objektiven Wert.

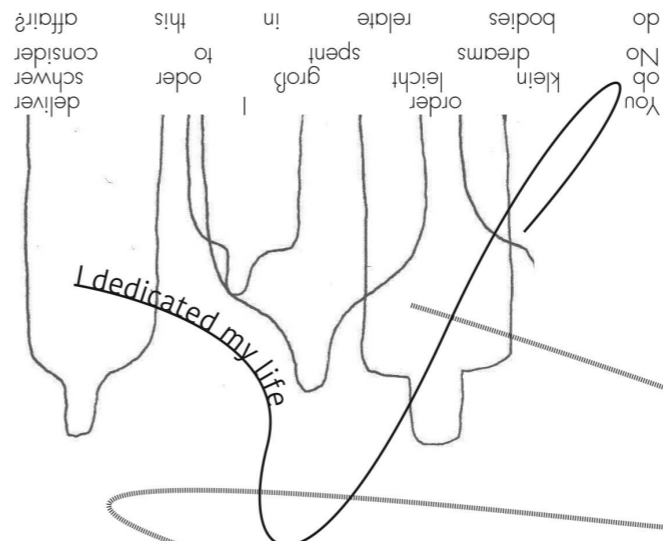
Potential Support Rate, gesetzliche Parität,  
ein abgeschlossenes STEM-Fach, mehr RD Personal,  
Role Models, Doktorandin, so steigt der objektive Wert

Kaum Zeit für eigene Arbeit oft fehlt Kraft anzufang  
"Zwei große Bier" - "Bring ich sofort" und so me Endschicht geht  
echt lang

Im Lego Movie Traum geht's um Gesellschaftstraum  
und wie sie verblödet "hier ist alles super"

Das macht mich traurig was kann ich nur tun?  
Ich sing dazu ein Lied denn Lieder bewirken viel

Die Legos kaufen Kaffee für siebenunddreißigvierzig  
Auf dem Weg zur Arbeit und finden's alle super  
Dort und da draußen denken alle dasselbe.



Auf'n Körper zurück geworfen  
durchkneten aufs Brett schlagen  
Wie ein Mantra wiederholen  
aus Angst es zu vergessen

Die Köpfe sind umtrieben by continuous Störgeräuschen  
ore crushing and rumaging in and out all back doors  
rewinding and retreating assembling and processing

Der Fritusenvertreiber  
sagt Menschen ja die lerne  
Die lernest du erst kennen  
wenn du mit ihnen handelst

In Basel and in Zürich your dreams come true also for you  
In London and in New York rich parents for everyone!  
In Norway and in Sweden it looks like the grass is greener!  
Überwachung meiner Angestellten was ich nun alles  
Hab Glück das kannst du sagen  
This schizophrenic thinking wieder alles auf reset  
how leave this idle condition im Strudel der Gefühle

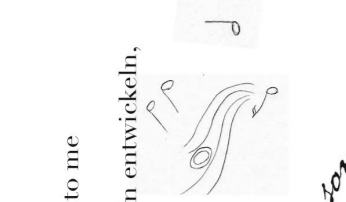
Letting go  
Gefühle  
Beim Obst und bei Gemüse, geh ich nach Gefühl  
Im Gegensatz zur Tradition, im Gegensatz zur  
einfach nicht.  
ich hab's jetzt satt, pass jetzt auf mich auf, verstehe es  
Das ist so feig, sich melden kurz bevor du abtrährst

Liefere mir  
transporta ora  
your backpack full with emozione  
e plen d'amore  
a casa mia privata  
begehre alles was du bringst  
and all you bring to me is liquid,  
tender delicacy  
rush to me  
vieni da me

Am Pissoir du lässt die Hose runter  
dein Schwanz  
verstärkt den süresten Geschmack  
die größte Offenheit  
als schreie die Liebe direkt in meinen  
Körper  
Kuss wird verweigert Körperteile die  
sich kennen  
Heiterkeit  
Heiterkeit  
Sicherheit  
Sicherheit  
Above the sky valium dreams hollywood im kleinformat  
neun stunden hin und zwölf zurück carbonfuf's overzise  
meine liebe killt den wald meine liebe schmilzt das ewige eis  
no frozen screen stays solid matter and time reunte  
Tromboseschrumpf  
der Emotion

Das ist so feig, sich melden kurz bevor du abtrährst  
ich hab's jetzt satt, pass jetzt auf mich auf, verstehe es  
einfach nicht.  
Im Gegensatz zur Tradition, im Gegensatz zur  
Gefühl  
Letting go

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rush to me  
vieni da me

long time.

Writing these lines, I close a chapter. My studies at Zhdk are finishing, however, my research into practitioners who counter the discourse and let bodies enter the field will continue. It sharpened my gaze for artistic practices that challenge what can be art and who is allowed to be visible on the cultural field.

### Prospect

In just these days the artist Philip Wiegard is visiting. He will hold a kids workshop next year of a different kind. The kids will work for him as assistants, and get paid by the hour. Kids will produce the wallpapers Philip Wiegard will later show in his exhibition.

He often works together with polymer clay, commonly popular between kids to create small pieces. But a closer look at the community made me feel stunned by the elaborate art works. I remember him saying that he is curious about how to bring the works of the creative community in an art context. He says sometimes it is because of their size, they are too small to be exhibited, therefore he scales them up by stretching them.

Wiegard not only includes art works from the creative community and questions authorship by mentioning and sharing sales with his collaborators but also invites all the families of the participating kids to join in the opening.



Philip Wiegard (\*1977 in Schwetzingen) has been working with Polymer Clay, an oven-hardening modelling clay known under the brand name FIMO, since 2019. This year, Wiegard showed wall works made with FIMO in the Berlin nbk. A central concern of this project is the exchange with the online polymer clay community via YouTube, Instagram and Etsy. Wiegard addresses this professional audience with his video tutorial. At the same time, with works such as the video work *The Graph Paper Cane*, he comments on current developments in the creative industry, in which the digital knowledge and service economy is being opened up to previously non-commercial areas, thereby blurring the differences between amateur and professional work. ([tropeztropez.de/reality\\_philip-wiegard](https://tropeztropez.de/reality_philip-wiegard))







## *Eau&Gaz Artist Residency*

Eau&Gaz. A Tous les étages ist eine häufig anzutreffende Beschilderung auf den Hausfassaden französischer Großstädte. Schilder dieser Art gaben ursprünglich den Hinweis auf fließendes Wasser und Gas im Gebäude. Erstmals gegen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts aufgekomen, zeugten sie von einem neuen Lebensstandard und wurden damit zum Zeichen modernen Komforts. Das blaue Schild mit der weißen Inschrift Eau&Gaz fand auch Einzug als *Objet trouvé* bei Marcel Duchamp. Das oft wiederkehrende Motiv war für ihn nicht nur Ausdruck des modernen komfortablen Lebens, sondern Bedingung. Damit wurde es zum Ausdruck eines neuen Zeitalters.

*Objet trouvé* kann als Auflehnung verstanden werden gegen das gemeinhin angenommene Verständnis eines traditionellen Kunstwerkes, welches sich durch herausragende handwerkliche und künstlerische Merkmale charakterisierte. Duchamp versuchte damit ein neues Zeitalter in der Kunst einzuleiten. Heute blickt dieses Phänomen auf eine lange Tradition zurück und hat größtenteils seine anarchistischen Züge eingebüßt. Dennoch möchten wir mit dieser Bezugnahme Fragen aufwerfen, die mit jenen im Zusammenhang stehen: Fragen über Normen und Konventionen innerhalb der Kunst und auch deren mögliche Aufspaltung bzw. Erweiterung. Das *Objet trouvé* ist ein aus dem Alltag entwendetes Objekt, das im Kunstkontext eine Neuinterpretation erfährt. In ähnlicher Weise versteht sich die KünstlerInnenresidenz gleichzeitig als Alltäglichkeit und Exotin des Dorfes. Die Abgeschlossenheit und Homogenität eines Dorfes stehen im Kontrast zu den üblichen Ballungszentren der Kulturszenen. Die Residency soll zum einen zu einem Refugium für KünstlerInnen werden. Dieser Rückzugsort, abgekoppelt von ständigen äußeren Aktivitäten, gewährt einen Raum der intensiven Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen Arbeit.



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## *Declaration*

**I hereby declare that except for works of other authors which served as sources of references and information and which have been duly acknowledged, the work herein submitted as a thesis for a Master of Advanced Studies in Curating at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) is the result of my own effort under supervision, and has not been presented nor is being concurrently submitted for any other degree elsewhere. I am thus responsible for the views expressed and the factual exactness of its contents.**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_