Self-surveillance: Performing the plurality of my feminine experience of self

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art by Research

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May 2018
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Paula van Beek
May 2018
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Abstract

Self-surveillance is a practice-led research project engaged with creating performative video installation artworks that question and complicate representations of female subjectivity. The research process encompassed the generation of original artistic material and an inquiry into an expanded performance practice. My research is contextualised with reference to 1970s feminist identity art practices and social media sites that provide a platform for both an emergent fourth-wave feminism and contemporary selfie culture. These sites facilitate self-representation and the presentation of diverse digital identities. The way women have been depicted in visual culture has historically set cultural templates that allow or restrict women’s access to social visibility. I use social theorist Andrea Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) models of visibility: recognition, control and spectacle as a framework to explore self-surveillance in relation to my own and other artists’ identity-based works.

The main aims of the research were to establish a solo practice and create performative artworks that made visible aspects of my lived experience. The research was driven by an inquiry into the ways an expanded performance practice could capture the plurality of a feminine experience of self. Through a comparative analysis of my own and others’ artworks, I have interrogated how performance strategies can subvert reductionist readings of feminine experience in contemporary selfie culture. I have brought together technical considerations of form with content related to plural feminine subjectivity. I have created original selfie-inspired artworks that present my plural point of view and act as both a celebration and a critique of self-representation online.

Note to reader

I have been exploring ways to integrate my content of plural subjectivity with form in my research. Writing this dissertation I intentionally use a narrative approach to tell the story of the research process and retain my subjective voice. I have privileged my experiences playing in the studio, reflecting on creative choices, and considering technical conditions as a lens through which to discuss the theoretical aspects of the research. I have employed the past tense to describe the research process and performance works, as they have been performed, and use the present tense to describe video and photographic artworks, as they are continuous. I also use the present tense for the writing process, as I explore my subjective point of view and “think” through the writing. To research the very contemporary conditions of selfie culture and fourth-wave feminism I draw widely from many online sources including artist interviews, podcasts, ebooks and Facebook research networks.

The document layout collages together an academic discussion with reflective writing and studio notes to create plural voices within the dissertation. Research images, photo documentation of works in progress, screenshots of social media feeds as well as the representation of artworks by myself and other artists create an “image track” to expand and support the written text. Key artworks by myself and other artists are cited in the References, other artworks are attributed in the List of Figures and captions. I have also included some additional documentation of my studio and extra research images as a way to make visible the creative process. Documentation of my performances and video artworks can be viewed at <www.paulavanbeek.com/current-research>.
Chapter 1 – Introduction

Self-surveillance is a practice-led research project that has created original performative video installation artworks. The research opens up a dialogue about the representations of female subjectivity in contemporary visual culture. I define my practice within a field of feminist art that engages with performative approaches to representing multiple aspects of the self. Working within an expanded performance practice I explore representations of identity that embrace duration and plurality and honour self-making as a process not a fixed product. My performative video installations present expansive experiences of my plural point of view. I consider my subjective experience of myself as consisting of both my personal point of view, which is my opinion and my POV (point of view from film theory), which is my visual vantage point. I present both what I think and what I see. I use the abbreviation POV to describe a mediated way of seeing. I focus on recording images of myself and position self-surveillance as both a theoretical frame and a method of art making. The phrase “self-surveillance” expresses the contemporary condition in which I know that you are looking at me looking at myself. The phrase self-surveillance is plural. It encompasses an internalised self-scrutiny as I try to confirm to cultural templates of how I should perform as a woman. It is also an external mediated vantage point of looking back at myself via devices of surveillance (Fig. 1).

My research focuses on social media as a platform for contemporary self-representation that fosters both “selfie culture” and emergent fourth-wave feminism. I address the social dimension of selfies on social media, as well as the media and mediating aspects of devices of surveillance, such as smartphone video apps and mirrors. Examination of my artworks is contextualised by a range of female screen-based and performance artists who also use an expanded approach to the subject
matter of the self, such as Joan Jonas, Pipilotti Rist, Miranda July, Amalia Ulman and Atlanta Eke. The discussion encompasses contemporary Western thinking about subjectivity and surveillance – the ways in which I am looking at myself and being seen (Fig. 2). I use social theorist Andrea Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) models of visibility: recognition, control and spectacle as a framework to explore self-surveillance in relation to my own and other artists’ identity-based works.

**Feminine subjectivity as plurality**

I assert subjectivity as not a fixed point of view, but a process – it shifts and changes as it is experienced and performed (Irigaray 1985; Grosz 1994; Mansfield 2000). Contemporary feminist thinking seeks to challenge the concept of a fixed female identity (Irigaray 1985, Grosz 1994; Jones 2006, 2012). Philosopher Luce Irigaray sets out a gendered reading of subjectivity in her seminal essay *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985). She rejects a singular concept of the feminine and instead suggests fluidity, mobility, ambiguity and plurality. I am using the word “feminine” to connote a quality or system that holds a set of associations (plurality, fluidity) and do not wish to infer that only someone who identifies as female could have an experience of a feminine subjectivity. My usage of feminine as a category, not specific to sex or gender, aligns with art theorist Amelia Jones positioning as she states ‘forms of feminine (not by any means necessarily “female”) subjectivities...’ (2006, p. 213).

Proposing a feminine subjectivity is also not an argument for essentialism, that there is any special feminine essence. Irigaray (1985) explains her theory is not the only way of classifying concepts of masculine and feminine subjectivity. In fact, Nick Mansfield (2000) argues that to state that feminine subjectivity has only one defined meaning within Western culture undermines Irigaray’s whole project of proposing ambiguity and plurality as feminine qualities. Inspired by Irigaray’s assertion of the feminine as plural I have adapted “plurality”, within the context of my project, to mean myself doing or being many things at once. I have taken her philosophical theory and made it a practical task I can perform in creating artworks about my subjectivity.
Social media: a site for feminism, selfie culture and a return to feminist art practices

The representation of different voices, faces and experiences in the self-publishing world of social media has helped feminism have a renewed impact (van Beek 2015a). This is evidenced by the recent hashtag activism #MeToo (Fig. 3). My personal definition of feminism, in how it relates to my research, is the enterprise of acknowledging, and working to dismantle power structures that restrict how the complexity of self-identity can be expressed. Emergent fourth-wave feminism builds on intersectionality theory1 that embraces a complex matrix of identity including class and race as well as gender and sexual identity.

I draw on the philosophical theories of Irigaray (1985) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994), as well as writing by Jones (2006, 2012) to discuss how plurality allows the collapsing of binary boundaries between object/subject, self/other, interior/exterior, online/offline, mind/body and visible/invisible. As a way to interrogate self in relation to society, plurality resists the over-simplification of complex questions about identity and refuses to reduce people into stereotypes or target markets (Fig. 4). Social media theorist José van Dijck asserts that the ‘need for a multiple, composite self has only increased since public communication moved to an online space’ (2013b, p. 200).

Social media can be broadly defined as online applications that allow users to generate and exchange self-made content (van Dijck 2013a). There are many different categories that include social network services (SNS) that facilitate personal or professional connections, sites for creativity that rely on user-generated content (UGC), as well as trading and gaming sites (van Dijck 2013a). The focus of my research has been on the image-driven platforms of Facebook and Instagram, which fall into the first two categories (SNS and UGC). When I use the term social media, I am often using it as shorthand for these two specific platforms.

I define selfie culture as the contemporary climate within which varied actions and intentions surround the taking and sharing of a digital image of self. I am using the 2010 launch of Instagram and the release of the iPhone 4 front-facing camera as a timeframe for my definition of contemporary selfie culture. I acknowledge this

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1. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality”, which is used in feminist theory to describe the complexity of identity, in 1989.
Self-surveillance is focused on Western culture. Although the word “selfie” originated in 2002 on an Australian online forum, the term is pre-dated by the Korean word “selca” and also “handcam” and “autofoto” (Murray 2015; The Selfies Research Network). I refer to the iPhone specifically in my research, as it is the brand of smartphone I own and its very name connotes an association with the self. In 2017 American technology company Apple was listed as the ninth largest company in the world (Stoller 2017). By referring to the brand iPhone, I am also acknowledging my identity as a consumer participating in Western capitalist culture.

The application of Web 2.0’s networked capabilities in the early 2000s facilitated an online participatory culture that was focused on the ‘potential to nurture connections, build communities and advance democracy’ (van Dijck 2013a, p. 4). The focus was towards the social – however, now the focus has become information companies that are more interested in users’ data than their connectivity (van Dijck 2013a). Social media sites are corporate entities that profit from unpaid users creating content. Facebook bought Instagram in 2012, consolidating its position as the largest photo-sharing platform (Rusli 2012). Facial recognition technology is now a default setting on many social networking sites. When I upload my selfies and tag my friends, I help create image-based labelled data sets used for marketing and security surveillance purposes (Fig. 5). Share Lab founder Vladan Joler warns:

All of us, when we are uploading something, when we are tagging people, when we are commenting, we are basically working for Facebook (cited in Miller 2017).

Surveillance and “dataveillance”, the practice of monitoring personal data transactions and online activities, are reoccurring themes in discussing social media. If the catch cry of the Women’s Liberation Movement\(^2\) in the 1970s was “the personal is political”, then today I wonder if it is “the personal is profit”?

From the 1970s to now, I chart a return within feminist identity-based art practices (Fig. 6). A new generation of female artists, within the context of selfie

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\(^2\) The Women’s Liberation Movement is often referred to as the second-wave feminism. I use these terms interchangeably.
culture, are again engaging with producing images of self (Fig. 7). Video art as a new medium in the 1970s aligned with the social conditions of second-wave feminism. Similarly, today I see a return to feminist concerns through selfie culture, aided by the technology of social media platforms and smartphones.

There is perhaps a distinction to be made between the popular notion of the selfie: the visual expression of vanity that is ubiquitous on social media sites like Facebook – and the more artistically motivated photographic self-portrait. As a visual form they can be totally indistinguishable, but the intentions that drive their production and social function vary greatly (Murray 2015, p. 499).

There is a rich lineage of female lens-based practitioners from the 1970s through to now who assert and question their own subjectivity through identity-based (what could now be called “selfie-style”) artworks. I have looked at the work of Martha Wilson, Suzi Lake, Joan Jonas, Hannah Wilke, Claude Cahun, Valie Export, Carol Jerrems, Cindy Sherman, Nan Golding, Julie Rapp, Tracey Moffatt, Candice Breitz, Pipolotti Rist, Alex Prager, Miranda July, Juno Calypso, Amalia Ulman, Petra Collins, Molly Soda, Dirty Feminists, Cassandra Tytler, Giselle Stanbrough, Intimadad Romero and Audrey Wollen. All these female practitioners create selfie-style artworks and address concepts of performance of self and multiple selves in many of their works. I focus on a few key works by artists who use an expanded performance approach to representing plural subjectivity.

1.1 Rationale: why looking at myself is relevant today

The depiction of women in visual culture has historically set the cultural templates that allow or restrict women’s access to social visibility. In 2017 taking a selfie was slightly more common among males that females (Sensis 2017). Yet it is predominately women who are subjected to the shaming narratives of vanity, narcissism and self-obsession that surround selfie culture (Murray 2015; Dombrek 2016). Art critic John Berger (1972) suggests that shaming women for looking at themselves is a consciously constructed way of ensuring that they are portrayed as
an object in a work of art, not as the subject. Both Berger (1972) and film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) assert that the way women are portrayed in visual culture is to please the masculine hetero-normative gaze. Or as art theorist Anne Marsh succinctly put it at a recent talk at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA):

Being the wrong sort of women, not looking like the ideal woman, in the visual imaginary of patriarchy, is something that has plagued women for centuries and been the subject of a range of art (ACCA 2017, min 23:36).

Feminism has created some significant cultural shifts in how women are able to present themselves and participate in society. Women have been permitted access to the “boys’ club” and are now celebrated for embodying masculine qualities. This plays out in both positive and negative ways from the promotion of female sports teams to the rise of raunch culture3 (Fig. 8). However, I feel feminine qualities (fluidity, ambiguity, plurality) have not been embraced in the same way – for any gender – in any cultural sphere. The framing of selfie culture as self-obsession, not self-expression, only serves to question if any conditions have shifted for women from second-wave feminism to now (Fig. 9).

If women are to develop autonomous modes of self-understanding and positions from which to challenge male knowledges and paradigms, the specific nature and integration (or lack here of it) of the female body and female subjectivity […] needs to be articulated (Grosz 1994, p. 19).

I engage plurality as an artistic strategy to address a contemporary construction of identity. I acknowledge my privilege and easy access to visibility as a white middle-class woman who fits the prescribed cultural templates. I aim, however, to work from inside my own experience to create expanded representations of my subjective point of view and push beyond visual markers of my identity. I have explored the ways an expanded performance practice can capture the plurality of a feminine experience of self. I have also interrogated how performance strategies can subvert reductionist readings of feminine experience in contemporary selfie culture.

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1.2 Practice-led methodology: subjectivity and the RSVP cycle

The methodology driving my investigation is practice-led research. I understand this approach in terms of Carole Gray's definition where practice and theory are reciprocal, so that 'critical practice should generate theory and theory should inform practice' (1996, p.15). I have explored plurality as an artistic strategy. In making work, I used ideas from intersectional feminism and process-based art to emphasise collapsing boundaries, allowing fluidly, activating change, honouring subjectivity and not placing value only on singular and unified finished products (Halprin 1969; Irigagray 1985; Grosz 1994; Jones 2006, 2012).

Working with the complexity of social media, I have drawn widely from feminist theory, art theory, social anthropology, media and surveillance studies to contextualise my practice. I reflect on my own processes for making art through a contextual analysis of contemporary artists who explore subjectivity through expanded performance methods. I use specific artworks to contextualise contemporary selfie-style artworks within a lineage of feminist lens-based practice. Critical reflection on the relationship of my artworks and processes to the fields of philosophy, visual culture, performance studies and feminist theory has allowed me to establish a specific field of knowledge and position myself within it.

The integration of content and form has been a central concern of my research. I assert plurality and collage in the layering of information and images and retain my subjective voice. This approach privileges my personal point of view as an artist-researcher in contrast to the scientific method in which researchers were previously encouraged to remain detached (Gray 1996). In making artworks I employed performance and process-driven art practices as a form that expresses the content of subjectivity as performative and in-process (Goffman 1959; Irigaray 1985, Butler 1990, Mansfield 2000).

I use the RSVP cycle as a method that aligns with practice-led research and allows me to, as Gray states, ‘not wear two alternate hats, but one hat which
integrates or at least allows difference to co-exist’ (Gray 1996, p. 7). To establish a solo practice I embraced plurality, performing multiple roles in making my artworks – simultaneously being performer, director, cinematographer and technician. I can be both artist and researcher by attending the distinct stages of the RSVP cycle and moving fluidly between them. The purpose of the cycle is to ‘free the creative process by making the process visible’ (Halprin 1969, p. 3). The four stages, Resources, Scores, “Valuaction” and Performance, do not need to be undertaken in any particular order (Fig. 10). Focusing on process steers me away from result-ordinated thinking so that outcomes operate as elements that feed back into the cycle of making.

Resources are all things that can be part of the process, such as materials, concepts and contextual references. At the beginning of the research the resources are source materials, but as the process develops artistic tests and artworks are fed back in as new resources to build on or repurpose. In this way I describe my artistic outputs as tests, processes, as well as fully realised artworks, for example, the studio tests ‘Inhabiting Hannah’ and ‘Hall of Mirrors’, the processes ‘Gallery of Her’ and ‘Selfie Machine’ and my artworks Selfie Machine (2016c) and Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b).

Scores are both detailed instructions and overall documentation of actions – akin to a musical score or playwright’s script. Choreographer Melinda Buckwalter (2010) asserts that the use of task-based scores provides the dancer-choreographer with creative agency as they are able to be simultaneously inside and outside of the generative process and performance. I have adapted from Halprin’s original action-orientated term “Valuaction” to my concept of Valuation. I ask questions that seek to find the value of Resources, Scores or Performance. Questions – such as What is useful? What am I excited about? What can I let go of? – assist me in keeping the research process going forward. Critical feedback from peers and supervisors as well as reflective writing support this stage of the process. Performance is the stage of activating or setting the work in motion.

Fig. 10 The four stages of the RSVP Cycle: resources, scores, “valuaction” and performance (Halprin 1969)
Using practice-led research and aligning my studio notes with the RSVP cycle lets me make visible my process for making artworks (Fig. 11). To combine content and form I have chosen methods that align with my subject matter. I employ plurality and highlight my subjective experience so that my feminine subjectivity is enacted, not just illustrated in the research.

1.3 Synopsis of following chapters

**Surveillance as a social practice: a front-facing camera lets me frame myself, but what is framing me?**

In Chapter Two, I discuss how the aesthetic of surveillance, which I see operating in selfie culture, frames how I see the world around me and specifically how I frame myself. The starting points for the research include previous projects in which I have created performative video portraits and the relationship of my art practice and my identity to selfie culture. Through a discussion of studio tests, I examine the concept of self-surveillance, contextualising it via social theorist Andrea Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) models of visibility: recognition, control and spectacle. Performative videos by artists Pipilotti Rist (1999) and Joan Jonas (1972a, 1972b) assist my understanding of how self-surveillance can be enacted. I further explore video, screens and installation methods considering Rist’s work through a reading of Amelia Jones’s (2006, 2012) art theory on performing a feminine subjectivity. I assert feminine subjectivity as plural in relation to Luce Irigaray’s (1985) theories. I interrogate mirrors and my iPhone as devices of self-surveillance and explore a public (visible) and private (invisible) self as realised through my mirror persona “Hannah”. The artworks of Miranda July (1998) and Amalia Ulman (2014), which explore self-surveillance through expanded performance strategies, allow me to focus my thinking about my own practice. I conclude the chapter by positioning selfie culture in relation to photography as a social practice (Sontag 1977) and consider how surveillance operates in the same way within today’s voyeuristic society.
The performance of visibility: exploring scores for being seen

In Chapter Three, I examine the social dimension of self-surveillance. This manifests as a way of seeing – in relation to recognition, point of view, mirrors and screens – and as a way of scrutinising the self through self-policing behaviour. I discuss the scores I used to create performance for the lens in my site-responsive iPhone works that interrogate models of visibility. I link my artworks to relevant works by other artists also exploring self-surveillance. “Selfie feminism” and artist Audrey Wollen’s proposed ‘Sad Girl Theory’ (Barron 2014, Watson 2015) are used to contextualise my four-channel video work Self Evident (2015b) in its exploration of making private vulnerable moments visible. Jill Soloway’s (2016) assertion of the female gaze assists me to open up a new way of describing POV and handheld camera techniques in my single shot iPhone film Recital (2015c). The concept of denying or repositioning the gaze becomes a framework to discuss visibility/invisibility in public space in works by artists Adrian Piper (1971), Hannah Black (2014), and Joan Jonas (1970). I use the act of repositioning the gaze in my durational live-streamed performance Starewell (2016a).

Plurality as process: plural feminine subjectivity through video performance installation

In Chapter Four, I discuss my attention to process over making finished products as I detail the creation and performance of various versions of my ‘Selfie Machine’ process. I begin by describing my live performative video installation test ‘Hall of Mirrors’ as a process for layering live images of self. I look to process-driven artworks by Julie Rrap (1984) and choreographer Atlanta Eke (2015) to understand more clearly how combining content and form creates powerful works. The concepts of dataveillance and “self as content” are explored as I confront the complications, culturally and commercially, that arise when I upload my image online. Giselle Stanborough’s fictional dating app (2016) is used to contextualise my development of Selfie Machine (2016c). I relate how I created a score for Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b) with detailed performance intentions and discovered I was performing a plural
process. I reflect on how I see plural feminine subjectivity operating in my work and discuss Jones’s (2006), concept of “parafeminism” to describe an expansive way of representing identity within visual culture. I conclude that new perspectives on feminine subjectivities have arisen in the range of contemporary artworks, including my own, that employ self-surveillance as both content and form.

Conclusions

In Chapter Five I revisit my rationale and aims for the research. I reflect on what I have discovered through making and researching identity-based artworks that use expanded performance practice methods. Consolidating my knowledge on content and form I discuss how I have integrated these using video montage, performance and iterative processes to capture plurality in my own artworks. I conclude by asserting that self-surveillance is effective as both content and form in creating contemporary artistic representations of feminine subjectivity that can resist the existing cultural templates and instead create expansive experiences.
Chapter 2 – Surveillance as a social practice: A front-facing camera lets me frame myself, but what is framing me?

In this chapter, I discuss the drivers for the research and how testing ideas in the studio focused me on the concept of self-surveillance. I position surveillance as a social practice, relating it to how an aesthetic of surveillance frames how I see the world around me. Employing self-surveillance as both a theme and a method, I focus on recording images of myself using mirrors and my iPhone. These technologies as materials frame me and I begin to explore ways to reframe myself. I position contemporary selfie culture in relation to photography and surveillance as a social practice (Sontag 1977; Finn 2012). Selfie culture has a tendency to reinforce standardised cultural templates that allow or restrict women’s access to social visibility. Social theorist Andrea Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) models of visibility: recognition, control and spectacle are used as a framework to analyse my practice and selfie style artworks by other artists. I discover how using plurality and performance can disrupt the established constructs of the representation of female identity in visual culture.

2.1 Self-surveillance

"I spent the night in the studio taking selfies, making mash-up videos, projecting them and re-inhabiting them. I’m trying to discover something about ‘performing feminine experience’, but last night got me thinking about self-surveillance..."

Studio notes, April 2015, Nicholas Building, Studio 22

I began the research with a clear concept of exploring feminine subjectivity, which I assert as plural in relation to feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s (1985) gendered interpretation of subjectivity. Self-surveillance became a key concept
through the initial stages of the studio research. Initially I intended to just look at the idea of “self”. However, the concept of “surveillance” provided me with the present-day way I was being seen and in turn seeing myself.

In my art practice, I create mediated versions of myself. My work asserts a feminist ideology that questions how images of women are presented in visual culture. I respond to signifiers, such as the sign for the female bathroom equating “women” with “wearing a dress”, as well as more complex examples that prescribe appearance and behaviour. I aim to create images of myself that do not seek to please the masculine hetero-normative gaze (Berger 1972, Mulvey 1976). I reject the self-objectified and sexualised body that is celebrated in ranch culture and epitomised by pop star Miley Cyrus (Levy 2005). By exploring more expansive ways of being seen, I aim to resist these reductive stereotypes and prescribed cultural templates. I perform many roles as an artist (performer, director, cinematographer, technician) and make visible multiple manifestations of my identity. Autobiography and persona, public and private, object and subject coexist in a disassembling of the singularity of “I”.

It all starts with a Gallery of Her

A performer, Xanthe Beesley, takes as many photos of herself as possible. As the public enter the theatre space, she sits slumped against a wall in a pool of light. Her live body inhabits the projection space screening close ups of her feet, costume, eyes and face. Caught in the light of the projector she is immersed in her own images – in two visual places at once. Jan 2013, Northcote Town Hall, Studio One

I had previously made a process for creating performative portraits. The two-layered video installation She only sees herself in close up (2013; Fig. 12), described above, was developed during a collaborative residency (van Beek & Beesely 2013b). This way of making performative portraits (that I now call the ‘Gallery of Her’ process) was further developed as part of Me, My Selfie & I (2014), another collaborative project with and for young women. The work was an investigation of public, social and private aspects of the self, as audiences encountered performances and video works outside on the street, inside the foyer and then in the intimate darkness of the theatre.
space. In the project, I was interested in countering reductive stereotypes of how young women and their experiences are represented. I encouraged the participating artists to create multi-layered representations of themselves. Different methods were employed within the six-week project using paper collage, video montage mash-ups, digital avatars and live performance to create diverse outcomes that were an expanded representation of the participants (Fig. 13).

Another challenge of the research has been to establish a solo practice. I have always had a collaborative practice working with contemporary performance makers and dancers. My role is often on the outside of the work, not inside as a performer. I work as a facilitator, director, dramaturg, lighting designer, camera operator and/or outside eye. I needed to find working methods in which I could be simultaneously inside and outside of my work, so to create expanded representations of myself.

Subjectivity as my inside experience

I was struck by the simultaneous visual images of an interior and exterior self that were presented in Pipilotti Rist’s video installation I Couldn’t Agree with You More (1999; Fig. 14). This work strongly influenced the creation of She only sees herself in close up (2013) and continues to inform my thinking. A public exterior of the artist is shown as Rist is filmed at the supermarket and in an apartment with the cityscape outside. The POV of the camera is suspended in front and above her upturned face as Rist is framed in a portrait mid-shot. In the installation, a second projection superimposes a wild, jungle-like scene onto the upper part of the image, often lining up with centre of Rist’s forehead (Fig. 15). I associated the wild images, full of naked bodies, with her private thoughts or dreams. I saw, in Rist’s work, the possibilities of using video and projection as material and how overlapping visual spaces were effective in expressing an expansive image of selfhood. The image of Rist’s face, front and centre in the frame, shares the same aesthetic as the selfies I see posted online everyday.

Selfie culture in a voyeuristic society

Forty years ago cultural theorist Susan Sontag (1977) situated photography as a social practice and, today, the snapping and posting of a selfie certainly reflects...
this positioning. Selfies can operate in a variety of ways: as a visual form of diary, an aesthetic representation of self, a statement of agency over self image, a personal brand or a documentary witness to being at a particular place or event. There are many sub-genres including car selfies, selfies with signs, and bathroom mirror selfies (Fig. 16). They are celebrated and criticised in equal measure for being narcissistic, self-empowering and posted for commercial profit (Murray 2015; Burke 2016; Abidin, Cambre, & Warf 2016). Sontag (1977) asserted that photography could be employed as an activity for amusement, a defence against anxiety or a tool for wielding power. Today, Murray argues that the en masse posting of selfies is a ‘radical colonization of the visual realm and an aggressive reclaiming of the female body’ (2016 p. 190). Burke counters that position pointing out the lack of diversity in the bodies presented and how the narrative of self-empowerment within selfie culture has been co-opted by mainstream media and brands such as Vogue and Adidas (2016).

Selfie culture exists within today’s voyeuristic society, magnifying what surveillance expert David Lyon asserts as the ‘underlying human desire to watch and be watched’ (Finn 2012, p. 72). The dictionary definition of selfie is a ‘photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media’ (Oxford Living Dictionaries 2017). I take from this definition that the public visibility of a selfie is a key aspect of the form. These images are made to be shared and to be seen by others.

Selfie takers often tout a high angle as the most flattering angle for a photo of the female face. I became interested in the concept of out-sourcing my POV. Taking a selfie I position my POV not out through my eyes or from a sense of interiority, but from the outside looking back down at myself. I think of the camera’s POV in Rist’s work, above and in front of her head, as if from a selfie stick. This hints that maybe my subjective opinion, my personal point of view, is being influenced from the outside too. Selfie culture, which operates within the very public realm of social media where everyone is watching each other, and of course, watching themselves. Surveillance has become a way of seeing.

Fig. 16 Bathroom mirror selfie
Performing the self: diverse expressions of identity

Although often only a single selfie is posted online at a time, behind the scenes there are a multitude of images taken and a whole performance of getting the right angle, best lighting, perfect pose, cropping and adding filters before uploading. I was working towards creating expansive representations of self so did not want to create single, static, one-dimensional artworks. Art theorist Amelia Jones writes that with the emergence of digital representation Rist is able to bring together body, image, screen and space in her video installations to ‘refuse the tendency of photographic media to reduce bodies to consumable and exchangeable things...’ (Jones 2006, p. 22). Rist’s performative video installation strategies open up an expansive expression of her selfhood that is able to contain both her exterior visible image as well as her (previously invisible) inside experience (Fig. 17).

Jones goes further to stress the importance of digital representation and performance. Acknowledging a dramatic shift in the contemporary experience of the world as a now global, digitally hyper-networked system she asserts that:

[We] must continue to acknowledge the ways in which bodies are identified and positioned in the world (including our own), while refusing to allow our assumptions about identity to congeal into fixed binaries. In order to promote this politics, it is – I will insist – essential first and foremost to keep the durational aspects of how we identify in the foreground (Jones 2012, p. 6).

I read in this a notion of a contemporary identity within visual culture that is digital and performative (durational aspects change over time). Individual identity can be created from both internal non-visible (or semi-visible) factors, such as class, lived experience and sexual identity as well as external visible markers, such as skin colour, body size, dis/ability and gender (Jones 2012). These diverse expressions and experiences of identity, however, are often homogenised into stereotypes which do ‘congeal into fixed binaries’ of black/white, fat/thin, male/female (Jones 2012, p. 6). These culturally prescribed templates do not represent complex visible and invisible identities or allow for people to self-identify. How could I create artwork that honoured a contemporary identity that is plural, fluid, digital, performative and self-
...artists tend to push at the seams... getting inside the image in order to keep these various tensions (the image vs. the thing itself; subject constructed by culture vs. the subject constructing culture) (Jones 2006, p. 23).

This concept, of the artist inside the work being both the image created and the active creator of their own image, is evident in Joan Jonas' video work *Vertical Roll* (1972a; Fig. 18). Jonas performs live for one video camera and points another at a monitor playing the live feed. She discusses how when she recorded the scrolling video signal and the resulting fragmentation of her body, it highlighted the mediation of her body. Jonas is quoted in NGV curator Maggie Finch's ebook:

> Video as we used it was personal, and the personal was political... The video monitor's screen or the projected image was another mask for the construction and deconstruction of persona (Finch 2015, para 3).

In the final moments of the work, Jonas' face further interrupts the visual space by appearing between the camera and the monitor (Fig. 19). In looking out at the viewer, Jonas creates another self-reflexive layer revealing herself as the maker of these images as well as the object in them.

Artworks and performances are created for an audience. Like selfies, they are designed to be witnessed, to be watched, to be visible, to be seen. Rist and Jonas play with the dynamics of performer/audience relationships and the specific acknowledgement that they are making a work to be viewed by others. Murray suggests that the acknowledgement of self-surveillance in selfie artworks enacts ‘the fraught matrix of seeing and being seen’ (2015, p. 215). Through my own subjective and feminist reading of the identity-based video works by Rist and Jonas, I see the artists both controlling and questioning the construction and presentation of their identities.

In 2006 Jones asked, ‘what kind of new subjects/objects are produced by global capitalist image culture?’ (p. 22). Today a very public and constructed self is being presented online within the context of selfie culture. I took Rist's image with a wild jungle in her head and Jonas' own interruption of the scrolling video into the studio with me. I began to test how an expanded performance practice might capture a contemporary representation of my feminine subjectivity.
Working solo in my studio, I recreated the ‘Gallery of Her’ process, this time placing myself in the work. I took selfies and created a slideshow as a background to perform against (Fig. 20). The only video camera I owned was an app on my iPhone, so I used this to record the second layer. I needed to be both inside the process as a performer and outside it, so I could frame the images. Rather than propping up the iPhone to record from an audience position, I experimented with holding it and filming via a standing mirror (Fig. 21). The handheld camera enabled me to control the frame and the mirror allowed me to include both my face and the reflection of the slideshow projected behind me. Although I had not initially intended to create images so directly related to selfie culture, when I saw myself holding my iPhone in a mirror, I had to acknowledge that I was directly referencing the contemporary visual imagery I saw on my screens everyday.

**Self-surveillance devices: smartphones**

The rise of selfie culture seemed to coincide with the ubiquitous use of smartphones. In relation to John Burris’s (1996) article ‘Did the Portapak Cause Video Art?’ I also asked ‘did the iPhone 4’s front-facing camera cause the selfie craze?’ (Fig. 22). Burris discusses how early video artists began experimenting with the SONY Portapak video camera when it was released in 1968. The possibilities of the technology itself became the subject of many early video artworks. Jonas explored the conceit of “video as mirror” in *Left side, right side* (1972b; Fig. 23). Through simple, repeated gestures she highlights the delay and reversal of the image. Jonas, who worked solo in her studio, noted that the handheld Portapak was an ‘appropriate tool’ for solo artists as the ‘technology was simple, and it did not require a crew’ (Finch 2015, section 8).

Today, smartphones and the self-publishing conditions of social media allow a single person to control the operation of the image capture device and from that same device share their image with the world. Front-facing cameras, now common on all smartphones, allow the careful framing of a self-portrait. Instagram has built-in filters that allow users to manipulate their image before they post. The easy framing, filtering
and sharing of a digital self-portrait, straight from a handheld phone, indicates an individual’s attention to constructing an image of self for public viewing.

**Self-surveillance devices: mirrors**

*I remember as a kid being fascinated with my mum’s dressing table mirror – the kind with the wings on the side that fold forward – if I got the angle just right, I could see so many reflections of myself making a hall of mirrors...a low-tech innocent self-surveillance.*

Reflective writing, May 2017, Counihan Gallery

The properties of mirrors enact what Australian artist Natasha Johns-Messenger calls ‘real-time image-capture’ (Heide Museum of Modern Art 2018, para. 2). In her installation *Echo* (2016), Johns-Messenger “repositions” a window overlooking the gallery’s garden through a series of reflections in angled floor-to-ceiling mirrors (Fig. 24). As I enter the installation I am well aware of the conceit of the work and pride myself in having worked out when I have arrived at the real window. However, I discover that there was one more layer, that I was still seeing a reflection. Johns-Messenger does not make work concerned with the representation of identity, yet I further understood how installation practices, and now also mirrors as materials, were able to create “reframing” techniques. Plural reflections make layers – the image of me in many places at once – creating an expansive way to represent my subjective experience (Fig. 25). Jones crystallises her thinking about a new way of imaging subjectivity by interrogating Rist’s large-scale projections.

![Fig. 24 Natasha Johns-Messenger, *Echo* (2016), photograph taken inside the *Echo* installation from my visit to the exhibition Sitelines, Heide Museum of Modern Art, 23 September, 2016](image1)

![Fig. 25 Selfie taken inside Natasha Johns-Messenger’s installation *Encircler* (2016), from my visit to Heide Museum of Modern Art, 23 September 2016](image2)

The boundaries between image space and material space (the room, the bodies) are deliberately confused, just as are those usually imagined as separating image body from “real” body (Jones 2006, p. 216).

I could relate a similar experience from being immersed and dis/re-orientated in Johns-Messenger’s mirror installation. Mirrors have a practical use in allowing me to be within the work and actively outside of it, crafting how it is being made. I now understood how mirrors and video projection could be used to create ambiguity and
not just a knowable reflection. I thought again of Jonas exposing the conceit of “video as mirror” in _Left side, right side_ (1972b). I continued to work with the hand-held reflected iPhone filming technique as a way to both control and complicate the visual framing of myself (Fig. 26).

_I watch back the new ‘Gallery of Her’ footage. I see myself looking at myself— checking the frame, moving the light, fixing my hair. I see myself looking back at myself via the reflected iPhone screen and I feel my own intense scrutiny._

_Studio notes, July 2015, Building 39 RMIT_

Self-surveillance echoes the conditions of selfie culture, gazing at myself via my smartphone screen. I now have the devices of surveillance, but I realise I also have a critical, judgmental way of looking at myself. Self-surveillance is plural, it captures my innocent curiosity with my reflection as a kid and my adult understanding that visibility, being seen, specifically as a woman in contemporary visual culture, is not as simple as it seems.

### 2.2 Models of visibility

Social theorist Andrea Brighenti discusses artworks that deal with the theme and technology of surveillance, what he dubs “artveillance”.

[W]e could call ‘artveillance’ the domain of the reciprocal influences and exchanges between art and surveillance... it invites us to consider art as ‘technological’, in the sense that art is always tied to a technology of production and a technology of mediation (and re-mediation). From this point of view, new visual and digital technologies cannot fail to have profound impact on contemporary art (Brighenti 2010, p. 137).

Although the technology of surveillance utilised by different artists changes, from CCTV cameras to Google Earth data, Brighenti asserts that the ‘surveillant gaze’ addresses issues of ‘social visibility and invisibility’ (2010, p. 138). He proposes distinct models of visibility: recognition, control and spectacle and outlines how these models operate in contemporary society, linking vision with power.
Brighenti’s visibility-as-recognition considers how a subject can find empowerment through being seen. This model, with a focus on personal recognition, allows the subject access to social existence and respect from others through what he calls ‘reciprocal inter-visibility’ (2010, p. 138). Being invisible within this model points to social exclusion. For example, the lack of female representation in many cultural spheres including major gallery collections (Fig. 27). The Countess Report author Elvis Richardson states that her study ‘reveals that a major influence on the perceived visibility and impact of female artists is their extremely low representation in art media’ (2016 p.2)\(^4\). With visibility-as-control the emphasis shifts from seeing eye-to-eye to seeing via mechanisms of surveillance in an asymmetrical dynamic. Brighenti asserts it as a ‘form of social control that disempowers the subject’ so that being visible in this sense is being watched, surveyed, traced and tracked (2010, p. 138). The third model, spectacle, is concerned with the ‘degree of separation that exists between the viewer and the viewed’ (Brighenti 2010, p. 138). The mediation of images, most commonly associated with mass media (including social media), creates this form of visibility where the images are dislocated from their original context or are, in fact, entirely fictional.

In setting out models of visibility Brighenti provides a framework for me to interrogate how ‘networks of vision and visibility contribute to our current cultural understanding of identity’ (McGrath & Sweeny 2010, p. 92).

**Recognition as reflection: I am here, I am seen, I am Hannah, I am her**

Brighenti’s visibility-as-recognition creates the conditions for an empowered subject. I have considered the idea of recognition through POV, screens and mirrors as a form of reflection. I have used concepts of catching sight of myself in previous projects and I now understand how my mirror persona Hannah works as a visual metaphor.

I was intrigued by my compulsion to capture images of myself, as I took many photographs of my reflection while travelling alone in Europe in 2004. This predates

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\(^4\) 2014 data (Richardson 2016) on the visibility and impact of female artists in the Australian art sector reveal that female artists received 36% of the art awards that year, yet only 34% of articles and reviews in the art media featured female artists, and female artists only made the cover story 20% of the time.
my use of smartphones, so these selfie-style images were captured on a Minolta 303 camera. My images reminded me of many identity-based images by 1970s feminist photographers, as I can see the outline of my chunky camera, not a slim smartphone (Fig. 28). My photographs were the impetus for a solo performance piece Of Hannah and the Taylor (2006). Using my lived experience I also found another connection with catching sight of myself in the bathroom mirrors of London clubs. The lush space of the female bathrooms became a space for hanging out and having a self-reflexive moment. The mirror became a check-in space. I started working with the concept of a mirror persona. She was the girl in the mirror looking back at me (Fig. 29). I manifested and made visible another part of myself and called her Hannah. The female bathroom space, where she emerged, became a key site for further investigation into public/private space.

Some sites and some subjects are more visible than others. Because sites and subjects interact relationally, social effects of visibility depend on who is more visible in which site... One of the main distinctions in modern western sociopolitical culture is the dichotomy between the public space, associated with visibility, and the private space, associated with invisibility (Brighenti 2007, p. 331).

Hannah, as a performance persona, has allowed me to explore the dynamics of visibility/invisibility in public/private space. Social anthropologist Erving Goffman defines “regions” as specific spaces that influence behaviour (1959). Using the extended metaphor of the theatre, he describes a backstage where there can be respite from performing in socially prescribed ways. In my case, the backstage was the supposedly private space of the female public bathroom. Hannah has become my shorthand for the divide between public and private manifestations of myself.

The unique intersection of female bathrooms, public/private behaviours and selfie culture led me to a wave of young female North American artists. These artists, who all create selfie-style artworks, have created what is known as “selfie feminism”. The assertion is that selfies are a powerful tool for women, specifically young women, to express personal identity through making public their private subjective experiences (Barron 2014; Watson 2015; Murray 2015; Burke 2016). This wave of selfie
artists are digital natives; the generation that has grown up with the Internet, living out their private experiences on social media. Artists such as Audrey Wollen (Fig. 30), Petra Collins (Fig. 31), and Molly Soda (Fig. 32), who all create confessional selfie style images, subscribe to the notion that self-representation and therefore, social recognition, can be achieved through online visibility.

In studio tests, I experimented with capturing my public and private self in the same frame. I projected Hannah onto mirrors to create plural images (Fig. 33) and experimented with projecting images of her and then trying to fit my body back into the projections. I wore the same grey costume from Of Hannah and the Taylor (2006) and called these tests ‘Inhabiting Hannah’ (Fig. 34). Putting on this grey dress is my way of stepping into Hannah. Yet it is the only thing I put on because I wear my hair loose and take off any jewellery. I am not dressing up as Hannah, putting on a wig or make-up. I am stripping back and exposing a part of myself, striving to make her visible, as she is a part of myself hiding within me.

To create performance material I used verbs that could be translated into actions. In relation to subjectivity operating from the “inside”, the instruction “inhabit” became a score. I recalled Jonas’ face and the layers of visual space, in Vertical Roll (1972a). And Amelia Jones’ vision of artists getting ‘inside the image’ (Jones 2006, p. 23). To “inhabit” opened up possibilities for expanding the boundaries of my subjective experience of self—I am here, but I am also her.

Wall/screen as mirror
performing in relation to image with body and screen/image relationship
– copy/contrast/complement
– where is the reflection point? (---|---)
it shifts.
my relationship with the image shifts
What’s the task?

hiding, revealing, shielding, inhabiting, obscuring, replacing
layers, overthrow, superimpose, palimpsest
supersede, superimpose, supplement, override
only best self/one

Studio notes, May 2015, ‘Inhabiting Hannah’ tests, Nicholas Building, Studio 22
After reflecting on the ‘Inhabiting Hannah’ tests, I began to question using my Hannah persona in this studio-based work. Hannah is site-specific – she exists in the seemingly private space of female public bathrooms. I took a cinematic approach to working with video and went on location (Fig. 35). As Hannah is a mirror persona, I considered if she could only be seen in reflections; then her visibility might be restricted by materials and locations. I engaged the hand-held reflected videoing technique that allowed me to see myself reflected as I am recording myself. I link this reflection to the concept of visibility-as-recognition. The agency to see and be myself, or in line with my concern with plurality: my many selves. These multiple reflections that are created in the mirror and the iPhone screen open up the many possible versions of myself.

My perspective on this plural sense of self was affirmed when I read feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray's gendered interpretation of subjectivity (1985). In reframing how the female body is imagined, she replaces the image of female sexual organs as a void, describing them instead as 'two lips in continuous contact' (Irigaray 1985, p. 24). By correctly redrawing the vulva and vagina, she rejects the cultural template that would confer invisibility – 'the horror of nothing to see' – and simultaneously proposes plurality as a system for describing feminine experience (Irigaray 1985, p. 26). I read in her essay an emphasis on embracing “two” not as fragmentation but as plurality. She states that ‘within herself, she is already two but not divisible into one(s)’ (Irigaray 1985, p. 24). This aligns with my own lived experiences of having distinct public/private behavioural modes and how Hannah operates alongside me overlapping, inhabiting and multiplying next to me.

**Control: surveyor and the surveyed**

I come to understand that there is another layer at play when considering visibility and plurality. Irigaray's assertion that ‘she is already two’ resonates with Hannah signifying a duality of interior and exterior experience (1985, p. 24). However, visibility and the notion of being two also collide in the conscious manufacturing of an exterior public façade that must be constantly monitored to ensure it is compliant with the

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**Fig. 35** Working on location in female public bathrooms, RMIT Building 80, Union House, National Gallery of Victoria, video stills and screenshots, 2015
required cultural templates. I realise that Hannah, in her act of self-surveillance, also represents the internal socially constructed critic monitoring my public appearance. In considering the lineage of art history, John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), asserts that women have been taught from earliest childhood to survey themselves.

A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself... And so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constitute yet always distinct elements of herself as a woman (Berger 1972, p. 46).

That I am conscious of my own reflection, constantly seeking to catch sight of myself, resonates not with vanity or curiosity but with a need to constantly monitor myself. Berger writes that women have historically been rendered as ‘an object of vision: a sight’ from an external male perspective and have come to internalise this way of looking at themselves (1972, p.47). ‘Shaping and managing visibility is a huge work that human beings do tirelessly’, writes Brighenti (2007, p.327). I have made Hannah visible and I can now reveal how she is now monitoring my public appearance.

Hannah, with iPhone in hand, looking at her reflection while simultaneously recording herself, is the contemporary manifestation of centuries of indoctrination (Fig. 36). ‘The mere fact of being aware of one’s own visibility status,’ writes Brighenti, ‘and not the fact of being under actual control – effectively influences one’s behaviour’5 (2007, p.336). This aligns with Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-control model within which “being seen” equates to being watched or surveyed. Hannah represents the internal invisible work of presenting an appropriate (according to male hetero-normative standards) outer appearance to be gazed upon.

Social critic Naomi Wolf writes of an ‘internalised self-policing’ that society encourages women to undertake, the diet program *Weight Watchers*, being a prime example (1991, p. 99 italics mine). Today smartphones, as devices of self-surveillance, have inbuilt apps that track my location, the hours I sleep and even every step I take. In 2015 the global wellness industry was a $3.7 trillion market (Table 1) (Global Wellness Institute website 2016).  

5. This is the concept of the Panopticon, a model of control in which prisoners (or now everyday citizens) assume they are being watched and self-policing their own behaviours (Finn 2012).
Wellness Institute, 2016). Although diet programs and fitness-tracking devices portend to be about creating physical, mental, and social well-being, there is a double cost in this self-surveillance (Wolf 1991). Women are encouraged to calculate, restrict and quantify their own behaviour in order to maintain a visibility that fits within society's cultural templates of beauty.

As communication technologies enlarge the field of the socially visible, visibility becomes a supply and demand market. At any enlargement of the field, the question arises of what is worth being seen at which price – along with the normative question of what should and what should not be seen. These questions are never simply a technical matter; they are inherently practical and political (Brighenti 2007, p. 327).

Women are encouraged (or even encoded) to survey themselves, yet when they do so they are criticised and subjected to the shaming narratives of narcissism and self-obsession that surround selfie culture. I work hard to control my public image but I remain unable to control how society chooses to perceive me.

Multi-disciplinary artist and performer Miranda July explores themes of visibility-as-control in her short video work The Amateurist (1998; Fig. 37). She sets up an asymmetrical dynamic as one character views the other via closed circuit camera. The narrator character, who monitors the CCTV, assumes the voice of authority. On the screen the other woman has no agency in how she is seen or described. July performs both characters and explores plural versions of female stereotypes in this solo video work that is personal, but not autobiographical. In a statement about the work on the Data Bank video site July explains:

The Amateurist alternately adores and rejects three familiar tropes: the sick and examined woman, the starlet/stripper, and the genius/talentless woman[...]. I create women who are predictable amalgamations of single types (Data Bank 2018, para 2).

July enacts plural roles and is able to subvert singular representations of women. Her approach addresses visibility-as-control and allows me as the viewer to question her authority and the notion of a single correct point of view. In a world of increasing...
Self-surveillance in public places, and information surveillance through the tracking of online interactions,’ writes NGV curator Maggie Finch, ‘the video is a paranoid vision of technological entrapment’ (2015, section 8). July highlights the potential for misinformation within visual broadcasting, specifically where an image of self is used and autobiography is assumed. Like the current cry of “fake news”, July tests the limitations and gaps that occur between performing, perception and reception – between looking at and being seen.

**Spectacle: in two places at once**

‘People love believing in things, and people still think the Internet is a place of authenticity,’ states Argentinean-born artist Amalia Ulman, ‘but everyone is selecting, or even fabricating, what they post’ (Small 2015, para 14). In 2014, Ulman staged a four-month performance over Instagram and Facebook (Fig. 38). She posted 175 photographs – mostly selfies taken on her iPhone – that seemed to chart her real-life experiences of moving to L.A., having a breakdown, undergoing cosmetic surgery and finding wellness. By the end of her work *Excellences & Perfections* (2014), even her L.A. agent believed her performance was real. Ulman’s online performance acts as a site-specific intervention. She was interested in more than just a send-up of selfie culture; Ulman wanted to expose the construction of identity that takes place online. ‘Social media are not neutral stages of self-performance,’ writes José van Dijck, ‘they are the very tools for shaping identities (2013b, p. 213). Ulman aligns her project with feminist philosopher Judith Butler’s notion of gender performativity and the “work” of being female (Sooke 2016).

Butler (1990) argues for gender, not as a biological condition, but as a social construct created through expectations, actions and experiences of what male or female should be. These social scripts are internalised and then performed by the subject in a re-acting out of what is required. Ulman carefully crafted her performance into three distinct episodes, informed by stereotypes of how young women present themselves online. She performed plural roles as she enacted a transformation over four months from innocent country girl, to party girl/ hot babe, to her redemption via wellness products such as yoga and heath juices (Fig. 39). She expertly recreated social surveillance in public places, and information surveillance through the tracking of online interactions.’
the visual codes of each Instagram sub-culture and as the title suggests, with each transformation she is aiming for perfection. Ulman is acutely aware of the dynamics of visibility that allow or restrict social recognition. *Excellences & Perfections* (2014) works to highlight the limitations of prescribed templates as Ulman is able to inhabit all the stereotypes herself in her durational act of self-surveillance.

‘All users perform a version of themselves on Instagram,’ says New Museum curator Lauren Cornell, yet she questions how artists are ‘using the commercial platform to calculated effect’ (Cornell, 2015, para 1). Employing fictional performance aligns Ulman’s work with Brighenti’s (2010) concept of visibility-as-spectacle that is concerned with the mediation of images and the separation between the producer of the images and the consumer. This reflects the contemporary conditions where, as van Dijck asserts:

> It is commonly accepted that people put on their daily lives as staged performances where they deliberately use the differentiation between private and public discursive acts to shape their identity (van Dijck 2013b, p. 212).

Spectacle is an ideal framework through which to discuss the complexities of visibility and identity creation on social media platforms. Using Brighenti’s (2010) models of visibility as a framework allows me to see how selfie culture can be read as both reinforcing and redefining cultural templates. The artistic acts of self-surveillance that I have analysed are most successful when they acknowledge this complexity.

### 2.3 Surveillance as a social practice

I position surveillance as a social practice, relating it to how an aesthetic of surveillance frames how I see the world around me and specifically, how I frame myself.

Surveillance has become a participatory public act. A headline screams: ‘SELFIE OBSESSED! Woman becomes viral sensation as she’s filmed spending a full minute trying to capture the perfect photo’ ([UK Daily Mail Online 2014](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2789583/woman-viral-sensation-s-filmed-spending-minute-trying-capture-perfect-selfie.html)). What is interesting in this headline is not the young woman trying to get the perfect angle, but that someone felt compelled to film her doing this, felt compelled to upload it, and that one million viewers clicked and watched the YouTube clip (Fig. 40). Everyone now...
participates in acts of surveillance.

When everything is seen, sampled, remixed and presented to us on a laptop browser, surveillance is no longer a specialist theme for artists, nor a singular focused political argument, it is a core characteristic of our society and our lives (McGrath & Sweeny 2010, p. 90).

I am constantly being monitored by CCTV, having my search engine metadata-mined and getting my face added to data sets. Yet, I am, in fact, participating myself in this practice when I engage with reality TV programs, watch citizen reporter footage on the nightly news or post my selfies to social media. On these platforms I check in with other people’s lives, actively curating my own public profile, monitoring others and of course, monitoring myself.

Aesthetics of surveillance

In today’s visual culture, the presentation of the aesthetics of surveillance lends authority to an image, the “truth” of a situation. A grainy telephoto lens image of a celebrity asserts more truthfulness to their identity than a carefully posed and photoshopped studio photograph (Finn 2012; Fig. 41). I can see how Ulman’s use of the selfies and July’s use of CCTV lent a sense of authenticity to their constructed fictional narratives. I am reminded again of Rist in I Couldn’t Agree with You More (1999), in what now looks like a front-facing camera selfie-stick angle. Rist was most definitely surveying herself and placing the viewer in a position of surveillance. I assert that in visual culture surveillance has become an aesthetic choice that lends the image a sense of truth. Selfies have adopted this aesthetic which comes from tabloid telephoto lens photography and CCTV footage.

The social aspects of self-surveillance collide with the technological conditions as a perfect storm. In charting the ubiquity of camera surveillance within visual culture, Jonathan Finn (2012) argues for positioning surveillance as a social practice. Tracing how ‘seeing photographically’ moved beyond the physical condition of the camera, he writes that surveillance has become a way of seeing – beyond the technology of CCTV or smartphones – that everyone now sees ‘surveillantly’ (Finn 2012, p. 78).
I now have constant access to the tools of surveillance – my smartphone is with me at all times with camera, video and social media apps connected to the Internet. I have the tools to survey myself and as the ‘surveyor and the surveyed’ I have internalised this way of looking (Berger 1972, p. 46). I now survey and judge not only myself but also the world around me.

**Social and media: integration of content and form**

What I see in Ulman’s work is a very public performance, a site-specific intervention, investigating both the “social” and the “media” aspects by creating a work both on and about social media.

What does it look like to carve out a space on Instagram for abstraction, dissonance, and transgression: in other words, for art? (Cornell, 2015, p. 4)

Social media researchers Crystal Abidin, Carolina Cambre and Katie Warf assert that the ‘interconnectedness of social and media’ must be understood to theorise selfies and selfie-style artworks as ‘socially mediated bodies’ (2016 pp. 2–3). July and Ulman create artworks that exploit the codes and conditions of the technologies of self-surveillance and play with concepts of female stereotypes, status and power through presenting multiple mediated personas. This integration of content and form within performative screen-based work can be traced back to Jonas. In *Vertical Roll* (1972a) she combined the thematic content of the construction and representation of her female identity with the specific affordances of the technology to reframe how she is seen. I looked for more contemporary artists that were using social media as both their content and their form.

The pixelated content of artist Intimidad Romero’s Facebook page explores concepts of pseudo-anonymity and public exposure of personal information online (Fig. 42). Her page is, in fact, the project *Intimidad Romero* by *Intimidad Romero* (2010–ongoing) a public Facebook profile that critiques the media inside the site itself, neatly dovetailing content and form. Posting selfies, usually associated with striving for visibility, the pixelated face camouflages identity while highlighting the digital data that constitutes her online image. Facebook has attempted to shut the project down.

**Fig. 42 Intimidad Romero by Intimidad Romero** (2010–ongoing), a public Facebook intervention, screenshot March 9 2017 <www.facebook.com/intimidadromero>
by arguing that *Intimidad*, ‘intimacy’ in Spanish, is not an acceptable name according to their Terms (Facebook Services).

Social media profiles, in other words, are not a reflection of one’s identity, as Facebook’s Marc Zuckerberg wants us to believe, but are part and parcel of a power struggle between users, employers/employees and platform owners to steer online information and behavior (van Dijck 2013b, p. 212).

As an ongoing intervention, this project’s various outputs include *Intimacy for Sale Facebook Update 9th December 2012* (Fig. 43) and the creation in 2013 of the *Intimatic* camera application that automatically pixelates any face in a photo taken with the app. In investigating the notion of her personal identity as content and the selfie as digital data, Romero brings into play notions of concealing, obscuring, protecting and performing.

July, Ulman and Romero all use duration and performative approaches to creating screen-based works that expand representations of self. I examined how concepts of public/private, interior/exterior and visible/invisible self were manifested in their artworks through their use of performing multiple roles, over-sharing or obscuring content and exploiting asymmetrical viewer dynamics. I understand more clearly now how “self” and “surveillance” come together in content and form.

**The surveillant gaze**

In this chapter, I have discussed how I came to discover and understand the concept of self-surveillance as applicable to both content and form. Self-surveillance is both my theme and a method for making work. My front-facing camera lets me frame myself, however, I am now aware of the larger cultural context that frames identity-based selfie-style work. I have come to understand that existing templates, such as hot babe or pure yoga girl as performed by Ulman, operate in a way that allows or restrict women’s visibility depending on their ability to adhere to look and act a certain way. Through studio tests such as ‘Inhabiting Hannah’ and using the ‘Gallery of Her’ process, I have started to test strategies to make expansive expressions of identity that are not reductive stereotypes.
Using the technology of mirrors and iPhone, I now have ways of looking at and scrutinising myself that reflects the contemporary condition of seeing ‘surveillantly,’ as asserted by Finn (2012, p. 78). I have used Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility models as a framework to discuss my initial studio tests and the complexities of the surveillant gaze. I have endowed female public bathrooms as sites for self-surveillance and engaged Goffman’s (1959) concept of backstage behaviour in relation to my own lived experiences of having distinct public/private behavioural modes. In working with my mirror persona Hannah as a separate internal manifestation of myself I have drawn from Irigaray’s emphasis on embracing two not as fragmentation but as plurality.

I have developed a reflected hand-held videoing technique that allows me to work as a solo artist and control the frame. This filming technique also visually represents my key concepts of self-surveillance, visibility and plurality as the reflection of Hannah and the recorded image on the iPhone are simultaneously visible in the frame. This image, revealing a woman monitoring herself, reflects Berger’s assertion that women have been taught from earliest childhood to survey themselves. I have aligned Berger’s theory of a woman being both the ‘surveyor and the surveyed’ (1972, p. 46) with Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-control model in which “being seen” equates with being watched or surveyed. I have also used both social critic Wolf (1990) and philosopher Butler (1990) to further unpack how cultural expectations leads to a very deliberate construction of image and identity. Their theories, along with Irigaray’s, bring a feminist lens to my analysis of artworks that address female subjectivity as plural and performative. Video work, as well as online performances and interventions, by July, Romero and Ulman have been used to understand the complexities of presenting a mediated image of identity.

In this chapter, I have presented Finn’s (2012) assertion that surveillance has become a social practice and a way of seeing the world. In the following chapter, I engage with this practice to create artworks and continue to use Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) framework of visibility to discuss my site-responsive iPhone video works Self Evident (2015b) and Recital (2015c) and my durational live-streamed work Starewell (2016a).
Chapter 3 – The performance of visibility: Exploring scores for being seen

In Chapter Two, I used three models of visibility as a framework to examine how cultural templates allow or restrict access to being seen in society. I analysed examples from feminist identity-based art practices to come to understand how these works could question the representation of identity through using expanded performance methods. In a discussion of my studio practice I related how I tested ways I could represent my own plural subjectivity. In this chapter, I describe how I used my lived experience as a way to develop task-based scores (such as “inhabit” and “pull it together”) to create new performance material that responded to both form and content. I relate how I worked with my persona Hannah to create a series of site-responsive video works in spaces that are simultaneously public and private. I discuss three of my artworks *Self Evident* (2015b), *Recital* (2015c) and *Starewell* (2016a) (Fig. 44) through the lens of visibility models and consider different ways of looking at myself and repositioning the male/cultural gaze.

3.1 Inhabit: Get inside the work

To create performance material, a playwright writes directions for the actors and a composer gives the musicians a musical score to play. I employed task-based scores to create performance material for a series of video works. Task-based scores, a concept from improvisational dance, are simple verbs I acted out to make performance action. I chose words that linked to my content of subjectivity in order

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*Fig. 44 (CW from top left) Self Evident (2015b), installation view; Starewell (2016a), performance documentation; Recital (2015c) installation view*

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6. As an example, choreographer Steve Paxton created a new genre of performance, Contact Improvisation, based on the score of two performers ‘sharing weight through a moving point of physical contact’ (Buckwalter 2010, p. 42). The dance that is created is whatever happens as the bodies negotiate this task.
to manifest these concepts as performance. I make art about women from the inside of the experience of being a woman myself. Working from the inside situated inhabit as a key task-based score. Working with plurality as a concept also allowed me to exploit instructions such as repeat and loop7 in both the performance action and later in the editing and installation of my artworks.

Inhabit resonates with me in two ways: to inhabit the persona of Hannah and to inhabit the space that Hannah occupies – female public bathrooms. I chose specific bathroom locations to perform the work, finding spaces that had opposing mirrors to create infinity effect, like a hall of mirrors, that multiplied my image (Fig. 45).

**Inhabit: working from the inside of Hannah**

My hand-held reflected filming technique created both a practical and cultural way of seeing Hannah. I had decided that, as a mirror persona, Hannah could only be seen in reflections. To achieve this, I continued to use the filming style I had discovered in the studio (Fig. 46) that combined Natasha Johns-Messenger’s concept of mirrors as ‘live image capture’ (Heide Museum of Modern Art 2018, para 2) with Jones’s observation of artists, such as Rist, ‘getting inside the image’ (Jones 2006, p. 23). Working as a solo artist, I can now see the monitor, as the director would, and make adjustments to the framing of the shot, as the cinematographer. Yet I can also be inside the work as the performer. This technique achieves a plural way of seeing. My filming technique locates Hannah’s POV simultaneously through her own eyes and through the iPhone video camera and screen, reflected back in the mirror. The thematic content of the image implies that she is monitoring her appearance and also her behaviour. Hannah is actively recording herself for public display and controlling what is being seen.

I link my exploration of a private sense of self to another key episode in my life that involved female public bathrooms. Art theorist Anne Marsh (2003) asserts that

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7. A “loop” is a dramaturgical structure of a continued repeating back on itself, like a loop pedal in music that takes a sound sample and endless repeats it creating a live layering of sound.
researching personal subjectivity and drawing on lived experience have been key tactics for performance artists throughout the history of the form.

The self and how it came to know the world became a central concern for many performance artists. The exploration of private and public space often involved intensive self-analysis on the part of the artist (Marsh 2003, p. 26).

I used my lived experience as content to make a series of site-responsive video tests. I chose verbs that had metaphorical meaning as well as being a clear instruction I could do to create task-based scores. Inhabit, along with refresh, repeat old patterns, fall apart and pull it together, were the task-based scores drawn from my lived experience that activated the performance action. These scores allowed me to start to combine content and form.

**The public/private space of female bathrooms**

*I slam the stall door shut and burst into tears. Here, in private I can cry.*

Reflective writing, April 2015, Studio 22 Nicholas Building

When I was living in London in 2005, I had a traumatic accident that resulted in severe damage to my right hand. I attended a series of lunchtime hospital appointments during the many months of the healing process. I remember how I would hold myself together until, after seeing the nurse, I could reach the safety and perceived privacy of the female bathrooms. There I would let myself fall apart before pulling myself back together again to face the world and return to work.

Reflecting on my experience in the hospital bathroom, I became aware of specific social codes applied to female space. The female bathroom space allowed me to feel invisible and enact very particular behaviours that I would not display in the outside world.

Over 50 years ago Simone de Beauvoir, the feminist philosopher, offered a gendered reading of Erving Goffman’s regions as specific spaces that permit different types of behaviour. She also drew on the metaphor of the theatre to make a distinction between a public self in the world of men and a backstage region of being with other women.
Confronting man, woman is always play-acting .... With other women, a woman is behind the scenes; ... she is getting her costume together, preparing her make-up, laying out her tactics; she’s lingering in dressing gown and slippers in the wings before making her entrance on the stage; she likes this warm, easy, relaxed atmosphere... (de Beauvoir As Metraux, cited in Goffman 1959, p. 112–113)

The female public bathroom serves as backstage to public space that is coded as a male domain. This implies a safe space and site for preparing for the outside world. I realised that I always hide my vulnerable experiences and only present a confident public face. I reflected that as I tried to pull myself together, a divide opened up between my socially visible self (Paula) and private hidden self. Hannah, as my artistic construct, acts as a visual metaphor for that divide and allows me to make an invisible part of myself visible (Fig. 47).

3.2 Visibility-as-recognition: Access to social recognition

Returning to Brighenti’s model of visibility as recognition, the emphasis is placed on personal eye-to-eye interaction, what he calls ‘reciprocal inter-visibility’ (2010, p. 138). Being seen in this way allows access to social existence and creates an empowered subject. I link my artwork Self Evident (2015b) to the recent trend of selfie feminism that champions online visibility as a way to achieve social recognition.

Selfie feminism: visibility = empowerment

Selfie feminism is the assertion that selfies are a powerful tool for women, and specifically young women, to express identity through making public their private, subjective experiences (Barron 2014; Murray 2015; Watson 2015). A new generation of digital-native artists propose that selfies can reclaim the male gaze as they turn the lens on themselves and control the creation and distribution of their own images.

Film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) coined the term “male gaze”, asserting that the conditions of cinema created a sexualised way of seeing women as an image or object.

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8. Gender-neutral public bathrooms are becoming more commonplace as trans and non-binary identities are now being given appropriate spaces. I acknowledge that this complicates a gendered reading of Goffman’s regions.
This echoes John Berger’s (1972) assertion that throughout the course of art history the ideal spectator is always male. Berger further suggests that shaming a woman for looking at herself is a consciously constructed way to ensure that she is portrayed as an object within an artwork, not as the subject (Fig. 48).

You painted a naked woman because you enjoy looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you call the painting Vanity thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure (Berger 1972, p. 51).

The notion that to be interested in your reflection is to be self-absorbed is a judgemental position that labels people who post a selfie as narcissistic. Narcissistic Personality Disorder is actually a rare clinical diagnosis (Dombek 2016). Berger (1972) points out the intention of the shaming behaviour is to objectify the female form. In the mid 1970s art critic Rosalind Krauss (1976) labelled artists using the new medium of video and video feedback, which set up the conditions for reflection, as creating a narcissistic POVs. In the hands of certain artists, she concedes, video could be used to reflect the self and be expanded into reflexivity, the possibility to see and comment back. Krauss (1976) cites artworks such as Jonas’ Vertical Roll (1972a), as being able to exploit as well as critique the conditions of subject, object, other and self (Fig. 49).

Rejecting the shaming narrative of narcissism that surrounds selfie culture, a new generation of female artists seek social recognition and self-empowerment through making themselves visible online. Selfie feminism is enabled by new technologies and new means for distributing images. Revisiting feminist video and photographic practices of the 1970s, such as work by Jonas, Adrian Piper and Carol Jerrems (Fig. 50), I can chart a spiralling return to producing images of self, asserting identity, questioning how female experience is being framed, while seeking to reframe themselves.

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9. In her essay The Selfishness of Others, writer Kristin Dombek (2016) traces the label of narcissist as a derogatory term that has been used to claim a moral stance over certain groups of people throughout history, including women and the LGBTQI community.
Selfie feminism and the complications of social recognition

Los Angeles based artist Audrey Wollen is a key figure in the selfie feminism trend. Born in 1992, she became known to the art world through her Instagram account on which she shares her love of art history and posts her personal selfies and selfie-style artwork. Wollen is well versed in the theories that assert that women are depicted for male pleasure. In Repetitions (2014) she restaged depictions of the female form in historical works of art (Fig. 51). She states that she reclaims objectification, ‘a history of anonymous naked girls’, through the act of reproducing the artworks with her own body and sharing the images online herself (Wollen in Watson 2015, para. 9).

Wollen proposes a ‘Sad Girl Theory’ to frame the sharing of private, vulnerable moments as another way of reclaiming agency (Barron 2014; Watson, 2015). She says:

Girls’ sadness is not passive, self-involved or shallow; it is a gesture of liberation, it is articulate and informed, it is a way of reclaiming agency over our bodies, identities, and lives. (Watson 2015, para. 3).

Sharing sad selfies online is a way of making private backstage behaviour visible and rebelling against the shaming narrative of self-obsession. Photographer and filmmaker Petra Collins is another key selfie feminist artist aiming to turn the tables on how “girly” behaviour is perceived. Collins creates a selfie aesthetic that portrays young women’s vulnerabilities in the name of self-empowerment. Her So Sad Today series (2016) were taken at a slumber party where the girls were encouraged to share sad stories. Collins started clicking when the girls started crying (Burke 2016; Fig. 52).

Collins and Wollen, who both create confessional selfie style images, subscribe to the notion that self-representation and self-empowerment can be achieved through online visibility. Curator Charlotte Cotton, at New York’s International Center of Photography, identified this phenomenon:

I don’t think we’d be here now in this amazing sexual and gender revolution without the online space where young people can see and share other versions of identity and sexuality (Cotton 2014, para. 4).
Visibility equals empowerment, as selfie feminism asserts, is a great equation, yet there are many complications. These selfie feminist artists have created reflections of themselves but whether they have achieved reflexivity in their artworks, the possibility of seeing and commenting back on female identity within the context of contemporary visual culture, is up for debate. Their artworks do not seem to address the complexities of being seen as young women within the context of the corporate social media platforms on which they post. In a critique of selfie feminism, artist and writer Aria Dean (2016) asserts that although selfies seem like a valuable feminist tactic, male, white and colonialist gazes dominate social media. She argues that a topless mirror selfie looks less like a rebellious act of agency than an acquiescence to the pervasive cultural templates provided by the patriarchy (Fig. 53). Artist and theorist Tassia Joannides (2017) renames the male gaze as the cultural gaze, asserting that Western culture has fully absorbed this sexualised way of seeing the female body.

So long as the feminist politic with the most traction enjoys this uncomplicated relationship to visibility, it will only sink further into aestheticization and depoliticization (Dean 2016, para 14).

In the artworks these young artists produce they do not seem to turn their attention outwards to the larger cultural constructs that frame their own work. This new generation of feminist artists, in creating reflections of themselves, create a looped gaze realising Brighenti’s ‘reciprocal inter-visibility’ (2010, p. 138) only with themselves.

Only a certain kind of body: white, young, thin and half-undressed

Intersectionality is a key concern in the current forth-wave of feminism. Yet selfie feminism undoes its own politics through erasing non-normative identities and refusing to acknowledge privilege.

Recognition is a form of social visibility, with crucial consequences on the relation between minority groups and the mainstream (Brighenti 2007, p. 329).

This criticism was recently argued in Jill Soloway’s TV adaptation of I Love...
Dick (2016–2017; Fig. 54). The character Toby is criticised for her live-streamed naked selfie-style performance for failing to take into account the class and race of her unwitting male participants. In the scene her performance is both lauded and critiqued by different artists.

White male: “It’s a stunning embodiment of a new epoch where academia, art and social media create a post-modern bricolage of high and low culture.”

Queer woman of colour: “Seems to me like you are busy inflicting all your privilege on all these working class, mostly brown dudes... Every white feminist will come and congratulate you... for making art that’s still subversive, what, for the sake of being subversive... It’s bullshit Toby.” (Soloway prod. 2016–2017 ep. 6, min 27:02)

Artist Hannah Black warns that in promoting the visibility of only a certain kind of body, selfie feminism can be seen to assert, that ‘all women have bodies in the same way’ (Darling 2015, para 2). However, People of Colour and people living with disability or diverse body size may not see themselves and their experiences reflected back to them as often online. Access to online visibility is not a universal privilege. Moderators of corporate social media platforms, on which these selfie artists post their work, contribute to the complications of visibility. It is mostly white male employees that police the sites’ community guidelines in line with their own values drawn from what Marsh describes as, the ‘visual imaginary of patriarchy’ (ACCA 2017, min 23:36). Acting as gatekeepers to what can be publicly posted, Instagram and Facebook moderators become complicit in ensuring that only the most agreeable versions of selfie empowerment are made visible – young, white, thin, and often half-undressed. Although sometimes selfie feminist artists get their accounts suspended for displaying natural body hair, their version of visibility is socially recognised and promoted over others’ self-representation.10

Artist Amalia Ulman, who amassed 90,000 Instagram followers during her work Excellences & Perfections (2014), complicates the simplicity of visibility equals empowerment. She acknowledges her privilege and her access to visibility as a thin,

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10. In 2014 a body-confident North American teen said Instagram temporarily deactivated her account because of her size (Taylor 2014).
white woman, self-reflexively stating that of course ‘photos of half-naked girls get a lot of likes’ (Sooke 2015, para. 7; Fig. 55). She is complicit in the objectification of herself and plays up to codes of the male/cultural gaze, yet she is also critiquing the media on which she makes her work. Her artwork is created and exhibited on Facebook and Instagram, and the work is explicitly about how images of women operate on those platforms.

**Revealing camera: blurring boundaries**

To address how I could bring a layer of reflexivity into my selfie style performance for the lens works, I returned to the concept of Goffman’s regions as specific spaces that permit different types of behaviour.

My backstage is the female public bathroom where I have been creating iPhone works. Goffman writes of physical boundaries, often a door, that separate the regions and therefore separates socially acceptable public and private behaviours. However, he states that in radio and television broadcasting, the front region and backstage are less defined, as often there is just a record button separating backstage behaviour from public performance. Broadcasting artists must be acutely aware of how quickly they switch from their backstage selves to their on-air personas (Goffman 1959, p. 119). In my video works the image of the broadcasting device is very present due to the reflected iPhone videoing technique I developed (Fig. 56). This raises the tension between the concepts of the regions, as Hannah is displaying backstage behaviour, which should be invisible, yet she is clearly recording it. The iPhone and selfie aesthetic of the work also implies that she will post the video online, making it public. The behaviour becomes simultaneously private backstage behaviour and public performance. I actively layer up the concepts of a private backstage space, a public performance of self and the act of making visible a personal experience.

**Self Evident (2015b)**

*not needing to be demonstrated or explained; visible, unconcealed, undisguised.*

Studio notes, August 2015
Self Evident (2015b) is a video installation of four looped videos (Fig. 57). The work makes visible private, normally invisible moments of vulnerability. These acts of social self-surveillance take place backstage, in the privacy of female public bathrooms. The mediated POV filming style captures plural reflections. The technique serves a practical purpose as it allows me to be in front of and behind the camera, so I can be the director, cinematographer and performer simultaneously. The reflected iPhone also creates a visual metaphor for the concept of Wollen’s ‘Sad Girl Theory’, as well as self-scrutiny. Hannah is allowing vulnerable moments to be made visible, but she is also judging her appearance and behaviour. The presence of the iPhone camera serves to blur the boundary between public/private and visibility/invisibility: I am pressing the record button. I am performing a persona. I am complicit in making my private experience public.

Reflections gave me plural images and I also used repetition and loops in the performance score and editing process, laying up my multiple selves so that plurality was present in both content and form.

Inhabit: an installation strategy

Self Evident (2015b) was further looped in a site-responsive installation in the female bathrooms at 524 Exhibition Space, Melbourne. The four videos played on iPads mounted to the four walls of the female bathroom space and one caught in the reflection in the mirror, further multiplying the performances of self on display (Fig. 58). To create an audience experience the videos were synchronised so that screens activated at different times. This accumulated to a simultaneous presentation, forcing the audience’s focus to shift by denying a clear vantage point of all four screens (and the reflected fifth). In this way, the audience also inhabits the installation space. Their kinaesthetic experience mimics some of the physical actions on screen as they turn around to witness another body behind them. Presenting four simultaneous performative video selfies, the work intentionally presents plurality, resisting a singular reading of Hannah’s subjective experience.

The success of the installation relied on the activation and codifying of the
bathroom space as a safe, female hangout space, described by de Beauvoir as an ‘easy, relaxed atmosphere’ (cited in Goffman 1959, p. 113). Discussing what the video work evoked for people during the exhibition, some women said they recognised that check-in moment from being out clubbing. Others reflected on the intensely private action that was taking place on the screens and how the female bathroom did indeed resonate as a space for letting yourself fall apart.11

3.3 Visibility-as-control: Male gaze/cultural gaze to female gaze

Brighenti (2010) asserts that visibility-as-control creates an asymmetrical dynamic where someone is surveyed, watched or tracked. The emphasis is on the mechanisms of surveillance, which could be a CCTV camera or my iPhone. I start to think of a cinematic surveillance in relation to Mulvey (1975), and the use of a camera as a device that would create this asymmetrical dynamic.

Taking back control: privileging a feminine POV

I considered how, since I hold the camera and make images of myself, I could take control of how I am framed. To consolidate the scores and concepts in Self Evident (2015b) I set myself the task of creating a cinematic single-shot iPhone film, Recital (2015c). Filmed on location at the Melbourne Recital Centre’s female bathrooms this selfie film continues the exploration of making a private moment visible by performing and recording Hannah in a distressing situation. To keep exploring plural subjectivity I once again utilised reflections and the hand-held reflective iPhone filming style that pluralises my POV. To further capture shifting, subjective points of view, I employed the cinematic strategy of using different framed shots, such as wides, mid shots and extreme close-ups, within the single take (Fig. 59).

I used the task of pull it together to create a performance score of preparing for the outside world. The dramaturgical trajectory ends with a consolidation of a “proper”

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11. Reinforcing the status of the female bathroom as the only public space that is exclusively female, my male supervisor did not enter to view the work, as he was not expressly invited in.
public self ready to leave the backstage bathroom space. The title, *Recital*, references the location as well as the backstage activity of preparing for a public role. Again, I enacted plural roles as director, cinematographer and performer simultaneously asserting my plurality and agency in creating, performing and sharing this private performance.

**Recital (2015c)**

*Recital (2015c)*, with Hannah in a short sparkly dress and heels, plays into the codes of the male/cultural gaze while simultaneously trying to find new ways of looking at and framing female experience (Fig. 60).

Mulvey (1975) asserts there are three different “looks” associated with cinema – that of the camera, that of the audience, and that of the characters looking at each other within the film – all of which privilege a male gaze. *Recital (2015c)* collapses Mulvey’s (1975) three looks into the plurality of my own POV. I am simultaneously the camera, the audience and the performer within the film (Fig. 61). I use the visual codes of cinematography (mid shot, wide, close-up) to keep reframing my body and present my shifting subjective experience.

The use of my iPhone as the imaging tool again creates a direct reference to the current trend of selfie feminism and social media as also a simultaneously public/private site. The location of the female bathroom highlights the gendered actions that women perform to retain access to the social sphere. The single shot creates an aesthetic of surveillance. The unedited, raw content links the work to citizen reporter and live-stream footage that is often posted to social media sites. Wollen’s ‘Sad Girl Theory’ acts as a contextual frame, yet pushing beyond the simplicity of the selfie feminist argument, my act of revealing the filming of myself allows the work to question and complicate the sharing of private, personal moments. I play with both seeking recognition as a model of visibility and the model of control.

**Is there a female gaze?**

A year after filming *Recital (2015c)*, I watched the online stream of Soloway’s
Soloway discusses how they work with the concept of a “female gaze” within a cinematic context. This is not a reversal of the male gaze – whereby women now get to objectify men – it is a set of filming techniques that reframe how characters are seen on screen. Soloway, in reference to Mulvey (1975), proposes three new ways of looking, presenting a conceptual framework for a female gaze. The first is “feeling seeing”, which is described as a subjective camera to get at a sense of being ‘in feeling’ rather than being looked at (Soloway, TIFF Uncut, 2016, min 16:65). This uses an embodied camera technique to portray the feeling of a character. “Feeling seeing” is an attempt to get inside the protagonist’s feeling body as opposed to just capturing external appearances. The method for achieving this is for the cinematographer (wearing, I assume, a body-mounted steadicam rig) to perform physical task-based scores while filming – the action of ‘melting or oozing or allowing’ (Soloway TIFF Uncut 2016, min 17:37). His body movements are translated into camera movements and affect how the camera is seeing and how shots are framed. This moving, subjective POV reclaims, rather than objectifies, the body, privileging emotions.

Soloway lays out two other ways of looking at and being seen. Firstly ‘This is how it feels to be seen’ (Soloway TIFF Uncut 2016, min 21:42). In this the actor can express how it feels to be the object of the gaze, making visible the feeling of being watched by the camera. This acknowledges and sets to even out Brighenti’s asymmetric dynamic as it switches the power dynamic from camera (external POV) to performer (internal POV). Secondly the concept of ‘returning the gaze’ – ‘I see you seeing me’ (Soloway TIFF Uncut 2016, min 23:09). This resonates with my concept of self-surveillance, being able to acknowledge the awareness of being watched. With this the protagonist

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12. Soloway prefers the gender-neutral pronouns of they, them and their.
13. Soloway works with The Technique developed and taught by Joan Scheckel, as an approach to filmmaking that uses the self as source and privileges emotions. <joanscheckel.com>
14. Elizabeth Grosz describes this as a ‘lived body’ (1994 p. 23)
15. Soloway works with a male cinematographer and also discusses the work of male directors whose work aligns with the concept of the female gaze. The female gaze can be used by anyone. I think the naming of the female gaze in binary oppositional terms is problematic here, a fact Soloway acknowledges in the keynote too.
and Soloway is specifically interested in how this operates with non cis-gender male protagonists – is able to assert their role as subject, not object.

The female gaze is not a camera trick; it is a privilege generator. It is storytelling to get you on somebody's side (Soloway TIFF Uncut 2016, min 28:19).

Soloway places the emphasis on creating empathy. Being seen resonates not only with a visual visibility but also an emotional visibility. Today metaphors of the sensing body are used as a way of expressing empathy: I see you, I hear you, I stand with you. Soloway asserts that empathy can act as a political tool. To create the conditions for female protagonists to express their own subjective experience and make that the subject of stories allows audiences to reframe their preconceptions about women. Creating an empathic connection with a character allows complexity in storytelling as they are not reduced to surface appearances but are given their own point of view. Cinematic characters regain social recognition and the sense of ‘reciprocal inter-visibility’ (Brighenti 2010, p. 138) through privileging a feminine POV. Cinema and TV allow for performance and duration to be key elements of the form. The representations of identity on screen in Soloway's works (2016–2017) shift and change unlike the static images created by Wollen (2014) and Collins (2016). Although all these artists seek to refute the male/cultural gaze, the use of moving camera techniques subvert the asymmetrical dynamic of visibility-as-control. The camera acts as both witness and participant, allowing the performers' vulnerability to be translated into empathy and intimacy. Soloway does not present just an exterior image but achieves a felt presence on screen that calls into being a rich inner emotional life that is experienced kinaesthetically and empathically with the viewer. As an audience I am moved.

Recital (2015c) created the conditions in which my personal vulnerable experience and my performing lived body become the subject of the narrative. Within Soloway's conception of a female gaze, I related my hand-held reflected iPhone filming technique to their use of an embodied subjective camera (Fig 63). ‘I see you...
seeing me’ (Soloway TIFF Uncut 2016, min 23:09). I also used task-based scores to create playable actions. My attention to cinematic framing allows a sense of “being in” (my score of inhabit) as opposed to a “looking at”. In privileging the subjective interior experience of myself both as the solo artist and performer, an essence of the female gaze has been realised in my work.

**Avoiding the gaze: other approaches to resisting visibility as control**

Deep into researching the complications of visibility, I call into question my own practice. Can I make work when I – as a blonde, white cis-gendered woman – would only be adding to the overload of images of my normative identity? Do I really need to take up any more screen time? Reflective writing, May 2016, RMIT Building 39

I am already afforded social recognition due to the fact that I fit the culturally prescribed templates. I became acutely aware of the complexities of creating identity-based work as a white Pakeha female. How can I remain self-reflexive in making work? How can I not just hold up a mirror to myself but create expansive experiences that can hold complexities and contradictions? I look to the work of two artists who are Women of Colour to see what strategies they have employed.

Back in 1970s, American artist Adrian Piper asserted the necessity for Women of Colour to define themselves in order to be visible within the discourse of feminism. She staged a durational private performance, *Food for the Spirit* (1971; Fig. 64), fasting and reading aloud Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. The work is documented through fourteen black and white self-portraits and an audiotape. In each image she stands naked, or partially clad, holding her camera before a mirror. The work examines how a private experience can assert her status as an embodied subject (Dean 2016).

Piper’s work is still a powerful piece in the context of today’s selfie culture. However, with an overload of images streamed on our screens every day, even self-

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16. Pakeha refers to a white New Zealander of non-Maori or non-Polynesian heritage.
representation for Women of Colour is not enough to counteract the mass of images produced by other sources that frame them in restrictive and destructive way.

Maybe a selfie comes close to proving that you exist – that you are at least firmly situated in time and space – but it proves nothing else conclusive about you: this is to say that, self-documentation of Black life still seems unable to contend with the ‘mass of images’ produced by anti-blackness’s aggressive and distributed media campaign (Dean 2015, para 11).

In this sense, visibility is afforded to the most dominant images, not the most self-representative. Just being visible isn’t enough if you are portrayed in the wrong way.

British artist Hannah Black confronts this dynamic and does not feature images of herself in her video work My Bodies (2014; Fig. 65). She refutes the assumption by white feminists that ‘all women have bodies in the same way’ (Darling 2015, para 2). Her video work features audio samples of African American divas signing the phrase “my body” played over images of white businessmen. Black is highlighting the focus on the body as subject matter for female singers yet is rendering them invisible, instead showing the viewer images of the consumers of those bodies – white men. As Brigenti states, ‘visibility is not finding one way to meaningfully talk about figurative images, paintings, films, landscapes’ but rather it is a ‘more comprehensive task that enables us to think about images, their production and their consumption (2010, p. 325). In the second half of Black’s video work a disembodied soul contemplates rebirth (Darling 2014; Fig. 66). It is as if the soul is pondering the merits of being visible at all.17

I explored a number of different ways to remove my image from my work including a short looped video, cheekily called The New Diversity (2016b; Fig. 67).

In this thirty-second iPhone work I hold a piece of white card over my face. It is an “insert your white face here” image and directly references the issues within selfie feminism. Another tactic I employed was to create a voice-only work Audio Tour

17. Although Black’s work was featured in a major exhibition interrogating the politics of the gaze online, ironically she was still only one of two Women of Colour featured in the show of 21 artists (Dean, 2016). Even with exhibitions on the supposedly democratic space of the Internet, it is still often curators who control which artists get seen.
That did away with my image altogether (Fig. 68). Rather than render myself invisible, however, I decided I needed to confront the mechanisms with which I was being seen and framed.

Visibility as a means of control highlights the mechanisms that frame how I am seen. Making my cinematic single shot iPhone film *Recital* (2015c) I worked to reframe my image and my subjective experience through privileging a feminine POV. The embodied camera and task-based scores, both of which are tactics also used by Soloway, achieve their concept of a female gaze. I have tested ways to avoid using my own image, but I return to working with my image, focusing on the mechanisms of surveillance and the concept of the surveillant gaze. I am the perfect template to be seen, so how could I exploit this?

### 3.4 Visibility-as-spectacle: In many places at once

Mass media – tabloids, TV and now social media platforms – offer a public face that can be far removed from the “real” self. Brighenti states that the model of spectacle operates as a ‘set of images detached from life and simultaneously falsely proposed as an illusory form of unity of life’, which aptly describes almost every Facebook feed ever (2010, p.138). My interest in plural subjectivity and simultaneously private/public spaces opened up possible artistic approaches to making work about self-surveillance through the lens of visibility-as-spectacle. In what ways could I create a very public work that still privileged my feminine POV?

**Starewell (2016a)**

*Fig. 68 Audio Tour (2017a), Seventh Gallery, Melbourne, install view and mobile website screenshot (2017a)*

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*I’m thinking about “reclaiming the act of looking”. I get an invitation to make a work for an exhibition opening night event. I go through all sorts of elaborate plans involving building structures of semi-reflective acrylic to perform behind yet arrive at the simple task of lying in the space and staring at myself via my iPhone.*

May 2016, Trocodeo Art Space, Footscray
In a stairway, suspended between the public world of the street and the more private space of the gallery, *Starewell* (2016a), is a site-responsive performative work that investigates the act of looking and being seen (Fig. 69). Situated in a small alcove halfway up the stairs I lay down for the duration of the opening. Gallery goers witnessed me in the space, as well as seeing what I was seeing on their own mobile device, via the live-stream app Periscope and linked Twitter feed (Fig. 70).

I was inspired by the conditions of Jonas’ *Mirror Check* (1970), in which the artist stood naked in an empty gallery space and examined her own reflection in a hand-held mirror (Fig. 71). With the resurgence of interest in performance art, Jonas’ work has been restaged, with other female performers undertaking the task, as part of *13 Rooms* (2013) in Sydney, and *14 Rooms* (2014) in Basel, Switzerland. In an interview about the restaging Jonas says she was inspired by feminist ideas when she first performed the work, playing with ‘reversing the gaze’ (Enrico 2014, min 2:05). The handheld mirror positions the audience outside the work, denying the gaze, as they cannot see what she sees.

**Repositioning the gaze**

I was interested in this same act of repositioning the gaze as I created the score for *Starewell* (2016a). Synonyms for “looking” – observe, ogle, spy, survey, scrutinise, stare – were verbs I could perform. I wanted to reclaim the act of looking at myself from an internalisation of the male/cultural gaze and from the shaming label of narcissism. I understood my privilege and the complications of public visibility as a strategy for self-empowerment, yet I knew I could exploit my socially acceptable template. To counteract my social conditioning to self-police my own appearance and behaviour, I set myself the score to stare with neither self-love nor self-loathing.

For *Starewell* (2016a), I substituted Jonas’s mirror for my iPhone – yet rather than deny the audience access to the image, I broadcasted it. Self-broadcasting, with apps such as Periscope or the more recent Facebook Live, enables real-time streaming of...
durational performances. It was a singular experience to be at the public event, highly visible, yet entirely consumed by the recording and broadcasting of myself. (Fig. 72)

Importantly, in this work, the primary audience for the live stream were not remote from me, but were the gallery goers who were sharing the same space as me (Fig 73). Although I had up to thirty online viewers, they quickly switched channels as my performance was neutral: I was merely looking at myself with neither self-love or self-loathing.

Unlike *Self Evident* (2015b) and *Recital* (2015c), works in which, although I reveal the mechanism of filming, I never eyeball the camera, in this work my gaze was entirely consumed by the device. I was there as a living breathing body, yet the majority of audience for the durational performance consumed my mediated image via their smartphone screens. The action and aesthetics of surveillance won out over the live act. In this work I explored how social media platforms, like female bathrooms, are simultaneously public/private spaces. The work created the conditions for the public and private manifestations of myself to all exist concurrently, collapsing Goffman’s regions. Brighenti’s model of visibility-as-spectacle relies on the ‘degree of separation that exists between the viewer and the viewed’ (2010, p. 138). However, in *Starewell* (2016a) I collapsed that separation. I reflected how the image-driven social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram also become a place that collapses the models of visibility – recognition, control and spectacle all start to co-exist. Brighenti’s article on ‘artveillance’ was published in 2010 and I wonder if he would now, eight years on, position social media as having another kind of model of visibility altogether?

**Expanding the gaze**

In this chapter, I have discussed the use of task-based scores to create performative artworks that conform to, resist or collapse specific models of visibility. I have continued to use Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) models recognition, control and spectacle as a framework through which to discuss my own identity-based works. I have consolidated ways to create self-reflexive artworks through examining identity-based selfie-style artworks by other female artists, paying attention to their use of both content and form. I had set “inhabit” as an instruction for myself, which became a pivotal score that led me to make work from my lived experience and create a series
of site-responsive works.

My four-channel video work *Self Evident* (2015b) and cinematic iPhone film *Recital* (2015c) layered up concepts of a private backstage bathroom space, a filmed public performance of self and the act of making visible private vulnerable moments. I have framed these works through a gendered reading of Goffman’s concept of regions that permit behaviours particular to female only spaces. Goffman’s observation of broadcasting artists switching swiftly from their backstage selves to their on-air personas assisted me in conceptualising the visual presence of my iPhone in both of these works (Goffman 1959). I have asserted that by revealing the broadcasting device via my reflected iPhone videoing technique I have successfully blurred the boundaries between regions. These works present a plural subjectivity by simultaneously displaying private backstage behaviour and public performance.

Selfie feminism and artist Audrey Wollen’s ‘Sad Girl Theory’ (Barron 2014, Watson 2015) draws on Berger (1972) and Mulvey (1975) to claim that visibility equals empowerment. Wollen’s asserts that posting private moments is a way of reclaiming sadness as strength. I used her theory to contextualise *Self Evident* (2015b) and *Recital* (2015c). Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-recognition, which considers how a subject can find empowerment through being seen, has also been used as a frame to discuss these two works and the selfie feminism trend.

I used Intersectional feminism as a frame to interrogate the claims of selfie feminism. Both Soloway (*I Love Dick* 2016–2017) and Dean (2016) critique the validity of a movement that only presents one dominant cultural template – young, white, thin and often half undressed. Empowerment remains reserved for only those that fit the pervasive cultural templates provided by the patriarchy. Selfie feminism has been unable to refute Mulvey’s (1975) male gaze and social media platforms, due to their corporate structures, are dominated by the white and colonialist gazes too (Dean 2016). Joannides (2017) has renamed the male gaze as the cultural gaze, asserting that all Western culture now sees women this way. This calls for new ways of looking.

I have discussed how Soloway’s cinematic concept of a female gaze is not a reversal of the male gaze (objectifying the male body) but a set of filming techniques that aim to create empathy. In reference to Mulvey’s (1975) three looks – that of the camera, that of the audience, and that of the characters looking at each other within the film – Soloway proposes three new ways of looking (TIFF Uncut 2016). “Feeling seeing” is an attempt to get inside the protagonist’s feeling body through using a moving camera technique. Secondly, the actor can express how it feels to be the object of the gaze, making visible the feeling of being filmed. And thirdly, the concept of returning the gaze acknowledges the awareness of being watched. I have explored how this concept of the female gaze was operating in my cinematic iPhone film *Recital* (2015c). I have aligned my use of task-based scores and a hand-held embodied filming technique to Soloway’s “feeling seeing”. My filming technique has been successful in privileging my feminine POV. I have also linked the use of the gaze from a cinematic camera to Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-control, in which seeing via mechanisms of surveillance sets up an as asymmetrical dynamic. I have outlined how *Recital* (2015c) collapses this asymmetrical dynamic of looking as I simultaneously take on the role and POV of the camera, audience and performer watching myself watching myself.

I have linked how I repositioned the gaze in my live-streamed performance *Starewell* (2016a) to an investigation of Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-spectacle within the context of social media. This form of visibility is concerned with the ‘degree of separation that exists between the viewer and the viewed’ (Brighenti 2010, p. 138). The mediation of images, most commonly associated with mass media (including social media), creates this form of visibility where the images are dislocated from their original context or are, in fact, entirely fictional. I turned the surveillant gaze on myself and condensed the distance between my live body and my mediated online presence by presenting them simultaneously in the gallery space.

Through this practice and theory, I now have a way of creating iPhone performance works that assert a plural subjectivity and collapse the boundaries between public and private regions, artistic roles and models of visibility. In the following chapter, I will discuss how I applied some of these discoveries to the creation and presentation of a process-driven artwork, *Selfie Machine v.3* (2017b).
In Chapter Three, I interrogated different ways of gazing by examining Soloway's (2016) conception of the female gaze and the notion of a surveillant gaze in relation to my own site-responsive iPhone works. In this fourth chapter, I turn my attention back to my studio-based practice to explore video installation as an iterative process. I focus on process and discuss how I rehearsed, performed and edited different versions of ‘Selfie Machine’. Through reflecting on different versions of this work, I discovered I was performing a plural process. I examine how I achieved a collapsing of boundaries between roles, forms of visibility and integrated content and form in my work. I reflect how a range of contemporary artworks that employ self-surveillance, including my own, have created expanded perspectives on feminine subjectivity.

4.1 Finding form: Projections & performance

To explore video installation I focused on the physical actions and technical mechanisms needed to make layers of images of self. This iterative process I developed was an investigation of form. Only much later did I crystallise the specific content and set clear performance intentions and scores to combine content and form in the work.

Making a ‘Hall of Mirrors’

As my studio practice progressed, the ‘Gallery of Her’ process incorporated a new layer of inhabiting the projections and then added a live-feed camera. I began by recycling my ‘Gallery of Her’ test footage to create a base-layer for a new series of studio experiments.

I inhabit the projection, refilming from the inside with my iPhone in hand. Another camera behind me records the whole projection, my silhouette and iPhone screen. I grab
the SD card from the camera, download the file, project the new footage and record again and again and again, entering and exiting the frame, plural bodies silhouetted on screen. Studio notes, July 2015, Building 39 RMIT

This new footage was immersive and disorienting. The “real me” became lost in all the iterations of bodies on screen (Fig. 74). Joan Jonas exposed the conceit of video as mirror in *Left side, right side* (1972b) and now I have found a way to use video projection to create ambiguity and not just a knowable “reflection” of myself. I push this disorientation even further using live-feed video projections to create a ‘Hall of Mirrors’ (Fig. 75).

To enact the concept of surveillance I decided to perform in front of a live audience. I wanted to be witnessed, surveyed, watched. I used a live-feed camera to emulate Natasha Johns-Messenger’s ‘mirrors as live image capture devices’ (Heide Museum of Modern Art 2018, para. 2). I successfully recreated the infinity effects of bathroom mirrors in the studio through using layers of projections and live-feed. Depending where I stood in the studio, I was seen only live or seen both live and projected. Working live gave me the opportunity to further blur the distinctions between my live, real and digital bodies. This resonates with Amelia Jones’s (2006) observations on digital representation. In Pipilotti Rist’s performative video installations, Jones saw how collapsing boundaries between body, image, screen and space could create a dynamic image. In this way, the mediated body is not reduced to a mere object. In my test ‘Hall of Mirrors’ I was able to complicate the presentation of my POV as I was visually in many places at once. The live and pre-recorded layers overlapped as I exploited dramaturgical concepts of loops, duration and simultaneity in the performance. The layers of silhouetted bodies became visible symbols for my previously invisible internalisation of self-surveillance. Like Hannah, in the bathroom mirrors, these “shadow selves” operate alongside me – overlapping, inhabiting and multiplying next to me.

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17. Jungian psychologists Wolf and Zweig (1999) explain the shadow self as a private, invisible, aspect of self which supports the concept of a plurality of self. Rrap was working with this concept in her *Persona and Shadow* series (1984).
I reflected on the success of combining live performance and video projection. Rewatching the footage, I became interested in a moment of disruption, the action that breaks the pattern, when I paused and leaned on the wall and looked at not “via” the iPhone. This image (Fig. 76), a woman scrolling her phone, her face caught in the glow of the screen, created a pause in the action. It looks like an everyday gesture, like I am taking a break from the performance, but it is, in fact, the most constructed theatrical image of the whole work.

**She shifts: collapsing regions and roles**

I collapsed the role of performer, director, cinematographer and audience in a single theatrical image. I had created a face glowing by screen light image, yet the brightness of my screen could not compete with the light of the projector. So, I cheated. In the performance I used the torch function and turned the iPhone over, pretending to scroll the back. It is a little moment of theatre amongst the task-based work. In that image my POV is inward and reflective not outward and active. I shift roles from active performer to passive audience as if I am consuming the images on my phone that I have just created. It resonates with a private act in a public space, as the audience have no access to what I am looking at on the screen. I connect this moment to Jonas’ handheld mirror in *Mirror Check* (1970) and how she was denying the gaze, as the audience could not see what she sees. This moment in ‘Hall of Mirrors’ also repositions the gaze as in the role of both performer and audience I am simultaneously the ‘surveyor and the surveyed’ (Berger 1972, p. 46). I have managed to create an image that resonates with the cinematic site-responsive works of *Self Evident* (2015b) and *Recital* (2015c) and the live-streamed *Starewell* (2016a) through working with video installation. This small live performance moment also allowed a collapsing of public and private regions as I enacted backstage behaviour within a public performance. Further, in experimenting with live performance, I was able to implicate the audience, as they watched me survey myself, in their role of participating in the social practice of surveillance.

**Selfie Machine score – draft one, v.1, 29 Oct 2016**

**Step 1.** Take initial selfies

**Step 2.** Create a slide show of selfies – different durations and repetitions

**Step 3.** Film with phone – reflect images via mirror – film with DSLR camera to show process

**Step 4.** Enter the machine – import layer, play on loop
  enter and film from point one – (right) – exit
  enter and film from point two – (left) iPhone camera front facing – exit
  import layer, play on loop
  enter and film from point three (centre) – exit
  enter and film from point four – phone torch – resting like scrolling photos – exit

**Step 5.** Import layer, play on loop
set up projector 2 and live-feed camera
1 filming straight to live feed camera – no shadow on back wall
2 from the side, filming the scrolling Paula – flat against back wall
3 in the corner – front-facing camera – to mirror original selfie still sequence
Making a machine

I was unsure, as I watched back the documentation footage, if the work was a video piece or a live performance work or sort of both. Was there a finished outcome? It was the iterative process for making layers of images that seemed was most useful. I decided that what I was making was a machine, a selfie machine. The accumulative process was like a mechanical process or algorithm, cogs and code beyond my control. To create the ‘Selfie Machine’ process, which I could perform live, I worked out how to perform all the actions in a continuous sequence. The machine metaphor enabled me to see how the work could act as a vehicle for key ideas. I had made a clear set of instructions, a score to perform, which could absorb new concerns as I continued to research. I had not made a finished work but created a process that would make multiple versions of itself. Input one single selfie and become plural in the machine.

I have translated the process of a live-layering of images of self into performance many times over the course of my research (Fig. 77).

4.2 Process-based work as a feminine approach

A renewed attention to feminist concerns in recent years aligns with the re-emergence of performance and process-driven art practices, where process is privileged over, or directly dovetailed with, concept (ACCA 2017).

In the art world process work is once again being acclaimed as conceptual, politically engaged and experimental (ACCA 2017, min 10:42).

I considered if being process-focused is a feminine approach? It resonates with fluidity and plurality and not striving to create a singular and unified whole, a finished product, which, defended by Irigaray, aligns with the masculine (Irigaray 1985, Mansfield 2000). I examined the work of two Australian female artists who exploit process as a major consideration in their art making.19

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19. I am using “process-based” to refer to artworks where the process of making remains visible as a key, if not the main, element of the work. I am referencing works where the “how” something is made is as important, if not more so, than any resulting image or artefact.
A process of re-appropriation

The evidence of the process of making *Puberty* (1984; Fig. 78) is visible in Julie Rrap’s final life-sized photograph. She embraced photography, collage and appropriation to create her series *Persona and Shadow* (1984). She does not represent her own subjectivity but questions the representation of women and female artists in the cannon of art history. The series was created after visiting a major survey of contemporary art in Berlin in 1982 where Rrap saw only one female artist and the work of 44 men (Daniell 2007). Rrap worked to make herself visible in the Western art world by recreating with her own body the stereotypical images of woman: the innocent girl, the mother, the whore, as painted by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944).

*Puberty* (1984) specifically appropriates Munch’s oil painting *Puberty* (1894; Fig. 79). To make the work Rrap shot a series of black and white photographs of herself that mimicked the painting. She assembled the photographs to create a life-sized collage of her body, then painted the background, rephotographed the work and destroyed the original collage (Daniell 2007). Revealing the layers and work involved in creating *Puberty* (1984) highlights re-appropriation and reclaiming as key concerns.

Images with an agency of their own

Dance artist Atlanta Eke’s *Body of Work* (2015) is particularly relevant in relation to my ‘Selfie Machine’ process in her investigation of live performance, video documentation, representations of the body and temporality (Fig. 80). Both video and performance art are temporal art forms, which can act to highlight process over finished product (Marsh 2003). Duration, which Jones (2012) relates to a fluid contemporary identity, is a key element in both.

Eke performs looping segments of choreography and explores a layering of her digital and physical bodies to question how performance time and documentation of a performance event operate. Eke is considering both content and form in a

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20. Exhibitions held in 2014 at Australian State Museums represented 34% female artists, 59% male artists and 7% collaborations (Richardson 2016).
performance work that highlights the tension between process and finished product. Collaborating with video artists Hana Miller and Jacob Perkins, Eke uses live-feed and delayed video sampling throughout the work. This draws attention to the process by which the onstage images are made as well as highlighting the “real time” process of performing a live dance work. The title *Body of Work* resonates with both the live performing body and the artist’s oeuvre, documentation that remains to represent the artist. As the layers of onstage images accumulate and the choreographic score loops, the boundaries between the physical three-dimensional body and the digital two-dimensional body start to dissolve. In an interview Eke discusses her agency as a performer in making the digital images live on stage:

With this piece it’s not clear what’s producing what…. Am I moving for the screen or is the screen moving for me? The choreographic shift inside the work creates that question for the audience, and that’s part of the point (Ransom 2015, para 11).

Eke’s work, for me, represents the mediation of images of the female body in contemporary visual culture. Connotations of cyborg, the machine, plurality and commodification – the “artist as product” – are present. I try to think through Eke’s work in relation to Bregheti’s models of visibility: how is she being seen and what is my role in surveying her? It hovers in the realm of spectacle; these are fictional images, yet Eke collapses the distance between viewer and herself as she reveals the construction of her multiple digital selves live on stage. If I think about visibility in terms of a power dynamic, it seems to me that Eke is acknowledging that the images she created of herself have an agency of their own.

**Feminist artists or a feminine process?**

Feminist artists often use appropriation to question the authenticity of male representations of female experience. Audrey Wollen says she sought to reclaim the male/cultural gaze (Watson 2015), yet when I look at her work, *Repetitions* (2014), I do not explicitly see that evidenced. Rrap, in creating *Puberty* (1984) employed a plurality...
of processes, creating a more powerful and layered image. Both artists are engaging with visibility as recognition, yet Rrap uses restaging as well as collage, painting and rephotographing to add layers of complexity to the task of trying to be seen on her own terms. Rrap’s work was created for display in a gallery – the context she is critiquing. Although Wollen also seeks to celebrate the representation of girls on social media, her work does not directly engage with the complications of posting her image to these sites.21

I see in Rrap’s Puberty (1984) how both the content and the form engage with the way in which images of the female body are constructed and displayed.

Rrap does not specifically position her Persona and Shadows series (1984) as feminist. However, collage can be seen as a feminine strategy that seeks to disrupt a singular and unified whole. Cutting up images and reassembling them leaves evidence of the process. I can see how the image was constructed, which allows me to question that constructed nature of all images of the female body. Rrap discusses how she conceptualises the use of her body and point of view in her own artwork:

I see myself as talking from the third person, not as a self-portrait... I use my self-image in a more disembodied way. I am having a conversation with the female body: I am in two positions at once as model and author (cited in Daniell 2007, p. 8).

Rrap employed plurality in the creation of her artworks, utilising process-focused strategies.

I read Eke’s performance works as being about her female body and the tasks it performs. Her previous work, Monster Body (2013), explored representation of the female body in contemporary culture (Fig. 81). In that work I saw Eke’s body distorted and “monstrous” with lumpy flesh-coloured appendages. I witnessed her lying naked in a pool of her own urine nonchalantly striking “sexy” poses. Although Eke steers clear of an overt feminist classification of her work, reviewer Liza Dezfouli notes that

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21. Wollen’s own work from her Repetitions series (2014) was re-appropriated by American artist Richard Prince in his Instagram screenshot exhibition New Portraits (Barron 2014). Although she spoke out about this, she did not make artwork in response to this situation.
there is ‘a confrontation with the construction of femininity in Eke’s performances; she presents visceral versions of herself for the audience’s consumption’ (Dezfouli 2015, para 3). Body of Work (2015) highlights the process by which the images of herself are made and consumed live on stage, and in this way the work succeeds in combining both content and form to create a powerful performance. I considered how process is operating in my work. How could I highlight process as a concern in an exhibition context?

**On site at night: making and installing **Selfie Machine** (2016c)**

Three nights before the exhibition opening I set up two projectors, a SONY Handycam, DSLR and arranged a Dedo film light with a cool blue gel, white chair and square mirror. I put on the silver dress and a pair of silver heels, press record and snap a selfie.  

I created the video footage for **Selfie Machine** (2016c) on the site that it was to be displayed in at the gallery. This was a site-responsive approach where the actions of making the work were layered up in the space where it was exhibited (Fig. 82). I performed all the tasks in a continuous sequence – from taking the first selfie right through to the final immersive live-feed sequence.

1. Step one – take initial selfies
   - front-facing camera
   - use thumb and volume button to take photo
   - take time to set up and rearrange
   - pauses – to stop blurs
   - high angle
   - use the wall / use the corner
   - high contrast – lots of flare good
   - different faces – big smiles, parted lips etc.
   - flirt with camera
   - hold in stomach!
– frame for DSLR camera
no feet but lots of legs
corner
shape of light but not lighting unit
similar if not the same as final live-feed frame
Studio notes, Selfie Machine Oct/ Nov 2016, Rehearsal score

After recording all the footage, I left the light and chair in place and hung the dress on the wall to create an installation (Fig. 83). The video footage was filmed from an audience POV. The edited sequence was played on a wall-mounted monitor and the final immersive sequence was also played on an iPhone resting on the chair in the space (Fig. 84). This installation acted as an “exploded diagram” to reveal the process for making the video work. The audience also inhabited the work, as they could move around inside the laid-out objects and look at the work on two different screens.

Selfie Machine (2016c), as a physical installation, worked to reveal the processes for creating images of myself. Making my ‘Selfie Machine’ I constructed my work out of feminist materials: video collage, performance, reperformance, documentation and my subjective experience. Into this process I could plug my own inputs.

4.3 Feeding my face into the machine

I consider how models of visibility could be applied to my selfie-generating image machine. Brighenti (2010) breaks down his model of visibility-as-recognition into subcategories that include categorical, individual and personal recognition. The majority of the artworks I have been making and analyzing so far operate to resist categorical recognition, which is the ‘stereotypical profiles to recognise people’ (Brighenti 2010, p. 138). These works aim instead to seek personal recognition, which is the acknowledgement of my own unique subjective experience. Working with the concept of an image-making process as a machine, however, I became interested in individual recognition. This type of visibility is linked to classifying information such as fingerprints, faces, registry office records, passports, and social media profile data.
Brighenti calls these ‘instruments of classification and control[...] whose function is performed today by sophisticated biometric profiles and digital searchable databases’ (2010, p.138). The machine processing all this data does not recognise the individual as a person, only the individual as data points. I realise that I am feeding the machine as I leave a trail of my daily online activities, likes and dislikes and upload my selfies.

**Dataveillance: how expression of self-identity becomes content**

Dataveillance is the practice of monitoring digital data relating to personal details or online activities. I get reduced to data points, which are used to create online social typecasting, which then directly target me in marketing campaigns. How digital identities are constructed, presented and increasingly commercialised is explored in the work of Sydney-based intermedia artist Giselle Stanborough. Her work asserts that technology is not neutral, that personal identity becomes entangled with corporate agendas when identifying data and images are uploaded online. Brighenti explains ‘the individual conceived through these technologies of power is a dividual, a social entity that can be segmented into traits to be controlled selectively’ (2010, p. 139).

For an exhibition at Sydney’s MCA Stanborough created a multi-platform work, *Lozein: Find the Lover You Deserve* (2016) that centred on a fictional dating app (Fig. 85). She created branded Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts for the dating app, digital interventions into the MCA’s website, as well as a series of performative lectures in the style of corporate presentations. Her project raises many questions about online identities, which now include corporate brands as well as human subjects.

Roughly after 2009, the self turned into an object of marketing and promotion now that connectivity could transform online social value to real rewards in the offline world (van Dijck 2013b, p. 202).

I become complicit in creating image-based labelled data sets when I upload my selfies and tag my friends. Facial recognition technology, now a default setting on many social networking sites, relies on the indexicality of an image, the objective representation of a face. As this form of surveillance becomes more prevalent, the
complexity inherent in individual faces and identities risks being lost. As technology professor Sarah Kember states:

> Face recognition systems substitute the meaning of faces for a mathematics of faces, reducing their complexity and multidimensionality to measurable, predictable criteria (2003, p. 186).

The process of reductive computation creates standard feature templates, averages and types and measures deviations from the norm in order to pick a face out from a crowd. This reduces faces, not only to zeros and ones, but back into gender and racial stereotypes (Kember 2003). I think of Jones’s urging to not let identity ‘congeal into fixed binaries’ (Jones 2012, p. 6). Although I upload my selfies as an expression of my subjectivity and seek personal recognition, now not only cultural templates, but also computerised stereotypes, restrict the ways in which I am seen.

_I think about my face as the content of a selfie. As my personal brand. Do I want to sell myself? Does my visibility come at a cost? What is the value of my self-image?_ Reflective Writing, Feb 2017, Building 39, RMIT

As a studio experiment I played with remaking the ‘Selfie Machine’ process but without the central motif – my face – the signifier of the selfie. I did the first four stages, starting the whole process with taking photographs of a white wall. I followed the process through to the end; the images were layers of my hands holding my iPhone (Fig. 86). In this new test, which I called ‘no self machine’, I had succeeded in making myself invisible but I was veering away from presenting my feminine subjectivity rather than working towards marrying content and form.

Stanborough’s work successfully combines content and form as she creates interventions into the corporate social media platforms where online identity creation takes place. Her work address dataveillance and social self-surveillance. Her work collapses the models of visibility: her online dating app appeals to my need for personal recognition, while actually reducing me to individual data points. Her corporate persona plays into visibility-as-control as only a certain kind of self is sold back to me as being desirable. And the entire fictional performance also situates the
work as spectacle. In an interview she identifies the double bind – the tension between being wary of visibility as an overexposure of private information and the dread of invisibility - being totally ignored and alone. Stanborough taps into the fear – not only that we are constantly being watched but also the fear that maybe nobody is actually watching us at all (ABC 2017).

4.4 Performing the process

I continued to develop my ‘Selfie Machine’ process and started to layer in my thematic concerns to consolidate the content. I now had a depth of knowledge about self-surveillance in the context of selfie culture and I wanted all those resonances to be present in my work.

Making a visual aesthetic of surveillance: form and content combine

The machine, my process for making a work, is my form, and my research into subjectivity and surveillance is my content. I had been focusing on task-based scores, attending to the actions I performed and the plural roles I played. I became aware of being both inside the work performing and outside it – a plural perspective. I wanted form and content to be more intertwined, so I carefully considered the technology I was using to create the work. I linked the materials with the thematic and conceptual concerns. Aligning with my emphasis on process José van Dijck states that ‘social media platforms, rather than being finished products, are dynamic objects’ (2013a p. 7). Through combining content and form across all areas I was not illustrating but actually ‘performing’ the central concerns of the research.

I brought a brand new Canon 80D DSLR camera and tested the camera’s features in the studio. It had an app that allowed me to see and control the camera from my iPhone, allowing me to be simultaneously inside and outside the work. The camera also had a face-tracking feature for focus. This white square is reminiscent of the facial recognition tagging feature in Facebook (Fig 87). The visual effect of the square hovering over my face created content about selfies, the surveillant gaze and visibility as control. Like Intimidad Romero’s (2012) pixelated faces it draws attention to the
Self-surveillance | 66

Selfie Machine v.3 score, May 2017

Step 2. Create a slide show of selfies – different durations and repetitions

Tech score

iPhone – enable personal hotspot
change laptop Wi-Fi from Canon to PVB hotspot.
on iPhone – airplay mirroring
Reflector should launch automatically
Full screen Reflector
on iPhone go into photos app – phone landscape
turn on short throw projector #1 – projecting computer screen
computer is mirroring iPhone via Reflector
Set up DSLR to record wall projections RECORD
RECORD on Reflector on laptop

Performance score ‘off stage’
flick through images
start slow
increase tempo / play with rhythm, duration and repetition of images
play like a photo editor – critical eye – compare images, staying
longer on good shots
make about 45 – 1.20” sequences – can put it on loop for next layers
layer one

Fig. 88 Adjusting the data projector to achieve 1970s video quality effects
Fig. 89 Testing the Reflector iPhone app for Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b)
digital media as form and the act of surveillance as content.

I wanted to acknowledge the lineage of identity-based artworks from early feminist artists as content in my work since contemporary selfie culture draws on these established visual codes of 1970s video and performance art. I chose to enhance a “retrograded” video quality and use a 4:3 aspect ratio. The SONY HD live-feed source image quality reminded me of the many 1970s performance art documentation videos I had been researching. I chose to enhance this resonance through focusing the projector showing the live-feed with a 4:3 format (which Instagram mimics in the square “retro” Polaroid format of their image frames).22 I also adjusted the colour settings, which combined with the framing and digital latency (delay), gave my projected live-feed image a 1970s video quality (Fig. 88).

I discovered that technical operations could become performative moments, not separate actions, further combining how the work was made and what the work was about. The iPhone was both a central tool and thematic concern. I researched smartphone apps that could be used to create the work live. The app Reflector allows the iPhone screen to be mirrored to my laptop screen, which meant that I could screen-record and/or project what the iPhone was displaying. Now I could screen-record without having to hardwire the devices for image transfer. This allowed me to remain away from the computer, still in the ‘stage’ space, just scrolling my phone to create the slideshow layer (Fig. 89). In this way there was a doubling up of the actual tech task and performed gesture of the “scrolling through” images of myself as performer and technician.

I made visible the concept of out-sourcing my POV. The high camera angle of the selfie mimics the position of a CCTV security camera. If I am trained to see ‘surveillantly’, then of course I am outside and above myself looking down. This is my surveillant POV.

iPhone above the head – face turned upwards – one hip sunk, knee bent, a coy look – click. Reflective writing, May 2017, Counihan gallery

22. The 4:3 format is predominantly used as a portrait format and is favoured by filmmakers, such as Andrea Arnold, who make character-centred films and employed this format on the TV series I Love Dick (2016–2017)
Elisabeth Grosz discusses how a person’s conception of their body is both physical and mental. This can include a “social extension” of the body whereby external objects can become mapped into the body image (Grosz 1994). Collapsing the binary oppositions of body/mind, my iPhone could also be my eye-Phone (Fig. 90). My subjective experience of myself expands to include the mechanism of seeing myself, which is both a physical tool and socially constructed vantage point. I understand that I am, as a woman, always aware of being watched even as I survey myself.

So what if I want to display the plurality of myself: how many angles and how many cameras do I need?

**Performing the score: the making of Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b)**

I created a new version of ‘Selfie Machine’ that could open up plural readings of selfie culture and collapse the models of visibility. *Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b)* explored both the social and the technological resonances of self-surveillance and invoked a surveillant gaze that I turn on myself. The work was performed live on June 1 at the exhibition opening of *Identity Intersection* at Counihan Gallery, Melbourne (Fig. 91).

I performed the full process twice over the course of the opening night. As a live experience, *Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b)* extended the split second of snapping and posting a selfie into a durational live event. The work acts as both a celebration and a critique of selfie culture remaining open to many readings. I do not mock the act of taking selfies or set out to judge this practice. As my image is transformed through continued iterations I lose control of how I first chose to present myself. I reveal the complex processes that happen behind the scenes alluding to larger forces at work.

In re-rehearsing for *Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b)* I was much clearer about the intention of each section. I was able to layer in concepts that I had encountered in my research so far, such as selfie feminism and the commodification of the self. Layer one addressed society and the selfie as narcissistic (Fig. 92). The initial layer was created to play up to the most common criticism used to undermine the activity of taking selfies. I wore a short sequined dress and flirted with my reflection in my iPhone screen. I used task-based scores drawn from actions performed on social media sites – like, scroll, swipe.
The second layer addressed self-empowerment in relation to selfie feminism, which asserts visibility as personal recognition (Fig. 93). I am holding both the camera and the mirror, controlling the camera angle and the framing of myself in the mirror. I reposition the gaze as the viewer cannot access the images I am making. It is a private, personal act of agency, although it is being done in public.

In the third layer I addressed social media platforms as corporate sites and referenced selfies as content (Fig. 94). I could reference self as content through inhabiting and re-inhabiting my own images in this layer. I focused on the intention behind the filming task, setting myself tasks within tasks – “film only eyes”, “capture the newer versions of myself”. I also used searching, sharing and reposting as actions from social media to get at the concept of corporate surveillance, dataveillance and visibility as in/dividualisation more strongly. There was a deliberate capturing of content within the larger image-making task.

For the final section my action is to step inside the machine. My image is consumed as I reference marketing corporations and self-identity as a commodity (Fig. 95). The final layer became a section of being consumed within the machine as I inhabited both the live space and digital space simultaneously. Any sense of uniqueness and individuality is ultimately destroyed as the continuous iterations consume the original selfies. I am being sold back to myself. I lose agency over my own image – they seem to have an agency all of their own. I enacted “a continuous loop of trying to capture myself” while all the selves multiplied around me.

The live-layering explored the complications of visibility, the complexity of projecting my image out into the world, and investigated agency and control in the creation of my own self-image. Friends reported that during the performance of Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b) at Counihan Gallery they overheard a woman commenting that “she is really into herself”. I am pleased that this most basic reading of the work exists. I hope, however, that the viewer engaged with the piece as it progressed and got to encounter a complication of that initial reading. But maybe not; maybe she already had her mind made up about what a woman in the act of engaging with her own image means.
4.5 A plural process

In creating and performing Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b) I discovered, again, that I was performing multiple roles within the work – being the performer, subject, object, and technician. And I realised that in creating a live performance for the opening of the exhibition, I was making two works in one – a live performance piece and a video artwork.

In the gallery the audience watched me work and saw all the layers created live during the exhibition opening (Fig. 96). The process and mechanisms of making the work were all on display. This situates the work as a live performance. Then from the recorded footage of the two cycles of the process, I edited a video work that was projected in the gallery for the remainder of the exhibition (Fig. 97). This is not a documentation/audience POV of the live performance work but a video piece created from footage from all layers and all recording devices (iPhone, laptop and DSLR) inside the performance. This situates the work as a video artwork.

Content creator and content consumer

As a performer, my perception had to shift in order to hold multiple foci. I was paying attention to both performance elements and technical concerns as I needed to ensure that both the live elements and the recorded footage would suit both outcomes simultaneously.

Is the frame right? Is it in focus? Am I flirting with the camera? Am I throwing a shadow across the projections? How much time has elapsed? Is it time for the next section? Am I paying attention to my task-based scores?

Reflective writing, Counihan gallery, May 2017

There was an extra visual layer of the face-tracking square in the video artwork exhibited at the gallery that the live audience at the exhibition opening did not see (Fig. 98). This footage was created live through screen recording but never projected into the space. And there was a final layer in the live performance that exhibition goers coming another day would not have seen – the live-feed of the performance with
my real body and digital body overlapping (Fig 99). In some ways it was disappointing that these layers could not exist in both versions of the work, but again it clearly emphasised to me that I was creating two different outcomes in the one process – a plural process. In the final edit of Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b) that was displayed in the gallery, I was able to pick and choose between the different takes of the two cycles of the process to create a final work. Conceptually this consolidated for me that I was not creating performance documentation but that I was making two works in one – the live performed experience and a crafted video art piece.

It was important that this was a solo work, that I did all the roles. I controlled the production, distribution and consumption of my own image. I was content creator and content consumer, and I also got consumed within the process of making the visual world. Collapsing boundaries between roles, forms of visibility, and content and form had crystallised as the central focus of the research, which I achieved in Selfie Machine v.3 (2017b).

Recycling through to the future: Selfie Machine v.4, v.5

During the live performance at Counihan Gallery I discovered that I could reproject the last layer so that the gallery space was mirrored again (Fig. 100). This was an exciting new layer that encouraged me to see how far I could go with applying the reprojecting process.

I push the ‘Selfie Machine’ process as far as it can go. In the studio I re-re-re-project the video footage – recycling through the performance and resource stages over and over and over again. All the frames collapse in on themselves. I record a new final image – a blurry blue line that flickers and fills the room. I imagine it to be a fibre optic cable buzzing with digital data. From still selfies, I have fed myself through the machine until my image is erased.

Studio notes, Sept 2017, Building 39 RMIT

I created a new video edit Selfie Machine v.4 (2017b) that ends with an image of identity reduced to a blurry blue line (Fig. 101). For the edit I started with the 4:3 aspect ratio then opened up to 16:9 widescreen as a way of creating a connection
between 1970s feminist video and performance art and current selfie culture (Fig. 102). The video was exhibited on a wall-mounted monitor, and the final section did not have the same impact as it did when projected across the walls of the dark studio. This confirmed for me that projection and installation were key components of ‘Selfie Machine’. However, the video file Selfie Machine v.4 (2017c) is now the performance score that I will use to perform Selfie Machine v.5 live as part of my final exhibition/performance in 2018.

Parafeminism: from binary to complexity

I will now return to how projection and installation methods can create an expanded representation of self. Subjectivity is a major theme within Pipilotti Rist’s work and Jones (2006), in considering self and image, coins the term “parafeminism” in relation to experiencing and thinking about Rist’s work. She describes an expansive way of looking beyond previous notions of identity within visual culture.

Parafeminism, as I see it, is non-prescriptive, open to a multiplicity of cultural expressions and behaviours, and focused on excavating power differentials. It makes use of (or even invents) new forms of power tied to the historical and present forms of feminine (not by any means necessarily “female”) subjectivities, while not assuming that power only exists in certain obvious forms (Jones 2006, p. 213).

What Jones proposed in 2006 as a way to move beyond the shortcomings of previous waves of feminism has been realised with the emergence of a fourth-wave feminism that builds on intersectionality. The representation of a diversity of voices, faces and experiences in the self-publishing world of social media has helped feminism to have a renewed impact on issues of equity, visibility, representation of identity and power (van Beek 2015a).23

23. An example of feminist hashtag activism, the 2017–2018 #MeToo campaign, has had a more powerful impact than the 2015 #YesAllWomen movement, which also called out incidents of sexual assault. I believe the positioning to speak from a personal subjective experience, as opposed to assuming that the experiences were the same for all women has had an impact on the traction this recent campaign has had.
complexity of individual subjective experience. My focus in my art practice, on using plurality, taken from Irigaray (1985), allows my work to move beyond singular positioning (all women) or oppositional binary definitions. I reveal the construction of my multiple digital selves live on stage, which serves to collapse roles, regions and models of visibility. I have found a way to use video projection to create ambiguity and not just a knowable reflection of myself. Through blurring the boundaries between live body/digital body, backstage, on stage and screen, my images of self remain active and have an agency of their own.

I have consolidated a solo way of working that honours the plurality of roles that I perform in my everyday life. I act as performer, director and technician; surveyor and surveyed; content creator and content consumer. I have not been reduced to conform to cultural templates but have written my own script – performing my own plural versions of myself.

Developing ‘Selfie Machine’ I have focused on creating processes, not finished products. I have embraced video montage, performance, reperformance and reprojection as ways to manifest my plural feminine subjectivity. I have created task-based scores, and even tasks within tasks, as a way of combining content and form. This has created a richly layered process for making both live performance and video artworks that open up questions about subjectivity and the representation of my digital identity.

**Process over product**

In this chapter I have described the development of my process for creating live images of self that express my plural subjectivity – from making the test ‘Hall of Mirrors’, through to *Selfie Machine* (2016c) and *Selfie Machine v.4* (2017c; Fig.103). I now value process over finished outcome and have ways of making plural processes through attention to process-driven artworks. I am able to proficiently combine content and form in my own work from having analysed the work of other artists who also employ self-surveillance as both theme and method. I have paid specific attention to works that interrogate both the social and media aspects of making works on and
about online platforms and digital identities. This informed my detailed performance score for *Selfie Machine v.3* (2017b), which turned thematic content into tasks and intentions I could perform. I have created performance and video images that demonstrate how I become entangled with corporate agendas when I upload images of myself online. I have used Jones’s (2006) concept of parafeminism to reflect on how I see contemporary artistic representations of feminine subjectivity operating in my own works and that of the other artists discussed.
Chapter 5 – Conclusions

The depiction of women in visual culture has created cultural templates that adhere to a patriarchal, hetero-normative way of being seen (Berger 1972; Mulvey 1975; Marsh in ACCA 2017). This allows or restricts access to social visibility (Brighenti 2007, 2010). Women who present in a certain way or who embody masculine qualities are afforded social status (Wolf 1991). However, feminine qualities, defined by Irigaray (1985) as fluidity, ambiguity and plurality are not celebrated in contemporary culture.

My research was driven by an inquiry into the ways an expanded performance practice could capture the plurality of a feminine experience of self. The aim of my research was to interrogate and give value to my feminine subjectivity through creating expansive artworks that rejected singular, unified categories. I have used performance for the lens and live performative events as ways to create expansive experiences of myself (Fig. 104).

Social media as a site for both emergent fourth-wave feminism and selfie culture has created the conditions for a new generation of female artists to engage with producing images of self. These images echo many 1970s feminist identity-based video and performance art practices.

We must still account for identification (if not ‘identity’ in the 1970s sense) in acknowledging how we interpret and give value to art or visual culture, broadly construed to include everything from painting to photography, installation, digital and film works, performance, and hybrid practices (Jones 2012, p.1).

Through a comparative analysis of my own and others artworks, I have interrogated how performance strategies can subvert reductionist readings of feminine experience in contemporary selfie culture.
5.1 Form: leading with practice

Moving from a collaborative practice of direction, facilitation and design, through this research I have developed a solo artistic practice. To connect content and form it was important conceptually that I controlled the production, distribution and consumption of my own image as I embraced my own plural subjectivity. I found many strategies to be simultaneously inside and outside my own work, such as using mirrors and the Reflector iPhone app. I collapsed the boundaries between various roles – performer, director, cinematographer, technician and audience – and through this I consolidated a solo way of working that honours the plurality of roles that I perform in my everyday life. I am now both content creator and content consumer.

Asserting plurality as an artistic strategy allowed me to subvert the binary oppositions of self/other, visible/invisible and subject/object. I used my lived experience to create works that blurred the boundary between autobiography, persona and Paula. Working with my mirror persona, Hannah, allowed me to make hidden aspects of myself visible (Fig. 105). I created infinity reflections in bathroom spaces that made multiple mediated versions of myself that were constantly reframed through editing and camera techniques. I devised ways to create infinity reflections in a video installation context that blurred the boundaries between live body and digital body. To create ambiguity and not just a knowable reflection of myself I used reprojected and inhabited video installation methods. The reprojected images had an agency of their own as the merging of screen, body and space render me as simultaneously subject and object.

Both female public bathrooms and social media platforms have been interrogated as simultaneously public/private spaces. I recorded and made visible normally invisible vulnerable moments so that the public and private manifestations of myself all existed concurrently. This allowed me to collapse the distinctions between onstage and backstage and online and offline behaviours, previously associated with separate regions. By presenting all sides of myself simultaneously I created artworks that imaged my plural subjectivity.

Fig. 105 Hannah, Self Evident (2015b), video stills
“Inhabit” became a key way for me to work from the inside of my experience and manifest my subjective point/s of view. My hand-held embodied filming technique, which captures my plural POV, is able to enact Soloway’s (2016) conception of a female gaze (Fig. 106). I use my iPhone camera to reframe my image, which in turn allows an expanded representation of my identity to be created and shared. Revealing vulnerable behaviours in Self Evident (2015b) and Recital (2015c) by performing task-based scores has created complexity, contradiction and empathy in the presentation of these vulnerable moments.

Investigating subjectivity as a performative process, I have achieved a way of creating an artistic outcome that privileges process over finished product. I have devised a plural process whereby I am able to make two works simultaneously – a live performance piece and a video artwork. Iterative processes allow the work to be fluid as evidenced in the video file Selfie Machine v.4 (2017b) now being used as the performance score for the live performance of Selfie Machine v.5.

By paying close attention to my materials and form I reveal the processes for creating images of myself. Making my ‘Selfie Machine’, I used feminist materials: video montage, performance, reperformance, documentation and my subjective experience. In my art practice I privilege my own subjective experience and personal point of view. I now understand my own artistic methods and aesthetic as processes that engages with collage and montage, where meaning is made in the gaps, layers and association between images and ideas. I am now able to skilfully employ my iterative processes to create fully realised artworks.

5.2 Content: expressing concepts through performance

Through my art making, which connects personal content and technological expertise, my research has opened up a dialogue between selfie culture, feminism, contemporary screen-based art and expanded performance practices. My artworks address how the concept of self-surveillance is performed in these different areas.

I have drawn on the philosophical theories of Luce Irigaray (1985) as well as writing by art theorist Amelia Jones (2006,2012) to engage plurality as an artistic
strategy that addresses a contemporary construction of identity. Plurality allows
the collapsing of binary boundaries between subject/object, public/private, online/
offline, real/digital and visible/invisible. Inspired by Irigaray (1985) I have embraced
the feminine quality of plurality as a method to create artworks about my feminine
subjectivity. I have also used ideas from intersectional feminism and process-based
art to allow fluidly and not place value on only a singular finished product.

I have asserted my subjectivity to be performative, context-specific and in-process
in relation to diverse theories on self from Ervin Goffman (1959) through to Judith
Butler (1990). Working to manifest these concepts of self in artworks I have investigated
how women are currently portrayed in visual culture as a way to find new strategies
for creating selfie-style works. Art critic John Berger (1972) writes that women have
historically been rendered as an object in, not the subject of, an artwork. This awareness
of being seen as an object has led women to internalise a way of looking at themselves
via an external male perspective. A woman becomes both ‘the surveyor and the surveyed
within her as the two constitute yet always distinct elements of herself’ (Berger 1972, p.
46). I have linked this double aspect of both “being” and “watching” myself as a woman
to Irigaray’s assertion that ‘she is already two’, further consolidating my understanding
of plurality as key part of a feminine subjectivity (1972, p.47).

Both Berger (1972) and film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) assert that the way
women are portrayed in visual culture is to please the masculine hetero-normative
gaze. My artworks build on an understanding of Mulvey’s (1975) male gaze, which
has been renamed by Joannides (2017) as the cultural gaze as she asserts that all
of Western culture has adopted this sexualised way of seeing the female body. My
reflected filming style is a visual metaphor for Berger’s conception that women are
constantly both ‘surveyor and surveyed’ (1972, p. 42). It shows the internalisation of
this way of looking at myself and enacts a plural way of seeing as I am simultaneously
the performer and my own audience. I have discussed the complications of selfie
feminism, which most critics agree only recreates the pervasive cultural templates
provided by the patriarchy and continues to cater to the male gaze (Soloway 2016,
Dean 2016, Burke 2016). I have proposed different ways of gazing to disrupt my
cultural internalisation of the male/cultural gaze. I have drawn from Jill Soloway’s (2016) conception of the female gaze as a series of camera techniques that create empathy to analyze my own iPhone films. I have also made work in relation to Jonathon Finn’s (2012) provocation that within today’s voyeuristic society I now see “surveillantly”. I have presented resolved works that reposition the gaze (Starewell 2016a), embody a female gaze (Recital 2015c) and enact a surveillant gaze (Selfie Machine v.3 2017b; Fig. 107).

Social theorist Andrea Brighenti coined the term “artveillance” to discuss artworks that deal with the theme and technology of surveillance. He asserts that the surveillant gaze in these artworks addresses issues of ‘social visibility and invisibility’ (2010, p. 138). Throughout this dissertation, I have contextualised my concept of self-surveillance via his models of visibility: recognition, control and spectacle. He writes that ‘shaping and managing visibility is a huge work that human beings do tirelessly’ (2007, p.327). I have found many relevant links between his framework and the theories of subjectivity and identity-based selfie-style artworks I have discussed. For example, I have aligned visibility-as-recognition, where a subject can find empowerment through being seen, with the trend of selfie feminism and the works of Audrey Wollen. Understanding the many different ways in which visibility works has allowed me to complicate the assertion that visibility equal empowerment. I have understood Berger’s theory of a woman being both the ‘surveyor’ and the ‘surveyed’ (1972, p. 46) in terms of Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-control model.

I have seen this evidenced in work by Miranda July and incorporated this concept into the development of my ‘Selfie Machine’ process where there is a more ominous monitoring of self appearance taking place.

To create artworks about my plural feminine subjectivity I have employed methods that allow me to collapsed binary boundaries. For example, my reflected iPhone filming style collapses Mulvey’s (1975) three different looks associated with cinema as I am simultaneously performing all three roles (camera, audience, character). Another example is how using social media as a theme as well as a platform to perform work on allowed me to collapse Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) model...
visibility-as-spectacle. Spectacle relies on the ‘degree of separation that exists between the viewer and the viewed’ (Brighenti 2010, p.138). However, in Starewell (2016a) I collapsed that separation, broadcasting myself to gallery-goers in the same room as me.

I have consolidated ways to create self-reflexive artworks through examining identity-based selfie-style artworks by other female artists, paying attention to their use of both content and form. I have translated their methods of manifesting plurality and performativity into my own practice, weaving it with relevant theories on subjectivity, feminism, and visual culture – specifically referencing the image-driven social media sites of Instagram and Facebook. I have employed self-surveillance as both a theme and a method to make my own original artworks that honour my feminine experience of self. I will be bringing together theory and practice in the staging of Selfie Machine v.5 in 2018. I will utilise task-based scores, and even tasks within tasks, as a way of combining content and form. For example, to create Layer Two of the process, which thematically addresses selfies as empowerment, I will be drawing on my understanding of Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) visibility-as-recognition and its links to selfie feminism. To ensure I can create an act of empowerment that rejects the male gaze I will employ my embodied camera that reflects Soloway’s (2016) “feeling seeing” technique that allows the female gaze to be enacted. I will use scores of re-frame and re-position, holding the mirror so that it obscures my face from the audience. In this way I am controlling my own access to visibility, recognition just for myself, as an act of empowerment. In staging this work live I will implicate the audience in their role of participating in the social practice of surveillance, as asserted by Finn (2012) by live streaming the fifth layer on Facebook Live. This further collapses Brighenti’s (2007, 2010) model visibility-as-spectacle as audience onsite in the gallery will be encouraged to view the work simultaneously live and mediated on their smartphone. Similarly weaving theory and practice in the new sixth layer I will create infinity reflections as a way to collapse boundaries between subject/object, real body/digital body and visible/invisible to create a performative, ambiguous and expansive experience of myself. Selfie Machine v.5 will manifest the theories of subjectivity that I have been discussing in relation to Irigaray (1985) and Jones (2006, 2012).
5.3 Self-surveillance: an expanded way to make identity-based artworks

I conclude that new perspectives on feminine subjectivities have arisen in the range of contemporary artworks, including my own, that employ self-surveillance as both content and form.

I have consolidated my working methods to develop an expanded performance practice that uses video montage, performance, reperformance, iterative processes and documentation to capture the plurality of my feminine experience of self. In my artworks I have combined technical considerations with performance action drawn from my conceptual concerns. My performance strategies of duration and plurality subvert reductionist readings of feminine experience in contemporary selfie culture. I have worked to collapse categories and blur boundaries between my live body, reflected image and digital body, models of visibility, regions and roles in my art making. Through my research, I have created original performative outcomes that reflect explorations of public and private existence and the plurality of selves arising from my lived experience.

By both celebrating and presenting the complications of selfie feminism, I have reframed selfie culture as self-expression not self-obsession. I have addressed both the social and media aspects of creating work online as a way of complicating the conversation about identity-based art practices that use the codes of selfie culture. I have identified and engaged performance and process-based approaches that use duration and plurality as ways to subvert stereotypical interpretations of identity.

Six years before Instagram was launched Amelia Jones was savvy enough to ask ‘what kind of new subjects/objects are produced by global capitalist image culture’ (2006, p. 22). By interrogating recent artworks that employ elements of self-surveillance by Amalia Ulman (2014), Intimidad Romero (2012), Hannah Black (2014), Atlanta Eke (2015), and Giselle Stanborough (2016), I am able to better understand the cultural conditions that frame expressions of identity and to develop processes and artworks that reframe myself. This is evidenced in my iPhone works Self Evident (2015b), Recital (2015c), Starewell (2016a) and my process for making various versions of ‘Selfie Machine’, which all present a plural feminine subjectivity (Fig. 108).
Artistic representations of feminine subjectivity in the 21st century actively resist the existing cultural templates and instead create expansive experiences that blend autobiography, fiction and persona. As artists we enact multiple roles in the creation of our own artworks and are complicit in performing, obscuring, selling or reframing ourselves. Plural images are presented that defy assignment into a single model of visibility. The surveillant gaze present in all these works acknowledges how women and their self-images are seen, controlled, categorised and reduced to data, yet ultimately many of these artworks remain fluid, performative and plural (Fig 109).

Through my refined performance strategies I am now able to challenge the conception of an essential female quality and reject the notion of a single story or stable point of view. I have created original selfie-inspired artworks that act as both a celebration and a critique of self-representation online.
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