



Nadja Verena Marcin To Display Works In THE WHITNEY HOUSTON BIENNIAL

Visual Arts News Desk Mar. 16, 2017



Multi-disciplinary artist Nadja Verena Marcin's photographic work *Bride* (image above) and video / performance piece *How to Undress in Front of Your Husband*, will be featured in the 2017 The Whitney Houston Biennial: Greatest Love of All-the all women biennial-which comes as a response to the awakening representation of women artists in major museums and galleries. To highlight female artists, curator and artist Christine Finley selected those from a varied range of geographic and cultural backgrounds, disciplines, methodologies, and generations. The show's title not only playfully addresses the traditional (and concurrent) exhibit held at the Whitney Museum, but also honors a strong woman, five years since her untimely passing. Being held at chashama at XOCO 325 by DDG in New York, the exhibition opens Sunday, March 19 with a reception from 4-8pm, and runs through March 29.

Marcin's *Bride* marries the heavenly beauty of the Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia-the world's largest and highest remote salt desert-with water, flooding the sky's infinite reflection. The site's breathtaking beauty explains its use as a location for many international photographers-



particularly Latin American wedding photographers. Marcin's breathtaking image unpacks this tradition. The bride stands in a lush, white wedding dress in the midst of a tinted lake, exalted inside of red water. Her colored dress expresses the existential aspects of femininity and female physicality, creation and fertility, guilt and suffering. As the origin of human life, the bride is characterized as a saint. Celebrated for her beauty, the assigned power converts her into an object. The holy becomes whore, and the bride, an economic commodity. Extravagant and kitsch in tone, the heavenly bride is so far over the top, that it points at an inherent contradiction. The bride, standing for family and a sense of pride and identity, is instead considered within the context of potential violence, as 90% of all marriages in Latin America are linked to physical violence. Marcin's striking image thus investigates the sacrament of as permit for this abuse.

The artist's performance and video *How To Undress in Front of Your Husband* is replicated from a 1960s 'how to' video, depicting the do's and don'ts of female disrobing. Whereas the original video turns this quotidian action into a performance under an authoritarian male gaze, Marcin recreates the video, playing all of the characters herself in delightful self-awareness, disrupting the original 'educational' trajectory of this narrative, while highlighting the absurdity of its creation in the first place.

The video-part of an ongoing investigation by Marcin on the damaging effects of machismo-toned media representations-first appeared in her solo exhibition *Cinema Pirata - How To Undress in Front of Your Husband*, and received a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant. Marcin's exhibition-covered by VICE Magazine in *A Sexist 1960s Film Remake Rewrites Cinema History*-considered the permitted roles and power dynamics in the production of mass media and film. Designed in collaboration with the architectural designer



Terrence Schroeder, and housed within the confines of an historic feminist art space, the show also comprised Distribution Vehicle, in which Marcin's video works were screened inside the backseat of a station wagon-popping up around the neighborhood during Bushwick Open Studios-as a nod to Kunstraum's bootleg video store (of which Marcin is also a founder). The jerry-rigged nature of the screening room was Marcin's humorously dark reference to the challenges that female filmmakers often face regarding the distribution of their work. As a gesture releasing the works from their potential patriarchal and capitalist constraints, nothing was exploited, sold, or purchased. Passers-by could only be spectators of the pieces.

Often deflating the gendered hierarchies embedded within the film industry, much of Marcin's work reflects on the roots of our cultural behaviors, in an attempt to shift the roles and voices of the media that we currently consume. "At the core, I aim to express that the full world of gender and the breadth of its expression has the potential to exist within one person, and that person is also the almighty oppressor or oppressed-depending on how we want to see it. Just as authentic cinema comes from within a culture and not from outside, a genuine challenge to the patriarchal system needs to emerge also from the margins."

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/bwwart/article/Nadja-Verena-Marcin-To-Display-Works-In-THE-WHITNEY-HOUSTON-BIENNIAL-20170316#>