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## The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life

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The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine  
Identity Ruined My Life

The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine  
Identity Ruined My Life

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in Art

by

Cambry Pierce  
University of Southern Illinois  
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Ceramics, 2010

May 2015  
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## ABSTRACT

*The Life You've Seen: The Search For Feminine Identity Ruined My Life* is a video installation created through the exploration for the search for identity, specifically female, in my personal work and in the art world for over sixty years. The videos, depicting myself in costume, display twenty different personas and scenarios created to expose the futility of this ongoing search through exposing the traditional ways in which forces such as nature, biology, heredity, and cultural constructs have been used in attempts to define "self." The installation format of the work, a wall of decades old television sets, and the unending repetition of videos, symbolizes the exhaustive search for self. While the visual absurdity, and reference to past feminist art alludes to a mockery of such works. A singular TV with one unchanging face positioned behind the wall of televisions represents the understanding and conclusion that "self" is not something that can be indefinitely defined, nor will it reach a culmination.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My thanks go out to my committee members Mathew McConnell, Bethany Springer, and Alissa Walls for their insight and assistance in the development of my work. Special thanks to Jeannie Hulen for acting as the director of my committee, drill sergeant and cheerleader. Thank you for your patience/impatience, commitment, and belief in the final product.

## DEDICATION

*The Life You've Seen: The Search For Feminine Identity Ruined My Life* is dedicated to Heather Pierce-Cutright, Glenna Pierce, and Wanda Renfro.

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## **INTRODUCTION: Me, Me, Meh, Meh**

On October 30th, 2013 I sat and wrote. My intention was to reflect upon the work I had been making since my entrance into graduate school. It was my hope that this stream of consciousness questioning would lead me to where my next and final body of work as a graduate student would derive from. The writing became not about where my work was, but about where I was, it began to read as a diary. Although, I am not thirteen, nor was I writing in a pink fuzzy book with a golden lock and key that would be tucked away in my underwear drawer. It was more like a journal or self-scathing blog. It, in a way, concisely described where my mind was, not on my work, but on my new life as a recently divorced twenty-something who just realized she was not who she thought she was. I didn't recognize the person I had been, but no one else recognized the person I was becoming, my appearance a stranger. How was I to continue making the work I had been making when I was not the same person who had made it? What was it that I was going to do from this point? I felt I had gained no answers.

What is my history when the physical history of objects treasured and discarded are eventually let go? When the mountains of objects and heirlooms fall to the possession of another and their meaning is lost. What defines me when I am separated from the mother who raised me, and the grandmother whom I've loved, but spent most of my life resenting? Who am I when I am no longer his wife, when I am no longer a surrogate, when I no longer have to compensate for someone else's shortcomings? What is my future if I renounce my God, my husband, my father? Without something to fight against do I become weaker? Is it wrong that my decisions were easier made when they were in opposition to someone else's? If I cannot define myself by the conventional roles I play and whom I play them for, do I then define myself by what I am not? If I am not striving to become something you desire, what is it that I desire? What is authentic under the vastness of mediated experiences? Am I still feminine if I shave my head? Am I still desirable if I permanently mark my body? Am I defined by my surface? Spectacle dominates! Surface is everything. What happens when you don't recognize my appearance, when I change it so rapidly not even my eyes have time to adjust? Am I a machine, can I be? Despairing in my reality, my experience is all I can ever know.

I realize more and more every day that I am completely manic, self-absorbed, self-conscious, and self-doubting while simultaneously attention seeking. Unable to concentrate on more substantive issues, my mind is an echo-chamber filled with my voice, the voices of my mother and grandmother, Elvis songs, hatred, the expectations, the father, Holly Golightly, “what-ifs”, judgments, self-deprecation, vampires, Harry Potter and other trivialities. My identity is convoluted by the trite, the perceived, the material, heredity, and self-assumed positions, and although my imaginary world is often more exciting, it is also often more depressing than what I can internally process. This inability to find authenticity amidst the barrage of mediated experiences has led me to my current works.

In current videos, I am interested in the simultaneity occurring in the mind space, capturing eccentricities: worlds filled with a flirtation with alternate scenarios and personas which create fractured narratives that run parallel rather than linear. Fantasy and constructed reality commingle in order to express feelings so dramatic they can only be exercised through physical action. Reality often dominates with bursts of the random, worship, masochism, female competition, humiliation, sensuality and unfiltered introspection. I am interested in toeing the line of comfort between my characters, fictitious or painfully transparent, and the viewer. I offer up an image for judgment, assimilation, understanding, or validation. Manipulative images of the female character create both an object for consumption and an objectifying gaze.

It is my intention to expose inner conflict, creating a dialogue between shame and the hidden desires of domesticity, sexuality, desperation for love, and assumed masculinity. By focusing on gender conditioning and social and religious expectations as well as exploring perceived, constructed and inherited identities I search for a, if possible, self-authored and less convoluted “self”.

## **CHAPTER 1: “Personal Transformation” and The Illusive Search For The Elusive Self**

In graduate school I have experienced several turning points. Whether those turning points were simply due to the nature of graduate school or “personal transformation” up until this point had been

unclear to me. Early on I came to the realization that my work was pure shit, convoluted and masked by a veil of trite 1950's imagery. I expressed emotionally charged personal content through the bodies of inanimate clay objects: an overwhelmed toaster with more tasks than it was capable of handling, a purging blender unable to control its own function, or a suicidal coffee percolator with its own power chord fashioned in a noose. I shallowly attempted to define yet hide myself within the objects and behind the dated, and unconfessed, stereotypical roles: wife, caretaker, and mother to a full grown man, that I had chosen at that point in my life to play. I was a woman who had married as a child, feigning fulfillment, acting the model of loveliness and subservience, while begrudgingly resenting the hand biology and backwards social upbringing had dealt me.

Upon this realization I then filled my studio with objects, objects belonging to me, passed down or unearthed from the collection of artifacts held within the two stories of my great grandmothers home. I dwelled among suitcases filled with folded stacks of tattered Levis, a strawberry crib sheet turned party dress, squares of lacy, embroidered handkerchiefs, useless knick-knacks and forgotten mementos. I, for a brief period, attempted to define myself by these objects. Obsessing over them and searching deeply for their essence in hopes that they would divulge some deeper truth to me about my purpose. These objects of lives lived and experiences had become hoarded, endowed with symbolism of my identity, their identity, a collective female identity. This collection and arrangement of found objects and ceramic replicas serving as a self-portrait became coded with symbolism and so completely about me that they were nearly inaccessible to the viewer

I began to ponder the word "identity", not realizing that this had been what my work had been about the whole time. I began to specifically consider my familial history. Perhaps I am only where I've come from, my identity no different than the hand-me-down clothing I grew up in, a product of the brave people who raised me and undeniably the absence of those who chose not to. Named by my mother I was Cambry Lace Pierce-DuPerier, born to two young people soon to divorce and eternally live separate lives. Raised by my mother, with the help of my, at best, eccentric grandmother and great grandmother, the hoarder. Stories, objects and clothing of lives lived and times past caused

me to hide within times and experiences, not my own. I discovered that with the family matriarchs comes a familial female history: decisions, successes and mistakes already made, set in front of me like a formula, all I need do is follow or oppose it. In many situations, I had done just that. Like the three generations of women before me, I married by the age of twenty. Though in my determination to avoid repeating their mistakes, my marriage had not yet ended in divorce, nor had it yielded children.

When this familial formula and the detritus of past lives no longer filled the void, which was my search for self, I was left reeling. Disgusted by myself, my coded symbolism-clay or not clay-the daunting thoughts of making shippable work, residencies, the ever-looming next step and life in general, I became immobile. Before my semester of candidacy I came to the realization that heredity held no power over me. I was not, as I had previously thought, defined by the women who had raised me, nor was I doomed to repeat their mistakes. My life held the possibility to exceed theirs in achievement and failure, and it already had. I realized that by my somewhat cowardly adherence to said formula I had condemned myself to fail my own expectations. The coincidence of this revelation, the coming of my twenty-fifth year, my fifth wedding anniversary, and the rapidly approaching end of the umbrella of safety from the real world I had become accustomed to as a perpetual student, brought about great changes not only in my work and my approach to it, but in my life.

I began to consider the issues at hand. If I was interested in introspection and the image of female identity, perhaps clay and found objects were not appropriate to communicate my message. I was the vessel, not a toaster made from clay or a suitcase used to carry ancestral baggage that wasn't mine to carry. Similarly if I was unhappy and unfulfilled in my marriage, perhaps my spouse was not suited to me. I began my life as a single woman working in video a year ago to this, my thesis semester. My work became a type of mockery of myself and the work I had made before, though not un-heartfelt or without the ever-present question, what is self? I exploited and mocked my relationship, my failings, and personal expectations. My process and execution itself was a mockery of video art using only my iPhone, finalized with minimal editing, abrupt, stark, transitions, botched voice-overs and poor lip-syncing.

Working in video allowed me to step outside the boundaries I had set within myself, enabling me to become the protagonist rather than a victim, referred to as “she” rather than “you.” In these videos, I acted out all the stereotypes I had played into. In them, I become a wife, lover, star, or troubled damsel. I turned to culture, the media, characters and idols. I lip-synced songs, one for every scenario, dilemma or daily emotional breakdown. Relying on the creative works and personas of others I exercised my heightened, over sensitive emotions. I wallowed in my own obsession and subjectivity of self, seemingly at the root of my journey for self-discovery. Though at the end, I found yet again, these cultural constructs could not possibly define the ever illusive search for the elusive self.

## **CHAPTER 2: To: The Unconcerned Masses...Self Does Not Exist**

This two-year period of discouraging highs and lows, coming of age, life changes and the ever-constant self-loathing brings me to date. The fact that my work has been consistently about one thing, identity, for as long as I can remember has become abundantly clear to me. Exposure to the search for identity in the works of 1970's and 80's female artists such as, Cindy Sherman, Martha Rosler, Laurie Simmons, Lynn Herschman and Carrie Mae Weems, has spurred my thought processes and artistic endeavors to, endlessly and often subconsciously, search for the grand query of female identity. It was unbeknownst to me that these works were not only initiating my search but also shaping it. I was simply repeating and re-interpreting the venture of “self” discovery of the women who preceded me. I followed in their steps, defining myself by the same means, and now the same media and fashions, unable to see past or beyond the path that had already been laid, and yet, expecting different and revelatory results. In this way the conceptual progression of my work as well as my understanding of female identity was impeded, and the challenge to contemporarily contextualize my work became exceedingly difficult. It was not only my identity that was convoluted but also female identity and it appeared the artists who had served as my references were at the origin of this convolution.

Again, I was running around in decades old, hand-me-down clothing, trying to explain to unconcerned masses why my experience in these outdated clothes was somehow relevant to how life in

this world functions. Though, all anyone could see was the outrageousness of a human being thinking only of herself, her unnecessary longing for nostalgia and an obsession with vintage clothing. There had to be more to it than that.

I read about the psychoanalysis behind the idea of female identity. Through the profound effect of these readings, I became aware that I had unintentionally followed the normative explorations in the search for identity, and had accordingly come to the conclusion, previous to my researches confirmation, that a collective female identity does not exist. As Judith Butler would assert, there is no whole or unified identity and there is no core "self".<sup>1</sup> There are two typical ways in which women have chosen over the years to define themselves. Griselda Pollock asserted that from a psychoanalytical standing there are two fantastical positions on the defining factors of female identity. There are those who define themselves by nature, by the conventional nurturing, biological woman "mother" or even a compilation of familiar mother figures, and those who in rejection of biology and or male creator attempt to instead define themselves by cultural constructs and accepted imagery which they have the power to manipulate. The thought being that this woman can re-author herself as who she desires to be.<sup>2</sup> Both of these ventures I had explored, separately and also simultaneously, through the buffer of objects and personal confrontation.

Psychoanalysis, however, continues in the theory of identity to undo both of these theories in favor of the unconscious. Our unconscious, filled with our deepest desires and denied impulses, holds the power to undo even the cleverest disguises we present as self. Our identities never reaching

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1

<sup>2</sup> Griselda Pollock, "What Women Want: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Critique." *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*. (New York: Neuberger Museum of Art, 2011), 73

culmination, but instead being a perpetual reinventing and redefining force.<sup>3</sup>

### CHAPTER 3: Mind Blown

I believe I had come to this conclusion before my research had laid it out for me in such straight forward terms and this conclusion had halted all creativity. I, for years, had been searching for the answer to the question of female and or personal identity to find that it was all completely pointless. What a horrifying realization. The power of nature is not as absolute as one would imagine and can be rejected, and social constructs are simply that. These things have no real bearing, and a group or one's identity is never and cannot be truly defined. Identity can be as fleeting as a hairstyle.

Therefore I came to the conclusion that the search for feminine identity had ruined my life. It was not just my creative endeavors and thought processes that the works of feminist artists had impacted, it was my day to day life, it was my identity, regardless of the somewhat fleeting and renovating nature of it. The focus of my work for years was now seemingly pointless as was the torturous and formulaic endeavor of a life I had subjected myself to. I clung to my past, my failures, the trash of my experiences, and the people who had failed me in an attempt to define myself. I unearthed family secrets, which changed my view of loved ones. I played the part and endured poor fitting solutions in effort to reach solace in knowing the answer, in the end only to find if indeed there is an answer, the desires of my unconscious are the author and I can never count on it not to change.<sup>4</sup>

Despairing in my reality, my experience is all I can ever know. A reality in which one is happier with dreams rather than lives, in which religion is clung to in order to explain the good and the bad, familial history and heredity justify experiences and decisions made, and where failure, misery, and poor

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<sup>3</sup> Griselda Pollock, "What Women Want: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Critique." *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*. (New York: Neuberger Museum of Art, 2011), 74

<sup>4</sup> Griselda Pollock, "What Women Want: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Critique." *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*. (New York: Neuberger Museum of Art, 2011), 74

choices are romanticized, all under a veil of uncertainly placed nostalgia. We define our realities by our experiences, our emotions, our opinions, our perceptions and the perceptions of others, but these things cannot shape us forever. Emotions change, experiences and opinions evolve, and perceptions, even our own, lie. The only truth, our unconscious, which our brains do not have the power to access or pinpoint.

#### **CHAPTER 4: Farce and Freedom, Mimic and Masturbation**

Post this dramatic reaction, I had an epiphany, if you will? Had the search for feminine identity actually ruined my life? No, it had not, the realization of this farce of a “true self” had actually freed me from continuing the previously declared pointless venture that had been explored for sixty-plus years. Though perhaps it wasn’t so pointless, this discovery in a way I believe justified the work I had made up until this point in my infantile artistic career. Though the work I had made was by many deemed irrelevant, I now realized it was a natural response to not only my upbringing and social circumstances, but also my position as a student within academia of the art world as it exists.

While the body of work I would create from this conclusion would be, in appearance redundant, it would be about its’ redundancy. Directly and intentionally referencing the works of most obviously, visually, Cindy Sherman, as well as others. Using the most cliché songs, and movie clips: love songs of Disney princesses, the hostile lyrics of Alanis Morissette, and the scathing words of “Fred” from *Breakfast At Tiffany’s* as a way of connecting with and communicating my content to the viewer in a visual way that we know and accept. This would be through video, TV, selfie, and contemporary cultural references. It would not be about me. Surprising, I know. Though it would intentionally appear so. It would not be about the “doer beyond the deed,” it would be about the mask, and the realization, that is all there is.<sup>5</sup> It would be about the masturbatory nature of the works which preceded me, my earlier works, the art world, and the society in which we live, thus why I would continue to use my face as my medium. I would continue to use my iPhone, using only the front facing camera like a mirror, embodying the contemporary notion of the “selfie.” Like my work from the previous year, this too would be a mockery. Mimicking what

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<sup>5</sup> Seyla Benhabib, "Feminism and Postmodernism." *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. (New York: Routledge), 21

I have seen. Which I would argue is all we can do. Similar to the works of contemporary video artist Alex McQuilkin, mimicking Cindy Sherman mimicking a movie starlet.<sup>6</sup> A mockery not so much of myself, but of the ongoing search for identity. Exposing the means by which we define ourselves, not specifically in the art world alone, but also as simple humans.

I have become painfully aware and yet also freed by the knowledge of the impossibility to find the center of what makes one “self.” In accordance with Lacan’s mirror theory, images of myself twice removed through video and screen creates fractures within the identity becoming like oddly shaped puzzle pieces, which one knows will never truly fit together to create a whole.<sup>7</sup> The screen becomes like a mirror of one’s self divorced, both images a lie. As Butler has theorized, I am defined by the roles I play in the contexts of which I play them.<sup>8</sup> I am, and am not, the princess and the caretaker, the doting lover and the damaged ex. I am model and master, actively controlling the gaze, and carefully governing the space I inhabit.

This body of work was created to express the inability to grab a foothold on the ever shifting ground of self. It is not about a grand answer or solution to what makes one tick, or the one word or idea that explains a woman as a whole. It is about the revelations gained through coming of age and the search for identity that I believe all women inherently undertake at some point in life. It is not something that I believe can be learned from the experiences of others nor that even the knowledge gained from books or theorists can satisfy it. Perhaps it is instead a process that only one’s personal experiences and cognition can reveal to them at the appropriate time and through the appropriate means. Consequently, I and other female artists of my and closely neighboring generations have continually searched for the personal revelation of the grander, answered yet unanswerable, issue. We do this despite the fact that it has already been explored, argued, theorized and laid to rest by those who preceded us and has been deemed no longer relevant. Similar to the way in which I, and others, have let

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/honigman/honigman3-29-06.asp>

<sup>7</sup> Kathy O’Dell, “Performance, Video, and Trouble in the Home.” *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. (New York, NY: Aperture in Association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), 137

<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 129

familial history and the repetition of “mothers” mistakes and successes as well as social norms define our formula, up until the realization is made that what has worked for others simply cannot work for all.

## EXHIBITION

Upon entering the gallery one is assaulted with sight and sound. A wall of televisions, faces, colors, the static of open air, and the black screens of silent worlds lying in wait.<sup>9</sup> Differing voices, male and female, accompany the images, all with the same slowly recognizable face. Each video shaking slightly as the arm tires from holding the camera which has captured the image. The videos end at their own time and begin again, the abruptness jarring, leaving the viewer unsettled. A tangle of cords, coming and going, crissing and crossing the space, around and in front of the TVs, creates an uncertainty of which image they derive, and the source from which the images come, seemingly keeping the viewer at a distance, for fear of entanglement. These elements are intended to create confusion which makes the intended view-point and understanding unclear. Behind the televisions the gallery is lit with one single light. Visible is, open, seemingly vacant space. If the viewer makes the decision to navigate over and around the electrical cords, which block the path to the back of the gallery, they will find that the TVs become less like portraits, their physicality, and their objectness, is now much more apparent. As the viewer continues into the open space a singular TV is seen. Upon this TV’s screen is the same face, stripped down, minus a wig, silently, and seemingly uncaring, viewing the objects in front of her. Is this the “self” behind the mask-like wall of televisions? No, we’ve discovered there is no self. This character embodies that understanding and symbolizes the exhaustive search for self, and the defeat of finding the answer. It’s physical separation from the others representing the freedom from the search.

The decision to work in video was easily made once my concept was realized. The camera, rather it be through video or photography, has been used extensively by women to project and reflect images of themselves. Using the lens and screen as mirrors and or stage women artists have called into

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<sup>9</sup> Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room with the American View." *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. (New York, NY: Aperture in Association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990). 126

question identity and the clichés of female representation. Often using one's own body as subject employing role play, masquerade, and appropriation to overpower the ego and define and or recreate self. Besides the historical reference to female works of identity, moving pictures, video, and appropriation have pervaded today's society, becoming the main way in which we understand and interact within our world.<sup>10</sup>

The video images of my face act as portraits for all intents and purposes. Referencing not only the selfie of today's social media culture, but also the wide history of self-portraiture in art. The very nature of self-portraiture has always leant itself to the representation of identity. Artists, male and female, have consistently used portraiture to identify gender, class, and public roles. Self-portraiture has also been used as a means of self-fashioning to project desired ideas about self even utilizing role play, costuming and the adoption of different guises to explore multiple variations of self.<sup>11</sup> This intention of self-fashioning and identification has not changed in the use of the contemporary selfie. Similarly I portray myself in widely varying guises though not to explore variations of self, but instead to highlight the absurdity of self, and to bring my viewer to the idea that there is no self behind the mask.<sup>12</sup>

With my ceramic background and a seemingly hereditary impulse to horde, I have an unexplainable attraction to and understanding of objects, as displayed by my earlier works in clay. With the switch to video as my medium came an exceptional frustration with the lack of tangibility or object-ness of the works I was creating. Previous to this exhibition the works had been displayed in projection format or on flat screen monitors. My desire to make objects while recognizing the non-sense of my concept realized in clay led me to the use of tube-style televisions. While the tube-style TV is no longer a modern technology, nor are they seen in many homes, replaced by flat screens, the use of these TVs as objects greatly informed my concept. The tube-style televisions, hooked up to DVD players, playing videos shot from an iPhone, display the technologies of several decades. It is my hope that the differing

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<sup>10</sup> Helaine Posner, "Hot and Cool: Feminist Art in Practice." *The Deconstructive Impulse: Women Artists Reconfigure the Signs of Power, 1973-1991*. (New York: Neuberger Museum of Art, 2011)1215

<sup>11</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 165

<sup>12</sup> Seyla Benhabib, "Feminism and Postmodernism." *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. (New York: Routledge), 22

ages of technology used in this installation will add to the complexity of the piece, inform the viewer of the reference to the issue of identity in the past and present, while also attributing the use of television in art history, specifically in the explorations of identity.

Unlike flat screen monitors which acted similarly to paintings, flat with no visible innards, tube-style televisions resulted in a tangible object, a box, a window, a dimensionality and separation which could suggest an alternate space, outside of the one in which we reside.<sup>13</sup> A television also unlike a projection acts in a way as an accepted format of our consciousness.<sup>14</sup> It is a sign of comfort, equality, its' messages trusted, accepted and assimilated with. The television acts as a vehicle for domesticating and making understandable and relatable personal feelings, emotions, thoughts, and sexuality.<sup>15</sup> Considering the masturbatory quality of his work I have looked to the writings of Vito Acconci on the use of television in art. Acconci explains the viewer has the ability to become the image, inseparable and invaded. The images of my face on the television screens are recognized as human, but size and scale are askew, pieces of the body as we know it, torso and limbs are often absent from view, as the person on the screen I have been replaced or displaced through the action of becoming the image. The subject within the image becomes a model, a model of non-self, a simulation, the notion of "self" through the removal created by the screen illustrates the concept of self as outdated and intangible.<sup>16</sup> It seems only appropriate that my questions of selfhood and my futile attempts at the definition of identity be displayed through a medium which negates the very notion of self.

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<sup>13</sup> Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room with the American View." *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. (New York, NY: Aperture in Association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990). 125

<sup>14</sup> Kathy R. Huffman, "Video Art: What's TV Got to Do with It." *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. (New York, NY: Aperture in Association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), 81

<sup>15</sup> Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room with the American View." *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. (New York, NY: Aperture in Association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990). 128

<sup>16</sup> Vito Acconci, "Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room with the American View." *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. (New York, NY: Aperture in Association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990). 126

## CONCLUSION

*The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life* is a video installation that explores the futile search for self and feminine identity. Different guises are adopted to express deep emotions and a coming of age understanding through a flirtation between hidden desires and shame. The twice removal of the image through video and screen aim to explore issues of identity, its falseness, fragmentation and its perpetually renovating nature. The videos are each thoughtfully created to display the ways in which we use such forces as nature, biology, heredity, and cultural constructs in attempt to define one's self, while the overwhelming and confusing overtones of the display and the constantly shifting images are to evoke thoughts on the transitory and changing quality of the self. This work embodies the uncertainty of defining, comprehending, and subsequently being one's self, while the visual humor and absurdity, as well as the reference to past feminist works will allude to the mockery of the ongoing search for identity in art.

## IMAGES

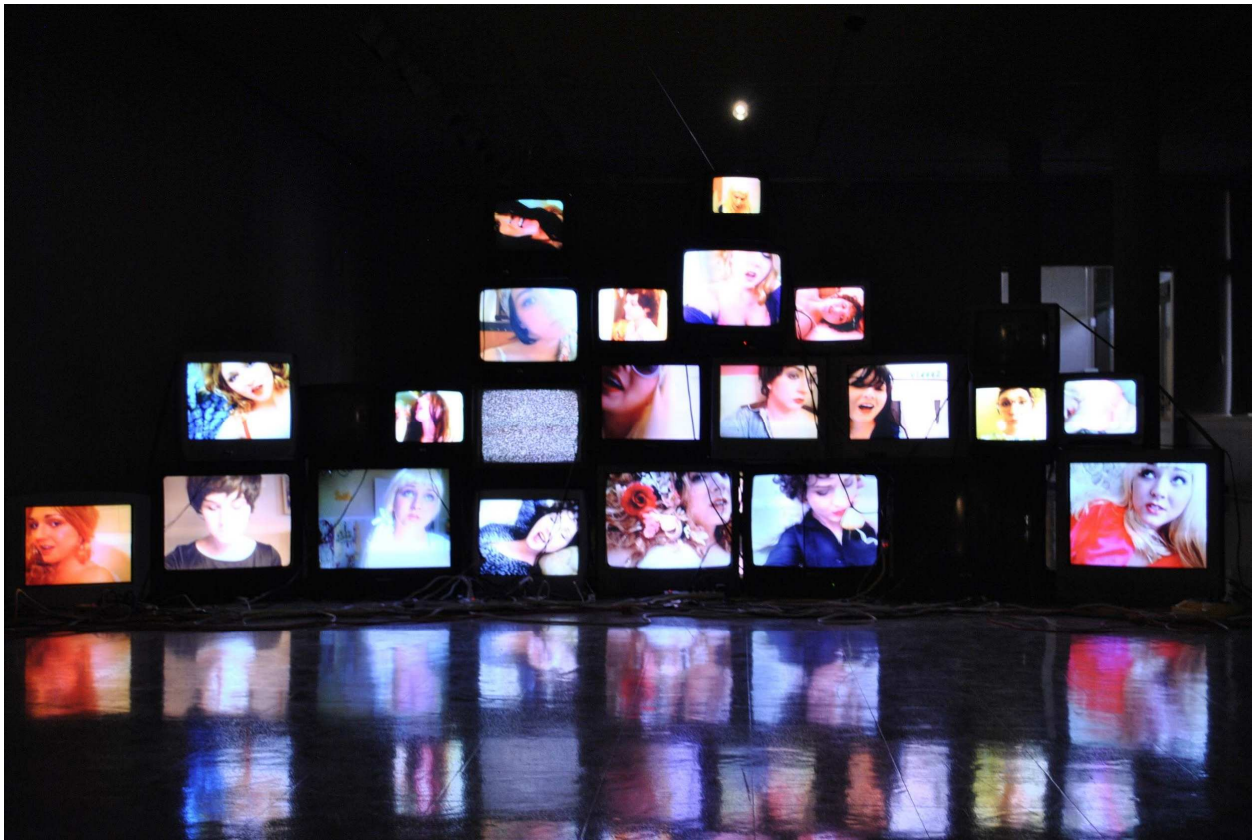


Fig. 1, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.



Fig. II, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.



Fig. III, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.



Fig. IV, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.



Fig. V, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.



Fig. VI, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.

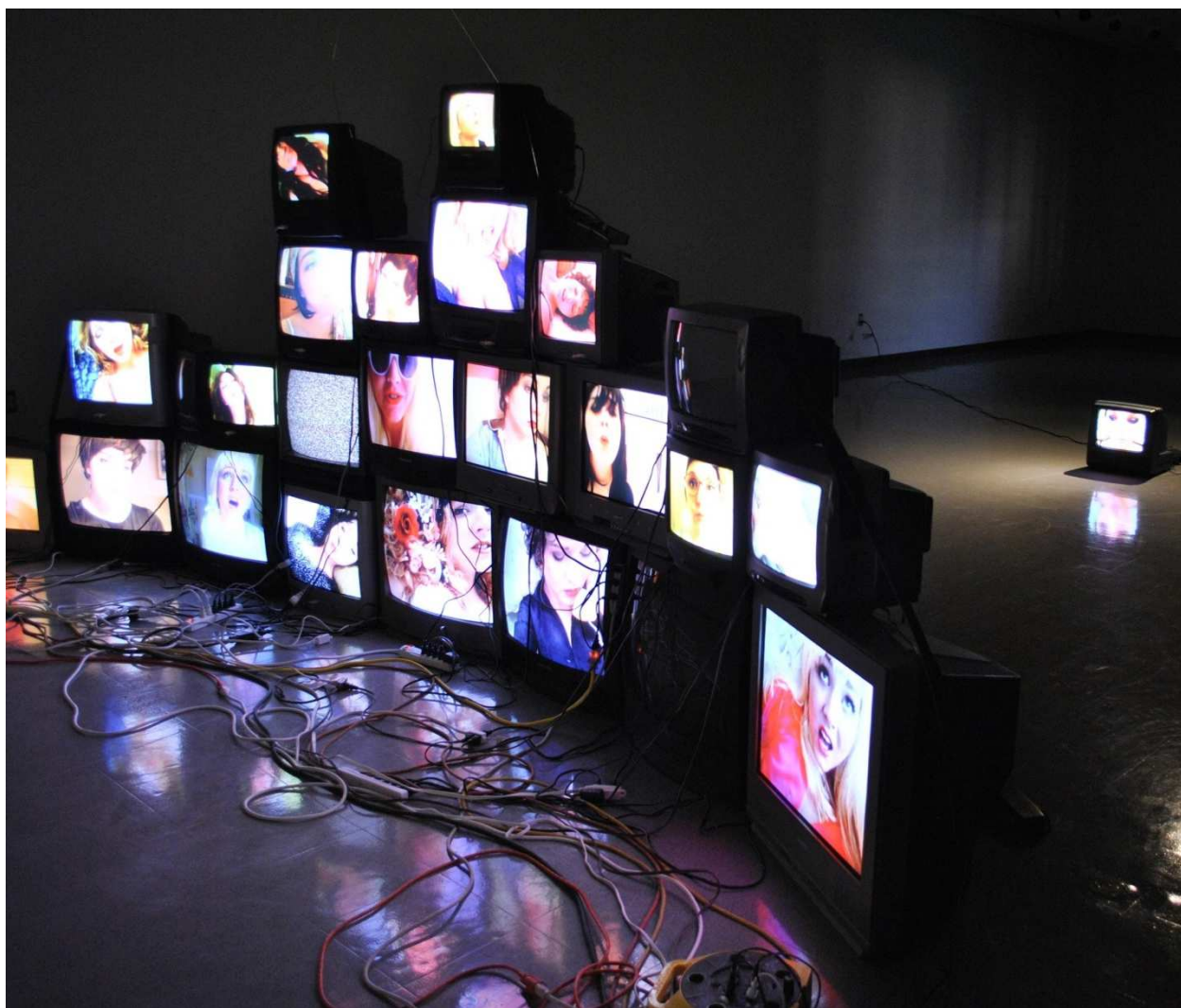


Fig. VII, Cambry Pierce, *The Life You've Seen: The Search for Feminine Identity Ruined My Life*, 2014.

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