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Taking Action – Sociopolitics and Media

- Evelin Stermitz (at):
ArtFem.TV [www.artfem.tv], Feminist Artistic Infiltration of
a Male Net Culture in Context of Art and Feminism and as
Cyberfeminist Action

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**Feminist Artistic Infiltration of a Male Net
Culture in Context of Art and Feminism and
as Cyberfeminist Action**

ArtFem.TV is an online television programming presenting Art and Feminism. The aim of ArtFem.TV is to foster women in the arts, their art works and projects, to create an international online television screen for the images and voices of women. ArtFem.TV is a non-profit artist run ITV and media art portal about art and feminism and has been founded by Evelin Stermitz in the year 2008. [Fig. 1]

Feminism and feminist art finally came to the forefront during the times of liberation and different political struggles in the late 1960s as a public debate, spurring a discourse to rethink the position of women in our society. One of the main questions was – what makes women different from men, and in point of art – what makes women artists and their art different from male artists. Women reflected upon the patriarchal social system, in history, in art history and in current affairs. It was a great benefit for later developments and changes, although it was a big struggle. Feminist art cannot be understood apart from this struggle. The term 'feminism' in connection with art should be used in the sense of understanding art works in a way of a female perspective, which, while not excluding the struggle, is more concerned with creating a recognition of a female position, in either counterpart or rather subject position. This position is a critical engagement with gender issues and views art as a socio-political matter.

Linda Nochlin wrote her article "Why have there been no great women artists?" in 1971, and gave an impetus for numerous published histories of women artists. A tremendous momentum for feminist scholarship concerning women in the arts ensued, offering the work of many more women artists overdue recognition.



Fig. 1: ArtFem.TV, screenshot, Evelin Stermitz, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of the artists.

We could say that the social conditions have changed enormously to facilitate more female participation in the arts and greater recognition of women artist's merits. But some people might suspect instead we have watered down or altered old notions of greatness and genius. (Freeland, 2001, p. 88)

Feminists criticized canons as the enshrinement of traditional ideas about what makes for 'greatness' in art, "[...] and this 'greatness' always seems to exclude women." (Ibid., p. 89)

The first two decades of art and feminism are seen as a revolt against male artists and their politics of production, consumption and targeting art, as well as the male-created gaze and male-dominated society. Female artists now find themselves concerned with evolving art in an aesthetics and with strategies including the social discourse. Feminist art has gained a relevant status and is highly approved and legitimated as an ongoing debate. These new ways of viewing the position of women and women artists in a socio-cultural context and in a critical philosophic manner is no longer defined as a revolt against patriarchal systems, rather it is accepted as a debate concerning disclosure and deconstruction of sex and gender in a patriarchal system, and reflects both construction and discourse within an historical context.

Although there is little consensus among women at the present time about where to go next, [...] – contemporary art by women reveals the formulation of complex strategies and practices through which they are confronting the exclusion of art history, expanding theoretical knowledge, and promoting social change. (Chadwick, 2002, p. 422)

New media offers new possibilities and chances, but also comprehends old restrictions and patterns. Works in the field of new media, feminism and art is a way to subvert the public economic tradition and offer new views, perspectives and possibilities to use new media with female agendas to undergo a shift from the male technocratic society, where knowledge, money and power go in one hand to strengthen male interests and visions. Cyberfeminism can be an answer to tech-malestream, whereby core cyberfeminist actions are aesthetic and artistic strategies, not only as deconstruction of representations of gender, but also of traditional concepts on the net and in the institutions of tech-culture. Terms of these practices are to recode, remap, relocate, reconstruct. Cyberfeminist projects do not work as a massive front in a manner of counter cultural movements, they are subversive, infiltrating the mainstream with ironic breaks, citations and deformations. (See: Draude.)

ArtFem.TV is an attempt to break with a male dominated net-culture and media landscape to highlight women's emphases in art and media works.

References

- Freeland, Cynthia (2001) *Art Theory*. New York, Oxford University Press, 88-89.
- Chadwick, Whitney (2002) *Women, Art and Society*, London, Thames & Hudson, 422.
- Draude, Claude: *Introducing Cyberfeminism* [Online]. Retrieved from: http://www.obn.org/reading_room/writings/html/intro.html [Accessed 4 June 2010].