

## ***transfeminisms***

Chapter V: Hidden Labours

**8 November–14 December 2024**

Open Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6pm

Mimosa House presents the fifth chapter of *transfeminisms*, a major survey touring exhibition, that brings to light a multiplicity of urgent, pressing and ongoing issues faced by women, queer and trans people across the globe. The fifth chapter will feature works by Cassils, Liz Cohen, Selma Selman and Elena Tejada-Herrera.

*Hidden Labours* unveils the unrecognised and often invisible gendered and emotional labours performed by women and LGBTQI+ individuals. The exhibition addresses the complex intersections of resilience, struggle, and celebration within these labours, challenging the stereotypes that have long shaped their histories and representation.

Focusing on unseen and, at times, coerced work related to activism, resistance, and survival in informal economies, the exhibition features performance, photography, and video to examine the labour of representation—how simply being visible in public can itself be a form of work.

Unfolding over five chapters, *transfeminisms* outlines strategies of resistance through propositions of collective action, care and radical imagination, in order to generate a more equitable future. The exhibition explores the lineage of feminist art practices by facilitating dialogue between emerging and more established artists.

The title *transfeminisms* is deliberately provocative. The prefix “trans” implies ‘across, beyond, through, on the other side of’; while the ‘s’ in ‘feminisms’ recognises the innumerable definitions of feminism worldwide. Our intention is for *transfeminisms* to be understood within an inclusive and decolonial context – one that takes us across feminisms and encompasses various ‘trans’ possibilities, such as: transcultural, transcontinental, transgender, transformative, transgressive, transitory, translucent, transparent, transaction, translation, transfusion, transmission, transmutation.

**Cassils** is a transgender artist who makes their own body the material and protagonist of their performances. Cassils’s art contemplates the history(s) of LGBTQI+ violence, representation, struggle and survival. For Cassils, performance is a form of social sculpture: drawing from the idea that bodies are formed in relation to forces of power and social expectations, Cassils’ work investigates historical contexts to examine the present moment.

*Ghost*, (2013) is a 4-channel sound installation which recreates the sounds of the artist’s breath, blows, grunts, and pulse rate during one performance of *Becoming An Image* (2012-present). We hear Cassils darting from one corner to the other and circling

the listener like a ghost. In the live performance *Becoming An Image* Cassils unleashes an attack on a 2,000 pound clay block in total darkness. The spectacle is illuminated solely by the flash of a photographer, burning the image into the viewer's retina. Each live performance generates a series of still images that depict Cassils sweating, grimacing, and flying through the air as a primal force pummeling the one ton clay obelisk. *Becoming an Image* was originally conceived as a site-specific work for the ONE Archives in Los Angeles, the oldest active LGBTQ archive in the United States.

Photographer and performance artist **Liz Cohen's** decades-long career focuses largely on the intersections of immigration, industry, labour, and women's representation in popular media, which challenges American cultural norms as they pertain to the eroticisation of women's bodies. Cohen's most recent series, *BODY MAGIC* (2020), sees her examine the intersection of labour, femininity, representation and self-expression and poses the question: What does it mean to be seen, by ourselves and by others? In black and white photographs, Cohen poses with the iconic lowrider model Dazza Del Rio in images which make reference to Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of the bodybuilder Lisa Lyon.

**Selma Selman's** ultimate aim is to protect and empower female bodies while promoting a cross-scalar approach to the collective self-emancipation of oppressed women. Her search for functional, contemporary political resistance arises from her personal experiences with oppression from multiple sources and scales. The works on view at Mimosa House engage with the artist's own and her family's stories: the video *Salt Water after 47* (2016) shows Selma's mother, previously stateless, experiencing the sea for the first time at age 47. The painting on metal, *I'm a Lady like my Mother* (2020), merges the traits of Selma and her mother into one indistinguishable portrait. This body of work on metal also reflects on the materiality of scrap metal collecting, referencing Selma's father, who supported the family by converting metal waste in the Roma community of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The installation *They Sing, They Dance, They Fight*, (2020) by **Elena Tejada-Herrera** includes several videos built upon the idea of the aesthetics of empowerment collaged into a disjointed narrative of female struggle and resistance with a post-Internet aesthetic. Beauty is a weapon for change. The artist deploys beauty, glamour, and absurdity to generate narratives that redefine notions of female physical strength and social agency offering alternatives to the roles assigned to women within the framework of a patriarchal capitalist society. Here women are physically strong, they can fight and they can hurt if necessary, unapologetically performing alternative constructions of femininity in a celebration of girls, trans women and cis women of all ages. Tejada-Herrera describes this work as "a trans-feminist video installation".

## Public Programme

8 November 2024, 6–7:30pm - Cassils Artist's Talk. Mimosa House, 47 Theobalds Rd, London, WC1X 8SP

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Curated by Christine Eyene, Daria Khan, Jennifer McCabe and Maura Reilly.

Global curatorial advisors: Camille Auer, Giulia Casalini, Natasha Ginwala, Snejana Krasteva, Natalia Sielewicz, Gabriela Rangel, Lucía Sanromán, Olia Sosnovskaya, Stefanie Hessler, and Indira Ziyabek

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About the Curators:**

Christine Eyene is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Art at Liverpool John Moores University and Research Curator at Tate Liverpool.

Daria Khan is the founder and director of Mimosa House, and a PhD candidate at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Jennifer McCabe is director and chief curator of the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, USA.

Maura Reilly is the director of Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, New Jersey and the Founding Curator of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum.

### **About Mimosa House**

Founded in 2017, Mimosa House is a non-profit art institution that supports intergenerational women and queer artists. Embracing inclusivity and sensitivity, Mimosa House is a safe and empowering space which focuses on the fluidity of identity and recognises the need for change.

Mimosa House, 47 Theobalds Rd, London, WC1X 8SP  
Open Wednesday – Saturday, 12–6pm  
Admission free | [mimosahouse.co.uk](http://mimosahouse.co.uk) | [@mimosahouselondon](https://www.instagram.com/mimosahouselondon)

### **Artists' bios:**

#### **Cassils (b.1975)**

CASSILS is a transgender artist who makes their own body the material and protagonist of their performances. Cassils's art contemplates the history(s) of LGBTQI+ violence, representation, struggle and survival. For Cassils, performance is a form of social sculpture: Drawing from the idea that bodies are formed in relation to forces of power and social expectations, Cassils's work investigates historical contexts to examine the present moment.

Cassils has upcoming solo exhibitions at SITE Santa Fe. They had recent solo exhibitions at Walter Philips Gallery, Banff Center for Art and Creativity, HOME Manchester, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Perth Institute for Contemporary Arts, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, NYC; Institute for Contemporary Art, AU; Philadelphia

Academy of Fine Arts; Bemis Center, Omaha; MU Eindhoven, Netherlands. They are the recipient of the National Creation Fund, a 2020 Fleck Residency from the Banff Center for the Arts, a Princeton Lewis Artist Fellowship finalist, a Villa Bellagio Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, a United States Artist Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Creative Capital Award.

Cassils is an Associate Professor in Sculpture and Integrated Practices at PRATT Institute.

### **Liz Cohen (b.1973)**

Liz Cohen (United States, 1973) is a photographer and performance artist whose decades-long career focuses largely on the intersection of immigration, industry, labor, and women's representation in popular media.

Cohen is perhaps best known for her BODYWORK project, in which she simultaneously transformed a dilapidated East German Trabant into an American El Camino lowrider while inhabiting a new identity herself as a car customizer and bikini model. Through this immersive series, Cohen produced a profoundly influential body of work that challenges American cultural norms as they pertain to the eroticization of the automobile industry as well as the challenging role of women's bodies in that space. Cohen's most recent series, BODY MAGIC (2020), sees the artist further explore similar themes. In black and white photographs, Cohen poses with the iconic lowrider model Dazza del Rio in images that refer to Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of the bodybuilder Lisa Lyon.

The artist's work has been selected for the survey exhibition, Flow States – LA TRIENAL 2024 at El Museo del Barrio, New York (NY), and is currently included in the landmark exhibition, Xican-a.o.x. Body at the Perez Art Museum, Miami (FL) through March with an accompanying catalog. In early 2021, Cohen was the subject of a survey retrospective, Body/Magic, at the Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe (AZ)

Recent group exhibitions include Desert Rider: Dreaming in Motion at Denver Art Museum, Denver (CO) in 2023; Stories of Abstraction: Contemporary Latin American Art in the Global Context at the Phoenix Art Museum (AZ) in 2020; and Shapeshifters: Transformations in Contemporary Art at the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills (MI) in 2020. Cohen has served as Professor of the School of Art at Arizona State University Tempe.

In 2020, Cohen received a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship. Past awards also include the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award (2019); the Creative Capital Foundation Project Grant (2005), and a MacDowell Colony Fellowship (2001).

Liz Cohen lives and works in Phoenix, AZ

### **Selma Selman (b.1991)**

Selma Selman is from Bosnia and Herzegovina and is of Romani origin. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2014 from Banja Luka University's Department of Painting. In 2018 she graduated from Syracuse University with a Master of Fine Arts in Transmedia, Visual and Performing Arts, and has completed a two-year residency at Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (2021-2023).

In her art works, the ultimate aim is to protect and enable female bodies and enact a cross-scalar approach to collective self-emancipation of oppressed women. Selma's search for functional, contemporary political resistance stems from her personal experience with oppression from various directions and scales. Selman is also the founder of the organization "Get The Heck To School" which aims to empower Roma girls all around the world who faced ostracization from society and poverty. Selma Selman currently lives and works in Bihac (BIH), Amsterdam (NL) and New York (USA).

### **Elena Tejada-Herrera (b.1969)**

Elena Tejada-Herrera is a non-binary transdisciplinary artist that creates artworks with hybrid languages incorporating participatory and multimedia pieces. She works with a trans-feminist perspective and an intersectional approach. Many of her artworks defy political correctness, incorporating civil disobedience in a celebratory manner. She creates spaces for the exercise of alternative ways of living, of relating to each other and for occupying spaces. Many of her works escape disciplinary notions and definitions, incorporating diverse media, such as drawings, landscape interventions, telephone messages, net art, dancing and exercising, real time participatory video performances, Zumba tutorials collective installation assemblages, new media art and technology, self-defense workshops for women, transwomen and dissidents, among others. In many of Elena's artworks, the audience becomes a creative active collaborator.

Her artworks have been displayed at the 11<sup>th</sup> Berlin Biennale, the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg Empowerment, international exhibition of trans-feminist art, at the Ulay Foundation, the Warsaw Museum of Contemporary Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art of Panamá, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Lima, the Neomudejar Museum of Madrid, the Sharjah Art Foundation online exhibition, Frieze solo project Focus section 2019 London, El Museo del Barrio and Americas Society in New York, among many others.

During the pandemic Elena created many videos with Peruvian transwomen, advocating for generating employment for them. Elena is part of a red of activists for

the Buen Vivir (from quechua's language sumak kawsay), or Collective Well Being: a movement in the Americas that fights for indigenous rights and for the rights of Nature looking for alternative solutions to the extractivist exploitative patriarchal capitalist system we live in.

*We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.*

### **About Canada Council for the Arts**

The Canada Council for the Arts contributes to the vibrancy of a creative and diverse arts and literary scene and supports its presence across Canada and around the world. The Council is Canada's public arts funder, with a mandate to "foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts." The Council's grants, services, initiatives, prizes, and payments support Canadian artists, authors, and arts groups and organisations. This support allows them to pursue artistic expression, create works of art, and promote and disseminate the arts and literature. Through its arts funding, communications, research, and promotion activities, the Council fosters ever-growing engagement of Canadians and international audiences in the arts. The Council's Public Lending Right (PLR) program makes annual payments to creators whose works are held in Canadian public libraries. The Council's Art Bank operates art rental programs and helps further public engagement with contemporary arts through exhibition and outreach activities. The Council is responsible for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, which promotes the values and programs of UNESCO to contribute to a future of peace, reconciliation, equity, and sustainable development.