Towards a Transdisciplinary Model for Social Change: Feminist Art Research, Practice and Activism

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Abstract

While some traditionally underrepresented artists may have recently gained access to recognition and visibility, this has not generally led to broad, diverse representation and participation. Numerous 'feminist art' researchers, practitioners and activists working in an interdisciplinary tradition have critically addressed social inequality in the arts. However, even research, practice and activism that challenge dominant norms can serve an economic system that thrives on perpetuating inequality. The production of 'art' does not escape, and often contributes to, unwanted socio-political and economic consequences.

This thesis argues that *combinations* of art research, practice and activism can play a critical role in the attainment of social equality inside and outside the arts, building on feminist critiques of dominant aesthetics and feminist efforts to *restructure* art canons. It recommends that feminist art stakeholders expand their collaborations outside the arts, in order to work with researchers, practitioners and activists from other disciplines. The proposed transdisciplinarity, in which feminist art plays a key part, can help avoid new forms of exclusion and discrimination that can emerge when the multiple, *intersectional* positions of marginalised individuals remain unrecognised. It is recommended that primary or empirical research is used to help achieve intended outcomes.

The thesis presents a novel approach to addressing social inequality, within and beyond the arts, by exploring the transdisciplinary potential of feminist art, contextualising feminist art as a restructuring currency, and calling for monitoring and evaluating the impact of feminist art. Original cartoons are included to illustrate the proposed feminist research reflexivity and transdisciplinarity. The proposed approach can help feminist art researchers better differentiate the *multiple* values of 'art', recognise broader selections of traditionally marginalised artists, and dismantle out-dated ideas of Great Art.

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A Note on Terminology

This thesis acknowledges the instability of terms and categories. In many places in the text, inverted commas are used to emphasise the *contextual* meaning of terms – which I consider constructed in the communication between sender and receiver. These terms include 'woman', 'man', 'lesbian', and 'transgender', but also occasionally 'feminist' and 'artist'. Acknowledging the intersections of categories, we should assume that a word never has only one meaning, but different ones to different individuals and groups.

In this thesis, I will argue that communicating identity categories in an un-negotiated way contributes to the (re)production of social inequality. For example, the word 'woman' can never communicate all real-life positions of 'women', precisely *because* communication is contextually constructed, and constrained, by its senders and receivers. Throughout the thesis, categorised terms placed between inverted commas are intended to be read inclusively, considering as many different contextual positions as possible, trying to escape the limited subjectivity of any one single perspective (inasmuch as that may be possible).

An intersectional perspective cannot be adopted without including gender, race, ethnicity and immigration status into discussions, together with socio-economic class, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability and other grounds for discrimination or prejudice. Acknowledging all these intersections *is* necessary for advancing social justice in a globalised world. The capitalised use of Black follows the literature reviewed and highlights a particular set of politics and experiences. Having been born and socialised as a white person, literature, articles and personal conversations have given me a sense of *both* the structural discrimination against Black people and people of colour, *and* the huge diversity of Black politics and strategies in the UK and the world. My understanding from this external perspective will be necessarily limited, and I continue to read, listen, reflect and learn.

I have used the gender pronouns of the authors cited as known in the public domain. While gender-neutral citation may have been preferable to some readers, this could only be achieved by also removing the forenames. I have therefore maintained the names and pronouns of the authors as published.

Introduction and Research Question

Gender inequality amongst artists exhibited in museums and galleries is a recurring topic. In recent years, the art world has been reported to 'airbrush' female artists from history (Ellis-Petersen, 2017) or 'erase' women from the history of art (Pollock, 2015), and has been asked 'where all the women are' (Bedei, 2014). Maura Reilly (2015) has shown that the number of 'women' participants in international annual exhibition events can go up, but can also go down again.[1] In a recent survey, 2,539 professionals working in UK arts and creative industries were asked about the circumstances of their practices. It was reported that '[w]omen [were] more likely than men to have worked in the arts sector for free and once paid [were] generally paid less than their male counterparts' (Create London, 2015).[2] More than forty-five years after Linda Nochlin's famous essay 'Why have there been no great women artists?' (1988, first published in 1971), gender equality in the multiple art worlds seems not to have been reached yet.[3] Recent empirical research (e.g., Adams *et al.*, 2017) underpins the feminist argument first introduced by Nochlin that influential groups of stakeholders value art by women less*, precisely *because* it is made by women.[4]

The low number of 'women' artists exhibiting, compared to men, is also occasionally used as evidence of gender inequality.[5] Recent examples include the annual reports on the representation of female artists in Britain commissioned by the Freelands Foundation (Bonham-Carter, 2016, 2017), and research conducted by The East London Fawcett Group

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[1] The participation of 'women' artists in Documenta was approximately 18% in 1997, 30% in 2002 and 45% in 2007. In 2012, the percentage of 'women' participants dropped again, to approximately 38%. In 2010, the Whitney Biennial had almost equal representation of 'women' and 'men' participants, but in 2012 the percentage of female participation decreased again, going below 40% and further decreasing to 30% in 2014 (Reilly, 2015). See: http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/

[2] http://createlondon.org/create-announces-the-findings-of-the-panic-survey/

[3] In 2011, Jennifer Chan (2011) revisited this question for 'women' net artists (working on the Internet and in virtual spaces) and came to a similar important conclusion as Nochlin forty years before: there are 'women' artists who make significant contributions to Internet art, but they are not necessarily recognised as such by their peers and art institutions.

[4] In 'Is gender in the eye of the beholder? Identifying cultural attitudes with art auction prices' (Adams *et al.*, 2017), the authors looked at 1.5 million auction transactions and conducted two empirical experiments on participants' attitude towards women and men artists. Evidence suggested that 'participants who are more likely to represent typical art auction participants may value art by women less' (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 27). The study will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.

[5] Examples include initiatives by the Guerrilla Girls in 1986, re-enacted by Pussy Galore in 2015, the East London Fawcett Group in 2013, and the Guerrilla Girls in 2016. Hilary Robinson (2002) reviewed 99 issues of the magazine *CIRCA: Contemporary Visual Culture in Ireland* and counted the number of 'men' and 'women' artists in, amongst others, solo and group artist features, reviews, artist's pages, photos, covers and the number of 'men' and 'women' contributing writers.

(2013). Gender percentages, however, do not necessarily provide full clarity on the matter. The East London Fawcett Group (2013, no page) reported that 31% of the artists represented by 134 commercial galleries in London between April 2012 and April 2013 were 'women', with Bonham-Carter (2017, p. 27) stating that, in 2016, '29% of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries were women'. The fact that around 30% of artists currently represented by London galleries are 'women' may be considered an incredible step forward. By comparison, at the time when Nochlin's 'Why have there been no great women artists?' (1988, first published in 1971) was written, there was little visibility for 'women' artists in art institutions, nor feminist theory, as Nochlin (2006, p. 21)[6] explains in her essay that revisits this earlier text. Art historian Griselda Pollock has recently called this period a 'tabula rasa' (2013, p. xxii), which feminist art historians and artists have started filling in. So, on the one hand, such percentages may indicate huge progress in the last decades, and potentially a closure of the gender gap in the near future. On the other hand, why is there not 50% representation, and, therefore, how *structural* can this moderate positive change be considered?

Social inequality in the arts does not stand apart from other discriminations, such as sexism and racism, in society in general and this will be discussed shortly. Gaps in representation, retention and remuneration between different groups can be found in most other areas as well. The selection of artworks and artists for museum exhibitions, galleries, biennales and art magazines depends on a number of factors, based on which the work of many 'men' artists is rejected too. Choosing what is most suitable for particular art contexts is a form of *differentiation* through *signifying* mechanisms. The question of what 'good' contemporary art is is answered through those selections. Feminist theorists have argued that this process of *categorising* art produces the stereotype of 'the artist' as male (and white, able-bodied and straight). With a growing number of 'women' artists represented in galleries, museums and biennales, the interesting question is whether the perception of 'women' artists as being less capable of making 'great art' has, in fact, changed. In addition, how should *evidence* for sexism, or absence of sexism, be collected?

Gender inequality in the arts can also be found in the comparison of auction prices of artworks. Reilly, for example, reports:

> At auction, the highest price paid to date for a work by a living woman artist is $7.1 million, for a Yayoi Kusama painting; the highest result for a living man was an

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[6] Page numbers for in-text citations that are not direct quotations have been added at the request of the examiners. Cited articles and books were reviewed holistically, and support my argument as such.

editioned sculpture by Jeff Koons, which sold for $58.4 million. The most ever paid
for a work by a deceased woman artist is $44.4 million for a Georgia O'Keeffe
painting, versus $142.4 million for a Francis Bacon triptych. (Reilly, 2015)

Here, gender disparity between artists is expressed through the unequal valorisation of
artworks made by 'women' and 'men' artists. The art market mechanism results in a
situation where the artworks of 'women' artists may be of lower financial value than those
of 'men' artists. Currently, the most expensive 'women' and 'men' artists are not sold and
bought for equal prices. This clear example of price differences constituted by dealers and
buyers may be the result of art markets' histories, unconscious bias or the logic of
speculation. Arguably, a 'woman' or non-binary identifying artist being the most expensive
artist one day would be a favourable outcome,[7] but it is uncertain whether this will ever
happen without further action. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, a number of art
theoretical, political and economic circumstances may hold back progress.

Gender inequality and sexism are social problems that pervade other large-scale and
complex world problems. Global social equality is connected to environmental
sustainability, social justice, a reduction in gender-based violence, anti-racism
campaigning, humanitarian aid, employability, equal wealth distribution, and many more
topics. Feminism, as a social movement, as a label, as a strategy, may play a role in
unravelling and troubling oppressive norms of society, as well as contributing to positive
social change on multiple fronts. I do not mean to imply, however, that *only* 'men' play a
part in the marginalisation of 'women', as 'women' have unconscious biases and oppress
each other too. Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon, and reaching inclusiveness in
stratified, hegemonic and capitalist structures needs a multiplicity of strategies. One
important fact is that individuals' opportunities are *intersected* by particularities other
than gender, such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, disability,
gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, age, et cetera. Those
characteristics together define positions of privilege and disadvantage.[8] In predominantly

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[7] To validate art in terms of money only is, of course, an extremely limited approach to art's social
and cultural value. Moreover, sales prices at the 'high end' of the global art world may not be very
relevant to the work and lives of the majority of artists, and the thousands of art students
graduating each year. Therefore, a change in the pricing of the work by 'women' artists can be said
to be an important indicator of gender equality progress in the arts, but may not tell the complete
story.

[8] Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1989) wrote about the legal invisibility of Black women in the US and
introduced the word 'intersectionality' to address the implications of being a Black woman in a
predominantly white society where the 'male' norm prevails.

white societies, white 'women' can be blind[9] to the privileges they *do* have. For this reason, a reported increase in representation or higher auction prices of female artists may still entail a structural oppression of 'other' others. Solidarity between different marginalised groups is rarely a given.

'Feminist' artists and artists who are 'feminist' may use their art as a means to influence the status quo. Continuing to make art, even when chances of success and recognition are extremely limited, can be considered a feminist act in itself. Some feminist artists may aim to contribute to positive social change in a direct way, developing and implementing participatory and community projects. Others may primarily aim for museum and gallery settings. For me, the most pertinent question has always been why artists who are committed to social justice continue to make art when there is no evidence of change or an escape from economic precariousness. I definitely see the benefits of art production, in terms of quality of life, therapy and friendships, but I cannot reconcile them with an inherent marginalised position in society. Undoubtedly, such feminist questioning of art has been the perpetuator of much art production, too, using art as a way of *expressing* critical positions. However, what has it solved so far? The recognition and visibility of (historical) 'feminist art' may be growing, but to what extent has feminist art contributed to ending systemic discrimination that marginalised artists encounter? Paradoxically, many art settings, including feminist ones, can be said to exploit artists, continue to marginalise them, and feed unsupported narratives of either *hope* or *despair*. Should we believe that progress is being made, be distressed by the lack of progress, or both? Arguably, many artists committed to social change[10] have started to search for alternative ways[11] to contribute to positive social change, which may not be *signified* as art or recognised as 'good' art by the dominant stakeholders in the arts.

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[9] Reporting on a recent survey, Create London state that '[t]he majority of white people in the arts don't acknowledge the barriers facing BAME [Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic] people trying to find a foothold in the sector' (2015).

[10] I include myself in this group. I have exhibited my art in museums, not-for-profit galleries, artist-run spaces and other institutions in Europe. I published short stories articles in (online) art and feminist publications in Europe and the US and gave presentations about my work in art, research and activist settings.

[11] I was the director of Transgender Network Netherlands (2010-2011) and project manager at COC Netherlands, a leading LGBTI rights NGO (2012-2013). In 2012, I secured funding for writing the first Dutch LGBTI children's rights report, and in 2014, the report was presented to the Dutch State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport. The report facilitated a number of positive social and legal changes, led to a debate in the Parliament and received a written governmental response to each of its recommendations. As a result, new governmental funding was released for research and children's rights organisations committed to supporting LGBTI children and young people. COC Netherlands then initiated collaborations with 'intersex' activists and established a new youth council that voices young LGBTI people's opinions about the policies that are made about them. My survey of transgender youth contributed to parliamentary discussions about lowering the minimum age of legal gender recognition in the new transgender law.

This thesis explores possible answers to the broad research question: How can social equality in the arts be accomplished? This is answered[12] through the proposal of a transdisciplinary approach towards social change and art, resulting from secondary research in the relevant research areas (reviewing literature, artworks, forms of activism, online news and magazine articles) and my own practice of art and activism (discussed shortly). Transdisciplinarity has been an important discovery for me – an approach that can *integrate* research, (art) practice and social justice activism, instead of keeping them separated. There are different ways to use multiple disciplines to solve research questions, for which multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are commonly used too. Approaches that exceed one discipline differ in the degree of common ground the multiple applied disciplines find in interaction with each other (Brown *et al.*, 2010, p. 4; Leavy, 2011, pp. 13-35). Disciplines in multidisciplinary projects may not find a common ground, though interdisciplinarity constitutes common ground through the use of two or more disciplines, possible even forming a new discipline. Transdisciplinarity is the furthest integration of disciplines, *transcending* boundaries of disciplines, practice and theory, as well as transforming the initial parameters of each of the different fields. Such transformation reminds us of the 'research paradigm shift' that 'feminist' art historians and artists have desired to create with the use of interdisciplinarity[13] (further discussed in Chapter Four).

In this thesis, I explore whether a transdisciplinary approach could *better* facilitate the diversification and de-marginalisation of artists in diverse global and local art settings. In my research, social and gender inequality in the arts has been seen to have *practical*, *discursive*, *semiotic*, *activist* and *epistemological* dimensions. A transdisciplinary 'problem-centred' or 'holistic' research approach (Leavy, 2011, pp. 25, 30, 54-81) can offer valuable tools for solving the accumulation of these dimensions. In line with much feminist art and critical theory, transgressions of boundaries between disciplines, as well as between theory and practice, can help overcome the multi-dimensional obstacles that stand in the way of social equality in the arts. However, *what* transgressions can have an actual impact, and how? What transdisciplinary strategies of feminist artists, researchers and activists may work, and why would artists, researchers and activists be inclined to use such

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[12] This thesis is written from a position 'inside' British academia, where there seems to be a strong feminist tradition in Art History. The latter is, for example, exemplified in a recent article by Victoria Horne and Amy Tobin (2014), which provides a brief historical contextualisation of feminist art histories writing, including the events they organised in the UK. This 'British' context has been the starting point for posing my research question. Having worked in the Dutch feminist art practice and research context for many years, I experienced the UK setting of feminist art as more progressive.

[13] In the preface of the 2013 edition of *Old mistresses: women, art and ideology* (1981)*,* Pollock writes: 'Posing gender as probe, feminism could shift the entire paradigm of art historical thinking, opening hegemonically formalist Art History and its exclusive canons to all forms of social, institutional and cultural factors (be that class, race, gender or sexuality) as the grounds for exclusion from access to art and recognition within the canon of art' (2013, p. xviii).

strategies? I will attempt to answer these questions in the following chapters, summarised briefly below, and followed by an overview of the research approach and literature consulted.

Chapter One introduces the socio-political and economic need for the proposed transdisciplinarity and contextualises its place in 'art' research, practice and activism, my initial fields of enquiry. Chapter Two summarises the rationale behind proposing the use of 'feminist art' in a potential transdisciplinary model for social change. It also provides a tentative visualisation of the proposed transdisciplinarity, and attempts to pre-empt potential criticism. Chapter Three justifies the proposed transdisciplinarity from the point of view of feminist art *practice*, taking into account how definitions of (good) 'art' are constructed. The chapter further explains why, for the diversification of art participation, a *strategic alignment* of feminist art research, practice and activism is recommended. Chapter Four takes feminist art *research* as a starting point for understanding what is necessary for creating positive social change within the arts. The chapter builds on the interdisciplinarity of 'feminist' Art History[14] in furthering the strategic, transdisciplinary alignment of feminist art research, practice and activism. Chapter Five further discusses the *feminist-activist* context of the proposed transdisciplinarity, exploring the need for 'feminist art' and its strategies of displacement. The chapter argues that 'feminist art' (research, practice and activism) can contribute to *representations of intersectionality*, which are necessary for creating positive social change. Chapter Six discusses key economic aspects of art value production, drawing attention to the *signifying* role of dominant art economic structures which have traditionally prevented diverse art participation. The chapter proposes transdisciplinarity as a *restructuring currency*, which is subsequently translated into four theoretical parameters further discussed in Chapter Seven. This last chapter summarises the facets, discussed throughout the thesis, that are important for creating positive social change and diversifying representation and participation in the arts, concluding that researchers, practitioners and activists can increase the likelihood of contributing to positive social change by:

1. Clarifying key theoretical, socio-political and economic positions;
2. Applying an intersectional gender perspective and visibly acknowledging the production of categories through art, activism and research;
3. Analysing art theoretical, socio-political and economic art structures (using feminist critical analysis), including *measuring* the impact of feminist art;

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[14] In this thesis, the capitalised form of research fields refers to academic disciplines.

4. Facilitating and/or occupying multiple research, practice and activism spaces including *diverse* economic structures.

Chapter Seven further illustrates the above parameters by discussing the case studies of the UK-based art-activist collective Precarious Workers Brigade[15] and the 2016 *Black Blossoms* exhibition at the University of Arts London Showroom. Applying the theoretical parameters to the case studies, including making concrete suggestions for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the initiatives, represents a starting point for developing a methodology of transdisciplinary impact evaluation in the arts.

The proposed transdisciplinarity, incorporating the four recommendations above, represents a novel approach to equality in the arts, as argued throughout this thesis. The current project uses the lens of critical theory and inquiry, complemented by creating original reflective cartoons and organising events during the research period, which have contributed to the transdisciplinary approach of the research presented here. During the research period, I co-developed and co-delivered workshops and a cross-departmental exhibition and education project,[16] which have informed my research. The cartoons in this thesis are part of my existing art practice that has informed my doctoral research. For example, the very first cartoon I ever made (Figure 1) was part of my PhD research proposal, as it very well illustrated the question of visibility of *intersectionally* situated 'women'. A number of my cartoons have been published, for example, in *Feminism and Art History now: radical critiques of theory and practice* (Horne and Perry, 2017, pp. 24, 82, 142, 202, 282).

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[15] The spelling used on the collective's website and publicity materials will be used in this thesis (without apostrophe).
[16] I co-organised and co-led the workshop *Why do you care?* (July 2014, CREATE/feminisms: a symposium, Middlesex University) in collaboration with Elina Suoyrjö and the teach-in *Women artists who 'stopped' making art* (July 2015, Middlesex University) in collaboration with Abi Shapiro. I co-developed and co-delivered the module *Proud: LGBT Politics in your practice* (January – April 2016, Middlesex University) for undergraduate and master's students in collaboration with Kerri Jefferis, reaching an estimated audience of over 10,000 through workshops, student-led events, and an exhibition in partnership with Winter Pride Art Awards, the university's Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement, as well as other internal and external partners.
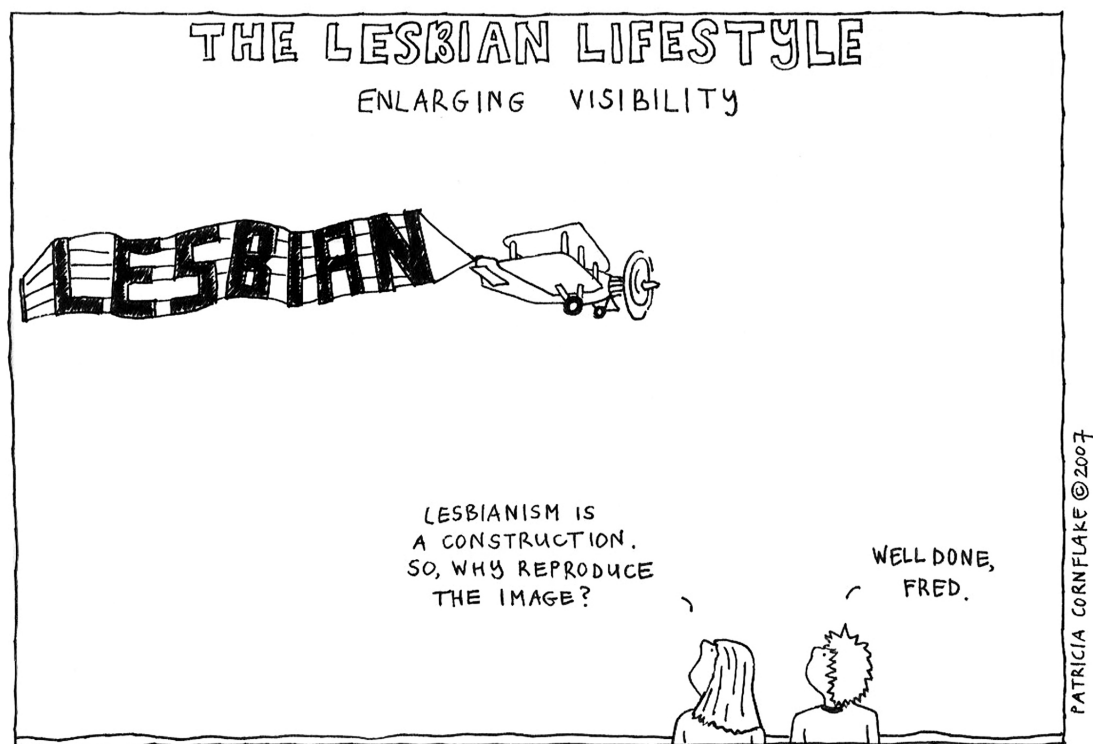
Fig. 1 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Enlarging visibility*, 2007. [Digital image]

During the research, cartoon making became a method of giving an account of my process and findings. The first series of cartoons (featuring the Green Creature) express my findings on feminist theoretical approaches used in the discipline of Art History. A second series of seven cartoons illustrates my reasoning for a departure from Art History towards the proposed transdisciplinarity. The cartoons are spread throughout the chapters. To the reader, they may resonate with research reflexivity or arts-based research, as well as perhaps Comics Studies (as contextualised, for example, by Labio, 2011; Ndalianis, 2011). My cartoons can be perceived as research, practice or activism, depending on their recipients' positions and interests. Besides being included in this thesis, the cartoons have also been presented at academic conferences and workshops,[17] receiving positive responses[18] from multidisciplinary audiences. The cartoons not only illustrate the content of my research, but also its feminist methodology, exemplifying the proposed transdisciplinarity. Arguably, the cartoons can be considered *theory* that communicates

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[17] I have used cartoons in presentations at *Writing/Curating/Making Feminist Art Histories: Conference* (University of Edinburgh, 2014), *Feminist Transformative Methods* (Durham University, 2014), *Lesbian Lives Conference* (University of Brighton, 2015), *Association of Art Historians Annual Conference* (University of Edinburgh, 2016), *Social-Legal Studies Association Annual Conference* (Lancaster University, 2016), *Institute for Work Based Learning* (Middlesex University, 2016) and *After the Recognition of Intersex Human Rights* (Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Surrey, 2016).

[18] The majority of these audiences did not report a response to me. To me, the audible laughter of participants was a positive response, which, however, does not indicate a change of behaviour or opinion afterwards. Many participants did not audibly laugh when seeing the cartoons. This is no evidence for lack of impact either.

the terms of theory 'differently', applying fiction as a feminist strategy of communicating marginalised positions to dominant stakeholders.

The literature review involved getting acquainted with a diversity of research languages and styles, as multiple fields are drawn upon in this thesis to answer the transdisciplinary research questions posed. The review, further discussed below, is not intended as an exhaustive review of all the relevant literature. Due to the large amounts of literature available in all the disciplines that the thesis draws on, as well as the space and focus limitations, I have prioritised finding interdisciplinary *synergies* relevant to the research question of what (else) is necessary for accomplishing social equality in the arts. The strategy of finding synergies in a transdisciplinary literature review is recommended by Patricia Leavy (2011, pp. 63-64). Relevant literature has been included either because it *theorised* multi- or transdisciplinarity, *practiced* multi- and transdisciplinary research or *supported opportunities* for multi- or transdisciplinary approaches. A feminist epistemological approach was applied to this literature search, and literature was critically analysed for its own potential risk of (re)producing social inequality.
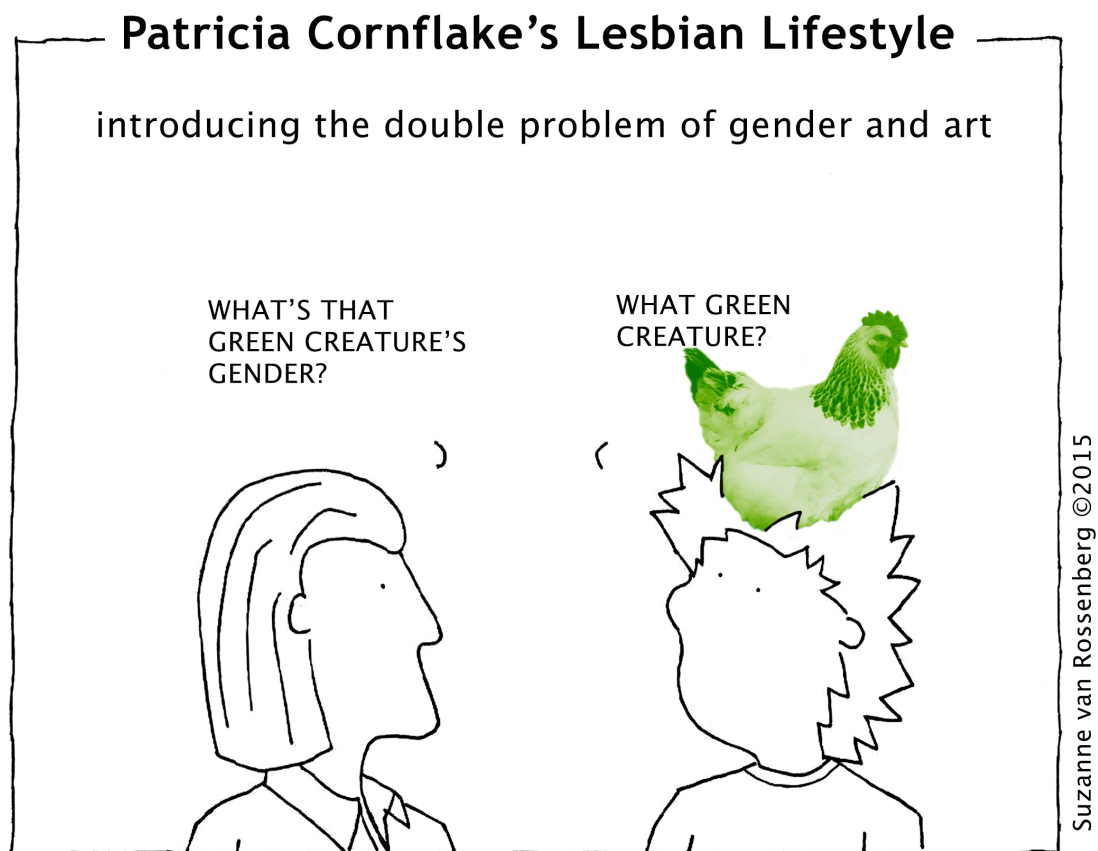
Fig. 2 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *The double problem*, 2015. [Digital image]

An important area of the research conducted brings together gender theory and art history, exposing what can be called the 'double problem' of gender and art, following Elizabeth Cowie's essay 'Woman as sign' (Cowie, 1990, first published in 1978). Figure 2 aims to illustrate the predicament, in which the 'green creature' can be said to represent the double problem of gender and art. The cartoon represents the fact that one first needs to *identify* and *categorise* marginalised artists in order to address social inequality, which, however, can have a *disqualifying* effect (as, for example, discussed by Pollock, 2013, p. xix). Patricia Cornflake's (character on the right) response to her friend's question may be strategic, avoiding any categorisation. However, it remains unclear whether she is actually aware of the green creature. The ambiguity of Cornflake's position is a response to the often limited, dissatisfying choice available to marginalised artists: being either invisible as artists, or visible whilst categorised as 'other' artists.

The category of 'woman' can be said to be *produced* through art, film and visual culture, as well as feminist theory – argued by Teresa de Lauretis in *Technologies of gender* (1987) – as signifying practices. This notion was transferred to Art History by, for example, Pollock (1996, 1999, 2003 [first published in 1988]). Nochlin's essay 'Why have there been no great women artists?' (1988, first published in 1971, revisited in 2006) is still a leading text for many feminist art researchers wanting to understand gender inequality in the arts. The production of categories, however, is accompanied by the knowledge that gender and other categories are 'unstable' (Riley, 1988) or 'performative' (Butler, 1999, 2004), as well as by the need for strategies of 'dis-identification' (e.g., Muñoz, 2010).

In socio-political sciences, the conditions of feminism and gender equality have been described (e.g., Fraser, 1990, 2007; Lombardo, Meier and Verloo, 2009b; Walby, 2011). Verloo (2013) has discussed the role of categorisation in the production of social inequality, formulating an intersectional echo to Charles Tilly's *Durable inequality* (1998). The theorisation of intersectionality articulated by Crenshaw (1989) remains important. The use of the concept 'intersectionality' has increased over the past few years, but a precise understanding and application of this are still rather underdeveloped. It should not be forgotten that Crenshaw addressed the gap between theory and practice, when introducing the term 'intersectionality' for a phenomenon that had been described and applied by feminists of colour for decades (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Arguably, intersectionality means, amongst other things, that in social justice research, practice and activism, the *production* of categories, which can be said to be semiotic and socio-political, needs to be taken into account – bringing us back to the same problem that Cowie (1990 [1978]) signalled. This given forms the context for the proposed transdisciplinarity, responding to Verloo's call for visible strategies of *displacement* of categories (2013).

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In creating 'feminist' art histories and making 'women' artists visible, Art History's disciplinarity and the object-focus can be seen to obstruct positive social change in the field (e.g., Tickner, 1988). Even art historians who write about artworks that transgress the borders of art continue to 'box' its signification through the predominant use of art conceptual and theoretical approaches (e.g., Smith, 2009; Kester, 2011; Bishop, 2012; Groys, 2013 [first published in 2008]). Therefore, 'feminist' approaches continue to aim to restructure the conservatism to be found in Art History (e.g., Bal and Bryson, 1991; Meskimmon, 2003; Kokoli, 2008; Dimitrakaki and Perry, 2013; Horne, 2014; Horne and Tobin, 2014; Pollock, 2014), and use interdisciplinarity and creative writing to challenge dominant parameters of research (e.g., Parker and Pollock, 1987; Leavy, 2009; Stacey and Wolff, 2013; Lykke *et al.*, 2014). Thinking of 'feminist' Art History as writing to a 'public' or 'counterpublic' (described by, for example, Warner, 2005) can form a strategic, political move. Feminist art researchers apply feminism's critical mode of analysis to critique the production of dominant art histories and curation (e.g., Phelan, 1993b; Kokoli, 2010, 2014; Reckitt, 2013; Robinson, 2016). In critical, 'feminist' responses to conservative approaches to art, the disciplines of Visual Culture and Art History cross paths, the former offering useful critiques of the conservatism in the arts and art histories (see e.g. Mirzoeff, 2001a [first published in 1998]; Jones, 2010b [first published in 2003], 2012; Mirzoeff, 2015).

There has been growing critique of neoliberalism within art theory and/or feminism (e.g., Sholette, 2011; Dimitrakaki, 2013; Fraser, 2013; Sholette and Ressler, 2013a; Vishmidt, 2013; Beech, 2015). As early as 1976, in the essay 'Changing since changing', Lucy R. Lippard (1995a) addressed the tension between feminism and the effects of capitalism on the art world. Economic approaches do not necessarily apply a critique of art signification to art constituted outside the arts (e.g. Abbing, 2002; Velthuis, 2005; Ginsburgh and Throsby, 2014a), but can, nevertheless, be valuable for their methods of empirical data collection, of which very few exist in critical art theory. A non-capitalist perspective (e.g., Gibson-Graham, 2006) can be helpful, too. Applying a *diversity* of economic approaches should be part of the proposed transdisciplinarity, which engages to solve complex problems from open-minded and unbiased positions (see, e.g., Brown, Harris and Russell, 2010; Leavy, 2011). The double problem of gender and art itself can be seen as a complex, transdisciplinary problem, in which not only pragmatic and economic obstacles play a role, but also epistemological ones.

Within epistemology, there is attention to the specific epistemological obstacles of marginalised researchers (e.g., Haraway, 1988; Sedgwick, 2003; Harding, 2004b). Recently, an important *intersectional* perspective to the production of knowledge was

developed (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). Within feminist critical theory, there is an issue with 'corrective' approaches, as there is no evidence that feminist analyses are more 'true' than the approaches they wish to correct (e.g., Hemmings, 2011), which may lead to the celebration of failure (e.g., Phelan, 1993a; Halberstam, 2011). As a result, activism in research settings is important, which is echoed in recent publications about feminist and queer art (histories) (e.g., Horne and Tobin, 2014; Jones and Silver, 2016a). There are several ways in which 'activism' can be part of the proposed transdisciplinary research (examples can be found in Schostak and Schostak, 2008; Bookchin *et al.*, 2013; Aldridge, 2015; Cruz, 2015a). However, in order to make a strong enough statement, activist collectives need to be as *inclusive* as possible (see, e.g., Weldon, 2006). Pollock (1996, 1999) has questioned whether art historians can be feminists, and vice versa, as feminist art research, practice and activism could easily crush Art History and its conservatism, by restructuring its terms of inclusion. Nevertheless, feminist art historians have been reluctant to do so, facilitating recognition of perhaps as many of marginalised artists as possible, but inevitably excluding many too. The transdisciplinarity I propose is a pragmatic approach of optimising feminist art strategies and avoiding complicity with the status quo.

As mentioned above, the literature review sought *synergies* between interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, art histories, socio-political sciences, economics and feminist, queer and intersectional studies. Feminist and queer approaches are important not only for discussing topics of gender, sexuality and hetero-normativity, but also for troubling the parameters of disciplines. The comic book *Queer: a graphic history* (Barker and Scheele, 2016) gives a good historical overview and context of queer theory. There is little literature in the public domain that incorporates a feminist-queer economic approach to art which *exceeds* critical theory and applies empirical research methods – the synergy I was looking for (one example is Cornwall, 1997). There are queer approaches to economics (e.g., Gluckman and Reed, 1997; Jacobsen and Zeller, 2008) and to the *practice* of LGBTQ emancipation (e.g., Goltz and Zingsheim, 2015). These niche approaches may form 'transdisciplinary' starting points, but would need additional strategies of category displacement, evidence-based approaches and actual crossovers between research, practice and activism.

Introducing greater emphasis on feminist arts monitoring and evaluation is a progressive, novel approach, which has been one of the results of my research. During my research project, the relevance and importance of arts impact evaluation through primary research became more and more apparent to me. Some readers may wonder whether a 'positivist' or 'objectivist' approach to social research can go hand in hand with the predominantly

'constructivist' and 'post-modern' approaches[19] in the arts. First of all, evaluating the impact of art does not have to be (and rarely will be) conducted through positivist methods, at a time when qualitative and mixed-method approaches are gaining more and more ground. And, secondly, empirical impact monitoring and evaluation can be a core part of creating the artwork's context, including its *meaning* (cf. Bal and Bryson, 1991). Throughout the thesis, I attempt to show that such a shift in art signification, which I argue represents a shift from an art theoretical context *only* to art theoretical, socio-political *and* economic contexts, is necessary for dismantling the Great Art myth.

I strongly believe that we, as a feminist art-activist community, can agree on (contextual) facts that can help improve the intended outcomes of our work. I am fully aware that not all feminist art researchers, practitioners and artists will be interested in developing transdisciplinary approaches and collaborations, and some may particularly object to an evidence-based approach to arts impact evaluation. My intention has been to start a new conversation, aligning feminist art with social justice objectives in multiple research disciplines, policy making and feminist activism. The success of the proposed development of transdisciplinary feminist art research does not require an overhaul of the whole arts system. The aim is simply to promote *more* and *multiple* meanings of 'feminist art' that are recognised by art publics and non-art publics, in both institutional and non-institutional art settings. The solution to intersectional gender inequality in the arts lies as much within the arts as it does outside the arts, and my thesis stands in the feminist art tradition of researchers, practitioners and activists expanding their domains and improving their skills sets, strategies and outreach.

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[19] See Gray (2014, pp. 19–20)

Chapter 1. Transdisciplinarity for Positive Social Change

This chapter will demonstrate that the combination of art research, practice and activism can play an important role in the attainment of social equality and justice. Transdisciplinarity will be demonstrated to be an appropriate and useful approach to creating positive social change. The chapter introduces many main concerns and areas that will be revisited throughout the following chapters. First of all, social and economic inequality is discussed (1.1), after which the potential role of transdisciplinary approaches is contextualised (1.2). Section 1.3 discusses whether *art practice* can create social impact, and if such impact is measured. For creating positive social change, extra attention is needed to disadvantaged and marginalised positions, which is the topic of section 1.4. The context of *feminist art* practice, research and activism, which explicitly include social equality objectives, is further introduced. Feminist art actors' own marginalisation will emphasise the importance of a transdisciplinary approach. Section 1.5 will demonstrate how the proposed transdisciplinarity and feminist art can work together.

1.1 Is the world such a bad place?

In the past decades, there has been an exponential growth of wealth *inequality* in the world. In 1990, one fifth of working North Americans 'earned more money than the other four-fifths of the country put together' (Nelson, 1993, p. 29). In 2011, the activist movement Occupy Wall Street drew attention to the fact that the power and income are concentrated in 1% of the global population, which led to the phrase 'We are the 99%' (Stanford, 2015, p. 99). In 2014, an even smaller percentage of 0.1% of the top earned as much as the 90% of the bottom earners in the US (Monaghan, 2014).[20] Globally, in 2013, the richest 8.4% of the world population owned 83.3% of all the wealth (Stanford, 2015). Recently, it has been reported that the eight richest individuals in the world have a wealth that is equal to the wealth of half of the world's population (Elliot, 2017).[21] This unequal wealth distribution is the result of global capitalism, which led to an advanced form of capitalism, now commonly referred to as neoliberalism (further explained below). It is a

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[20] https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/nov/13/us-wealth-inequality-top-01-worth-as-much-as-the-bottom-90

[21] https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/16/worlds-eight-richest-people-have-same-wealth-as-poorest-50

system through which rich can become exponentially richer, and chances for poor people are further diminished (e.g., Tilly, 1998, pp. 155-156).

Capitalism dates back to the latter sixteenth century (Beech, 2015, p. 7) or mid-1700s (Stanford, 2015, p. 33), and two aspects characterise its business form: wage labour and profit-driven production. The combination of wage labour and a drive for profit is generally thought to form the basis of oppressive working and living conditions during the Industrial Revolution, which began around the second half of the eighteenth century. The economist Karl Marx (1818-1883) provided an economic analysis of this development and recognised the clash between the (new) working class and (new) capitalist class (Stanford, 2015, p. 54). With US and UK governmental support since the 1980s, the world economy has started to best serve private and corporate businesses, which are currently the most common business forms (Stanford, 2015, p. 91). Capitalist businesses support the growth of social inequality, as the majority of workers who do the actual work do not benefit from the profit that is being made. A small elite group of owners and shareholders becomes richer (Tilly, 1998, p. 156), and due to the profit-seeking characteristics of the corporate world, large groups of workers are further exploited. The current dominance of corporate businesses, some of which are the size of small countries (Stanford, 2015, p. 34), is called 'neoliberalism', which thrives on labour as a commodity or even the production of money without labour involved (discussed shortly). Though, traditionally, liberal politics may support liberty and equality, its modern form of free-market mechanisms may not, in fact, guarantee social equality without other necessary measures (see also Collins and Bilge, 2016, pp. 16-18).

An important critique of capitalism is that labour itself becomes a commodity, as it is bought and sold for money (Morawski, 1973, p. 19; Stanford, 2015, p. 105). This takes the value of production away from workers, who do not have a say in what their labour is worth. In addition, today's Western economy is based on a 'lending-and-investment process [that] is essential to economic growth and job creation under capitalism' (Stanford, 2015, p. 250). Through the processes of 'securitization' (loans becoming assets) and 'speculation' (buying and selling of assets) money is produced *without* actual labour or the creation of jobs (Stanford, 2015, pp. 250-253). Today, not only is a large part of the world economy disconnected from the actual labour performed, but corporate businesses also have an increasing influence on national economies. Together with governments, corporations increasingly control domestic politics and policies, which is another key feature of neoliberalism.

Due to these developments, social agendas of civil society and governments have been under tremendous pressure (Fraser, 2013, pp. 1-16). The business ethics of corporate organisations do not, in themselves, support social equality and the de-marginalisation of oppressed groups (see, for example, Semeniuk, 2012; Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 138). In addition, neoliberalism represses any protest against the negative outcomes of its economics. Economist Jim Stanford (2015) notes that, since the 1980s, neoliberal efforts by both corporates and governments have aimed to construct 'a whole new cultural mindset, in which people… accept insecurity and vulnerability as permanent' (2015, p. 48). For a complete picture, the colonial histories of countries need to be taken into account, as well as the unequal social positions of different ethnic groups within the countries. Though neoliberalism affects everybody, some groups continue to be relatively more advantaged, and others more disadvantaged. For example, Black men in the US form a structurally disadvantaged group. Their incarceration provides free jail labour supporting a privatised business model that thrives on possible discrimination by the justice system. Documentary maker Ava DuVernay (2016) has described this system as the 'new plantations'. In this light, neoliberalism not only further increases the gap between rich and poor, but also supports structural oppression, discrimination and differentiation between socio-ethnic groups. The newly acquired freedom and emancipation of the few may simply be accompanied by the lack of freedom and opportunities for others, which can be said to be part of neoliberalism's mechanism of 'durable inequality' (Tilly, 1998).

Another important feature of neoliberalism is its *global* character (see, for example, Dimitrakaki, 2013, p. 6), through which wellbeing and poverty are spread unequally over the globe. Historical, colonial power relationships run through neoliberal economic structures. For example, one hundred, mainly British, private companies control $1trillion worth of resources of oil, gold, diamonds, coal and platinum in Africa (Curtis, 2016).[22] As a result, poverty and unequal wealth distribution in formerly colonised geographical areas are 'globally' constructed. International corporate structures enable some countries to have or gain a certain degree of control over other countries.

The question arises whether capitalism in itself is a problem, with the only way forward being the development of non-capitalist social structures (see, for example, Gibson-Graham, 2006). Stanford explores whether we can learn anything from capitalist corporations that seem to run so smoothly, and whether this knowledge can be applied to devising 'a "social corporation", with the mandate to maximize social well-being' (2015, p.

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[22] http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/mark-curtis/britain-africa-development_b_11191728.html

395). Within neoliberal structures, corrections to the unequal wealth distribution may be possible, such as the introduction of a basic income that is 'unconditionally granted to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement' (Basic Income Earth Network, 2016).[23] As an experimental component of recent social benefits reforms, the Dutch city of Utrecht is currently monitoring the effects of giving unemployed people a monthly basic income (Universiteit Utrecht, 2016).[24] Generally, it is thought that the current form of global capitalism is unsustainable (Federici, 2013; Fraser, 2013; Stanford, 2015),[25] but when and how it will end remains unclear. Arguably, the question goes back to how to shape societies and which conditions are needed for humans to take the necessary risks to create communities, including pursuing social and technological progress. It would be naive to think that building communities would not involve various forms of compensation for risk taking.

In this thesis, above described capitalist structures are taken as the scope of the economics of research, practice and activism, as these 'disciplines' usually are to, at least, some degree part of those structures. 'Art' discussed in this thesis is made, exhibited and *signified* with the help of capitalism, including the theoretical discourse facilitated by 'capitalist' structures (further discussed in Chapter Six on economics). Within this 'capitalist' discursive space, there is, however, a lot of research dedicated to creating positive social change, which is further discussed in the next section.

1.2 Can transdisciplinarity facilitate social change?

One way to increase one's influence and alter dominant decision-making processes is to occupy positions of power. However, the historical organisation of many societies makes it difficult for 'new' groups to obtain positions to speak from and create change (Fraser, 1990, pp. 63-65; Mouffe, 2013, pp. 1-15). Society is *stratified*: there are formal and informal barriers to marginalised groups occupying decision-making positions (Fraser, 1990). Arguably, societies are always 'the expression of a particular configuration of power relations' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 2), and, in order to change dominant power dynamics, one needs to engage with 'hegemonic' practices. For this reason, individuals and groups may engage with activism or work for organisations to form the *civil society* of countries. Through different forms of activism, advocacy and political lobby, marginalised voices can

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[23] http://www.basicincome.org/basic-income/
[24] https://www.uu.nl/nieuws/ongelijkheid-utrecht-op-te-lossen-door-basisinkomen
[25] Web version of Federici's article used: https://endofcapitalism.com/2013/05/29/a-feminist-critique-of-marx-by-silvia-federici/

be heard and can have an influence on politics and policy. In addition, marginalised individuals gradually attain mainstream positions of influence and power. What can research contribute to this de-marginalisation of oppressed groups?

Many scholars who believe that their work will contribute to a better world may soon realise that their world-changing ideals cannot be met through academic writing alone (see, for example, Leavy, 2011, p. 8). Their work may simply be too far removed from real-life contexts. Research is, nevertheless, crucial, as data collection, critical analyses, and recommendations can inform the practice of better decision-making. Without research, we would not know the extent and seriousness of issues and the impact of interventions. Possibly, the frustration of *not* being heard as researchers is the result of *politics* inside and outside universities, for which few scholars entering academia are prepared. Even in a seemingly neutral field like Art History, where writing about what one *sees* seems to be quite straightforward, researchers cannot escape the politics inside and outside the academic structures (Bal and Bryson, 1991, p. 208). Nevertheless, academic curricula may not give future art historians much information about academic politics, management and leadership. Not being prepared for political and institutional roles may form a huge disadvantage for those researchers who do not comply (enough) with the, often implicit, dominant norms.

Over the last decades, disciplinarity has deepened through the strengthening of research communities, disciplinary conferences and academic publishing (Leavy, 2011, p. 17). This can be seen as the success of disciplinary research: more specific knowledge is produced, which is crucial for better understanding of the world. However, as many of the big problems that we face today are not created within the boundaries of one discipline, disciplines need to be transgressed in order to facilitate working solutions (Leavy, 2011, p. 18). Disciplinary knowledge is still necessary, but multi- and transdisciplinary research can better facilitate complex problem solving. Stella Sandfort goes so far as to argue that new concepts of transdisciplinary research are 'not identifiable with any specific disciplinary fields, either in their origin or in their application' (2015, p. 166). This reiterates that the boundaries between disciplines (theory and practice) are *transcended* in order to solve complex, multi-faceted problems (see also Leavy, 2011, p. 23). Potentially, researchers who stay within their disciplines cannot provide useful recommendations and effect social change.

A significant amount of research on social issues is conducted outside the walls of universities, being explicitly embedded in practice and activism. Researchers can, and many do, work for independent research institutes, NGOs, governmental bodies and

activist movements, through which they may more directly influence social and environmental agendas. The organisation Transgender Europe (TGEU), for example, has conducted several surveys to elicit information about the social and legal positions of transgender people in Europe. Funded by supporters such as the European Union (Transgender Europe, no date), the organisation is able to directly use the data in further advocacy and lobbying. World organisation Human Rights Watch produces reports without accepting funding from governments or foundations that are partly financed by governments. In 2011, their report about the legal position of transgender people in the Netherlands (Human Rights Watch, 2011) played an important role in changing a Civil Code article that denied Dutch transgender people their rights to personal autonomy and physical integrity. Margriet van Heesch conducted research that was directly embedded in a practice of 'intersex' advocacy and activism. Her recently published research (2015) incorporates personal, socio-political, historical and medical approaches to variations of sex development ('intersex') in the Netherlands over the past seventy-five years. Van Heesch has combined qualitative empirical research (interviews), historical research of medical publications and gender theory. Whilst Van Heesch engaged with collaborative activism, her research started to function as a platform for advocacy and has directly contributed to change in governmental policies and medical settings (Van Heesch, 2015, p. 344). These examples illustrate that being embedded in social movements and political advocacy can significantly increase the likelihood of *being heard* and making a difference as a researcher.

The engagement of researchers with social movements can be recognised as the 'holistic' approach of transdisciplinarity (Leavy, 2011, pp. 25, 30), which may bring together different forms of research, activism and community building. Transdisciplinarity can be said to be embedded in the social processes it influences (Osborne, 2015), which makes it important to critically analyse socio-political and economic structures of not only the problem, but also of the solution to the problem. This topic will be revisited throughout the thesis. The combination of research, practice and activism may form the most effective way to facilitate change – especially when gender, race and socio-economic class discrimination prevent marginalised researchers from being fully heard and recognised within their own disciplines.[26] Transgressing the boundaries of disciplines provides space for the personal, local and strategic moves of researchers (Brown *et al.*, 2010, p. 4), which is important for providing working solutions. Transdisciplinarity can also be the answer to traditional power dynamics and hierarchies within disciplines (Osborne, 2015), which

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[26] This line of reasoning will be further contextualised throughout the thesis.

resonates with feminist standpoint theory (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004a)[27] and intersectional approaches (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). For art researchers and practitioners, there are other, more specific, barriers to producing knowledge from marginalised positions, which will be further discussed in section 1.4.

Social and environmental researchers who do not understand the real-life practice of politics, policy making and discriminatory processes may be less likely to produce recommendations that can realistically facilitate change. Research-based recommendations for practice or policy changes need additional, practical strategies for implementation. Crenshaw (1989, pp. 152, 166-167), for example, has argued that the improvement of the position of Black women in the US requires adjustments in the whole social justice system, calling for strategies that bridge the gap between social justice theory and practice. As an example of such a strategy, in 1983, activist and writer Andrea Dworkin and constitutional lawyer Catherine A. MacKinnon were hired by the City of Minneapolis to draft an amendment that would make pornography a violation of the civil and human rights of women (Dworkin, 1989, p. xxvii). The proposed change in civil law would have made it possible to sue pornographers for sex discrimination (Dworkin, 1989, p. xxxii). Though the amendment was not accepted, it was one of the first times that testimonies of women about sexual gender-based violence were communicated publicly. The process of drafting the amendment itself offered a platform for activism and debate.

As was discussed in the previous section, neoliberal economic structures may constrain the opportunities of creating social justice. The proposed transdisciplinarity cannot escape the limitations of neoliberalism, and the economics of the proposed transdisciplinarity will be discussed in Chapter Six. Peter Osborne (2015, p. 13) suggests that, in the European context, there can be a tension between transdisciplinary research and neoliberalism, being heavily influenced by the funding and policies of governments that have adopted this economic system. Embedding research transdisciplinarity in governmental structures is not necessarily detrimental, and can actually contribute to increasing research impact. The loss of being 'radical' that Osborne (2015, p. 13) refers to may be compensated by a more strategic alignment of research, practice and activism including an intersectional feminist perspective (as proposed in this thesis).

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[27] Haraway (1988, p. 578) writes: 'Marxist starting points offered a way to get to our own versions of standpoint theories, insistent embodiment, a rich tradition of critiquing hegemony without disempowering positivisms and relativisms and a way to get to nuanced theories of mediation.'

1.3 Can art facilitate social change?

In the previous section, the combination of research, practice and activism was shown to facilitate successful approaches to achieving social change. In general, *art practice* is considered to be useful in pursuing social change. Chantal Mouffe (2007), for example, places the future of artistic interventions in the 'agonistic' spaces of society – those spaces where people disagree, negotiate, protest and form new alliances and agreements. Leavy (2009, pp. vii-xiv, 2011, p. 105) sees an important role for arts-based research in socially engaged research practice, among which transdisciplinary forms of research.

Though artworks need particular signifying structures in order to be called art, they can be made outside traditional art settings and/or without studio- or workshop-based art tools and techniques. This will be further discussed in Chapter Three. Art historians have noted, from the 1990s onwards, an increase in the number of artworks that use collaborative and participatory methods (Kester, 2011, p. 1; Bishop, 2012, p. 1), which has been called a 'social turn' in the arts (Bishop, 2006). Artists who engage with real-life social and political change, and who shape their art through interactive projects and appropriation of settings (rather than the production of *objects*), have been more widely recognised in mainstream and institutional art settings over the past twenty years. For many, feminist art has always been characterised by a social and political focus, of which transgressions into other fields are necessarily a part. Angela Dimitrakaki (2013, p. 12) notes that the recent increase in the recognition of social and political art has – paradoxically – *marginalised* feminism in art histories. This suggests that many social artistic practices that are visible and popular today may not have included the necessary intersectional gender perspective (discussed in the next section). For this reason, much art-activism that aims for social change may, in fact, be ineffective or even counterproductive.

The global economic system discussed in section 1.1 is also the context of 'the art world', consisting of a huge collection of regional, national and international art settings. Undoubtedly, neoliberalism has huge impact on the art world (Smith, 2009, pp. 117-132; Kester, 2013, p. 5). In 2014, it was reported that the global art market was worth €51 billion (Barrett and Aglionby, 2015).[28] The blog *Hyperallergic.com* published figures on shady art market practices after the publication of the Panama Papers in 2016, which mention amounts between tens and hundreds of millions of dollars (Sutton and Voon,

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[28] https://www.ft.com/content/cad245a0-f889-11e4-8e16-00144feab7de

2016).[29] The shady art economy may predominantly concern commercial art settings, such as auction houses and galleries. However, non-commercial art institutions and initiatives are part of capitalist, neoliberal structures too. One clear example is the corporate sponsorship of museums, as well as the use of corporate businesses for other services. The relationship between art and neoliberalism, in which speculation plays an important role, is further discussed in Chapter Six. Nowadays, art is increasingly contextualised as 'labour', as the negative effects of neoliberalism on working conditions of artists have become more visible. John Roberts argues that this precarious position of art workers has led to 'the exponential rise over the last ten years of participatory, relational and other socially-oriented [art] practices' (2013, p. 65). More and more artists pay attention to the conditions in which they work. However, it is unclear whether their commitment to social change actually makes a positive contribution. This topic will be revisited throughout the thesis.

Artworks can engage with social change in many different ways, and, as economic structures are dominant, artistic responses to the negative effects of neoliberalism not only demonstrate artists' awareness and knowledge, but also inform a diversity of strategies. *The Brixton Pound* in London, for example, is an initiative that has worked on the borders of art, activism and social engagement since 2009 (Brixton Pound, no date).[30] The development of a new currency to promote local business ran side by side with the facilitation of participatory art projects and temporary art studio spaces. In 2015, Jeremy Deller, an artist who won the Turner Prize 2004 and represented Great Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2013, proposed a new design for the Brixton five-pound note (Owczarek, 2015).[31] In the project *The Brixton Pound*, there is involvement of artists and creative practitioners on several layers, from organisational to artistic contributions. *The Brixton Pound* is one of the few publicised creative activities that are embedded in an economic structure that forms an *alternative* to the dominant economy. Possibly, the initiative's new local economy can (partly) reduce the negative outcomes of a globalised economy. In this example, the *combination* of artistic, activist and community engagement can lead to social change.

Another example is the stamp design *Occupy Liz* by Ivan Cash and Andy Dao, commissioned for the exhibition *Disobedient Objects* at the Victoria & Albert Museum (London) in 2015. An image can be stamped onto a five-pound note depicting Elizabeth II, which, as a result, displays a playful chart of wealth inequality in the UK between 1975

[29] http://hyperallergic.com/289250/panama-papers-shed-light-on-the-shadowy-art-market/
[30] http://brixtonpound.org/artists
[31] http://brixtonpound.org/blog/2015/07/08/deller/

and 2011 (Cash, 2016).[32] The exhibition commentary accompanying the 'artwork' stated that in 1975 the top 0.1% earned on average £257,742 and the bottom 90% £14,765. In 2011, this was respectively £922,433 and £12,993. The artwork may have inspired exhibition visitors to make their own stamp and spread the information in this tactical way. (The artists did make it clear, though, that by doing so one risked a legal penalty.) In this work, research, art and activism were combined for a product that could potentially grow audiences' social and political awareness of unequal wealth distribution, as discussed in the previous section.

Very few artworks deal with both economic and environmental issues. Artist Ellie Harrison, however, has started the Radical Renewable Art + Activism Fund (RRAAF, no date),[33] which is envisaged as a financing scheme for social and political art projects funded by renewable energy. This creation of 'new' money, and potentially new value of art, forms a way of both having social impact and challenging the conservative market valorisation of artworks. The distribution of funding to artists by RRAAF does not stand apart from the for-profit settings in which it was created (such as the crowd funding of £1M for a wind turbine). Nevertheless, the exchange between 'new' money and art may very well raise social and political awareness about environmental and economic issues, and may potentially *signify* art differently. Such a new exchange may instigate temporarily new art criteria, as, for example, potentially funded artists themselves may need to fulfil environmental criteria. Harrison transgresses the borders of research, practice and activism including collaborating with partners, such as the charity Community Energy Scotland. If the initiative is successful, she has created a novel tool for social change, which may be more effective than many other art projects.

Whilst the above combinations of art practice, research and activism can be seen as positive contributions to social and environmental change, their real impact remains unknown. What mechanisms do the initiatives described above have in place to make sure the social and/or environmental objectives are met? Gregory Sholette (2011, pp. 43-44, 116-134, 166-167) suggests that the activist initiatives of artists outside the arts which agitate against neoliberalism may, in fact, support the structures of economic social inequality (further discussed in Chapter Six). Even though the number of social art practices may have increased over the past decades, few artists incorporate impact monitoring or evaluation objectives into their art-activist interventions. Artists may think their concept is good for the world (or, at least, does no harm), but what if their actions

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[32] http://www.ivan.cash/occupy-liz/
[33] http://www.rraafund.org/

actually have the opposite effect and instigate the previously mentioned 'durable inequality' (Tilly, 1998)? Should they not give an account of this? And, if so, how?

In terms of research validity and quality, there may be limitations too. Would it, for example, matter if the data analysis of *Occupy Liz* were incorrect? The artists may not have been trained in interpreting and visualising data, and could have produced misleading graphs. This question of research validity is also applicable to Guerrilla Girls' work *Is it even worse in Europe?* (2016),[34] exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. The exhibition reported on the findings of a survey sent to 383 European art museums and institutes in order to measure sexism and racism in the arts in Europe (Artdaily.org, 2016; Whitechapel Gallery, 2016).[35] Seen from a specific research point of view, however, there was an apparent bias, as well as some flaws,[36] in the survey that may very well limit its effectiveness in reducing sexism and racism in European art institutes. Not everyone would see the conclusions as reliable, which can certainly make a good artistic statement, but simultaneously can do a disservice to feminism, missing a good opportunity to promote positive social change. The data cannot be convincingly used in feminist art advocacy and reporting. Transdisciplinary collaboration with social scientists, for example, or adopting rigorous social science research methods, could have increased the quality of the research conducted, and providing a better basis for instigating intersectional social equality within the arts. Current combinations of research, art and activism may be an inspirational starting point for social change, but they need further development in order to be effective.

There is a discursive framework that focuses on the artistic part of socially engaged artworks. Within arts-based and arts-led research, artistic and fictitious interventions can be said to produce 'other', equally valuable, types of knowledge that do not require impact evaluation. One may, for example, prioritise aesthetic qualities and research 'vigour'

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[34] This work *did* showcase an intersectional gender perspective, in contrast to the previous examples. The survey explicitly asked questions around gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and race.

[35] http://artdaily.com/news/90535/The-Guerrilla-Girls-raise-questions-about-diversity-in-European-museums-for-their-latest-campaign#.V_donNyW2oE; http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/guerrilla-girls/

[36] The survey produced an interesting body of knowledge, which was fully accessible through the publication of all the responses in a volume made available in the exhibition room. However, the exhibition reproduced the pre-determined narrative of the Guerrilla Girls, instead of the contextual narratives of the museums and institutions that had had input in the survey. Some of the responses were actually quite funny, and exposed the flaws in the open questionnaire. Also, ethical research borders were possibly crossed by publishing e-mails that were stated to be private correspondence. One could argue that the same survey results could have led to a completely different framing that told the same socio-political message, but in more nuanced and responsible way. Here lies an opportunity for the collaboration between feminist artists and socio-political scientists experienced in rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, with clear mutual benefits.

instead of research rigour (Leavy, 2009, pp. 15-16, 2011, p. 129). In empirical research frameworks, there is a need for evidence-based methods which are rigorous and transparent. A focus on the artistic value of research, practice and activism combinations provides quality on the basis of creative strength or engagement with audiences. Though the artistic and creative power of imitating research strategies should be acknowledged, such research approaches, however, do not tackle the dominant myth of Great Art and possibly does nothing to improve the position of marginalised artists (revisited in Chapter Two).

In this section, artworks are shown to be powerful tools with the ability to express, as well as work with, the context of positive social change. They can contribute to creative solutions through their strategic use of research and activism, though measuring impact and using rigorous research methods are important to creating actual positive social change. Artworks that engage with producing social impact can function in the proposed transdisciplinarity. In Chapter Three, the theoretical context of making art part of the proposed transdisciplinarity is further discussed. This section has touched upon an intersectional gender approach, necessary to de-marginalise people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Incorporating such an intersectional approach in research, practice and activism is further discussed in the section below.

1.4 Intersectional perspectives of art and social change

As discussed in section 1.1, individuals are not equally affected in societies that are structurally racist and sexist. Today, one in three women experiences physical and/or sexual violence[37] in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2016).[38] The fact that, under neoliberalism, there has been an increase in women's employment and decrease of the gender pay gap (Walby, 2011, pp. 37-38, 156) may say more about women's previous marginalised positions than their current 'global' success. Recently, emancipatory processes of (Western) 'women' have been argued to have played a supporting role in the rise of neoliberalism (Dimitrakaki, 2013, pp. 36-37; Fraser, 2013, pp. 209-226). These examples show that *an intersectional gender perspective* is required in the pursuit of

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[37] Academic discussions about equal opportunities rarely refer to the role and impact of experiences of violence, despite such experiences characterising the everyday lives of one third of women, and also of many men.
[38] http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/

positive social change. Extra attention[39] needs to be drawn to the diverse positions of 'women' who, despite on average suffering more from discrimination, violence and sexual assaults, are often forgotten.

As important, however, is the 'intersectionality' of women's positions (a term discussed in Crenshaw, 1989): gender, race, socio-economic class, age, ability, sexual orientation et cetera intersect with each other, influencing individuals' positions in societies. 'Intersectional' thinking about gender started in the 1960s and 1970s in the US, where '[i]n the confines of racially and ethnically segregated neighborhoods and communities… women of color were in conversation/tension with the civil rights, Black Power, Chicano liberation, Red Power, and Asian-American movements' (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 65). An intersectional approach can best facilitate the understanding of why some 'women' may reach positions of power and influence, whilst others remain in 'extra'-marginalised positions. White queer researchers, like myself, may need to be reminded that race has always been at the heart of queer theory (Barker and Scheele, 2016, p. 126). The overrepresentation of white voices in queer, as well as feminist, theory can be considered a form of 'white-washing', a modern form of oppression.

For this reason, it is important to acknowledge that research, practice and activism that work 'transdisciplinarily' towards a better world are not by default concerned with the position of all 'women'. General social movements themselves are not necessarily inclusive or safe for people in doubly or triply marginalised and oppressed positions. For example, at several locations of the international Occupy activities, there were concerns regarding the safety of 'women' and the dominance of 'white' voices. Occupy Wall Street activist and visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (2014) draws attention to the 'new male gaze' in activist and non-activist responses to social injustices in the world, and has publicly withdrawn from post-Occupy Wall Street activism. Such activist movements may not have implemented 'norms of inclusivity' (Weldon, 2006, p. 57), which was, for example, important in securing the inclusiveness of the global movement and opposition against gender-based violence (further discussed in Chapter Five). The lack of diverse representation represents a real problem for many social movements (see also Murray, 2016, pp. 3-9).

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[39] A concrete tool for the implementation of a gender perspective has been the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that was created in 1979 (UN women, 2009), thirty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, no date). See: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/ and http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

The need for an intersectional gender perspective is not limited to social justice issues. Economic problems, as discussed in the previous section, and environmental issues can also be analysed from an intersectional gender perspective. Individuals in diverse intersectional positions are differently affected on the basis of gender, race, socio-economic class, age, geography and so on. Therefore, feminist socio-political thinkers such as Nancy Fraser (e.g., 2013, p. 237) and Silvia Federici (e.g., 2013)[40] do not separate social justice objectives from ecological and non-capitalist approaches to social change. The oppression of marginalised subjects is embedded in the same structures that are responsible for environmental and economic issues. Perhaps, resolving world problems is obstructed, more than anything, by the difficulty of *representing* intersectionality and/or multiple resistances. This predicament will be revisited throughout the thesis.

As discussed in the Introduction, gender inequality in the arts is visible through the unequal representation of 'women' and 'men' artists in art institutional settings, which is compounded by the relative invisibility of artists who are not white, heterosexual, and/or able-bodied. As such, an intersectional gender perspective has been predominantly absent in the arts.

The ground-breaking essay 'Why have there been no great women artists?' (Nochlin, 1988, first published in 1971) was the starting point for art historians to understand why 'women' artists had remained so invisible, rarely entering the category of the 'Great Artists'. Figure 3 aims to illustrate this issue, as well as an additional complexity in solving the issue, discussed shortly. The cartoon builds on the previous cartoon, which introduced the green creature representing the double problem of gender and art. In pursuit of solving the problem (getting rid of the green creature), Patricia Cornflake's friend uses Nochlin's essay title. This question should be read as *provocative*, as, of course, 'women' can be and have been great artists, but their visibility, opportunities and recognition have been limited (as have the definition and context of 'Greatness').

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[40] Federici critiques the 'corporate appropriation' of natural resources, which plays a role in class relations. The author promotes land takeovers, urban farming and community-supported agriculture among other strategies for re-appropriation and production of a new, non-capitalist economy.

Fig. 3 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Why have there been no...*, 2015. [Digital image]

Cornflake's answer to the posed question refers to Nochlin's remark that 'the middle-class woman has a great deal more to lose than her chains' (Nochlin, 1988, p. 152), hinting at the limited solidarity of relatively privileged women with more disadvantaged women. The cartoon suggests that the green creature does not leave, because it has nothing to lose (or gain) by doing so. The double problem of gender and art remains unsolved. Decades after Nochlin's insightful essay, not much seems to have structurally changed for the position of 'women' artists (see, for example, Meskimmon, 2003, pp. 1, 13; Dimitrakaki, 2013, p. 3; Pollock, 2014, pp. 19-20). In an alternative reading, as the position of female artists *has* changed and is more recognised, the globalised, market-infused signification of art has found new ways to exclude female artists (and many male artists) from institutional and commercial settings.

When feminism in in the analysis of art histories started to develop, nobody knew in advance what change looked like and what timeline was to be expected. Since the beginning of feminism in the arts, it has been critically questioned whether 'women' artists would be interested in the *same* greatness as their male counterparts (see, for example, Lippard, 1995a, first published in 1976, pp. 39-40). Such a question addresses neither the diversity amongst 'men' and amongst 'women', nor the instability of the terms.

Taking into consideration the diversity of feminist strategies, Dimitrakaki (2013, p. 3) remarks that access to institutional art settings has (partially) increased. The entrance of a *particular* group of 'women' artists, who may not represent the diversity amongst all women artists, into the institutional and mainstream art structures has not structurally changed the face of a globalised, capitalist art world (Dimitrakaki, 2013, p. 3) that most likely *contributes* to exploitation and unequal wealth distribution. In other words, despite a growing number of women artists entering art institutions, an intersectional gender perspective in the arts may continue to be underdeveloped or underappreciated.

A key problem of counting marginalised artists is that it can be used to show *both* progress *and* lack of progress in specific art settings, including museums, galleries and biennales. The interpretation simply depends on the point that one wants to make. Both increase and decrease in participation of women artists in un-negotiated, neoliberal art settings can be considered good news, as each of the options can be imagined as social change. *Absence* of women artists in such settings, for example, can be read as resistance and refusal (in line with Dimitrakaki, 2013),[41] but very few feminist art researchers do so. The underlying question is whether feminism in or through the arts can actively reduce the oppression of marginalised groups, and if so, how. Art as a powerful tool for positive social change needs an intersectional gender perspective, but how this will lead to actual impact needs further contextualisation and strategies (see the following chapters).

In this light, the objective of social equality in the arts and art research can be seen as a transdisciplinary 'wicked' problem (Brown, Harris and Russell, 2010). Inequality in the arts and in art histories is not created in one discipline or field only (in line with Cowie, 1990, p. 118). Therefore, combinations of research, activism and practice are necessary to facilitate change in this respect. Feminism in art histories is often interdisciplinary (Tickner, 1988, p. 94), but its strategies have not necessarily been recognised due to disciplinary conventions of Art History. This is an issue that still continues today (Pollock, 2014, pp. 19-20). For this reason, Pollock (1996, p. 18, 1999, p. 11) raises the provocative question whether art historians can ever be feminists, and vice versa. Transgression from feminist research into art practice and activism should definitely be seen as an activist, epistemological move (as argued, for example, by Lykke *et al.*, 2014, pp. xiii-xiv). It is important, however, to ensure those transgressions actually *work* in practice. The recognition of feminist theory needs what De Lauretis has called 'a view from elsewhere'

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[41] Dimitrakaki writes that 'feminist' contemporary artistic practices have been framed as 'practices of refusal' by feminist art historians. Following Dimitrakaki's point, I argue that the absence of 'women' artists in mainstream or institutional settings can be the result of their own resistance against the settings' structures.

(1987, p. 25).[42] In this thesis, I explore whether a 'strategic' transdisciplinary alignment of feminist research, practice and activism can diversify historical and contemporary art canons.

In feminist art, not only 'feminism', but also 'art' is strategically defined. Instead of walking away from signifying practices that are hegemonic and exclusionary (as discussed in Pollock, 1999, 2003), feminist art aims to trouble the dominant signification of art and create space for marginalised individuals to be recognised as artists. From these new positions, artists can develop artworks that may contribute to social change. The positions of feminist art researchers (such as art historians) and practitioners (such as artists, art critics, curators, educators)[43] together form a strategic collaboration between research, practice and activism in the arts. Feminist artists and art researchers need each other to trouble the dominant parameters and strengthen their visibility (further discussed in Chapter Three).

Besides the lack of recognition, there are other reasons why space and opportunities for artists who are marginalised are limited. The mass exploitation of the majority of artists within the dominant parameters of art (as described by Sholette, 2011, pp. 116-134) keeps the various art worlds exclusionary and deepens social inequality in the arts. Artworks that protest against the dominant socio-political and economic structures are not likely to escape this, as artist and researcher Carla Cruz (2015a, p. 11) notes that '[c]entre and margin [of the art world] are in fact constitutive of each other' in an analysis of her art project at the intersection of art and activism. In fact, there are indications that the 'centre' of the art world and its 'margins' depend on each other not only conceptually, but also financially (Sholette, 2011, pp. 161, 167-168). Unfortunately, dominant art historical efforts to re-signify the transgressive artworks often *do not* create an intersectional representation of artists (see, for example, Kester, 2011; Groys, 2013). An *integrated* intersectional gender perspective is absent, and it seems that feminist art researchers need (more) tools, resources and space to implement those perspectives and signify artworks differently.

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[42] Whereas De Lauretis (1987, pp. 25-26) did not see the movements between different spaces as literal, Cho, Crenshaw and MacCall (2013, p. 794) demonstrate the need for *physical* spaces for marginalised researchers, practitioners and activists to work in. The creation of such spaces involves a layering of representations, discourses and power systems (revisited in the following chapters).

[43] These positions may overlap, as feminist art researchers, for example, curate exhibitions on the basis of their scholarship or can be – as many are – art practitioners themselves.

1.5 How 'feminist art' can make a difference

The process of re-signifying art, validating art of diverse artists more *equally*, starts with looking differently at the production of art. Pollock encourages her audiences 'to see art as a *social practice*, as a totality of many relations and determinations, i.e. pressures and limits' (2003, p. 7, first published in 1988; emphasis in the original) (further discussed in Chapter Three). Curator and art researcher Helena Reckitt writes that 'the key feminist insight... [is that] neither "art" nor "work" are ever just that, but are always subject to conditions of who does what, for whom, and under what terms' (2013, p. 152). The questions for what audience, for what (political) purpose and in what economic context an artwork is made are important for a feminist approach. Artworks have theoretical, philosophical and conceptual structures, but also socio-political and economic ones (in line with Morawski, 1973; Cowie, 1990; Pollock, 2003; Velthuis, 2005; Reckitt, 2013). The theoretical, socio-political and economic structures of art *together* form its aesthetics. Such a 'holistic' view resonates with the proposed transdisciplinarity, forming a solution for the wicked problem of social inequality in the arts.

When socio-political and economic structures are taken into account for the signification of art, historical examples of women artists who stopped making art,[44] such as Lee Lozano (described in Lehrer-Graiwer, 2014)[45] and Laurie Parsons (described in Nickas, 2003), may provide invaluable knowledge in a field that 'filters out' (a term used by Pollock, 1999, pp. 3-6) interesting art. The proposed transdisciplinarity supports such research, following the transgressions of feminist artists into other fields. The *transdisciplinary* representation of artists' social practice can contribute the space, and possibly resources, necessary for feminist art researchers to restructure art canonicity. The discussion below will further illustrate this line of reasoning.

Artist and photographer Zanele Muholi produces artworks about sexual and gender diversity in South Africa and is a representative of the LGBTI[46] social movement in

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[44] This was the topic of the teach-in organised by Abi Shapiro and myself (July 2015, Middlesex University).

[45] See also the forthcoming publication *Not working: Lee Lozano versus the art world 1961-1971* (Yale University Press) by Jo Applin.

[46] The abbreviation 'LGBTI' stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, which groups the positions of people who may face discrimination and violence on the ground of their sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity and/or sex characteristics. The term 'LGBTI' is further contextualised in Chapter Five. I use the term 'LGBTI' following the international organisation ILGA. However, other researchers and organisations may use different abbreviations. For example, the world youth organisation IGLYO focuses on 'LGBTQI', adding the 'Q' for queer (see also: http://www.iglyo.com/what-we-do/). The use of different abbreviations illustrates that different organisations have different organisational objectives, which change over time.

international activist contexts. In 2006, Muholi created a website for queer activism and media called *Inkanyiso.org*, which is a platform for queer, activist artists, writers and poets in South Africa. The website functions as a source of information for art and advocacy (Inkanyiso, no date),[47] facilitating a transdisciplinary combination of art, research and activism. Another example of a 'transdisciplinary' artist is Ins A. Kromminga, who plays an important visible role in international intersex advocacy. Kromminga's portal *GenderFreeNation.de* (Kromminga, no date)[48] leads the visitor to artworks *as well as* resources for intersex activism. Both Kromminga's artistic and activist outlets aim to question societal conventions of 'normality'. Art historians and visual culture theorists who describe the full context of these artists' approaches to art and social change will start working 'transdisciplinarily'. The artworks will be attributed *meaning* in not only the art historical or critical field, but also in, for example, socio-political and economic fields. As a result, art parameters through which art is traditionally contextualised will be restructured according to more complete circumstances in which the artworks were made (further discussed in Chapters Three and Four).

Muholi and Kromminga are perhaps exceptional, as they have been able to create art that is and will be increasingly recognised in art institutional settings, as well as activist settings. Few artists are able to *both* contribute to social change through advocacy *and* establish themselves as artists working from marginalised positions. Their artistic, social practice is a stimulus for social change in a more complete, transdisciplinary way with actual effects outside the arts,[49] though this is not necessarily represented as such by art and cultural theorists. This thesis argues, however, that integrating socio-political and economic analyses into art historical and critical interpretations of art may be a necessity to diversify Art History and contemporary art exhibition. Such a more 'holistic' approach to art can also pay attention to queer and feminist artists who work like Muholi and Kromminga, but less visibly, or even 'by stealth' (a research strategy discussed in Schostak and Schostak, 2008, p. 8). Though working in the margin without access to recognition as artists, their 'unmarked' art-activist strategies may play a very important role in the creation of art discourse and histories (Phelan, 1993a, p. 6).

Sometimes a '+' is added to an abbreviation indicating that the used term is not exhaustive, or does not cover all identities and sub-identities. Most 'LGBTIQ+' organisations acknowledge the rights of people who prefer to reject categorisation altogether.

[47] https://inkanyiso.org/about/

[48] http://www.genderfreenation.de/

[49] The economic structures of Muholi's and Kromminga's art practices have not been contextualised here, but do play an important role in the signification of their art. The economic dimension of transdisciplinary art is further discussed in Chapter Six.

My LGBTI children's rights report (Van Rossenberg, 2013) is an example of an art-activist strategy that is not recognised as 'art'. The report was discussed in the Dutch Parliament and led to policy changes, as well as new governmental funding for LGBTI research. Very few readers will see the report as an artwork, or would argue it should become part of art history. Simultaneously, however, there is no reason why it cannot be framed as an artwork. Besides the theoretical notion that 'anything' can be art (further discussed in Chapter Three), more importantly, the development of the project could not be separated from my *social practice* as an artist. The work is the result of my position *as an artist*, situated at the intersection of art, activism and research. There is essentially no difference between my report and my drawings exhibited in museums and galleries, except for the 'art' context. Additionally, recognition of my report alongside my drawings within art contexts would not entail a transformation of the arts system, but a further diversification of art criteria, increasing the art public's understanding that 'artworks' are constituted in (more) diverse ways and can have actual socio-political objectives.

The idea of the proposed transdisciplinarity is to trouble *that* context which keeps audiences' understanding of 'art' quite conventional and static. Paying attention to the full context of art-activist practice, as well as their actual social impact, can inform a new step in restructuring of art canons and 'reading against the grain' (Tickner, 1988, p. 97; Pollock, 1999, pp. xiv, xv, 39) (contextualised in Chapters Three and Four). Such a 'transdisciplinary' approach can further radically change art criteria (cf. Tickner, 1988, pp. 92-93, 116-117), and challenge art canonicity, which Pollock has called the 'impoverished and impoverishing filter' (1999, p. 4). The collaboration between feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists, as well as their overlapping positions, can further contribute to developing tools that effectively create positive social change. The following chapters will further discuss what is necessary to achieve this objective, beginning with a further explanation of the proposed transdisciplinarity (Chapter Two).

Chapter summary

This chapter started with the economic context of social inequality, which clarified that economic systems need consistent addressing, whilst creating transdisciplinary tools for positive social change. Most research, practice and activism are part of 'capitalist', 'neoliberal' economies that produce social inequality through their structures. The use of *combinations* of research, practice and activism is recommended for overcoming society's stratified and hegemonic structures that create obstacles for marginalised groups. Such a 'transdisciplinary' approach can lead to a more comprehensive approach to solve societal

complex problems. Art practice can be part of the proposed transdisciplinarity, as many artworks that work towards positive social change showcase relationships with research and activism. However, it is advised to start measuring impact of artworks, taking into account that some of their socio-political and economic structures can create an implicit or unknown negative impact. Moreover, artworks committed to creating positive social change do not necessarily provide sufficient solutions to marginalised groups, including diverse groups of women. Therefore, an *intersectional gender perspective* should be part of research, practice and activism. Gender and social inequality are encountered *in the arts* too, which itself can be seen as a transdisciplinary, wicked problem. Because feminist art research, practice and activism combine socio-political, economic and intersectional gender perspectives, making 'feminist art' the centre of the proposed transdisciplinarity may be able to contribute to developing more tools for attaining social equality.

Chapter 2. Context and Justification of the Proposed Transdisciplinarity

In the previous chapter, it became apparent that if art is to be used in creating structural positive change, then *both* a transdisciplinary *and* feminist approach is recommended. This chapter further introduces the transdisciplinarity proposed in this thesis, which promotes the transdisciplinary use of 'feminist art' (research, practice and activism) in multiple other fields. Section 2.1 sets out the rationale behind such proposal, summarising the research findings on which the proposed transdisciplinarity is built (all further contextualised in the following chapters). After this, the proposed transdisciplinarity is captured in a series of visualisations (2.2), which could be a first step in thinking about a transdisciplinary model and may further help the reader visualise the proposed transdisciplinarity. Section 2.3 is dedicated to answering potential criticism that the proposed transdisciplinarity may receive. The responses to potential criticism provide more information on the epistemological approach applied in this research.

2.1 Rationale behind the proposed transdisciplinarity

In the pursuit of social change, many researchers bring together research, practice and activism. For feminism, the application of transdisciplinarity can challenge traditional paradigms (cf. Leavy, 2011, pp. 13-35). As early as 1988, Lisa Tickner argued that feminism in art history was inherently interdisciplinary, as multiple disciplines were necessary to change the terms of representation. Sandfort (2015, pp. 169, 171-172) even argues that the critical practice of feminist theory[50] is transdisciplinary *by definition*, because of its transdisciplinary re-negotiation of terms, such as sex, gender, woman and sexual difference. Feminism within research settings, however, does not necessarily lead to more social equality within those settings. Diversity work within institutions can be an extremely long-winded process of shifting power hierarchies (see, for example, Ahmed, 2012), if anything changes at all. Feminist researchers may choose not to engage with the politics of institutions, and primarily focus on their own feminist research instead.

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[50] Feminist theory can be said to be working towards social change (Stanley and Wise, 2000), but precisely *what* social change is actually pursued is not always clear.

However, the circumstances in which they work may make it difficult for them to receive recognition and support. The approach taken in this thesis aims to strengthen the position of 'feminist' researchers, who may be practitioners and activists too. This is a first starting point of the proposed transdisciplinarity.

Feminism can be said to, at least, acknowledge the significance of sexual difference and/or gender in society (Stanley and Wise, 2000, p. 168; Jones, 2010a, p. 1; Phelan, 2014, p. 18) and, by doing so, improve 'women's' positions in society. There is a tension, however, between the diversity of feminisms and the rhetorical use of the collectivity of (all) 'women' (cf. Dimitrakaki, 2013, p. 3; Riley, pp. 16, 96-98). Who is in a position to speak for whom, and to whom? Can one person or group represent intersectional feminism? One of the key predicaments of the feminist cause is the risk that feminist research, practice and activism may themselves continue to categorise, essentialise and stereotype 'women' (De Lauretis, 1987; Riley, 1988; Cowie, 1990) (as illustrated in the Introduction). One could state that there is lack of *representation of intersectionality*: women's diverse, intersectional positions that make them hugely differ from each other are not visible (revisited at length in the following chapters). Stopping the marginalisation of 'women' within groups of 'women' has been one of the biggest challenges of feminist strategies (see, for example, Hammond, 2000, pp. 15-49; Pollock, 2003, pp. 22-23; Weldon, 2006; Himid, 2013; Jones and Silver, 2016a, pp. 14-50). For this reason, this thesis engages with the question of both *categorisation* and *de-categorisation* necessary for intersectional social equality – another starting point of the proposed transdisciplinarity.

The third starting point is finding a solution to the lack of representation of intersectionality through the *combination* of feminist research, practice and activism (an approach that was contextualised in the previous chapter), including *a diversity of methods*. There is an impressive body of feminist theory, but some consider it has become too inaccessible and abstract (for example, Stanley and Wise, 2000, p. 268). A significant proportion of feminist theory can be seen to have no clear links to the 'real world' and, additionally, it lacks research validity. Despite having grown out of activism in the 1970s and 1980s, current feminist academic research may be distanced from the *practice* of feminism. It is hard to determine whether that is really true. The fact that some scholars do not *recognise* feminist activism within academia does not validate the assumption there has been a 'loss'[51] of feminist values (Hemmings, 2011, pp. 24, 59-93). One problem is, however, that much of the knowledge produced is rarely measured, or even measurable,

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[51] I would argue that, despite the occasional perceived inaccessibility of feminist theory, it is more visible and more relevant today than ever before. In addition, while feminist theory can sometimes be perceived as too abstract, there is nothing to prevent feminist theorists from also being activists (combining *abstract* theory and practical pursuit of social change).

which makes the criteria for participating in new in-groups less transparent. This form of exclusion can obstruct the production of equality[52]. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to promote more diversity of research methods within feminist art theory, hoping to give researchers, practitioners and activists from diverse backgrounds equal positions.

The fourth starting point of the proposed transdisciplinarity is the fact that feminist activism needs a *representation* of feminist strategies (cf. Fraser, 2013, p. 13), which will be elaborately revisited in Chapter Five. 'Representing' is similar to 'framing' in socio-political sciences (Walby, 2011, pp. 73-75), which consists of aligning the interests of individuals through an overall framework, and which can mobilise them as a social movement. In feminist art history, the term framing has been used too to provide new views of relationships between feminism, art production and art histories (examples are Parker and Pollock, 1987; Robinson, 2001 [1995]; Kokoli, 2008). As feminism often offers new approaches, the reinterpretation it offers can be called 're-framing'. Establishing new 'frameworks', however, can lead to disagreement on the clarity and inclusivity of messages (Walby, 2011, p. 74). The broader the movement, the less 'radical' its positioning. Now feminism has become more visible, feminism as a framework may not rely on the fixed and always visible identification of 'feminists'. There has never been 'one' way of representing feminism, and the proposed transdisciplinarity aims to *frame* this through communicating the use of research, practice *and* activism, reaching broader audiences.

There is, nevertheless, urgency within feminism to represent the intersectionality of feminism, and address the diversity among marginalised positions. Intersectionality needs to be represented in order to avoid the (re)production of inequality (Crenshaw, 1989; Verloo, 2013; Collins and Bilge, 2016), as was discussed in the previous chapter. Strategies for social change need representational forms that are *non-hegemonic* (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo, 2009a, pp. 8-10) and *reflexive* (Bacchi, 2009). The 'semiotic' production of categories, which has been a topic of feminist visual cultural analyses since the 1970/80s, forms an obstacle in social justice practice[53] of intersectional gender equality. Overcoming gender inequality by continuously *communicating* categories may not make it easy for recipients to understand that, in fact, categories are 'unstable' (Riley, 1988, p. 5) and 'intersectional' (Crenshaw, 1989). Without a visible intersectional gender perspective of 'women', social justice practice can lead to (new) stigmatisation, competitiveness and reproduction of inequality (Verloo, 2013). The necessary 'representation of

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[52] For example, queer theory is a new trajectory for many studies, but can also be criticised for being unproductive (Barker and Scheele, 2016, p. 151).
[53] Practices that deal with intersectional gender equality consist of, for example, research recommendations, policymaking, monitoring and evaluation, but also campaigns, social movement building, advocacy and litigation.

intersectionality' can support the *displacement of categories* (as called for by Verloo, 2013, p. 899). There is a necessity of representing intersectionality in research, practice and activism in non-hegemonic and reflexive ways (the fifth starting point of the proposed transdisciplinarity), which 'feminist art' could potentially contribute to, as argued in this thesis.

'Feminist art' strategies, however, may not actually be able to provide representations of intersectionality, encountering barriers in overcoming gender inequality in art settings. As Chapters Three and Four will demonstrate, production of categories and 'good art' definitions are interlocked. Besides the fact that 'feminist art' may not fully represent intersectionality,[54] a bigger problem is that dominant theoretical, socio-political and economic structures that *signify* 'art' obstruct the recognition of intersectional feminist art as 'good' and belonging to Art History. The 'feminist art' used in the proposed transdisciplinarity may actually never be(come) 'art' due to discursive politics. The proposed transdisciplinarity, therefore, aims to contribute to creating more recognition of feminist art and support the production of multiple art values, which is the sixth starting point of the proposed transdisciplinarity. The instrument 'art' used for the attainment of social equality needs simultaneous 'restructuring', as has been argued by feminist art theorists. The proposed transdisciplinarity supports such feminist restructuring, facilitating what I call *dynamic* research positioning, consisting of the *layering* of research identities (further discussed in sub-section 2.3.5).

The last starting point for proposing transdisciplinarity is the fact there is an actual opportunity for feminist art to have an actual function and *meaning* outside the arts, which can support the feminist objective of restructuring art histories. Discussing intersectional and cross-movement social justice practice, Verloo asks, 'to what degree is displacement [of categories] *visibly* developed as a strategy?' (2013, p. 899, my emphasis). In this thesis, the visible strategy that Verloo calls for is argued to be the *combination of 'feminist art' research, practice and activism.* There are many 'feminist' and 'queer' artists who displace identity categories in their art, as well as apply feminism as critical mode of inquiry. One example is my cartoon on intersectionality (Figure 4). In this cartoon, the proverbial elephant in the room is introduced to highlight the difficulties of addressing social inequality in research, practice and activist settings. Having started a doctoral research, I was in need of a way to *represent intersectionality*. When such artworks become part of research, practice and activism collaborations to increase their impact, the applied

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[54] Intersectionality of gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, socio-economic class, disability, age et al.

transdisciplinarity can help *frame* the artworks in multiple art and non-art signifying fields.
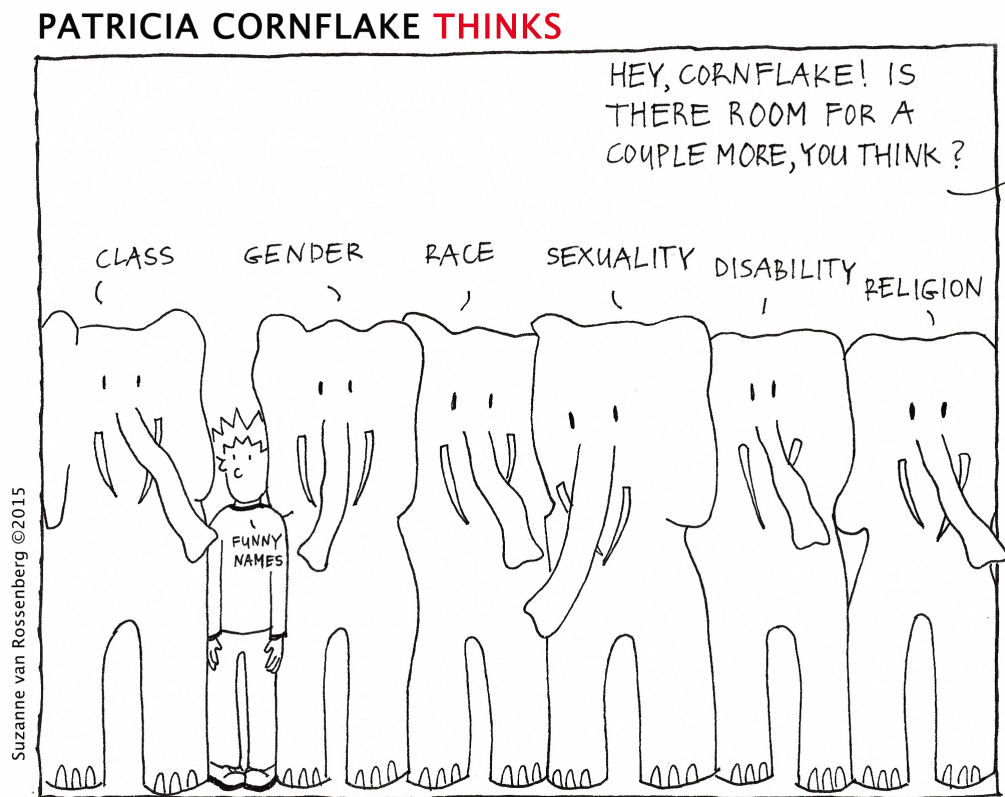
Fig. 4 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Intersectionality*, 2015. [Digital image]

Combining these seven starting points, the proposed transdisciplinarity can be beneficial to feminist art research, feminist art practice, socio-political sciences, social justice practice and activism, as will be in depth discussed in the following chapters. Feminist and queer artists may be able to develop representations of intersectionality, but this would only be sensible if those artists' artworks do not (re)produce inequality, within and outside the arts. The conducted research has been dedicated to understanding those structures that are necessary to avoid the (re)production of social and economic inequality, which has led to a transdisciplinary approach to creating positive social change within and beyond the arts. Therefore, the following chapters will take into account art theoretical, socio-political and economic considerations. The next section (2.2) provides an initial visualisation of the model, including some further explanation.

2.2 Visualising the proposed transdisciplinarity

The previous section introduced seven starting points that form the rationale behind developing a transdisciplinary model in which 'feminist art' plays an important role. In this section, this rationale is translated into a visual representation that may help the reader understand the proposed mechanism. Figure 5 illustrates that feminist art can be part of collaborations with many disciplines and areas, producing *representations of intersectionality* for those diverse fields. The production of categories is an issue in all research settings, them being 'signifying' mechanisms that produce (conservative) values. The inclusion of 'feminist art' in those fields can help destabilise the constant need for categorisation.
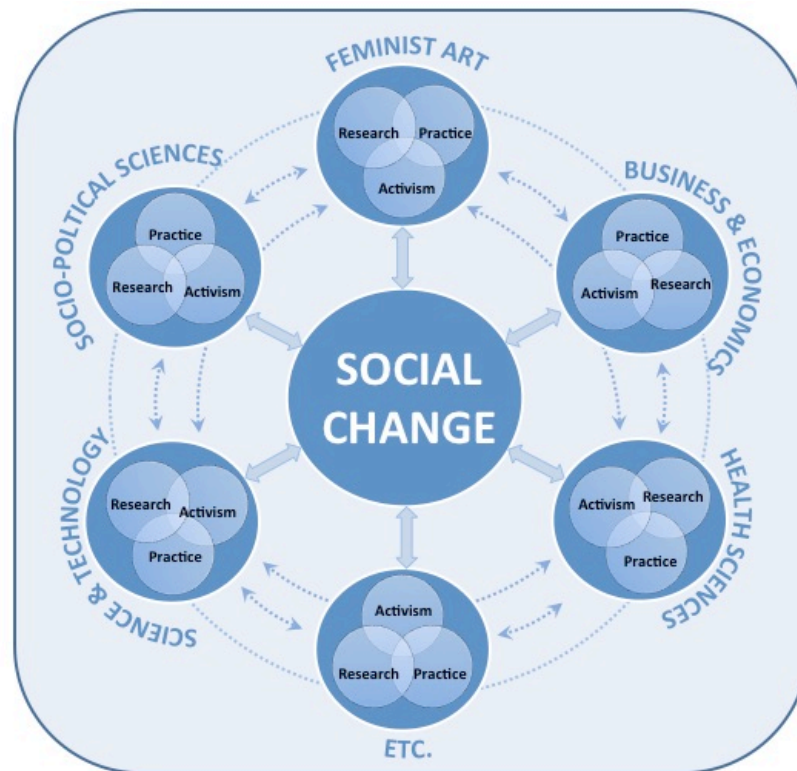
Fig. 5 A transdisciplinary model for social change

The rationale described in section 2.1 has demonstrated a collaboration opportunity between feminist art (research, practice and activism) and socio-political research, practice and activism, which is the focus of this thesis. Chapters Three and Four will further explore why feminist artists and researchers would be interested in engaging with such transdisciplinarity. After having found potential reasons, 'feminist art' can become a first stage of the proposed transdisciplinarity, as visualised in Figure 6. The 'feminist art'

circle (red) includes art research (including Art History), art practice (such as art making, curating, exhibiting, writing and educating) and activism by artists, art professionals and researchers. The transdisciplinarity amongst 'feminist art' research, practice and activism aims to create positive 'social change' (in the centre of the model), but cannot yet do so without also creating *meaning* and recognition outside the arts.
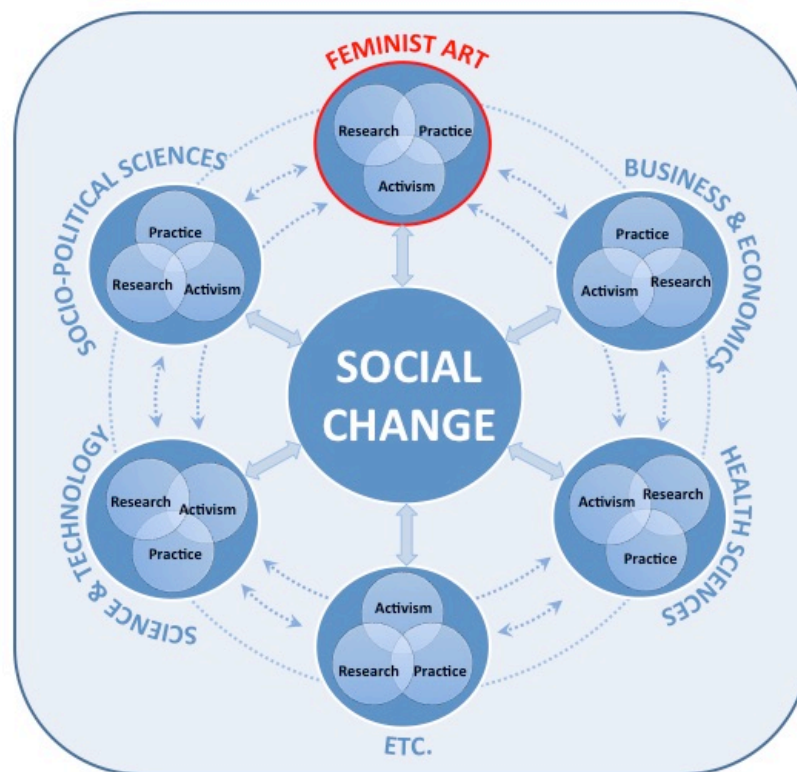
Fig. 6 A transdisciplinary model for social change: feminist art

As mentioned, this research focuses on the collaboration between feminist art and socio-political sciences, instigating the use of 'feminist art' as the representation of intersectionality necessary for creating equality (further contextualised in Chapter Five). Once there is a 'transdisciplinary' relationship between the two fields, in which research, practice and activism are all equally important, it may be possible to produce long-lasting positive social change that conquers the negative effects of durable inequality (as visualised in Figure 7). Chapter Five will discuss, in depth, the socio-political parameters of the proposed transdisciplinarity for positive social change; Chapter Six the economic parameters.
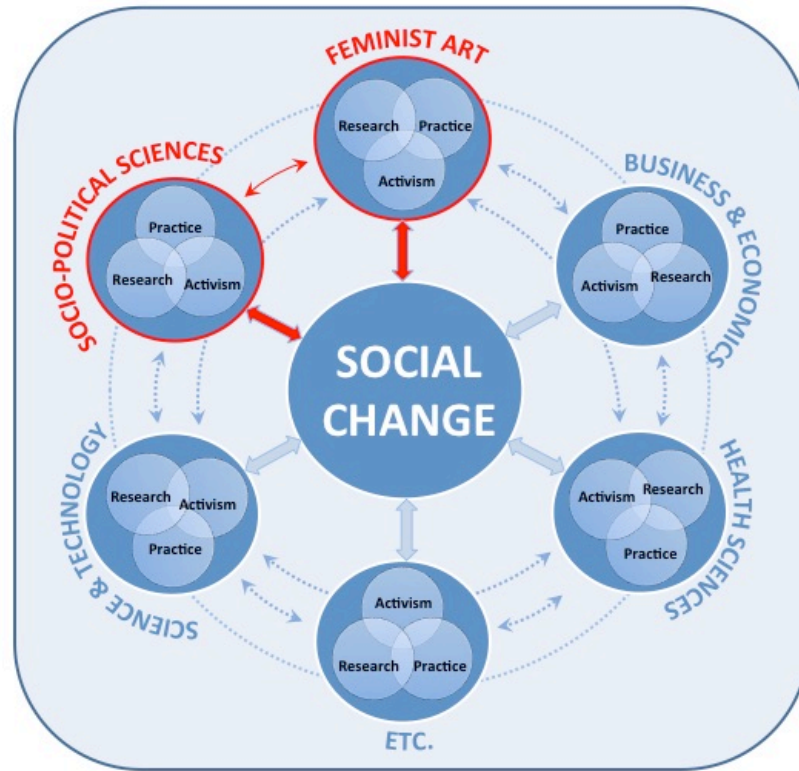
Fig. 7 A transdisciplinary model for social change: feminist art and socio-political sciences

2.3 'Yes, but...' – Anticipating potential criticism

This section discusses a selection of questions, responding to, as well as pre-empting, some of the potential criticism that my proposal of transdisciplinarity may attract. In research settings, a critical attitude towards feminist approaches, use of art as research and the role of activism can be found. Such criticism can be constructive, and I think the questions listed below are valid points to consider. My responses to the potential criticism are based on my understanding of the literature, and contextualise my position as a researcher.

2.3.1 Will the proposed transdisciplinarity promote radical relativism in art research?

The proposed transdisciplinarity promotes plural interpretations of art, which to some readers may resonate with 'radical relativism' (e.g., Smith, 2009, p. 253), allowing for *non-expert* interpretations of art. Art historians may fear that the use of transdisciplinarity will render the discipline Art History, including its rich, in-depth knowledge, unimportant. The value of 'art' would allegedly be decreased through, among others, too much focus on politics and money, and/or not enough attention to, for example, techniques, composition, themes and artistic strategies. The proposed transdisciplinarity does *not* instigate such relativism, for the reasons set out below.

Socio-political and economic structures play a role in the creation of societal definitions of 'good art' (further discussed in the Chapter Three). Opinions can differ about whether these socio-political and economic circumstances *should count* in art signification. This thesis argues they should, because such a view of art will more 'completely' represent artworks, making the *implicit* conditioning of socio-political and economic structures more transparent. Therefore, critique of (radical) relativism is a matter of scope, facilitating a discussion on objectives of Art History as a discipline. When an artwork has the explicit objective to create a positive impact on society, should that impact then not count in its assessment, and be *assessed*? Different answers to this question reveal opinions on who should, and can, determine the boundaries of the discipline. This thesis argues that artists and art researchers together determine the boundaries of Art History, which involves making artworks' own objectives part of their signification, also when these objectives fall outside the arts. Such a proposal can be called 'radical', but not

relativist. Perhaps, the approach proposed in this thesis shows *a radical care* for the interpretation of artworks and inclusion of more diverse ones.

One should remember that even without taking political and economic conditions of artworks into account, art canons are still the result of *competing* aesthetic approaches. Art is centred around the question what constitutes the significance of artworks, and scholars have different approaches. Some art theorists may argue that the proposed transdisciplinarity will not lead to the most 'accurate' or 'favourable' interpretations of artworks, but they cannot *invalidate* the research approach, as it is as valid as their own. Very few art researchers apply methods to test whether their own signifying mechanism produces objectively 'more accurate' representations than other researchers'. Again, the aim is not to overhaul this arts system, but to create more diverse art criteria, more diverse *combinations* of art theoretical, socio-political and economic criteria, and 'testing' of them through more diverse research methods.

2.3.2 Will the proposed transdisciplinarity simply produce more 'bad' art?

Discussing the use of artworks in research, Leavy (2011, p. 121) writes that 'research-driven artistic works… need not be "great" works of art per se in order to be useful'. Such a comment can, indeed, be worrying. Though it is unclear what is precisely meant by 'great' in this context, proposing to leave matters of art quality in research settings behind oversimplifies the role of 'greatness' in art discursive and historical narratives. I would even argue that such an approach would not help marginalised artists obtain better positions, as many marginalised artists apply 'great art' criteria, whether subversively or not. Therefore, the proposed transdisciplinarity *engages* with the mechanism that creates 'Great Art' criteria, including the sexism and racism produced.

Art publics (either expert or non-expert) may, indeed, call the particular artworks part of the proposed transdisciplinarity 'bad' or 'not great'. However, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, positive *and* negative judgements are important for art signification. There is no indication that the proposed transdisciplinarity would facilitate a generally poorer quality of art. Artists and art theorists participating in transdisciplinary collaborations will apply art discursive and theoretical parameters for their work, by which they engage with a critical discussion on good art and art criteria. In the proposed transdisciplinarity, discursively constructed art criteria are taken seriously, and they are not rendered less important, simply because that would make using art for creating social impact easier.

Moreover, oversimplifying art signification may actually make it *more difficult* to create social impact within the arts, and would possibly even allow the 'new' art (that does not have to be 'great') to oppress marginalised artists.

Transdisciplinary settings will facilitate as much 'bad' art as non-transdisciplinary settings, taking into account the diverse, expert and non-expert, approaches to art quality. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to increase the diversity of 'Great Art' – art that is considered important and significant –, whilst reducing its sexism and racism. The awareness that *several* types of art can be 'great' may be more developed among feminist art scholars. Janet Wolff, for example, writes that '*there is no correct feminist aesthetic*' (1995, p. 16, emphasis in the original),[55]emphasising the importance of context for determining 'correctness' or quality of art. A focus on *context* is not the same as relativism, which will be revisited in sub-section 2.3.4.

2.3.3 Will specialist knowledge about art be under threat?

Will a transdisciplinary approach overshadow the role of art historical experts, and devalue the importance of specialist knowledge on art? The answer is no, because specialist and disciplinary research continues to be necessary in transdisciplinary approaches (Brown *et al.*, 2010, pp. 3-5; Leavy, 2011, p. 34). Defining transdisciplinarity,[56] Brown et al. describe it as 'the collective understanding of an issue [which is] created by including the personal, the local and the strategic, as well as specialized contributions to knowledge' (2010, p. 4).

Nevertheless, transdisciplinary frameworks may put the disciplinary production of knowledge into a different perspective. Osborne refers to disciplines '*transforming the meaning of their basic concepts*' (2015, p. 14, italics in the original), and this suggests that researchers need to be willing to change their 'basic' understanding of notions. Leavy remarks that 'transdisciplinary researchers have to give up the idea that their disciplinary values and assumptions are "the truth" and instead become hyper-aware of their disciplinary lenses' (2011, p. 35). This hyper-awareness can be detected in the writing of

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[55] The definition of 'feminist art' is further discussed in Chapter Three.
[56] The origins of 'transdisciplinarity' can be traced back to the beginning of the 1970s (Leavy, 2011, p. 24; Osborne, 2015, p. 9). In academic terms, transdisciplinarity has become a collection of *discursive* approaches. In search for solutions to complex problems, researchers can work in multi-, inter-, cross- and transdisciplinary ways. In *multidisciplinary* research, a combination of disciplines is used to solve one problem (Brown *et al.*, 2010, p. 4). Interdisciplinarity is constituted by the common ground of two or more disciplines, which may then later form its own discipline (Brown *et al.*, 2010, p. 4). Leavy interprets multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity on an increasing scale of 'interaction and integration between disciplines' (2011, p. 18).

feminist authors such as Hemmings (2011), Sedgwick (2003), Pollock (1999) and Phelan (1993a), discussed in Chapter Four. The proposed transdisciplinarity is especially interesting for those art researchers who are committed to creating positive social change[57], for whom staying within one discipline will not lead to the results they envisage.

Specialist knowledge will not be under threat in the proposed transdisciplinarity, but the *politics* of specialist knowledge will be addressed. Transdisciplinarity can help researchers overcome hegemonic and hierarchal boundaries of disciplines (Osborne, 2015, p. 9), an aim to be found in feminist art research too (further discussed in Chapter Four). In the following chapters, it will become clearer why the issues of sexism and racism in the arts are not easily solved within one discipline, such as Art History. Solving the 'double problem' of art and gender requires multiple disciplinary approaches, and, arguably, 'prioritize[s] the problem at the centre of research over discipline-specific concerns, theories or methods' (Leavy, 2011, p. 9). In other words, inter/disciplinary restructuring of the discipline of Art History and specialist art historical approaches *can* exist next to each other, but the feminist objective of positive social change remains the key focus. This will be elaborately contextualised in Chapter Four.

2.3.4 How objective is research facilitated by the proposed transdisciplinarity?

As mentioned above, the proposed transdisciplinarity engages with the *politics* of knowledge production. Does this make the proposed research mode more biased than other research modes? Donna Haraway (1988, p. 582) claims that the dominant interpretation of research objectivity can be seen as a 'god trick', which is described by Sandra Harding as 'speaking authoritatively about everything in the world from no particular location or human perspective at all' (2004a, p. 4). It would be impossible for any researcher to understand and see 'everything', that is, the network of all conditions that form the contexts of their understanding. Engagement with the politics of knowledge production does not exclude 'objective' research positions; it simply reemphasises the

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[57] Interestingly, Clare Hemmings started her close reading or discourse analysis of feminist academic writing in *Why stories matter* (2011) with an interdisciplinary way of data collection. However, Hemmings admits she stopped the data collection because of a shortage of time. In Humanities and critical theory, where research conclusions do not necessarily have to be evidence-based, this may not count as a significant weakness. The book won the Feminist and Women's Studies Association annual FWSA Book Prize in 2012. Hemmings' research might have benefited from a collaborative approach, which may have needed some adjustments in disciplinary assumptions. Most likely, such an approach would have taken more time and money than was perhaps available, as well as the willingness and energy to collaborate.

importance of *research context*, including its discursive, socio-political and economic structures. The proposed transdisciplinarity is as 'objective' as any other research that acknowledges research contextuality. However, it does promote feminist and 'intersectional' epistemological perspectives, as further discussed below.

Critique of dominant understandings of research objectivity is a key feature of feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 2004b, pp. 1-17; Leavy, 2009, pp. 7-8), part of the feminist 'branch' of Epistemology, developed over the last four decades. In feminist theory, 'positioning oneself' or 'giving an account of oneself' (see, for example, Butler, 2005) refer to acknowledging that knowledge is *contextual* and 'situated' (Haraway, 1988). 'Feminist' research methods are justified in the same way as non-feminist research methods, in their specific fields or disciplines. However, authoritarian structures in research and science may suppress alternative voices (Harding, 2004a, pp. 4-5; Leavy, 2009, p. 7),[58] a mechanism through which marginalised researchers remain marginalised due to a continued lack of power, influence, status and income. Challenging this given probably needs strategies that categorise the marginalised actors in question as 'feminist', 'woman' and 'Black', which can lead to their (further) stigmatisation. This topic is revisited in this thesis, urging for constant re-negotiation of those categories.[59]

Sumi Cho, Kimberlé W. Crenshaw and Leslie McCall (2013) have started developing an *intersectional* research approach[60] to the production of knowledge, which acknowledges the multiple disadvantages (and privileges) that diverse researchers encounter. An intersectional studies research approach can facilitate the synergy between inquiry and praxis (Collins and Bilge, 2016, pp. 31-62), which is necessary to solve social inequality. An intersectional perspective is incredibly important, but it also remains unsure whether the *theorisation* of intersectionality will eventually benefit marginalised researchers. Will another cycle of academic knowledge production make a difference, and is it worth investing in (emotionally)?[61]

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[58] In the past, feminist scepticism towards theory was reported (Wolff, 1995, p. 16; Squires, 2000, p. 12), claiming that any production of knowledge within traditionally 'male' research frameworks is compromised. Monique Wittig speaks of 'the straight mind' of sciences and disciplines, which 'oppresses all women and many categories of men' (2001, p. 38).
[59] Diversity tools such as the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charters may stimulate universities and research institutes to facilitate those value re-negotiations *in practice*.
[60] The proposed Intersectional Studies consist of three forms of engagement, which can be summarised as 1) intersectional analysis and application of an intersectional framework, 2) making intersectionality work within disciplines and discursive debates and 3) an inherent relationship between intersectional academia and activism including intersectionality in political actions (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, pp. 785-786).
[61] Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016, p. 32) write: 'Within intersectionality as critical praxis, most activists do consider power relations and social inequalities as central to their work, yet they may feel that ideas themselves, especially theoretical reflections on intersectionality, are luxuries

2.3.5 Can a researcher have more than one position?

As described above, the production of knowledge can be said to be contextual, however does that mean that a researcher works from a single position or a single identity? When a researcher is, for example, a woman and Black, and writes from this socio-political position, her standpoint is not necessarily static or one-dimensional. Myra Marx Ferree writes that 'the "intersection of gender and race" is… a *process* through which "race" takes on **multiple** "gendered" meanings… depending on whether, how and by whom race-gender is seen as relevant' (2009, p. 87, italics in the original; my emphasis in bold). A marginalised researcher usually applies more than one identity at once, and the relevance of each of those identities depends on the context. This is, however, often difficult to communicate in (academic) texts (revisited in the following chapters). Therefore, an intersectional approach promotes research as *active*, that is, as 'doing' instead of 'being' (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, p. 795). The recognition and *de-marginalisation* of researchers can only be obtained, when research, practice and activism are combined (cf. Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013; Collins and Bilge, 2016). Dominant and privileged stakeholders, however, may take researchers who are, for example, also practitioners or activists less seriously.

For marginalised researchers, research can be a constant, activist battle. Movements between different fields and disciplines are not only important for troubling discursive and disciplinary boundaries, but also to receive recognition in, at least, one of those fields, and capitalise on that recognition. Such strategic and activist research positioning instigates what I would call the *layering* of research subjectivity, whether that is the multiplicity of identities, disciplines or professions. The layering of *identities* is important, because too much focus on one-dimensional categorisation contributes to the (re)production of social inequality (further discussed in this thesis). The need for 'dynamic' positioning of researchers in terms of diverse fields, theories and practice, as well as diverse identities, is one of the core arguments in this thesis. This layering of research subjectivity will be further illustrated in the following chapters.

2.3.6 Can art be research?

A researcher may be also an artist, but can their art ever be considered research? There is a considerable body of scholarship around art as research, which I will refer to as arts-

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they cannot afford. Some activists even reject social theory, failing to see how ideas themselves can move people to action'.

based research (cf. Leavy, 2009). Arts-based research practice is extremely broad, and there is a lot of discussion about how diverse artistic research practices produce knowledge. Henk Borgdorff (2007, p. 5), for example, distinguishes research *on* the arts, research *for* the arts and research *in* the arts, which, of course, also overlap each other in practice. The four *discursively* produced 'rationales' of artistic research may be summarised most quickly as: 1) the paradigm shift, 2) the art work as research, 3) research as the art work and 4) the fact research and art similarly produce knowledge (Solleveld, 2012, p. 79). There is no doubt that arts-based knowledge production can be considered valid and useful,[62] but its recognition in academic spaces may not necessarily reflect this.

Art as research, or vice versa, can be part of the proposed transdisciplinarity for positive social change. Discussing the increase of 'public scholarship', Leavy (2011, p. 105) argues that arts-based research can greatly help solve transdisciplinary world problems through its diverse modes of enquiry, participation and communication. Artistic practice can be used in '*data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation*' (Leavy, 2009, p. ix, emphasis in the original). The role of artists and creative professionals in social and environmental research is not uncommon. The Wellcome Trust, for example, financially supports the interdisciplinarity of art and sciences to support social and environmental change. Another example is the collaboration between artist Fabian Vogler and researcher Katinka Schweizer, who have made sculptures part of communicating 'intersex' in research and practice settings.

Arts-based methods tend to stimulate researchers to 'position themselves', as reflexivity is very much part of the artistic, creative process. This is generally a good contribution to research and science settings, and it can help de-marginalise researchers in disadvantaged positions. Epistemologically, arts-based researchers may draw upon auto-ethnographical approaches for justifying their research approach (Leavy, 2009, pp. 25-62). It should be noted, however, that arts-based research does not by default produce positive social change. Some arts-based researchers may aim for a 'paradigm shift' in particular research fields *without* addressing racism and sexism. It remains important to pose the questions for whom and for what purposes such a paradigm shift is set as an objective.[63]

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[62] Arguably, arts-based research frameworks are transparent about the fact they produce *values* instead absolute truths, and precisely this may confuse conservative and traditional researchers. The research reflexivity that arts-based research promotes can be an asset to academic and research settings, but its creative outlets do risk (re)producing social inequality, including those perpetuated by the 'Great Art' myth.

[63] Floris Solleveld (2012) arrives at this same question in his article 'A paradigm for what?' from a non-feminist, non-intersectional perspective. I do not think such an approach will lead to the most complete answer.

2.3.7 Can activism be part of research?

Activism may not be research, but activism is a quite common part of research strategies that advocate social justice. Participation in research designs, for example, has been developed over the last decades as a way of empowering participants,[64] especially when this has concerned marginalised voices (Aldridge, 2015, p. 1). Research can then be seen as a vehicle for 'self-advocacy' (Aldridge, 2015, p. 5), in which researchers and participants become more equal actors. Another example is 'militant research' (Bookchin *et al.*, 2013),[65] which has resulted in a handbook that promotes the research practice of visual culture artists, activists and academics in Argentina, Spain, Egypt, India and the US. The authors interpret 'militant' as *persistent* rather than violent, and define militant research as something that 'works in and with the movement it is concerned with' (Bookchin *et al.*, 2013, p. 5). In 2016, the London School of Economics and Political Science started the Collective Action Forum,[66] which aims to bring academics and activists together (Chalcraft, 2017).

It is necessary to be critical of activist approaches within research settings, for reasons of contamination of data, as well as the conflicts that can arise between researchers and participations (cf. Aldridge, 2015, p. 5). Another important concern is that the research practice may not actually lead to positive social change. The latter is described by John Schostak and Jill Schostak (2008). In exploring 'radical' research approaches, the authors, in first instance, propose the '"smuggling" [of] practices, values and courses of action into a project, that is, operating by stealth' (2008, p. 8). Researchers 'smuggle' their activism into a research setting[67]by not calling it activism. After suggesting this idea, however, the authors advised against it, because when one's true agenda is revealed, conflict among

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[64] Jo Aldridge (2015, p. 156) offers a model in which she recognises four stages of research participation: the participant as object (of study), the participant as subject, the participant as actor and participant-led research. The fourth option potentially leads to the greatest degree of emancipation of the research participants, which positions both researchers and participants as *activists*.

[65] The handbook itself also originates from activist engagement in Occupy Wall Street in New York City.

[66] John Chalcraft writes: 'The CAF is based on the idea that academics can benefit from interaction with activists in developing, disseminating and achieving impact for their research. Activists, in turn, can benefit from links with academics in enhancing their collective capacities to bring about or resist change' (2017). See: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/government/2017/03/01/what-can-academics-and-activists-learn-from-each-other/

[67] Schostak and Schostak write that the 'smuggling' researcher 'operates under the mantle of "normal" research, hiding or infiltrating the radical research agenda that enables the collection and interpretation of data in ways that ultimately deconstruct and transform the project' (2008, p. 8).

stakeholders may instigate new power configurations that put marginalised individuals in an even worse position than before. Instead, Schostak and Schostak propose 'radical openness' (2008, p. 8) as a research approach that aims to bridge differences between (marginalised and dominant) stakeholders and challenge hegemonic structures.

This 'radical openness' can be used to describe the *activism* of the proposed transdisciplinarity. Participating researchers, as well as practitioners, can be 'activists' in their radical openness towards individuals, methods and approaches. In addition, the proposed transdisciplinarity facilitates collaboration with different types of activists, such as human rights organisations or activist artists groups. The most important aspect of 'activism' within the proposed transdisciplinarity is the acknowledgment that *action* is needed to make a difference. Therefore, collaboration with social justice advocates and human rights campaigners can be extremely useful in collecting strategies for creating change within academia.

Chapter 3. 'But… is it art?'
Art Practice in the Proposed Transdisciplinarity

In the previous chapters, three important elements of the proposed transdisciplinarity were discussed: social change, feminism and art. The combination of research, practice and activism was shown as an effective way to work towards social change. Feminism was presented as the strategic and temporary alignment of feminist research, practice and activism, through which feminist art (research, practice and activism) could, arguably, function as the *representation of intersectionality*. This chapter further discusses the justification of such a proposal, taking into account the structures in which art comes into existence and is defined *as art*. Art incorporated in the proposed transdisciplinarity *transgresses* the borders of traditional art spaces, and so the question arises if it can still be called art. Will art theorists, historians and critics regard the 'feminist art' that is part of the proposed transdisciplinarity as 'art'?

Section 3.1 investigates the discursive structures that define art, in which a dominant focus on art philosophical, conceptual and theoretical structures will be found and challenged. Feminism within art practice is further explored in section 3.2, introducing the notion of the 'displacement of dominant aesthetics'. I then consider how feminist art could contribute to positive social change within and outside the arts. Section 3.3 looks more closely at current feminist art practice, as well as the potential role of the proposed transdisciplinarity in the recognition of feminist art, taking into account the theoretical, socio-political and economic structures of art.

3.1 What counts as (good) art?

In Chapter One, art was shown to be a social practice (Pollock, 2003, p. 7) with its own theoretical/conceptual/philosophical, socio-political and economic structures. This thesis proposes the transdisciplinary instrumentalisation of this social practice, which entails the transgressions of art into other fields, by, for example, applying diverse and 'tactical' modes of inquiry, participation and communication. Such transgressions are in line with participatory, collaborative community artworks, which have reportedly become more

frequent since the 1990s (Kester, 2011, p. 1; Bishop, 2012, p. 1). The transgressions of artworks into other fields have become part of art theory and art histories. Crossing the boundaries of art, as also proposed in this thesis, is not considered to be problematic for art signification. However, not all transgressions receive the same (institutional) recognition. Dimitrakaki (2013, p. 12) argues that only a few social and political projects that adopt a gender perspective will draw institutional attention. This section further explores the circumstances of this predicament. It looks at how the meaning of transgressive artworks is created (3.1.1) and what role different art structures play (3.1.2), after which a proposed solution is advanced (3.1.3).

3.1.1 Can anything be art?

Who decides what art is? Who constructs its value and meaning in society? The academic disciplines of Art History, Visual Culture, Sociology and Economics offer a space for interpreting the meaning of artworks. Art History developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe, the UK being one of the latest countries to institutionalise the discipline (Pollock, 2014, p. 13). From the 1970s, Art History started to study mass culture visual imagery (Mirzoeff, 2015, p. 46) and developed broader visual culture approaches, in which feminism has played an important role (Jones, 2010a, p. 4). Since the arrival of digital media, however, the two disciplines have gradually separated over the last twenty-five years, and the first degrees in Visual Culture started to appear in the 1990s in the US and UK (Mirzoeff, 2015, p. 57). Subsequently, Visual Culture has challenged the conservatism of Art History, including the dominant idea that meaning always needs to be found *in* the image (Jones, 2010a, p. 3). Nevertheless, Art History remains important for artists to signify their work, including for those who work 'transdisciplinarily'.

Today, art researchers, such as art historians or visual culture scholars, may have different discursive backgrounds, but their socio-political approaches towards artworks originate from collaboration in the 1970s (Mirzoeff, 2015, p. 46). For example, Pollock's political approach to Art History,[68] which reflects the writing and teaching of art historian T.J. Clark (Pollock, 2003, p. 3, 2010, p. 22, 2014, p. 20), grew out of diverse approaches. For this reason, in the analysis of transdisciplinary art that aims for social change, a clear distinction between an art historical and a visual cultural approach may not be necessary. Moreover, when the inherent interdisciplinarity of feminism in Art History is acknowledged (Tickner, 1988, p. 94), there is no reason to limit the inter/disciplinary

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[68] In Chapter Four, we will see that, in the UK, Pollock has instigated important discursive parameters for the ways in which feminism should manifest itself in art histories and visual culture.

analyses and interpretations of artworks. (This last point is further discussed in Chapter Four.) Art History and Visual Culture can both provide critical analyses of socio-political artworks, whether they are billboards in public spaces or paintings in a gallery; they can complement each other. In this thesis, 'art' refers to both art and visual culture that can be signified as 'art' through the combination of its theoretical, socio-political *and* economic structures.

Art historian Terry Smith concludes in his book *What is contemporary art?* (2009, p. 267) that '[i]t follows from the mindset and the modes of practice of this generation of artists that they share no single answer to the question of what is contemporary art'. Not only artists, but also art historians, visual culture theorists, art critics, curators and spectators will have their own, different, opinions as to what constitutes the ontology of artworks today. Whilst the question 'What is art?' remains an important tool, as will be discussed later, the answer to the question should always be considered a *contextual* one, which is not a universal one (in line with Pollock, 2003, pp. 1-24). These 'individual' definitions create contextual inclusion and exclusion of artworks, resulting in preferences for what should be called art, what should be called *good* art, and what should not be called art.

Arguably, academic and disciplinary theorisations of what art is provide authority, as well as a dominant norm for the validation of artworks. This *differentiation* of what art is and what is not, applied and taught in academic and non-academic practice settings, is the vehicle of most art signification. Whether the spectators are experts trained in Art History or accidental audiences of an art performance in the street, the question whether something is to be considered art (or not) becomes part of the parameters of its very existence *as* art. After this 'concept-ion', one can have discussions about whether the artwork is 'good' or not, or art at all.[69] The discursive expression of this conditioning factor, in the form of contemporary art history and criticism, can be said to be embedded in the differentiating narrative called 'Great Art' and 'Artist as Genius' (as challenged by Nochlin, 1988, first published in 1971). In other words, disagreement with the academic and institutional norm of 'Great Art' and the quality it prescribes does not affect the discipline's authoritarian claim. It rather reinforces the vehicle for the constitution of 'art' in both institutional and marginal settings. However, only very few 'artworks' will be considered *Great* and recognised as such in museums, books, newspapers and/or television programmes.

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[69] As Pollock points out, many artworks do not have the creation of beauty or comforting feelings as their aim (2003, p.8).

In the first chapter, art was presented as a social practice that is culturally restrained and pressured (Pollock, 2003, p. 7). As described earlier, art has theoretical, socio-political and economic signifying structures that together form the aesthetics of the work. However, in institutional and mainstream interpretations of art, theoretical, philosophical and conceptual structures have been prioritised over socio-political and economic structures. Differently put, the combination of context, authorship[70] and reception *frames* the meaning of artworks (Bal and Bryson, 1991, pp. 176-188). Artists no longer need traditional art contexts, such as galleries, museums and art fairs, to make 'art' – as concepts and discourses can provide structures for authorship and the reception of art works outside the arts. The contemporary art space follows the artist. Interestingly, such an analytical approach can easily render transgressive artworks into 'Great Art', whilst, however, leaving socio-political and economic aspects *out of the picture*. Limiting aesthetics solely to conceptual and philosophical structures, as if socio-political and economic structures do not play a role, leads to a *closed* discussion of art signification. Nicholas Mirzoeff calls this research exercise 'a knowing pastiche that finds comments and critique to be the only means of innovation' (2001b, p. 4). In this thesis, the continuous creation and re-creation of so-called 'ultimate' meanings of art ('Art') is considered an *art game*. There is pleasure in the philosophical pondering about what art is, but, due to its repetitious character, the social impact of art may increasingly be rendered irrelevant for determining its aesthetic value. A critique of this limited view of aesthetics will follow in the next sections.

Art researchers are often confronted with subjects of research (artworks) that aim to transgress the definition of art and challenge art as a signifying mechanism (Kester, 2011, p. 7). Conceptually, these artworks have been easily signified as art, because transgressing the boundaries of art has become part of art signification. Artworks can become great *because* they challenged the conceptual parameters of art. Besides whether or not such an 'art game' is innovative or interesting, there is also the question of how long this could go on for. Art historian Arthur Danto (1997, 2000), therefore, has suggested an end of art, or rather an end of (one) taste. In reality, 'art' has never been in danger; the acclaimed end of art was just another version of the same philosophical art game.

The question, thus, whether 'anything' can be art (and art can be 'anything'), should be answered with yes *and* no. The combination of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures signifies the meaning of art and together they form the aesthetics of artworks.

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[70] The fact that authorship plays an important role in the recognition of art has made it difficult for anonymous artists or artists' collectives to be considered to make 'Great Art' (in line with Bal and Bryson, 1991, p. 182).

However, making conceptual structures dominant leads to a lack of analysis of socio-political and economic structures, even though they are as important for art signification. Peanut-butter floors, wooden replicas of cardboard boxes, 4'33" of silence and canned faeces,[71] to name a few 'Great' artworks, would never have been considered good art if their structures of authorship, context and reception had not helped *frame* them as such. If I were to create a Marmite floor in Trafalgar Square tomorrow, my identity as an artist, an art-historical context and communication with an audience would be necessary in order to render it an artwork, and, subsequently, to determine whether it is a good artwork or not. A Marmite floor as such is no art, but the *art game* is to show it can very well be. Simultaneously, regardless of any of this, my Marmite floor would be art, for reasons which are explained below.

The framing of my Marmite floor as art can be approached through the lens of a 'public' (cf. Tickner, 1988, p. 103; Warner, 2005)[72] – the art audience, often *imagined* by artists (in the process of art making) and art critics (in writing about artworks). Without the concept of an art public, there would be no art (in line with Warner, 2005, p. 8). Therefore, *seen from the perspective of an art public* 'anything' can be rendered art. There are no limits for artists and art critics to *imagining* the art public, which does not have to coincide with a real audience. Under these circumstances, renewing artists who envisage a yet unknown context for their art can be the misunderstood 'avant-garde', not yet recognised by the general audience. Therefore, in theory, my Marmite floor can be called art regardless of the recognition of its authorship, context and reception. My Genius artwork may simply be still misunderstood. The fact that passers-by may not understand that my Marmite floor is a (good) artwork does not influence its art signification. The only condition is that I, the artist, have somewhere declared it is an artwork[73]. At this point, I may be the only person who thinks my Marmite floor is art, but that is unimportant. In the discursive and philosophical narrative of Great Art, 'anything' can be art. In reality, however, not anything will be recognised as such in the public realm, which is the socio-political dimension of the question whether 'anything' can be art.

There are no rules as to what number of spectators or what amount of recognition is needed before something can be called 'art'. However, many artists themselves may need substantial spectatorship and reception in order to feel that their work has *mattered*. Therefore, the most important question here is: what would be the *point* of creating a

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[71] Artworks by respectively Wim T. Schippers (concept 1962/first exhibited 1969), Andy Warhol (first exhibited 1964), John Cage (1952) and Piero Manzoni (1961).
[72] The role of 'counterpublics' (Warner, 2005) plays a role in creating access for marginalised groups. This topic will be revisited later.
[73] For this reason, the short answer to 'Is this art?' is whether the maker of the object says so or not.

Marmite floor? And, *to whom* would it matter?[74] What has been the reason for artists to make artworks that show that daily life can be art? In addition, it is important to ponder whether these questions have predominantly been answered from art conceptual and theoretical points of view, and much less from socio-political and economic ones – as this may form an unconscious bias in art signification.

Turner Prize 2016 nominee Anthea Hamilton is the maker of 'a monumental pair of butt cheeks, casually spread, made to flank the doors of a New York apartment building' (Howard, 2016).[75] On the website *Hyperallergic.com*, Maria Howard notes: '[i]t's the same thing every year. The press has a field day with some sensational piece that challenges the very definition of art and the Turner Prize is front page news for the day' (2016). This critique suggests that the continuation of the conceptual art game, is, in fact, entangled with other interests. There is a mixture of politics and economics that drives the signification of (good) art, which may be thought to be irrelevant for the interpretation and monetary recognition of artworks, but does play a part in the coming into existence of artworks. Hamilton had surely seen a *point* in making the buttocks and exhibiting them as 'art', but (how) do we, as spectators, understand what that point was? In a way, the general notion of the 'art public' – that is, its imaginary role in the coming into existence and the display of the work – is used to generate visibility and economy for the Turner Prize. Therefore, questions of why the butt cheeks are (good) art should not remain within the conceptual borders of art aesthetics if the artwork is to be described accurately. How the socio-political and economic structures of art could become part of art interpretations is not yet so clear, which is discussed in the next section.

3.1.2 Is art signification too flexible, or not flexible enough?

If successful contemporary art can be loosely defined as *both* staying within *and* transgressing the borders of art, it is precisely the socio-political and economic structures of art that make this possible. They guarantee that there will never be an end to art. Nevertheless, art conceptual games can be more diversified than they are now. Hiding socio-political and economic interests, or claiming they have nothing to do with 'real' Great Art, stakeholders may keep audiences uninformed about all aspects that *signify* art. Art can then remain mystified and philosophical, and continue to exclude particular social groups. However, as feminist art historians such as Pollock (2003, p. 32) have argued, not paying attention to the socio-politics and economics of artworks will produce *inaccurate*

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[74] Taking into account intersections of gender, race, socio-economic class and so on.
[75] http://hyperallergic.com/327481/years-turner-prize-exhibition-makes-good-potential-shock/

and *invalid* art-historical interpretations and analyses. I would argue that obscuring socio-political and economic structures, which do play a role in the dominant definitions of good art[76], *misrepresents* art. Nevertheless, these incomplete definitions of art can, and have, become dominant in scholarship, exhibitions and media. Most importantly, they can be argued to be (still) structurally sexist, racist and classist (Nochlin, 2006, p. 30; Meskimmon, 2003, pp. 1, 71; Pollock, 2013, p. xviii; Jones and Silver, 2016a, pp. 25-26). In conceptual *art games*, art made by artists from diverse backgrounds is not equally valued.

Dominant combinations of theoretical/conceptual, socio-political and economic structures have the tendency to filter out the work of artists who are not 'masculine, heterosexual, white, Euro-ethnic, middle-class and able-bodied' (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 71). The artist who makes 'Great Art' is much less of a neutral subject than is presented to, and constituted by, the art public. This fact, however, only becomes visible the moment that race, gender, gender identity, class and sexual orientation are given their due attention. Challenging that myth of neutrality has often lead to the creation of 'counterpublics' (Warner, 2005), speaking to and making art for publics that *include* marginalised social groups. The artworks described in the two following vignettes (by Chitra Ganesh in this section and by Alison Bechdel in the next) can be seen as two different examples that are clearly not 'neutral' in their art expression. Subsequently, writing about these artworks could contribute to the constitution of a counterpublic, which is further explored in Chapter Four.

Vignette 1. Feminist museum comics

The blown-up panels of cartoons by Chitra Ganesh appropriate the style of popular Indian comic books to arrive at an own version of sexuality and gender power relations (displayed in the exhibition *Female Power* (2013) in the Museum of Modern Art in Arnhem, curated by Mirjam Westen). Spectators may be familiar with the enlarged comics that are canonised as part of 1950s Pop Art, and can interpret Ganesh's intervention as both the creation of visibility for 'women' and the appropriation (including *critique*) of Great Art narratives. Based on the exhibition of the work and the self-identification of Ganesh as an artist (Ganesh, 2016),[77] this work can be called art. As the art game prescribes, any discussion whether the blown-up panels are (good) art or not contributes

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[76] There is another important element of the formation of art canons that maintains the dominance of the conceptual in contemporary art discourse. Pollock (1999, p. 4) points out that artists embed themselves in art historical traditions by referring to their influences and predecessors. This cross-referencing may be similar to the politics of citation that Hemmings (2011, pp. 20-24, 161-190) has criticised. Pairing oneself up, or being paired up, with famous, publicly respected predecessors increases one's institutional recognition, which as a result may limit the diversity of our histories of art.

[77] http://www.chitraganesh.com/artist-statement/

to them being art. Beside the art conceptual structures, also the economic structures seem to follow the dominant signification of art, being part of an art exhibition in a contemporary art museum. Possible criticism of the work could be the result of spectators' rejection of the socio-political context of the work, including, for example, Ganesh's commentary of the position of 'women' in Indian culture and Western society. Such negative taste judgement, partly or completely based on the *socio-politics* of the work, could be a form of sexism.

In revisiting the signification of art that has a function outside art settings, the production of more and more artworks outside traditional art contexts does not trouble the general constitution and categorisation of 'art'. The question, therefore, is whether transgressions can do anything to reduce the structural and institutional discrimination that is embedded in the contemporary art game. In theory, any new trend or conceptual expression that provokes discussion can be defined as another paradigm shift inside the arts (Kester, 2011, p. 7). This part of the contemporary art game has been referred to as a paradox (for example, Smith, 2009). It is a paradox that, according to Boris Groys (2013, p. 3), even incorporates the *politics* of taste. For Groys, the 'paradox-object' (2013, p. 4) is crucial for defining contemporary artworks that have a political impact. In other words, even when artworks have strong political, social or cultural components, the art game is said to continue to embed itself in a conceptually paradoxical situation. However, for restructuring aesthetics and 'displacing aesthetics' (the objective of feminist art practice and research), such an objectifying mechanism forms a true obstacle. This will be further discussed in the next section, which raises the question whether the objectification of art is always the desired approach towards transgressive artworks.

The structural exclusion of artworks made by artists in marginalised positions may be unfair, but is it intentional? Art historians, curators, art critics and artists responsible for, and in charge of, art's exclusionary mechanism simply judge art on what *they* define as 'good art'. They can claim to dislike the visual appearance of Ganesh's artworks without explicitly critiquing its gender socio-politics, the former supposedly not being a form of sexism. Though one should be open to the possibility no discrimination occurs, an analysis of applied *combinations* of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures of artworks that are rejected can help us better understand the structural discrimination of 'women' artists. Perhaps dominant gatekeepers keep themselves uninformed about the implicit bias in focusing on the *image* only, which Visual Culture has argued to be conservative. They may have no professional or personal interest in changing or re-focusing the dominant parameters of art, keeping socio-political structures *less significant* in the interpretation and analysis of art than art theoretical ones. For this reason, art and

research that aspire to change dominant perspectives of art need additional, strategic forms of activism.

Potential unawareness about the exclusionary effect of constructing the meaning of art on predominantly conceptual and theoretical parameters may be a form of unconscious 'agency in unknowing' (Van Heesch, 2009, p. 142), which makes stakeholders reject any new regime that would take away their agency.[78] Such unintentional gatekeeping can be called 'durable inequality' (Tilly, 1998) and it is not limited to 'masculine' or non-feminist approaches. Art historians, curators, art critics and artists who call themselves 'feminist' can also be gatekeepers. The complexity lies in working with art's exclusionary mechanism that will always constitute a particular taste. In that sense, a 'feminist' taste is not necessarily less exclusive. The question is whether feminism has succeeded in establishing a 'fairer' inclusion and exclusion of artists. And, what is 'fair' in the art context? Any new regime of meaning making within a mechanism that differentiates by definition creates a tension between the inclusion of (new) voices and the exclusion of other (new) voices. In fact, feminist art researchers have not ignored this predicament, but have used it as the starting point for re-theorising art histories, which is further explored in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the object-focus of art signification has limited the possibility of fully diversifying art signification, as will be further demonstrated below.

3.1.3 Recognising art that has a social impact

As discussed in Chapter One and earlier in this chapter, despite the growing number of participatory, collaborative and community art projects (Kester, 2011, p. 1; Bishop, 2012, p. 1), sexism and racism in the arts continue. The focus on the social structures of art has widened the art space, but has not necessarily changed it. Why have transgressive artworks not led to a broader range of approaches to re-signify artworks and restructure art canons?

Welfare, health and environmental city policies have each played a part in the increasing opportunities for social art contexts. Art practices may be, for example, situated in environmental activism and social work (Kester, 2011, p. 7) or, as a more recent

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[78] Van Heesch (2009, p. 142) describes 'agency in unknowing' with regard to people in marginalised (as opposed to dominant) positions. Women with XY sex chromosomes in a medical regime that regards them as the '*sine qua non* of masculinity' (Van Heesch, 2009, p. 142) have been reported to 'miss' clues that tell them they have an intersex disposition. The phrase 'agency in unknowing' can be extremely useful for any position. Dominant stakeholders, for example, may see themselves as emancipated, but often refuse to pick up the clues for becoming aware of their own discriminatory behaviour.

development, social justice agendas (Soskolne, 2015).[79] New York City-based artist and activist Lise Soskolne (2015) is very critical of such developments, as art is used for the justification of capitalist and neoliberal structures that distribute wealth in unequal ways. The arrival of artistic activities can gentrify and up-market neighbourhoods, a process that will eventually push out low income groups altogether. For example, the concept of 'guerrilla gardening' in urban environments, which creates unexpected mini-gardens in public space for everybody to enjoy, has a completely different *meaning* when city councils or corporate businesses start to fund such initiatives for their own objectives.

The question of how to approach the socio-political and economic structures of artworks is primarily answered through art scholarship, and, consequently, art curation inspired by that scholarship. Not surprisingly, there is a focus on critical theory in the frameworks that art historians use to interpret and historicise transgressive artworks (examples include Kester, 2011; Bishop, 2012; Groys, 2013). As differentiation will never leave art, the *criteria* used when including or excluding transgressive artworks become ever more important. Grant H. Kester, therefore, rightly poses the question: 'How do we determine which transgressions *matter* in the arts?' (2011, p. 10, emphasis in the original) What new artistic transgressions progress our ideas of art significance? Should only theoretical and conceptual criteria be used for determining which transgressions matter, or also socio-political and economic ones?

Traditionally, art-philosophical discourses that frame the meaning of artworks produce *objects* of aesthetics and aesthetic theories (Bal and Bryson, 1991, p. 193). The signification of art, be that an object, happening, performance or participatory project, produces an *aesthetic object* that can function as the subject of art histories. Surprisingly, even though Kester acknowledges that transgressions of artworks should differentiate art critical approaches accordingly, he, nevertheless, concludes that collaborative practices 'don't supersede this textual approach' (2011, p. 11). The interpretation of art (its 'aesthetics') is returned to the object, constructed through writing about transgressive artworks from static points of view. The question is whether such static approach should be assumed and perpetuated. Groys, as previously mentioned, argues precisely the same with his paradox-objects. However, do art canons need to be inevitably constructed by the 'objectification' of artworks?

As Tickner (1988, p. 96) noted, in art histories that centre around objects, marginalised artists remain marginalised, because the category of art is not fundamentally changed. The

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[79] http://artanddebt.org/artist-as-debtor/

objectification of aesthetics, which has the parallel component of commodification of art in art economic settings (discussed in Chapter Six), does not offer much space for a re-focus on socio-political and economic structures in determining the value of artworks. This is further discussed in the next chapter. The restructuring of dominant aesthetics or 'Great Art', anticipated by feminist art research, often cannot take place while staying within the discipline, as it favours only particular art discursive approaches. However, outside the boundaries of dominant theory, artworks regularly displace dominant aesthetics, but are not framed as restructuring aesthetics, and recognised as significant as such. This thesis argues that a transdisciplinary approach can help *represent* the dynamic positioning of artworks that, as a result, can restructure dominant aesthetic discourses. This is further explored below.

Art historians, visual culture theorists and critics may assume that transgressive artworks can be analysed and interpreted within the borders of scholarship and theoretical discourse, as academic disciplines can be bent, stretched and opened up. However, as discussed in Chapter One, transdisciplinary and art-based methods show that working within one discipline only does not necessarily produce any (complete) answers (Leavy, 2009, pp. 1-24, 2011, p. 18). It is much more logical to think that 'correct' interpretations of socio-political artworks are produced on the borders of academic disciplines, practice and activism. The transdisciplinary approach towards art, as proposed in this thesis, can 'de-objectify' the histories of art for the purpose of better representation of art practice. This entails the necessary *displacement of dominant aesthetics*, which may then de-marginalise artists. The vignette below provides an example of approaching marginalised art in a transdisciplinary way, contextualising the comics *Dykes to watch out for* by Alison Bechdel.

Vignette 2. The social impact of feminist comics outside the art museum

Alison Bechdel's comics *Dykes to watch out for* (as documented in Bechdel, 2009) was produced over a period of twenty-five years (1983-2008) and published in magazines and books. Recently, individual pages of the comics were exhibited in the House of Illustration (London, 2016). They are also sold through Bechdel's website (2017b),[80] as 'artworks'. Published in a magazine, the comics became 'a countercultural institution' (Bechdel, 2017a)[81] and fulfilled an important role in increasing the visibility and emancipation of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer 'women' and 'men'. As lesbian art has been marginalised in the arts and art histories (Hammond, 2000, pp. 7-13; Burk, 2013; Jones

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[80] http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/original-art-for-sale
[81] http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/about

and Silver, 2016a, p. 24), the importance of the work, made under such oppressive circumstances, is significant. Though this impact has not been measured formally, as far as we know, few feminist artworks have positively contributed to the wellbeing of so many readers. A recent call for papers invited contributions to an essay collection about Bechdel's work from visual culture *and* art history perspectives (Utell, 2016).[82] Interpreting and analysing the comics as 'art' may help Art History inform a transdisciplinary approach that shifts the dominant focus from art theory to socio-political impact of artworks.

Giving an account of the conceptual, socio-political and economic structures of art can be seen as 'dynamic' research positioning, which coincides with an intersectional research approach (discussed in Chapter Two). From an epistemological point of view, the constant objectification of art in art histories can be seen as a 'god trick' (discussed in section 2.3.4). Similar to the position of a deity in religious contexts, the researcher is suggested to oversee everything from a single static position, and construct significance accordingly. The fact that art historians and critics draw on this single viewpoint even when dealing with socio-political and transgressive artworks (whose meaning is constructed in more than one field or carries significance in multiple fields) can be regarded as conservative. All artworks, regardless of the circumstances under which they are made and exhibited, are expected to 'work' on the same aesthetic terms, or they will be dismissed. In reality, it is more accurate to assume that significance crosses borders and frameworks. To capture the significance of transgressive artworks, art researchers need to cross those borders too. This thesis suggests that a possible way for art researchers to do so is the proposed transdisciplinarity.

It is crucial to recognise that the interpretations of transgressive art practices are contextual *narratives* that may misrepresent artworks when restricted to one field. It is incorrect to call them 'bad' artworks, simply because the art meaning making process is multi-dimensional. Many experts are gatekeepers of *their version of* differentiation in the arts, often focusing on the theoretical and art conceptual structures as dominant signifiers. As discussed in Chapter Two, allowing for multiple interpretations may be seen as 'radical relativism', taking us away from the 'truth' and diminishing the role of expertise knowledge. However, precisely the opposite may be true: openness to transdisciplinary ways of interpreting can show *more care for the 'truth'*, as well as social equality. The next section (3.2) will demonstrate that representing *multiple* art values matters in feminist art practice.

[82] https://janineutell.org/2016/06/25/call-for-papers-the-comics-of-alison-bechdel/

3.2 Can feminist art influence what counts as (good) art?

Displacement of aesthetics entails the displacement of *both* the category of art (contextualised in the previous section) *and* multiple categories of identity. The latter consists of the application of an intersectional gender perspective, as set out in Chapter One. Only the successful displacement of both will lead to social change within the arts. In the proposed transdisciplinarity, feminist art is argued to potentially *represent intersectionality*. Collaborative, transdisciplinary combinations of feminist research, practice and activism can be seen to contextually define feminism. In this section, the role of feminist art practice in this constellation is further contextualised, highlighting what it can contribute to transdisciplinarity and the displacement of dominant aesthetics.

In theory, there is no difference between the signification of feminist and non-feminist contemporary art. Both are social practices that have theoretical/conceptual, socio-political and economic structures that signify them. However, feminism does represent an ideology that may inform particular combinations of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures. The question remains whether 'feminist art' can actually displace dominant aesthetics, and if so, how. Section 3.2.1 further discusses the parameters of feminism in art settings. The subsequent two sections aim to illustrate how feminist art practice can contribute to the representation of intersectionality.

3.2.1 What is f-f-f-f-f-feminist art?

Art practices that can be called feminist are those that support feminism and its objectives. Feminist objectives may differ from context to context, as may the strategies used to achieve those objectives. It is very difficult to define feminism in the arts (illustrated below), which may undermine the understanding and effectiveness of feminist art strategies. There may be no *one* audience that they address, but, in fact, multiple.

Chapter Two has stated that feminism, at the very least, acknowledges the significance of sexual difference and/or gender in society. In *Art and feminism*, art historian Peggy Phelan defines feminism as '*the conviction that gender has been, and continues to be, a fundamental category for the organization of culture* [which] ... *usually favours men over*

women' (Phelan, 2014, p. 18, emphasis in the original). For feminist visual culture, the acknowledgement of gender or sexual difference is also crucial (Jones, 2010a, p. 1). As briefly explored previously, communicating gender issues unavoidably instigates gender categorisation, and cannot always avoid reproducing gender hierarchies (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 3; Riley, 1988, pp. 16-17; Cowie, 1990). This is a reoccurring topic, elaborately explored in Chapters Four and Five as well, addressing feminist art research and activism, respectively.

With regard to art and feminism, a flexible approach towards gender is necessary, along with the acknowledgment of temporary, strategic 'fixity' of gender categories. Formulating a queer approach to visual culture, Amelia Jones writes that 'we do not know what we mean any more (if we ever did) when we say "woman", "lesbian", "queer", or "feminist" – and [...] this is a good thing' (2016, p. 12). Not knowing what categorised identities mean underlines the 'instability' of the category (Riley, 1988, p. 5) and emphasises that meaning is differently constructed within each communication between a sender and a receiver (Cowie, 1990, p. 128). As a result, destabilising the dominant value of 'women' (in relationship to art), and challenging sexism in the arts, do not appear to be straightforward at all. The temporary defining of identities complicates the strategy of *displacing* identity categories, which is necessary for both the displacement of aesthetics and the representation of intersectionality.

One could argue that feminism itself is inherently unstable in meaning, which affects the clarity and the success of its strategies. As a result, feminism may even include strategies that are not identified as feminist, but share feminist objectives (as argued by Walby, 2011, pp. 2-5). Such a flexible approach towards feminism can help avoid the policing of feminist parameters within the arts and visual culture (as aimed by Jones, 2010b, p. 2). Feminism in the arts needs to provide space for plurality, which suggests that there is not *one* definition of feminism, but possibly only a temporary, strategic determination of feminist strategies. A key question, then, is: what is *the objective* of these various contextual definitions of feminism?

As briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, the diversity of feminisms casts doubts over references to 'women' as one collective group. Feminist researchers in the arts have drawn on 'strategic essentialism' which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak contextualises *and* critiques in an interview with Ellen Roony (Roony and Spivak, 1989, pp. 124–56).[83] Robinson notes that it can be empowering to 'speak with one voice' (2001, p. 536). In

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[83] See also Landry and Maclean (1996, p. 204).

conversation with art historian Lara Perry, Reilly explains strategic essentialism as 'temporarily accept[ing] the category of "woman" as a stable unity for the purposes of mobilising women' (Perry and Reilly, 2016, p. 50). There is a *dynamic* dimension to strategic identification: Collins and Bilge (2016, p. 133) recently noted that '[s]trategic essentialism is about the politics of performing different multiple identities from one context to the next'. The problem is, however, that homogenising people, even if only temporarily, has the tendency to *normalise* particular parameters, which are oppressive to subgroups that do not fulfil this norm (Muñoz, 2010, pp. 237-238)**.** Despite the theoretical flexibility of the concept, in practice, the limits of the word 'woman' in representing diversity do lead to oppression of alternative voices. This is revisited in Chapters Four and Five.

As socio-political approaches have shown, the strategic unification of groups does not dismiss the need for the *recognition* of marginalised subjects within marginalised groups (Crenshaw, 1989; Fraser, 1990, p. 64; Weldon, 2006, p. 56; Murray, 2016, pp. 3-9). Here, the need for the representation of intersectionality is greater than ever. S. Laurel Weldon (2006, p. 56) argues that '[t]he most effective way to ensure that… "internal minorities"… develop and voice their distinctive perspectives is… the opportunity for self-organization'. This suggests, as will be further explored later, that intersectional feminism can only be expressed through action, movement, participation, collaboration (in line with Collins and Bilge, 2016, pp. 42-62), visualising them as 'not static'. One could interpret José Esteban Muñoz's strategy of 'disidentification' (Muñoz, 2010, p. 239; Jones and Silver, 2016b, p. 33) as a form of self-organisation in art and visual culture, which challenges the potential policing of essentialist feminism. There is a necessity to, alongside the strategic essentialism of identities, to visibly *dis-identify*[84] with identities. For this reason, the representation of intersectionality must consist of simultaneous categorisation *and* de-categorisation. The question remains how this 'de/categorisation'[85] can be *represented*.

As discussed previously, counting of numbers of artists from marginalised positions is an important, visible strategy. We have seen examples by Guerrilla Girls, East London Fawcett Group and Maura Reilly. An interesting fact is that, according to Rozsika Parker and Pollock (2013, first published in 1981), the disappearance of 'women' artists from art

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[84] Muñoz argues that disidentification is 'a third term that resists the binary of identification and counteridentification' (2010, p. 239). This approach challenges the relationship between publics and counterpublics that Warner (2005) describes, an approach that will be used in Chapter Four. Muñoz pays attention to the fact that, regardless of the construction of sub-identities, the power to 'more inclusively' recognise and signify sub-identities still lies with the dominant group. Perhaps Warner's counterpublics that, sooner or later, become part of mainstream publics represents a hegemonic process that may facilitate durable inequality (Tilly, 1998).

[85] In this thesis, the term 'de/categorisation' is used for simultaneous categorisation and de-categorisation.

histories mainly took place in the twentieth century with the arrival of modern art and the opening up of a new market.[86] Could it be that *new* barriers for the recognition of 'women' great artists were created? The number of 'women' artists exhibiting in art institutional settings is seen as an increasingly urgent matter. However, it is very unclear whether essentialising gender identities without a *dis-identifying* strategy will change the dominant opinion about 'women' artists. The number of 'women' artists in museum exhibitions, galleries and art magazines seems to have been rising, but it is unclear whether this increase has enhanced the *diversity* of art signification. This lack of clarity may instigate disagreements amongst feminist stakeholders about what the best way forward is.

Sholette (2011, pp. 46-70) offers great insights into possible alternative strategies and describes a wealth of competing, succeeding, failing and contradicting art strategies that aim to challenge the normative parameters of art. In the 1980s Parker and Pollock called the diversity of feminism 'differing strategies' and warned of the 'real danger of remaining on the margins' (2013, p. 135), suggesting that too much disagreement would dangerously slow down or obstruct change. There is little evidence that the dispersion of feminist activist projects stands in the way of progress. There *are* signs, however, that the essentialised visibility of women in the arts has oppressed the communication of diversity and multiplicity of 'women' artists (see, for example, Hammond, 2000, pp. 7-13; Himid, 2013). This topic is further discussed in the next section (3.2.2).

Given that feminist art consists of contextual strategies, whose impact remains largely unknown, a definition in terms of style, visual form or ways of expression does not make sense. Rather, as Lippard writes, the goal of feminist art is '*to change the character of art*' (1995b, p. 172, emphasis in the original), which may not even need the label 'feminist' (previously argued). Either way, it is important to note that, though there may be no definition, *there is differentiation*, as otherwise the work that 'changes the character of art' cannot be called (feminist) art. There is little agreement about what the differentiation of 'feminist art' entails, but, more importantly, there is also little discussion about what constitutes 'feminist art', of which criteria would lie somewhere in the combination of art and feminist politics. Subsequently, there is little public debate about what should *not* be called feminist art, even though feminist artists and art researchers may have opinions about this. Inevitably, multiple definitions of feminist art exist, and perhaps in some

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[86] Pollock writes in the 2013 preface of *Old mistresses* (Parker and Pollock, 1981): 'By analysing the discourses and the histories of Art History itself, Rozsika Parker and I made a discovery that surprised us. Women artists only 'disappeared' in the twentieth century, in the moment of modernism, when the first museum of modern art was opened to tell the story of then recent and contemporary art (MoMA, New York, 1929), when Art History expanded in the universities, when art publishing houses were founded to create and feed a market for knowledge about art' (Pollock, 2013, p. xxiii).

feminist art contexts (lack of) social impact is part of the applied art criteria. By measuring the impact of feminist art (a suggestion that will be revisited in later chapters), a discussion is facilitated about whether or not 'feminist art' should entail visibly creating positive social change.

Aiming to change the character of art, which was previously presented as an objective of feminism in the arts, adds an art criterion to the definition of feminist art, which very few feminist artists and art historians actually act upon. This thesis argues that without knowing the impact of feminist art (e.g. changing the character of art), it is difficult to shift dominant art signification, aiming to give conceptual, socio-political and economic structures equal roles. Without more clearly stating the difference between feminist and non-feminist art, the significance of feminist art is not differently constructed, cannot cause a paradigm shift and may very well become mere lip service. Moreover, are feminist artists and researchers not interested in if they are actually creating positive social change? And, why would they continue to make feminist art, or write about it, when one's efforts may not make any difference? This thesis poses the provocative question whether the lack of long-term planning, monitoring and evaluation has possibly undermined the ability of 'feminist art' research to effectively and convincingly restructure canonicity. In addition, the lack of displacement of identity categories, along with the limited opportunities for feminist art research approaches, may have complicated the actual displacement of dominant aesthetics. This will be addressed in the next chapter.

For now, feminist art can be regarded as a social practice that questions and potentially *changes* the structures in which art is defined (in line with Pollock, 2003, pp. 7-13; Reckitt, 2013, p. 152), as well as incorporates a gender perspective (following Stanley and Wise, 2000, p. 168; Jones, 2010a, p. 1; Phelan, 2014, p. 18). Feminism can be seen as a mode of analysis, 'deconstructing situations' (Sollfrank and Rassel, 2002),[87] which resonates with an intersectional studies approach (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, p. 786). This mode of analysis as one of the representations of feminist art is further discussed in the next section.

3.2.2 Feminist misrepresentations of feminist art

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[87] Digital art pioneer and curator Laurence Rassel declared in an interview about cyberfeminism with Cornelia Sollfrank: 'One constant thing is to ask myself, wherever I am: "why", "what for", "under which condition", "for what economic system"' (Sollfrank and Rassel, 2002). Subsequently, a feminist approach to art can consist of posing a similar set of questions about artworks: by whom, for whom, for what purpose and with what money is an artwork made? See: http://www.artwarez.org/101.0.html

Harmony Hammond writes that 'there is no agreement as to what constitutes lesbian art... just as there is no fixed lesbian identity, there is no single aesthetic or sensibility – and we like it that way' (2000, p. 7). It is clear that there are many variables in the theoretical/conceptual, socio-political and economic structures of 'lesbian art'. One could state that strategic and temporary applications of art practice, research and activism produce those diverse contextual meanings of 'lesbian art'. Hammond's personal archive of lesbian art in the US, illustrated in her book, represents a form of self-organisation to increase the recognition and visibility of marginalised artists. The very *act* of collecting and writing such a book can be considered a *representation of intersectionality*, more than the visual end product. Hammond's definition of lesbian art also suggests that lesbian art has *diverse* art publics, each constructing the meaning of art differently. This inevitably leads to the question whether such diversity amongst the strategies of marginalised artists also includes works that do *not* aim to change the character of art. And, if so, should feminist art research aim to include such artworks of marginalised artists? Would the mere *increase* in the visibility of intersectionally situated women, including the plurality in hegemonic politics, affect the character of dominant art signification? This is impossible to answer when the socio-political and economic effects of increasing the visibility of 'women' artists are not measured.

Feminist art researchers search for space to write about and 'historicise' feminist art within dominant art structures. This involves both making 'additional' artists visible (those who would otherwise be filtered out) and changing the criteria through which art differentiation takes place. Feminist art historians like to distinguish between adding 'women' artists to the canon (or replacing 'men' artists by 'women' artists) and restructuring the canon (for example, Pollock, 1999, pp. 33-34), which is said to filter more 'women' artists *in*. The latter approach would include retrospectively re-signifying canonised artworks by both 'men' and 'women' artists. The complexities of feminist strategies will be further explored in Chapter Four. For now, it is important to note that, if feminist art is characterised by its mode of analysis that challenges the dominant construction of art, this criterion should be part of the *differentiation* of feminist art. However, feminist art consists of a multiplicity of strategic applications of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures, each of these defining 'feminist art' slightly differently. Re-creating a canonicity that recognises the plurality of applications may need a more complex matrix of differentiation than art histories may ever be able to offer. The limitations of art histories are illustrated by the short discussion of feminist essentialism in the vignette below.

Vignette 3. Feminist art-historical misrepresentation

It is known that feminist art histories have created reductive distinctions between generations and geographies (as discussed in Pollock, 1996, pp. 12-17; Meagher, 2011). For example, the 1970s generation of feminist artists and art historians has been framed as 'essentialist' by the 1980s generation, which is now perceived to have a negative connotation. There has also been a false opposition between feminist art in the US (considered essentialist) and the UK (considered poststructuralist and theoretical). Essentialism can be described as feminist art's approach to 'the' female body in its different forms and identities (Phelan, 2014, p. 36). New approaches criticised the discursive language applied to essentialist feminist art in such an antagonistic way that the diversity that *was* there was not sufficiently recognised. For the purpose of creating recognition and space for a 'different' diversifying approach, a feminist narrative of *progress* (a term explored by Hemmings, 2011, pp. 20, 31-57) informed an opposition between two generations which may simply misrepresent history (as argued by Meagher, 2011). These discursive and pragmatic boundaries of the written feminist art histories are further discussed in Chapter Four.

A 'dynamic' definition of feminist art has been difficult to achieve. Disseminating 'feminist art' in the mainstream (articles, books, exhibitions and catalogues) continues to reiterate the parameters of feminist art, appealing to a (false) universalism in the representation of the histories of feminist art. Robinson (2016), among others, is critical of the *categorisation* of feminist art through feminist blockbuster exhibitions. She concludes that we do not need 'the fixity of museal and archival categories, but unfixity' (2016, p. 39). This 'unfixity' is crucial in the representation of intersectional feminism and displacement of dominant aesthetics. This also resonates with *dynamic* research positions, which, as discussed previously, create meaning in multiple fields and in multiple ways, rather than from static points of views. However, it is very hard to make books, newspapers and journal articles (through which feminist art is historicised into canons) *dynamic*.

The *hegemonic* characteristics of the production of knowledge about art (further explored in Chapter Four) have influenced the misrepresentation of feminist art. Misrepresentation is not intentional, but rather the inevitable result of the parameters of art and art histories. The cartoon *The production of categories* (Figure 8) illustrates the difficulty of leaving misrepresentation. As Cowie would argue, the green creature series of cartoons/artworks cannot avoid producing a *category* of green creatures, contributing to a value judgement about them and, most likely, misrepresenting them as a group. Patricia Cornflake's friend proposes to leave this signifying structure for a while, and go for a coffee, out of the sight of the viewer, so communication would be broken.

Fig. 8 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *The production of categories*, 2015. [Digital image]

Feminist art needs a way of temporarily escaping its signifying mechanism, for which the proposed transdisciplinary might be a solution. The need for a temporary exit is one of the reasons why feminist art historians have promoted interdisciplinarity, namely to diversify ways of representations and trouble dominant parameters, which is further explored in Chapter Four. The communication of feminist art can be concluded to be a mode of analysis that can deconstruct the conservative notion of art, searching for new ways of representing more dynamic ideas of art. The next section (3.2.3) looks more closely at the relationship between feminist art and the proposed transdisciplinarity, including the idea of feminist art as the *representation of intersectionality*.

3.2.3 Can feminist art represent intersectionality?

A dynamic research approach found in 'intersectional studies' seems to provide the right tool for the diversification and increased inclusiveness of art canonicity. Collins and Bilge (2016, pp. 31-62) depict an intersectional approach as the 'synergy between inquiry and praxis'. From the 1990s, intersectionality became important for new art critiques and new models of visual analysis (Jones, 2010a, pp. 1-7; Phelan, 2014, p. 24). As discussed in

Chapter One, the intersections of categories such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, et cetera influence individual people's positions in society. Arguably, historicising the (general) feminist art of 'women' artists will always lead to misrepresentation if intersectionality is not part of the mode of analysis. Taking race, sexual orientation, class and so on into account is, however, likely to facilitate the necessary space for the multiplicity and diversity of feminist art (see, for example, Reckitt, 2014, pp. 11-13). New representations of intersectionality casted doubt over the 'usefulness of essentialism' (Jones and Silver, 2016b, p. 24), but unfortunately filtered out all essentialism's nuances.

An important contribution of intersectionality theory is to highlight, again, the possible oppression and exploitation of 'women' *by* 'women' – still an unresolved and largely overlooked problem in feminist art histories. Very early on, Nochlin (1988, p. 152) pointed out that solidarity amongst 'women' from different socio-economic classes could not be assumed to necessarily be present. 'White', 'middle-class' 'women' who identified as 'heterosexual' have been relatively privileged in their opportunities in the arts compared to 'women' who fell outside of these categories (Jones and Silver, 2016b, pp. 25-26). The uncomfortable question is what feminist art is worth, when circumstances continue to oppress 'other' others? Riley (1988, p. 2) calls the 'instabilities of the category [of woman]… the *sine qua non* of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object, despoiled of a fight, and… without much life'. For this reason, the inherent oppression of feminist sub-identities within feminism, which can be called reproduction of inequality (Verloo, 2013, pp. 896-898) or durable inequality (Tilly, 1998), should continue to be openly named and recognised.

Since the 1970s, the discrimination and oppression of 'women' have given rise to initiatives for the visibility of 'women' artists with sub-identities, which can regarded as *both* part of *and* critique of feminism's (strategic) essentialising. Examples include exhibitions and publications by artists who identify as 'lesbian' (see, for example, Hammond, 2000; Burk, 2013). Following Riley, as described above, the challenging of feminism is not a threat, but one of its catalysts. Therefore, Pollock's (2013, p. xix) critique of the categorisation of feminist art, such as 'Black', 'lesbian' or 'queer' art, can come across as oppressive, but also demonstrates the struggle of bringing intersectional gender perspectives into hegemonic, conservative discursive fields. Again, there is no reason to think that Pollock had any intentions to perpetuate oppressive structures. But rather, the representation of intersectionality may not yet have found a satisfying form in the restructuring of canons. This predicament is further discussed in the next chapter.

In both art histories and visual culture, the new generation of feminist and queer scholars calls for *alternative* ways of producing knowledge (Horne and Tobin, 2014, p. 82; Silver, 2016, p. 381). Most likely, there *are*, currently, alternative and interdisciplinary feminist and queer approaches to art histories, but their 'framing' and representation do not make a difference within the dominant parameters of their disciplines. Despite its mode of analysis, feminist art may not effectively represent intersectionality, and has not yet displaced identity categories, which is necessary for the displacement of dominant aesthetics. Essentialising strategies for creating more visibility and recognition for 'Black', 'lesbian', 'white', 'heterosexual', 'cisgender', 'disabled', 'bisexual' and/or 'transgender' 'women' artists needs to be accompanied by *de-essentialising* identities. These two facets – consistently politicising art *and* identities – could together help feminist art contribute to the representation of intersectionality, or the visible strategy of displacement of categories, which is called for by socio-political research, practice and activism (for example, Verloo, 2013). Transdisciplinary approaches to art that *produce* social change, as proposed in this thesis, therefore, need to displace art *and* gender as stable categories. This thesis aims to show opportunities for this 'de/categorisation' of art and identities. The final section of this chapter takes a closer look at the practices of feminist art, taking into account their socio-political and economic structures.

3.3 Producing good art *and* positive social change

In section 3.1, transdisciplinarity was presented as potentially being able to displace 'the aesthetic object'. It was argued that the interpretation of transgressive contemporary art needed dynamic research positioning. The previous section argued that feminist art practice as a mode of analysis contributes to representing it more 'dynamically', following the interdisciplinarity of feminist art research. This will be further contextualised in Chapter Four. This section discusses the space and resources feminist artists need in order to make their transgressive art that can potentially facilitate positive social change, inside and outside the arts.

The current dominant signification of art offers few artists stable economic conditions (Sholette, 2011, 2015; Fusco, 2015; Soskolne, 2015). There is no reason to expect better opportunities for 'women' artists, whose art has been structurally marginalised (for example discussed in Lippard, 1995b; Pollock, 1999). Feminist art historians, visual theorists and critics also experience economic obstacles which prevent them from making more space for the recognition of feminist art practices. Despite all difficulties, many feminist artists continue to make art, even when they cannot envisage access to art

structures that will help them become visible and recognised as artists. The most compelling question to ask here is: *why* do they continue to do this?

The art game, as discussed in section 2.1, has strict social rules (Smith, 2009, pp. 242-243, 253) and is characterised by strong competition (Lippard, 1995b, p. 120). This makes it hard to challenge the dominant paradigm of contemporary art. Besides, the contemporary art world has become more globalised (Smith, 2009, pp. 117-132; Kester, 2011; Sholette, 2011, p. 3; Dimitrakaki, 2013, pp. 5-6) and, as a result, dominant discourses can no longer deny there is not one identifiable institutional and mainstream taste. Awareness of the myth of Great Art is growing, which makes its communication to the (fictitious) general art public complex. Morgan Quaintance (2016)[88] asks why the Turner prize does not better represent today's politics instead of the judges' taste. The key underlying question is whether mainstream, institutional art settings can ever represent the socio-politics of transgressive artworks that are made for neither the purposes nor target art audiences of mainstream art institutions.

Potentially, incorporating marginal and 'amateur' aspects of collaborative and participatory art practices will only *strengthen* the dominant art parameters, as the focus on concept and theory will become dominant in the signification and recognition of this 'outsider' art (as argued by Cruz, 2015a). Under these circumstances, it is very hard, if not impossible, to communicate intersectionality. Therefore, feminist artists who want to contribute to social change should wonder if they still want to engage with art institutions, given that influencing them from a singular artistic position is almost impossible. Lippard recognised this dilemma as early as the 1970s:

> As a critic, it's none of my business to tell artists not to grab whatever chances for fame and fortune that present themselves, especially when I'm making a living off the same system. (Lippard, 1995a, p. 39, first published in 1976)

Figure 9 is an illustration to Lippard's remark. Patricia Cornflake's friend takes a similar pragmatic approach and proposes to bring the green creature to the café. The potential presence of 'corporate queers' refers to corporate sponsorship in the arts, as part of 'Corporate Social Responsibility',(as discussed, for example, in Semeniuk, 2012). I will return to this in Chapter Six.

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[88] https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/dec/03/why-is-the-turner-prize-failing-to-engage-with-politics
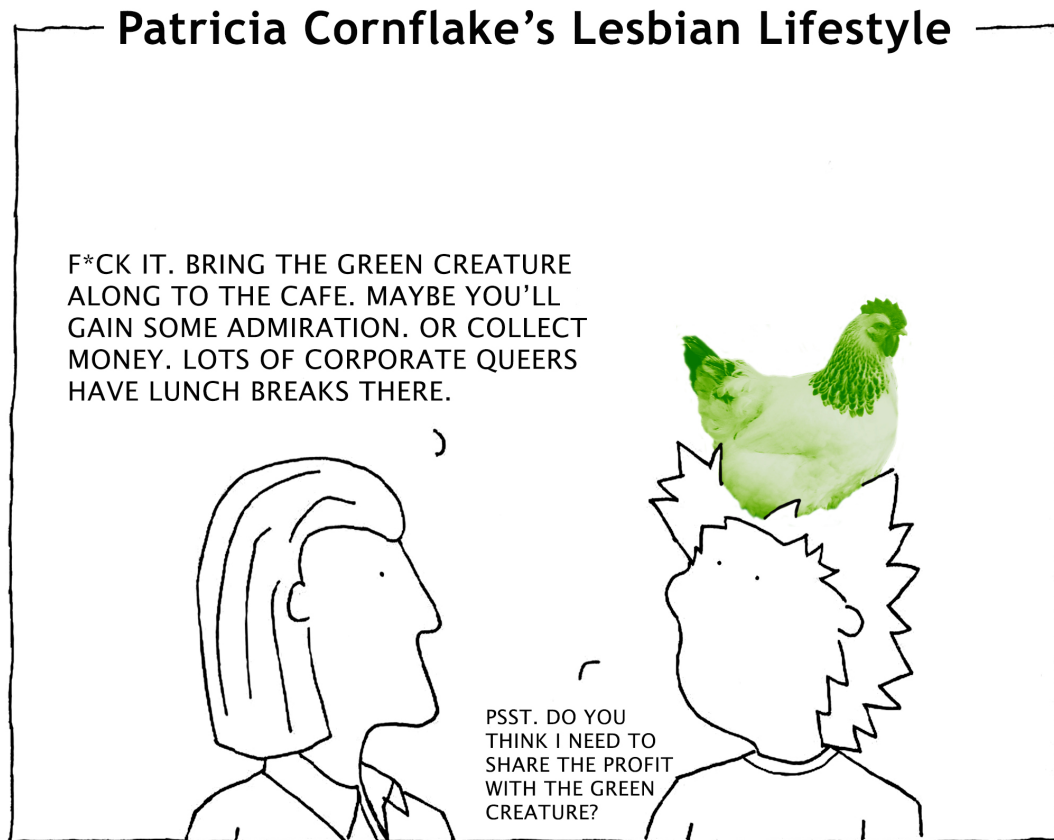
Fig. 9 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Economic structures*, 2015. [Digital image]

The reality is that artists need to engage with art institutions if they want to be recognised, remembered and influential in mainstream contexts. Usually, feminist artists apply a diversity of strategies, both inside and outside the arts, hoping to gradually further enter the stratified art world. Inside the art world, they can use feminism to address sexism inside and outside the arts, though they may be stigmatised for doing so to. One example is the work *Maintenance Art* by Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who used art institutional structures as a platform for resistance against sexism (see the vignette below).

Vignette 4. Feminist resistance inside the institution

Feminist artists have explored forms of resistance whilst complying with dominant, exploitative structures of art for decades. One example is the work *Maintenance Art* by Mierle Laderman Ukeles (late 1960s/early 1970s). Ukeles' cleaning work in a museum *as* art aimed to raise awareness of the traditional role of 'women' and their housework as forgotten labour (Reckitt, 2013, pp. 131-134), which had a significant role in the growth of capital (Federici, 2013). Over time, the visibility of Ukeles' artwork has somewhat increased due to the interest of feminist art researchers. Nevertheless, from the perspective of enhancing gender equality, the impact of the work remains unclear. Did the

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work increase spectators' awareness or influence their opinions? In what ways did the work contribute to the feminist socio-politics taking place outside the arts? There is no doubt that the performance can be signified as art and can easily be canonised as such, but such notion also rather accommodates the focus on concept and theory instead of subverting it. In other words, to what extent has the work unintentionally perpetuated a dominant art discourse, back then in practice, as well as in its current historisation by art researchers? How could feminist art historians represent Ukeles' art differently?

Since the 1960s and 1970s, feminist art strategies have been plural and diverse, but it is unclear whether there has been any progress in terms of social impact. Are feminist art strategies *effective*? There may be an increasing gap between feminist art theory and practice (in line with Stanley and Wise, 2000, p. 268). In addition, the creative writing process (as discussed in Lykke *et al.*, 2014) can be considered the 'new' feminist art (revisited in Chapter Four) that attempts to impact discursive, theoretical fields. Sometimes artists become researchers themselves, like, for example, in arts-based doctoral research (discussed in the previous chapter), and produce academic publications in order to provide the desirable frameworks of inquiry for their work. The opportunity to do a PhD, for example, can give feminist artists who are unable to enter contemporary art canons, a voice, as well as access to academic and institutional recognition. The double positioning of researchers as artists and artists as researchers, resonates with the dynamic research positioning discussed in sub-section 2.3.5. This dynamic positioning could contribute to the refocus in art signification, necessary for the de-objectification of art histories. Carla Cruz is an artist who is also a researcher, and the vignette below describes how her research positioning as an artist informs a shift in the focus of art signification.

Vignette 5. The feminist artist as the art critic of her own work

In a recent article, Cruz (2015a) reflects on her art project *Rastilho* (2011-2013), which took place outside the arts and consisted of a collaboration with people who were unemployed or retired from the textile industry in Guimarães, Portugal. The artwork consisted of activities such as group meetings, conversations, the creation of a community space, and arts and crafts workshops. In the article, Cruz explores the theoretical boundaries of art and addresses the dynamics of power and (her) authority to signify art. She is also transparent about the financial structure of the project, providing a useful insight into how such art projects can be possible. Cruz (2015a, pp. 9-10) concludes that 'a subversive act within the field of art becomes a dominant gesture in the field of culture… the community does not need my intervention to produce culture'. Cruz refuses to have the authority to signify (her) art on the basis of art conceptual theory. Instead, she

> *displaces* the criteria of art by framing the *movement* of art meaning between different fields.

Cruz' approach to her art project *Rastilho* described above is a clear example of a refocus in art signifying structures. She makes the socio-political and economic structures as important for art signification as conceptual and theoretical structures. The concept does not define the work as art, but the *combination* of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures. This is not *elimination* or destruction of art theory, as the question of what art is is still applicable. In fact, the question was even used in the creation of the 'artwork', and became part of the conversations between Cruz and the project participants. The question, 'But… is it art?', becomes a vehicle for *different* purposes of art, including creating social change. The difference between the displacement of dominant aesthetics and 'paradox-objects' (Groys, 2013, p. 4) is the *movement* between different fields of signification. These transgressive movements of feminist artworks should be represented in art historical and critical descriptions of the works, which Cruz now decided to do herself. Her 'transdisciplinary' approach informs new aesthetic rules through which attention is paid to the signifying role of socio-political and economic structures of art.

In the refocus of signifying structures, success can be estimated by measuring the socio-political impact[89] of the work, which should be counted as *one of the criteria* that makes the artwork 'good'. Cruz' arts-based research approach and the academic publication of her work can be read as a form of restructuring art canons. The arts-based research method, in this case, provided tools in line with proposed transdisciplinarity. Actively questioning dominant aesthetics, Cruz found ways to be visible. However, very few feminist artists are able, like Cruz, to do so, avoiding old signifying parameters and the perpetuation of the Great Art myth.

Another important aspect of obtaining space for feminist art is activism. Feminist artists and art researchers are known to form collectives and activist groups. An important historical example is the Women's Art History Collective founded in 1973, in which artists and (future) art historians and journalists participated (Pollock, 2010).[90] This collective was the basis for the collaboration between Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock and the starting point for their book *Old mistresses: women, art and ideology* (2013, first published

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[89] The impact of Cruz' project *Rastilho* may include the fact that the art project group members continued to meet weekly after the art project was finished, as well as the fact that all of them were paid for their participation. Because the art project addressed unemployment and poverty, and the participants themselves were not particularly well-off, it was important to Cruz to offer equitable payment, even if this meant limiting the number of participants (Cruz, 2015a, pp. 4, 11-12).
[90] Pollock writes that the collective was 'attached to the women's workshop of the Artists' Union' (2010, p. 21), which shows the explicit socio-political positioning of the group.

in 1981). Other examples from the 1970s include the collectives Rivolta Femminile in Italy, recently receiving recognition in UK feminist academia, and the Hackney Flashers in London, recently displayed at Tate Britain (2015). Twenty-first century collaborations include the traveling exhibition *All My Independent Women* initiated by Carla Cruz, and the working group INVASORIX consisting of ten 'women' artists based in Mexico City who produce songs, music videos, publications and performances (Invasorix, 2016).[91]

The Guerrilla Girls, mentioned earlier, are a well-known feminist collective. Covering their identities with gorilla masks, they have anonymously addressed sexism in the contemporary art world for over thirty years, through performances, actions, posters in public spaces, exhibitions and appearances on television, such as recently in an US television interview (Fox, 2016). Members of the group are said to have their own individual practices, but the Guerrilla Girls' activism has also become part of the art system *as* artworks. They exhibit in museums and at biennales, and their artworks have gained (economic) value under the dominant parameters of art. As discussed in the previous chapter, their success in institutionalised settings raises the question whether their activism effectively troubles dominant art signification, or rather helps keep norms in place. How can/should the impact of their work be measured? This question is briefly explored in the box below.

Vignette 6. Assessing the impact of feminist art

Chapter One described the work *Is it even worse in Europe?* (2016) by the Guerrilla Girls, exhibited at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. Situated within the 'art game', the exhibition does successfully draw attention to equality and diversity in the arts, presumably reaching a relatively large audience. Assuming that 'anything' can be art, the survey and the display of the results can be seen as art. However, are the signifying structures in any way reshuffled? Assessing the displacement of dominant aesthetics would require more information about the reception, as well as some form of impact evaluation of the work. To what extent has the work changed the attitudes of spectators, or increased their awareness? To what extent has it led to different behavioural outcomes for audiences, curators or funders? Has the work resulted in *measurably* less sexism or racism in the arts? Or, in the worst-case scenario, has social inequality been reproduced?

In the examples provided in this section, art research, practice and activism together form feminist art strategies. Artworks that transgress the borders of art and combine research, practice and activism can represent the starting point of displacing dominant aesthetics in

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[91] http://invasorix.tumblr.com/about

their dynamic mode of analysis, although the *displacement of identity categories* is still underrepresented and unfulfilled in these examples. Focus on artists who aim to explicitly trouble gender regimes and stereotypes, such as Muholi and Kromminga, mentioned in Chapter One, could contribute to finding a representation of 'de/categorisation' of identities. Other examples of artists who apply essentialising *and* de-essentialising strategies in performances and photography are Del LaGrace Volcano, Risk Hazekamp and Sands Murray-Wassink.[92] If these artists were part of transdisciplinary collaborations, their work could become more effective, and, subsequently, instrumental in achieving positive social change. This chapter has demonstrated there is a big chance that those artworks will, then, not be *recognised* as art. Feminist art historians, critics and curators, therefore, play an invaluable role to continue to recognise the value of transgressive feminist art.

Although there is little evidence that feminist and queer artworks have had any significant influence on the re-signification of women artists, their coming into existence and visibility under restrictive, dominant parameters are very important. This is an accomplishment that should certainly not be underestimated, as overcoming barriers to work as an artist, be recognised and continue to work, is not easy at all. The visibility and recognition of every queer/feminist artist are crucial to the world. However, without strategic framing, such as the proposed transdisciplinarity for social change, or evidence of social impact, the displacement of categories of art and identity is not *represented* to the public. Differently put, inspiring and beautiful concepts need evidence-based approaches in order to achieve wider social change. The history of 'feminist' compliance with neoliberalism (briefly discussed in Chapter One and revisited in Chapters Five and Six), highlights this importance.

The next chapter approaches the tension between social inequality and 'feminist art' from the position of feminist art researchers. The key question will still be in what ways the *meaning* of art can be created differently, bypassing sexism, conservatism and hegemonic production of knowledge. The focus on art conceptual and aesthetic *objects* would need to be redirected so as to also include the socio-political and economic structures of art signification. This raises the exciting question whether art signification can ever incorporate a measure of social impact. Could art ever be differentiated on the basis of its social impact? Can feminist art practice and research change what counts as (good) art? Could, for instance, learning processes, human rights advocacy or mental health ever be

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[92] See: http://www.dellagracevolcano.com/
http://www.riskhazekamp.com/
http://sands1974.com/

the positive validator and *signifier* of art? Could we ever *filter out* artworks based on their contribution to social *inequality* and exploitation? And, more radically, is feminist art that does not contribute to positive social change part of the problem?

Answering the last question would definitely require a clearer idea of what can be considered positive social change, and how it can be measured and monitored. However, merely allowing the question to be posed will *re-politicise* feminism and art. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to create space for this to happen. Besides broader visibility for feminist art (and a broader debate), transdisciplinarity may support the creation of more diverse positions[93] for feminist art practitioners and researchers.

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored whether transgressive artworks, potentially part of the proposed transdisciplinarity, could be defined as 'art'. A dominant focus on 'the aesthetic object' may discursively and practically stand in the way of recognising the quality of 'transdisciplinary' artworks. Equal roles of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures have been argued to be a more desirable approach to the aesthetic object. This 'de-objectification' of art can support the *de-marginalisation* of oppressed groups of artists. However, in developing feminist art strategies, the *de-essentialising* of identities is as important as the proposed de-objectification of art. Feminist art is in need of a *representation of intersectionality*, showing the diversity and instability of categorical terms (including feminism). The dynamic positioning of feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists will support this intersectional representation. Though there are many types and styles of feminist art, the key feature may be best described as a mode of analysis, inquiring theoretical, socio-political and economic terms of art making, exhibiting and canonising, and potentially changing those terms.

The chapter introduced the 'displacement of dominant aesthetics', which consists of 'displacing' and de-categorising art and identities. The actual displacement is most likely to coincide with a *representation of intersectionality*. However, knowing whether such social change has been successful needs measuring and impact evaluation, which is quite a

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[93] Much of the feminist art around the world is underpaid or unpaid. For artists who do not need income from their art, underpayment may not resemble exploitation to them. Free art can also be a feminist approach. Generally, art should not lead to exploitation of artists, which will be revisited in later chapters. Within the proposed transdisciplinarity, payment of artists can come from diverse sources, including from outside the arts. If artists are not paid or underpaid for their contributions to exhibitions or art projects, transparency about these economic structures is very important. This will be revisited in later chapters.

new terrain for Art History and feminist art histories. The proposed transdisciplinarity supports strengthening the collaboration between research, practice and activism, necessary for social impact, as well as new approaches of feminist art monitoring and evaluation. In the following chapters, it will become clearer why measuring impact is important. The next chapter will approach the same question around social equality and (feminist) art from the perspective of feminist art research. This includes a reasoning of why feminist art researchers may be interested in working in collaborative and transdisciplinary ways.

Chapter 4. Self-Help in the Arts: Feminist Art Research in the Proposed Transdisciplinarity

In the previous chapters, I have argued that *combinations* of art research, practice and activism best serve the attainment of social change. In search for the representation of intersectionality through feminist art, the 'displacement' of categories of both art and identities has been shown to be important. Feminist art can be seen as the strategic and temporary 'framing' of feminism and art for the purpose of social impact, as well as recognition of marginalised artists. For accomplishing equality in the arts, the role of feminist art research is crucial. However, the position of feminist art researchers is subject to marginalisation too. Are they in the position to facilitate recognition of marginalised artists, and, if not, how can they obtain such a position?

It seems that the strongest scholarly developed feminism in the arts can be found in 'feminist' Art History.[94] Feminist art researchers, including art historians, have used interdisciplinarity, fiction, creative writing and various forms of activism. This chapter will contextualise these disciplinary *and* interdisciplinary activities within feminist art research, concluding with a discussion of how the proposed transdisciplinarity can facilitate 'feminist' Art History, and why it may be beneficial to feminist art researchers. Section 4.1 contextualises the disciplinary parameters of feminist art research, after which creative writing (4.2), interdisciplinarity and activism (4.3) are explored. A clearer image of the proposed transdisciplinarity will emerge from these discussions. Section 4.4 will discuss whether such proposed transdisciplinarity can actually work considering the 'paradoxical' discursive position of feminist art researchers.

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[94] There is a difference between 'art research' and the discipline of Art History, the latter involving, among other methods, archival research, analysis, interpretation, critique and criticism of artworks. In this thesis, the use of 'art research' captures these Art Historical methods, but also data collection through new, multidisciplinary methods, such as surveys, monitoring or impact evaluation measures. In this context, art historians are regarded as part of the wider group of art researchers. However, not all art researchers are necessarily art historians.

4.1 What is the f-f-f-f-f-feminist problem with Art History?

In the UK, large part of feminist art research is theoretically embedded in the *academic* discipline of Art History. Even though there are few institutional and formal structures of explicit 'feminist' art history or visual culture studies,[95] the presence of feminist art scholars within British universities continues to enhance the visibility of feminist art research. One could argue that, by now, feminism in UK Art History has had a strong and solid tradition of more than forty years of research (as recently discussed by Horne and Tobin, 2014), albeit perhaps a niche one. There is, nevertheless, a tension between feminism and Art History, as feminism challenges the parameters of the discipline (further discussed in this section 4.1.1). For this reason, in the late eighties, Pollock wrote that we should '[…] no longer think of a feminist art history but a feminist intervention in the histories of art' (2003, p. 24, first published in 1988). This section will further contextualise why *de-categorising* 'feminist Art History' has been important for feminist art historians. In section 4.1.2, the internal tension of 'feminist Art History' is discussed in light of the discursive limitations of feminist art research.

4.1.1 Art History rules

Generally, each academic discipline has its own language and strict rules (Leavy, 2011). Art History can be said to be highly conservative (Smith, 2009, p. 253; Horne, 2014, p. 3), creating historical *canons* of artworks without much diversification in its approaches. Formulating the historical significance of some artworks (and not others) is the result of a number of *competing* canons (Pollock, 1999, p. 3; Meskimmon, 2003, p. 131). This highlights the role of politics in the discipline and academic institutions, mentioned in Chapter One. Surprisingly, as we have seen in Chapter Three, even approaches to *contemporary* art can be conservative. Artists' disruptive acts in art signification are still often interpreted *exclusively* through the lens of discursive, art-historical canonicity. As argued in Chapter Three, the emphasis on objects and 'objectification' in and through Art History continues to marginalise artists in already oppressed positions. Feminist art researchers who would like to change this face a challenge of negotiating this conservatism and creating different art narratives.

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[95] In 1991, Pollock developed and led a 'Master of Arts (MA) in Feminist Historical, Theoretical and Critical Studies in the Visual Arts' (Pollock, 1996, p. 3). The programme was discontinued in 2003 (Pollock, 2010, p. 20).

Art-historical canonicity has traditionally favoured a Western narrative (Pollock, 1999, p. 4, 2003, p. xix; Smith, 2009, p. 253). Awareness of an increasingly globalised art world makes the conservative approach of the discipline less and less sustainable (cf. Bal and Bryson, 1991, pp. 179-180; Smith, 2009, pp. 1-10). Conservative approaches are not inclusive enough for the needs of today's audiences or stakeholders, revealing the pitfalls of dominant art narratives. One important aspect of Art History's conservatism is the aim of establishing 'accurate' and 'correct' interpretations of artworks (Bal and Bryson, 1991, p. 203). The feminist approach to Art History does not necessarily move away from this objective (see, for example, Pollock, 1999, pp. 23-36), as the objective of research remains to search for 'truth'. However, the discipline of Art History has very few methods to establish the accuracy of narratives. Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson (1991, p. 206) even question whether the historical context of artworks can ever be communicated to contemporary readers. More importantly, they argue that the art historian's desire for accuracy may inadvertently push aside any irregularities identified (Bal and Bryson, 1991, p. 203). In this light, Art History can be said to be *controlling* the production of knowledge by keeping its object of study smooth and clean (Bal and Bryson, 1991, p. 203; Horne, 2014, p. 3) instead of allowing it to be messy and multi-dimensional.

Art History is not only conservative and controlling; it is also characterised by structures that are known to be 'hegemonic' (Pollock, 1999, pp. 11-12, 2003, p. 27) – at least, to a great extent (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 131). Mouffe (2013, p. 2) writes that contingent hegemonic practices produce a particular order that is a) based on the exclusion of options, b) always temporary, and c) the result of power relations. If we interpret art history as the result of hegemonic writing practices, the canon is constantly subject to change. However, we can wonder *which* change this is, and instigated by whom. Considering the discipline's conservatism that resonates in art criticism and interpretation (as discussed in the previous chapter), voices that address the inherent discrimination can be expected to be insufficiently heard and, arguably, oppressed. Based on this expectation, the accuracy of current dominant representations of art histories should be questioned.

As discussed in previous chapters, one of the discrimination grounds in the arts is gender. Since the 1970s, feminist art historians have argued that Art History predominantly excludes 'women' artists. Factors that are said to have played a role are no access to education and means (for example, being denied access to life drawing of nude models); no opportunity to completely and exclusively devote oneself to art; stereotyping of feminine and masculine attributes; sexism in the construction of Art History, as well as the myths of Greatness and the Artist as a Genius (Nochlin, 1988, first published in 1971).

Following Nochlin's argument, Pollock and Parker (2013, first published in 1981) have argued that this exclusion of 'women' artists from canons is not a coincidence, but a *structural* matter: the structure in which 'Great Art' is celebrated favours 'men' and oppresses 'women'. Due to the systemic character of the inclusion and exclusion of artists based on gender, interventions in Art History are needed which can change the character of canonisation (instead of simply writing 'additional' feminist art histories).

The object-based character of art histories keeps marginalised artists marginalised (as argued in Tickner, 1988, p. 97). The *movements* in art signification (creating meaning in more than one space), which marginalised artists may use to enter the hegemonic structures, cannot be represented very well in traditional, institutional art settings. This has been discussed in the previous chapter. In the representation of transgressive artworks, art historians and reviewers may classify them again in merely art historical and theoretical terms. In the case of contemporary art, the fact that innovation of conceptual art discourses is quite repetitive (cf. Mirzoeff, 2001b, p. 4) may simply become a vehicle for more sexism. The perpetual elusiveness of what art may be, which then needs *experts* to define it (from static points of view), may be an ingenious way to guarantee particular, exclusionary values, including commercial ones. This is not to say that every art historian, researcher or critic is driven by these ('white', 'male') socio-political and economic structures, but their communication of 'art' is most likely embedded in and influenced by them. In contrast, feminist interventions reportedly aim to expose and change these conservative dispositions. The question is whether 'feminist' research findings and outcomes are effectively changing traditional structures. The next section discusses the obstacles that feminist art historians encounter in this.

4.1.2 Feminism fights back

Given that Art History is conservative in its structure, feminist responses need to *intervene* in its hegemonic structure and 'trouble' the current configuration of power. For this reason, 'feminist art history' may be best called feminist interventions in the histories of art (Pollock, 2003, p. 24), as stated above. Feminist art historians argue that simply adding (intersectionally situated) women artists to the canon does not question the assumptions behind the canon (Pollock, 1999, pp. 33-34; Meskimmon, 2003, p. 2; Nochlin, 2006, p. 22), and, therefore, does not restructure its mechanism. For this reason, feminist interventions reportedly engage with the *parameters* that constitute the discipline and aim to represent art histories 'differently' (following De Lauretis, 1987; Nochlin, 1988; Cowie, 1990; Pollock, 1999, 2003; Meskimmon, 2003; Horne and Tobin, 2014).

One of the big questions is whether Art Historical hegemonic structures can actually incorporate feminism (Pollock, 1999, p. 12): can a 'feminist' version of a discipline that consists of structural differentiation differentiate differently? Pollock (1999) explores this question thoroughly. She persuasively argues that a norm that recognises artists who are 'other' than this norm will never be able to incorporate them: it will simply create more 'others' (Pollock, 1999, p. 5). They might be given a voice within a space of power that is not theirs yet, but this is merely the first step towards restructuring parameters or shifting the paradigm. Only when the 'others' are in could the rules start changing.

This tension between feminism and Art History is illustrated in the cartoon *Restructuring parameters* (Figure 10). Patricia Cornflake's friend offers to 'restructure the parameters' of the cartoon, the terms of their representation, in the hope of getting rid of the green creature and so solving the double of gender and art which it represents. However, there is no indication that the green creature is leaving.
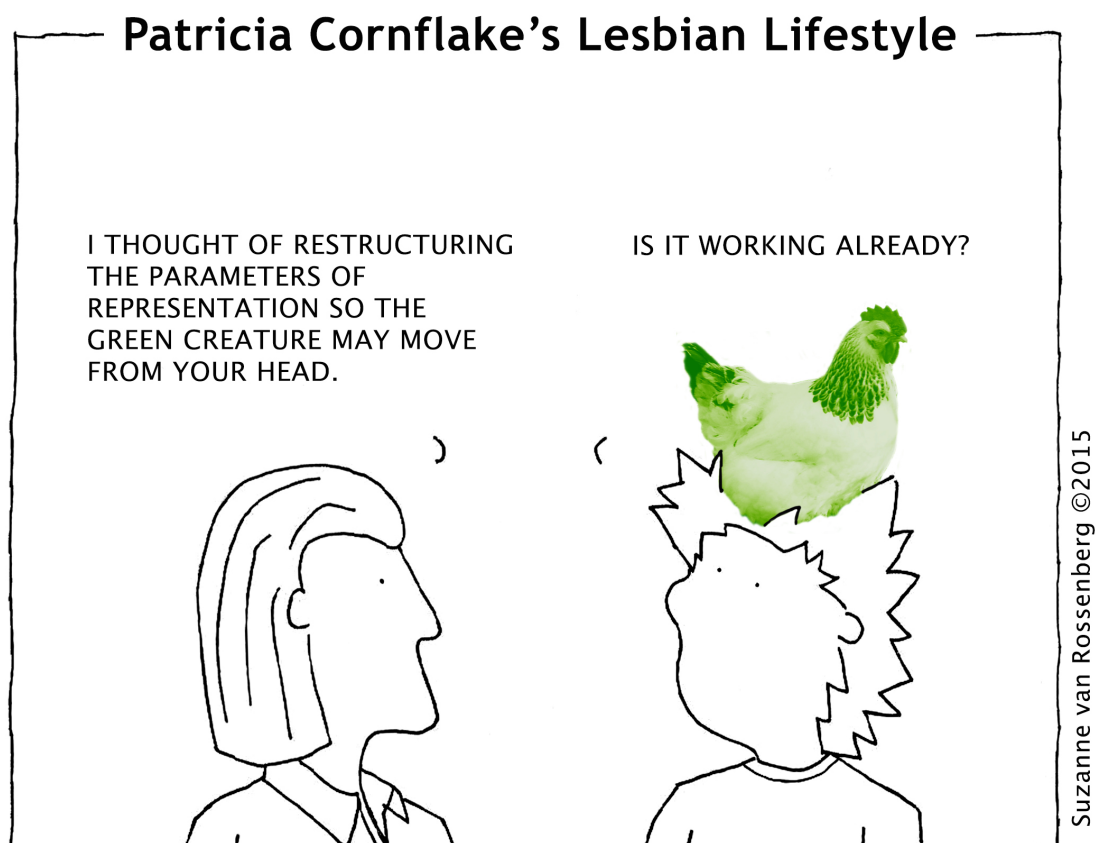
Fig. 10 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Restructuring parameters*, 2015. [Digital image]

As discussed in the previous chapters, the production of the category of 'woman' runs through all attempts at re-structuring the discipline. Essentialising 'women' without

simultaneously de-categorising them not only risks introducing new policing norms, but also *(re)produces* the category. Texts that 'represent' feminist interventions which promote the visibility of 'women' often cannot avoid *producing* the category of 'woman' and, subsequently, sexual difference. Therefore, they do not restructure the parameters in which the value of 'women' is produced (as argued in De Lauretis, 1987; Cowie, 1990). The word 'w o m a n' cannot communicate the diverse and multiple positions of women in society and may simply obstruct the necessary restructuring. Intervening in the parameters of Art History to enhance 'women's' visibility requires the *simultaneous* troubling of the communication of 'women', showing the intersectionality and diversity of 'women'. I have referred to this as 'de/categorisation' in the previous chapter.

This production of 'woman' as a category consists of possible stereotypical imagery of 'women' and 'men', including dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity. It is clear that stereotypical images *cannot* represent the diversity of women and men. However, the production of 'woman' is not so much realised in the image, but in the structures within which the image came into existence (De Lauretis, 1987; Cowie, 1990). Therefore, the resulting sexism may not always be so obvious. How, for example, could an abstract sculpture without references to human figures ever be sexist? The answer lies in the socio-political and economic structures of 'art' that tend to favour 'men' and 'masculinity'. Though an 'art object' may seem completely neutral, its *meaning* is constituted as part of potentially sexist structures. As a result, spectators will (unconsciously) render sculptures made by 'men' as better or more significant than those made by 'women'. The sexism is in the *terms* of communication. In film theory, Cowie has called this communication mechanism 'the double problem of the production of woman as a category and [of] a film as a signifying system' (1990, p. 117). The *mode of production*[96] of films is argued to pre-determine the value and roles of the represented women.

Cowie's analysis has significantly influenced the development of feminist art history (see, for example, Pollock, 2003, pp. 16-17). It seems that the dominant socio-political and economic structures of conservative, hegemonic Art Historical structures 'interlock' the objectification of 'women' and the objectification of art. Instead of a double problem, one can actually speak of a *double-double* problem. The discourse favours 'men' artists, *because* 'women' cannot be great (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 71). Therefore, the successful feminist intervention in the structure of Art History would need to trouble the categorisation of

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[96] This includes the so-called 'male gaze' of the audience – a concept introduced by Laura Mulvey (1975) to address the pleasure of (male and female) spectators as a condition in which films are made. One could argue that the existence of the male gaze reflects not only the dominant sexist perspectives of some film directors and producers (and targeted audiences), but also the socio-political and economic positions of the staff involved in producing the film.

both art and gender *simultaneously*, which together form the displacement of dominant aesthetics. For this reason, Chapter Three introduced 'dynamic' research positioning and representing intersectionality as part of the solution, which will be revisited in this chapter.

'Queer' feminist approaches to visual culture (see, for example, Jones and Silver, 2016a) may offer answers to how to 'trouble gender' (Butler, 1999). As discussed in Chapter Three, visual culture has challenged art history in its normative and hierarchal formation (Jones, 2010a, p. 3). However, early *queer* visual culture largely ignored feminist art theory and history by, for example, understanding and dismissing feminism's approach to 'women' as an essentialism that excludes intersectionality (Jones, 2016, pp. 3-4). Additionally, contemporary queer approaches have not resolved the exclusion of ('queer') 'women' either (as exemplified in Silver, 2016). There are probably plenty of inventive and innovative 'feminist' and 'queer' art researchers, but they may not be in the position to determine the rules, or to make themselves heard on their own terms.

De Lauretis (1987, p. 25) argues that resistance against hegemonic practices is very real, but, given that it cannot *yet* be represented through the old parameters of the field, it is not *recognisable*. In Chapter One, this was briefly discussed as requiring 'a view from elsewhere' in order to establish and represent feminist theory. Without this view, which can facilitate easier access to feminist theory, readers may perceive new feminist theory as contradictory and invalid (following De Lauretis, 1987, pp. 17-18, 25). In other words, feminist art history may not necessarily be recognised the moment it intervenes in Art History. This is very important to acknowledge, because *perceived* contradictions and inconsistencies may lead to the unnecessary dismissal of feminist theory as incorrect, whilst in reality they expose friction between dominant discourse and new voices. Contradictions can be used as indicators of oppression, in which the analysis of theoretical, socio-political and economic structures can help detect the clash between conservative and new theoretical and academic styles.

Through its conservative, hegemonic structures, Art History structurally excludes marginalised artists, such as 'women' artists, because of the dominant understanding that great artists are 'men', 'white', 'able-bodied' and 'heterosexual'. The focus on the object does not easily allow moving art signification into other signifying fields, which would take the *signifying* aspects of socio-political and economic structures into account (as discussed in Chapter Three). Under these circumstances, the '*paradox*'[97] of 'feminist' Art

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[97] Pollock refers to feminist art history an 'oxymoron' (1999, p. 8).

History emerges. Drawing attention to the *gender* of artists in structures that do not yet communicate re-signification of art to its readers cannot re-signify the value of 'women' artists. Therefore, other means of communication are needed to 'unlock' this double problem of art and gender. The question is whether these forms of communication will *eventually* be recognised as part of Art History, or will *always* be filtered out as not belonging to Art History.

Being able to communicate 'a view from elsewhere' would help feminist art historians in communicating feminist interventions and restructuring the canon. Creative writing, fiction and personal storytelling are examples of such views from elsewhere, representing art histories 'differently' and aiming to break with old paradigms. This may resonate with the representation of the mode of analysis that is necessary for the representation of intersectionality. The next section (4.2) is dedicated to a brief exploration of creative writing and fiction as part of feminist theory.

4.2 The roles of creative writing and fiction

In the previous section, the discursive space of feminist art researchers was argued to be pressurised and limited. Creative writing and fiction are two possible ways to open up the forms of representation of art histories and create space for more diverse, untold stories, which may otherwise be structurally oppressed within the discipline of Art History. Creative outlets may also contribute to strategies of dis-identification, de-essentialising communication of 'women' and writing against the grain with regard to the production of woman as a category. Queer strategies, such as playing with gender and pronouns, or depicting the gender transition of the narrator (see, for example, Preciado, 2013) can help make readers aware of the instability of gender as a category. In this light, creative writing and fiction can make a potentially significant contribution to the representation of intersectionality necessary for social change. This potential is further explored in the rest of this section.

Because academic writing styles are regarded by many as fixed and static (Leavy, 2011, p. 17; Lykke *et al.*, 2014, pp. 1-13), the use of subversive language may make a dent in the dominant parameters, though never completely shift them. A relatively new academic genre called 'fictocriticism'[98] uses explicit fiction as a method of research and institutional

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[98] First encountered at the conference *Transformative Feminist Methods* at Durham University (10 September 2014). Jane Kilby used the term 'fictocriticism' to frame her paper, which was a fictitious story about the life and death of Aileen Wuornos, who was executed in 2002 in the US for several

critique. As another example, Jackie Stacey and Janet Wolff (2013) presented a collection of articles that represent 'writing otherwise' in academic[99] cultural criticism, containing, amongst others autobiographical elements, affective language and creating writing. The next section, 3.2.1, will further discuss these elements[100]. Section 3.2.2 will then explore the potential of creative writing to help escape a dominant paradigm that seems to create a paradox for feminist art history, as discussed in the previous section.

4.2.1 Recognising 'fiction' in feminist art research

Generally, there may be a very thin line between critical theory writing and fiction (Pollock, 1999, p. xvi; Hemmings, 2011; Leavy, 2009, p. 43). Pollock's intervention in Art History is characterised by drawing attention to the socio-political and economic structures of art practices. However, she also calls her attempts to difference the canon a 'creative covenant' (Pollock, 1999, p. xvi) through which the line between academic, theoretical writing and personal storytelling is blurred. For example, Pollock (1999, p. xvi) explains that her 'unprocessed grief as a motherless daughter' has influenced her research interests in Art History.

Hemmings (2011, p. 24) has taken, among others, the emotions of feminist academic writers as a starting point for trying to understand the role of *affect* in the construction of feminist theory. Hemmings makes a distinction between progress, loss and return narratives, which can be seen to result from different strategies of coping with the barriers encountered within feminist theory. An important conclusion is that, though the narratives aim to restructure and 'correct' the representation of 'women' in different fields, they are not necessarily more true or more accurate than the corrected ones (Hemmings, 2011, pp. 12-16).[101] On the one hand, conservative claims to truth and accuracy in Art History may oppress other, new valid interpretations (in line with Bal and Bryson, 1991, pp. 174-175, 177). On the other hand, new and corrective interpretations

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murders and is thought to be the world's first female serial killer. Kilby presented her fictional paper as an epistemological strategy and critique of feminist institutional production of knowledge.
[99] The editors explicitly stay within 'an academic frame' (Stacey and Wolff, 2013, p. 3).
[100] Stacey and Wolff also list the plural forms of authorship and the combination of writing and visuals. The latter strategy of mixing writing and visuals has been regularly used by art historians (for example, Parker and Pollock, 1987; Meskimmon, 2003), aiming to give text and visuals, theory and art, an *equal* position. The curation of art exhibitions can be considered an application of this strategy too. Examples include the work of Amelia Jones, Cornelia Butler, Mirjam Westen and Carla Cruz, who engage with both exhibition curating and writing articles, books and exhibition publications.
[101] Hemmings (2011, p. 13) draws on the works of Antoinette Burton, Elizabeth Grosz, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Jennifer Terry, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. She also recognises that her depiction of the three feminist narratives is 'something of a misrepresentation' too (2011, p. 61).

cannot replace those traditional versions of the 'truth' in 'un-negotiated' ways, as they are not necessarily more accurate versions themselves.

How, then, can feminist researchers trouble the dominant stories and replace them with more inclusive and representative ones? What are the theoretical grounds for change? Feminist art researchers have grappled with this question and there have been several tentative responses. Phelan (1993a) provides a good example of the inventiveness of feminist art researchers (see Vignette 7 below).

Vignette 7. The unmarked

In an original response to object-focused art histories, Phelan (1993a) draws attention to the role of the 'unmarked' in the representation of art, that is, to what is *not* framed through discourse and written language, which she argues invisibly influences theory. This way of looking at art histories can help (invisible) feminist interventions be recognised. Phelan, however, encounters a paradox in her intervention. She cannot *communicate* the 'undocumentable and nonreproductive' (Phelan, 1993a, p. 31) in the documentable and reproductive terms in which she works. This contradiction illustrates the tension of feminist art theory and indicates a friction between old paradigms and new voices, as previously discussed. As the parameters of academic texts cannot represent her theory, Phelan argues she inevitably reproduces the dominant paradigm's fiction. According to Phelan, there is no way out. At least, not visibly.

As mentioned above, part of the creative covenant is the 'affected' position of feminist authors that influence their research and writing. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003, pp. 146, 149, 150) calls this the *reparative* characteristic of research. Researchers may be interested in studying particular topics because of their own experiences of misrecognition, violence or discrimination. By conducting the research, they *repair* themselves, and find recognition and visibility for their positions in society. In this light, the writing of feminist art histories can be seen as reparative, as they repair not only professional positions, but also the personal experience of misrecognition and marginalisation. In this process of reparation, autobiographical elements can inform the use of fiction, as showcased by Pollock's creative covenant.

Reparative[102] research practices are no less valid as research positions (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 150). Moreover, dominant research positions are probably not free of affect themselves.

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[102] In 'Paranoid reading and reparative reading, or, you're so paranoid, you probably think this essay is about you' (2003), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick contextualises the relationship between 'paranoid' and 'reparative' positions in the readership and scholarship of, among others, queer

There is another problem, however: the absence of a theoretical vocabulary that can represent the reparative research positions as valid and strong (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 150). This reminds us of the lack of De Lauretis' 'view from elsewhere' (1987, p. 25) and the need for a representation of intersectionality. For this reason, potential contradictions and inconsistencies in feminist theory are not a problem. However, it may be problematic that it is never very clear when dominant paradigms have been or are being restructured as a result of feminist interventions. How can we notice or measure the restructuring? Is the facilitation of equality, which is assumed to take place, monitored and evaluated?

An important facet of feminist writing, academic work and epistemology is research reflexivity, which can lead to creative forms of communication (Leavy, 2009; Lykke *et al.*, 2014). As previously mentioned, creative writing can be an epistemological standpoint that aims to overcome the discursive paradox that marginalised researchers encounter. Researchers can use fiction and creative writing to 'position themselves' and give an account of the conditions in which their knowledge is produced, including the paradoxical terms of 'feminist' research. In this light, positioning oneself can be a response to the question of research neutrality, as discussed in Chapter Two. Fictional storytelling can be a form of research reflexivity that aims to makes the researcher's position *transparent*. As previously mentioned, such reflexivity is part of other disciplines too, for instance Autoethnography (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis, 2014) and Practice-Based Studies (Leavy, 2009; Barrett, 2010; Haseman and Mafe, 2011).

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topics. Whilst in the mid-1980s paranoia got reclaimed as 'antihomophobic' theoretical positioning (p. 126), Sedgwick critically reflects on its current strength and validity as a research position. Sedgwick exposes and resists the negative effects of paranoid reading and research, and promotes *reparative* ones, though potentially originating from a similar disposition.

PATRICIA CORNFLAKE HAS HEARD THAT GOOD RESEARCH STARTS WITH POSITIONING ONESELF
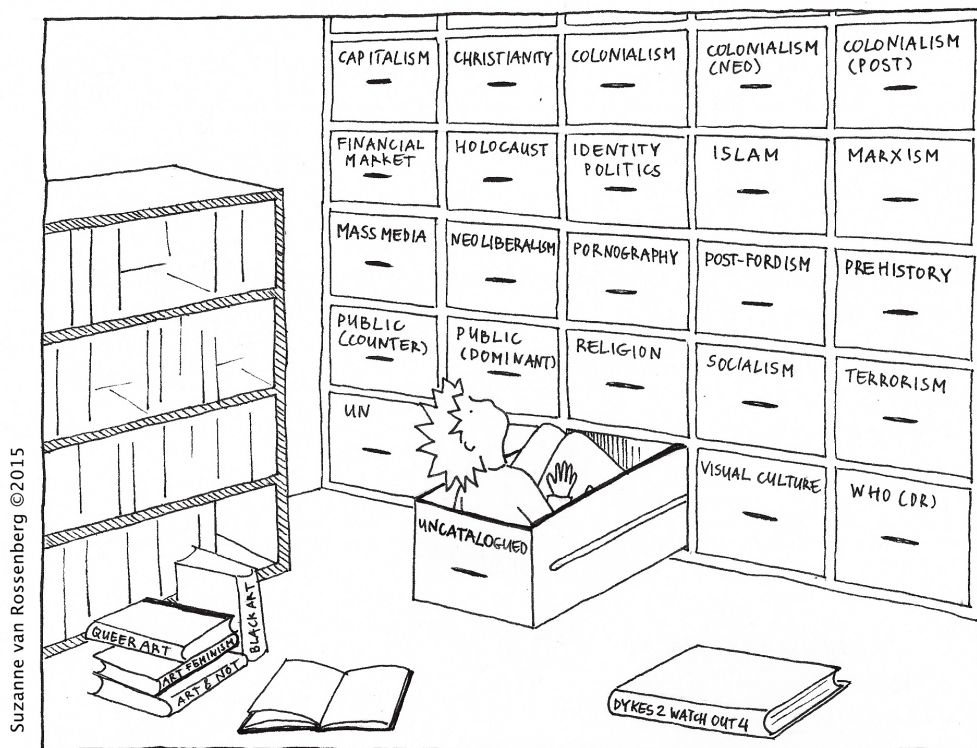
Fig. 11 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Positioning oneself*, 2015. [Digital image]

The cartoon *Positioning oneself* (Figure 11) illustrates research positioning, offering a glimpse into the work involved in starting 'feminist' art research. The books scattered on the floor represent the use of identification in arts and visual culture, reiterating the need of marginalised voices to have their own spaces (and books) which facilitate crossovers between research, practice and activism in multiple ways (in line with Fraser, 1990; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013).

4.2.2 Limitations of creative writing in facilitating change

Though fiction can be a valid method of producing knowledge, creative and fictional academic writing may not be easily published in academic, disciplinary journals[103]. Creative and fictional academic writing is not easily published in academic, disciplinary journals. Art critic Lucy Lippard writes that though the art of the late sixties and seventies

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[103] The editors and contributors to *Writing academic texts differently* (Lykke *et al.*, 2014) work in the area of gender theory, in which they may have more space to experiment with style and genre. The editors write that they all 'have tried out what it means to produce texts in the borderlands between academic and creative writing' (2014, p. 2). The use of creative writing is less likely to be accepted in other discipline, particularly in sciences, mathematics or engineering.

invited people to respond in creative ways, her 'experimental fiction…got [her] accused of being an artist' (1995b, p. 12). Therefore, it remains to be seen whether fictional and creative accounts of art histories can engage with the hegemonic politics of Art History and influence its parameters. It can be frustrating for the feminist author to make her/himself vulnerable through reflexivity and personal storytelling and not necessarily be taken seriously as a theorist (as argued, for example, in Gallop, 1988, p. 7). Resorting to such explicit vulnerability as part of political research practice needs accompanying forms of strategic activism to secure its impact, as discussed in the previous chapters (and further explored in section 4.3).

Another problem in the use of creative, reflexive and fictional academic writing is the reproduction of dominant parameters that it aims to critique. For example, Hemmings (2011) uses affect and citation to communicate her analysis to her readers. Only in the latter part of her book does the strategy of recitation possibly reshuffle the academic paradigm in which she works. A large proportion of the book, in which Hemmings contextualises her strategy, can be read as the reproduction of an old paradigm. Similarly, Sedgwick (2003) does not escape her own critique[104] of academic writing. Can her own article be regarded as 'real conceptual work' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 136)? Paradoxically, there is no way to tell whether Sedgwick's own writing is effective. As in Phelan's intervention (discussed in the vignette above), the relevance of the feminist text or the resulting troubling of dominant parameters cannot be measured. Apart from audiences potentially experiencing elation or being inspired (an effect similar to that of *artworks*), is there any other impact? And, if so, (how) can it be measured? One should, therefore, critically question *for whom* these texts are written, and *to whom* the reflexivity and sharing of personal stories matter.

Phelan (1993a, pp. 32-33) asks the reader to forgive her for her 'failure' to see, acknowledging the ever present 'blind spots' that characterise any research position. But why would she ask forgiveness for a situation that was not created on her own terms (as a 'woman' and/or 'feminist') in the first place? Is the theoretical paradox that Phelan finds herself in *really* a failure? Asking for forgiveness may strategically negotiate (her) 'feminist' positioning with dominant parameters of representation, communicating the relevance of her text *within* the old paradigm. Such a positioning has the advantage of potentially influencing dominant stakeholders and changing their opinion. The

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[104] Sedgwick warns against tautological thinking that conceals whether 'real conceptual work' (2003, p. 136) is done. Because the terms of 'real conceptual work' are, as she herself argues, pre-determined, Sedgwick cannot address this point other than through tautology. She does not break the epistemological loop of 'narrational' research in the *representation* of her analysis, that is, her article.

disadvantage, however, may be that Phelan's approach only speaks to 'feminist' readers who are like herself, already part of institutional space or *aspiring* to be. They may find Phelan's intervention 'inspiring', whilst the rest of the 'feminist' public is excluded. As a result, there is no representation of intersectionality, and the structures of social inequality are (re)produced. This predicament is visualised in the cartoon *Failure* (Figure 12).

There may be nothing wrong with promoting the acceptance of our failures, which can 'mark' what is *not* represented under dominant parameters of representation. However, failing to identify strategies that have a positive effect in practice will not only maintain the problem, but may even create bigger problems, that is, the (re)production of social inequality. The green creature in the cartoon has been duplicated into a larger version of itself.
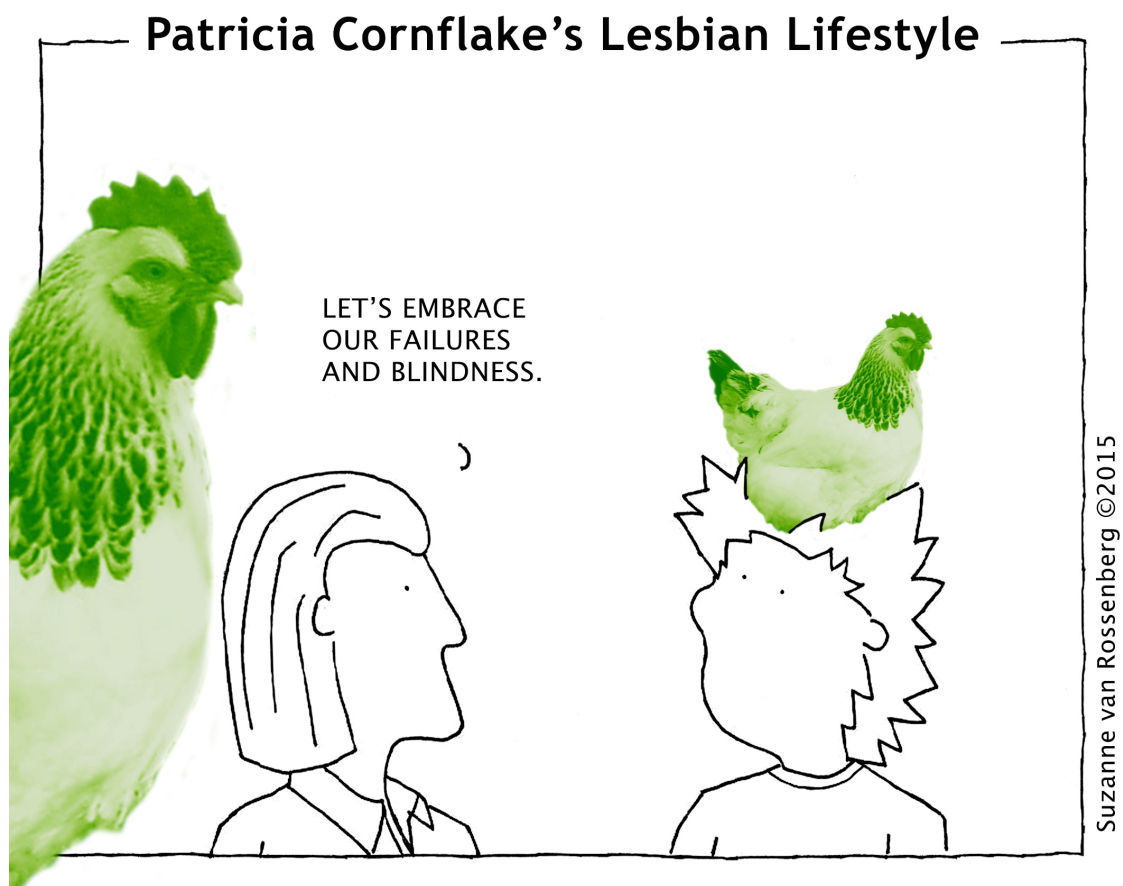
Fig. 12 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Failure*, 2015. [Digital image]

The (re)production of social inequality *through* feminist research is very relevant to representing diversity and allowing diverse, multiple voices to be *equally* heard. Pollock (2013) encounters a paradox in aiming for multi-vocalism, whilst criticising the visibility of multiple voices through the labelling of art as woman, queer or Black. As we have seen

in section 4.1, the hegemonic structures of Art History cannot include any 'other' artists than the ones that are supposed to be neutral or universal. Applying a creative covenant and research reflexivity has not provided *representations of intersectionality*. An important reason for this may be the lack of diversification of feminist art publics and the use of static research points of view. The displacement of dominant aesthetics while at the same time representing intersectionality may simply be too much work for one researcher, which can discourage art researchers from tackling the real problem at all. The cartoon *An intersectional desire to just be* (Figure 13) captures the feeling of being overwhelmed by such work. The signposting depicts the intersectionality of Patricia Cornflake's position.
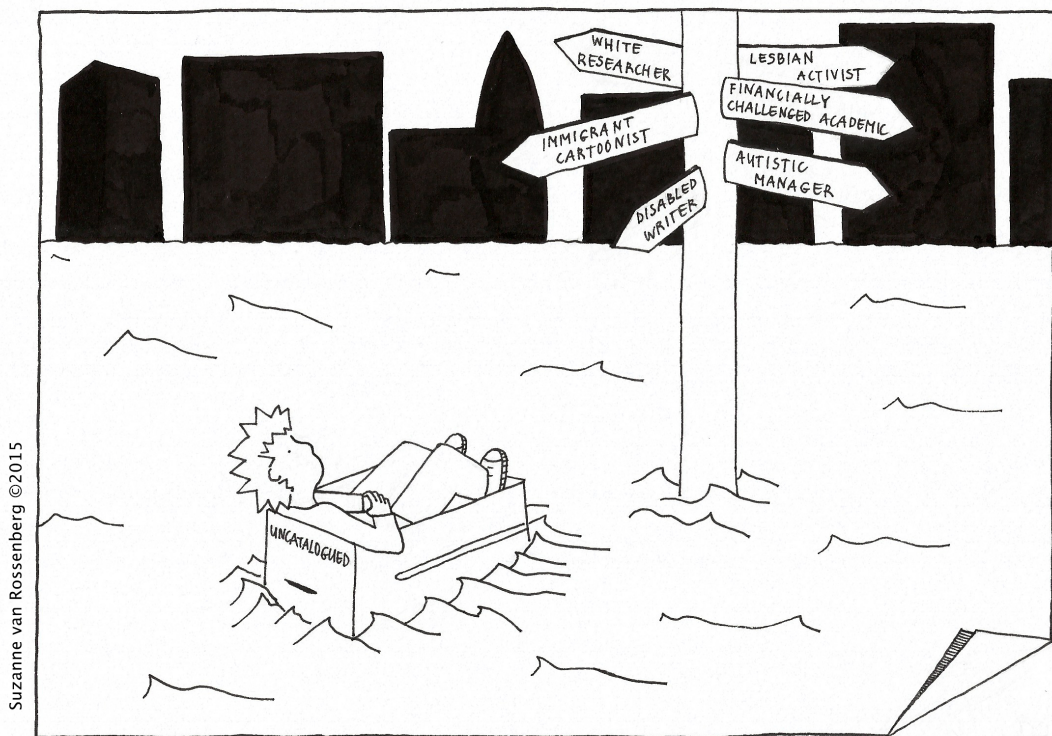
Fig. 13 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *An intersectional desire to just be*, 2015. [Digital image]

This section has explored whether creative or fiction writing can challenge dominant discursive structures. Can it provide a view from elsewhere that can recognise feminist art theory? The answer is yes and no. Creative transgressions in academic writing are valid and useful tools that can support the marginalised situations of feminist authors. Art histories can be differently written, but it is uncertain whether they will be 'heard' and can *politically* engage in the current, dominant hegemonic practices of Art History. One difficulty is the fact that critical theory itself can largely be regarded as 'fictional', being

inevitably affected by the emotions of its authors. New 'fictional' values are easily oppressed by a dominant narrative. The ambiguity of 'truth' in the discipline reemphasises the need for activist engagement in order to facilitate social change. Discursive politics manifested exclusively through writing may not be enough to facilitate any real social change.

In this light, creative and fiction writing is as good as any other form of feminist academic writing. In the search for a representation of intersectionality (combining feminist art research, practice and activism), creative and fiction writing is a valid approach, rendering art research into (partly) *art practice*. The proposed transdisciplinarity accommodates this transgression. Nevertheless, the 'feminist intervention', which Pollock (2003, p. 24) speaks of (see section 4.1), may need more than writing only in order to maximise the pressure on Art History and effectively restructure it. For real change as a result of the feminist intervention, other forms of interdisciplinarity and activism are needed. This is further discussed in the next section (4.3), which takes into account the socio-political and economic structures of feminist art research.

4.3 From interdisciplinarity and activism towards transdisciplinarity

The previous two sections highlighted the discursive boundaries of Art History, which contribute to the double problem of gender (and other identity categories) and art. Art History is subject to socio-political and economic conditions too, similar to the artworks that it describes, researches and interprets. Following the strategy of *combining* art research, practice and activism, this section will discuss examples of interdisciplinarity and activism that can be found within feminist art research. Interdisciplinarity and activism that can be found in feminist art research form the basis of the proposed transdisciplinarity, together with the strategic overlap between art research and art practice, examples which were discussed in the previous section and chapter.

As the displacement of dominant aesthetics cannot take place in discursive space only, feminist art researchers have always searched for an exchange with other disciplines (Tickner, 1988, p. 94). In this section, the question is posed whether interdisciplinarity and activism in feminist art research can contribute to the *representation of intersectionality*, which is needed for social change (as argued in Chapter One). Section

4.3.1 describes the interdisciplinarity of feminist art, which, in combination with activism (4.3.2), forms an important element in creating positive social change in the arts.

4.3.1 Interdisciplinarity in feminist art research

In 'Woman as sign', Cowie (1990, pp. 117-118) argues that signifying practices do not stand apart from other social practices in society. Therefore, academic writing, which is a signifying practice, should be seen in the context of not only theoretical and discursive contexts, but also, for example, socio-political and economic contexts. Pollock (2003, pp. 5-7) emphasises that the intersectional positions of the feminist interveners in art histories are conditioned. Similar to artistic practices, research practices can be considered *social practices* that are limited and constrained by socio-political and economic conditions. Feminist research practices are constrained by the politics and economics of institutions that tend to favour 'white', 'male' approaches (Harding, 2004a, pp. 4-5). Recognition of academic work is not only based on originality, quality, validity and usefulness of research, but also favouritism and access to resources. Interdisciplinarity can, therefore, be strategic for pragmatic reasons.

Fig. 14 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Telling stories differently*, 2015. [Digital image]

As argued in the previous chapters, to historicise and art criticise socio-political art practices, analysis and interpretation of the applied art conceptual, socio-political *and* economic structures are necessary. The 'transdisciplinary' artworks envisaged in this thesis partly apply 'conservative' aesthetics, but also *reject* the dominant combination of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures (which can be said to be all 'feminist' artworks). As argued in the previous chapter, transdisciplinary and dynamic research positions are presumably able to more accurately *represent* those artworks. Simply put, if an artwork is situated at the intersection of two or more fields, art researchers will need to gain knowledge about those fields and work at intersections too in order to interpret the diverse meanings of the work (to different audiences). As a result, within the field of Art History, the multiple meanings of artworks would be acknowledged and recognised as belonging to Art History. This proposal is visualised in the cartoon *Telling stories differently* (Figure 14).

As discussed in sub-section 4.2.1, representing art histories *differently* helps troubling the dominant parameters of research. However, what is *not* represented is the fact that those alternative stories about art are more than one thing, being, for example, research *and* fiction, or research *and* activism. They work in multiple ways to multiple audiences, which could represent intersectionality in *action*, but not in books or articles through which *one* reader receives the writing from *one* author position. The *multiple* meanings of the reinterpreted artworks are not communicated, and this predicament is part of re-structuring the canons, for which, not only creativity, but also an interdisciplinarity between theory and practice is needed. The green creature in the cartoon now wears a rainbow-coloured marker (to represent it 'differently'), the colours of which refer to LGBTI diversity. LGBTI activism deals with representing intersectionality in practice, which is further discussed in Chapter Five.

Interdisciplinarity of feminist art research is extremely important for creating space for marginalised voices. One can, however, deliberate about *which* particular interdisciplinarity used by feminist art researchers has resulted in the best possible impact. Before looking into this, it should be noted that interdisciplinary positions in dominant academic cultures are not necessarily easy to generate. The current parameters of academic research tend to deepen disciplinarity (Leavy, 2011, p. 17). Interdisciplinarity is not absent, but the mechanisms of scholarship involved, for instance, in the peer review of journal articles or academic conference papers provide (new) disciplinary rules and norms, with their associate facilities, means and resources (as noted, for example, by Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, p. 794). Transgressing the borders of disciplines and discourses convincingly requires the critical and practical support of research peers in

those multiple fields. This may limit the extent of interdisciplinarity available to art researchers, as they may not always have the time to familiarise themselves with multidisciplinary critical discourses (in line with Leavy, 2011, pp. 63-64). Certain forms of exclusionary politics are at play again.

Feminist art historians report the use of different types of interdisciplinarity. Phelan, for example, lists 'Western science, law, theatrical realism, autobiography, and psychoanalysis' (1993a, p. 3) as disciplines that she deploys in her re-structuring strategy. Pollock (1999, 2003) uses Marxist socio-political sciences, literary science, psychoanalysis and film theory. Throughout the decades of feminist art history and visual culture, psychoanalysis[105] has had a prominent place, as understanding of psycho-social processes is argued to increase understanding of the need for differentiation and the associated sexism (see, for example, Mulvey, 1975; Pollock, 1999, pp. 13-19, 2003, pp. 17-19; Jones and Silver, 2016a, p. 21). Few art historians employ more pragmatic forms of interdisciplinarity with, for instance, social sciences, economics or healthcare, and few use social-science research methods such as surveys, statistical analysis or participatory research.

Which transgressions of disciplinary boundaries can best represent the critical mode of analysis of feminist art research discussed in Chapter Three? What form can best draw attention to questions such as for whom, for what purpose and with what money art signification takes place? Socio-political and economic approaches do appear to contribute to better understanding of the socio-political and economic aspects of art signification. However, in order to displace dominant aesthetics and diversify the canon, engagement with the hegemonic practice of Art History and its dominant form of art differentiation is necessary.[106] In this light, psychoanalysis may resonate better with the interests of dominant gatekeepers.

There is a relationship between the narrow application of interdisciplinarity and the difficulty of displacing dominant aesthetics. The epistemological challenge taken up by creative writing modes, as described in the previous section, can be considered part of the interdisciplinarity of feminist art research. This may be especially true when these

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[105] A key limitation of psychoanalysis is its emphasis on the male/female binary. Interpreting feminism as 'a rewriting of desire' (Pollock, 2014, p. 19) that constitutes canonicity, psychoanalytical approaches seem to be trapped in their own production of sexual difference, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Temporary and strategic differentiations of sexual difference – being neither one nor the other, or being both – are oppressed by static research approaches that, in the end, will always essentialise gender.

[106] Economic and sociological approaches that side-line the role of theory and concept in art signification cannot fully tackle the politics of representation and enhance diversification of art canons either. This will be briefly revisited in Chapter Six.

creative methods are possibly instigated by the reflexivity of psychoanalysis or other research fields. As Art History is so traditional, Pollock (1996, pp. 11-12) questions whether one can ever be both an Art Historian and a feminist, because such a person would inherently apply forms of *interdisciplinarity*. The dynamic mode of analysis that may displace both art and identities is oppressed by conservative structures.

In an unintentional vicious circle, feminist researchers who are not able to dynamically position themselves (crucial for the *representation of intersectionality*) may simply oppress and marginalise *other* others – a reproduction of inequality described in the previous chapters. This predicament may be one reason why some researchers prefer not to describe their method (openly) as 'feminist' and/or work on the topic of identity. Different approaches to 'women's art' can lead to tensions illustrated in the vignette below. Nonetheless, interdisciplinarity is crucial for feminist art historians. But how can it 'work' and intervene in art canons?

Vignette 8. Disagreement about feminist research methodologies

In a 1983 polemic about the historical (in)visibility of women artists between Ann Sutherland Harris and Pollock (republished in Robinson, 1987, pp. 222-227), Harris accuses Pollock of not doing her homework as an art historian, omitting crucial information that would result in a misleading conclusion about the erasure of 'women' artists (Harris, 1987, pp. 222-226). In response, Pollock argues that Harris does not address the structural dimension of sexism in discourse, which is key to accurately understanding and interpreting artworks by 'women' (Pollock, 1987, pp. 226-227). One could infer that Harris temporarily 'brackets' difference in order to do 'accurate' historical work. When collecting data, the role of gender cannot be assumed, but only deducted from the material. Simultaneously, however, such a research approach may perpetuate sexism, as the dominant structures cannot represent the temporary bracketing of gender difference, but simply render 'women' invisible. If it is, either way, impossible to address sexism and gender inequality through Art History, should then feminist activism be situated outside research altogether? Perhaps the disagreement between Pollock and Harris is the clash between, respectively, a socio-political approach and a conservative Art Historical one. Neither of them provides final, complete answers, and both are needed to strengthen the position of 'women' artists and art researchers.

It becomes increasingly apparent that, in establishing research modes that can intervene in art histories, boundaries between disciplines need to be *transcended* through which 'old' disciplinary and interdisciplinary paradigms are basically transformed. In applying transdisciplinarity, which facilitates such transcendence, the discipline of Art History will

not be abolished, but researchers will need to let go of privileging one research perspective over another (Leavy, 2011, pp. 35, 55). To some readers, this proposal may resonate with the 'death of the author' narrative, which is further contextualised, and rejected, in the vignette below.

Vignette 9. Death of the author?

The transgression of the borders of art making and writing may remind some readers of what is referred to as 'the death of the author' discussed by thinkers such as Roland Barthes (1977) and Michel Foucault (1979) as a concept that allegedly dispels the myth of the author as a patriarchal figure or genius. Pollock persuasively notes that, in reality, only feminists have nothing to lose with such a proposal, because they have never been in positions of authority in the first place. Joan Borsa (1990, pp. 23-24) also critically questions what such a move means for authors (and readers) who have always occupied a decentred location. When inherent instability or 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) is acknowledged, there is no need for the death of the author at all. Haraway (1988, 585-586) even argues that the death of the subject implicitly reinforces the narrative of an all seeing master eye. For feminist authors, it is very hard to start occupying positions of authority without claiming positions of authorship. Artist and curator Laurence Rassel ironically remarks in the fictionalised radio drama *The Laurence Rassel Show*: 'I think it's kind of funny that when we claim to be an author – ***finally*** – well, he died' (Rassel and Thaemlitz, 2007, emphasis in the original).[107] The proposed transdisciplinarity not only takes distance from the notion of the death of the author, but also does the exact opposite by promoting the multiplicity of author positions. Speaking from transgressive research perspectives means, therefore, *reclaiming* positions of authority and power, whilst acknowledging the relativity of authority and power.

In section 4.4, 'transdisciplinarity' of feminist art (research, practice and activism) will be further explored as an effective response to the conservatism that keeps oppressing feminist interventions in Art History. The strengths and limitations of feminist art research will be taking as starting points to contextualise the proposed transdisciplinarity. Before doing so, activism and collectivism that can be found in feminist art research is explored (4.3.2), leading us to the combination of feminist art research, practice *and* activism, which the proposed transdisciplinarity aims to apply.

4.3.2 Activism as part of feminist art research

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[107] http://www.comatonse.com/writings/2007_laurencerasselshow.html

As discussed in the previous chapters, activism is an inherent part of feminist engagement in the arts. We have seen, for instance, that Pollock's academic work arose from the women's liberation movement in the 1970s and was closely related to political action and awareness raising network groups (mentioned in Pollock, 1996, pp. 10-11, 2003, p. 32, 2010, p. 21, 2013, p. xxvii). Given that the applied interdisciplinarity is potentially limited (see 4.3.1), additional activism to alter conservative tendencies within disciplines does appear to be necessary. New voices in feminist-queer art research show a desire for activism and collaborative practices (Horne and Tobin, 2014; Silver, 2016). This underlines the transdisciplinary use of research, practice and activism in the pursuit of social change, as introduced in Chapter One.

Fig. 15 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Collectives*, 2015. [Digital image]

Activism may offer a way to escape discursive space and, more consistently, draw attention to theoretical, socio-political, economic structures of art and research. This may be one way of making feminist art (research, practice and activism) more of a 'social movement', collectivity or community, which is not necessarily far removed from the concept of a research community. Leavy (2011, p. 17) writes that each academic discipline forms their own research community. Within art history, Pollock advises feminist art historians to develop their own 'conversational community' (2003, p. 19), which may

guarantee the continued awareness of the conditions of art history writing. More recently, art historians Victoria Horne and Amy Tobin, who organised a series of events in the UK in 2013-2014, reiterated the need for a 'supportive and critical network of feminist researchers' (2014, p. 75). The fact that feminism in art research leads to activism and collectivism is illustrated in the cartoon *Collectives* (Figure 15). The green creature's rainbow-coloured marker has slid slightly, in comparison to the previous cartoon, which suggests there is some movement.

The extent to which 'feminist art' collectives use activist tools borrowed from social movements will differ from one to another. A recent example of using 'activist' tools is the foundation of the international network Feminist Curators United by Maura Reilly, Helena Reckitt and Lara Perry in 2014. This network aims to support and contribute to the recognition of feminist art curators and scholars (Feminist Curators United, no date)[108]. The strategy of this network will be revisited in the next chapter, which explores the tools of feminist activism. One of the difficulties Feminist Curators United may encounter is that 'art histories' do not have a formal or legal body that governs and controls art canons. Art History does not consist of democratically chosen 'rules' of what constitutes art histories. Evidence-based recommendations for policy changes in art canonisation would, therefore, not make much sense. How, then, can support and recognition of feminist art curators and scholars be established institutionally?

Xabier Arakistain, curator of the feminist exhibition *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang: 45 Years of Art and Feminism* (2007, Spain), was able to influence national Spanish legislation, which now requires governmental cultural institutes to pro-actively support gender equity (Robinson, 2016, p. 34).[109] This is an exceptional achievement. It shows that influence beyond the art institutional realm is possible, and that (collectives of) feminist curators, directors, academics, art historians, journalists and artists *can* influence governmental and business policies – not unlike gender equality and human rights movements (discussed in Chapter Five). In addition to 'intervening' on discursive levels in inter/disciplinary ways, collective action that effects practical change can support the differencing of canons.

As discussed in the previous chapters, feminism, in general, draws on the idea of collectivism. In dialogue with Perry, Reilly expresses the belief that, perhaps not consciously, feminist curators are working towards common objectives (Perry and Reilly, 2016, p. 51). This may suggest that the inherent 'fictitious' collectivism does not

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[108] http://www.feministcurators.org/
[109] The legislation concerns Article 26 of 'Ley Orgánica 3/2007' (see link: https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2007/BOE-A-2007-6115-consolidado.pdf).

necessarily need to match visible and concrete collective structures through which feminist objectives are realised. This may be the case, but the question remains whether such framing of feminism will provide sufficient effective activism to attain change. In light of differing strategies of feminists, as discussed in the previous chapters, an abstract image of feminist collectivism may be as diverse as the feminist stakeholder imagines it to be. In other words, the plurality of feminist identities remains limited to the imagination of feminists in power, and the 'definition' of feminism is not challenged (in line with Butler, 1999, pp. 19-22, 189). The belief that feminist art research, art histories and Art History automatically result in some sort of feminist collectivism may not recognise its own mechanism of inclusion and exclusion and, unintentionally, makes feminist art a 'site of exclusion'[110] (Leavy, 2009, p. 219).
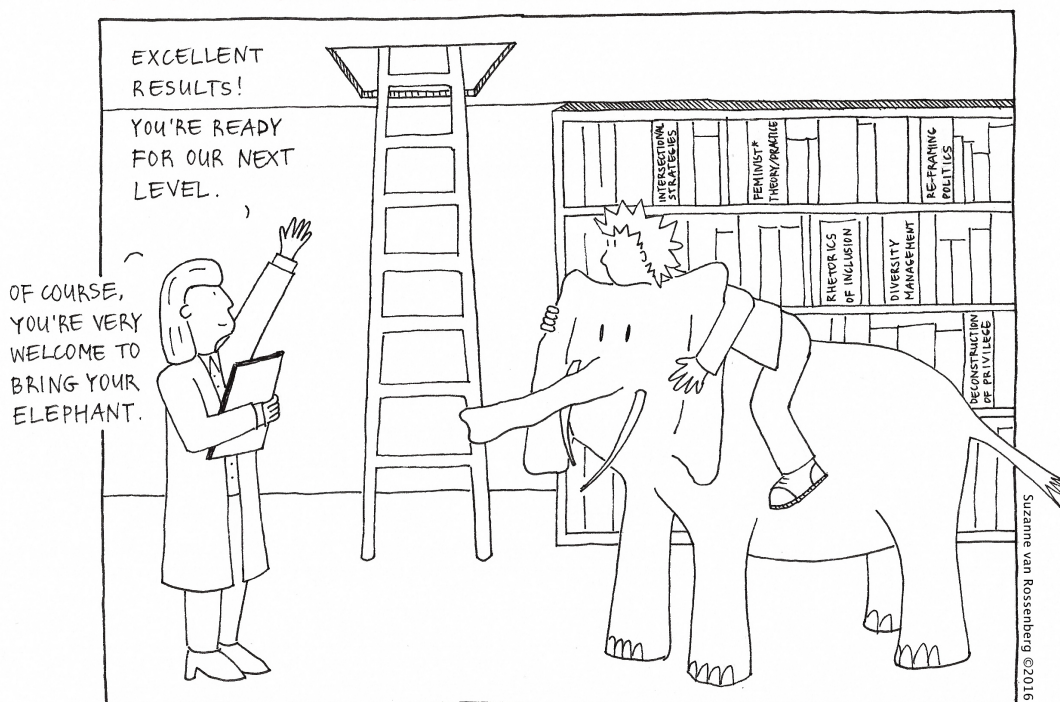
Fig. 16 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *On the academic career ladder*, 2016. [Digital image]

This unintentional (re)production of social inequality in feminist academia is illustrated in the cartoon *On the academic career ladder* (Figure 16). Patricia Cornflake has made

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[110] The term comes from *Art on my mind: visual politics* (1995) by bell hooks. Leavy (2009, p. 219) writes: 'Furthermore, informed by her engaged feminist politics, hooks makes a persuasive case that race, class, and gender shape who makes art, who sells it, what is sold, who values it, how it is valued, who writes about it, and how it is written about. In this respect art can function as a site of exclusion. However, for hooks, visual art also carries a transformative power that can resist and dislodge stereotypical ways of thinking.'

excellent progress in her research, and is invited to advance to the next stage of her academic career. However, in order to reach the next stage, she needs to climb a ladder leading to a gap in the ceiling. Will she be able to take her elephant (representing her intersectional position) with her? It is important to acknowledge that feminist academia, though providing spaces of solidarity, can be exclusionary too.

In recent years, a number of events organised in the UK have looked more closely at the relationship between art, feminism and activism within the discursive field. Examples are the conference *Writing, Curating, Making Feminist Art Histories* (2014, University of Edinburgh), two conferences on the theme of *Re-Materialising Feminism* (2014, The Showroom and ICA, London), the teach-in about 'women' artists who stopped making art organised by Abi Shapiro and myself (2015, Middlesex University) and the *Feminist Duration Reading Group* initiated by Helena Reckitt (2015 to date, London). Nevertheless, though they contribute to knowledge sharing and awareness raising, the events do not seem to enter the organised structures of activism or advocacy. As a result, they may have little demonstrable impact on the dominant parameters of art. Little visible collaboration outside the arts and academia is sought and few objectives in other fields/practices that intersect feminist art are formulated. It should also be acknowledged that the events most likely reflect the 'whiteness' of the field.

These observations do not mean to imply that such activities are necessarily futile. They do, however, reiterate the importance of being aware for whom, for what purposes and in what economic conditions such events take place. The events can very well function within transdisciplinary, collaborative and activist research designs, and, as such, they may form necessary advocacy and support tools. However, without serving concrete objectives or working towards a collective, collaborative agenda, be that influencing policy or a demonstration, the meetings may cause little change, and may even contribute to the perpetuation of the status quo (though, of course, this would hardly be measured).

When considering the existing interdisciplinarity and activism within feminist art (research), feminist art historians do seem to take steps towards transdisciplinarity. Art curation and creative writing by scholars have been clear examples of expanding and diversifying audiences. In addition, non-academic writing published through outlets such as the UK feminist magazine *Spare Rib* (1972 to 1993)[111] or the US *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* (1977 to 1993) has been an important channel for feminists engaging with Art History. *Heresies*, for example, hosted the first publication dedicated to

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[111] https://www.bl.uk/spare-rib

the work of lesbian artists (Hammond, 2000; Burk, 2013), which shows that non-academic activist sites are important for giving a voice to marginalised artists and representing intersectionality. Leaving non-academic publications out of the history of feminist theory (as in, e.g., Hemmings, 2011)[112] necessarily misrepresents the relationship between academic feminism and activism. In this thesis, I argue that framing feminists' academic and activist work as transdisciplinary is the most logical step, as well as a necessary one.

Contemporary feminist art historians and curators may promote collaboration, knowledge sharing and boundary challenges (as described in Horne and Tobin, 2014), but concrete, structural solutions are yet to be offered. How inclusiveness is envisaged and designed in collaborative and interdisciplinary research approaches is still unclear. This is not meant as a critique of all the innovative work currently undertaken in the field of feminist art histories. The key objective, as argued in this thesis, is to support the impact of feminist art by the combination of feminist art research, practice and activism, transgressing into other fields, such as socio-political and economic sciences. This may lead to social change inside and outside the arts, which is the main argument in this thesis. Aiming to create actual impact through feminist art research would be one of the reasons for feminist art researchers to engage with transdisciplinary research.

The proposed transdisciplinary approach offers a way to overcome the discursive paradox of 'feminist' Art History, as well as feminism's (re)production of social inequality to which feminist art researchers unavoidably contribute, if not representing intersectionality. An approach towards 'transcending' the boundary between Art History and transdisciplinarity is further discussed in section 4.4. The fact that transdisciplinary art research may not be recognised as 'Art History', and art historians cannot be 'feminist' in order to be successful, should be taken into consideration very seriously. The specialist knowledge and art criticism of feminist art researchers are necessary for creating space for marginalised artists in art canons.

4.4 Making feminist art research part of the proposed transdisciplinarity

Chapter One discussed the need for the *displacement* of identity categories within socio-political research, practice and activism. Categorisation and stigmatisation are perpetuated through social research, practice and activism that engage with identity

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[112] Hilary Robinson drew my attention to this fact.

categories for the purpose of social change. This thesis has argued that the *representation of intersectionality* may contribute to resolving the negative effects of categorisation, for example by using 'feminist art' to de-categorise identities. The previous chapter argued that a *representation of intersectionality* was necessary in the arts too, which involved not only the de-categorisation of identities, but also art (as the aesthetic object). When art and identities are 'de/categorised' simultaneously, both applying and rejecting norms, the displacement of dominant aesthetics can take place. The big question is how one can *both* apply *and* reject norms that define 'art' and 'categories' at the same time. The previous sections of this chapter described a number of strategies that feminist art researchers applied to attempt to solve this paradox.

It has become clear that 'visualising' feminism in discursive space has its own complications. There are still limited ways to trouble the dominant signification of 'art' and 'Art History', most importantly because disciplinary and theoretical spaces do not easily allow for the de-objectification of art. Feminist art researchers experience theoretical and pragmatic obstacles, including their own production of categories (hardly ever truly addressed). Can the obstacles, contradictions and inconsistencies of feminist theory be *constructively* repurposed for the benefit of positive social change? Aiming to answer this question, section 4.4.1 explores the notions of publics and counterpublics – a potential tool for incorporating intersectionality in 'feminist' Art History. Section 4.4.2 will then frame 'feminist art history' as a *style* whose discursive strength can function in the proposed transdisciplinarity. By doing so, the double problem of gender and art is *transferred* to the transdisciplinary approach. It is argued that by such 'reframing' of feminist art history (once more), a *representation of intersectionality* can be created, which can work towards positive social change.

4.4.1 How can feminist art research represent intersectionality?

A diversity of academic outputs is available nowadays, including books, articles, lectures, tutorials, presentations, creative writing, curatorial writing and online articles. These forms address multiple audiences, and over time, they can be said to create a 'public' (Warner, 2002). Feminist art discourse can be seen as the space in which an on-going series of 'contingencies' are projected on a partly real and partly imaginary group of readers, which form the 'public' of the field. A very successful example is Pollock's substantial body of work, which, over the past four decades, has created a public around restructuring and differencing art canons – a concept that has become quite dominant in the UK feminist art field. Her work includes academic publications, but also critical articles

on non-academic platforms. Recently, for example, Pollock (2015) wrote an article for *The Conversation* (a website facilitating dissemination of research to non-specialised audiences), addressing the erasure of women from art history by the National Gallery and referring to her own scholarship on this topic.

Potentially, the deepening of disciplinarity of Art History, and, subsequently, 'feminist' Art History, has not helped the cause of 'de/categorisation' and the displacement of dominant aesthetics as a result. Feminist disciplinarity may have created more discursive obstacles than it has eliminated, simply by being embedded in normative rules. The theoretical strength of 'feminist art history' may have further constrained the position of 'extra' marginalised art researchers, who may have found it harder, not easier, to enter academic spaces or receive institutional recognition. Spaces envisaged as suitable for 'multiple occupancy' (Pollock, 1999, p. 11) may still be the most accessible to 'white' 'women'.[113] Has a real solution been found for the tension between hegemonic Art History and feminism? As discussed, feminist art researchers cannot lobby for a 'policy change' in establishing filtering mechanisms. Implicit discriminatory signification of 'art' as done by dominant stakeholders cannot be forbidden on legal grounds.

The cartoon *Projecting diversity* (Figure 17) illustrates the situation of traditionally marginalised voices that do manage to enter academia, only to realise they may not find what they were looking for. Patricia Cornflake has climbed up the ladder with her elephant, which seems to be stuck in the ceiling gap. They have arrived in a dark laboratory, which may conveniently cover up the current 'whiteness' of feminist academia, hinting at the tension between the growing use of the concept intersectionality and the on-going underrepresentation of 'BAME' (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) lecturers and professors in British academia.

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[113] Pollock (2003, pp. 21-22) writes: 'Moreover this work [Pollock's essays in this book] was not only Eurocentric but ethnocentric. The position of Black artists, men and women, past and present, in all the cultural and class diversity of their communities and countries needs to be analysed and documented. Race must equally be acknowledged as a central focus of all our analyses of societies which were and are not only bourgeois but imperialist, colonizing nations. This remains a shadowy concern within this body of writings. But confronted by those involved in struggles around the issue, we must undergo self-criticism and change our practices.'
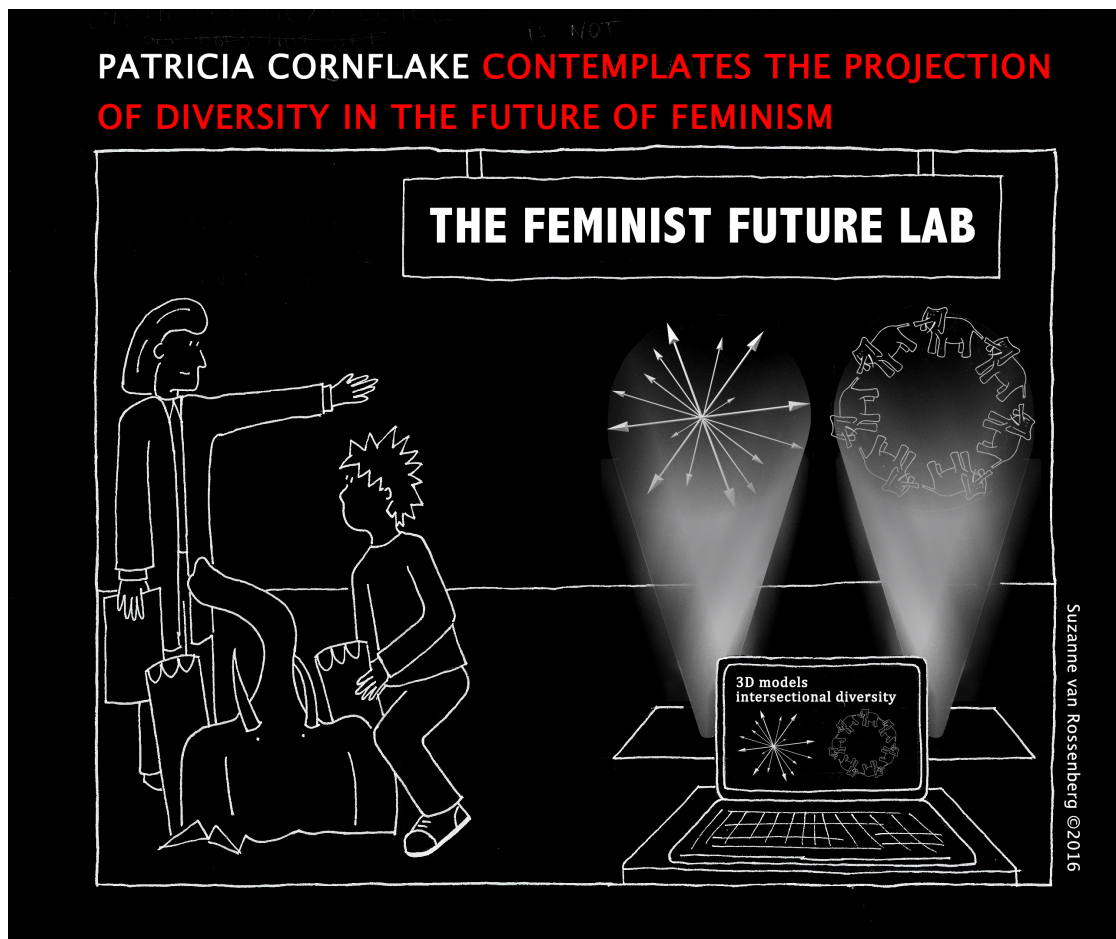
Fig. 17 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Projecting diversity*, 2016. [Digital image]

Forty years of building a research community and overcoming many socio-political and economic obstacles have not yet changed the dominant, patriarchal, white approach to the histories of art (Meskimmon, 2003, pp. 1, 13; Pollock, 2014, pp. 19-20). There is little evidence that feminist interventions have instigated structural change, or that they are currently doing so. Unfortunately, we cannot *see* paradigm shifts in action. This may be considered a weakness, but seen from a transdisciplinary point of view ('the view from elsewhere'), the feminist discipline's new discursive space, despite its limitations in representing intersectionality, can be regarded as a strength that can be instrumentalised. Michael Warner's (2002) concept of *counterpublics* can be very useful in illustrating this potential. Below the concept of counterpublics will be used to differently contextualise Pollock's (1999, pp. 6-7, 2013, p. xix) critique of artists and researchers labelling themselves as woman, Black or queer.

Counterpublics (Warner, 2002) are connected to the political grouping of *subaltern counterpublics* (Fraser, 1990, p. 67) consisting of marginalised or subordinated groups that suffer from one or multiple oppressions in society. Examples are women, working-

class and Black people, who, by not being represented (enough) in positions of power, are oppressed by the norms of predominantly 'white', 'middle/upper-class' and 'male' governing bodies. Working with and within a discipline that *differences* out of necessity, Pollock warns of the danger of oppressed voices self-organising separate academic studies or self-labelling art practices, referring to the term of 'ghettoization' (Pollock, 1999, p. 7). The danger is not ungrounded, as emancipation processes have been known to increase the social inequality of others (Tilly, 1998; Verloo, 2013) (further discussed in Chapter Five). However, as there is no functioning multi-vocalism at the moment, the expression of such fear of ghettoization may simply sound exclusionary and discriminatory. Self-organisation of 'extra' marginalised voices is crucial for strategic feminism (Weldon, 2006, p. 56), and critiquing this can easily be experienced as silencing, gatekeeping or oppressing. Applying Warner's notion of (counter)publics can give an alternative view to the potential, implicit discrimination of critiquing the use of identity labels.

Warner argues that there is, in essence, no difference between a public and a counterpublic, because both are constructed though the same means, such as self-organisation and reflexive circulation of discourse (2002, p. 81, 86-87). However, the counterpublic is capable of transforming political landscapes and creating space for voices that are marginalised and not heard (Fraser, 1990, pp. 67-68; Warner, 2005, pp. 85-89). Warner explains, with regard to a 'queer' counterpublic:

> The individual struggle with stigma is transposed, as it were, to *the conflict between modes of publicness*. The expansive nature of public address will seek to keep *moving that frontier* for a queer public, to seek more and more places to circulate where people will recognize themselves in its address; but no one is likely to be unaware of the risk and conflict involved. (Warner, 2002, p. 87, my emphasis)

Writing feminist art histories that aims to restructure the signification of art and of 'women' is comparable to creating a counterpublic to whom this message can be communicated. The idea that 'women' are not able to be (good) artists can be seen as a stigma that needs to be overcome. Feminist art historians may be said to aim to 'move the frontier' for a feminist art public, gradually expanding it. However, they encounter a 'conflict between modes of publicness' between the non-feminist and feminist art public, being unable to speak to both simultaneously. Pollock's critique of identity labelling may simply show that feminist texts, in order to represent *intersectionality*, need to address even more than these two publics, but also *multiple feminist audiences*. This is further illustrated below.

Pollock (2013, p. xix) argues that adding adjectival labels such as 'women', 'Black' and 'queer' to 'artists' leaves the privileges of 'white', 'male' and 'heterosexual' artists unmarked. This has the effect of *disqualifying* artists who are *not* 'white', *not* 'male' and/or *not* 'heterosexual'. Pollock thinks that this semiotic mechanism cannot be transgressed. However, categorisation may only be perpetuated if one stays *within* the discipline. Framing the (new) discipline as research, practice *and* activism, for which clues can be found in feminist art scholarly work (as discussed the previous sections), feminist art historians who transgress their discipline may very well be able to communicate identity categories and their differentiated meanings to a number of (counter)publics. The proposed transdisciplinarity supports the movements between disciplines, theory and practice in order to represent as many as identity values as possible. Chapter Five will further discuss the role of practice in the representation of intersectionality.

Whilst Pollock's argument may stand in theory, in *practice*, numerous artists[114] voluntarily label themselves as woman, feminist, Black, lesbian and queer and contextually re-negotiate new meanings with art audiences that the feminist art historian might never have imagined. Following these artists' transgressions, as argued in Chapters Three, the feminist art researcher is able to represent intersectionality in more than one signifying field. The self-labelling can be read as strategic. Disqualifying self-labelling artists in theory only can be seen as a one-dimensional, static approach which will never facilitate multiple occupancy (Jones and Silver, 2016a, pp. 30-31). The fact that feminist art research may encounter *more than one conflict* between modes of publicness could further explain why, despite its strong scholarship and links to activism, feminist engagement in Art History has found it difficult to reach both the institutions and the diverse marginalised groups. Again, the proposed transdisciplinarity could help feminist art researchers finding those audiences. The necessary 'de/categorisation' and representation of intersectionality coincide with the diversification of research methods and methodologies, as well as in the earlier proposed *layering* of research positions.

This section has argued that intersectionality can be found, produced and represented through the combined use of research, practice and activism, as supported by the proposed transdisciplinarity. The production of Art History (including 'feminist' Art History), however, remains constrained by the conservative and hegemonic structures of the field. The next section (4.4.2.) will demonstrate that transdisciplinarity offers

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[114] See for example: Frizzell, N. (2015) '#Arthoe: the teens who kickstarted a feminist art movement', *The Guardian*, 19 August. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/19/arthoe-teens-kickstart-feminist-art-movement-instagram-tumblr (Last accessed: 3 January 2018).

temporary escapes from what was earlier called the paradox of 'feminist' Art History, through which the discursive parameters are simultaneously applied and rejected.

4.4.2 'Feminist' Art History as a transformative practice

The previous section argued multiplicity of discursive spaces is needed for the troubling of hegemonic practices of Art History, as well as 'de-categorising' the identity politics that is necessary for making social inequality visible (in line with Fraser, 1990, pp. 63-70; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). Feminist art theory has demonstrated that naming marginalised groups as 'other' or 'different' from the norm will not automatically include them in the norm or re-signify them (Pollock, 1999, pp. 4-6). A 'view from elsewhere' (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 25) was argued to be needed in order to understand and reframe this structuring mechanism, and possibly resolve the double problem of gender and art it produces. When the limitations of the (counter)publics of feminist art research are understood, inconsistencies and contradictions in representing intersectionality may be understood differently.

As further institutionalisation and specialisation in contemporary research reinforce similarity instead of facilitating diversity (Leavy, 2011, p. 17), feminism is confronted with the difficult question of how to challenge *the whole system* that reproduces normative research positions. There has been limited space for the representation of intersectionality. Nevertheless, Pollock's differencing of the canon for over forty years through publications, articles, teaching and lecturing can be seen as an impressive and comprehensive strategy to counter-balance the perpetuation of dominant norms. Only a sizeable and consistent body of academic work over a long period of time, such as that of Pollock,[115] could ever compete in the power dynamics of the discipline's conservative, hegemonic structures. The importance of project management, planning, development and networking skills in the creation of such a strong body of scholarship should not be overlooked.

Pollock's art history writing and initiation of a counter/discipline (taking up the almost unresolvable tension between feminism and Art History) could be read as a *stylistic* answer to the whole system. Including the 'creative covenant', interdisciplinarity, collectivism, public engagement and art history writing into the research practice, the

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[115] One could go so far as to call Pollock's overall strategy of differencing the canon an artwork or art practice, which would resonate with what Sholette calls a 'mockstitution' (2011, p. 152) – the fictional application of structures that imitate cultural institutions.

whole social practice (of research, practice and activism) can be transcended to the transdisciplinarity proposed in this thesis. The representation of intersectionality should be sought and tested *there*. Moreover, Art History can stay intact as a discipline, functioning as *one* of the applied research methods.
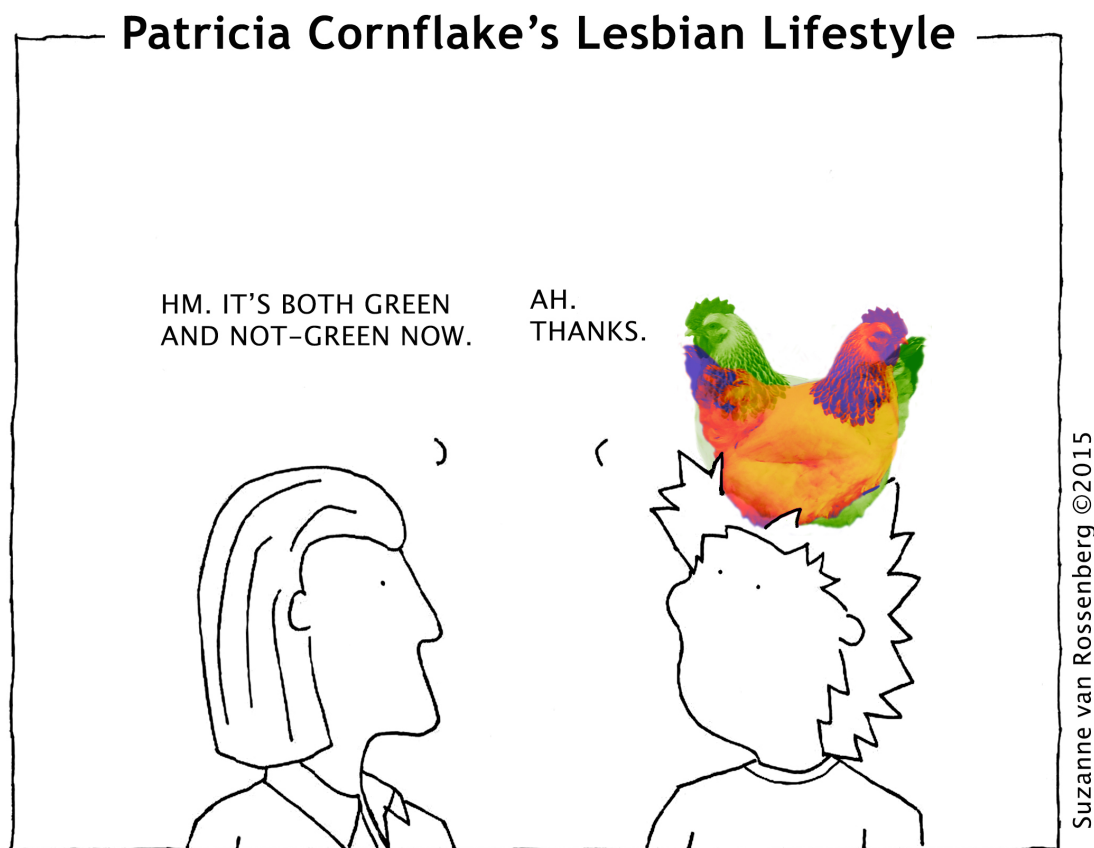
Fig. 18 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Being both*, 2015. [Digital image]

Within the proposed transdisciplinarity, art researchers can be both feminists and art historians, answering Pollock's (1996, p. 18, 1999, p. 11) provocative question whether art historians can ever be feminists, and vice versa. The move from 'feminist' Art History to feminist art transdisciplinarity is illustrated in the cartoon *Being both* (Figure 18), in which the double problem of gender and art (previously represented by the green creature) is now represented through duplicity and layering.

Warner calls the limited impact of academic writing the 'fate of academic publics' (2002, p. 68), but he may have disregarded the strategic activism of feminist scholars who have come very far in moving multiple frontiers by addressing multiple audiences. Rather than leaving behind the disciplinary and theoretical writing about feminist art, this thesis proposes to build further on the rich and important scholarly, creative and academic work of feminist art historians. It also aims to offer a framework that allows marginalised

researchers and artists to more easily enter the discipline and research community and re-diversify feminism within Art History.

As mentioned before, current research activities such as writing articles, organising workshops and conducting archival research do not necessarily have to change in form, but rather in their strategic framing in socio-political reality. Writing to (imaginary) readers remains important and can 'make a world' (Warner, 2002, p. 64). The message, however, should have links to reality and not be entirely 'fictitious' to the (counter)public (in line with Stanley and Wise, 2000; Warner, 2002, p. 64). The success of British art critic John Berger arguably resulted from his ability to make artworks accessible to a wider audience (Minto, 2017),[116] showing links to real, everyday socio-politics that mattered to large groups of viewers. The challenge of feminist art critics is to make the politics of art histories and creation of meaning understandable to a large audience. This is not easy, as conservative and progressive approaches are equally in/accurate. Monitoring and evaluating the de-marginalisation of artists, as well as the displacement of dominant aesthetics, could help in making a convincing argument. I personally would argue that increasing the *transparency* in art politics[117] may be the least fictitious message, which can best resonate with the public.

This chapter began with describing the 'paradoxical' position of feminist art researchers, when wanting to overcome marginalisation and avoid gatekeeping of 'other' and/or 'newer' voices. It has ended with a proposal to transform feminist art research into a *transdisciplinary* counter-strategy that aims to increase the art public's understanding of meaningful transgressions of artworks. The proposed transdisciplinarity supports academic writing, creative writing, exhibition curation, collaborative projects, workshops, conferences, comics, collective actions, and so on. Dynamic research, practice and activism positions are promoted to re-signify and de-objectify art, facilitating multiple meanings in multiple spaces. The availability of potential, meaningful transgressions, however, depends on the transdisciplinarity with other disciplines and fields. As socio-political

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[116] https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/a-smuggling-operation-john-bergers-theory-of-art/
[117] The lack of a critical framework to make the structures of art meaning and purposes understandable to audiences may be recognised in the growing critique of the Turner Prize, which is said to miss the link with the politics that matter (see, for example, Quaintance, 2016). The question is whether the nominees of the previous editions were more engaged with politics than the 2016 nominees, or whether other circumstances have resulted in the public's demand for art that more clearly relates to current socio-political affairs. The demand may well be the result of (audience) widening participation strategies applied by the Turner Prize organisers, and, if so, should be seen as a success. Alternatively, the cultural-economic climate has simply changed, and day-to-day politics matters more to the art public. Estimating the degree of political engagement in artworks would require analysing the combination of theoretical, socio-political and economic structures. In this light, Helen Marten's gesture (the 2016 Turner Prize winner) of sharing the prize money with the other three nominees is especially interesting and timely.

research, practice and activism need *representations of intersectionality*, this thesis explores the transdisciplinarity between feminist art and socio-political sciences (as introduced in Chapter Two). The following chapter is dedicated to contextualising such feminist transdisciplinary collaboration. What parameters condition the representation of intersectionality from an activist-feminist point of view?

Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the combinations of feminist art research, practice and activism from the perspective of feminist art research. The chapter reaffirms the conclusion of Chapter Three that combinations of feminist art research, practice and activism can contribute to the attainment of positive social change in the arts. Disciplinary, interdisciplinary and activist research practices can become part of the proposed transdisciplinarity. However, the monitoring and evaluation of 'feminist art' impact, within and outside the arts, is advised to support the (new) research, practice and activism in order to avoid the (re)production of social inequality, as well as to communicate to larger audiences. The proposed transdisciplinarity can help de/categorise identities, representing intersectionality *in the combination of research, practice and activism*.

For solving the double problem of gender and art, which are interlocked in signifying processes, the simultaneous 'de/categorisation' of art and identities is necessary. Interdisciplinarity, art practice and activism have supported the de-objectification of art within feminist art research. The de-objectification of art, together with the representation of intersectionality, can now start informing the displacement of dominant aesthetics. It has been argued that the proposed transdisciplinarity can counter the discursive, conservative and hegemonic pressure of Art History, by adopting the discipline into the model as *one of the research methods.* Within the proposed transdisciplinarity for positive social change through the use of 'feminist art', (feminist) Art History will sometimes be the dominant approach, and at other times not, depending on the message and its audience. 'Feminist' Art History is certainly necessary for framing and signifying the art of the feminist art practitioners participating in the transdisciplinarity.

Chapter 5. Who Needs Feminist Art? Feminist Activism of the Proposed Transdisciplinarity

This chapter will further contextualise the need for the proposed transdisciplinarity as laid out in the previous chapters. The application of a *combination* of feminist art research, practice and activism, proposed as a *representation of intersectionality*, is further explored. In the previous chapters, the displacement of dominant aesthetics (as sought by feminist art researchers and artists) has been argued to consist of dynamic research positioning, de-objectification of art and strategic 'de/categorisation' of identities. This may be possible in collaborative practices in which feminist art and socio-political approaches combine their strengths to de-marginalise oppressed social groups. Simply put, feminist art (research, practice and activism) can help achieve positive, intersectional social change and social justice. This chapter discusses 'feminism' in more depth, exploring its conditions in the potential transdisciplinarity. The objective of displacing dominant aesthetics will be taken into account, as well as the hegemonic structures that may prevent feminist researchers, practitioners and activists from being recognised and heard.

In section 5.1, the (re)production of inequality is further contextualised, leading to a further discussion of the proposed transdisciplinary collaboration between feminist art and socio-political research, practice and activism. As has been discussed in the previous chapters, 'feminism' does not prescribe particular strategies. The forms feminism takes can be seen as temporary combinations of research, practice and activism, as well as contextual approaches towards equality. Nevertheless, difficult questions regarding the impact of feminism should not be avoided (this is addressed in section 5.2). In both sections, the crucial role of the *representation of intersectionality* will be reiterated, for which transgressions between research, practice and activism are necessary to draw attention to the role of *practice*. This will lead us to section 5.3, in which the terms of intersectional representation are further discussed, drawing on practical examples of 'feminist' and 'LGBTI' activism, as well as further contextualising the role of the proposed transdisciplinarity.

5.1 How 'feminist art' can support positive social change

As seen in Chapter One, Verloo poses the question: 'to what degree is displacement [of categories] visibly developed as a strategy?' (2013, p. 899). Verloo's question provides me with the starting point for exploring the proposed transdisciplinarity of artists, art researchers, socio-political scientists, policy makers and activists. Such collaboration between them opens up space for the displacement of dominant aesthetics, applying dynamic research positioning and 'de/categorisation' of categories (art and identities) in multiple fields. This section considers the context of this displacement in socio-political contexts, and explores where feminist socio-politics and art can 'practically' meet in their support for the displacement of identities. First, however, a socio-political approach to inequality is sketched.

Tilly (1998, p. 10) describes four mechanisms that contribute to the reproduction of inequality in 'categorical' groups aiming to improve their own marginalised situation: exploitation of outsiders, opportunity hoarding (the monopolisation of resources), emulation (copying social inequality) and adaption (conforming to the social inequalities). The first two mechanisms are supported by the latter two, as Tilly writes that '[e]xploitation and opportunity hoarding favor the installation of categorical inequality, while emulation and adaptation generalize its influence' (1998, p. 10). All four mechanisms, which are situated in societal hegemonic and hierarchal structures, result in marginalised groups producing social exclusion for 'other' groups instead of creating equal opportunities for 'all'. Paraphrasing Tilly, Verloo calls this result 'a *by-product* of people's improvised attempts to stake a claim for their livelihood' (2013, p. 897, my emphasis). In other words, creating better positions for oneself results in the *unintentional* effect of oppressing others. Such effects are rarely acknowledged. Similar obstacles can be found in research environments where categorised researchers need to find their way through 'power relations that are far from transparent' (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, p. 789). As discussed in the previous chapter, this (re)production of inequality may be at work within feminist art research too. Simply striving for one's own 'livelihood' in an academic, competitive and hierarchal climate can be oppressive to others.

Ensuring one's 'livelihood' can be a complex and difficult social process. The very reason why marginalised groups are oppressed is that the dominant groups do not necessarily see the marginalised as needing or having a right to better positions. With regard to human rights advocacy, Judith Butler, for example, writes:

But if we are struggling not only to be conceived as persons, but to create a social transformation of the very meaning of personhood, then the assertion of rights becomes a way of intervening into the social and political process by which the human is articulated. (Butler, 2004, p. 32)

In practice, therefore, categorised and marginalised groups simultaneously fight for their rights *and* re-negotiate the meaning of markers of dominant and subordinate categories. Riley (1988, pp. 6, 15) recognises a similar mechanism with regard to 'women's' emancipation: historically, the neutral norm of humankind has been male, resulting in 'women' being positioned as subordinate to 'men'. Progress in this respect would involve a social and cultural shift in dominant thinking (see, for example, Slootmaeckers, 2014). This mechanism resonates with the re-structuring of feminist art histories, as discussed in the previous chapter. The inclusion of 'women' artists requires not only visibility, but also a change of paradigm in order to *recognise* them. Categorisation done *through* feminism has been touched upon, with strategies of de-categorisation being argued to be necessary. These topics will be revisited in this chapter from a broader socio-political perspective. It will be argued that Verloo's call for strategies of category displacement can be observed with help from transdisciplinary feminist art (research, practice and activism) representing diversity and intersectionality.

The complexity of the (re)production of social inequality through social movements can be further illustrated through Crenshaw's (1989) metaphor of the basement:

Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked – feet standing on shoulders – with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are *not* disadvantaged in any way reside. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151, italics in the original)

In the original article, the metaphor continues by describing the implications of this situation on the stratified structures of societies. Additionally, one can imagine that individuals who move upwards inevitably push others down. This is not necessarily due to lack of solidarity, but the unavoidable result of hegemonic and stratified societies. Not everybody can become emancipated at once. Governments may even do anything they can to prevent metaphorical basement ceilings from breaking. There is little measurement or

accountability of this unintentional damage done amongst minority, marginalised groups trapped in 'basements'.

What Crenshaw's extended metaphor illustrates is that each individual is affected differently. Structurally racist and sexist societies render Black women structurally *invisible* (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 148-151). Another important point is that being at the intersection of multiple disadvantages and privileges exposes the *multiplicity* of social values that identities can have. In a racist and sexist public realm, 'women' may predominantly mean white 'women', by which a distinction between black and white women is made at the intersection of gender and race. In other words, the value of 'woman' can mean something else for, say, white men, white women, Black men and Black women, leaving us already with four different contextual values or *meanings* (see also Ferree, 2009, p. 87). This particular gender diversity amongst 'categorised' groups is not *seen* or recognised (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 2). However, such an intersectional approach to gender and race is still not complete. For example, many more meanings of gender *and* race can be produced in British society, when, for example, taking into account Asian minorities or 'white' immigrants from European countries without colonial histories. Moreover, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and other potential discrimination grounds intersect with all those values.

In the creation of social movements, a semiotic mechanism can lead to new hierarchies. Derek Conrad Murray (2016, p. 9) writes that, in the African-American context, the Black liberation movement was not necessarily sympathetic to women, homosexuals and Black people who were not (visibly) recognised as being Black. The political movement constructed identities for which new norms and new ways of identity policing were introduced. This resembles the negative effects of strategic essentialism that is not accompanied by strategies of *dis-identification*, as discussed in the previous chapters. Representing multiple identities *is* difficult, and usually there is a focus on *one* difference between two individuals or social groups. Acknowledging the inherent difficulties, representing more than one difference between individuals or groups is, however, necessary. In this light, current expressions of Black or LGBTI politics in the UK may support emancipation on the basis of (constructed) identity politics, which is very good progress, but such politics may not be very inclusive and may (re)produce social inequality too. This thesis proposes the use of 'feminist art' to give an account of mechanisms of oppression within group emancipation processes.

The term intersectionality may be seen to express a *network* of meanings, but may not actually help visualise or communicate diversity and multiplicity. In practice,

intersectionality is more than the sum of different identities, disadvantages or privileges. Understanding the challenges that Black women face, for instance, is more complex than understanding the challenges of Black people and the challenges of women. As a result, the power dynamics in the practice of intersectionality can become very complicated, as, for example, within the 'LGBTI' movement. Within this particular form of identity politics, multiple layers of meaning are formed through differences (and hierarchies) of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, in addition to ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability, age, et cetera. Verloo remarks that '[i]dentity politics can… further boost the negative effects of competition' (2013, p. 906). The fact that more people strive for their livelihood on their own terms may simply result in them *undermining* each other. However, there seems to be no other way than advancing identity politics, *visualising* the precise needs of groups at the intersection of multiple disadvantages. In addition, the construction of collective identities *is* essential for building political movements (Weldon, 2006, p. 56; Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 135) – an idea that will be revisited in section 5.3.

As discussed in the previous chapters, reducing identity to broad categories such as 'woman' and 'man' has the disadvantage of limiting the representation of diversity within the categories. Discussing strategies for gender equality, Judith Squires (2000, pp. 77-79) distinguishes two general dominant strategies, plus one strategy that is less frequently used, but offers more opportunity for the recognition of intersectionality. The first one is the *strategy of inclusion*, which 'denaturalises' (Squires, 2000, p. 78) the difference between the social roles of 'women' and 'men'. Each individual can fulfil equal roles in society, regardless of their biology. The *strategy of reversal*, on the other hand, 'revalorises' (Squires, 2000, p. 78) the position of 'women': the contribution of 'women' is seen as different, but *equally* important. Though inclusion aims to minimise categorisation as much as possible, neither inclusion nor reversal eradicates gender categorisation as a tool for obtaining gender equality. The categorising semiotic mechanism remains in place. Both strategies reproduce the sign 'w o m a n' and produce *categorisation* through their signifying acts. In order to displace categories in gender equality policies, as Verloo (2013, p. 895) would like to, the categorisation produced by the signifying mechanism needs an accompanying mechanism to *de-categorise* subjects.

This need for de-categorisation is best captured in the third strategy that Squires discusses, the 'strategy of displacement' (2000, p. 78), which Verloo (2013) has adopted. This strategy aims to *transcend* the meaning of 'women' and 'men', masculinity and femininity. Nonetheless, Verloo is correct to wonder what a strategy of displacement looks like, and to what extent it is being developed. I argue that the 'visualisation' of

displacement could be a *semiotic* intervention in gender equality policymaking, which, as argued in the previous chapters, 'feminist art' and transdisciplinary research could provide. In addition, the feminist mode of analysis used in feminist art and visual culture (questioning conceptual, socio-political and economic structures) can help draw attention to the parameters in which the production of categories takes place. Collaboration between feminist art and socio-political researchers, practitioners and activists can be one way forward. Verloo (2013, pp. 901-905) distinguishes four options in the practice of equality policies that address the intersectionality of social inequality and the reproduction of categories. These will now be described in order to get a clearer view of where feminist art interventions are possible.

The first approach is 'reactive' (Verloo, 2013, p. 901), which aims to show that a 'categorised' policy intervention can be stigmatising and counter-productive. Feminist art interventions could help visualise this, for example, through illustrations, such as the cartoons in this thesis. The next three strategies try to go beyond simply illustrating the complexities and engage on the level of re-structuring. In these cases, feminist art *transdisciplinarity* (research, practice and activism) may be supportive of displacement. Verloo's second, *pragmatic* approach can be considered a form of 'applied intersectionality' (2013, p. 902)[118] and works with current treaties and conventions on human rights to make intersectional positions visible. In this approach, tools for re-structuring *are* in place, but they need to be used in practice before they can produce new values. Nonetheless, the approach will produce categorisation, which feminist art strategies can displace with visual strategies of dis-identification (e.g., 2D visuals that can be distributed or even performative interventions that take place in meetings). Feminist art is then also used in the *process*, not only in the end product. Some conventions need to be broken, and the function of art needs to be clearly contextualised.

In the third and fourth approach that Verloo describes, feminist art (research, practice and activism) could engage in re-structuring even more actively. The third, *structural* approach, for example, aims to address the underlying parameters of current strategies of social equality movements and policy making (Verloo, 2013, p. 904). One intervention or one change in gender equality policy will not be not enough to influence the whole social mechanism that produces inequality and categorisation. Collaborative strategies could support making the conditions of categorisation visible, as feminist art approaches have done within Art History. Feminist art (research, practice and activism) may inspire socio-

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[118] One example is my LGBTI children's report, which uses the framework of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (Van Rossenberg, 2013).

political researchers, practitioners and activists in their own approaches, thus supporting the structural approach.

The last, fourth approach that Verloo (2013, p. 905) describes probably comes closest to a transdisciplinary approach, in which the boundaries between disciplines are transcended. Verloo calls this approach the *procedural* one, explaining that it aims to facilitate change through a series of actions. This would entail interventions on the level of policymaking, increasing the awareness of policymakers about the production of categories through documents and research, including the need for the 'de/categorisation' of identities. In such re-structuring processes, there could be a role for feminist art (research, practice and activism) in facilitating new policy design processes. It is thought that the procedural approach deepens the democratic process and gives voice to subordinated groups (see also Fraser, 1990, pp. 67-70; Walby, 2011, pp. 155-157). The vignette below uses my LGBTI children's rights report to illustrate the four approaches.

Vignette 10. The first LGBTI children's rights report in the Netherlands

The LGBTI children's rights report (Van Rossenberg, 2013) used the framework of the Convention of the Rights of the Child to evaluate the extent to which the rights of LGBTI youth (0-18 years) were observed in the Netherlands. The stigmatisation that LGBTI youth encounter was a focus of the research, which adopted a 'reactive' approach. However, the research also adopted a 'pragmatic' approach, applying intersectionality in practice through the use of a general human and children's rights framework. As argued above, doing so inevitably produced *categorisation*. In the report, this was counter-balanced by acknowledging the flexibility of LGBTI youth in 'labelling' themselves. The report could have also illustrated a 'structural' approach if it had engaged on the level of the production of categories. For example, if visual aids had been used to represent intersectionality and 'de/categorisation'. The report also illustrated a transdisciplinary approach, in which both my roles – as a 'document producer' (who *reproduced* categories) and as an artist (who offers a strategy of displacement) – were significant. In this case, there was space for a creative intervention that acknowledged that COC Netherlands, the organisation I wrote the report for, had not yet engaged with 'intersex' matters. The intervention took the form of a personal account of my experiences as a researcher, including the use of a 'profile photo' of my cartoon character Patricia Cornflake, on this occasion sporting rainbow-coloured hair. In the fourth, 'procedural' approach, the 'art intervention' could have taken place earlier, for example, in the *process* of creating support for the report. Creative tools could have been used in conversations with supporting ministries and human rights organisations to raise awareness about the role of categorisation in the (re)production of

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social inequality.

The most important aspect of the transdisciplinary approach, in which socio-politics and feminist art are combined, is the application of dynamic positioning. As touched upon in the previous chapters, the very *movements* between feminist disciplines, practice and theory can represent intersectionality. This will be further explained in section 5.3. Knowledge exchange between feminist art, sociology, political sciences, economics and other disciplines can advance the semiotic analysis of categories, using 'feminist art' (practice, research and activism) as a useful case study. Feminist art can help facilitate storytelling and visual culture that may *frame* the desired re-structuring of categories differently. Of course, collaborators from both sides need to be committed to an equal exchange, as well as willing to change their opinions, assumptions and methods, based on the newly produced knowledge, as was discussed in Chapter Two.

5.2 Dealing with debates within feminism

The previous chapter and section provided a theoretical rationale for the proposed transdisciplinarity, which can inform its application in practice. This practice is further explored in this section by discussing relevant points of debate in feminism. Collaboration between socio-political sciences and feminist art would provide the opportunity for feminist art researchers to displace dominant aesthetics through creating multiple fields of art signification. Socio-political collaborators may find feminist art approaches useful in the development of strategies that can visibly displace categories in gender equality policy making. Nevertheless, working within a 'feminist' paradigm, transdisciplinary researchers may disagree on crucial points, such as the impact of feminism (5.2.1), interpretation of gender equality (5.2.2) and use of identity politics (5.2.3). These topics are discussed in the following sections, in the hope that such disagreement will be at least partially mitigated.

5.2.1 When does 'feminism' mean equality for *all* 'women'?

Political theorist Nancy Fraser (2013) has described the history of modern feminism as a drama in three acts. Positioning today's feminism as the third act, she attempts to establish which way feminism should go from here. Fraser frames the new path as a *third way* or '*triple movement*, encompassing marketization, social protection, and emancipation' (2013, p. 230, italics in the original). In so doing, she takes into account the

contribution that feminist strategies have made to the current exploitative, neoliberal systems of distribution of wealth and power, as discussed in Chapter One. This suggests that, in practice, feminism does not always have positive effects.

Fraser (2013, pp. 3-5) explains that feminist attempts to revalidate 'women's' work in socio-political terms (both unpaid housework and waged labour) could not stand the overwhelming pressure from the corporate businesses from the 1970s onwards. Cutting costs in difficult economic times, with help from the US and UK governments (Stanford, 2015, p. 47), formed the basis of increasing inequalities on the basis of gender and geography (Federici, 2013). This growing wealth inequality marks the global world order of today. 'Feminist' individual choices may have accumulated in a 'practice' of politics that turned out not to be as solidary as it had been hoped. In this light, *economic* structures are very important to individual decision-making (further explored in Chapter Six). Neoliberalism, which arrived and developed during the 'second wave' of feminism (starting in the 1960s) favoured the new focus of feminism, the *cultural* re-validation of 'women's' positions, instead of a mere focus on economic independence and recognition. In hindsight, this particular feminist approach to equality can be seen to have contributed to the development of new exploitative systems (Fraser, 2013, pp. 4-5). This process may be clarified by a closer at look at Fraser's three 'acts' of feminism.

Act One[119] of feminism is defined as the strong force of feminist activism that fought against male dominance and gender injustice: it addressed the unequal socio-economic distribution of wealth and power (Fraser, 2013, pp. 3-5). In Act Two, however, there is a shift from the economic towards the cultural: 'difference', which may have been neglected in the first act, becomes more important. Feminist activism then focuses on influencing the social and cultural contexts, in which various differences between people are seen as the axes of oppression and discrimination. This second act makes space for intersectionality and advances identity politics. This refocus, also framed as 'from redistribution to recognition' (Fraser, 2007, pp. 23-24, 2013, pp. 1-5), *disperses* attention of feminists, away from the socioeconomic positioning of 'women' as a whole, which, as a result, creates a negative effect on *resisting* neoliberalism. For this reason, Fraser envisages a feminism called Act Three, which is the *combination* of the two previous strategies capturing both

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[119] Fraser does not link her acts of feminism to 'waves' of feminism. Act One is situated in the 'second wave', the latter being the second large, visible feminist movement after the women's vote movement in the 19th and early 20th century (the 'first wave'). The 'third wave' of feminism is said to have started in the 1990s, which correlates with the upcoming of an intersectional understanding of women's rights, but also increasing individualism. Fraser's second act is correlated to this time period. Fraser's third act (taking place now and in the near future) can be suggested to take place in the 'fourth wave' of feminism, which is associated with, among others, social media. The coining of feminist waves (as well as acts) is the result of critical, feminist debate, and does not set boundaries for feminism *in practice*.

the socio-economic and cultural aspects in the global enhancement of women's participation in society. This is framed as 'redistribution, recognition, and *representation*' (Fraser, 2013, p. 5, my emphasis). Fraser's use of the word 'representation' here has informed my view of a 'representation of intersectionality', being one that combines socio-economic and cultural values. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to do precisely this: including a socio-economic perspective in its representation of intersectionality.

Fraser's analysis is an important contribution to knowledge about feminism. An important conclusion to draw from her perspective, however, is that it is very hard, if not impossible, to decide in the moment itself which strategy will turn out to be the 'right' one in the historical course of events. Ideally, collaborators in the proposed transdisciplinarity may want an overview of *all* theoretical, socio-political and economic structures, but that is virtually impossible. Is it possible to design situations that *produce* social equality instead of inequality? This question is further explored in the next chapter. This predicament also reiterates the question of how our *knowing* is constituted. Very few researchers can completely avoid uncertainty about their conclusions. 'Feminist' researchers may be more likely to search for ways to acknowledge the limitations *and* politics of production of knowledge. The epistemological problem of not knowing whether all relevant facets are taken into account shows, at the very least, that no one author or researcher can have a complete view on their own. This is another reason to seek collaboration and knowledge exchange in determining the parameters of (feminist) methodology.

Establishing the impact of feminist interventions encompasses the need for a representation of intersectionality. Fraser's framework may facilitate social change for the future and increase our understanding of our blind spots. Nonetheless, it is hard to find concrete steps in Fraser's book for *actually* establishing the triple movement, which she advises readers to develop. In addition, as far as we know, the impact of her theorisation has not been monitored or evaluated, and therefore we do not know whether it is, in fact, an effective tool. Fraser's book does not report on collaborative or transdisciplinary research designs, and does not give an account of the economic structures in which she works. As a result, there is no visible strategy for displacing categories, which this thesis argues to be crucial.

5.2.2 Equality, difference, sameness, diversity…

The question of sameness or difference between 'women' and 'men' was briefly touched upon in the previous section. Different approaches to gender equality can lead to

disagreements amongst feminists. As discussed in previous chapters, the increasing number of 'women' artists in art institutions could indicate progress on the matter of gender equality, but not necessarily on the diversification of artists. The economics of art signification (which I will explain in Chapter Six) excludes many 'women' and 'men' artists who do not produce works that comply with the dominant, *investable* taste (in line with Dimitrakaki, 2013, pp. 3, 63). The fact that the line that divides 'women' from 'men' is not so clear brings an intersectional dimension to the question of gender equality: does gender equality means 'women' are seen as the *same* as 'men', or *different* from them? Though one can wonder how fruitful these discussions are, they are the result of practice and the formulation of *strategies*. Therefore, these disagreements amongst feminists should be taken seriously.

The presence of such discussions in practice has led to a theoretical and historical distinction between 'equality feminism' and 'difference feminism' (Squires, 2000, p. 115). Equality feminism sees men and women as the 'same', while difference feminism emphasises their differences. Discussions about whether, and how, gender is constructed run through both feminism strands (Squires, 2000, p. 118). Therefore, it is often hard to clarify the difference between the two approaches in the practice of feminism and the determination of activist strategies. An important aspect is that, regardless of whether 'men' and 'women' are seen as the same or different, neither approach considers gender as a reason for giving 'men', 'women' and those who identify as neither or both, unfair or unequal opportunities or chances (Squires, 2000, p. 118). Disagreement about *how* to reach equality may continue. Thinking that some professions are more suitable for 'women' and others for 'men' can be considered a form of difference feminism. This view does form a sliding scale, however, as 'women' contributing to, or agreeing with banning 'women' from particular professions (e.g., as parliamentarians or priests) on religious grounds could then be called 'feminism', too. Many difference *and* equality feminists would find this highly controversial.

One important distinction between equality and difference feminist approaches is that equality feminism aims to transcend gender into something that does not matter as a *category* anymore. In this light, equal does not always imply *the same* (Squires, 2000, p. 129). Equality can still mean different measures for individuals, but simply not on the basis of gender signification. Whilst equality feminism ideally sees gender retreating into the background, difference feminism, on the other hand, regards gender differences as too important to ignore. The latter approach makes it almost impossible to overcome gender categories and binaries. It may be an effective strategy to emphasise 'women's' and 'men's' characteristics temporarily in order to challenge gender inequality, but will categorisation

as such be challenged? For this reason, collaborations within the proposed transdisciplinarity may tend to favour equality feminism, which acknowledges the different positions, needs of individuals and multiple gender values (instead of essentialising them to two). However, difference feminist approaches can be applied in the proposed transdisciplinarity. In the negotiation of gender equality terms, the third approach of *diversity* can be used to bridge the two perspectives (Squires, 2000, p. 124). The ultimate goal is to promote and attain diversity in society, regardless of self-identification and the gender beliefs of individuals. Combining or alternating equality and difference feminist approaches is one way of acknowledging the instability of the term 'feminist'.

Discussing gender equality in the context of policy making, Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2009a, p. 1) note that scholars tend to prioritise one definition over another. In feminist art histories, one can recognise a mixture of difference and equality perspectives, also within the writing of *one* author. Pollock (1999, p. 11), for example, celebrates gender difference, but also states that she wants 'to go beyond the concept of binary gender difference' (1999, p. 34), which resonates with the *transcendence* of gender categorisation. Following Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2009a, p. 1), one could argue that the communication of 'gender equality' by feminist authors is very much connected to the context and the public. For whom, for what purposes and in which economic setting is the feminist strategy described? In Chapter Three, we saw how the framed opposition between essentialism and post-structuralism within feminist art histories (Pollock, 1996, pp. 12-17; Meagher, 2011) served *particular* purposes, but may have missed the opportunity to accurately represent strategic, contextual feminist strategies towards gender. Therefore, we should always ask for which purposes the terms of gender and gender equality are constructed – a question that is also applicable to this thesis.

Acknowledging that the framing of gender equality and gender difference depends on the feminist authors' purpose of writing, we should note that, for many readers, choosing a particular framing of 'feminism' is secondary to the actual achievement of social change. In other words, if readers 'sees' the framing as *working* (and there is evidence), they will be less likely to critique the author's approach. If the reader, however, does not see the particular terms of equality, difference or feminism to be *working*, they are more likely to question the strategy. In terms of constructing feminist narratives, therefore, the measurement of objectives *is* important. As already discussed in Chapter Four, the storytelling of feminist art histories is not measured through empirical research: we do not know whether there is a relationship between feminist interventions in art histories

and the increase in the inclusion of 'women' artists. It is also unclear whether feminist art (research, practice and activism) facilitates or oppresses diversity, or does both.

As argued in the previous chapter, it seems that intersectional gender equality in the arts, at the very least, needs strategies of de-categorisation to *transcend* the constant production of categories. I would argue that a *multiplicity* of spaces with *multiple* terms of feminism and gender equality is necessary – just as Fraser (1990, p. 67) calls for subaltern counterpublics to obtain a voice in democracy. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Riley argued that, without the instability of terms, feminism would be 'without much life' (1988, p. 2), which suggests that disagreements are part of the spirit of feminism. Nonetheless, as any 'feminism' is a *signifying* practice, it is important that the production of categories is counter-balanced by dis-identifying practices, in order to avoid (re)production of inequality and oppression of others. The proposal to use 'feminist art' (research, practice and activism) in facilitating dis-identification in social justice research, practice and activism, as part of the proposed transdisciplinarity, is novel. The next section further discusses the feminist terms of identification and dis-identification.

5.2.3 Inclusive solutions lie in practice, not theory

The creation of (sub)identities through feminist activism can be very reductive. Murray writes that, though labels create opportunities, they can be 'incredibly confining and restrictive' (2016, p. 3). The lack of representation of intersectionality causes negative effects of categorisation, and therefore empowerment through identity politics without an intersectional gender perspective should be questioned – as it contributes to the (re)production of inequality (Verloo, 2013). Feminism that is generally thought to deal with the equality of 'women' and 'men' is a form of identity politics, too. Difference feminism can be said to be the root of identity politics, as it emphasises difference between individuals (Squires, 2000, p. 134). Nevertheless, equality feminism, which aims to transcend gender difference, can also be linked to identity movements, such as the LGBTI movement that increasingly aims to trouble the notion of gender. Here one sees that the distinction between equality and difference feminisms becomes irrelevant to matters of intersectionality, as was suggested in the previous section. Gender intersects with many identity political fights including Black politics, Black women's politics, disability politics, queer politics, queer Muslim politics, queer lesbian Muslim politics, LGBTI politics and so on. As mentioned in the previous section, the gender values produced within such diversity are multiple, and successful feminism needs a way to represent this gender multiplicity.

With regard to the production of identities, there are no *a priori* limits to the creation of (new) identities and categories (Riley, 1988, pp. 1-2) or to making particular private experiences public and political (Fraser, 1990, p. 71). Riley (1988, p. 5) argues that the term 'w o m a n' does not have a consistent meaning for any woman, and refers to the *instability* of the category, which, as mentioned above, Riley thinks should be embraced as one of the conditions of feminism. In this light, we can understand Walby's (2011) decision to address feminist activities that are not necessarily (self-)labelled as feminist, but potentially contribute to the 'the transformation of gender relations' (2011, p. 5). An intersectional approach towards identities leads to the important conclusion that feminist activism should always recognise the instability of gender terms, which may include identities that are considered *not* 'women' by some feminists. Debates amongst feminists about the inclusion of, for example, transgender women are not so much about *whether* gender is socially constructed, as about *how* it is constructed. Paradoxically, some 'trans exclusionary radical feminists' ('TERFs') would like to 'essentialise' the experience of socially constructed gender.

Interestingly, the discussion about what is feminist or not may contribute to the label 'feminist' as an identity, including the term's instability (as demonstrated in Walby, 2011) and strategies of dis-identification. Perhaps even the women explicitly calling themselves *not feminist*, but acting as allies in practice, have always been part of feminism. In the previous chapters, de-essentialising was argued to be as important as essentialising. Therefore, explicitly distancing oneself from feminism could be functional, and may not undermine the movement *effectively*. Disagreement about the term feminism is not a problem; working towards opposite goals *is*. In the proposed transdisciplinarity, therefore, terms of identity politics do need to be discussed amongst the researchers, practitioners and activists collaboratively working with it. Even working within the same field, they can have different approaches to identities, gender and feminism.[120] They may not need to agree, but they do not need to know where others stand, and be respectful of that.

To conclude this section, debate about impact, terms of gender equality and identity politics should not be avoided, but should be part of collaborative and transdisciplinary research models. It seems that the *instability* of terms of identities should be agreed on, which still leaves space for difference, equality and diversity approaches. The *representation of intersectionality* in feminist activism is very important, as economic

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[120] Economics is another point of disagreement which structures debate about strategy. This is further discussed in the next chapter.

mechanisms can turn 'good' intentions against feminist causes[121] (as described by Fraser, 2013, pp. 209-226). Temporarily essentialising the meaning of 'women' (and other identities) may be necessary for positive social change, but can be extremely problematic in stratified, hegemonic settings, creating new parameters of policing. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to supports the *troubling* of these semiotic mechanisms, with help of 'feminist art', dynamic research positioning, and critical analysis of socio-political and economic structures. Chapter Four concluded that many re-negotiations of identity values in the arts take place in *practice*, and this section has shown that this is true for gender within feminist activism as well. There is little point in staying within theory only, as representing intersectionality takes place in and through *practice* – as illustrated in the image below.
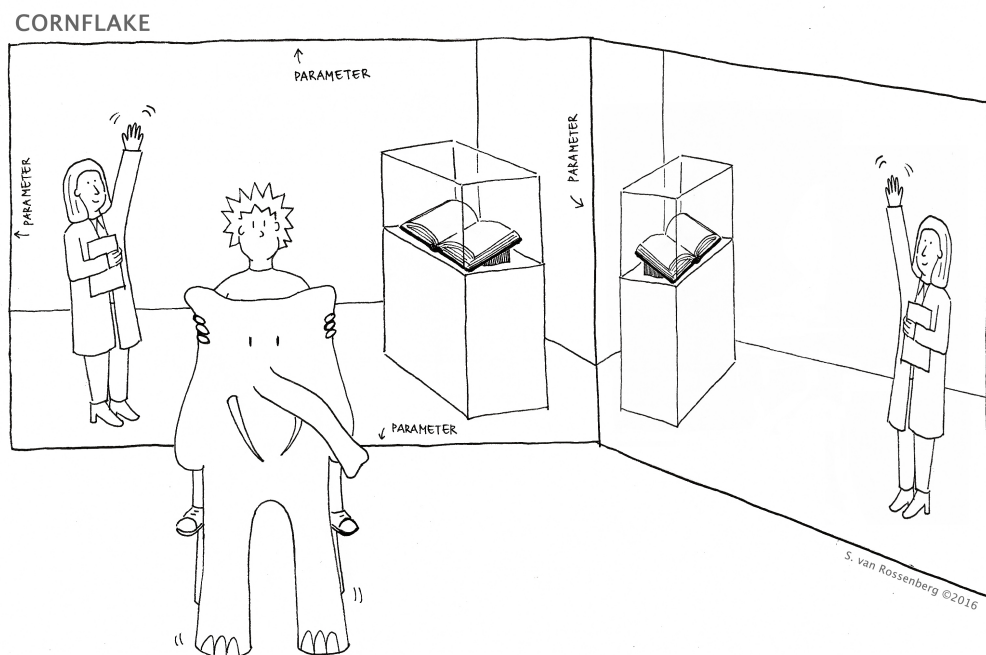
Fig. 19 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *Leaving*, 2016. [Digital image]

The cartoon *Leaving* (Figure 19) aims to illustrate the limitations of theory and the need to leave the boundaries of theory in order to solve issues of social inequality. In the image, a book is visible in a display case, which suggests books have become art objects to be valued in static ways. Within the proposed transdisciplinarity, in which theory is *only one*

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[121] Another example is the women's rights movement in the second part of the 19th century. According to Riley (1988), the movement adopted an egalitarian definition of women to support the improvement of their position. Their interpretation of the female role as socially functional may have been successful for the women's vote, but it also limited the notion of 'woman' and diversity *amongst* 'women'. This illustrates how difficult it is to negotiate the instability of identities in feminist activism.

of the components, feminist art (research, practice and activism) may form a bridge between social justice practice and theory. Researchers committed to social justice need to engage with *practice* if they would like to contribute to producing social equality (further contextualised in the next section).

5.3 Maximising 'feminist' inclusivity

In this thesis, the representation of intersectionality has been argued to be crucial for creating strategic, inclusive feminism that can enhance social equality in the arts and social justice practice, contributing to positive social change in society in a transdisciplinary, collaborative mode. This section will provide a closer look at the practice of emancipation of categorised, marginalised groups. What happens when the production of categories is subverted? (5.3.1) Section 5.3.2 takes the 'LGBTI' as an example of emancipation of marginalised sub-identities, and discusses its intersectionality in practice. The recently added 'intersex' emancipation to the movement's political objectives shows the role of practice in creating intersectional inclusion. In section 5.3.3, the proposed transdisciplinarity for social change is further contextualised as a signifying mechanism that supports the representation of intersectionality, necessary for attaining societal equality.

5.3.1 Going from theory to practice

In the previous chapters, the production of categories has been discussed to illustrate the signification and production of the category of 'woman' *through* the arts and visual culture (cf. Cowie, 1990). At this point, a closer look at Cowie's analysis of signifying mechanisms will help further unpack the terms of representation of 'women' and the ways in which their diversity can be communicated. Cowie (1990) uses the theorisation of kinship by cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969), who saw kinship structures as a system of exchange that produced meaning. This concerns the *literal* exchange of women between families. Cowie (1990, p. 124) argues that, in these exchanges, 'women' are both the object of exchange and the carrier of the meaning of that exchange, that is, the signifier. This double role makes women the signifier of 'woman', even when there is no relationship between the real-life woman and the sign. This is a very important conclusion, as it shows that the subordinate role of 'women' is perpetuated through historical modes of communication, which is not easy to subvert. For example, though nowadays we can *see* women fulfilling every possible job and role, a large part of society

will still think, in the first instance, of a 'man', when hearing about a doctor, scientist, fire fighter or engineer.

Cowie argues that this value of 'women' is pre-determined by its 'modes of exchange' (1990, p. 121), as the kinship structures validate the exchange of 'women' *before* they are exchanged. In conclusion, communication *about* 'women' is seen as a (figurative) form of exchange, which pre-determines and reaffirms the value of 'women' through the *mode* or parameters of communication. This production of value entails *the full context* in which the communication takes place. With regard to the production of film, art and visual media, the full context then includes not only visual and art conceptual parameters, but also socio-political and economic ones (as discussed in the previous chapter). The *context* in which a word (e.g., 'woman') is used constitutes a large *a priori* part of that word's meaning. For this reason, Cowie (1990, pp. 132-133) is not very optimistic about changing this signifying and stereotyping mechanism, as senders and receivers do not have much control over the terms of exchange. If this were true, it would be very hard to ever communicate the real-life positions of 'women' – their diverse and intersectional lives, instead of merely communicating positive or negative stereotypes.[122]

Because of this signifying mechanism, De Lauretis (1987, p. 3) argues that gender and sexual difference are mere representations or fictions. The word 'woman' is constructed through a mode of communication that may not take into account the real lives of 'women'. In previous chapters, the collective of 'women' that feminism draws on was indicated to be fictitious, because the word cannot express and communicate to receivers the diversity and multiplicity of 'women'. Perhaps the word 'woman' can never communicate and visualise reality, as the historical mode of communication keeps 'women' subordinate and stereotypical. This argument has important consequences for the representation of 'women' and their diverse, intersectional positions. Feminist authors have used quotation marks and/or the plural noun *women* (instead of the singular *woman*) to show the difference between real-life women and the category or the fiction (Squires, 2000, p. 77). Riley (1988) and De Lauretis (1987) are examples of such authors. Small textual alterations may not make a huge difference to readers in the dominant mechanism of signification. In the pursuit of strategic feminist activism, the need for strategies of *de-categorisation* is once again apparent. The meaning and re-valuing of 'women' cannot be communicated without dismantling the category pigeonhole too. Feminist art and visual culture can create spaces and methods to do so. In this thesis, it is

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[122] Such stereotypes are produced by 'men' *and* 'women', both groups being the senders and the receivers of communication.

argued that multiple spaces outside and inside the arts are necessary for successful displacement. What does that look like in practice?

As argued in the previous chapters, the successful displacement of identity categories in the arts is accompanied by the displacement of *art* as a category. For this reason, transdisciplinary, collaborative approaches are important, as they can facilitate a re-focus on socio-political and economic structures in *art signification*. Cowie's (1990) analysis supports this idea, because she argues that representation inherently stands in relation to *other practices* in society that keep 'women' 'in place'. De Lauretis calls these the 'political and economic factors in each society' (1987, p. 5), and, of course, this resonates with feminism's critical mode of analysis (Pollock, 2003, pp. 1-24; Reckitt, 2013, p. 152). Though Cowie is not very positive about the possibility of displacing categorisation, one could find a clue in her observation regarding the lack of 'attention to the *specificity* of the system' (1990, p. 128, my emphasis), which signifies dominant modes of exchange as neutral. Therefore, by paying attention to the *specificity* of the system, terms of communication may be able to be re-negotiated between senders and receivers. The transdisciplinarity proposed in this thesis is such an attempt, paying attention to the *specificity* of research, practice and activism as signifying mechanisms and troubling the categorisation produced by them.

Cowie provides another clue for troubling the parameters of communication that fictionalises 'women' when she interprets kinship structures as a '*series of acts* of exchange' (1990, p. 129, my emphasis). Altering the sexual identity or subjectivity of the senders and receivers of those acts may change the signification of identities. For example, could 'homosexual' and 'transgender' people signify 'women' and 'men' more equally, because their kinship structures may be different? Whether 'queer' kinship can alter the signification of women is a complex question, which resonates with Judith Butler's theorisation of gender performativity and is illustrated by her following question: 'What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?' (1999, p. 42)

Queer subjects can certainly create new contextual meanings of 'w o m a n', but this could also bring new forms of discrimination, along new axes of sexual difference. In an indirect way, this would fulfil De Lauretis' (1987, p. 2) wish for diversifying binary sexual difference. Distinction amongst lesbian women, such as 'lipstick lesbians', 'butches', 'femmes' and other local and contextual labels, brings along new forms of social inclusion *and* exclusion, including new forms of sexism. Changing the gender or sexual orientation of the senders and receivers of communication is not the same as troubling the sexist

parameters of communication: 'queer' individuals can validate 'women' differently, but may also contribute positive or negative stereotyping.

This uncertainty reiterates the need for transcending gender categories by facilitating de-categorising signification *alongside* categorising mechanisms. It also emphasises that knowledge of the *context and practice* is necessary to interpret identity values. Male stereotypes performed by drag kings and female stereotypes performed by drag queens, for example, trouble categorisation *because* the displacement of categories is simultaneously communicated to the audience. There is a layering of positions, which is expressed through artistic forms. However, communication of this layering and displacement is contextual, and cannot always be reproduced in writing. But sometimes it is possible: for example, I have used a visual adaptation of a citation in presentations[123] to demonstrate the displacement of categories in feminism and the arts (Figure 20). The very ability to communicate 'de/categorisation' may render 'feminist' and 'queer' artists important, as they question gender and sexuality through their modes of art production.

"As a critic, it's (none of) my business to tell artists not to grab whatever chances for fame and fortune that present themselves, especially when I'm [not] making a living off the system. The entrance of more art by queers, transgenders, lesbians women into the establishment is certainly good for the establishment. But it is, perhaps, less of a good thing for queer, trans / gender feminist art. One of the questions we have (cyber) yet to answer is whether women feminist, queer, trans / gender artists do want the same things that men other artists have wanted; whether "greatness" in its present form is in fact desirable."

Lucy R. Lippard in 'Moving Targets/Concentric Circles: Notes from the Radical Wind' in 'The Pink Glass Swan, Selected feminist essays on art', 1995, p. 39-40

Fig. 20 Suzanne van Rossenberg, Adaptation of a Lucy R. Lippard citation, 2008 [digital image]

This section has reiterated that strategic feminist activism would (ideally) simultaneously categorise and de-categorise identities, through modes of *communication* that pay attention to socio-political and economic structures. I have contextualised that 'de/categorisation' takes mostly place in *practice*, which is further explored in the following section. The proposed transdisciplinarity for social change aims to facilitate such

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[123] I have first used this image in a presentation at the *17th Archaeology and Theory Symposium* at Leiden University in the Netherlands (January 2008).

strategies, in interaction with research, activism and 'feminist art', which together can become a representation of intersectionality. This is further contextualised in the next section in relationship to 'LGBTI' activism and social justice practice.

5.3.2 Inclusive practice: where can we *see* it?

In the previous section, the complexity of the signification of 'w o m a n' has been further explored, highlighting why representing the diverse and intersectional real-life positions of women is so difficult. This section will provide a closer look at the practice of emancipation, with reference to processes of emancipation, equal rights movements, equality policy making, litigation and human rights activism. This will further contextualise the (re)production of social inequality, as discussed in section 5.1. In her first article on intersectionality, Crenshaw concludes there is no 'adequate theory and praxis to address problems of intersectionality' (1989, p. 152), indicating a gap between practice and theory. Though many developments have taken place since, this gap still seems to stand (as discussed in Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013; Verloo, 2013), including within feminist art histories (see previous chapter). In addition, in response to Fraser's (2013, pp. 5, 13, 16) call for a representation of feminism, one could argue there is no adequate representation of *intersectionality*. Insufficient representation of the diversity and intersectionality of 'women' can make feminist activism counter-productive. How can the intersectionality of feminism be represented? Or, if such representation is already happening, how can we start *recognising* it?

The previous chapters have referred to various stratified and hegemonic structures. Hierarchies between groups are structurally (re)produced through the institutional organisation of societies (Fraser, 1990). For this reason, it can take a very long time for oppressed groups to improve their position in society and get their voice heard. The creation of 'counterpublics' (Warner, 2005, pp. 7-20) or 'subaltern counterpublics' (Fraser, 1990, p. 67) can facilitate the circulation of alternative messages, and, once they become more visible in the mainstream, these can influence the opinions of groups in power. Another possibility is that representatives of marginalised groups liberate themselves and obtain political positions of influence. Interestingly, in formal public arenas, such as the Parliament, differences of background and socio-economic status are 'bracketed': those differences are allegedly not there for the *opportunity* of social equality (Fraser, 1990, p. 64). However, the setting may formally be equal and minority voices *should* be fully heard within the dominant parameters, but, in reality, the *informal* barriers and power relationships prevent any real change (Fraser, 1990, pp. 64-65). For this reason, Fraser

argues that in the organisation of democracy, societies need to facilitate a 'multiplicity of publics' (1990, p. 66). In the previous chapter, the multiplicity of spaces was argued to be important for the production of social equality within the hegemonic structures of art histories. The transdisciplinarity between feminist art and socio-political activism may strengthen each other in this democratic approach (as, for example, explored by Cruz, 2015b).

The previous section discussed the politics of *identities*, through which sub-identities within marginalised groups could more easily find a voice. In theory, identity politics cannot bypass the limitations of categorisation. However, the *practice* of social equality activism cannot go forward without advancing identity politics, which is, for example, acknowledged in queer theory (Barker and Scheele, 2016, p. 135). Fraser (1990, p. 68) recognises the 'emancipatory potential' of sub-identity forms of identity politics, as activism provides both a place for reflection *and* a platform for further action. In *representations of intersectionality*, therefore, the full context is not always communicated. For example, the intersectional message may not communicate the socio-political and economic structures in which the message is (not) heard. Diversity and inclusion practitioners can experience what Ahmed (2012, p. 26) has called a 'brick wall'. The 'bracketed' difference is a form of communication that allows space for emancipation, but also continues to oppress in implicit ways. The opposite can occur as well; difference may be foregrounded by some activist groups, but they implicitly aim for the liberation of all.

In strategic feminist activism, gaining a voice can be a messy business of many negotiations between dominant and subordinate groups, of which some may succeed and many may fail. This complexity of emancipation is not often communicated to the public, but communicating complexity,[124] however, may help in representing diversity and intersectionality of identities. As an example, the 'LGBTI' movement necessarily deals with the complexity of emancipation due to the diversity of LGBTI positions, which is discussed below. However, the *practice* of negotiating this complexity may not always be visible to outsiders.

'LGBTI' politics have become more and more visible in recent decades. The international social movement that represent the rights of 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual', 'transgender' and 'intersex' people has been increasingly professionalised (see, for example, ILGA, 2008). The abbreviation itself has historically grown from 'gay and lesbian' to LGB, and later

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[124] With regard to feminist art, change may have taken place as the result of disagreements, contradictions and power games. These are largely invisible to newcomers and academic outsiders. Teaching students about the politics of academia and strategic feminism could be beneficial to the field.

LGBT, aiming to broaden and strengthen the movement. Only by making identities more visible, can the work of constructing identity categories, advocacy and political lobby be done. The abbreviation should not be read as a term that aims to cover all sexual and gender identities, because it does not. The fact that, for example, the world organisation ILGA is currently using 'LGBTI' is the result of creating and seeing the political opportunities of getting messages across. In the future, the abbreviation can change again. The recent inclusion of 'intersex', which is neither a sexual nor a gender identity, has been the result of collaboration between 'LGBT' organisations and 'intersex' activists. Political opportunities, as well as power dynamics that accompany these new collaborations, will be revisited in the next section.

The position of 'LGBTI' individuals differs greatly from country to country. They may experience discrimination from individuals, organised groups and states. ILGA Europe ranks the social and legal positions of 'LGBTI' people in Europe in their annual *Rainbow Europe Map* (ILGA-Europe, 2016).[125] The Netherlands, which is usually considered one of the most progressive countries, was in tenth place in 2016. Certainly, the country can be said to be progressive, as, for example, 92% of the population think that homosexual men and lesbian women should be free to live their lives the way they want[126] (Kuyper, 2016, pp. 16–17). However, there are also historical social and legal structures that prevent social equality. For example, it was not until 2015 that the Netherlands abolished the law that allowed religious schools to end teachers' contracts on the grounds of their homosexual or bisexual orientation (COC Nederland, 2015).[127] This law attracted significant media attention when a gay school teacher lost his job in 2011 due to being gay (COC Nederland, 2014).[128] This teacher would not necessarily regard his work setting as progressive.

Another example is the position of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in the Netherlands. Studies have shown that LGB youth have on average four to five times more suicidal thoughts than the comparable general population (Van Lisdonk and van Bergen, 2010, pp. 189-190) and that there is a correlation between LGB students being bullied and suicide ideation (Van Bergen *et al.*, 2013). The most important conclusion to draw from these examples is that an increasingly prominent term like 'LGBTI' does not and cannot represent the diversity and intersectionality of individuals' positions whose rights are

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[125] http://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/rainbow-europe/2016
[126] Dutch people may (declare they) accept homosexuality, but only 69% of the population think same-sex couples should have the same rights when it comes to the adoption of children (Kuyper, 2016, p. 24).
[127] http://www.coc.nl/jong-school/vandaag-einde-ontslagmogelijkheid-lhb-docent
[128] http://www.coc.nl/politiek-2/tweede-kamer-stemt-voor-afschaffing-enkele-feitconstructie

being protected or violated. Only by looking into the actual facts and processes does one get an idea of what the *practice* of identity politics or advocacy work actually consists of.

A closer look at 'LGBTI' politics at work also helps clarify why intersectional approaches are essential, highlighting the different needs of, for example, a disabled transgender man, a Muslim lesbian woman, a white bisexual teenager from a working-class background, a Christian intersex lesbian woman and an elderly queer non-binary-identifying person with HIV. When considering all these differences, the term 'LGBTI' is quite obviously *fictitious*, and it can be assumed that activists and collaborators are constantly searching for ways to (re)negotiate the terms of communication amongst each other, whether successfully or not. In addition, the wellbeing of different sub-identities of 'LGBTI' groups can be monitored and evaluated 'intersectionally' to a certain extent, subsequently informing actions, policies and political lobbying. For these reasons, I would argue that many *representations of intersectionality* take place in the practice of 'LGBTI' politics, which is contextually (re)negotiated between participants, and not necessarily accessible to outsiders. This, of course, does not dismiss the power dynamics, hierarchies and hegemonic structures that do occur as well. Nonetheless, the practice of 'LGBTI' activism could be said to constantly challenge its own 'strategic essentialising', whether that is in regional, national, international or global contexts. This is often not visible to critics of LGBTI identity politics, as there may be very few ways to represent these re-negotiations except for personally *experiencing* them. The role of practice in the representation of intersectionality will be further discussed in section 4.3.3.

The recent introduction of the letter 'I' in the abbreviation, for 'intersex', has revived conversations about the dominant signification of 'LGBT'. This development may have even stimulated feminist perspectives within the 'LGBTI' movement for the following two reasons. First, there are many variations of 'intersex',[129] which makes the communication of diversity very important. And, second, 'intersex' concerns *sex characteristics*, which do not overlap, but intersect with sexual orientation and gender identity.[130] In addition, many individuals who were born with a variation of sex characteristics – *if* they know they have a variation – do *not* identify as 'intersex' (or not yet), and might not even consider their condition 'intersex'. Van Heesch (2015), therefore, prefers to speak of 'intersex

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[129] Examples are MRKH Syndrome, Klinefelter Syndrome, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome and hypospadias. There are many more 'diagnoses' that are the result of clinical and medical practices. The Dutch activists Margriet van Heesch and Miriam van der Have define 'intersex' as 'the lived experience of socio-cultural consequences of being born with a body that does not fit the normative social constructions of male and female' (e.g. at the conference *After the Recognition of Intersex Human Rights*, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Surrey, 2016).

[130] LGB and T intersect in a similar way: a transgender person can be either lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual. LGB people can identify as transgender, cisgender, gender fluid, gender queer, non-binary, et cetera.

dispositions'. One could argue that 'LGBTI' carries *instability* as part of its signification (as discussed in section 5.1) to a much larger degree than 'LGBT' has done. As extrapolated below, 'intersex' activism keeps discussions about the construction of identities going, and supports practical strategies of 'de/categorisation'.

In Chapter One, the research of Van Heesch was framed as transdisciplinary, combining research, practice and activism. Her critical contextualisation of 'intersex' and the emancipation of individuals with an 'intersex' disposition can be said to give an account of social and cultural *signifying* structures. Van Heesch (2015) studied the medical, legal, socio-political, cultural and economic structures in which knowledge about 'intersex' (usually without using this particular word)[131] was produced and transferred. In this knowledge transfer, feelings of shame were attributed to people with a variation of sex development. This is comparable to the signification of 'gay' and 'lesbian' as deviant and sick in (historical) medical and social contexts. Emancipation can be read as the re-negotiation of that 'being sick' label, through conversations and activism in medical, social, institutional and personal settings – that is, in practice.

Dialogues between medical professionals and human rights advocates who were previously their 'patients' can be complex and frictional, but have the potential to dismantle historical hierarchies, including what Van Heesch (2015) calls the production of 'asymmetrical knowledge'. In the Netherlands, the arrival of 'intersex' activism has revived the need for acknowledging the structures in which terms and labels are used and produced. Re-negotiations may not be visible in the strategic, public use of the fictitious 'LGBTI' or 'intersex' labels, but they do take place in the many conversations that occur backstage. In those conversations, the *instability* of the term is acknowledged and constantly re-negotiated. As more and more people agree upon the instability of the term, the value of the term is, again and again, re-signified and made accessible to a larger audience. This pragmatic side of strategic essentialism, which Reilly (in Perry and Reilly, 2016, p. 50) also referred to, will be further contextualised in the next section.

The pragmatic use of the term 'intersex' can obscure its multiple meanings in multiple contexts. In activist, governmental and legal contexts, the term might be a communication shortcut, signifying a particular set of conditions or criteria, which everyone around that

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[131] In the Netherlands, many people with an intersex disposition were not given a name of their condition and/or medical term by their doctors, which constructed a hierarchy of knowledge (Van Heesch, 2009, 2015, pp. 81-116, 302-307). At the multidisciplinary conference *After the Recognition of Intersex Human Rights* (University of Surrey, 2016), where I presented a paper, a mix of publics was present, such as intersex activists, psychologists, psychiatrists, LGBT activists, philosophers and artists. Presenting different research approaches, methods and objectives, the naming of 'intersex' dispositions indeed varied between the different researchers.

particular table is aware of. In such a context, explanation or accountability is less necessary. However, using 'intersex' in such ways may be confusing to outsiders who are unfamiliar with the setting. Generally, explaining 'intersex' requires time, as few generalisations are possible. Many stories involve taboos around gender and sex (Van Heesch, 2009, pp. 132-143, 2015, pp. 86, 340-341), which is another reason why 'intersex' can help revive feminism. Whilst 'intersex' may increasingly become a term understandable to mainstream audiences, 'intersex' advocates consistently question 'normality' in social, medical, political and economic contexts. These stories are disruptive in multiple ways, which may not always be represented in mainstream communication of 'LGBTI' identity politics or 'queer' and 'feminist' theory. Therefore, the combination of research, practice and activism may offer a better representation of 'LGBTI' emancipation processes, as it inherently includes both the nuances and pragmatism of practice. This is further discussed in the next section, in which the *applied* feminist activism of the proposed transdisciplinarity is further framed.

5.3.3 Transdisciplinary 'feminist art': a paradigm shift in action?

The previous section has given examples of identity politics that have contributed to the emancipation of individuals. Though new identity framings, such as 'LGBTI', do instigate new discussions, hegemonic structures can continue to (re)produce durable inequality, as discussed in section 5.1. The question arises whether a transdisciplinary approach can help subvert those structures. The *representation of intersectionality* (through 'feminist art') has been argued to be crucial in the communication of a diversity of positions. Feminist art can fulfil a need for continuous 'de/categorisation', but will socio-political structures allow space for this? It was previously argued that combinations of research, practice and activism, framed as transdisciplinarity, can best facilitate space and resources for 'feminist art'. The same has been argued for feminist activism and its representation of intersectionality, in this chapter, and this is further contextualised below.

Discussing the establishment of the 'global movement against gender violence' since the *First World Conference on Women* in Mexico City (1975), Weldon (2006, pp. 60-64) describes how obstacles were overcome, and solidarity and inclusion were created across differences of geography, sexuality and gender identities of 'women'. The process was not easy, and took two decades. The movement dealt with many of the issues described in this chapter: the intersectionality of activists' positions, the representation of sub-identities and the dominance/subordination dynamics of representatives from different regions. Though the term 'woman' could not have changed in form, its contextual communication

was able to provide re-negotiations and opportunities for conference participants to bring together different values of 'woman'.

Success was eventually achieved by creating a broad, strong movement that could have an influence. Weldon observes that collective identities are the *result* of collaboration rather than its cause, but also that 'norms of inclusivity' (2006, pp. 59, 65) are crucial for enhancing collaboration between groups that do not have the same identity (briefly discussed in Chapter One). In the case of the global movement against gender-based violence, norms of inclusivity were created by offering space for participants to disagree, but they were also encouraged to find common ground. Allowing *and* mitigating differences between 'women' was one of the most important factors that led to a more effective form of activism against violence targeting 'women' (Weldon, 2006, pp. 60-64). The other two important elements were the strategic framing of objectives, and making use of political opportunities, which stimulated 'women' to work together for concrete goals (Weldon, 2006, pp. 62-64). The global 'LGBTI' movement can be said to go through similar processes.

From this example, one can conclude that the representation of intersectional feminism is dealt with in *practice*, and not in theory. Conversations, arguments, disagreements, as well as political opportunity, are pragmatic circumstances through which social movements evolve, as Fraser remarks that 'multi-cultural literacy… can be acquired through practice' (1990, p. 69). For the representation of these intersectional developments, it is necessary to give an account of the socio-political and economic structures in which they take place. In alignment with feminist art research, the *social practice* (Pollock, 2003, p. 7) of such activism needs to be described, including its visual/theoretical, socio-political and economic structures. Another important element of the proposed transdisciplinarity is the transfer of knowledge from socio-political sciences to feminist art. In other words, feminist art research, practice and activism can learn from these strategies. The vignette below briefly discusses the organisation Feminist Curators United as an example that can be analysed from a socio-political activist perspective.

Vignette 11. Practising strategic feminism in the arts

Feminist Curators United is an initiative that combines research, practice and activism. Membership to the organisation is by invitation only. This strategy of inclusion and exclusion can be successful in shaping effective activism and monitoring intersectional representation. Weldon (2006, p. 61) writes that participation by invitation only was key to achieving cultural diversity and regional balance at the *Meeting on Traffic in Women*,

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which took place in 1983 in Rotterdam. It is, however, unclear from the Feminist Curators United website what the purpose is of its exclusionary strategy. What 'norms of inclusivity' are being sought? Furthermore, what political opportunity is used to reach the organisation's general objectives remains unknown, or only known to insiders. What is the potential impact of this organisation? Is there a monitoring and evaluation framework in place that can support and document the desired social change? Transdisciplinary knowledge transfer from feminist socio-politics and identity politics could be beneficial to Feminist Curators United's use of activist tools and strategies.

In Chapters Three and Four, it was argued that transdisciplinary research could facilitate a more complete representation of feminist and queer art. In the previous section, the practical contexts of 'LGBTI' were seen as important to understanding identity politics. Likewise, 'feminist', 'queer' and/or 'LGBTI' *art* made in different countries is embedded in different cultural, socio-political, legal and economic contexts. Regardless of whether feminist and queer artworks are explicitly about (domestic) identity politics, the exclusionary and discriminatory structures around them play a role in the dominant and counter-cultural signification of the artworks. For art researchers and critics, knowledge of those structures informs a better understanding of the artworks. Collaborative and transdisciplinary research approaches may facilitate an increase in this understanding. What do violence, abuse, discrimination, social exclusion, but also resistance, activism and advocacy of marginalised groups in society *mean,* and how are these expressed in the artworks and their contexts?

This chapter started with unpacking the representation of intersectionality, which, I argue, is needed for social change. As feminist art (research, practice and activism) needs collaborations for the displacement of aesthetics (the displacement of the categories of art and identity), socio-political research, practice and activism may provide a space for 'feminist art' to be signified *transgressively*, creating multiple art values in multiple spaces. Such collaborations can be realised through transdisciplinary research designs, whose concrete research topics, objectives and methods would need further exploration.

The proposed transdisciplinarity can function as *both* the necessary displacement of aesthetics *and* representation of intersectionality, which renders it into a new *signifying* mechanism. The proposed transdisciplinarity is argued to contribute to positive social change and intersectional gender equality by facilitating dynamic research positioning and creative strategies of de/categorisation. In response to Verloo's call for visible strategies of displacement of categories, feminist art (research, practice and activism) can contribute to establishing visible strategies of displacement of categories. From a 'feminist art' point of

view, which brings together research, practice and activism, the dominant research paradigm can be shifted, allowing for social change to happen (further illustrated in the cartoon *A paradigm shift in action* (Figure 21)).
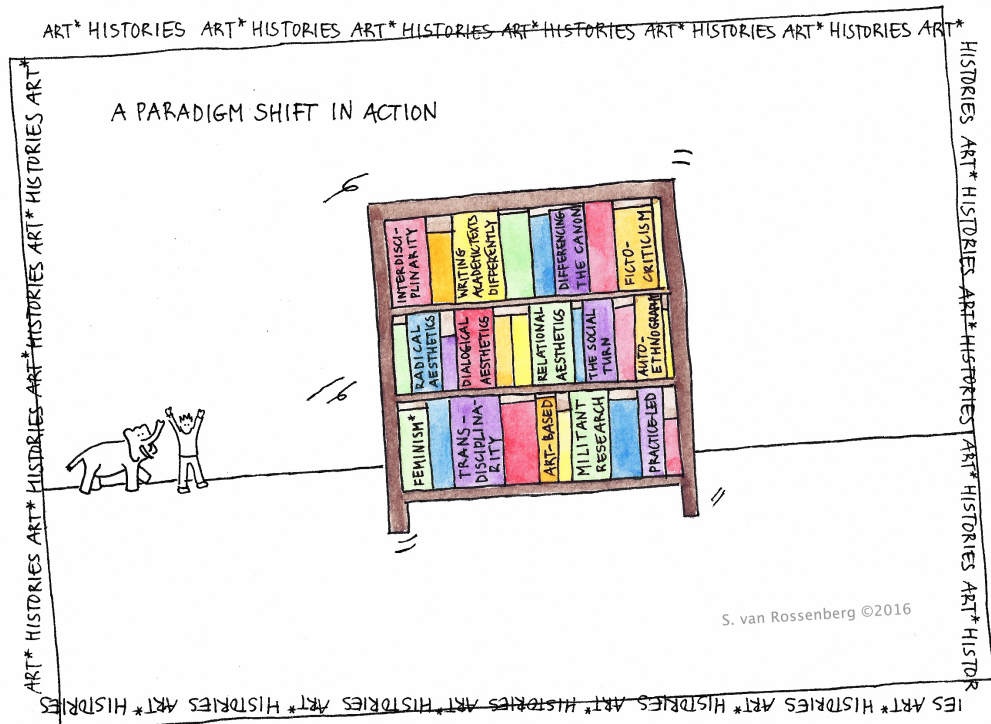
Fig. 21 Suzanne van Rossenberg, *A paradigm shift in action*, 2016. [Digital image]

The frame of the cartoon is slanted in comparison to the intersecting level frame formed by the numerous repetition of the words 'art* histories',[132] which makes the bookcase appear as if it is moving. However, if the viewer slightly tilts their head, making the angled frame the reference point of view, the bookcase appears to be standing straight. Is the bookcase actually moving? In other words, are all the necessary elements now present to make a difference to social equality in the arts?

As discussed in Chapter One, economic structures play a dominant role in the production of social inequality and injustice, and the question is how the proposed transdisciplinarity relates to this. When resources are found for the proposed transdisciplinary approach, how can the negative effects of neoliberalism be avoided or accounted for? This is the topic of the next chapter, in which the proposed transdisciplinarity is tested against

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[132] The asterisk signifies the fact that 'art' is always contextually defined.

economic models. What would count as suitable feminist art economics for the production of social equality?

Chapter summary

This chapter has laid out the terms of the transdisciplinarity proposed in this thesis, combining feminist art and socio-political research, practice and activism approaches. The (re)production of social equality complicates emancipation, within and beyond the arts. A visible strategy for the displacement of categories, or a *representation of intersectionality*, is necessary to avoid new forms of inequality. For emancipation and equality, re-negotiation of the value of identities between dominant and marginalised participants takes place in practice. 'LGBTI' politics is an example that carries multiple values and *constantly* re-negotiates those values through intersectional praxes. Attempting to overcome hierarchical and hegemonic structures, *practice* plays a crucial role in the production of new, inclusive values, which, therefore, should be represented in and through the proposed transdisciplinarity.

Combinations of research, practice and activism, as part of the proposed transdisciplinarity, can facilitate a more dynamic understanding of categories and identity values, which often get lost in theory. The chapter has argued that 'feminist art' may be able to support social justice research, practice and activism, including policymaking and human rights advocacy, in the *representation of intersectionality*. As a result of such a transdisciplinary approach, new knowledge on social justice and human rights can inform more contextual and transgressive art interpretation, necessary for the displacement of dominant aesthetics. Multiple meanings of feminist artworks are created, informing the de-objectification of 'art' necessary for equality within the arts. Arguably, the proposed transdisciplinarity becomes a *signifying* mechanism. However, can this mechanism withstand the pressure of economic, neoliberal structures? This is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6. Towards a Feminist Art Currency

In the previous chapters, the transdisciplinarity of 'feminist art' research, practice and activism was proposed as a problem-centred approach to gender inequality in the arts, as well as a *representation of intersectionality* that can help social equality in general. Paying attention to the *economic* structures of research, practice and activism is not only important for the displacement of dominant aesthetics (discussed in chapters Three and Four), but also for the very pragmatic reason of ensuring income for marginalised researchers, practitioners and activists to live and work from. For those who are oppressed and discriminated against, obtaining positions of influence often coincides – at least, partly – with overcoming financial precariousness. The question is not so much whether current global economic circumstances can create more and better opportunities for research and art that currently take place in the margin, but *when* they do, whether the effects of durable inequality and oppression of 'other' others can be avoided.

This chapter will explore this important question, beginning with a discussion of economic values of art and art resistance (6.1). Section 6.2, subsequently, contextualises a feminist and intersectional gender perspective to art economics, taking into account that 'feminism' can (re)produce inequality too, as discussed in the previous chapters. It is discussed whether there are any economic structures available for art to produce social equality and justice. In section 6.3, the answer to this question is further explored, and an economic perspective of the proposed transdisciplinarity for social change is contextualised.

6.1 Unpacking the role of art economics for positive social change

The proposed transdisciplinarity is a signifying mechanism, which, as argued, consists of three interacting components: research, practice and activism. Starting with the issue of gender and social inequality in the arts, the proposed transdisciplinarity aims to shift the emphasis in art signification from art conceptual/theoretical to socio-political and economic structures. This shift will allow for a more important role of the socio-politics and economics in the differentiation of (good) art. As a result, a more 'accurate'

representation of artworks that transgress the boundaries of art will support the necessary displacement of dominant aesthetics (as argued in Chapters Three and Four).

As will become clear, recognition of the social and cultural value of art does not necessarily lead to remuneration or stable income for artists. The global economic system, which was discussed in Chapter One, plays an important role in this 'unfairness', which is a reason for some researchers,[133] practitioners and activists to condemn global capitalism and its advanced stage of neoliberalism. However, the question is whether anything that is signified as 'art' could ever escape capitalist structures – something that has been critically addressed in recent years (see, for example, Sholette, 2011; Stakemeier, 2013; Vishmidt, 2013; Beech, 2015; Rädle and Jeremić, 2016). Recent financial crises, rooted in financial developments starting in the 1970s, can be said to have informed a new 'political economisation of art' (Roberts, 2013) in art research and practice, which is part of the 'social turn' that many art historians have embraced (discussed in Chapter Three).

However, as Pollock (2003, pp. 6-7) shows, art has always had economic structures that signify it, whether or not art theorists and historians take them into account. The historicisation of the relationships between (great) art and economy through what has been *visible* and perhaps dominant can easily lead to omissions (examples will be discussed later). The validation of today's art-activist strategies for positive social change requires critical and sceptical approaches towards capitalist structures – which leads to the important question of what economic structures of art, if any, can facilitate social change.

This section begins with some general notions about the economic value of contemporary art (6.1.1), in which I propose to consider multiple economic values of art, which do not exclude one or the other. Section 6.1.2 further contextualises the current paradoxical relationship between activist art and its economic structures, as it remains to be seen whether activist art that is committed to social justice can actually created economic social equality. The section will end with an exploration of alternatives that may facilitate a way out of this predicament (6.1.3). What economic structures can facilitate social change through art?

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[133] For example, Slavoj Žižek writes that '...the main task of the ruling ideology [neoliberalism] in the present crisis is to impose a narrative which will not put the blame for the meltdown onto the global capitalist system AS SUCH, but on its secondary accidental deviation (too lax legal regulations, the corruption of big financial institutes etc.)' (2013, p. 17).

6.1.1 Recognising multiple economic values of art

Currently, the globalised art world can be seen as the 'largest-ever bubble economy' (Sholette and Ressler, 2013b, p. 12). Artworks are carriers of monetary value, which can increase through trade and demand. The characteristics of the economic bubble can be recognised in the fact that the demand for contemporary artworks, and their accompanying valorisation, is influenced through art dealing by galleries or at auctions. If a dominant group of stakeholders believe that particular artworks are important and valuable, these artworks can become solid investments. From a 'Marxist' perspective, this economic mechanism reflects the 'alienation' of artists from their work (Morawski, 1973) and it can be said that 'the market commensurates what is considered to be incommensurable' (Velthuis, 2005, p. 3). For example, Smith writes that contemporary art has the 'capacity – amply demonstrated by artists such as Koons, Hirst, and Murakami – to keep up the shock value while actually making judicious compromises with collector taste' (Smith, 2009, p. 128). This 'commodification' of artworks can be called the economic dimension of the object-centeredness of art histories described in the previous chapters, which inevitably perpetuates the marginalisation of artists.

In this thesis, a relationship between dominant art signification, as discussed in Chapter Three, and its economic structures is argued. This relationship can be said to be 'capitalist'. Dave Beech (2015, pp. 1-30), nevertheless, questions whether this economic mechanism necessarily turns art into a capitalist commodity, and sees an opportunity for art to be non-capitalist. However, the transgressive art-activist artworks, which this thesis focuses on, aim to challenge canons and institutions that communicate *within* capitalist structures. As re-structuring signifying mechanisms have economic structures (following Cowie, 1990; Pollock, 2003), the question is whether transgressive, activist 'art' that is able to *communicate* its resistance to an audience, can truly and completely escape capitalism. This can be seen as the economic dimension of the double problem of gender and art, which will be revisited later in this chapter. Maybe activist art can only be truly non-capitalist in private spaces and negotiations. Throughout this section, it will become clearer why the relationship between economic value and dominant signification of art is not easily troubled. This economic value of 'capitalist' art, constituted through exchanges, does not always have to be expressed in *monetary* terms (discussed below in greater detail).

The art bubble's characteristics reinforce the *speculative* mode of art production and consumption.[134] Investing time and money in 'art' can lead to more profitable positions. This speculative value of art is not limited to commercial art settings. Neoliberalism has created work circumstances in which it becomes important for artists to 'curat[e] her [their] brand value' (Vishmidt, 2012, p. 227). When attempting to establish socio-political value of art, there is not necessarily a difference in the signifying role of economics in either commercial or not-for-profit settings. One speculative capacity of 'art' in not-for-profit art settings is crystallised in the delivery of *unpaid* work by artists in the hope of future opportunities. The institutional name on artists' CVs and access to a network may help attract attention to their artwork. In an increasingly globalised and capitalised art world (see Dimitrakaki, 2013, pp. 1-23), investment of voluntary time and own money is often the first speculative step in entering this exclusionary world. This investment includes obtaining an art degree, which increases one's value as an artist. The fact that students pay high amounts in tuition fees and take loans to finance this insecure opportunity (Fusco, 2015) is an especially crude situation. As will be later extrapolated, any work experience in the arts, whether paid or unpaid, increases artists' social capital (Sholette, 2011, pp. 116-134, 167-168). This potential (self-)exploitation of artists is further contextualised in section 6.1.2.

What does the economic value of art consist of? Economists often draw a distinction between the economic and cultural value of artworks. Marx, for example, thought that aesthetic and economic values had become too separated from each other through the perversity of the capitalist market (Morawski, 1973, pp. 18-19; Velthuis, 2005, p. 3). Testing what thus far has been a theoretical distinction between the cultural and economic value of art, David Throsby and Anita Zednik (2014) collected empirical data about the two kinds of value of paintings. Having conducted surveys amongst visitors about their opinions of six paintings in a major public art gallery in Sydney, they concluded that the distinction between the two values can be made, and – in addition – that 'the cultural value component, while related to economic value, is *not subsumed* by it' (Throsby and Zednik, 2014, p. 96, my emphasis). In other words, the paintings have a cultural value that (also) stands apart from their market price. What the data additionally shows is that artworks have different values to different audiences, *including* different economic values – something that the authors seem to have overlooked.

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[134] Beech (2015, p. 8) sees them as entirely separate, but this thesis contests that, as the value of art is pre-determined by both production (to a public) and consumption (by a public) influencing each other in their mechanism of art signification.

Following this argument, it is important to start acknowledging the *variety* of economic values. Whether or not artworks are worth millions on the art market, they can still be appreciated (and criticised) merely for their cultural values, including ones that are not predominantly part of their art signification.[135] The actual reception of artworks is diverse, but this is not reflected in the myth of Great Art, which depends on *one* public being there, and not multiple ones. To give another example, in an economic analysis of art prizes and awards, James F. English (2014) notices the symbolic and speculative value of prizes. English argues that the institutional recognition and prestige that accompany awards are 'relatively easy to "cash in" or convert into future earnings' (2014, p. 129). Surely, however, this cultural value cannot be equally cashed in in any sector or industry. The symbol of recognition has economic value in one sector, and not per se, or to the same degree, in another.[136] Speaking of 'the' economic value of art does not recognise that there are potentially *diverse* signifying roles of economic structures, and, for this reason, may obstruct the de-marginalisation of artists and the advancement of equality in the arts.

In addition, the economic value of artworks can be said to *include* social and cultural values (Cornwall, 1997; Velthuis, 2005, pp. 3, 11). The fact that the monetary value of artworks is not clearly separated from symbolic, cultural and social values (including having a *diversity* of recipients) that can be speculatively capitalised on, is visible in commercial art settings too. Vice versa, a 'monetary' exchange does not make art economic (Beech, 2015, p. 24): art is already economic through its mode of production.[137] It is a common misconception that capitalist economic objectives exclude social values. As Marx theorised, markets cannot function without social networks and relationships (Cornwall, 1997; Velthuis, 2005). In a quantitative and qualitative study of art dealers in Amsterdam and New York, Olav Velthuis found that today's commercial art markets are in part *gift economies* that exceed the 'hedonistic and financial purposes' (2005, p. 76). Velthuis emphasises the role of 'a dense network of intimate, long-term relationships between artists, collectors, and their intermediaries' (2005, pp. 6-7), which may incorporate 'concerns of status, care, love, pride or power' (2005, p. 6). In other words, commodification of artworks that leads to their disproportional monetary value is supported by (possibly multiple) *non-monetary* economies of stakeholders. When aiming to displace dominant aesthetics and trouble its economic structures, exclusive critique of

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[135] Throsby and Zednik (2014, p. 87) divided cultural value into the aesthetic, social, symbolic, spiritual and educational value of the paintings.

[136] I, for example, cannot easily 'cash in' on the success of my LGBTI children's rights report (as discussed in the Introduction and previous chapter) in art institutional settings.

[137] However, Beech later contradicts himself slightly by calling art non-economic: 'Let us say, more moderately, that the values of art (and other non-economic or not primarily economic activities), including questions of quality that discriminate between individual works, are not only independent of their price but are regarded (by the communities that judge such works) to be more important than their market value' (2015, p. 37).

the *financial* effects of neoliberalism may not be enough. The symbolic and social effects of economic structures are as important.

As briefly discussed above, an important conclusion is that the pricing of artworks can be said to be 'not just an economic, but also a *signifying* act' (Velthuis, 2005, p. 158, my emphasis). Exchanges between stakeholders in for-profit art settings, whether they involve money, love, care and/or prestige, create a particular *meaning* of artworks. The same work created, exhibited and sold under different economic structures can have different meanings. There is a similarity with Cowie's (1990) kinship analysis in the signification of gender and visual culture, as discussed in the previous chapters. Gallery settings as particular signifying mechanisms can be said to *produce* a gender value in the valorisation of art, as there is an implicit positive bias towards the work of 'men' artists. 'Men's' art may sell better than 'women's' art, as the non-economic values that art dealers talk of, such as 'fairness, honesty, arrogance, success, or prudence' (Velthuis, 2005, p. 156), more easily support the un-negotiated, traditionally sexist narratives of Great Art.

Despite its current sexism, acknowledging economics as *signifying* does create an opportunity to *redefine* those narratives,[138] and work towards gender equality. Transactions can instigate change in the meaning of artworks, so that more sales will be made later. Dominant art stories are not necessarily static, or true for that matter (Velthuis, 2005, pp. 156-157). Therefore, presumably, if art transactions produced the narrative of *equal* validation of diverse artists, they would contribute to erasing sexism and racism in the arts. The condition is that art dealers would need to commit to the value of social justice and gender equality as part of their kinship structures. The feasibility of such an idea will be further explored in the following paragraphs.

Opponents of the alienation of art labour may express negativity towards for-profit settings of art because of art dealers' self-interest motives. As illustrated above, art dealers' motives may be both monetary and non-monetary, and some of the latter, such as love and care, may even exceed their self-interest. In addition, it is debatable whether human economic behaviour is always rational and profit-seeking. This assumption is challenged within economic theory too (Sen, 1977; Velthuis, 2005, pp. 1-6). The supposed

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[138] Velthuis recognises three narratives in the commercial art market scenes since the 1950s: 'The first narrative takes the form of a tragedy, in which a small art world, populated by honorable art lovers, falls prey to the laws of capitalism… The narrative that followed was the narrative of the superstar, which was about the artist as a star, the collector as an investor, and the dealer as an aggressive marketeer… After the crash of the market in the early 1990s, the ensuing narrative was the narrative of "the prudent" or "the real": this narrative inspired dealers to make efforts to… establish a firm, healthy market, in which solid, long-term careers of artists could be grounded' (Velthuis, 2005, p. 156). Velthuis questions whether these stakeholders' narratives are based on reality.

merciless, utilitarian self-interest of human economic behaviour, on which economists have built their models and predictions, can, in fact, be called the *myth* of economic theory (Februari and Drenth, 2000, p. 29). There is no reason to assume that gallery owners and art dealers would never want to commit to the value of gender equality, especially considering the growing public debate around this topic.

As early as 1977, economist Amartya Sen (1977, p. 336) wrote that '[t]he *purely* economic man is… close to being a social moron'. In other words, the person assumed in theoretical explanations of economic behaviour does not exist in reality. Therefore, the monetary and non-monetary exchanges of art dealers may be considered for-profit, but they are not always rational or utilitarian. Sholette concludes from Velthuis' study that the global contemporary art world is 'a messy, interconnected discursive field' (2011, p. 123). Art worlds may indeed be messy and perhaps even irrational, but according to Velthuis they are not random; they have their own logic.[139] Commitment to gender inequality can become a bigger part of multiple art worlds, whether this is the result of socially irrational or 'logical' behaviour. On that same note, individuals' commitment to good causes and ideologies, which are part of their economic choices (Sen, 1977, p. 330), can be self-interested and utilitarian too. Economist Julianne Nelson (1993), among others, aims to test whether self-interest can lead to the support of public goods. As gender equality and social equality can be considered public goods, this approach will be further explored in section 5.1.3, which focuses on alternative economic structures.

This section has given an overview of relevant approaches to the economic value of contemporary artworks including those that might be used in the proposed transdisciplinarity. There is no doubt that economic structures play an important role in the signification of art *as* art, as well as accompanying, often implicit, gender values. Art institutional structures, whether commercial or not-for-profit, more prominently contribute to the meaning of art than alternative economic structures such as self-funding, local sponsorships and non-monetary exchange structures, do. Institutions, museums and galleries simply reach larger (educational) publics *through* their use of capitalist, neoliberal structures. There is space for them to commit to making gender equality part of their *narratives*. However, artists who use 'art' to resist social injustice (including exploitation, racism and sexism) may find themselves in a paradoxical situation, neither escaping the dependence of art on 'capitalist' signifying structures, nor changing the system. This unintentional (re)production of social inequality is further explored in the next section.

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[139] Random human economic behaviour may make positive contributions to art too, maybe even structurally.

6.1.2 Can 'art' ever avoid contributing to inequality?

The durable inequality of stratified, hegemonic society was discussed briefly above (6.1.1). Tilly (1998, pp. 155-156) argues that despite the efforts of the non-elite groups to overcome their poor economic positions, capitalism allows the wealthy to keep and increase their wealth, which continues to benefit their own families and social groups. Relative goods, such as 'prestige, power, and clientele' depend on autonomous goods, such as 'wealth, income and health' (Tilly, 1998, pp. 25-26). In interaction with each other, relative and autonomous goods contribute to the accumulation of wealth. Art markets do not stand apart from this mechanism, as many stakeholders, such as art dealers, collectors, investors, sponsors and philanthropists may belong to the elite, being therefore able to maintain and increase their wealth. Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous section, their wealth does not have to prevent them from moral economic behaviour that facilitates social justice. The question is to what extent donations and sponsorships provide a structural solution to the negative effects of capitalism (see also Soskolne, 2015). Moreover, it is hard to imagine significations of art (including feminist ones) that are art-conceptually, socio-politically *and* economically dissociated from capitalist structures, especially when corporate sponsorships in the global art world are taken into account. As a result, dominant economic structures may contribute to perpetuating the Great Art myth. This will be further clarified shortly.

Further research is needed to clarify the specifics of the relationship between capitalism and the (re)production of inequality in the arts. One thing is clear, however: the art world runs on underpaid and unpaid labour by those who seek opportunities at all costs, or who can simply afford to make art without being remunerated appropriately. As early as the 1970s, art critic Lucy R. Lippard (see, for example, 1995b, pp. 31-41, 117-127) criticised the exploitative character of the US art world. Sholette goes so far as to say that contemporary art economics 'successfully manages its own excessively surplus labor force, extracting value from a redundant majority of "failed" artists' (2011, p. 134). Sholette (2011, pp. 116-134) argues that these large numbers of 'failed' artists becoming art workers make it possible for the *few* to become superstars. As there is an overproduction of art and an abundance of artists, there will always be artists willing to do underpaid or unpaid work, which they may later be able to *capitalise* on. Artists provide the creative, innovative and flexible work mode that neoliberalism needs, similar to the effects of flexible work hours promoted by feminism, as described in the previous chapter.

Sholette concludes that artists, in fact, establish an attractive model for capitalism and neoliberalism, in which '[e]veryone contributes, a few are rewarded [and] capital is enriched' (2015, n.p.).

Again, the question arises whether artists who would like to protest against these working conditions have the *means* to do so, both in a literal and a symbolic sense. Like Sholette, Mouffe thinks that '[n]owadays... artistic critique has become an important element of capitalist productivity' (2007, p. 1), suggesting that artists profit from their protests. However, even when artists have their own resources and do not need to capitalise on their artistic acts, the communication of their socio-political imagery will still be 'capitalist'. Their resistance will be regarded as *art* inside the art world, contributing the capitalist, economic signifying structures; and may go unnoticed as protest outside the art world. Strategic multiple means are necessary to disturb mechanisms, and the Liberate Tate initiative (discussed in the vignette below) is a good example. Does being visible as an artist simply entail compromising one's activism? If so, then this puts artists committed to social justice in an impossible situation.

Vignette 12. Art activism against oil company sponsorships

In 2010, the network and activist group Liberate Tate was founded during an event commissioned by Tate (Liberate Tate, no date).[140] The group campaigned against the funding of Tate galleries by oil companies (the sponsorship ended early in 2017) and will continue to campaign against funding of other cultural institutions by oil companies.[141] The network not only used 'creative disobedience' (Liberate Tate, no date) as a form of activism by staging performances, but also increased awareness and produced knowledge about the economic structures of art settings. The booklet *Take the money & run? Some positions on ethics, business sponsorship and making art* (Trowell, 2013) provides useful insights into the broader context of the discussion around ethics and corporate economic structures, with helpful suggestions for further reading. Liberate Tate's activist strategy has 'worked' in many ways, but most importantly by influencing the end of BP's (formerly British Petroleum) sponsorship of Tate. However, we should not be afraid to state the obvious: the creative and artistic interventions in Tate temporarily *contributed* to the value of the institution, whilst artists voluntarily invested their time and unpaid labour in art economic settings. Tate may have temporarily capitalised on them, as institutional critique and resistance can be an asset to the prestige of art institutions. Liberate Tate's performances were a very interesting form of visual cultural production, which spectators

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[140] http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/
[141] See: http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/liberate-tate-news/

did not have to approach any differently than the other artworks in the galleries. As Tate has now ended the BP sponsorship, it seems that the protests have been effective.

Some artists have applied clever 'tactical' strategies in aiming for social change, either inside or outside the arts. The Yes Men (Mouffe, 2007, p. 5; Sholette, 2011, pp. 153-154) are some of the most well-known. Igor Vamos (aka Mike Bonanno) and Jacques Servin (aka Andy Bichlbaum) have used tactical media for activist spoofs and hoaxes to draw attention to unethical behaviour by corporates and politicians (The Yes Men, no date).[142] They started in 1999 when, after making a mock website of the World Trade Organization (WTO), they were invited to speak at a conference on behalf of the WTO (Link TV, 2009). Sholette calls these initiatives that imitate 'administrative, affective, and intellectual power of institutions' (2011, p. 152) *mockstitutions*.[143]

Mockstitutions can be small and local too: for instance, artists' collectives that 'institutionalise' themselves in order to increase visibility and, indeed, *mock* art mechanisms. In reality, artists' mockstitutions may depend very much on dominant art structures. For example, the visibility of tactical artistry in art economic structures gives groups members the opportunity to capitalise on the 'art' value, 'seeking employment as teachers, cultural consultants, or administrators' (Sholette, 2011, p. 168). Additionally, data collected by Sholette illustrate that art collective members who challenge and criticise dominant art mechanisms still generate income from those same art settings and, subsequently, contribute to the dominant capitalist-economic signification of art. In other words, the impact of art-activist initiatives can be double-edged. Artists may disarm some of their own subversive, transgressive acts by their other acts that strengthen the status quo. Moreover, such tactical art-activist strategies ingrained in this economic duplicity may not do anything for gender and social equality inside the arts – the key focus of this thesis. This is further discussed in section 6.2. The fact that mockstitution members generate income from the system does not resolve the exploitation of other artists.

The self-exploitation of artists remains an unsolved problem in the accommodation of neoliberalism in the arts. For this reason, artists' activist organisation Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) was founded in 2008 in New York. The organisation aims to regulate artists' fees in non-profit art settings (W.A.G.E., no date),[144] for which they

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[142] http://yeslab.org/
[143] In Chapter Four of this thesis, Pollock's career and work were regarded as a *stylistic* answer to Art History. It was already noted there that Pollock's intervention in the discipline could be seen as a 'mockstitution', imitating the rules and language of the dominant field and gradually changing them from within.
[144] http://www.wageforwork.com/

developed the W.A.G.E. certificate and fee calculator.[145] By committing to art workers' minimum fees, W.A.G.E. propose, art organisations and institutions can contribute to eroding exploitation and put a stop to the negative neoliberal effects. This may not topple the mechanism of a majority of low-paid artists accommodating the few famous and rich, but, at least, everybody can pay their rent. Other initiatives that have been raising awareness of these issues in recent years are the Precarious Workers Brigade,[146] the conference *Re-Materialising Feminism* (The Showroom and ICA, London, 2014),[147] the Trondheim Seminar (LevArt, Trondheim, 2015), the exhibition and catalogue *It's The Political Economy, Stupid: The Global Financial Crisis in Art and Theory* (Sholette and Ressler, 2013a), the conference *The Artist as Debtor* and the resulting website (Coco Fusco and Noah Fischer, New York, 2015).[148]

A solution to the problem of artists' self-exploitation is still to be found, especially as there is a continuous flow of art-activist initiatives (including feminist ones) in which artists exploit each other. The Trondheim Seminar facilitated by Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić in September 2015 discussed possible solutions. The aim was not only to re-signify art practices *away* from neoliberalism, but also to use their transformative and emancipatory potential. Some outcomes were perhaps contradictory, such as recommending that artists can best create alliances outside institutions, whilst emphasising the relationship between the value of art and institutional structures, stimulating resistance from *within* (Rädle and Jeremić, 2016, p. 40). It appears that participants were mostly applying a *static* mode of art signification, whilst dynamic and transdisciplinary positioning is needed to create actual sites of resistance.

The quickest way to solve exploitation is artists ceasing their compliance by not taking any unpaid or underpaid work in the arts (see also Soskolne, 2015).[149] Resisting is not easy, as, besides art's functions of pleasure and self-help therapy, the socially speculative character of art may be very appealing to artists, increasing their social and symbolic

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[145] See: http://www.wageforwork.com/
[146] See: http://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/
[147] Speakers included, amongst others, Kerstin Stakemeier, Marina Vishmidt and Linda Stupart.
[148] See: http://artanddebt.org/
[149] In response to the question 'Why don't non-profits pay artist fees?', Soskolne, core organiser of W.A.G.E., answers: 'The short answer is: because artists don't think they deserve them; because non-profits don't know what they're doing in this regard; and because the philanthropists who support the non-profit sector know exactly what they're doing, and they always have' (Soskolne, 2015). A similar question has been asked by economist and artist Hans Abbing (2002), who poses the question why artists are poor. In his analysis, however, Abbing excludes social and activist art practices that are foregrounded in this thesis. By not acknowledging the role of counter-strategies in response to marginalisation and sexism in the arts, the economist misses the larger, political picture of art (signification) and fails to successfully critique the economic structures that create his own suffering as an artist.

capital. However, the Great Art narrative in which artists embed themselves may not be very empowering in the long run, as it continues to feed hope instead of real solutions. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to limit the (self-)exploitation of collaborators and participants, though sufficient resources would need to be found before starting collaborative action. As economic structures play an important role in transdisciplinarity's signifying mechanism (including its troubling of dominant signification), it is important to pay attention to the payment of artists. Payments do not always need to be monetary, as artists can receive goods they need in other ways. Some artists may consider the exposure a fair payment, but this is a dangerous sliding scale, facilitating social inequality. I would recommend that, whatever the financial arrangements of artists' contributions are, they are made transparent so audiences can become aware of them. Feminism's critical mode of analysis, as discussed in the previous chapters, can help feminist artists question economic structures, and ask for payment.

In this section, the complexity of troubling the neoliberal relationship between conceptual, socio-political and economic aspects of (dominant) art signification was further explored. The conclusion is that even transgressive artworks that agitate against exploitative structures may actually contribute to them. Starting from the proposed transdisciplinarity that aims for social equality within the arts, the influence of economic structures on dominant art signification can be seen as an additional issue to deal with. Troubling the interconnections between the conceptual, socio-political and economic structures of art is made more difficult because of the power of the art world subsuming resistance. In addition, general activism against neoliberalism may not do much for feminism, as it does not necessarily fight for intersectional gender equality, and may even obstruct social change. As previously mentioned, there is an issue with the *representation* of multiple resistances – a representation that can exceed or challenge the neutrality of 'artists'. The proposed transdisciplinary approach is still, or more than ever, necessary to create room for the actual displacement of dominant aesthetics (as argued in the previous chapters). The question is, however, *which* economic structures would be sufficient for transdisciplinary, collaborative methods. This is discussed in the next section.

6.1.3 The importance of commitment to positive social change

The previous sections discussed the signifying character of art economic structures. For the valorisation and recognition of art, it is important to know with what money and for what economic purpose an artwork is made. This is emphasised by the feminist mode of analysis in art research and practice, as discussed in Chapter Three. We can assume that

artworks that are made *outside* structures that capitalise on 'art' in monetary or symbolic ways are less likely to be recognised as artworks. Their cultural and social value as art is not supported by the 'right' kind of signifying economic structures. This absence of the 'right' kind of art economic signifying structures could play an important role in the lack of recognition of 'feminist art'. The lower appreciation for artworks funded *outside* the arts, such as self-, crowd- or social welfare funding, may be signalling sexism in art and taste politics. In the box below, a work by Carla Cruz illustrates the fact that social art can have multiple economic values.

Vignette 13. Differentiating economic art signification

In 2006, Cruz staged the performance *Artist at Work* at the ARCO Fair in Madrid. The commercial gallery that represented her at the time hosted the happening. Cruz walked around the art fair wearing a t-shirt that said: 'I am an artist. What can I do for you?'[150] This art performance led to conversations with visitors, but, walking around, Cruz was, of course, also *invisible* as an 'artwork' to many art spectators. For art critics, there will be no doubt that the performance can be considered 'art', but the questions by whom, when and for what purpose can lead to many different answers. Through her performance, Cruz displaced the parameters of art signification and rendered visible the economic structures of 'free' symbolic art work. Interestingly, Cruz could have easily done this performance outside the setting of an art fair, away from the hundreds of galleries from all over the world presenting their best and newly discovered artists. However, done on the streets or in a supermarket, the performance would have had a different meaning. The art setting created the possibility to question and undermine its economic signifying structures. Whether such an economic, *symbolic* and artistic gesture actual led to more sales for the gallery (one of the purposes of being at the art fair) is a question that would have needed purposeful monitoring and evaluation.

When the effects of current capitalist and neoliberal economic structures on art production are taken into account, opting for anti-/non-capitalist economic structures would seem the best way to challenge exploitation and politics in the arts. However, the question arises whether art produced *outside* the conceptual, socio-political or economic structures of art will ever be recognised, appreciated or validated *as* 'art'. In other words, is the combined conceptual, socio-political and economic art game by definition a capitalist game? Does art actually have a subversive power, and what may that be? Can art that is fully produced outside (capitalist) art structures ever enter art historical canons

[150] Cruz, C. (no date) *Artist at work*, *Carla Cruz*. Available at: http://carlacruz.net/2006/project/artist-at-work#/0 (Last accessed: 3 January 2018).

and trouble them? This section explores alternative economic structures of art practice, and questions whether they can support the feminist, dynamic positioning of the proposed transdisciplinarity (in which research, practice and activism overlap), necessary for creating social impact. The alternatives to be discussed include non-capitalist structures and capitalist structures that facilitate altruism.

J.K. Gibson-Graham initiated a research community aiming to facilitate the end of capitalism.[151] The authors[152] disagree with the presentation of the end of capitalism as an 'unlikelihood or… impossibility' (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 3). Stanford (2015, p. 51) remarks that it is not so much the question *if* capitalism will end, but *when*. Therefore, it may be crucial to start imagining what post-capitalist economic structures could look like. It can be argued that representations of non-capitalist structures are currently being oppressed, which should be counter-balanced with more imagery of non-capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 3). Feminist art and visual culture can play an important role in providing an image of non-capitalism. However, studying the projects of Gibson-Graham's research network,[153] there is a remarkably low number of art and visual culture research projects represented. Some research projects described in the *Militant research handbook* (Bookchin *et al.*, 2013), described in Chapter Two, may be suitable for inclusion in the non-capitalist network.

When being isolated from art institutional and educational structures, there may be little context, or reason, for the displacement of dominant institutional aesthetics. Not-for-profit settings should not be mistaken for non-capitalist structures, as most not-for-profit settings are financially and symbolically tied to capitalist structures. In this light, Sholette and Ressler (2013b, p. 13), curators of an exhibition that promotes a stand against neoliberalism, may argue that the critical reflexivity provided by the show and catalogue impacts dominant art economic structures, but the question is whether this is really true. In reality, their art curation may even have the opposed economic effect, symbolically. Soskolne (2015), for example, argues that the speculative/capitalist value of art exhibited in not-for-profit settings may increase, as the *perception* that 'it serves the public good… adds economic value to art when it reaches the commercial auction and sales markets'. As mentioned previously, Beech (2015, pp. 1-30) does see a possibility to separate capitalist signifying structures from art, as, according to him, art-activist forms *can* refuse to make art (labour) a commodity. That may be true, but for artworks to be recognised and positively validated by larger art audiences than small groups of friends, capitalist

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[151] See: http://www.communityeconomies.org/Home
[152] This is the shared pen name of Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson.
[153] See: Community Economies Collective (CEC) and the Community Economies Research Network (CERN) (http://www.communityeconomies.org/Home)

economic structures are, arguably, inescapable. The growth of representation of non-capitalist structures, as promoted by Gibson-Graham (2006, pp. ix-x), though, would support Beech' vision.

Non-capitalism of the arts may actually entail a *total* displacement of current art signifying structures, rejecting all dominant art theoretical, socio-political and economic structures. Total displacement of art signification can be a solution for feminist artists and researchers abandoning the global art world and starting all over again with a new set of definitions and rules that are more *inclusive*. A completely separate counter-discourse can be created that makes use of only non-capitalist structures. This compares to the suggestion of abandoning Art History altogether, as touched upon in the previous chapters. Artists and art researchers would leave behind current (hope for) positions of power, influence, resources, visibility and recognition. Stepping away from institutional 'feminist art histories' is a break from its means and communities too. The chances of contributing to gender and social equality in the mainstream realm may be even more minimised. This thesis has focussed on the feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists who have not decided to (completely) leave institutional art structures, and the proposed transdisciplinarity aims to support their resistance from within.

In debating non-capitalist and anti-neoliberal structures, few researchers and art makers actually apply the feminist mode of analysis, questioning for whom, for what purpose and under what economic circumstance an artwork is made, or an article is written. For example, neither Gibson-Graham (2006) nor Sholette and Ressler (2013b) describe their target audience, their payments or their voluntary contributions to making their texts available to the 'public'. They do not 'give an account' of themselves or position themselves economically, which this thesis argues to be important for the displacement of dominant aesthetics. Analysing the dominance of capitalism in the signification of art, philosopher Kerstin Stakemeier remarks that 'all creative attempts to gain as much distance to capital as to fit it into a frame are ineffectual, as *they would need to represent that person taking the image herself as a figure of capital*' (Stakemeier, 2013, p. 159, my emphasis). This self-reflexivity reiterates the necessity for researchers, practitioners and activists acknowledge the economic structures in which they work, providing insights into the signifying mechanism of art. Such transparency can better facilitate re-structuring, as will be revisited in this chapter.

Now non-capitalist structures have been discussed, it is time to ask whether resistance might be possible from within capitalist structures. Capitalist art economic structures facilitate altruistic deeds, such a sponsorships and donations. This form of altruism is not

necessarily without self-interest, but also not purely focused on making a profit. Sponsorship can be based on the belief that art is a public good that deserves supporting. Many art institutions and art events are sponsored by corporate businesses, and the question is whether this is more the root of a problem (Soskolne, 2015) than a potential solution to the lack of governmental art funds and exploitation of artists. Discussing the structures of today's social art projects, Marina Vishmidt observes that 'activism and business pair up in a utopian vision of social desire that is… a vision of money brokering intimate and meaningful exchanges that can have actual "empowering" effects' (2013, p. 11). In other words, for for-profit organisations, art activism is worth sponsoring because of the ethical and social values that the organisations support. Moreover, this is not necessarily mere lip service, but can have an actual positive impact on social change (that is, in one area, but not necessarily all areas). Social change in one area can negatively contribute to other areas. For artists and researchers who are committed to social justice, this (re)production of social inequality should, *at the least*, constitute a dilemma. They should want to know the full impact of the economic structures in which they work. Such a socio-economic dilemma is, for example, described by artist and curator Michael Petry, who reports on his curation of a queer exhibition in the building of a corporate law firm at a Tate conference (2012, n.p.).[154]

The ethical decision artists and researchers are confronted with corresponds with questions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a concept through which for-profit organisations engage with social or environmental issues. Philosopher Joanna Semeniuk discusses different forms and motives of CSR, analysing the alignment of its morality and profitability, and concludes that CSR 'leaves space for unethical business behaviour' (2012, p. 24). Semeniuk argues that this is not problematic as long as states provide services to guarantee the wellbeing of people. Additionally, Semeniuk concludes that 'in order to make capitalism truly work to our advantage, the goals of the business world would have to be shifted' (2012, p. 24). Although there is no direct solution for the negative effects of (free) market CSR structures, engagement with CSR by *feminist-queer artists* may contribute to that 'shifting' of business goals. Feminist and queer art can then be seen as 'infiltrating' corporate structures, finding new allies and increasing socio-political and economic awareness.

Such a two-fold strategy may actually be necessary in not-for-profit art settings, too, as capitalist economic structures are dominant in art signification in those settings (as

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[154] Petry, M. (2012) 'Corporate queers: suits, ties and pin-striped shirts. Curating in a business environment', in. *Civil partnerships? Queer and feminist curating*, Tate, London. Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/civil-partnerships-queer-and-feminist-curating-video-recordings#open265747 (Last accessed: 30 December 2017).

argued in the previous sections). The advantages of CSR may be the opening of *new* art spaces, such as a temporary exhibition space in a corporate law firm (Petry, 2012). This can contribute to counter-balancing dominant aesthetics and politics and may provide more space for marginalised artists, such as 'queer' and 'LGBTI' artists. CSR may explicitly commit to social justice and anti-discrimination goals of art without being afraid to communicate the 'wrong' institutional aesthetic, being an outsider anyway. An alternative signifying mechanism may be put in place. In that sense, it is a misconception that CSR can never be political. The question is, however, how this could work to the advantage of *intersectional* feminism and its objectives. This question will be revisited in the next section on feminist, intersectional perspectives of art economics. First, let us explore briefly whether altruism can be modelled as capitalist self-interest, aiming to reform the world's exorbitantly unequal wealth distribution.

In search for a solution to unequal wealth distribution as a result of capitalism, economist Julianne Nelson (1993) tries to model altruism in self-interest settings. She does so with help of the game of the Prisoner's Dilemma (described in Sen, 1977),[155] which exposes dilemmas in rational economic decision making. Though game theory has usually been used for modelling and understanding of self-interest, it can also form a starting point for analysing public goods – those that can be said to be beneficial to 'all'. Will the wealthy ever give the homeless poor money because it is beneficial to themselves and in the interest of the public, having multiple reasons to erase poverty and homelessness? In Nelson's version of the model, the wealthy can decide whether or not to give money to the poor, and the poor can decide whether or not to beg on the streets. Adaptations of the model, such as the private character of decisions and the waiving of rights, show that, in theory, altruism out of self-interest is not impossible. The most important conclusion is, however, that '[i]t is necessary to secure a *commitment* to transfer resources to the poor' (Nelson, 1993, p. 42, my emphasis). This has not only an ideological, but also a pragmatic side, such as 'designing the size and type of transfers, and finally to establish the institutions that will get the job done' (1993, p. 42). Nelson admits that this is a 'daunting agenda' (1993, p. 42).

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[155] 'There are two players and each has two strategies, which we may call selfish and unselfish to make it easy to remember without me having to go into too much detail. Each player is better off personally by playing the selfish strategy *no* matter what the other does, but both are better off if both choose the unselfish rather than the selfish strategy. It is individually optimal to do the selfish thing: one can only affect one's own action and not that of the other, and given the other's strategy-no matter what-each player is better off being selfish. But this combination of selfish strategies, which results from self-seeking by both, produces an outcome that is worse for both than the result of both choosing the unselfish strategy. It can be shown that this conflict can exist even if the game is repeated many times' (Sen, 1977, p. 340, italics in the original).

Therefore, we should perhaps conclude that pure self-interested economic behaviour will hardly lead to social welfare for *all*, and, as Semeniuk (2012, p. 24) suggested earlier, needs other (state) institutions to take care of social aspects that are forgotten – services that need to be *outside* free market settings in order to properly work. The exploration of the vested interests of altruism basically leaves feminist art stakeholders in the same situation as before. There remains a necessity for *commitment* to gender equality, social equality and intersectionality (as briefly discussed in section 6.1.1), and, although commitment may be growing through the moral behaviour of some, modelling this would present another impossible task. Campaigning for gender equality in the arts may certainly continue to influence stakeholders, but it would be wise to implement monitoring and evaluation in order to learn what works and what does not.

There are currently no functioning economic structures that can *both* undermine the (re)production of inequality (for example, by making wealth distribution fairer) *and* effectively challenge historical and contemporary art canons. As long as economic signifying structures are not 'differenced' or 'troubled', the double problem of gender and art appears to be unresolvable. As argued in Chapter One, a feminist approach to economic equality may often consist of more than one campaign, including environmental and social justice agendas (see, for example, Federici, 2013; Fraser, 2013, pp. 227-237). As previously mentioned, there may be a difficulty in representing multiple messages. The result can be that non-economic structures or environmental activism perpetuate durable social inequality and discrimination. Vice versa, feminist art may negatively contribute to global capitalism or have a bad effect on the climate. In this case, what would be the point of searching for economic structures that support feminist art that aims for social change? If no change is possible, it may be best to stop altogether, and abandon feminist engagement with contemporary art and art histories. Feminist art may provide a representation of intersectionality, but can it comment on its own economic structures that may be part of the problem? Can the pursuit of feminist art (research, practice and activism) within current art economic *signifying* structures be justified, strategically and morally? This is further explored in section 6.2.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, *non-capitalist* structures which abandon dominant art structures would need to 'reinvent' their own art signification. Such new art signification can be easily established, and may be going on right now, but, without discursive and institutional structures, 'non-capitalist art' cannot easily influence what is exhibited and promoted in mainstream venues. Artists working 'off the grid' are simply not heard, and, if they are, their voice and 'art' may become part of the capitalist objectives of institutions. Another important concern is the question whether the 'non-capitalist'

criteria of art will pay attention to socio-political and economic dimensions of signifying practice, or whether a new, possibly discriminatory, myth of art will appear. Potentially, the 'new' art will continue to be embedded in exchanges. Federici (2013), for example, envisages new, non-capitalist structures 'through land takeovers, urban farming, community-supported agriculture, through squats, the creation of various forms of barter, mutual aid, alternative forms of healthcare'. Art can be easily imagined as part of such new communities, functioning as decoration, meditation, currency or other functions that societies invent. It would be interesting to see whether complete new terms of art signification would, indeed, lead to a less *biased* and less exclusive differentiating mechanism.

For feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists, there may certainly be valid reasons to follow the non-capitalist path of abandoning art institutions and reclaiming other spaces of art value. This route will, however, lead away from the current research question of how to create diversity in the art settings such as museums, galleries and art institutions, which are necessarily embedded in capitalist economic signifying structures of art. The aim is to analyse those art capitalist structures and find possible ways to influence the status quo from within. As this section has shown, this is not without risk, as the line between subversion and (re)production of exploitative structures can be incredibly thin. The uncertainty about whether socio-political interventions *can* make a positive difference is part of feminist activism, which is the topic of the next section.

6.2 Feminist strategies to art economics

This section will explore the *economics* of an intersectional gender perspective, which was introduced in Chapter One. Applying a 'feminist' approach has been argued to not always contribute to social equality and justice. The (re)production of social exclusion within and through feminism, such as the oppression of sub-identities and the absence of the representation of intersectional feminism, has economic structures that need to be taken into account. Ideally, the economic structures of feminism *produce* solidarity and commitment to social equality. But what would those structures look like? In the previous chapter, the (re)production of inequality was called a 'by-product' of human behaviour (Tilly, 1998, p. 11; Verloo, 2013, p. 897). Could economic structures, nonetheless, also produce the opposite, that is, *equality* as a by-product? If so, what economic (monetary, non-monetary, symbolic) exchanges are necessary for this to happen?

Additionally, there lies the question of the representation of the multiplicity of resistances (such as against neoliberalism *and* sexism, sexism *and* racism, social injustice *and* environmental issues).[156] This resembles the *representation of intersectionality* by overcoming hegemonic social structures, reaching a multiplicity of audiences and allowing for multiple, democratic spaces for voices to be shared, as set out in the previous chapters. The question posed here is whether the proposed transdisciplinarity, which aims to re-signify dominant aesthetics, can help resolve the difficulty of finding alternative economic structures for feminist-activist art. One aspect of the solution has been addressed in the previous section: positioning oneself *economically*, and giving an account of the economic structures in which one works and addresses one's public(s).

In search of a more complete answer, sub-section 6.2.1 will further explore the contradictions that economic structures of feminist art research, practice and activism provide when attempting to reach feminist objectives. Examples of (unwanted) sexism as a result of art economic research, practice and activism are further contextualised in sub-section 6.3.2. The section concludes with the development of an economic perspective of feminist art (research, practice and activism), as part of the proposed transdisciplinarity.

6.2.1 Trouble gender, art and economics *simultaneously*

Feminist art can be made and exhibited inside and outside institutional art structures. Whether or not monetary or non-monetary exchanges are involved, like any work that is signified as 'art', feminist artworks cannot be easily separated from capitalist economic signifying mechanisms. As explained in the previous sections, the use of 'art' makes it difficult to employ economic structures that can facilitate positive social change, that is, dissecting the (re)production of social inequality in the art world or elsewhere. Moreover, the impact of 'feminist art' is not being monitored or evaluated, which makes it impossible to know whether social change is created.

Recently, Horne (2014, pp. 170-177) evaluated two small feminist art exhibitions[157] in Tate Britain that were sponsored by BP, which could be an example of CSR for the purpose

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[156] The need for the representation of non-capitalist structures has been discussed, but as neither the feminism nor the art in this research are solely produced in explicit non-capitalist structures, this falls outside the scope of my project.

[157] These are the displays *Sylvia Pankhurst* (exhibited September 2013-April 2014) (see http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/bp-spotlight-sylvia-pankhurst) and *Women and Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry 1973-75* by artists Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt and Mary Kelly (see http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/harrison-hunt-kelly-women-and-work-a-document-on-the-division-of-labour-in-industry-1973-t07797).

of both art and feminism. As BP has been criticised for creating environmental damage, it was questionable whether their sponsorship of the feminist artworks was properly aligned with their values. The sponsored visibility may facilitate inaccurate historical readings, or contribute to a *misrepresentation* of feminism. Horne concludes there are 'irresolvable *opposing* interests' (2014, p. 170, italics in the original), and suggests that the friction between the exhibited feminist art and its (new) economic structures cannot lead to a well-aligned moral stance. This analysis includes the 'homogenising effects' (Horne, 2014, p. 170) of corporate sponsorship, which further oppresses diversity.

We can assume that if the display of feminist art does not reflect on the dominant economic signifying terms of its communication, including the narrative of Great Art, the double problem of gender and art continues to exist. Without an explanation of terms of representation, the viewer may have insufficient information to make an aesthetic judgement. Not applying knowledge about the categorisation of art and gender, the feminist objective of displacement of dominant aesthetics cannot take place. For this reason, when assessing the production of gender equality through economic signifying mechanisms, the BP sponsorship of feminist art (now ended at Tate) may not be any worse than any other financial donor. Nevertheless, this example may better show the urgency of paying attention to the socio-economic structures of art. This awareness may also contribute to more awareness amongst curators about the one-dimensional use of the word 'woman', failing to simultaneously *trouble* gender categories while increasing the visibility of 'women' artists.

It is not surprising that economic structures play an important role in the signification of categories. For feminist art history, coming from a Marxist tradition of analysing the production of art, the interdependence between the (re)production of femininity and masculinity and the capitalist system has been very clear from the beginning (Pollock, 2003, pp. 5-6). Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (1997, p. xiii) emphasise that the arrival of 'wage labor' in the nineteenth century (one of the characteristics of capitalism) enhanced modern gender roles, sexual norms and the construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Nevertheless, in analyses of class, the intersection of these and other social identities is often omitted (Cornwall, 1997, p. 109), while we know that the *representation of intersectionality* is necessary for an accurate economic perspective of feminist art. Examples will be further discussed in the next section 6.2.2.

As suggested previously, the *economic* dimension of the double problem of art and gender can represent an extra obstacle. Economic structures have the ability to strengthen the value difference between 'men's' and 'women's' art. If art exchanges produce the

contextual meanings of both art and gender (following Cowie, 1990; Velthuis, 2005), sexism can emerge *at the intersection* of both. Gender becomes an important signifier in art speculation. For example, when significantly more numerous artworks made by 'men' are exchanged in commercial and not-for-profit settings, it is logical that artworks by 'men' will be seen as increasingly more interesting and profitable to invest in. This investment can consist of money, but also time and energy spent on 'men' artists by art collectors, dealers, art critics, journalists, curators, educators, students and the general art public. In other words, the *invisibility* of art by marginalised artists may continuously contribute to its own devaluation, which needs to be overcome repeatedly – that is, *every* time the dominant value of art is communicated in the *absence* of real diversity and intersectionality. This is certainly a mechanism that would warrant further research. The most important conclusion is that the structures of feminist art representation and economics are interconnected, which the proposed transdisciplinarity would need to respond to. The gender status quo is reproduced the moment each of the three signifying mechanisms (art, gender and economics) and their relationships to each other remain *unaddressed*. Gender equality may be only achieved when all of them are addressed simultaneously.

Feminist activism has had a complicated, paradoxical relationship with neoliberalism from the 1980s onwards. Fraser argues that liberation movements got into 'a new romance of capitalism with real-world effects' (2013, p. 220). In order to explore this claim in further detail, Fraser's three acts of feminism (described in Chapter Five) are revisited here. The cultural turn of Act Two emphasised difference and individualisation, which can be said to have undermined the communal fight for gender equality and redistribution of wealth (Fraser, 2007, 2013, pp. 1-16). In line with this, Fraser (2013, pp. 14-15) recognises four 'ironic' developments on the matter of economics, showing that solutions to creating equal economic positions can have the *opposite* effect, as the 'feminist' economic structures 'could line up in principle either with marketization or with social protection' (Fraser, 2013, p. 237). The four 'ironic' developments that Fraser argues for are as follows.

First, feminism's culturalist approach coincided with neoliberalism's approach to political-economic inequality: the focus on difference had positive *and* negative effects on the different financial positions of 'women'. Second, feminism's aim for an equal economic position of 'women' as part of a 'family wage' model became crucial for further exploitation of workers in general. Male, white and able-bodied workers continued to be better off than 'others'. Third, feminism's original critique of the state for its paternalistic approach to marginalised groups was similar to neoliberalism's critique of the over-caring state. There appeared to be a thin line between overcoming victimisation (without being

patronised) and being neglected (again). And, fourth, the relationship between global governance and neoliberalism may have given feminists an opportunity to contribute to gender justice, but, by doing so, the capitalist and exploitative structures of this relationship may have actually been strengthened.[158] This fourth observation resonates with the paradoxical relationship between art-activism and neoliberalism (as described in Sholette, 2011, pp. 116-134, 152-185) discussed in the previous section. Therefore, we should be aware that art-activism that does not acknowledge the economic dimension of the double problem of gender and art may very well strengthen sexist parameters through the *absence* of gender re-negotiation of the economic art exchange. Examples will be discussed in section 6.2.2.

Returning to the *representation of intersectionality*, which is needed for successful feminism, an economic perspective will be crucial for subverting the paradoxical effects of feminist and queer art-activism. For example, exhibiting art by marginalised groups in corporate settings may reinforce the potential negative social justice impact *through* the economic structures of the exhibition. So, then not only the neoliberal values of the exhibition are questionable (as discussed in the previous section), but its production of categories through a lack of intersectionality may be too. In hegemonic terms, some marginalised artists will be exhibited, but never all or most of them, resulting in new exclusive norms and mechanisms of durable inequality. For this reason, corporate sponsorship of art may be a slippery slope for many feminists, as often there is no intersectional feminism. New *exclusionary* differentiation may be put in place, by, for example, exhibiting predominantly white 'gay' and 'lesbian' artists instead of more ethnically diverse groups. The negative effects of such curatorial choices have been addressed in the previous chapters. A critical response to this can be quite simple: as in any art context, the speculative, symbolic and monetary economics that contributes to art signification needs to be acknowledged. However, can such economic awareness be communicated and, for example, become part of the representation of 'feminist art' and its *intersectionality*? Can a feminist economic perspective that addresses this predicament become part of the proposed transdisciplinarity, as suggested in section 6.1.3?

Fraser is persuasive when arguing that 'struggles against heterosexist misrecognition do not automatically threaten capitalism, but must be linked to other (anti-capitalist) struggles' (2013, p. 12). Feminist and queer strategies would only threaten capitalism, *if* they were – inherently – representing the (historical) role of economics in the construction of identities and their diverse values. In reality, very few queer and feminist

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[158] In 1984, Judith Van Allen argued something similar in 'Capitalism without patriarchy,' *Socialist Review* 77 (September-October 1984)(Gluckman and Reed, 1997, p. 81).

artworks that rebel against dominant art structures represent a simultaneous troubling of art, gender *and* economics. One rare example may be the art of Sands Murray-Wassink, briefly described by the vignette below, after which the unintentional sexist effects of art economic research, practice and activism are explored, illustrating the difficulty of representing multiple resistances.

Vignette 14. Renegotiating art, gender and economics

Artworks by Sands Murray-Wassink[159] may exemplify the troubling of art, gender and economics. Gift economies play a crucial role in Murray-Wassink's art, consisting of painting, drawing, performances and happenings. The generous exchanges include offering perfume advice, handing out cake, reading open letters to feminist artists, facing audiences naked, and swapping artworks with other feminist artists. Murray-Wassink's art cannot be moulded into one clear form, and may appear 'messy' to many art viewers. However, as multiple resistances within/against the art world are hard to represent, the artist's messiness can be considered logical too. Murray-Wassink's institutional visibility and art economic value are fairly limited, though there is a clear symbolic, visual and social relationship between him and his contemporaries Tracey Emin and Elke Krystufek, and his mentor Carolee Schneemann. There is a possibility that the *terms* of Murray-Wassink's art exchanges do not lead to institutional recognition and market values. Researching these precise terms (the art conceptual, socio-political and economic structures of Murray-Wassink's art) would make an invaluable contribution to understanding the economics of art signification.

6.2.2 Create multiple economic values in multiple areas

Chapter One discussed briefly new forms of sexism and gender inequality within activist movements, such as the male gaze within the Occupy movement. Feminist fights against sexism need to be replicated in spaces that claim to promote social equality. The lack of representational *forms* of intersectionality constitutes an unintentional obstacle to communicating diversity. This section will provide a closer look at such unintentional sexism of art-activism within art economic structures, which will further clarify the economic dimension of the double problem of gender and art.

Artist Andrea Fraser clearly understands the interconnected impact of economic and art conceptual structures that can represent the basis of sexism. Fraser focuses on the

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[159] http://sands1974.com/

relationship between art and economic structures in her essays 'L'1%, c'est moi' (2011) and 'There's no place like home' (2012). The latter was produced and commissioned for the 2012 Whitney Biennial. The former was originally written for the Berlin-based publication *Texte zur Kunst* and is also available on the website of the Whitney Museum.[160] These essays do not only challenge the formal characteristics of art by being texts instead of objects, but also aim to expose the signifying mechanisms of art economic structures.

Fraser exposes the difficulties of artists to fully consciously participate in current economic structures whilst actually disagreeing with these terms. In 'L'1%, c'est moi', Fraser writes that '[t]he only "alternative" today is to recognize our participation in that [art] economy and confront it in a direct and immediate way in all of our institutions, including museum, and galleries, and publications' (2011, p. 6). Here Fraser calls upon artists to take action against the neoliberal and exploitative characteristics of the art market. In 'There's no place like home', which is slightly more theoretical and discursive, Fraser remarks:

> ... it may be that the way out of the seemingly irresolvable contradictions of the art world lies directly within our grasp, not in the next artistic innovation – not, first of all, in what we do – but in what we say about what we do: in art discourse. While a transformation in art discourse would not, of course, resolve any of the enormous conflicts in the social world or even within ourselves, it might at least allow us to engage them more honestly and effectively. (Fraser, 2012, p. 33)

In this case, Fraser hopes that social change in the art world is possible. However, following the line of reasoning in this thesis, it may be questionable if art signification can be shifted when there is no *transdisciplinary* engagement with practices outside the arts, creating multiple positions (of authority) to speak from. In Fraser's texts there is little account of the representation of intersectionality, which, as a result, incorrectly presents 'artists' as a homogenous, neutral group – as if the impact of the economic signifying mechanism would be the same for every artist. This can be seen as a form of 'bracketing' identity categories, but, consequently, social inequality remains unaddressed.

There is, however, plenty to indicate that Fraser is fully aware of sexist mechanisms in the art world, from having been a member of the feminist performance group the V-Girls (active between 1986-1996)[161] to creating a daring one-hour video called *Untitled* (2003),

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[160] http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2012Biennial/AndreaFraser
[161] see http://thev-girls.tumblr.com/

in which she has sex with an art collector for money, thereby referencing the exploitative economics of art labour (Cahan, 2006). Therefore, the omission of such an *intersectional gender perspective* in the works mentioned above may be a strategic move, avoiding the disqualifying effect of categorisation. Nevertheless, the question is whether such 'misrepresentation' can have any real impact, as it re-establishes the myth, or rather does not *replace* the myth with a substitute signifying mechanism that *produces* social equality. The potential absence of impact, if measured, may lie in the art economic structures of the work – its art institutional structures in which the communication is pre-determined. To trouble that communication, Fraser would need to represent dynamic, transdisciplinary positioning between different signifying practices, addressing multiple audiences. Though doing so to a certain degree by using a combination of research, practice and activism, the meaning of the work still seems to be *signified* (as art) in one area only.[162]

Therefore, unfortunately, the singular signification of Fraser's work, taking place in the context of the art exhibition, may simply reproduce sexism and social inequality. The impact of Fraser's work can, of course, enhance gender equality by inspiring marginalised artists and raising awareness of economic structures, which is necessary for gender equality. But the question is whether the art system and dominant art discourse are truly challenged by such works. When dominant aesthetics are not successfully displaced, hegemonic and stratified structures that oppress diversity and intersectionality continue to be in place. A similar negative effect of well-intended politics can be found in Sholette's (2011) argument, discussed below.

There is no doubt that Sholette expresses engagement and commitment to feminist-queer art-activist practices. Sholette (2011), for example, includes feminist and queer case studies, such as *Queer Spaces* by REPOhistory in 1994 in New York City, which commemorated the history of LGBT communities, amongst whom was 'transgender' street-activist Marsha P. Johnson, who was murdered in 1992.[163] Nevertheless, it can be questioned whether Sholette acknowledges enough the *signifying* role of economics in the production of art and identity. In his book *Dark matter* (2011), the necessity of a re-focus on socio-politics and economics in art signification (as set out in chapters Three and Four) is not acknowledged. A book may logically never (fully) represent a transdisciplinary, dynamic approach to art signification, necessary to displace dominant aesthetics. Therefore, I would recommend taking Sholette's whole practice of research, practice and

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[162] It is possible that the texts are reaching publics in socio-political or economic fields, informing the scholarship and art-activism of (new) readers. This possibility would need further research and evaluation. The discussion of Fraser's work here is meant to illustrate one way of approaching art-activist interventions in art economics.

[163] See also: http://www.gregorysholette.com/?page_id=71

activism into account for assessing whether or not his economic critique of the art world challenges dominant aesthetics.

This line of reasoning builds on the earlier demonstrated difficulty to represent multiple resistances, against the dominant conceptual, socio-political *and* economic structures that signify art. Tackling only one of them certainly exposes the problematic system, but the means of resistance continue to contribute to sexism, racism and neoliberalism. Successful feminist artworks would need to displace the dominant conceptual, socio-political *and* economic structures of art, and, by doing so, signify art differently by *replacing older stories with new stories*. This implies an exchange of conditions, a re-negotiation of not only concept/theory and socio-politics, but also economics. And as previous chapters have demonstrated, this re-negotiation takes place on the triple levels of research, practice and activism. This 'exchange characteristic' will be revisited in section 6.3, in which feminist art is framed as a re-structuring *currency*.

The displacement of art economic signifying structures can take place in the proposed transdisciplinarity, because there are two or more economic spheres in which the value of the artworks is determined. In other words, the dynamic positioning includes the acknowledgement of economic structures, whether or not these are monetary. This argument aligns with acknowledging multiple economic values, as discussed in section 6.1.1. Artists do not have to get paid in all fields in order to create economic meaning and value in those multiple fields. The minimum requirement is, of course, no exploitation, for which the W.A.G.E. fee calculator could be used in art contexts. Feminist art can only contribute to social change when it becomes part of transdisciplinary collaborations. For positive social change, collaboration with researchers, practitioners and activists in other disciplines is necessary. The next section provides a closer look at how the strategic, multiple economic positioning could be approached.

6.2.3 Take risks, monitor and evaluate

The thin line between resistance against and cooperation with neoliberal, exploitative structures has been explored in this chapter. The previous chapters have addressed potential disagreement amongst feminists and resolved these through transdisciplinarity, working towards solutions by transcending boundaries between research, practice and activism. But do the economic structures in which the proposed transdisciplinary would take place create an impossible situation for feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists?

The previous two sections concluded that the proposed transdisciplinarity needed to facilitate the troubling of gender, art and economics simultaneously, as well as the creation of multiple values and in multiple areas. This is an incredible amount of work, for which collaboration, as part of the transdisciplinarity, is advised. It not strange that most activist forms, including combinations of research and practice, have not escaped their 'durable inequality' (Tilly, 1998). The same question can be said about activism within corporate business settings. For example, Gluckman and Reed (1997, p. xvi) suggest that when gay men and lesbians 'have broken down barriers in corporate settings', they may start thinking more carefully about socio-economic class. Here the overcoming of barriers is again represented as stratified, not allowing everyone to emancipate at the same time (discussed in Chapter Five). In many cases, 'LGBT' Corporate Social Responsibility can be said to work for social change,[164] and to a lesser extent for profit. Nonetheless, its economic structures that facilitate emancipation do contribute to new oppression (cf. Tilly, 1998; Verloo, 2013).

In Nancy Fraser's (2013) analysis of feminism, there was a similar duplicity of economic-ethical positioning. Feminist plans for improving the position of 'women' could be simultaneously aligned with either marketization or social protection, and feminist actors have been divided about strategies to follow. Feminism's objectives became subject to multiple interpretations and framings, Fraser drawing attention to the awareness of 'our uncanny double' (2013, p. 224). Economic structures make it quite impossible to really separate our individualist, market-infused, historical, social, political, collective and/or misrecognised identities. There is always the possibility of having made the 'wrong' decision due to blind spots, fragmented knowledge, oppressed knowledge, general unawareness or peer pressure. These decisions cannot be separated from economics, as they *signify* the position and value of individuals. When Nochlin wrote that 'the middle-class woman has a great deal more to lose than her chains' (1988, p. 152), this included the financial positions of 'middle-class' 'women'. Economist Richard R. Cornwall (1997, p. 109) also draws attention to the social codes of human economic behaviour that influence decisions. Critiquing free marketization, he argues that individuals do not always do what they actually want or think.[165] For this reason, Cornwall recognises the '*simultaneity* of the

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[164] Sometimes a 'business case' for CSR is made, claiming or implying that it can enhance productivity and profit. But there is not enough empirical evidence to prove this (see, for example, Semeniuk, 2012, p. 20). In the case of LGBT emancipation, it is sometimes argued that employees coming out at work increase the productivity and profit of businesses or organisations.

[165] Cornwall (1997, p. 92) completed ten simulations through a (simplistic) economic model, which measured the likelihood of queer participants coming out in a queer social context. Some remained in the closet, and did not follow their 'true' desire. This suggests that the relationship between the social and individual, materialised through economic signifying structures, is more complex. A

articulation of the individual and the social'[166] (Cornwall, 1997, p. 108, italics in the original).

For the proposed transdisciplinarity, the duplicity in economic human behaviour needs to be acknowledged. This may actually be an opportunity to develop an economic perspective that supports the representation of intersectionality. Such a representation would consist of 1) giving an account of oneself economically (which was discussed in section 6.1.3) and 2) transdisciplinary, dynamic economic positioning through which multiple economic values (of art and identities) are constituted.

With regard to the earlier mentioned queer exhibition in a corporate law firm, Petry (2012) gives an account of challenges and shows awareness of our 'uncanny double'. In doing so, he criticises the absence of queer perspectives within art institutions that could commit more to removing the 'heterosexual' bias in curation and spectatorship. CSR sponsorship of not-for-profit art settings can offer space for queer and feminist art, but can it also facilitate sites of *inclusion*? Petry argues that public art institutions have a responsibility for facilitating inclusion. The counter-question would be whether not-for-profit institutional art settings *can* better facilitate such activism, as their economic structures may not signify artworks differently (as discussed in section 6.1). The 'differencing', 'troubling' or 'queering' of art contexts should entail such discussions about art economic signifying structures and their diversification. Which spaces would allow for a diversity of economic signification and values?

Reilly (2015) does not make a distinction between commercial and not-for-profit settings, when measuring sexism in the global art world. This is probably appropriate, as their aesthetic terms produce gender inequality in similar ways, and there is a similar need for stakeholders to *commit* to changing this (as was discussed in section 6.1.3). The economic values of artworks need to be redefined in such a way that they *produce* gender parity and social inclusion. Commitment in doing so may depend on stakeholders' utilitarian motives of profitability, motives for enhancing the public good, or unexpected (irrational) affects. Perhaps the development of what Nelson calls a '*rationale* for the requisite altruism' (1993, p. 37, emphasis in the original) is needed to *convince* more people of the importance of social change and inclusion. This brings the question back to the creation of

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social context is needed in which terms such as gay, lesbian and queer are signified and *mean* something to people. But even when this social context is there, social codes can make people 'fail to perceive their sexual orientations' (Cornwall, 1997, p. 109).

[166] For Cornwall, this is best done through queer art and culture. He writes: 'This *simultaneity* of the articulation of the individual and the social has been addressed better by literary cultural analysts than by most other scholars' (1997, p. 108, italics in the original).

publics and counterpublics (Warner, 2005), which can increase attention, visibility and awareness on the matters of gender and art (as discussed in Chapters Three and Four). Therefore, in strategic alliances, feminist stakeholders may choose to render the precise nature of economic structures of artworks (for example, non-capitalist, capitalist, neoliberal, gift economic) as less important – infiltrating a diversity of art socio-politics and economics whilst trying to influence the opinions of as many stakeholders as possible. Feminist art can be a great form of campaigning, and, in conclusion, feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists may not actually need to do anything differently, except for one thing. As in any campaign for a good cause, would the campaigners not like to know the *impact* of their interventions? Here, the importance of impact evaluation is reiterated. Not monitoring or evaluating the impact of feminist art could be a gigantic waste of time, energy and money. Queer and feminist exhibitions in corporate settings may be perceived as controversial, but they may trigger audiences to think about gender and feminist politics, which they may not have encountered previously. Arts impact monitoring and evaluation can help enhance this social objective of feminist and queer art – a topic that is revisited in Chapter Seven.

Throughout this chapter, an economic perspective of the proposed transdisciplinarity has been developed, tackling the question whether its feminism risks being complicit with economic structures that produce social exclusion and inequality. There is no guarantee that the feminist art signified through the proposed transdisciplinarity will *not* contribute to the (re)production of inequality within and beyond the arts. However, there are some options that can help minimise the risk: dynamic positioning between research, practice and activism, facilitating multiple signifying spaces (through which 'art' and 'identities' can be de-categorised), paying attention to the multiple economic values of art and monitoring and evaluating impact. The proposed transdisciplinarity supports and promotes all these activities, increasing the chance of dominant aesthetics displacements, as well as recognition of artists being marginalised.

To conclude, though capitalist and neoliberal structures of commercial and not-for-profit art settings are part of the problem, they are not a no-go area *per se*, especially because current definitions of art depend on them. If one does not want to take the risk of (re)producing inequality, it is probably best to stop. When one continues making 'art', however, it is very important to start measuring the impact of one's acts. Corporate settings can contribute to diversifying economic structures as much as grassroots activist structures can. Though commercial and non-commercial art settings currently depend on the gift economies established by artists, paying artists fees is recommended in order to avoid direct exploitation. Within the proposed transdisciplinarity, feminist art is advised

to take place in multiple areas simultaneously, which, arguably, opens up financing and support opportunities. The most important thing is to generate multiple economic structures through partnerships and collaborations, as supported by the proposed transdisciplinarity, through which multiple art values can be established.

Whether in marginal or institutional, art or non-art, commercial or not-for-profit settings, 'feminist art' may work as a *currency* that helps audiences and stakeholders think about the economic structures in which both the production of art and spectatorship take place. This way, commitment to social inclusion in the arts is embedded in the proposed transdisciplinarity. The next section will further explore this notion of feminist art as *currency* – a concept that originated from my collaboration with Carla Cruz, Nina Hoechtl, Francesco Ventrella in 2008, as part of a project for the European Feminist Forum (see Westen, 2010, p. 88).

6.3 Facilitating positive social change: 'feminist art' as currency

Earlier in this chapter, attention was drawn to the economic structures of feminist art that could be part of the proposed transdisciplinarity for social change. As feminist art cannot guarantee eliminating the (re)production of inequality, feminist art researchers, practitioners and artists have an important choice to make. Should they stop facilitating art, opt for a total displacement into non-capitalist structures, or take the risk of reproduction of inequality? The third option has been advocated by the current research project, which aims to promote questioning all aesthetic and economic terms. The application of a feminist mode of analysis ideally provides the parameters of constant re-negotiation, which may occasionally involve a local 'art strike'. Exchanges that signify feminist artworks inform the socio-political and economical positions of artists, curators, sponsors and spectators. The objective is gaining *commitment* to feminism through those exchanges (preferably from non-feminist stakeholders), through which feminist art starts functioning as a currency. This may not be successful or lead to change on every occasion, but by attempting to negotiate at least *the need for this change has been communicated*. In addition, alternative art economic structures may be the starting point for signifying feminist artworks differently.

The philanthropic organisation Mama Cash (Amsterdam), which funds feminist art-activist projects, is an example of an alternative art exchange. Being part of larger feminist projects, the assessment of the art projects is not measured based on 'art criteria' (as art funds would do), but their impact on normative societies.[167] In other words, in the exchange between Mama Cash and the artists (an exchange involving money), the dominant marker in the signification of art was temporarily displaced to an explicit socio-political objective – regardless of art theoretical and conceptual structures chosen by the artists. Of course, the dominant Western conceptualisation of 'art' may not have been applicable to the funded artists and 'arts' organisations.[168] Considering the globalised character of art (see Dimitrakaki, 2013, pp. 1-23) and the appropriation of amateur and activist visual culture for the purposes of art theory (see, for example, Kester, 2011), there is, however, no reason why applied media such as video, theatre, radio, street performance, cabaret, blogging, storytelling, and photography cannot be signified as art.

In this thesis, the appropriation of these artworks into Western feminist art histories is not necessarily promoted, even though the works can be considered part of global feminist art histories. Potential future interpretation and historicisation of these works should take collaborative forms, such as those promoted in the proposed transdisciplinarity. Nonetheless, the economic structure of art provided by Mama Cash illustrates that feminist art researchers do have a choice in writing about *diverse* economic structures. Granting visibility to feminist artworks in always the *same* dominant economic structures does little to challenge the dominant aesthetics, even though this may be the quickest way to recognition including increased financial stability. It is crucial to give an account of the diversity of economic structures of feminist artworks, to compare them and to apply an intersectional gender perspective, as this chapter has attempted to do. Otherwise, 'feminist art' may continue to be misrepresented.

As previously argued, historical research on artists who have stopped making art is important, especially because contemporary artists, such as Andrea Fraser (2011, no page), publicly consider stopping. However, the distinction between being 'inside' or 'outside' the art world is not one-dimensional, but the result of a network of intersectional positions, decisions and considerations, in which the (re)production of social inequality influences (the lack of) individual opportunities. When formerly marginalised artists break through and become part of the famous few, the system can still be structurally

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[167] Personal communication with a Mama Cash Programme Officer, 31 July 2014.
[168] The following organisations, among others, received funding for feminist art projects: Mujeres al Borde (Colombia), Aireana (Paraguay), Reinas Chulas (Mexico), 5Harfliler (Turkey), Les+ (China), AFRA (Kenya), Women in Black Belgrade (Europe) and Voices of Women Media (Netherlands and Asia).

biased. When financially supporting marginalised artists, criteria for strategic *alliance building* inside and outside the arts can become part of assessing the art practice or proposed project.

This thesis has thus far revolved around finding *representations of intersectionality* that could, in interaction with feminist art and art histories, help advance social equality. Circumstances have been studied in which feminist art could contribute to dismantling the effects of stratified and hegemonic structures of society and institutional production of knowledge. The discussion of economic structures in this chapter has reiterated the need for dynamic positioning, in multiple spaces that signify art (differently). Working in different value systems, and creating opportunities to do so, require significant amounts of work, which can feel daunting. Lee Lozano illustrated the scale, when stating at a public hearing of the Art Workers Coalition in 1969:

> For me there can be no art revolution that is separate from a science revolution, a political revolution, and education revolution, a drug revolution, a sex revolution or a personal revolution. (Lehrer-Graiwer, 2014, p. 58)

It is possible that many feminist artists have already attempted to re-signify their art, working in more than one setting, applying a double-edged strategy. Rediscovering *them* will help restructure dominant parameters, as they challenged the canon by transgressing disciplinary boundaries. However, feminist art researchers who write about them need to transgress the disciplinary boundaries themselves. They need to overcome the epistemological and semiotic challenges discussed in Chapter Four. The proposed transdisciplinarity aims to facilitate opportunities for our economic, sexist, racist, socio-political, theoretical, homophobic and/or transphobic 'uncanny doubles'. Displacing dominant aesthetics means persisting in the many attempts to dissect the mechanisms of (re)production of inequality. The proposed transdisciplinarity is one possible way of transforming (re)production of inequality into *production of equality* through feminist art.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, the feminist art economics that could be part of the proposed transdisciplinarity has been contextualised. Under current neoliberal circumstances, artists who are exploited (or exploit themselves) contribute to further social inequality and dominant aesthetics that marginalise artists from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is important to recognise economic structures as *signifying*, facilitating the production of the

art and identity categories. Besides, it should be acknowledged that artworks *can* have a variety of economic values. This acknowledgement can help diversify art signifying mechanisms. Feminist art economics does not necessarily escape the (re)production of social inequality and exploitation of art workers, and there lies the question whether the pursuit of feminist art (research, practice and activism) can be strategically and morally justified. The proposed transdisciplinarity can help in resolving the paradox of feminist art economics by encouraging feminist artists and researchers to (1) make their own economic positions transparent, (2) apply an intersectional gender perspective to art economics (paying attention to the role of economics in the production of art and identity categories), (3) analyse art economic structures and measure the impact of feminist art, and (4) facilitate and/or occupy multiple economic structures. Together, these 'conditions' form the economic perspective of the displacement of dominant aesthetics. In the next, and last, chapter, these parameters are translated into general guidelines for the proposed transdisciplinarity.

Chapter 7. Towards a Methodology of Transdisciplinary Impact Evaluation: Two Case Studies

The previous chapters have aimed to demonstrate that having a substantial, positive, measurable impact on social equality through the arts is neither easy nor straightforward. Artists, curators, arts professionals and arts funders committed to positive change are faced with difficult questions that cannot be answered immediately. It is very hard to untangle economic interests (realised through monetary *and* symbolic exchanges) from capitalist and growing 'neoliberal' exploitative structures that arts and art academia are inevitably embedded in. Feminist art researchers, artists and art-activists cannot easily determine whether their actions, which are often unpaid, result in any progress towards the attainment of their specific goals.

The previous chapter ended with four 'parameters' (introduced earlier in the thesis and further discussed below in section 7.1.1) that are argued to maximise the likelihood of artworks contributing to positive social change, societal equality and diversity in the arts. These parameters have been derived from secondary research, and sum up the different facets discussed in this thesis that are important when creating social impact – this includes measuring the impact of the transdisciplinary art. This chapter focuses on illustrating how the theoretical (or hypothetical) parameters can be used in practice, and what forms transdisciplinary impact evaluation of 'feminist art' may take.

After a brief summary of the four transdisciplinary parameters and a brief overview of monitoring and evaluation (section 7.1), I will discuss two case studies: the UK-based art-activist collective Precarious Workers Brigade, with a focus on their most recent tool, the guide *Training for exploitation?* (7.2), and the 2016 exhibition *Black Blossoms* at the University of the Arts London (7.3). Both initiatives have very clear objectives for social change, but aim to achieve them by different means. The Precarious Workers Brigade offers tools and guides for artists, cultural workers and educators to help themselves, and others, decrease their precarity – working in a way that resembles the transdisciplinarity

proposed in this thesis. *Black Blossoms* provides visibility for Black women[169] artists through exhibitions and events, which aims to help the artists in their careers. These two examples were selected to illustrate a broad approach to applying the transdisciplinary model in practice, together with suggestions for 'empirical' data collection and impact evaluation. I have come across the two case studies during my research, and I consider them, each in their own ways, exceptional in their aims for positive social change.[170]

7.1 A transdisciplinary approach to measuring social impact

Throughout my research, I have come to understand that a (greater) focus on impact within 'feminist art' can support more careful consideration of 'feminist art's' (re)production of social inequality and improve our skills for dealing with this 'uncanny' problem. The proposed 'parameters' of the proposed transdisciplinary approach are the result of reviewing literature, artworks, online news and magazine articles that contextualised current debate about art, social change and/or economics. From a social research perspective, these parameters can form the *theory* informing the design of transdisciplinary 'feminist art' interventions, giving an indication of what might 'work', and (by exclusion) what might not. This approach can also help determine 'a priori questions' or hypotheses to be tested (Gray, 2014, p. 128), enhancing our understanding of what insight we would like to derive from primary or empirical research in the arts. In this section, first the 'theoretical' transdisciplinary conditions are discussed (7.1.1), after which I will further contextualise the empirical research proposed by my transdisciplinary theory (7.1.2).

7.1.1 'Theoretical' parameters of the proposed 'feminist art' transdisciplinarity

The parameters of the proposed transdisciplinarity can function as guidelines or a check list for researchers, practitioners and activists who are committed to creating positive social change, increasing the likelihood of their research/practice/activism contributing to positive social change. The parameters can also be used as a framework to analyse 'transdisciplinary' research/practice/activism, as will be done later in this chapter. In my

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[169] In the information on *Black Blossoms* I accessed, both 'Black' and 'women' are sometimes capitalised and sometimes not. In my discussion of *Black Blossoms*, I capitalise Black, referring to Black as a set of politics.

[170] The Precarious Workers Brigade showcases a consistent and up-to-date socio-political and economic approach; *Black Blossoms* represents the development of agency of Black women artists.

research, I concluded that the following four actions are important for researchers, practitioners and activists when working towards positive social change:

1. To clarify key theoretical, socio-political and economic positions

Producing knowledge whilst avoiding reproducing the historically hierarchal structures needs *transparency* with regards to researchers' positions. This transparency concerns theoretical and discursive argumentation, as well as researchers' socio-political and economic contexts – following feminist standpoint theory and feminist art theory, described in this thesis, which aim to reduce discrimination, sexism and racism in research. When researchers, practitioners and activists communicate their key theoretical, socio-political and economic perspectives and positions, they make it easy for their spectators, audiences and/or readers to understand for whom, with what (political) interest and with what money the research/practice/activism activity in question has taken place. Such transparency contributes to removing power hierarchies that are built through implicit or hidden knowledge, and transfers valuable knowledge that readers then themselves can apply.

2. To apply an intersectional gender perspective and visibly acknowledge the production of categories through art, activism and research

Feminist and socio-political literature argues that categories of identities, including their value, are constructed *through* means of art, activism and research. It is not so clear how, when, and perhaps even whether we can change our perception of other people. Gender, race, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, ability, age et cetera produce innumerable variables of one identity value, which means that no identity value is universal – even if presented as such. Identity categorisation is necessary, but is inherently fiction too – and it is important to communicate this to audiences. Such a 'double' truth is more easily communicated in *practice* (cf. Squires, p. 133) than in theory. Therefore, an applied 'intersectional gender perspective' is not always immediately visible from the outside, and should be sought in the 'real' practice of the applied art, activism and research. As I have argued before, 'feminist art' research, practice and activism have a great potential to communicate intersectionality, and, when doing so, can become a *representation of intersectionality*.

3. To analyse art theoretical, socio-political and economic art structures (use feminist critical analysis), including *measuring* the impact of feminist art

One of the greatest pitfalls of art critical analyses is overlooking the relationship between definitions of 'art' and the economic *signifying* structures in which they are constructed.

For example, 'feminist art' has many different meanings, and not all 'feminist art' may positively contribute to social equality in the arts. A feminist art critical analysis consists of applying an intersectional gender perspective to communicating one's findings (see above), as well as answering for whom, with what purpose and in what economic context artworks are made. Such art critical evaluations are often highly subjective and may continue to produce *stereotypically negative* values of the works of marginalised artists, therefore a more 'objective' impact evaluation may help produce a more rounded picture of feminist art, providing a more effective counter-narrative of art history.

4. To facilitate and/or occupy multiple research, practice and activism spaces
'Feminist art' (consisting of research, practice and activism) has traditionally been constrained by financial means and under-recognition. There are no quick solutions for equal validation of marginalised artists, and this thesis argues that decreasing feminist artists' dependence on *one* field is the most sustainable and viable solution. Feminist art practice and theory should draw on funds and recognition from multiple directions, and create collaborations across different disciplines and between research, practice and activism. By applying diverse economic structures, the relationship between dominant definitions of art and their economic structures can be troubled. It has proven difficult for artists, art researchers and art-activists to overthrow 'neoliberal' influence on the arts, as well as to leave those exploitative structures completely. This thesis argues that 'feminist art' actors should subvert one-dimensional art meaning making by visibly working in a multiplicity of spaces (with diverse economies) and explain openly why this is important.

7.1.2 'Empirical' impact monitoring and evaluation in the arts

Empirical or primary research in the arts can be part of several academic disciplines. In the previous chapter, I have cited examples of primary research within economic approaches (Velthuis, 2005; Throsby and Zednik, 2014). An economic approach to art includes the analysis of art production, distribution, consumption, trade, cultural heritage and cultural policy issues, which is expanding economics into the anthropological field of studies (Ginsburgh and Throsby, 2014b, pp. 1-12). A primary research approach in the arts is inevitably an interdisciplinary research approach, often intersecting with the *practice* of arts or policymaking. Beside economics and anthropology, empirical research of the arts can be found in sociology, education, museum studies, and media studies; and is well suited within arts-based, action and/or participatory research approaches. However, empirical research is to a much lesser degree found in the discipline of Art History. This is, for example, illustrated by the edited volume *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession,*

archive, encounter (Holly and Smith, 2009), which suggests a full range of research methods, but, in fact, deals with art historians' subjective, self-reflexive practices. In contrast, there are plenty of research handbooks to be found in media and communication studies that cover visual analytical empirical methods (e.g., Hansen and Machin, 2013; Berger, 2016) – which can perhaps be adapted for developing new art historical approaches.

Whilst the use of quantitative and qualitative[171] data in or about the arts is growing, including dissemination through academic books and journals (e.g., the journal *Empirical Studies of the Arts*), the question of research relevance continues to be important. Not all knowledge that we can retrieve about the arts through primary research may be particularly interesting or relevant from a social change point of view (though, of course, not everyone will agree). In the category of empirical data that support socio-political objectives, one can first and foremost find empirical approaches that document gender inequality and lack of diversity in the arts, of which several initiatives have been mentioned in the introduction (e.g., Robinson, 2002; The East London Fawcett Group, 2013; Reilly, 2015; Guerrilla Girls, 2016; Bonham-Carter, 2017). Empirical data to showcase there is (still) social inequality in arts settings is important, especially because sometimes assumptions about the lack of diversity may *not* be supported by empirical data.[172] Previously in this thesis, I have questioned the *meaning* of unequal numbers of women and men artists in selected art settings. The recent article 'Is gender in the eye of the beholder? Identifying cultural attitudes with art auction prices' (Adams *et al.*, 2017) signifies a very important development, not only by demonstrating feminist art historical awareness within an economic approach, which very few economic approaches do, but also by using a *combination* of quantitative research methods[173] to demonstrate gender

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[171] In social sciences, quantitative research is distinguished from qualitative research through the use of numerical data typically collected through closed-ended questionnaires, structured observations and experiments, which are often used to draw conclusions about trends, patterns, relationships and, more rarely, causality. Qualitative research entails the collection of subjective perceptions, narratives or interpretations, often through interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, diaries, participant and non-participant observation. Art research (though often 'empirical' through the first-hand encounter with documents and art objects) may, therefore, not be considered 'qualitative' research by social scientists. Leavy writes that she 'consider[s] arts-based research [applying mixed-mode methods] to constitute a new methodological genre within the ever-evolving qualitative paradigm' (2009, p. 4).

[172] Using a 15,000-entry database with artists participating in perennial exhibitions, Christian Morgner (2015), for example, found that international biennales *do* support global cultural diversity, instead of favouring artists from only particular regions.

[173] The authors of the article analysed a sample of 1.5 million auction transactions between 1970 and 2013 in 45 countries for 62,442 individual artists, and conducted two experiments. In the first experiment, participants (880 in total) were asked 'how much they liked the painting on a scale of 1-10 after they guessed the gender of the artist' (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 6). In the second experiment, the authors 'randomly associated fake male and female artists' names with images of paintings and asked participants [1,823 in total] how much they liked the painting' (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 6).

inequality in the art market and a bias against women artists. The two experiments conducted provide 'suggestive evidence that participants who are more likely to represent typical art auction participants may value art by women less' (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 27), which gives an evidence-based context to the enormous difference between the average auction prices of art works by men and women artists[174] and enough reason to argue that culture, not biology, impacts the economic position of women.

In this thesis, I have looked at whether artworks themselves could influence those cultural and societal gender values that hold back women artists. For this reason, a second strand of empirical research that is interesting for measuring art's socio-political objectives is the social impact evaluation of the arts that can be found, for instance, in cultural policy (e.g., Cartiere, 2012)[175] or educational settings (e.g., Education Endowment Foundation, 2017).[176] There is criticism of the evidence for impact of arts,[177] which may be similar to other policy areas that apply data-driven evaluation approaches (Galloway, 2009, p. 127). For example, control or counterfactual groups, necessary for strengthening the evidence of impact (Gray, 2014, p. 29), are rarely used in the arts, which means that most of the evidence of impact presented is likely to be based on perception and, therefore, biased. From an empirical studies point of view, impact evaluation of the arts is challenged by the lack of 'generalizability' to the wider population, 'explanatory failings' (overclaiming or failing to explain effects) and 'complexity' (both overclaiming and oversimplifying the causality between arts and impact) (Galloway, 2009, pp. 129-130). In response to this critique, however, it is argued that the applied research methods in arts impact evaluation insufficiently take the *specific* characteristics of arts interventions into account (e.g., Galloway, 2009; Belfiore and Bennett, 2010). Galloway argues that a 'theory-based evaluation' would be more appropriate, paying more attention to the individual, the artwork and the context or environment (2009, pp. 131-132).

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[174] The authors (Adams *et al.*, 2017, p. 13) state: 'Relative to the average price of male art, the discount for women's art is 47.6%. Not surprisingly, mean auction prices are heavily affected by a handful of transactions of "superstar artists" that are not representative of the general market. When we exclude transactions above 1 million dollars (which we label as mega-transactions), the discount drops to 28.8%. If we look at median prices, we obtain a similar discount (25.28%)'.

[175] Cartiere, C. (2012) 'Charting public art – a quantitative and qualitative approach to understanding sustainable social influences of art in the public realm', *Art & the Public Sphere*, 2(1+2+3), pp. 9-16.

[176] The Education Endowment Foundation and the Royal Society of the Arts are currently funding five randomised controlled trials to test the impact of arts activities on students' academic attainment, with a focus on reducing the attainment gap for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[177] Galloway refers to the following literature: Coalter, F. (2001). *Realising the potential of cultural services: The case for the arts* (Research Briefing 12.43). London: Local Government Association; Belfiore, E. (2002). *Art as a means towards alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? – A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.* International Journal of Cultural Policy, 8(1), 91-106; Shaw, P. (1999). *The arts and neighbourhood renewal: A literature review to inform the work of the Policy Action Team 10.* London: DCMS.

The use of the proposed transdisciplinarity is also quite specific, aiming to support 'feminist art' researchers, practitioners and activists to create positive social changes, as well as producing 'feminist art' value in multiple signifying fields. The parameters discussed in the previous section could be seen as a check list for determining the artworks' 'usefulness' for contributing to social change, provided, of course, this is in line with the objectives of the artworks themselves (see Leavy, 2011, pp. 125-126). While it would not make sense to apply the theoretical transdisciplinary parameters to *all* feminist artworks, impact evaluation can be useful for all art that has a social objective. In section 7.2, I will apply the transdisciplinary parameters to the case study of the Precarious Workers Brigade, their strategies being aligned with the proposed transdisciplinarity. For the *Black Blossoms* exhibition (section 7.3), I will give a more general contextualisation from which objectives and suggestions for empirical evaluation can be derived.[178]

Considering the challenges in arts impact evaluation, which can be summarised as limited time, resources and skills,[179] it is important, within the proposed transdisciplinarity, to become aware of the diverse positive and negative contextual outcomes and how they can inform the improvement of 'feminist art' tools. If 'feminist art' practice were to be seen as a continuous programme of interventions, it may be beneficial to start using frameworks that not only measure the end results (*impact evaluation)*, but also measure progress towards the goals set (*monitoring* or *process evaluation*). Monitoring and evaluation are both characterised by a systematic approach, but the former is 'primarily used to support management and accountability processes' (Markiewicz and Patrick, 2016, p. 12), whilst the latter is more summative, and focuses on determining whether objectives are achieved (Markiewicz and Patrick, 2016, p. 12). Adopting a monitoring *and* evaluation approach within the proposed transdisciplinary 'feminist art' supports the goal of improved continuous learning and development promoted by this thesis. In the future, monitoring and evaluation may even become an integral[180] part of some 'transdisciplinary' feminist artworks, enhancing their impact and impact evaluation methods.

The two case studies discussed below have been chosen for the versatile possibilities they offer in terms of evaluation. The discussion that follows is my own analysis and deductions of how the artists, researchers or activists involved could approach impact evaluation, and

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[178] *Black Blossoms* may be the result of transdisciplinary approaches too. However, information in the public domain about their theoretical, socio-political and economic positioning is limited.
[179] Jensen, E. (2017) 'Introduction to principles of quantitative analysis'. *Very Gentle Introduction to Quantitative Evaluation*, London, 5 September.
[180] Anne Markiewicz and Ian Patrick write that '[a]ll too frequently, monitoring and evaluation appear as an add-on or as a discretionary activity' (2016, p. 6).

likely includes methods that have been used in internal analyses by the two teams. (No impact evaluation of the two case studies exists in the public domain at the time of writing.) Several suggestions for possible data collection methods[181] are presented, which could be selected and adapted depending on the specific aims of the evaluation, bearing in mind pragmatic constraints such as the willingness of the public to engage with such methods, the amount of time they may have available, and the critical trade-off between the effort expended (both by the team and the participants) and the insight likely to be gained.

7.2 Precarious Workers Brigade

Emerged from the Carrotworkers' Collective in 2010, the Precarious Workers Brigade (PWB)[182] offers tools that aim to diminish the precarity and exploitation of people working in culture, arts and/or education by fighting precariousness, raising consciousness and changing attitudes.[183] The forms of PWB's tools are very diverse,[184] and include guidance (available online), workshops, letter templates, a People's Tribunal on Precarity (2011, ICA), actions, protests,[185] articles and talks. These activities neither represent traditional 'art objects' nor are exhibited as such.[186] However, even though the PWB does not actively seek an arts exhibition context, their activities are situated in arts and arts educational settings, often building on the professional backgrounds of the members.[187] The PWB is easily analysed through the proposed 'transdisciplinary' lens because the collective has a clear objective of contributing to social equality, applies 'transdisciplinary' combinations of research, practice and activism, and works both inside and outside the arts. In this section, I will first apply the 'theoretical' transdisciplinary parameters to PWB's activities (7.2.1), after which I discuss possible approaches to more 'quantitative' monitoring and evaluation (7.2.2).

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[181] Numerous research methods textbooks are available which can be used to better understand arts audiences and impact. Helpful overviews include Gray (2014), Matthews and Ross (2010), Bryman (2016), Pajo (2017), Dawson (2009) and Markiewicz and Patrick (2016).
[182] https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/
[183] See: Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade (2015, pp. 172–173).
[184] An overview of the PWB's tools can be found on their website:
https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/Toolbox
[185] In 2015, for example, the PWB joined protests for better payment of cleaners at the Barbican Centre in London.
[186] The PWB states: 'We receive many invitations to take part in exhibitions where our work might appear like an artwork. We generally turn down these invitations, however, and have developed an open working code of ethics that allows us to make these decisions and keep us focused' (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 173).
[187] The PWB writes that many individual members have a background in the visual arts (2017, p. 15).

7.2.1 A 'theoretical' transdisciplinary evaluation of the PWB

PWB's guide *Training for exploitation? Politicising employability & reclaiming education*[188] can be seen as an accumulation of knowledge, techniques, strategies and approaches,[189] *representing* (partially) their research, activism and practice over the past years. Research is a visible part of the guide, which informs readers on historical and political contexts and recommend relevant literature. The PWB's practice consists of education, organisational management and art, the latter including the 'transgressive' artistic strategies of the Brigade's individual members.

PWB's target audiences are creative professionals, art and design educators and students, with a focus on those who are in precarious positions through self-employment, underpaid or unpaid roles, internships or work placements. The collective's *legal form* for generating income, re-granting income and paying workers is not described explicitly. They may resemble a 'co-operative'[190] – a democratic organisational form that they themselves promote explicitly, and possibly do not favour to the more 'hierarchical' forms of charities or NGOs.[191] There are no strategic plans or annual reports accessible through the website, but a large amount of information is available to facilitate 'theoretical' analyses. I have applied the four 'transdisciplinary parameters' to this available information, which is discussed below, following the sub-heading order used in section 7.1.1.

Clarifying key theoretical, socio-political and economic positions
Compared to many activist collectives *and* charitable organisations, the PWB is very transparent about their theoretical, socio-political and economic positioning. Large amounts of relevant information can be found on the website, and *Training for exploitation?* starts with an elaborate introductory contextualisation (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, pp. 4-18). In this respect, PWB's positioning is more transparent than, for example, another recently published activist guide, entitled the

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[188] Downloadable for free: http://joaap.org/press/trainingforexploitation.htm
[189] This edition is an updated and expanded version of the first Working for Exploitation? guide, published in May 2012 (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, p. 96).
[190] Stanford (2015, p. 388): 'Cooperatives have a long and important history as a "do-it-yourself" form of socialized ownership and governance... they are governed on the basis of democratic voting by members.'
[191] Having worked for LGBTI NGOs and collaborated with more generic human rights charities, my opinion is that charities, though more 'hierarchical' than co-operative forms, often facilitate relatively simple structures of decision-making (including certain degrees of democracy and outsider voices), which can speed up fundraising, forging strategic collaborations with high-level stakeholders and reaching concrete objectives (including legislation reforms or national policy change). The PWB is critical of the term 'collaboration', because such a notion can obscure the nature of relationships and can entail an unwanted cooperation with regimes of power (Livergant and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2017).

Framing Equality Toolkit (Blackmore and Sanderson, 2017), which aims to help European LGBTI activists improve their strategic communications and, subsequently, their precarious social, legal and/or financial situations. The PWB has published an ethics code,[192] which offers important insights into their decision-making processes, including a tool called the *Free Labour Info Box*. This info-box is applied to *Training for exploitation?* too, and it can be inferred that the guide may be the result of authors' free time donation.[193] Whether the free time involved relates or stands outside the mass self-exploitation of artists (discussed in the previous chapter), which the guide itself aims to fight against, would require further research, potentially also on the individual level of contributors.[194] Within the transdisciplinary approach, free labour is not recommended, but payment does not have to be realised in one field only. If the contributors have income elsewhere which enables them to donate time for PWB's activities, they are not necessarily 'exploited' or exploiting themselves. The most important thing is that the PWB does offer transparency, enabling readers to understand for whom the guide was written, with what political interests and in which economic context. Such a transparent socio-political and economic positioning transfers knowledge that would otherwise remain 'hidden', and contributes to diminishing power hierarchical structures constituted by implicit information.

Applying an intersectional gender perspective and visibly acknowledging the production of categories through art, activism and research

The PWB positions itself in a tradition of workers' emancipation, which can be seen as a form of 'identity politics',[195] suggesting a communal experience of professional precarity, which seem to cut through differences of class. As far as I can tell, the PWB does not seem to have created activities for groups that share one specific gender, racial or sexual identity. The PWB does, however, mention that class, gender, ethnicity and other

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[192] PWB's ethics code reads as combination of mission, vision, programme theory, policy and communication plan. See: https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/ethicscode
[193] In comparison, the *Framing Equality Toolkit* has been facilitated and financed by ILGA-Europe (European LGBTI organisation) and the Public Interest Research Centre, and there is no information about the amount of 'free labour' that has been involved. Maybe no voluntary time was involved, or to a much lesser degree, as ILGA-Europe employs and contracts workers to deliver projects they attract funding for. Because of payment, the contributors to the guide may be less 'exploited', but, though aiming to improve the precarious situation of a vulnerable group (LGBTI people), no tools or knowledge are offered for diminishing activists' precarity. To a certain degree, the finances of ILGA-Europe are more transparent than those of the PWB, because, being an NGO with statutory obligations, their financial accounts are made public annually. Nevertheless, information about the financial structure of the guide directly communicated to its readers could have transferred knowledge that would otherwise most likely stay implicit to its readers.
[194] Do individual members, for example, use their involvement in the guide to elevate their 'symbolic' value as artists within art institutional settings?
[195] Fraser (1990, p. 67) mentions workers as one of the subordinated social groups: '…members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics'.

characteristics should be taken into account when looking at art workers' positions (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, pp. 10, 11, 12). The PWB criticises the celebration of 'masculinist' behaviour in employability training (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, p. 9), which demonstrates a critical gender perspective. Acknowledgement of different impact on different people will speak to a *diversity* of readers. However, when discussing their targeted audiences (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, p. 7), the PWB does not differentiate readers' backgrounds, experiences, and needs for solutions. Not communicating the specific needs that extra precarious positions may require may have the advantage that identity categories are not (re)produced; differences have been 'bracketed' (a term used by Fraser, 1990, p. 64), which, from the outside, promotes the equal value of all workers. However, as argued in Chapter Five, such a 'bracketed' approach may, in reality, not enhance diversity. Addressing a general 'public' from an anonymous position[196] can limit reaching diverse audiences, as groups may not recognise themselves or may not think the guide is of immediate relevance to them.

There is not enough information in the public domain to conclude to what degree the PWB is diverse or 'inclusive', or to what extent it enhances diversity and inclusiveness. There are no diversity or equality guidelines mentioned in the ethics code, and nothing that could resemble 'norms of inclusivity' (Weldon, 2006, p. 59). The PWB does, however, recognise, and aims to act upon, *financial disparity* between members through payments on a sliding scale, taking into account that one person may depend more on the income generated from a specific project than another.[197] PWB's 'real' intersectionality will stay unclear until it has been documented in practice. If PWB's activities were to empirically demonstrate impact in terms of diversity and inclusion, their activities could be called 'representations of intersectionality'.

Analysing art theoretical, socio-political and economic art structures (using feminist critical analysis), including measuring the impact of feminist art
The PWB is a very good example of analysing the structures in which one works, and they do so from a feminist analysis perspective (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 174; Livergant and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2017). The introduction to *Training for exploitation?* (pp. 4-18) provides insight into PWB's theoretical, socio-political and economic structures reasoning. Several of their socio-political and economic standpoints are translated into practical actions in their Ethics

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[196] The PWB works as a collective, and the authors of the guide are, for example, unknown. Visibly diverse members could attract a more diverse audience as well.
[197] See PWB's ethics code: https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/ethicscode

Code.[198] For the PWB, personal and individual decision-making in the *here and now* is important for solving the macro-political social problems in the future (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 176; Livergant and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2017). Such a micro-political approach is probably the reason why PWB's clear aversion to neoliberalism (e.g., Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, p. 8)[199] does not entail a boycott of 'neoliberal' structures, but instead offers tools for resistance from within.

The PWB does not seem to take into account that their tools can potentially have negative impact too, and no monitoring or evaluation reports can be found in the public domain. The road from precarity to stable incomes may not be so clear, which is acknowledged, for example, in the discussion of 'vocations': on the one hand, vocations help workers to get away from a neoliberal employability agenda, but, on the other hand, can also generate precariousness (2017, pp. 3, 15-16). The art workers' passion and flexibility make them escape societal limiting norms, but also make them very vulnerable. In the worst case, their resilience as labourers contributes to exploitative mechanisms (cf. Sholette, 2011, 2015), of which the PWB shows full awareness (2017, p. 15). There is no quick fix for the precarity of art workers, except perhaps for not being art workers anymore. For this reason, PWB states elsewhere that they are fighting for 'precarity on [their] terms – not the governments', not the corporations', not the markets'' (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 174). Potentially, improvement in terms of loss of precarity may not be immediately visible in better financial conditions of artists' lives.

Facilitate and/or occupy multiple research, practice and activism spaces
PWB clearly facilitates and occupies multiple research, practice and activism spaces, including workshops, discussions and exercises in classrooms (education practice), traditional forms of activism[200] (e.g., unionisation and protest) and creating new alternative economic spaces altogether. *Training for exploitation?* offers a list of possible methodologies that search for the intersections of activism, practice and research (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, pp. 22–26) and offers a wealth of resources. Interestingly, the design of the guide directly facilitated an art-activist practice that the PWB promotes. The guide was collaboratively designed by Evening Class, a 'self-

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[198] Examples include PWB's intended solidarity with other groups, using a sliding scale for members' payments and returning fees to the collective, and clear guidance to members on when to accept invitations for contributing to events.
[199] PWB analyses 'neoliberal subjects' as 'rational self-interested beings (*homo economicus*)' (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, p. 8), but, within in economy theory, pure rational, self-interested human behaviour is considered a myth (as discussed in Chapter Six).
[200] For instance, collaborating with the Latin American Workers Association (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 171).

organised design education experiment, consisting of 19 participants from various cultural and educational backgrounds' (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, p. 96), which, as the guide describes, was no smooth process (Precarious Workers Brigade and Federici, 2017, pp. 88-89). By including a description of the design process the PWB shows that collaborations are necessary, but not being necessarily easy, require commitment. PWB's activities come into existence through the application of different economic structures (not-for-profit, commercial, self-funded, publicly funded). It is easy to imagine that the guide *Training for exploitation?* could obtain an additional symbolic, economic art value by being 'exhibited', printed and distributed by a mainstream art institution. Adopting and promoting different 'art values' in different economic settings, the PWB could contribute to the differentiation of art canons – if they would be interested in this. Though PWB currently turns down most invitations for exhibitions in which the work is presented as 'art' (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 173), there may be (other) exhibition circumstances and conditions that would be beneficial to PWB's objectives and aligned with their code of ethics.

7.2.2 Suggestions for 'empirical' monitoring and evaluation

The above 'theoretical' analysis demonstrates that the PWB can contribute to social equality through their transparent positioning, ethics code, acknowledgement of intersectionality and combined application of research, practice and activism. Additional 'evidence' could facilitate ongoing learning and development, not only for their audiences, but also, perhaps, for the collective themselves. PWB's main *implicit* objective appears to be that of helping precarious workers help themselves,[201] and PWB's tools and guides are expected to have a positive influence on users' and readers' attitude, behaviour or learning. Therefore, any means of eliciting information about such outcomes, whether declared or objective, would be very beneficial. Additionally, it would be useful to know users' professional situation (work, studies, employment, internships), their background (gender, race, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, et cetera) and their financial situation. Thirdly, information could be gathered about their satisfaction with the tools, and any perceived ways in which the tools could be improved to better address the needs of PWB audiences. Several suggestions for data collection are described briefly below.

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[201] The PWB states: 'Rather than trying to "organise" others, we try to encourage people to join with us and to organise themselves' (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade, 2015, p. 172).

Targeted surveys

There is currently no information required to download *Training for exploitation?* through the website of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*. However, the online distribution of the guide represents a good opportunity to retrieve information about the users of the guide, which could help better understand the needs of the PWB public, the extent to which these needs are met and some of the impact that PWB's tools have on various social groups. Users downloading the guide can be asked, in return for receiving the guide (currently available for free), to answer brief questions in line with principles of informed consent and data protection legislation. An additional possibility is requesting guide downloaders who are willing to share a contact email address to participate in a second online survey in several months' time, when they are likely to have read and/or used the guide. The two questionnaires could obtain information about the users' background, intended versus actual (reported) use of the guide, knowledge gained, any resulting actions that may be linked directly to accessing the guide, suggestions for improvement and any other topics of interest. Clear communication of the survey aims, guarantees of confidentiality or anonymity and keeping the questions brief, clear and easy to answer would help convince users to participate.

Open surveys

An open, anonymous online survey can generate valuable information about the use of PWB's tools, their target audience and the types of audiences who are familiar with their programmes. The PWB has probably grown an enormous network over the years, and has access to a very large pool of artists, creative workers and educators through individual members' networks and social media. Respondents can be asked whether they are familiar with PWB's tools, whether they have used them (and, if so, for what purposes and in what settings) and what their experiences were. Information about the users' backgrounds can give insight into PWB's audience, with financial or economic situation being key (given the collective's aim to help eliminate precarity). Additionally, they can be asked about future actions, for example, whether they will recommend the tools to others and/or intend to use them (again).

Focus groups

A selected group of users can be asked to participate in focus groups to elicit information about the users' perceptions PWB's tools, their satisfaction and feedback. Additionally, a group of *potential* users (unfamiliar with PWB's tools yet) can also participate in focus groups in order to understand whether the tools accommodate their wishes and desires, and some of the reasons why they have not found or looked closer into PWB's tools yet.

Workshop impact evaluation

Training for exploitation? gives instructions for numerous workshops, and better understanding their impact in practice can be a valuable continuous development tool. Participants can be asked to fill in brief questionnaires before *and* after the workshop (on paper or online, perhaps by sharing links that can be easily accessed on mobile phones or having tablet computers available on the day for instant data collection). A delayed post-event questionnaire can help track any longitudinal impact, actions and behaviours that may be linked to attending the workshop. Questions could focus on the perceived quality of the workshop/tools, accessibility, novelty of content or approach and (intended) future actions (e.g., Will they use the guide and/or recommend it to others? Will they take any other action as a result of attending the workshop – e.g., donations, further event participation, activism, lobbying). It would also be useful to find out whether participants' 'economic' decision-making has evolved as a result of attending the workshop, helping them become less 'precarious' in the long-run through the knowledge that the PWB shares.

7.3 *Black Blossoms* exhibition

By discussing the 2016 exhibition *Black Blossoms: highlighting the voices of Black women*,[202] I am aiming to suggest a monitoring and evaluation perspective that complements the one provided in the previous section. As the proposed transdisciplinary parameters do not necessarily apply, I will instead offer a general contextualisation of the exhibition (7.3.1), which will inform my suggested approach to monitoring and evaluation (7.3.2). The monitoring and evaluation suggestions could inform future 'transdisciplinary' approaches – leading to researchers, practitioners and activists from different fields working together to explore and continue to strengthen the impact of the initiative.

7.3.1 *Black Blossoms* contextualised

The *Black Blossoms* exhibition took place from July to October 2016 in the UAL Showroom, a public space hosted by the University of Arts London at High Holborn.[203] The space was freely accessible to all visitors during the university's opening hours. The exhibition was part of a larger programme that also included a conference and a free exhibition

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[202] https://blackblossomsexhibition.tumblr.com/
[203] http://events.arts.ac.uk/event/2016/7/11/Black-Blossoms-Exhibition/

catalogue,[204] which contained not only information about the artworks, but also references to key literature and explanations of key concepts related to racism, intersectionality, oppression, identity and equality. The exhibition included a wide range of media, including paintings, drawings, prints, photography, video, and sculpture – representing no particular artistic style, but, instead, the diversity of 'feminist' art.

There is a necessity and urgency in exhibiting Black women artists, as societal racism and sexism create extra barriers for them to be visible and successful as artists. For this reason, the show's curator Bolanle (Bee) Tajudeen (at the time, the education officer for UAL's Students' Union) created the opportunity for eighteen Black women artists (students and former students from the six UAL colleges) to exhibit in the UAL Showroom. The exhibition programme aimed to generate visibility for Black women artists, offering them additional work experience, access to networks, increased confidence and alternative forms of healing.[205] An additional objective may have been changing the public perceptions of Black women artists, though this is not explicitly communicated.[206]

As an example, Yharnna Dior Joseph exhibited a photograph series through the form of a magazine, in which a woman is wearing different colours of facial makeup. The artist explains about her work: 'My photography series communicates the real-life narrative of a woman who used to be ashamed of her skin, feeling lighter skin was superior… eventually… she realised that Black is beautiful' (University of the Arts London and Shades of Noir, 2016, no page). Habiba Nabisubi presented a series of drawings of different hairstyles, which the artist contextualises as follows: '… Black women have been stigmatised and ridiculed for their natural hair. The stereotype of Afro hair being 'unmanageable' and 'unprofessional'… now belies an outdated attitude' (University of the Arts London and Shades of Noir, 2016, no page). Kudzanai-Violet Hwami, a painter describing her work in *Black Blossoms*, writes: 'Having lived in South-Africa, Zimbabwe, and England, displacement and identity [are] a recurring theme in my work. I try to understand my Zimbabwean identity within the African Diaspora' (University of the Arts London and Shades of Noir, 2016, no page). The other artists exhibited in *Black Blossoms* were Azarra Amoy, Cara Brown, Diana Burton, Dionne D Ward, Fiona Jane Walsh, Francesca Cozier, Melodie Holliday, Mikela Henry-Lowe, Molly Ofori-Mensah, Nicole

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[204] The catalogue is still available online at the time of writing:
https://issuu.com/shadesofnoir/docs/blackblossoms
[205] See Shades of Noir (2016b): http://shadesofnoir.org.uk/son-covers-black-blossoms-exhibition-private-view-2016/
[206] The curator of the exhibition was the initiator of the campaign *#UALsowhite*, which addressed the lack of ethnically diverse tutors, lecturers, professors and other staff at the university (Shades of Noir, 2016a). Inclusion of Black women in art educational settings may depend on changes in the perception and behaviour of the predominantly white staff.

Muskett, Portia Emily Baker, Samia Malik, Shani-Louise Osei, Silvia Rosi, and Taiwo Sonekan. One could argue that *Black Blossoms* created necessary, new circumstances in which Black women artists could speak and be heard, facilitating Black women's expression of individual *and* collective experiences.

The exhibition project can be seen as part of the larger diversity programme of the university, which aims to 'narrow differentials in participation, continuation and attainment of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students' (University of the Arts London, no date).[207] In their 2016 *Equality, diversity and inclusion report*, the UAL team write:

> In 2014/15 52% of home students from BAME backgrounds were awarded a 1st or 2:1, compared to 72% of white students. This reflects the UK sector average – 75% of white students on creative art and design courses were awarded a 1st or 2:1 compared to 56% of BAME students. (University of the Arts London, 2016, p. 13)

Like other UK higher education institutions, UAL deals with an attainment gap between students with a BAME background and students with white backgrounds, which the university acknowledges and aims to decrease. There may be several reasons why BAME students experience obstacles in arts education (see also Finnigan and Richards, 2016), and solutions can lie in changes in curriculum design, unconscious bias training of staff and an increase of BAME visibility within the UAL colleges. The exhibition *Black Blossoms* could potentially contribute to helping BAME students, delivering important positive experiences necessary for marginalised artists to overcome obstacles and campaign for an academic experience that better facilitates equal opportunities. Causal relationships between interventions and a decreased attainment gap require, of course, research, and, presumably, internal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are already in place to measure the impact of UAL's diversity and equality events. Improving the academic performance of Black, Asian, minority ethnic students, but also LGBTIQ, disabled and international students requires an intersectional approach – one that is clearly visible in the activities of Shades of Noir, a programme that aims to influence UAL's curriculum and pedagogy,[208] and which has supported the organisation of the *Black Blossoms* exhibition. *Black Blossoms* 2016 was funded by the University of Arts London, the intellectual property legal firm EIP (sponsor of the Showroom, the contemporary art space in London) and Shades of Noir (funder of the exhibition catalogue). The 2016 edition of the exhibition

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[207] http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/diversity/equality-objectives-and-reports/
[208] http://shadesofnoir.org.uk/about-shades-of-noir/

in London has recently been followed-up by exhibitions in Liverpool and Sheffield (Black Blossoms exhibition, no date).[209]

There are several reasons why monitoring and evaluation could be important for an exhibition like *Black Blossoms*. Within the university, knowledge about impact can strengthen its justification, attract additional funding and be used for further equality campaigning, such as increasing the visibility of the cause in social and mass media. Monitoring and evaluation can also provide learning opportunities for the organisers and participants. (Did the programme elements work as intended? What lessons can be learnt for future similar events?) Also, positive impact results and feedback can provide an additional *socio-political meaning*, which then gives participants an increased sense of empowerment and purpose. A subsequent 'transdisciplinary' approach combining 'art' and 'social science' may stimulate diversifying art canons and other art signifying fields. In the next section, I will suggest some possibilities for data collection that could provide additional insights into the impact of the *Black Blossoms* exhibition (which may well have been used in evaluations not available in the public domain).

7.3.2 Suggestions for 'empirical' monitoring and evaluation

Exploring the impact of the *Black Blossoms* exhibition could include a number of themes, chosen according to the programme's intended objectives and the organisers' need for information. An evaluation could, for example, include visitors' perceptions of the show, their intended actions after their visit, their overall satisfaction, the visitors' backgrounds, their typical art consumption behaviour, the exhibitions' media coverage and outreach, and the participants' experiences, learning and career development before and after taking part in the show. Indicative examples of data collection methods are discussed briefly below, which could be selected and adapted in line with the specific questions that the team may want to answer, and their contextual feasibility.

Exit questionnaire
Brief anonymised questionnaires could be offered to visitors after they have seen the exhibition: these could be either on paper or table computers on stands or installed on the wall near the exit/entrance. A banner could draw visitors' attention to the questionnaire and briefly explain the purpose of the exercise. (For example, 'Help us understand our public better') If the exhibition and catalogue are free (as they were for the 2016 event),

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[209] See: https://blackblossomsexhibition.tumblr.com/post/154728836832/were-touring?is_related_post=1

visitors may be inclined to give something back to the organisers, as a sign of gratitude. Survey questions could revolve around whether the show resonates with the visitors' own experience (emotional impact), whether they learnt something new (intellectual impact), their overall satisfaction, visitors' intended actions (recommending the show, researching the artists, taking social action, making donations) and their backgrounds (e.g., gender, race, affiliation, participation in activism and/or Black politics, familiarity with art).

Focus groups or interviews

As part of a larger programme with its own objectives, interviews with selected visitors (including UAL staff and students) could benefit *Black Blossoms*' organisers and participants, the university and, if disseminated, the general public. Such focus groups or interviews could even be conducted both before and after a visit to the exhibition. Questions could revolve around the emotional impact, intellectual impact, intended future actions, and overall satisfaction, or any other topics that would benefit from additional in-depth exploration. Combining this information with the respondents' backgrounds (race, gender, socio-economic status) could be useful for estimating what effect the exhibition has had on Black, white and other ethnic identities among staff and students. It would also be interesting to ask visitors whether they can name any of the artists showcased before and after seeing the show, and linking this awareness to any publicity materials distributed, immediate and long-term impact, or the visitors' own background.

Media coverage analysis

Analysis of media coverage of the event can offer different types of insight, from audience reach to the terminology or registers that are used to describe the event. Information like the number, content, tone and publication outlet of reviews can provide a good sense of how the exhibition has been received, and by whom, along with the number of webpage views, shares and likes on social media. Depending on the specific socio-political objectives of the show (empowering Black women and/or changing the perception of others), the analysis of media coverage can give an indication of the extent to which communication strategies have been successful in achieving these objectives, and what other key factors may have influenced the social reach and impact of the exhibition.

Longitudinal artist survey

As the exhibition's objective was to support Black women artists, the artists showcased could be asked to participate in a long-term survey. They could respond to questions both before and after the exhibition through questionnaires (or focus groups), including follow-up surveys several months after the event. The survey could focus on the personal impact the exhibition has had on the participants (including new contacts, opportunities, income),

their reasons or aims for participating (and to what extent they were achieved) and the responses (praise/criticism) they received. They can also be asked about their artist's journey, their goals, experienced obstacles and opportunities. This survey could be accompanied by a focus group with participants from the same artist pool, but who did not participate in the exhibition, either because they were not selected or because they were unable to participate – who would act as a 'soft' counterfactual or control group. The outcomes of both groups can then be compared to better understand the contribution of the show to any resulting changes that participating artists may have experienced (e.g., emotional, intellectual, social, economic impact). Such evaluation exercises could also produce invaluable information about ways in which the 'political' aspects of exhibition could be expanded and its impact enhanced.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have described in more detail the starting point for developing a methodology of transdisciplinary impact evaluation. The research conducted has resulted in four 'theoretical' parameters which were further discussed and applied to the case study of the Precarious Workers Brigade. The context of arts impact evaluation, which is part of the proposed 'transdisciplinary' theory, was discussed, including some challenges and criticisms of evidence-based approaches in the arts. Having discussed the Precarious Workers Brigade and the *Black Blossoms* exhibition, I have suggested multiple options for empirical research methods, which may inform future data collection for the case studies discussed, or similar exhibitions and initiatives. In the arts, monitoring and evaluation as additional tasks could clearly prove challenging for artists, collectives, researchers or activists whose resources are already limited. Even if agreeing that such insights may be beneficial, not every team will have the time and skills necessary to conduct, analyse and report on the impact of their events, initiatives or art objects. This is one more challenge to which working in transdisciplinary collaborations can offer a relatively easy solution.

The proposed transdisciplinarity entails a shift in art signification from an art theoretical context only to a combined art theoretical, socio-political and economic context. Throughout the thesis, I have shown that such a shift may contribute to a diversification of art criteria, by including artists in socio-politically and economically viable art contexts based on *more diverse* art criteria – as well as communicating those diverse art criteria to audiences. I do not believe that the proposed transdisciplinarity would overhaul the arts system, but it could help distinguish more clearly, and recognise, the socio-political aims of

different artworks, whether within or outside 'the canon'.[210] Not every art researcher, artist or art-activist will be interested in including monitoring and evaluation in art initiatives that aim to redress societal inequality. But, as long as art as a concept continues to facilitate underpayment and the (emotional) exploitation of artists, there will always be art researchers, artists and art-activists fighting against this mechanism and who will want to gather more evidence that their efforts do make a difference in society.

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[210] Working transdisciplinarily in the arts can be seen as *one* of the counter-narratives gradually impacting dominant art-signifying mechanisms that perpetuate sexism and inequality. What social equality in the arts will eventually *look like* – both in terms of artworks and economic structures – cannot be predicted, as we do not yet know the future dominant stakeholders upholding social equality, nor their interests. However, following the line of argumentation set out in this thesis, we can expect a substantial number of those stakeholders to work transdisciplinarily across primary and secondary research approaches.

Conclusion

In the Introduction, a provocative question was hinted at, that is, whether feminist artists, art researchers and curators should stop making, researching, exhibiting, curating and writing about 'art', as their opportunities to increase social equality are very limited. Art institutional worlds, in their theoretical, socio-political and economic *signifying* forms, may always continue to be structurally biased against artists who are not 'male', 'white', 'heterosexual' and 'able-bodied'.

This thesis has shown there are options for feminist researchers, practitioners and activists to continue to engage and work for 'art' and social change. However, the *(re)production of social inequality* within feminism and the arts is an additional complexity which *should* be addressed. There is the unavoidable 'double problem' of gender and art: the (negative) value of 'women' artists, the (positive) value of 'men' artists and the myth of Great Art (made by 'men') are *interlocked*. This mechanism obstructs the diversification of the arts and fails to structurally include 'women' artists (and many 'men' artists) who are not recognised as making 'Great Art'. 'Feminist' strategies that want to address gender inequality do not effectively and consistently trouble the categorisation of art and identities including their positive and negative values. The efforts of feminist art researchers, curators, artists and critics do often not allow for an *increase* in intersectional diversity and equality. The transdisciplinary model for social change proposed in this thesis represents a possible answer to this complexity of inequality (re)production, for the reasons reiterated in the concluding overview below.

Research question and conclusions

The thesis has contextualised the factors that artists committed to social justice may consider when deciding whether to 'stop' being engaged in art or not. The proposal of a transdisciplinary model in which 'feminist art' (research, practice and activism) is prominent is an answer to the question how art can produce positive social change. The Introduction posed the broad research question: How can social equality in the arts be accomplished? One conclusion is that, for the representation of intersectionality, feminist art research can be *reframed*, and then start including objectives from outside the arts against which it can be assessed.

Feminist art research, including feminist Art History, aims to displace dominant aesthetics, acknowledging transgressions of artworks on *conceptual/philosophical/theoretical, socio-political* and *economic* terms. Traditional art research has no problem signifying artworks that transgress the borders of art *as* 'art'. However, incorporating socio-political 'art' into Great Art narratives does not necessarily contribute to gender equality, arguably because conceptual, theoretical and philosophical terms are still predominantly used to define (good) art. Though extremely flexible, such an aesthetic continues to be discriminatory and needs 'displacement' in order to produce social equality. Displacement of dominant aesthetics is, therefore, one of the objectives of 'feminist' art research.

One of the means of successfully displacing dominant aesthetics is increasing audiences' awareness of the socio-political and economic structures that signify art. Spectators' knowledge of the dominant art filtering mechanism can help break the repetitious nature of conservative art interpretations. Feminism discussed in this thesis offers a helpful set of questions to approach art: how, where, for whom, by whom and with what money is the artwork made? However, relatively few feminist art stakeholders are in the position to pose these questions and create an impact on conservative and disciplinary approaches. Secondly, when artworks that have an actual impact on society become visible in discursive and mainstream art spaces, impact assessment is not made part of the aesthetic assessment. On many occasions, artworks that have a measurable, positive impact are not recognised as 'art' or 'good art'. Advocates of using art for positive social change need status, authority and means to influence dominant aesthetic opinions. Strategic collaboration between practice, theory and criticism positions can help us change ('difference' or 'queer') dominant aesthetics – which is a *necessity* for creating positive social change in the arts.

In theory, artists, researchers and critics need a 'view from elsewhere' (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 25) that *communicates* the differencing strategy of the 'new' signifying mechanism that displaces dominant aesthetics and influences the conservative art research paradigm. The 'view from elsewhere' can be read as a metaphor for bridging two diametrically opposed opinions ('feminist' and conservative approaches to 'art'), which some 'feminist' art historians claim *cannot* be bridged. The proposed transdisciplinarity offers an approach that, within and outside theory, aims to establish communication across artworks, interpretations and audiences, overcoming discursive and practical barriers through collaborative, multi-method research designs. Transdisciplinarity is necessary for the effective *communication*, and therefore promotion, of social equality in the arts. Now the need for transdisciplinarity for feminist art is established, it still remains unclear in *which*

transdisciplinary collaborations 'feminist art' would be functional. In other words, who could have an interest to work with feminist artists and researchers?

Answering this question, I have argued that a collaborative, transdisciplinary approach to feminist art (research) can fulfil the need for a *representation of intersectionality* – a need which is found in socio-political research, practice and activist contexts.[211] The *semiotics* of categorisation, found in art and visual culture fields, produce similar stigmatisation, hierarchies and inequalities in social justice theory, practice and activism. 'Feminist art' functioning as the representation of intersectionality can help avoid societal (re)production of inequality. The proposed transdisciplinarity, in which 'feminist art' collaborates with 'socio-political sciences', becomes a *signifying* mechanism that defines 'art' in new ways, displaces dominant aesthetics, and produces social equality. However, in order to develop a working transdisciplinary approach that creates better positions for marginalised artists, the objectives of the applied transdisciplinarity should be established, monitored and evaluated. The impact of feminist artworks (both within and outside the arts) *matters* in this signifying mechanism, therefore empirical evidence of impact is argued to be important.

I have demonstrated in the thesis that today's socio-political and economic structures provide opportunities for creating the meaning of 'feminist' 'art', but often not without *paradoxical* effects. Feminism often contributes to the (re)production of inequality, and does not yet have sufficient *representational* forms to communicate 'intersectionality' – the network of privileges and disadvantages that determine social positions based on gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age and other categories. Simultaneously, 'art' (as a sign) is not inclusive of feminism, and, above all, seems to inevitably create unequal opportunities for artists from diverse backgrounds, partly because of the capitalist, neoliberal structures in which 'art' is signified. Therefore, though 'feminist art', as was argued, can function in the proposed transdisciplinary model and contribute to social change, a third question was whether 'feminist art' (as a sign) could ever produce social equality.

In response to this question, I have argued that transdisciplinary 'feminist art' that contributes to positive social change can function as a *currency* which facilitates the advancement of social equality. Additionally, the research conducted has led to defining four parameters of the proposed transdisciplinarity, namely that stakeholders are encouraged to: (1) clarify their theoretical, socio-political and economic positions; (2)

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[211] In addition, the representation of intersectionality can benefit any discipline or field in which 'women' and minority voices are being marginalised.

apply an intersectional gender perspective and visibly acknowledge the production of categories through art, activism and research; (3) analyse art theoretical, socio-political and economic art structures (using feminist critical analysis), including *measuring* the impact of feminist art; and (4) facilitate and/or occupy multiple research, practice and activism spaces, including *diverse* economic structures. I have used these parameters as the starting point for developing a methodology for the proposed transdisciplinarity, proposing them as guidelines or criteria which can be applied in analyses of transdisciplinary art initiatives that aim to create positive social change.

Having suggested that the parameters indicate the *likelihood* of research/ practice/ activism contributing to positive social change, I further contextualised arts impact monitoring and evaluation, proposing examples of possible empirical research methods for the evaluation of two case studies: the Precarious Workers Brigade and the *Black Blossoms* exhibition. Incorporating monitoring and evaluation frameworks within 'feminist art' can be yet another strand of the proposed transdisciplinary collaborations, in which artists and/or art researchers work together with social scientists. By doing so, the value of 'feminist art' can be realised in multiple signifying fields, while the increased focus on impact monitoring and evaluation of 'feminist art' can help trouble dominant aesthetics.

As acknowledged above, not all art researchers, practitioners and activists committed to social change will want to adopt the proposed transdisciplinarity. Some 'feminist art' actors could apply parts of the proposed transdisciplinarity, which would not necessarily require collaboration. For example, art historians could write about transgressive artworks from their own transgressive point of view as a researcher, practitioner and activist, publishing in diverse media, including academic journals in different fields, non-specialised platforms and/or personal blogs. It is, however, important to address a broader audience than feminist art specialists and to write about artworks situated in diverse economic structures. Art researchers, practitioners and activists may not be able to revolutionise the neoliberal structures of the arts (yet), but criteria for establishing the *significance* of artworks can be diversified by making socio-political and economic structures *count* more. This further diversification of the appreciation of art is a core function of the proposed transdisciplinarity, standing in a tradition of interdisciplinary feminist art research, practice and activism.[212]

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[212] Therefore, 'feminist' Art Historical research does not necessarily have to change in form, but should widen its scope. Activities such as conferences, workshops, reading groups, exhibitions and panels can be *reframed*, and contribute to positive social change within wider, transdisciplinary and activist collaborations.

Another important conclusion is that, from a social justice angle, there is little point to an art economic perspective without an intersectional gender perspective. The power dynamics between dominant and subordinate positions in the arts is perpetuated in art exchanges, regardless of their for-profit, not-for-profit, capitalist or non-capitalist nature. If no attention is paid to the implicit, but predetermined terms of exchange, any dominant myth about 'art' will prevail. Critical economic perspectives of art that speak of artists as if they are a homogenous, neutral group (with equal opportunities) will not dissect the common positive bias towards 'men' artists. An intersectional, feminist approach can help avoid such (re)production of social inequality, though needing strategies of 'de/categorisation' to trouble the production of new (fictional) values that do not represent intersectionality.

I hope to have made a positive contribution to the discussion of 'feminist art' and positive social change. Working with the proposed transdisciplinarity for positive social change will stimulate constant professional development and learning, enlarging the set of tools to make 'feminist art' (research, practice and activism) a more effective means for positive social change within and outside the arts. It is important to acknowledge that what is – now, or in the future – defined as 'feminist art' (contextually and/or temporarily) does not always benefit social equality. In fact, it often does not, and such a predicament should be paid attention to. The proposed transdisciplinarity can, on the one hand, offer recognition to feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists. On the other hand, it supports the further development of transdisciplinary approaches in art research, which can more effectively contribute to positive social change. Nevertheless, there are limitations to my research too, which are discussed in the next section.

Limitations of the research

The proposed transdisciplinarity is a theoretical model, which, though building upon practice, has not yet been 'tested' as such *in* practice. This can be generally thought of as a limitation. It is important to test the model, because the literature used, including the general overviews and interpretations of 'feminist' art histories, is subject to processes of politics, and, above all, is never complete. In all feminist art research, including this thesis, the critical question should be posed as to *which* selection of feminist artworks and literature the conclusions are based upon. As discussed, there are no trends or styles of 'feminist art' through which to recognise and categorise 'feminist art', which leads to the question whether its diversity and multiplicity are sufficiently represented. Arguably, as little generalisation of 'feminist art' as possible should be underpinning conclusions about

feminist art. Nevertheless, in promoting, as well as theorising, the application of feminist art in the proposed transdisciplinarity, I have myself used generalisations that are, arguably, uncertain and incomplete. Due to the (relatively) high number of 'feminist' artists in the world and (relatively) extensive writing about them, there is no way of avoiding generalisation, and building upon other authors' generalising approaches. This predicament is part of any art research, and relates to the politics of canonicity production. It should also always be acknowledged as a limitation.

The absence of 'hard data' evidencing the potential impact of feminist art on social change, possibly related to the incompleteness of feminist art histories (see above), is another limitation of this research. A set of impact metrics or criteria could have helped me select artworks to work from, collecting evidence of impact or researching the availability of data. I have argued that 'feminist art' has the ability to contribute to positive social change, specifically when being part of the proposed transdisciplinarity. However, this is an assumption, which needs testing, as mentioned above. Looking back, I could have searched for more impact evaluation data (if available) or designed the research differently, collecting data on the (lack of) impact of feminist art through different research methods. This would have entailed a change in methodology and scope of the research. It would also have been a different research project altogether – better suited, perhaps, to a different discipline from the one I have started from. Transdisciplinary collaboration would have been a clear solution to this limitation, though, of course, not suited to an independent doctoral project.

The politics of writing about art includes addressing particular artists and leaving others out. The selection of examples I have used in my research is in itself limited, because many more artists could have illustrated my argument. In addition, I could have used (more) artists who are not recognised as such due, in part, to working outside the dominant 'art' signifying mechanism used as a frame of reference in this thesis. One example is the lesser visibility of feminist Internet and new media artists[213] in Art History. Internet and new media artists produce artworks in, or at the intersection of, the *virtual* realm (as briefly mentioned in the Introduction). The use of virtual signifying parameters in art institutional critique showcases a *new* set of art criteria, which are not immediately recognised by feminist art histories. Feminist net art could have contributed to the reasoning of my proposed transdisciplinarity, had space and scope permitted.

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[213] Artists who produce artworks in the virtual realm may not be completely separated from art institutional spaces, including new ones that have been established around net art and new media. Though sexism and the 'double problem' of art and gender can be expected, just as in 'physical' art spaces, the multiple signifying fields of net art, including technology and science, bring about other specific forms of gender discrimination.

As previously argued, this predicament of art history incompleteness cannot be avoided. However, it is important to strive for better strategies to acknowledge the incompleteness of any art historical representation. I have consistently argued that transgressions from art into other signifying fields should be interpreted transdisciplinarily in order to displace dominant aesthetics. Such a proposal includes taking into account artists who are under-represented or invisible (to me),[214] which is not systematically done in this research. There lies an important question whether the feminist artists who are, or can become, visible to art researchers and writers are a generalisable sample of the total population of 'feminist' 'artists'. Are they representative of feminist artists in terms of their strategies, aesthetics and backgrounds? And, what if the most *effective* 'feminist art' is produced outside our – contextual and temporary – art signifying structures?[215] Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to pay significant attention, relatively speaking, to the circumstances in which filtering out of feminist artists takes place, which can be said to contribute to feminist thinking in Art History.

Despite these limitations, however, the research has addressed a clear need, raising questions that have typically been overlooked in discussions of feminist art, and making contributions to knowledge that are briefly summarised below.

Original contributions to knowledge

I believe that my research has made a unique contribution to knowledge on three levels. Firstly, the proposed transdisciplinary model has produced a *rationale* or 'theory of change' for the use of feminist art in the attainment of positive social change. The proposed approach to feminism, art and social impact can be said to be novel in Art History and art practice. I have proposed feminist art (research, practice and activism) as the *representation* of intersectionality, following feminist socio-political literature hardly ever used in (feminist) art historical and theoretical discourse. Verloo's (2013) call for visible strategies of category displacement has not yet been defined as feminist art

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[214] Feminist artists who may be underrepresented in the visible sample of feminist artists are those who work or have worked on *non-capitalist* terms. This group was argued to fall outside the inquiry of this research, which investigated how social change from *within* current art institutional settings could be established. However, research on non-capitalist artists can produce valuable knowledge, and should not be *a priori* excluded from Art History. It remains to be seen, though, how they can be *represented* in existing art theoretical, practical and activist realms that are conditioned by undercurrent capitalist structures.

[215] For this reason, data on artists who stopped with making art or 'left the art world' can produce valuable knowledge, which can be used to trouble traditional art canonicity.

strategies, though it does appear that feminist art is one of the few media that can communicate 'de/categorisation'.

The second contribution is the transdisciplinary approach to 'feminist' Art History, providing a 'holistic' theoretical, socio-political *and* economic approach to the 'double problem' of *gender and art* production through feminist research, practice and activism. The necessary switching between signifying fields has always been part of the 'feminist' tradition in Art History, giving research, practice and activism equal roles. However, I argue that this interdisciplinarity has been too limited, and needs to be further developed in order to make a greater impact. Transdisciplinarity is necessary to truly give research, practice and activism equal roles within strategic collaborations, re-directing the discursive paradoxes into real-life social, political and economic settings and assessing feminist art's contributions to social equality.

Thirdly, my cartoons are novel, by not only illustrating my line of reasoning, but also reflecting my research accountability, which is part of a *feminist* approach. There is a growing number of research outputs that include cartoons and comics, either as part of Comics Studies or interdisciplinary approaches. In research areas such as Law and Health, there is growing scholarship on the use of comics in practice and research. In feminist art research, there has traditionally been limited use of cartoons as communication. The novelty of my cartoons is the attempt to translate the *effects* of the discursive paradoxes and (re)production of social equality into a visual form. The cartoons are outcomes of my literature research, as a researcher positioning myself in response to authors, artists and *their* strategies. Few feminist art researchers and practitioners have used their own cartoons in their research, articles or paper presentations, in order to address the discursive paradoxes that can lead to (re)producing social inequality.

To conclude, this thesis has presented a transdisciplinary, arts-based research approach that few art researchers, practitioners and activists committed to social justice have previously adopted. I have called for a more *strategic* alignment of feminist art research, practice and activism, and proposed a set of four criteria which help contribute to creating social change. I have challenged the assumption under the current research paradigm that all artworks need to 'work' under the *same* aesthetic terms, consisting of art conceptual/theoretical, socio-political and economic conditions. I have acknowledged that, for *signifying* transgressive artworks (producing *meaning* in multiple fields), Art Historical expertise continues to be important. However, the field has an obligation too to provide more complete art histories, facilitating social equality and justice. Transdisciplinarity, as a methodology and representation, is necessary to achieve this aim.

I have *both* challenged *and* promoted the capability of 'feminism' to contribute to positive social change in the arts. Unfortunately, *there is* gatekeeping within feminist arts and art academia. Nevertheless, 'feminism' in all its multiplicity can be said to be the first to address its own (re)production of social inequality. Feminism facilitates internal debate, discussion, disagreement and tension. Feminism cannot be generalised, and can contain oppositional acts of 'feminist' individuals. Feminism continues to empower many individuals, as well as disappoint them. Paradoxically, the inclusion strategies of some lead to the exclusion of others, and this is part of identity politics. It is very important to start recognising and communicating this, challenging the myth of feminist solidarity. This will enhance the opportunity to find working solutions.

I have argued that, as a solution, feminist art research, practice and activism should further explore the need for *both* categorisation *and* de-categorisation in more developed, *transdisciplinary* forms of research, practice and activism. This can help avoid the exclusion of 'women' through the use of the term 'women' (by 'women'). Though such a proposal is not new, very few feminist art researchers and practitioners strive to avoid the (re)production of social inequality within feminism, advisable as this is.

Recommendations for researchers, practitioners and activists

Throughout the thesis, recommendations and suggestions have been made for researchers, practitioners and activists. I have encouraged researchers to more consistently apply a 'feminist mode of analysing', not shying away from asking *for whom*, *for what purpose* and *with what money* artworks and knowledge are produced. Feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists can promote this type of questioning in transdisciplinary, collaborative research forms. Another recommendation is to promote, and exploit, overlaps between researcher, practitioner and activist positions. Stigmatisation, further exclusion and diminished recognition can be reasons for researchers and practitioners not to deploy an explicit 'feminist' or 'queer' approach. However, instead of avoiding identity politics (which will not lead to a solution either), I recommend engaging with it, through transdisciplinary approaches that emphasise the need for 'de/categorisation'.

Learning new research, practical and activist skills, feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists may contribute to the diversification of art signification. New strategic combinations of research, practice and activism can then be developed, and positively influence the degree of impact. Broader alliances of art researchers, artists, activists, social scientists, human rights organisations, charities, art institutions, city councils and governments can support the displacement of dominant aesthetics by producing, and framing, *multiple* art values. More resources are necessary to accomplish the above, and create space for 'additional' research and practice in those fields. However, most importantly, effort towards such a broader framework can help 'feminist art' cause change more effectively.

I have promoted a more *rigorous* approach to the displacement of dominant aesthetics, which places the justification of feminist art in *actual* social impact instead of *the belief* in social impact. There is little evidence on which feminist strategies in the arts work, and how 'feminist' combinations of art theoretical, socio-political and economic structures of art contribute to better positions for marginalised artists. There is huge personal gain in visually and conceptually exploring the meanings of 'feminism' and 'art', contributing to the personal and professional development of 'women' (and 'not-women'). This impact of 'feminist art' should be measured, as well as the effects on society, *the moment this 'feminist art' becomes part of public aesthetic structures.* In my opinion, too many feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists do not pay enough attention to the actual (negative or positive) impact of their application of art structures.

Realising social impact through feminist art transdisciplinarity is coupled with increasing awareness on (re)production of social inequality within feminist art research, practice and activism. Certainly, 'feminist' researchers can enhance their professional careers without addressing the feminist paradoxes created in hegemonic, stratified research structures. Transdisciplinarity is not a necessity for creating a 'feminist' career path, but, arguably, it *is* for social change. My proposal to interpret 'feminist art' differentiation as a transdisciplinary *currency,* exchanging art and non-art values in multiple settings, may be able to help support a larger group of feminist art researchers.

The recommended development of transdisciplinarity within feminist art research can reinvigorate new enthusiasm and professionalism amongst the group of researchers, practitioners and activists who currently do not have access to (enough) resources and recognition. The four parameters of the proposed transdisciplinarity (see above) can be implemented in the development of research projects, contributing to the communication of the *relevance* of feminist art research to socio-political and economic world problems –

which may prove to be helpful in (transdisciplinary) research bids and political alliance building.

As within most social movements, many feminist art researchers certainly produce social change *behind the scenes* or outside the boundaries of their job. The proposed transdisciplinarity is a way of acknowledging this 'activism', incorporating it into an analysis of art signifying structures. Considering the financially precarious situations of many feminist artists and researchers, it is important to create more opportunities across disciplines and sectors, as a response to tendencies of furthering academic specialisation. The following section will make recommendations for further research, after my recommendations for art education, described in the paragraph below.

In art education, more attention is needed to the circumstances in which art can or cannot produce social impact. Assessment of students' art often reveals a predominant focus on art theory, philosophy and visual quality rather than on diverse *combinations* of conceptual, socio-political and economic structures that condition the work and its meaning.[216] Students who are interested in creating social change should be encouraged to work across disciplines, theories and practice. Teaching about human rights, social movements and the (re)production of social inequalities, for example, will benefit art students' development and critical thinking.

There is increasing debate and awareness of societal economic inequality in art educational settings, as well as a willingness to further scrutinise contemporary art economics. The fact that feminist and other identity political movements are part of neoliberal settings reveals an almost insolvable tension. In my opinion, the one-dimensional criticism of 'neoliberalism', however, does not grapple enough with the reasons *why* there is an entanglement between neoliberalism and identity politics. Academic discussions of economic social inequality in the arts seem to be blinded to their own omission of an intersectional approach. Often, neither is an understanding of what neoliberal economic effects mean for different groups of artists furthered, nor is intersectionality represented in the applied methodology (transdisciplinarity) or form. It is advisable, especially in art education, to start telling *complete* stories and reform traditional curricula based on new, transdisciplinary research evidence.

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[216] The conservative approach in art education intersects with or may be part of the 'unconscious bias' of examiners assessing students' artworks, which prevents equal attainment and retention of students from different backgrounds (see, for example, Finnigan and Richards, 2016). Paying more attention to the socio-political and economic structures of art as *signifying* has the potential to bring about real solutions.

New research areas

The proposed transdisciplinarity has opened up several areas of research that need further development within the arts and art academia. Examples discussed in this thesis include feminist art economics, monitoring and evaluation of feminist art impact, feminist art as a socio-political tool outside the arts and feminist art transdisciplinarity.

Longitudinal data on numbers of marginalised artists can give an insight to social inequality in the arts. However, to understand the increase or decrease of marginalised artists participation, *a theory of change* is necessary that frames the findings and can provide an interpretation of the data. Monitoring percentages needs a consistent approach to evaluating the significance of the data, as well as the effectiveness of interventions, where applicable. A theory of change provides such a consistent approach, having theorised what change in the arts should look like. As I argued in this thesis, 'feminist' art researchers and artists usually do not follow a particular theory of change, and, above all, they have different opinions regarding the necessary changes. Starting to think through and implement monitoring and evaluation frameworks in feminist art will stimulate discussions of 'feminist' theories of change. The impact evaluation of feminist art is an exciting new research area, which will generate development, critical thinking and dialogue across a larger group of feminist researchers, practitioners and activists. It may also lead to collaborative working forms between, for example, art researchers, social scientists, artists, galleries, museums and art-activist projects.

An integral part of such collaborations is the use of 'feminist art' in socio-political research, practice and activism to provide the need for the visible displacement of categories. In Chapter Four, I discussed different ways in which feminist art can engage in the four approaches to social change identified by Verloo (2013). Such feminist art engagement with socio-political theory and practice opens up another exciting field of research, in which feminist art theory, arts-based methods and activism meet. Such an approach needs further development, space, resources and collaborations to make this particular 'theory of change' happen, as well as to test it. Some feminist artworks might already function as a tool in research, practice and activist settings, displaying the proposed transdisciplinarity. These artworks are good starting points for further development of collaborative research designs and feminist art impact evaluation. An example could be the collaboration between a feminist art researcher, artist, socio-political scientist and human rights advocate working towards settings for feminist art to represent intersectionality. The human rights advocate facilitates the real-life context; the

artist creates the work; the socio-political scientist and feminist art researcher provide the critical, theoretical framework(s), produce research outputs and monitor the impact.

To create those 'feminist' critical and theoretical perspectives, more research on and dissemination of a feminist economic perspective is necessary – one which takes intersectionality into account. There are diverse economic approaches to art, as well as researchers coming from divers disciplines and research fields. However, there is not much research on art, economics *and* identity politics, which would be the appropriate starting point for the proposed transdisciplinary use of feminist art for social change. Economic approaches to art do not necessarily take gender and race categories into account. Queer-feminist economic perspectives do not focus on arts and culture. The proposed transdisciplinarity offers an opportunity to research those areas in relationship to each other, which would give a more complete and 'holistic' view of art economics. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation of feminist art impact will undeniably contribute to more understanding of art economics, including the opportunities and barriers that socio-economic inequality brings to diverse artists.

In this doctoral thesis, I have theorised the importance of transdisciplinarity in art research, practice and activism. On the one hand, the development of the proposed transdisciplinarity for social change left me less time and space to write about traditionally marginalised artists, as the research focused on developing a general framework that could lead to social change. On the other hand, however, transdisciplinarity brought the research closer to the *core* of 'feminist art': the development of artworks that help shape solidarity in the arts and in society. I have argued that the further development of transdisciplinary approaches to *art and feminism* provides very important advantages to current feminist art research, practice and activism. It is not enough anymore to 'intervene' in art discourse in art journals, academic books, conferences, workshops, art education and exhibitions. Most likely, it has *never* been enough, which many feminist art theorists and practitioners acknowledge.

Feminist art researchers, practitioners and activists who have structurally contributed to positive social change in inter- and transdisciplinary ways deserve recognition, further opportunities and an intersectional, inclusive environment. There is a discursive and practical need for transdisciplinarity, transcending the boundaries of practice, theory and disciplines. There are, however, problems posed by limited time and resources due to the increasing specialisation of academic disciplines. Nonetheless, when feminist research misses the opportunity to create actual change, and fails to take new knowledge into

account, there is an ever-growing need to approach discrimination in the arts and art academia strategically and effectively.

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