



I Sing The Body Electric

An exhibition of new works by

Lili Reynaud-Dewar

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I did ballet as kid and as a teenager. I was in a special school where we studied in the mornings and danced in the afternoons. We never read Walt Whitman. We read Ronsard, Montaigne, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, but not Whitman. Maybe you read Whitman at school if you grow up in America. Maybe you read *I Sing the Body Electric*. Maybe you learn parts of it by heart. Which parts would you be able to recite? Which sentence do you remember? Which version of the poem would be taught at school?

Whitman wrote many versions of *Leaves of Grass*, the book in which the poem *I Sing the Body Electric* appears. He revised it every time a new edition was out, and for the third edition (I think it is the third one...) he added a chapter at the end of that poem. This chapter consists of a list of body parts. These body parts should probably be understood as the parts that form a singular, comprehensive body, but when reading the poem out loud they feel dispersed, fragmented, projected all over the place.

Yesterday, Susanna, who has been working at the gallery for more than a year now, maybe two, asked me if I felt that I have privacy when I show my videos. I answered that I have some privacy when I make them; the locations are empty, I don't need help and I wander around alone, naked, painted, with my camera. When I can, I smoke. I like smoking in empty exhibition spaces. But that wasn't what she wanted to know. As I was describing the routine and the process for making these videos, I tried to remember how many times I'd filmed myself in empty museums, repeated these moves, revised the dance.

Talking about privacy, I recently wrote that one should have many rooms owned by many selves, instead of a room of one's own. I don't think of this as a particularly great thing, but... I want to have flowers in all of these rooms, and I want to spend time looking at them fading. It's a slightly morbid tendency of mine that I feel I can indulge. Because flowers seem to effortlessly talk about the very obvious things I am interested in: life, death, beauty, carpeted floors, hotel corridors, ambivalent privacy, (very) moderated ownership, repetition.

My father was a poet. He published a few books but he preferred to write poems on beer coasters or tissue paper (sopalin) and give them away to people. He found this more democratic than the books, and also more intimate. He would write specifically for one person, like a poem on demand (except he would often initiate the demand). He would usually write these poems at the bar, but wanted people to take them away and hang them on their wall, at home, in their private "thing". I like the idea of the decorative poem, the domestic poem, the private poem, but still quite democratic. My father also wrote lyrics for ballads that were composed and played by one of his friends, an acoustic guitarist. They launched a few LPS and some tapes too. I don't know how my father would have responded to our era of information and exchange and immediacy and lack of privacy. Maybe he'd have a blog and he'd post poems everyday?

Can poetry be taken home just like artworks? Can art really be "private" or privately owned? Does it make any difference if this art represents the female body? Shall artworks seek more privacy? Or less privacy? And what about us? Shall we seek more privacy? And me? Why are there no peonies in this show?

Lili Reynaud-Dewar was born in France in 1975 and currently lives and works in Grenoble, France.

Recent solo exhibitions and projects include *Index*, Stockholm, SE (2014); *New Museum*, New York, USA (2014); *Le Consortium*, Dijon, FR (2013); *Le Magasin*, Grenoble, FR (2012); and *Kunsthalle Basel*, CH (2010).

Her work has also been included in a number of international group exhibitions, including the 56th Venice Biennale (2015); the 12th Lyon Biennial (2013), the Paris Triennial (2012), and the 5th Berlin Biennial (2008), and has been exhibited at institutions such as *Witte de With*, Rotterdam, Netherlands (2014); the *Studio Museum in Harlem*, New York (2013); and *Generali Foundation*, Vienna (2012).

She cofounded the feminist journal *Pétunia* in 2011.

Since 2010 she has held a professorship at HEAD, Geneva, CH.