A Transfictive Tale
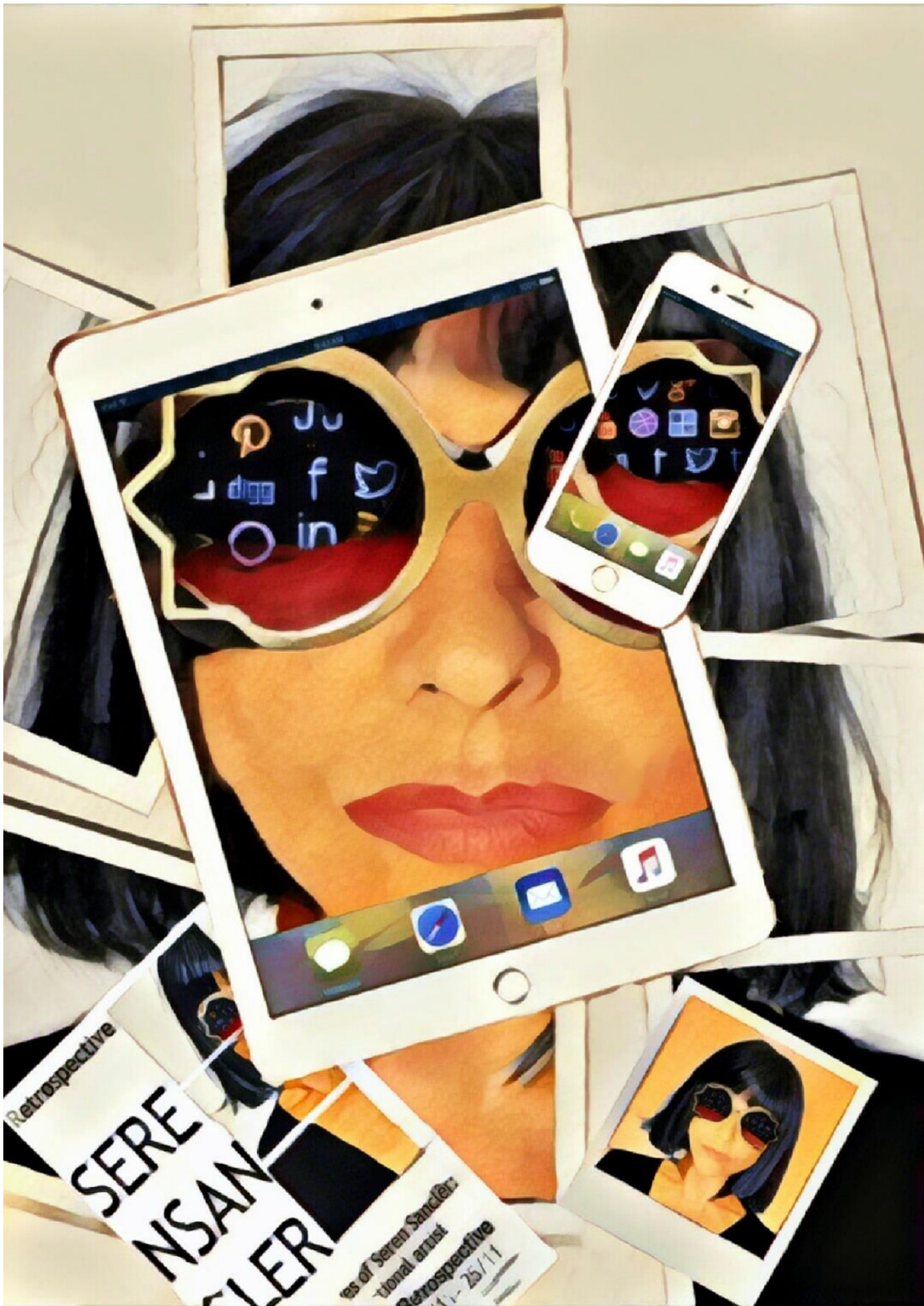
Life of the Artist as a Self-Brand

PhD Thesis 2016

Sara Sylvester

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Abstract

The body serves as a critical site of identity performance particularly when considering the implications of technology on construction of the self. This thesis investigates the growing interest in the development of transfictive artists as art practice and how through the use of multimedia platforms it is possible to create and establish a fictional identity through transmedia storytelling. Each of the fictional artists selected for this research, namely Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr, function to draw the audience into exploring issues of identity, performance, in particular, the artist persona as exemplifying *selfebrity*.

This original contribution to knowledge explores the ideas, concerns and ways of creating a transfictive heteronymic persona in relation to gender politics, the ways in which media convergence is utilised to develop identity, performance and the importance of self-branding. The case studies are discussed in relation to the above issues, demonstrating where appropriate the influence that digital media has had on contemporary art by offering new challenges and opportunities to explore issues of identity construction.

By taking an autoethnography approach to explore identity performance, the research incorporates visual autoethnography to illuminate directly the construction process of crafting a fictive artist, Seren Sanclêr, as a site for the development of new knowledge about transfictive storytelling as a process to develop identity. What this particular thesis intends to examine is why artists are creating fictive artists and how this specific art practice reflects and informs the culture from which it emerges.

Keywords

Alter Ego, Fictive Art, Gender, Hypereality, Identity, Performance, Digital, Technology, Photography, Selfies, Self-Branding, Social Media, Superfictions, Transmedia, Parafiction, Transmediated Self, Visual Art, Femininity-as-image, Feminist art, Post-feminism, Digi Feminism, Selfebrity, Micro- Celebrity, Transfictive Heteronym

Acknowledgments

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Introduction
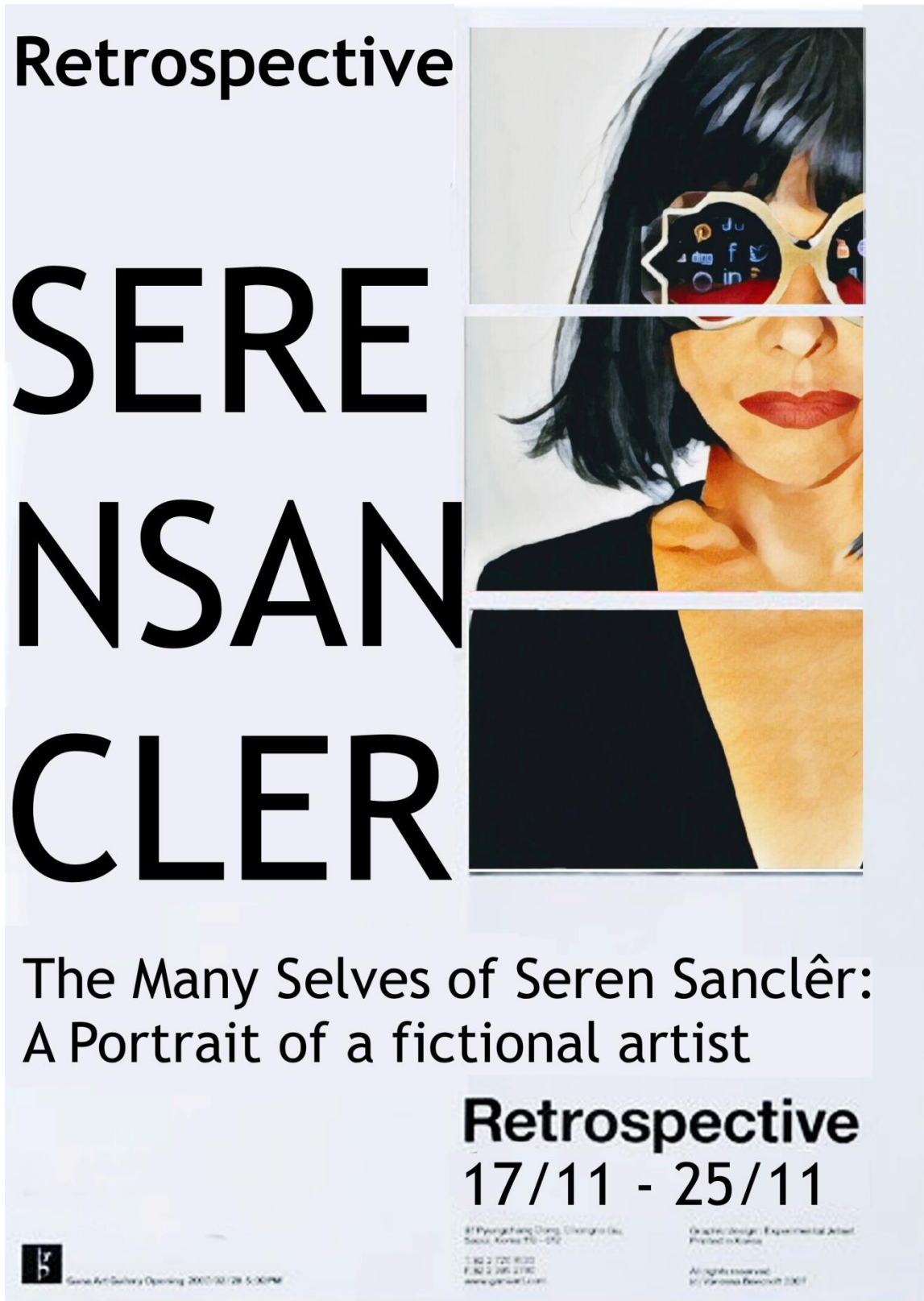
Figure 1.1: Retrospective Show Poster Design (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

1.1. A Transfictive Artist is Born

"Fictive artworks have clearly fictional elements but extend outside the realm of the textual in various ways, principally through the creation of realia. A working definition of the term might be: plausible fictions created through production of real-world objects, events, and entities.'"

(Lafarge, http://fictive.arts.uci.edu/)

"It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself."

(Baudrillard, 2001: 170)

Visual images can now be easily reproduced, manipulated and anchored to create new meanings; their impact and society's insatiable desire to consume; it is not surprising that Walter Benjamin's use of the term phantasmagorias (Cohen, 1989: 87) in relation to commodity culture so aptly reflects the phantasmagorical powers of contemporary digital media. Selfies, fake news and social media self-branding all call into question what is authentic at this time of rapid information exchange and society's desire to present their individual identity to the world in a post truth age. What does the deluge of information and brand messaging across an array of media platforms mean in relation to our concept of reality when the boundaries between fiction and fact can be so easily blurred? In a world where it has become easy to obscure the boundaries between reality and the imaginary a growing number of artists are exploring the multimodal nature of contemporary identity construction in order to unravel questions of self, authenticity and subjectivity.

As a self-taught artist the research undertaken for the PhD study involved examination of artist collections, archives, participant observation and interviews resulting in the creation of a fictive artist constructed across multi-platforms both virtual and real. Through live performance, creation of artefacts such as art works and establishing a presence online via social media sites a fictive persona was constructed according to the aesthetics of transmedia production thus providing an opportunity to explore identity performance.

Beginning with Alan Kirby's (2009) assertion that digimodernism is a dominant cultural force of the twenty-first century it is undeniable that digital technology has had an impact on all forms of art, culture and textuality. Such a theoretical shift is a move away from the established concept of binary opposition to an enmeshed blurring of boundaries between real time and cyberspace which in turn equally reflects the impact of digital technology on identity. In light of scholarly work on the hybridisation of self in relation to the blurring of boundaries between the real and the digital presentation of identity, the implications of what Teresa Senft (2013) has identified as the rise of the "micro celebrity" and J S Elwood's (2014) "transmediated self", provided a strong grounding to explore this particular art practice phenomenon. It is the case that in establishing the questions to be addressed in the study, the limited, existing scholarship in the field of transmedia's relationship to the existence of transfictive artists and specifically digital identity performance as a whole which became central factors shaping the investigation.

For artists a fictional persona, by definition, allows for the creation of a separate identity and the opportunity to explore the story of the fictional artist's intellectual and emotional growth as well as question key issues about the contemporary art world, women's roles as artists and society itself. The fictional subject, is not a new phenomenon, to the contrary it has been widely employed throughout modern art history. This rich tradition of fictional personas in art making allows artists to experiment with identity in and through their work in order to present an alternate, idealised or transformed self or as a tactic to investigate a different approach to their practice. These alternative constructed selves can function in diverse ways, often as a strategy for transgression, dispensing with accountability and/or for maintaining the freedoms and possibilities of a mutable identity. Thus establishing self-identity is an important process for the artist and even more so for the fictional artist.

In a modern world of digital media where society have become adept at reinventing or masking identities this research focuses on a largely ignored phenomenon why artists have decided to create fictional personas. A critical examination of many such fictional artists, considered chronologically, tells the larger story of the importance of branding, the desire to play with identity and exposes the complex and gender biased world of professional art. Although much has been written about portraits of artists in novels, there has been very little work exploring artists' creation of fictive artists as art practice. This research will restrict its focus to works about contemporary fictional women artists, to allow for a sharper focus on the many and varied transactions between the fictional artists and the artists who create them.

In order to portray a fictional artist, the artist is obliged to conjure out of words and images, through a range of texts, the identity of the fictional artist and her history as well as create her imaginative vision. When the fictional persona is created the artist or artist collective begin with an implicit or explicit dialogue between themselves as a creator and the fictional artist. The fictional artists examined in this study explore the ways artists are portrayed as well as the way their art is presented and how it compares to real artists. Each of the fictional artists should be considered a complex work which exists across a wide range of media platforms: installation, exhibitions, catalogues, interviews, live performance, social media and other internet sites particularly the artist website all of which support the development of the persona's authenticity as an artist.

Identity is weaved through detailed "transmedia storytelling" (Jenkins, 2006) that establish and support the artists' persona. Transmedia is the art of sharing a narrative over multiple media platforms, the case in point being print, online, exhibition, film, social networks, where unique content is delivered through each platform. This has been extremely popular for film and television programmes; although individual branding is different it is increasingly imperative that artists employ transmedia thinking as a way to expand a story over multiple platforms. But more interestingly is the impact of transmedia storytelling on society and how individuals are beginning to utilise a transmedia strategy to construct their identity via digital media. Comparable to any company, individuals also have an important social media presence. What some of the fictional artists do successfully is have cohesiveness and interconnections of narrative between each unique platform taking advantages of the opportunity to develop distinct voices and storytelling opportunities. Embracing transmedia demonstrates that it has the power to create an authentic identity that is engaging as a brand. Key to this is the artist's involvement into developing a narrative arc over multiple platforms in order to market their work and artistic brand. The importance is to be able to continually engage and create a unified narrative across the platforms thus making the construction of the identity a more engaging and authentic experience. Where music artists such as Jay Z, Gorillaz and Lady Gaga have embraced new digital opportunities to develop their brand identity thus reflecting the emergence of new economic models and multiplatform projects, this is also now being reflected through other art forms and needs to be examined in more depth.

For a fictional artist to be successful the persona needs to reinforce their identity through their relationship with their audiences through storytelling which is authentic and credible. Therefore it is clear that building a narrative universe for an artist's identity is crucial and a narrative arc for each exhibition is essential. Thus the creation of a global

narrative universe is built, in large part, on the artist's personality, which can be a way of reinforcing the engagement of an audience already more or less intrigued by the fictional element of the persona.

Such art practices could be perceived as an excellent example of something that can be loosely identified as "fictive art" (LaFarge, 2001) a term coined by Antoinette LaFarge which she defines on her website titled *fictive art* as "plausible fictions created through production of real-world objects, events, and entities" (Lafarge, 2007: n.p.). The use of the term fictive in scholarly research has grown exponentially in the last forty years, particularly in the fields of anthropology and ethnography. Of particular interest is the literary anthropologist Wolfgang Iser's study of the term in *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (JHU Press, 1993), where he asserts that fiction and reality are no longer binary opposites. Iser's hypothesis proposes a triadic relationship to understand the fictionalising act, which he states comprises of the real, the fictive, and the imaginary. For Iser (1993) the fictive is an act of boundary crossing where the referential world is disrupted and doubled — the act of fiction becomes an act of transgression. The important word here is act, in other words, fiction is no longer defined against an idea of the real, nor is it tied solely to the literary.

As such art practices have developed so too have scholarly exploration of this art form. Of significance is Carrie Lambert-Beatty's (2009) consideration of parafiction and the concept of fictiveness specifically in relation to contemporary art practices. Her examples involve "a diverse range of practices and practitioners" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 71), including the artist Michael Blum's construction of the fictive persona Safiye Behar reinforces the complexities of what is real and what is authentic particularly when in view of the artist's statement that "Behar was "real to me"" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 53) which demonstrates her assertion that "fiction or fictiveness has emerged as an important category in recent art" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Whilst there are specific nuances to both definitions of fictive and para fictive art, key to each respectively is the importance of real artefacts.

Key to unravelling both terms is the theoretical concept of mimesis which within Western traditions of aesthetic thought has been central to attempts to theorise the essence of artistic expression. Whilst the term has been theorised by many scholars, of specific interest to this research is the exploration of mimesis from a feminist perspective, particularly the work of Luce Irigaray (1977), which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2. From this stance the consideration of the ways in which women are imitated and represented through contemporary media forms allows for discourse exploring how

traditional representations of the female body can be disrupted. Keeping in mind the importance of artefacts for para fictive and fictive art, what could be considered transfictive mimesis is that paradoxically the use of multi platforms to create a fictive artist depends on using mediums that depict reality more efficiently whilst also engaging with fictions, narratives, and made-up worlds.

To consider these concepts in more depth it is French philosopher and societal theorist Jean Baudrillard's later work that we turn to in order to begin to decipher the symbols and signs of the fictional artist. Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* (1994) - a collection of essays about the nature of what we perceive to be reality offers, through exploration of simulation and the hyperreal, an opportunity to interrogate the relationship among reality, symbols, and society.

Baudrillard's assertion that we can no longer distinguish the difference between what is real and what is a simulation. He argues that we have not only lost touch with reality but have in fact reached the point where perhaps there is no reality. What Baudrillard terms the hyperreal - the simulation has become all-important and he claims that we no longer care whether there is a reality there at all and we have lost the ability to distinguish between the two. Although Baudrillard explores his ideas on postmodernism through war and film it is easy to relate his work to the growing number of artists creating fictitious artists. These ideas will be used to explore the theoretical interconnections between Baudrillard simulacra and the birth of the fictional artist through multi modal texts. This fascination with the effect of mediation technologies on the human experience of reality, by considering Baudrillard's work, will question how reality itself is destroyed by this same technology when artists create their fictitious personas.

Fictitious artists in some sense reflect Baudrillard's ideas that reality has disappeared in the postmodern world. This simulation of real artists creating fictitious artists could be regarded as reducing everything in our world to the order of simulacra. In the context of fictitious artists it could be assumed that this has led to the creation of a hyper-reality. Ironically, each of these real artists' simulations, which have an illusionary grounding in the real, point to the illusionary nature of reality itself, filtered and mediated through images from advertising, television, and mass media. "Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum" (Baudrillard, 2001:173). Simulation, in their image world through photography embedded fiction, websites, exhibitions, is the real.

Fictitious artists therefore are a perfect model to consider the "entangled orders of simulation" (Baudrillard, 2001:174). By considering Baudrillard's successive phases of the image transformation to simulacrum, the fictitious artist as a concept begins as a "reflection of a basic reality" (Baudrillard, 2001: 173) that of the life of a real artist. At the second stage, when considering the examples that follow, there is a clear sense that the fictitious artist "masks and perverts a basic reality" (Baudrillard, 2001: 173) for instance as real male artists create female fictitious artist personas. Through exhibitions, catalogues websites and photographs the fictive artist clearly "plays at being" (Baudrillard, 2001: 173) which progresses the fictional artist to the fourth stage where he/she "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard, 2001: 173).

Lambert- Beatty aptly defines parafiction as "related to but not quite a member of the category of fiction [where] real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world as it is being lived" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Acknowledging the work of scholars such as Baudrillard she perceives parafictional strategies as post-simulacral which are less concerned with the departure of the real and alternatively build upon the premise that "these fictions are experienced as fact" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Her approach considers the issues surrounding parafictions' juxtaposition of truth status and potential deceptive nature identifying that between 1998 and 2008 this genre of art, including "legions of fake artists" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 56) reflects the growing popularity of and establishment of fictive art illustrating how these artists "produce and manage plausibility" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 72). Lambert-Beatty states that central to the success of a parafiction is "stylistic mimicry" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 60) which in the guise of established and contemporary conventions present art that could be perceived as authentic. Whilst Lambert-Beatty acknowledges how certain viewers/audiences have been 'duped' by the artworks she more interestingly draws attention to the growing scepticism of people and the little explored pleasures of satisfaction and a sense of superiority due to the recognition of fictive nature being identified. What is particularly interesting is her discussion of the impact of the fictive work on viewers where the experience itself coinciding with the deliberate plausibility of the parafiction will "have a lingering effect even after the disillusionment" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 66). Equally the issue surrounding a fictive work's tenuous ethical position is deliberated particularly in relation to society's suspicion of "media culture at large… to the epistemological shock that the rapid mainstreaming of the Internet has caused, especially in the last ten years" (Lambert-

Beatty, 2009: 78) yet it is argued that such fictive experiments "prepare us to be better, more critical information consumers, and therefore citizens" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 78). Central to this view is how individuals are acquiring "post-parafictional alertness to the possibility of play" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 83) resulting in the development of a more informed critical outlook.

The construction of fictive artists is considered specifically in relation to them being perceived as transmedia narratives, their personas established across multiple mediums or platforms. Whilst it is generally accepted that this is an accurate way to define transmedia storytelling the level of integration between these platforms has been greatly contested. According to Jenkins (2006), each branch of the story should be independent enough that an individual could enjoy each one without needing to experience the others. Whilst Jenkins (2006) asserts that each platform should be independent Christy Dena (2009) disagrees with this definition preferring the term *transfiction*, which refers to a story that is contingent on all story pieces across all mediums. By this definition, no single branch would be adequate to experience the story. It is the term transfiction that seems to encapsulate the construction process of the fictive artists more closely. Whilst it could be argued that Jenkin's definition ensures more accessibility and creates more widespread engagement, the fictive artists as transfictive selves mirror the ways in which society utilise different platforms to self-brand. By building an interconnected identity narrative that depends on all platforms this creates a more authentic and satisfying experience of the fictive artist as a whole.

Consequently, research such as this is vitally important since Transmedia practice is "an important phenomenon that has emerged in the practices of individuals and companies alike, across art forms, genres, industries, time and countries…" (Dena, 2009: 3) thus needs to be documented mainly because "Transmedia practices are not just the concern of conglomerates who are horizontally organized, but also of individuals with limited resources. It is important, therefore, to recognize the breadth of the phenomenon" (Dena, 2009: 4).

1.2. Fictional Artists - A Brief History and defining the art form

As highlighted earlier, the creation of fictional artists is not a new phenomenon. Artists have always played with identity. Since the beginning of the 20th century, artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Claude Cahun and later Cindy Sherman, have played with the existence of a second Ego through their work.

More recent creations, such as William Boyd's Nat Tate, a reclusive radical artist, have achieved cult status, before and after being exposed as pure fiction. However, since digital technologies began to be integrated into the fine arts, narrative structures and their related concepts of the 'fictional persona' subject have been explored in more depth by artists in the last forty years.

Perhaps artists, by using another persona - whether anonymous, fictitious, or both – it is a way of creating a space outside the market: a space where things can't be pinned down so easily and exchanged. This creative model research exemplifies the underlying context of digital platforms - where everybody can create anonymous personae - and a broader cultural shift into a kind of irrational space. Artists, frequently develop characters or different personalities in and through their work in order to present an alternate, idealised or transformed self or as a tactic to investigate a different approach to their practice. These alternative constructed selves can function in diverse ways, often as a strategy for transgression, dispensing with accountability and/or for maintaining the freedoms and possibilities of a mutable identity. What is interesting is that many of the fictional artists are introduced to the public initially as real entities and only later revealed as fictitious or a hoax. Even more fascinating is the acceptance of these fictional artists in their own right after the revelation.

The various ways these fictive personas have been labelled or defined gives an indication of why fictional artists are somewhat impossible to entirely define. They manifest themselves in too many forms to enable a simple description of what defines a fictional artist. The term *alter ego* has altered significantly during the last century resulting in the definition developing into a personal attribute, demonstrated as a second Ego to the outside world. Many artists particularly during the last two centuries have made use of a persona as part of their art work. More than just artistic pseudonyms, the personae explored in this research are independent characters used either as the focus of the artist's work as or as artists in their own right. Creating a new persona offers a chance to explore one's identity; consequently through the construction of alter egos and fictional life histories, the fictional artist provides a specific context and an entry point into the identity of the woman artist.

In the wake of 1990s identity politics, and following the postmodernist dialectic concerning the constructed self, such as those explored in Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, 1991, many artists working today question the possible meanings of 'identity'. The artists in this research use their own bodies and those of others in order to express

individual and particular cultural positions as a fictional persona, namely that of the artist.

Although the domain of fictional artists is ostensibly defined by the fact the artists do not "[exist', in practice their art is known through the virtual existence of the artists and this is 'fictive art'" (Lafarge & Patt, 2001). It is the artists' existence through virtual world of social media, physical presentation of self-image, performance and their work – that their identity is established and legitimised in the art world. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) explore identity theorising that identity refers to "position in a multi-dimensional space defined by particularistic categorical attributes such as race ethnicity or gender" (2000:7). However there has currently been an upsurge of interest in the possibilities that a constructed female identity offers to contemporary artists whether working individually or collaboratively.

Returning briefly to Baudrillard's (1994) exploration of representation of a world that has become hyperreal and simulated, comparisons can be clearly drawn with the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888 – 1935) when considering a working definition of fictive artists. Both Baudrillard and Pessoa deal with representation as the only experience possible and question how society grasps truth and reality. Pessoa, it is important to note, coined the literary term heteronym which he used to define the series of invented selves that he perceived not as pseudonyms since he felt that this term did not capture their true independent intellectual life. Unlike a pseudonym or alter ego, Pessoa perceived heteronyms as autonomous agents with their own specific interests, literary styles, biographies and physical physiognomies. It is from this stance that the fictive artists explored in this research are specifically identified as transfictive heteronyms (Sylvester, 2016).

How have these transfictive heteronyms gained success in the art world when by definition they do not exist? How do they justify their fictional persona as a real entity? In the case of fictional artists these ideological structures pose alternative models of esteem, relating to power of the individual importance of creativity and role of women artists. The ideology of authenticity suggests that the fictional artist exists as a transmediated self.

1.3. Fictive Biographies

Closely linked to the development of the artist's persona is the presentation of their biographies. These narratives justify their authenticity, serving as a primary criterion of evaluation. Through transmedia texts the artists' identity is developed through visual and

text narrative, the biography invests the artists' identity with meaning. The identity of the artists is embedded in the art practices of branding. It is this play with identity which is so difficult to distinguish the real from the simulacra that is so fascinating. "At the core of society and culture, brands define "where capitalism meets consumerism" (Wilson, 2009: 130)

Chrissie Iles and Phillipe Vergne, describe the process of constructing an imaginary collaborator in an interesting way explaining that the persona develops "When two people curate a show, they give birth to a third person" where the role of the identity is to channel our illusion" (Griffin, 2006: 94). Iles further clarifies this underlying motive that 'For artists, using another persona - whether anonymous, fictitious, or both - is a way of creating a space outside the market: a space where things can't be pinned down so easily and exchanged" (Griffin, 2006: 94). Iles reinforces this research's exploration of fictional women artists by proposing that the construction of fictional artists as "a creative model might also relate to the underlying context of cyberspace - where everybody creates anonymous personae - and a broader cultural shift into a kind of irrational space" (Griffin, 2006: 94).

The major objective of the research project is to develop a body of work which, in a disciplined way, investigates how transfictive female artists have been introduced to contemporary society through a variety of media texts. As well as consider gender constraints imposed upon female artists by society, the art world, audiences and the female artists themselves since the transfictive artists that form the basis of the case studies have much to offer in serious conversations about online textuality, participatory media and the performance of gender.

1.4. The Terminology of Transmedia

The terms transmedia and transfictive are introduced in this thesis to encompass a variety of practices and existing terms defining the area. These theories—including transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006), transfictions (Dena 2009), transmediated self (Elwell, 2014) are subsumed under the term transmedia/transfictive for methodological purposes.

The term transmedia is a widely used research term which is applied to different areas exploring this particular phenomenon. Thus it is therefore important to clarify what is meant by transmedia in this thesis, and how it has been employed by others. The terms

and research areas to be discussed for this purpose are: transmedial narrative, transmediated self, transmedia storytelling and transmedia identity, and transfiction.

Firstly, it is important to consider in light of this research what is meant by the term transmedia or transfictive? Taking Jenkins (2006) explanation of a story unfolding across multiple media platforms as a basis point Dena's (2009) employment of the term transfictive further highlights the research's inquiry into the ways in which fictive artists utilise a variety of modes to construct their identity across diverse platforms. However whilst "The term transmedial fiction names a fictional world that exists across distinct media and art forms" this research is not concerned with the construction of fictional worlds but solely on the ways personas can be brought to life, namely fictive artists (Dena, 2014: 486). Thus the focus specifically centralises on how the fictive artists are "expanded across both digital and nondigital media" (Dena, 2014: 486). However this will be further elaborated in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Transfictive is used as a term throughout as well as within the thesis title itself for the following reasons: to illustrate the particular nature of the artists being studied and to illuminate the potential variances between the transmediated self (Elwell, 2014) and transfictive personas investigated for this research.

Dena defines transfiction as "a single-story told over multiple channels…alternating between channels" (Dena, 2007: 3). In this context each of the fictive artists, and in keeping with this research's consideration of fictiveness, are a single narrative projected across multiple platforms alternating between channels to develop an authentic transmediated self and promote self-branding as well as establishing the persona. The artist's persona is "stretched to encompass many platforms" (Dena, 2007:3).

A great deal has been written about identity in relation to digital technology, with specific focus on the development of the Internet, role playing games, and the construction of the avatar. However the construction of identity through digital media arts, in particular the creation of the fictional artist in transmedia storytelling is a greatly unexplored area of study.

With this in mind a number of questions are raised. A key theme to explore is what does this art based on fictional women artists reveal about the creative process in establishing identity? In the wake of transmedia storytelling how does the creation of women personae reflect the reality of women artists today? Has reality become fragmented? Is there a clear line between fiction and critical thought?

1.5. The Art of a Feminist Approach

Whilst this research examines feminist art criticism and its approach takes a feminist stance it is important to unpick some of the terms used within the study to clarify some concerns and issues. The path of post modernism and digimodernism as briefly outlined earlier is at best fraught; post feminism and digi feminism are equally overloaded with different meanings. As Rosalind Gill (2007) asserts post feminism is difficult to define and is best understood as a distinctive sensibility made up of a number of interrelated themes. Central to this is femininity as body property with a shift from objectification to subjectification, individualism, choice and empowerment. Thus the transmediated self via social media platforms plays out various scholars' contradictory assertions of the body being a source of power whilst simultaneously one of surveillance. The concept of the transmediated self (Elwell, 2014) and the transfictive artist could quite easily be perceived as what Angela Mc Robbie (2004) defines as "a double entanglement" of neoliberal values in relation to gender" (McRobbie, 2004: 255) in that they to differing extents epitomise individualism of social media by perfectly predicting/encapsulating the selfie phenomenon – an art form utilised by some of the transfictive artists in this study. The transfictive artists as constructed personas do support Gill's (2007) assertion that women "are required to work on and transform the self" (Gill, 2007: 164) and to some extent respond to a need for "Further exploration of this intimate relationship" (Gill, 2007: 164) between neoliberalism and postfeminism. However, whilst potentially offering ways to explore the complexities of this connection, this study completed almost a decade after Gill's (2007) article, emphasises that there continues to be an urgent need to illuminate the ways in which digital technologies are impacting contemporary feminist media culture.

Of equal significance is the feminist waves metaphor discussed in this thesis in relation to the case studies since it is important to clarify that in many ways the researcher is in agreement with Linda Nicholson (2010) that the wave construct is flawed and "has outlived its usefulness" (Nicholson, 2010: 34) when discussing feminist movement. The researcher's intentions when referring to waves, albeit restrictedly, has deliberately been done in this way to acknowledge that feminism, defined by Lori A. Brown (2016) citing Gillian Rose (1993) should be perceived as a "relational and constantly shifting state always in flux" (Brown, 2016: 10). Consequently this research asserts that when waves are discussed they should be perceived more as signposts which signify important shifts feminist practices.

In a dialogical relationship between practice-based and written research, this thesis explores contemporary transmedia case-studies in relation to digital art practices, female artist representation and identity branding particularly in relation to the current movement of feminism. This is particularly important since "Feminism in the 21st century bears a broader, deeper, and more diverse range of voices and interests than ever before" (Tani, 2015: n.p.). The issues surrounding the customary representation of women by traditional media cannot be avoided due to the comparable conventions that have been assimilated into all contemporary media practice – thus to investigate the challenge of representing women's identity, the concept of the fictional female artist is examined through numerous sources, including photography and literary theory, feminism, and video art. While the discourse on women and their use of digital media technologies has been important, especially in relation to gender theory, its recent connection to the creation of fictional artists through transmedia texts has not been fully explored. The intention of this research is to explore artists' use of digital media in their work and how as transmedia texts this helps to establish the identity of transfictive artists through the work of Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr.

In the last two decades recent considerations of the role of fictional women artists has been successfully employed through Sandra Bridie's use of fictional artists to explore the artist's identity and relationship with the contemporary art world, Joe Scanlon's creation of African American Donelle Woolford, the collaborative creation of the fictive artist and curator Reena Spaulings by a collective of artists and the recent Instagram sensation, artist Cherry Lazar. The fictional artist Seren Sanclêr, created over a seven year period, has been specifically constructed for this research to experience first-hand the implications of transmedia storytelling whilst considering authenticity of identity through a fictional and lived experience.

Scholarly research is now beginning to examine the continued impact of digital technologies on contemporary feminist artists (Bassett, in Berry & Dieter, 2015; Toffoletti, 2007; Kretowicz, 2014; Janssen, 2015; Geurts, 2015; Washko, 2014; Hodges, 2015). Subsequently, Digi Feminism or what is sometimes termed Fifth Wave Feminism (Hodges, 2015) needs to be explored more fully when exploring how women artists are "using their image as a tool of rebellion" (Geurts, 2015). Contemporary fictional women artists are also playing their part in making "themselves visible from the margins through the noise of Web 2.0 hegemony" (Kretowicz, 2014) playfully confronting gendered representations by

exploring issues of authenticity where the possibilities of hyper self-realisation have been incorporated in the way the artists establish their identities and personas as transfictive heteronyms (Sylvester, 2016).

Thus, Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr have been deliberately chosen to explore the process of the their practice in establishing an authentic artist identity, as well as document the ongoing performance of the transfictive identity, with a particular focus on digital media, whilst also considering each artist from a feminist perspective. It is from this stance that the research argues that Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr are not only connected by their status as illusory creations, but also that their identity and works are associated with their use of transmedia texts to establish each personas' credibility as an artist as well as acknowledging the complex role of the artist in society.

Additionally, the research addresses the lack of critical writings that link the concerns, ideas, and ways of working as well as the achievements of fictional women artists to the work of feminist artists. It also redresses the deficiency of critical writings about the five selected artists used for case studies for this research. Although there is a growing body of scholarly research which does exists on women artists most notably Frida Kahlo, Claude Cahun, Gertrude Arndt, Cindy Sherman and Hannah Wilke who explore issues of identity and influences of feminism on their work, there is still clearly a need to focus on this in more depth (Lowe, 2006; Herrera, 2003; Burrus, 2008; Souter, 2015; Pankl & Blake, 2012 ; Udall, 2003; Helland, 1999; Rice & Gumpert, 1999, Steadman & Cook, 1996; Doy, 2000; Bower, 2013; Bond, 2015; Princenthal, 2010). Similarly, academic enquiries concerning the history of fictional artists (Brams & Gruijthuijsen, 2010), as well as investigations of specific fictional personas (Glaros, 2012) have been conducted to a lesser degree however there has not been a specific study considering women fictional artists. This examination of fictional women artists, their achievements and use of digital media in developing their identity needs to be addressed. Equally there has been no consideration of how if at all the fictional woman artist fits into digi-feminist art and purported fifth wave feminist movement.

The examination of fictive artists begins initially however with a broader exploration of the artist's identity in Western mythology – what defines an artist? The artist throughout history has in turn been interpreted as craftsman, labourer, intellectual, genius, individualist, convention defying, Bohemian and entrepreneur (Wallace, 2013). However

for feminist scholars the one constant image throughout these interpretations has been the artist's gender where the dominant cultural myth of contemporary Western mythology is the artist's identity as male (Nochlin, 1971; Battersby, 1989; Brand & Korsmeyer, 1995).

Central to the feminist analysis of the artist's identity has been one that rigorously challenges the popular myth of 'male genius' as well as highlight the exclusion of women from the history of art. Feminist art historian Linda Nochlin, in her influential essay, provocatively entitled, *Why have there been no great women artists?* (1971) demonstrates that genius is not an innate attribute of 'true artists' but a mythical product of privileged advantages. Most importantly, whilst men have been recognised as great artists, women in contrast have been predominantly regarded as muse, model, patron or the stereotypical amateur artist (Nochlin 1988). Nochlin's social models have offered an invaluable starting point from which other researchers, particularly feminist scholars, have insightfully examined the impact such mythical constructs of the artist's identity as male have had on the development of women artists' sense of self as artist. The artist's identity and the role of the woman artist are still significant to feminists today. In an interview with *Spiegel*, the artist Georg Baselitz, pronounced that there are no great women artists since 'Women don't paint very well. It's a fact' (Beyer & Knöfel, 2013: n.p) thus reflecting that gender still constrains the types of artist roles available to contemporary female artists. Thus reinforcing the contemporary view of the artist's identity as a predominantly male-dominated profession. Such dominant ideology makes the examination of fictional women artists all the more interesting. Perhaps the creators of the fictional female artists are drawing attention to the fact that hegemonic realities must be continuously renegotiated, contested and reconstructed?

 In addition to the case study research of the five artists in question, which also incorporates the construction of the fictive persona Seren Sanclêr; qualitative interviews were conducted to develop more in-depth narrative detail to reinforce the authenticity of her identity. Since "Interviews are among the most familiar strategies for collecting qualitative data" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 314) it was felt that to develop an emerging understanding of the research questions in relation to the creative element, interviewing the creators of the transfictive artists would provide rich and in-depth information about the experiences of constructing a fictive personas. Inclusion of this approach ensured that discourse surrounding identity performance in relation to this specific art practice could be explored in order to assemble a plausible persona. It also raises questions in relation to the importance of artist biography, embodiment of the fictive persona, creation of artefacts and self-branding.

Figure 1.2: Susan (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Figure 1.3: Tetraptych of Donelle (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Figure 1.4: Cherry (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Figure 1.5: Ona (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Besides the novelty aspect a fictional persona generates, this also mirrors society's use of digital media and echoes the ways in which people are able to create different identities using digital media. But key to this research is why create a fictional woman artist when women are basically less celebrated for their work and what are the creators trying to explore and are there any connections to feminist art, or women's art in general? Interestingly it is perhaps pertinent to point out that historically women artists' exploration of gender through their work focuses more on cross dressing. For instance artists such as Hannah Gluckstein (1895 – 1978), known simply as Gluck in order to avoid gender connotations, whilst Rosa Bonheur (1822 – 1899) dressed in masculine clothes "her cross dressing makes no effort to disguise her sex, though it remains a subversive gesture in its cultural context" (Bolich, 2007, p.90) or Claude Cahun and Frida Kahlo's experimentation with androgyny where more contemporary artists such as Cindy Sherman has only portrayed men in her History Portraits (1989–1990) to date. Currently women artists assuming male artist personas to expose the biased art system are presently limited to the fictional novel *The Blazing World* by Siri Hustvedt (2014) and the artist Tiff Oben whose art practice demonstrates the fluidity of identity and performative nature of gender usually through her portrayal of women however she has also explored the gender binary through the constructed male artist persona Wilkins Cox.

Nevertheless, as this research argues, the concerns, concepts and ideas of fictional women artists, might be seen, as a mirror reflecting the art produced and exhibited by contemporary women artists or young artists in general. Bridie's work of fictional artists have been the subject of solo and group exhibitions across Australia, Europe and the United States including those at the Metro Arts Brisbane Festival; the Videonale in Bonn; and the LeRoy Neiman Gallery, Columbia University. Bridie's critical eye of the art world and the failures of Susan Fielder as an artist could be perceived as the outcome of her artistic ability. Whilst in contrast, Donelle Woolford's selection for the 2014 Whitney Biennial exhibition proved to be extremely contentious particularly around issues of race and gender. Whereas Cherry Lazar's online presence with 5,288 followers on Instagram hosted her first photography exhibition on May 7 2015 in Paris perhaps reflects the ways artists are utilising social media to their advantage. However it is Ona Artist perhaps, that best encapsulates digi feminist artists' utilisation of digital technology, particularly social media, illustrating the power of the transfictive heteronymic identity to explore contemporary feminist issues.

Regardless of whatever one might think about these fictional portrayals of artists, the use of digital media and artists' use of new technology to explore identity and examine art institutions have certainly contributed, as this thesis contends, to some of the success of contemporary fictional women artists. This is not to say that the purpose of this research is to prove that transmedia and the use of digital media is responsible for the success of the five artists in question.

However, the debate regarding the under representation of women artists by the art world persists to be a key concern particularly for feminist journalists and scholars (Elderton, 2013; Reilly 2015; Jones 2015; Nochlin & Reilly, 2015) who continue to strive to make women artists more widely accepted by institutions, celebrate the achievements of previous generations of women artists and acknowledge the power of digital media to platform women's art. The rationale of this research as a result partly addresses the question of whether the fictional artists discussed truly reflect feminist art and to some extent considers Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr are feminist artists.

Although this research reflects on feminist art, the intention is to move away from such a customary approach which would merely contribute to an already polarised collection of viewpoints that seems to exist wherever debates about feminist art occur. The focus is not feminist art it is about fictional representation of artists and identity. Therefore the main objective of this thesis is to provide a reading of the five artists' works and to consider how the construction of their identities might be understood as transmedia texts. The interpretations of Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr's identities aims to complement other possible readings already in place, as well as consider issues surrounding women as artists and the use of fictional personas in general. As a result, this research not only gives fictional artists retrospective meaning, but it also shows that its concerns have validity for contemporary fictive artists.

With this in mind, the research aims to highlight and acknowledge the impact of digital media technologies has for contemporary women artists and in turn the effect fictional personas have, consciously or unconsciously on contemporary artists. Such a focus will contribute to a limited body of work examining fictional artists in general and the five contemporary fictional artists discussed within this dissertation, as well as examine current issues surrounding identity construction, transmedia storytelling and digi feminism.   Presently there, is no recognisable critical research of fictional artists and digi

feminism, only a loose grouping of individuals with numerous different viewpoints and critical stances. And last but not least, by dealing with the work of five contemporary fictional women artists, that are recognised by the art world and followed by the public, this thesis will take the opportunity to offer the potential readership, who would very likely not be confronted with issues of identity and the topic of fictional personas otherwise, the chance to get in touch with issues that were historically of concern to artists and that are very much of significance today.

It is also important to note that when able to, the research refers to the female artists discussed simply as artists since it is felt that using woman as a suffix to artist reinforces the traditional gender inequality highlighted by the feminist art movement, discussed at length in Chapter 2 the literature review. This consideration is aptly encapsulated by the conceptual artist and analytic philosopher Adrian Piper (b. 1948) who in her Letter to the Editor on her website urges writers to take into account her requests: "Please don't call me a woman artist...I have earned the right be called an artist...I have earned the right to call myself anything I like" (2003: n.p.).

1.6. Background to the Research

"Flamboyant. Extravagant. Megalomanic. Alcoholic. Sexually obsessed. Manic-depressive. How important is persona in understanding an artist's practice?"

(Gingeras, 2004: n.p.)

My examination of fictional artists is grounded in seven years of ethnographic observation, interviews, analysis of text and incorporates a practice based research case study. In a society that is so concerned with representations of reality this research considers how transmedia storytelling could be an effective method to develop fictional artists' identities?

As a self-taught artist and photographer with research interests in feminist perspectives, I have naturally been drawn to artists particularly those that explore identity in their work. After studying a course with *Ffoto*gallery at Chapter Arts Centre on *Photographing People* in 2007, I began to study the work of specific artists such as Claude Cahun, Sophie Calle, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Cindy Sherman and Hannah Wilke. It was the blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality in order to examine identity and gender that proved to hold the greatest fascination for the genesis of this research. Much of the art work created by the artists examined in preparation for this research focused on

negotiating the female diasporic identity with issues of traditionally established gender roles. These artists in particular all play with the ideas of gender, identity, and form. Equally their use of photography, performance art, video and other artistic expression have played a significant role in the exploration and development of feminist theory.

Largely ignored until the 1990s the Surrealist photographer Claude Cahun (1894 – 1954) disrupts restrictive ideas about gender, in particular, social prescriptions about femininity. Her self-portraiture proved to me most interesting, particularly the ways in which she displays herself in turn as stylish dandy in masculine attire, demure maiden, as androgyne or as a historical or fictional character thus projecting both multiple identities and multifaceted selves. It is the way that her photographs obscure the boundaries between public and private that initially created an interest in artists' exploration of identity. This was further reinforced when considering Cahun's use of self-portraiture as a means to explore gender play since "Pictures of Cahun in a variety of highly coded costumes and poses visually theorize the artificiality of gender in ways that appear to anticipate by sixty or seventy years the writings of queer theorists such as Judith Butler…" (Latimer, 2010) as well as influencing the strategies of contemporary artists employing masquerade, such as Wilke, Sherman and Hershman Leeson.

In the same way as Cahun, Wilke (1940 – 1993) through her exploration of the body continues to influence artists today, particularly feminist artists, in the consideration of female identity. The nude body is omnipresent in her work and its self-representation is the vehicle by which Wilke exposes personal and political themes. Her use of female body imagery played a crucial role in feminist art criticism in the 1970s. In her series of photographs entitled *S.O.S - Starification Object Series* (1974), Wilke uses her nude body as a backdrop, the focus instead on vulvas randomly stuck to her body that have the appearance of scars. *S.O.S.* attacks the physical representation of women and more importantly their actual treatment in society. Wilke parodies popular images of women in this series of photographs. While her glamorous and seductive guises simulate those of traditional advertisements and pin-up poses of women, the viewer's eye is drawn away from her body to focus on scar marks covering the body. This series of work questions openly the ways in which women's bodies are objectified; Wilke's body is a paradox – on the one hand an object of desire for men whilst also bordering on distasteful and repellent.

In a similar way to Cahun and Wilke, contemporary artist Sherman (1954 -) also exploits photography's potential for transformation, although she refutes a feminist agenda. In her

famous *Untitled Film Stills* art work series Sherman impersonates female character types from various fictitious B movies in order to explore public icons of femininity as she convincingly makes illusion her personal reality. Reminiscent of Wilke's *S.O.S. Starification*, Sherman also uses familiar images as the foundation of her photographs. In this series of sixty nine black and white photographs, Sherman assumes the role of many different women, each representing a different stereotype where "Each image is built around a photographic depiction of a woman" (Mulvey, 1991: 137). This performance, since part of the process is that she uses wigs, costumes and make-up in order to create a different woman for each of the images, reinforces that although these are self-portraits one cannot ascertain who the real Sherman is since she does not maintain a fixed identity. Instead this series of work is meant to question the identity of women in general and how these familiar images lead the viewer to define identity by what is seen. Sherman's multiple identities exemplifies how "She brings a different perspective to the 'images of women question' and recuperates a politics of the body that had, perhaps, been lost or neglected in the twists and turns of seventies feminism" (Mulvey, 1991: 138). By simulating popular images and identities, Sherman in a similar way to Wilke, offers through her art a reminder of how these socially constructed identities of women are so ingrained in our subconscious raising "serious and challenging questions for contemporary feminist aesthetics" (Mulvey, 1991: 137).

Photography artists Nan Goldin and Corinne Day's technique of snapshot aesthetic to document their lives and the sub cultures they belonged to offers women a female perspective on documentary photography. However it is their self-portraits that are most fascinating. Goldin's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* and Day's *Diary* explore how photography as an art form offer ways to document women's life experiences. Their self-portraits in each series of works demonstrate how such photographic narratives are utilised to authenticate as well as assist in the construction of the artist's identity.
My introduction to the artist Tracey Emin, was in 1997 watching on a Channel four live debate show discussing art in light of Gillian Wearing's Turner Prize win. Her appearance in a "drunk and disorderly" state (Longrigg, 1997: n.p.) held a great fascination for me at the time. During the last twenty years, culminating in *Love is what you want*, a major survey exhibition at the Haywood Gallery in 2011, Emin's exploration of self-exposure though her autobiographical 'confessional' style art work, which "resonates with a wide audience both within and outside the art world, and that it has substantially promoted the concept of confessional art and contributed to an ongoing redefinition of the concept of autobiography" (Fanthome, 2006: 30). Her approach to self-promotion as well as the

significance of her celebrity status clearly reflects the successes of the self-made artist where "Tracey Emin needs no introduction" (Cumming, 2011: n.p.). Her use of photography and writing has proved to be most interesting to the research with regards to exploring the persona of the female artist and reinforcing the importance of establishing the brand of the artist. Equally her work also reflects the continuing feminist usage of the female body as provocative subject to subvert the patriarchal idealised female form.

In the last decade this has given rise to Digi Feminist artists specifically exploring identity, women and the body through their work thus demonstrating that "Women artists are no longer held back by their limited access to the traditional gallery …Technology has given society an unprecedented amplification of the feminist voice" (Tell, 2014: 4). Artists specifically relevant to this research are Leslie Kulesh, Ivana Basic and Leah Schrager. Kulesh, through her performances and sculpture across multiple platforms, examines the role of technology as a symptom of contemporary culture production and its convergence with feminism thus using "…the filter of popular culture to tackle contemporary feminism and late technology" (French Riviera, 2012: n.p.). By questioning identity politics through digital illustration, where the digital offers the ability to become, instantly, she examines CGI authorsjip and the potential liberation of an online avatar focusing on her research into self-editing. This is exemplified in her *Oh My Goddess!* Series (2012) which "presents an environment situated between the digital and the organic" (French Riviera, 2012: n.p.). Thus giving rise to the issues surrounding identities, particularly public personas where in the past they were carefully constructed over a lifetime, now, in the form of the avatar, they can be taken on instantly then discarded and replaced indefinitely.

SOMA, is an ongoing art project by multimedia Serbian New York based artist, Basic, which explores the ideas behind digitizing the human body and the way individuals are "…integrating new technologies into our daily existences (Pangburn, 2014: n.p.). Through *SOMA*, Basic is in the process of creating a hyper realist 3D simulation of herself titled Ivana Basic®. However whilst Basic insists that generally her "work is not really informed by the fact that I'm a woman" (Folks, 2015: n.p.) this specific ongoing art work is in direct response to the overtly sexualized way 3D models are constructed thus her intention is to "set out to subvert and critique the standing market trend with her own avatar" (Pangburn, 2014:n.p.). Although her work "pushes for extreme realism" it also explores similar themes and reflects the influence of Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1984) as the other artists considered in this research that experiment with personas since her "avatar will represent her in her absence" thus its construction will ensure "The part of me that is

absent from my digital self is my body which is why I am now creating a container for my digital presence"(Pangburn, 2014: n.p.).

Basic's website explains how this creative work is intended to progress whereby the avatar will be developed as two versions and then made available to purchase by the public through an online market. The second version of the model, Ivana Dynamic®, as the second part of the project "will explore virtual and augmented realities as performative spaces using a 3D Avatar of the artist as a performer" (Basic, 2014) thus the purpose is for this double to have a real world identity through simulation which reinforces the concept "if there were multiples of me, or if anybody could be me, then you wouldn't know which one, of all of me is really me…In that sense, identity would become fluid and open"(Pangburn, 2014).

Their work explores the merging of the real with the virtual and performance play through the creation of multiple selves is now commonplace. Similar to the artists previously discussed, themes explored through their art, particularly their use of their own bodies reflects the blurring of boundaries, the limitless opportunities for impersonation and deception; useful tools for political counter-strategies, but also the cause for anxieties surrounding the issue of loss of control over issues of real identity.

Consequently my fascination with identity and in turn fictional artists grew out of an interest in photography fiction and as discussed above women artists' exploration of identity through alter egos and self-portraiture. The use of photographs in a fictional text acted as an initial starting point to highlight the present digital landscape which is saturated with simulation. It should be noted that ever since the advent of the medium in the mid-nineteenth century; photography and literature have been involved in an almost constant dialogue and process of inter-semiotic cross-fertilisation. A relationship that has continued to develop through digital technology resulting new variances of photographically engaged fictions.

William Boyd's *Nat Tate: An American Artist (1928 – 1960)* published in 1998, exemplifies the collaborative literary and artistic practices of fictional invention – the creation of a fictional artist whilst raising issues about 'fake' art and media hoax and in turn questions surrounding simulation. The fictional biography relates an imaginary biography with imaginary paintings, of the American painter Nat Tate (Nat Tate, for National Gallery and Tate Gallery), who allegedly committed suicide after visiting Georges Braque.

Boyd's artist Nat Tate demonstrates that the transaction between language and photography is not a one way affair since the photographs are implicated in the process of

the story telling. As a visual epistolary narrative such inventions could be argued as being both a "…critique of the artistic field and a piece of art in its own right…" (Voigts-Virchow, 2008: 176). Equally the interplay between word and image is crucial in forming communication, something that has continued to be important for digital media where the narrative's authenticity is realised when the two modes (verbal and visual) merge.

Hustvedt considers the art-world gender bias in her novel *The Blazing World* where "The absence of women artists in the history of painting is an old feminist topic, but it is one *The Blazing World* approaches head-on" (Cusk, 2014: n.p.). Interestingly Hustvedt attended the Boyd publication party for Nat Tate which clearly had an impact on the themes explored in this novel "was inspired to write about the hoax at the centre of *The Blazing World* after a similar hoax took hold of the New York art world"(Watts, 2014: n.p.). However her artist ""Harriet Burden, Hustvedt's pugnacious heroine, is an artist whose phantasmagoric multimedia installations, created from the 1970s to her death in 2004, have never received the acclaim they deserve" (Eberstadt, 2014: n.p.) so in an act of retaliation against the art world she "… uses real people – other artists – to conceal her true identity. These other artists – her masks – exhibit Harry's work as if it were their own" (White, 2014: n.p.).

Although the premise of the novel was Burden's adoption of three male artist personas to expose "the art establishment's ingrained sexism" (Eberstadt, 2014: n.p.) it was Hustvedt's use of fictitious documents of a "portrait of the artist as a middle-aged widow…It's rare to encounter a female protagonist who throws her weight around quite so grandiloquently as Harriet Burden…" (Eberstadt, 2014: n.p.) which proved to be an interesting starting point for this research. This is further reinforced when considering scholarly work of the novel in relation to the claim that "the gender of an artist has profound consequences for the way the artist's work is perceived" (Sommerlund & Strandvad, 2015: 272). Construction of Burden's identity and life story is established through created diaries, critics exploration of her work and interviews with her family, friends and collaborators which help to establish her persona however this is not a simple tale of institutional misogyny rather " The path to the truth," in her heroine's words, "is doubled, masked, ironic" (Eberstadt, 2014: n.p.). This is a novel about a female artist who creates male aliases as an experiment over five years where she produces three exhibitions under the guises of three different male artists, the work titled respectively *The History of Western Art*, *The Suffocation Rooms* and *Beneath* questioning "how perception is determined by cultural preconceptions, on the limits of artificial intelligence

and on the dialogic nature of artistic creation" (Eberstadt, 2014: n.p.). "Egomaniacal, lustful, intellectually omnivorous, alternately bullying and tenderhearted, self-lacerating and bold, Harriet Burden is an outsize Everywoman, raging against her own mortality " (Eberstadt, 2014: n.p.). I found it interesting that Hustvedt in response to Boyd's Nate Tate had constructed a novel as a kind of artefact, out of numerous kinds of testimony through a collection of interviews, essays, articles and letters demonstrating the spectrum of responses to a would-be scandal. This highlights that the self, whether that be the private, the public or the virtual is more controversial than ever before for individuals. Equally the opportunity to explore women artists as a vehicle for art offered an opportunity to explore this phenomenon more closely as well as contribute creatively by "telling stories of qualified female artists, their work, and the ways in which this work is perceived" (Sommerlund & Strandvad, 2015: 272).

Consequently, throughout the research the focus on performance of multiple identities has been a key area of significance central to the study. Subsequently the inquiry into artists constructing personas led to an exploration of the artist Hershman Leeson and her fictional creation Roberta Breitmore. Although not a fictional artist, as a fictional female persona Roberta Breitmore is essential to any survey of feminist art and proved to be an excellent starting point to explore the ways in which fictional entities are made to appear real through the use of transmedia texts. This art project took place between 1974 and 1978 and focuses on the masquerade performance by Hershman Leeson as she assumes the persona of Roberta Breitmore completely. As a performance artist Hershman Leeson lives breathes and sleeps Breitmore; not only does she possess her own history, voice, posture, style of dress, personality, and neuroses; Breitmore through the acquirement of a credit card and driver's license exists legally in the real world. "She was a breathing simulacrum, a persona played first by myself and then by a series of multiple individuals" (Hershman, 2003: 644). The body of work was revisited by Hershman Leeson and Stanford University by developing an online archive of the artist's work in Second Life in 2006. Although by 2010 Second Life's "existence is debatable today due to its fall in popularity" (Collins, 2010: n.p.) such speculation has led to scholarly consideration of the assertion that "the death of the SL metaverse has long been rumoured" (Baldwin & Achterberg, 2013: 13) in relation to exploring issues of identity and gender performance in the virtual world experienced specifically by women. Whilst Roberta Breitmore as an artwork may be a part of the past, her identity continues to flourish through digital media. Transmedia storytelling ensures that her persona has continued to endure during the last forty years.

"I. Reena Spaulings, Claire Fontaine, and Bruce High Quality walk into a bar in Brooklyn, New York on 10 September 2001…Reena is wearing a neon jumpsuit – mesh, naturally – and is very stoned, having just rolled a spliff in her car outside in the parking lot and smoked it with the windows closed and NPR turned up real loud"

(Russell, 2013: n.p.)

Reena Spaulings in many ways, exemplifies the modern existence of "portfolio people" (Handy,2012:146) - underwear model, muse, artist, main protagonist of a novel, art dealer and New York 'It' girl who describes herself as being "made of gossip, a gossip girl' (Klein, 2012: n.p.) who is described in the novel as "an unsuspecting New York anybody swooped up into the worlds of fashion and film by scheming talent scouts who cast her as this season's It Girl in a high-profile lingerie campaign" (Simpson, 2004: n.p.). Her identity has even been explored artistically by American rock band Sonic Youth with a song titled Reena (2006). However, Reena Spaulings conception as an entity began as "an art project in the guise of a gallery, Reena Spaulings Fine Art, playing host to performances as well as exhibitions that lasted, in some cases, only a matter of hours" (Cotter, 2006: n.p.).

Interestingly Heather Warren-Crow (2013) examines the art collective BC's construction of the novel *Reena Spaulings* (2004) in relation to production development of *Gossip Girl* (Brooke von Ziegesar, 2002) as a collaborative transmedia text and a continued focus on the growing popularity of the woman/child persona. "She is a remarkably mobile and flexible conceptual commodity, animated through the labour of primarily anonymous contributors working inside and outside the art world" (Warren – Crow, 2013:109). It is specifically the focus on commodity and labour that was of greatest interest to this study since the fictive women artists selected as comparable case studies demonstrate the efforts required to establish their self-brands and transmediated identities.

Reena Spaulings as a fictive persona demonstrates through her existence that she, like her work, is also a (re)construction whose very existence poses an ontological question surrounding issues of reality, the nature of being in relation to the ways individuals function within the societal context of the 21st century.

Whilst Reena Spaulings as a fictive artist is interesting on many levels when exploring issues of commodity and identity – unlike the case studies selected for this research Reena Spaulings does not have physical presence – she is neither performed by the artist/s or part of a delegated performance thus rendering visual analysis of the artist persona redundant. Although she functions successfully as a transmedia text, due to her lack of physical representation she has no presence as an individual via social media sites. Whilst this same point could be argued for Susan Fielder in relation to social media, Susan Fielder, performed by an actor demonstrates the development of the fictive artist, illustrating the process of performance during digital and post digital.

In addition Susan Fielder also continues to have a presence online through her artist website – which offers a more personal connection to the artist's identity. Another reason for Reena Spaulings not to be selected was due to the anonymous constantly changing group of artists that assume her identity which reflects "a political refusal to be subjectivized" (Anastas et al, 2006, p.121). With her ethereal presence devoid of a physical presence since it was felt this would deviate away from the research questions. Nonetheless, it was felt that acknowledgment of her impact on this research as a fictive entity was important to document in relation to the development of the study as well as her impact on the progression of Seren Sanclêr, specifically in relation to developing a fictional novel after the completion of the research thesis.

One of the first artists that I began to explore in depth was the Australian artist Susan Fielder (see figure 1.2) the creation of Sandra Bridie, Kevin Murray and Melanie Beddie. 'Primarily known as the creator of fictional artists' (McQualter, 1996: n.p.) Bridie's art practice has focused on the creation of fictional artists through a range of media; their identity as real personas established across a multiplatform series such as performance, film, sculpture, painting and conceptual art. What drew me to *Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective* was the fact that unlike many of the other female fictional artists examined for this research Susan Fielder depicts an unsuccessful artist who is on the fringes of the art world. The issues surrounding the failures of women artists seemed to be encapsulated through Susan Fielder's unsuccessful career thus reflecting the problems women artists have faced throughout history and continue to do so today when attempting to achieve critical recognition and acclaim as successful artists in their own right.

Donelle Woolford has proved to be the most fascinating fictional entity of my research. After discovering her artist website thingsthatfall.com Donelle Woolford initially offers a

detailed presentation of the life of a young contemporary African American woman (see Figure 1.3). Defined as "an African American artist for the 21st century" who as a narrative created by Scanlan can be perceived as "a character spawned by myths and compelled by demographics to embody the persona that her pseudo-Cubist paintings require" (Ellison & Gilissen, 2008: n.p.). The myth making is further developed via other media outlets through interviews, of particular interest is Nicola Trezzi's interview with Donelle Woolford *When Attitudes Become Multitudes: An Interview with Donelle Woolford* (2010).

Firstly it is important to note that Trezzi pens the article under his pseudonym Marcel Janco and has first-hand experience of the fictive artist since he is part of the collective construction of the fictive artist Lucie Fontaine. Citing Joe Tang in order to pose a question to the artist ""Donelle Woolford, Narrative artist. Donelle Woolford, Cubist painter. Donelle Woolford, avatar. The possibilities are endless" Could you please explain? Who is Donelle Woolford?" (Janco, 2010: 107) allows for the artist to consider her fictive state. Donelle Woolford's response "A folk legend? A product? A myth? Or maybe she is the precise outcome of a demographic that is continually calibrated to reflect our collective desire for an artist like Donelle Woolford" (Janco, 2010: 107) demonstrates the endless possibilities of creating a fictional entity as a work of art to explore issues of gender, race and construction of identity. I was fortunate enough to attend *A Trusted Friend* exhibition in July 2012 at the Carlos/Ishikawa gallery London. This allowed me to familiarise myself with the work of Donelle Woolford directly and offered me a first-hand opportunity to scrutinise the intellectual processes and working methodologies of an artist creating a fictional persona. Not only have there been many women who have assumed the identity of Donelle Woolford's during her career (2005 – present) but in 2012 Scanlan transformed her into a mid-career artist, instantaneously aging her from thirty one to fifty eight years old. This has been achieved through the use of older women performing as the artist and through the rewriting of her background history. In 2013 her biography on her website acknowledges that she is now "an independent entity" (Woolford/Scanlan, 2016: n.p)

As transfictive artist, Donelle Woolford demonstrates the opportunities individuals have to developing/cultivating particular public personas. The implications of her controversial creation and the issues she raises about race, gender and authenticity culminated with the backlash response by the media and art world with her inclusion in the 2014 Whitney Biennial.

Although she remains a fictional character, her achievements and body of work have established her as a fully realized, circulating subject with publicly acknowledged

attributes' (thingsthatfall.com). The performance of identity is realised completely through the development and continual transformation of Donelle Woolford. The inclusion of Donelle Woolford in this research is based on how her performance can be used to conceptualize the play of identity formation through transmedia storytelling.

Cherry Lazar (see Figure 1.4) is the creation of New Zealander artist Stephie Key. Her first solo exhibition *Cherry on Top* in Paris in 2015 focused mainly on photographic self-portraits (all of which were also exhibited through Instagram.) Key states that the creation of Cherry Lazar is inspired by second wave feminists, thus the use of Cherry Lazar's body in her artwork in a way illustrates the present debate surrounding the way that Selfies have been discussed as a feminist act which implies that the objectified image of woman is being reclaimed whilst others perceive this as an exemplification of passive narcissism.

Schrager, as stated earlier, also works with digital technology to examine identity, the biography of the female body and issues of ownership through her own image. Works such as *My Modeling Portfolio* (2012), *SarahWhiteModeling.com* (2012), *ArtSexyStudio.com* (2013) and an ongoing project *EscartGirl.com* (2013) demonstrate her interest in the legal and economic control over an individual's images. However it is her present art project Ona Artist that is of most interest to this research. Schrager expresses that "it's important for us to start considering selfies an advanced and florid kind of self-portraiture... People are exploring themselves and they are owning their explorations, which should be supported as an alternative to what I call "man hands" (men selling women's images as art)" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.). Schrager has specifically focused on her own identity on the Web where "Since 2010 I've conducted an ongoing interaction with my Google Image search results. First was Removal, then Multiplication (necessitated by an act of GF Revenge), and now conflation" (Schrager, 2015:n.p.). Her examination of the female body where she feels "It is conceptually central to my work that I use my own image" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.) in relation to ownership and her personal experiences as an artist "when the director of the West Chelsea Artists Open studios kicked me out of the event in 2012; he claimed my artwork was an "ad" and not "art" and that I was a "commercial entity" not an "artist"" (Schrager, 2015: n.p).

Despite "Slut Shaming" (Schrager, 2015: n.p) she directly considers the role digi feminism has had on feminist artists since "I own the rights to myself and use my own image" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.) and the ways they have exhibited their bodies as art and demonstrates that "women should have the right to do what they wish with their bodies"

(Schrager, 2015: n.p.) thus reinforcing the concept that it is important for women to present their bodies in diverse ways within the art world.

Equally, it is important to consider the fictive artists discussed above in relation to Alison M. Gingeras who in her article *The Lives of Artists* (2004) considers how important persona has been historically to artists as well as navigating an exploration of artist identity and self-promotion in a contemporary cultural landscape where "Many artists have consciously cultivated their public persona as a strategic, often antagonistic element in their art practice" and although "…there is no single moment of origin when artists began to elevate their own personas into something more significant than simple biographical interest, there are those who have contributed to the transformation of persona into an autonomous field of artistic activity, equal to any traditional artistic practice"(Gingeras, 2004: n.p.).

In light of this, Seren Sanclêr, the fictional artist created for this research, was developed to consider directly the contemporary issues of gender and identity of present day women artists. Her conception which is based on feminist readings, artist research and interviews, examination of transmedia texts in light of establishing an identity through narrative, ensures that Seren Sanclêr as practice research has been a constructive vehicle in considering the factors influencing the crafting of identity of fictional women artists. This visual autoethnographic approach will be detailed and justified in chapters 3 and 5.

The research also acknowledges the legacy of feminist artists and their work exploring gender, the female body and identity as well as more recent feminist consideration of the Selfie regarding reclaiming ownership of the female form. Thus allowing for a personal exploration and understanding of the importance of an artist's identity. The creative research element consequently attempts to reflect the history of artists and their exploration of cultural implications of gender through their work.

The construction of her persona as an artist has been clearly influenced by Cahun, Wilke and particularly Sherman, the act of performance and self-portraiture of the persona Roberta Breitmore, Donelle Woolford's effective use of multiplatform media, Cherry Lazar's exhibition through social media as well as Ona Artist's prodigious use of multi-platforms to develop her transmediated celebrity identity. The intention of the creative element of the research was to explore the experiences of contemporary artists. It was felt that a constructed fictional artist would be more efficient at rendering a subjective experience of reality in order to understand the thought processes of creating an identity

as well as draw a focus to the influences of digi feminism on the dominant themes explored through contemporary feminist artists' work such as gender, the body and ownership.

Influenced by the artists studied, Seren Sanclêr's narrative identity, enacted by myself, was developed through live performance, painting, writing, photography and digital media as illustrated in Figures 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1. Thus the fictional artist as a creative element of the research builds upon the work of earlier feminist artists in order to explore the cultural implications of gender. In a similar way to the artists selected for this research, Seren Sanclêr, visited exhibitions, submitted work for exhibition and joined artist groups, her experiences have been documented via social media sites and her existence in the real world has been substantiated through correspondence with galleries, artists and writers. It is intended that Seren Sanclêr's purpose for the research through multiplatform media explore how branding of the artist identity is established, whilst addressing directly the representation of the artist today. This allowed the research to explore issues such as sexuality, gender and the way artists perceive and promote their own identity.

It became clear early on in the research that it was important for Seren Sanclêr's constructed identity as an artist to specifically focus on photography and digital media as an art form, since the transfictive women artists examined for this research utilising the same methods have been able to create narrative identities with varying success. Although photography had been used for decades preceding the feminist art movement, it is understandable why this medium attracts women artists. Defined as a voyeuristic medium, photography was and still is a powerful tool in deconstructing the male gaze and bringing private moments into the public domain. Currently, as presented by the case studies, digital technology continue to expand imaginative frontiers, providing opportunities for artists to explore women and identity through multiple platforms. This research proposes that the concept of fictional personae presented by the case studies is more than a feminist issue. It also reflects contemporary society's preoccupation and pleasure with masquerade and playful performance through social media where each individual exists in a multicultural and multi temporal environment. Thus the development of the fictional artist may be defined as a conspiracy between artist and audience, their secret agreement to make the persona a part of reality. In different ways, the fictional artists all embrace the possibilities of expanded selves, blurring boundaries between exterior and interior, fact and fiction.

Each of the artists selected for this research challenge the notion of fixed identity: they construct, and sometimes as quickly dismantle, issues concerning the representation of the physical female body, assumed expectations of the woman artist, and the art world they reside in. They explore questions of identity sometimes through self-portrayals in photographs, performance art or on film. Assuming the role of the artist, they act out various roles, both real and imagined. In different ways they fracture a single, solitary sense of self, instead offering identity as a creation of multiple projections of invented, fictional selves. By adopting an artist persona they overturn accepted distinctions between illusion and reality.

1.7. Chapter Overview

With that in mind, Chapter 2 provides the reader with a literature review and deals with the notoriously difficult question: what is identity particularly in relation to the transmediated self? At least, what are some of the parameters that might be considered as important for determining something as an approach to the development of the artist's identity particularly that of the fictional artist with a particular focus on performance, branding and digital media in relation to feminist art? However without trying to be an all-encompassing feminist art historical overview this part of the thesis will specifically focus on the performative nature of transfictive artists as well as the importance of self-branding as well as consider the ongoing trajectory of digi-feminist artists.

Chapter 3 outlines the approach taken for this research and justifies the use of autoethnography and visual approaches as a methodology. It examines recent developments in autoethnography whilst also clarifying the inclusion of a visual autoethnographic chapter alongside the more conventional method of case studies. This chapter reflects a change in emphasis in research from research *about* the Visual Arts and artists (as *subject*) to a more pro-active research model involving practitioners researching through action and reflecting in and on action. Thus making the researcher / practitioner central to the inquiry as is the context in which the research is taking place.

Chapter 4 contextualises Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist within the recent phenomenon of contemporary fictive artists. It looks at how their practices explore issues of identity, the artists' construction process as practice, the importance of performance and authenticity as well as critical responses to the work. Encompassing each of the case study artists is the underlining way each fictive project illustrate the ways in which digital technology enhance the transfictive construction

process as well as perhaps begin to unravel the creators' motives behind the creation of a fictive artist that is female. This in turn raises issues surrounding reclaiming the female body as well as the growing interest of feminist artists and women in general in exploring female identity through self-portraiture and its close association with society's preoccupation with performance via digital media.

Consequently Chapter 5, based on the findings of Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist, focuses on the autoethnographical mainly analytical approach to this research – the creation of a contemporary fictive artist, Seren Sanclêr. The conception of Seren Sanclêr as a transfictive artist allowed the research to ground the activities through the use of multimedia platforms, thus allowing for critical analysis of a personal case study as well as providing the research with a first-hand experience of the creative process resulting in the visual autoethnography (Chapter 6). Subsequently, Seren Sanclêr is presented both analytically (Chapter 5) and visually (Chapter 6) in order to illustrate the processes and practice of transfictive artists with specific consideration to: construct of identity, performance, digi-feminism, self-branding and the rise of the transmediated self.

As briefly outlined above, Chapter 6 presents findings in the form of a visual autoethnography, illustrating the creative process in constructing a fictive persona as a transfictive identity across multiple platforms. It was felt that to understand the essence of Seren Sanclêr and how she has developed it was important to present samples of her existence and the labour undertaken to establish and develop her self-brand. Presented in a fictive way, the chapter poses as Seren Sanclêr's artist journal which presents her artist project in exploring selfebrity - *I wanna be Adored: Portrait of an Artist as a Young Brand*. Acknowledging fictive art, parafiction and mimesis, the chapter is structured visually around an artist journal initially where pages assume the appearance of an artist's journal then transforming into simulating an iPad interface in order to present her creative presence via social media and other websites thus demonstrating the laboured construction process of her transmediated identity. Equally, this chapter also further justifies the use of a visual autoethnographical approach where a creative visual/textual approach through which it is anticipated that proposed readers/viewers will be able to relate to the transmediated self which is presented. The chapter itself exemplifies Seren Sanclêr as a transfictive heteronym (Sylvester, 2016: n.p.).

Finally the last chapter, Chapter 7, gives a justification for the importance of a critical reading of the work of the five fictive artists where the critical position of identity

construction and performance, digi feminism and digital media art debates are analysed and the need for further study in issues surrounding self-branding and the transmediated self are substantiated. Furthermore, the lack of critical analyses of fictive artists in general and in particular the artists in question, is once more taken up and debated.

The chapter tentatively concludes with highlighting the significance of the transmediated self which is encapsulated by the fictive artists explored in this study. Whilst the performance of narrating the self as presented throughout the thesis appears historically to be an inherent part of our psyche, the practice of constructing the transmediated self as fictive artist reinforces its continued relevance as a phenomenon to study.

Thus, the transfictive artists offer an opportunity to see how spreadable media extend, reorient, and reimagine existing historical trajectories in the production and consumption of culture. By comprehending the artists' practice in the construction of the transfictive artists in terms of cultural exchange across and transformation through different media platforms this requires acknowledging traditional processes of adaptation and translation of content. Such research it is felt supports a greater understanding of the longer history of production and consumption of cultural convergence but also provide us with methods to better understand its evolution in the contemporary context in relation to the social exchange of spreadable media today particularly in relation to fifth wave feminism and digital feminist art.

1.8. Research questions

Such changes brought on particularly by digital media, in the way we present ourselves to the world which allows for multiple identities to be performed led to the consideration of what significant creative choices do artist make when they construct fictional artists and in turn how do individuals in general construct their digital identities and self-brand into an evolving transmedia text?

Thus the main research question focus: Is transmedia storytelling an effective method to develop fictional artists' identities?

Therefore a key concern for this research is to understand specifically how fictive artists through a wide variety of texts craft their identities. This is considered in light of fifty years of feminist theory, the use of photography, the rise of the Selfie and the importance of social media in the promotion of the artist.

Why is establishing a clear identity for a fictive artist so important?

What is the motivation behind artists choosing to create fictive artists from a female perspective?

How is identity realised through the creation of a transmedia text in establishing and constructing narratives?

What effect does gender or collective authorship have on the creation of an identity   and its reception by society?

Where does feminism fit when considering the issue of artist as brand and identity as reduced to a commodity?

Within cyberspace, artists have ever evolving opportunities to construct identity in both realistically conceived and alternative forms that explore key notions of identity and representation. The rapid growth in popularity of social networking sites as well as accessibility to construct websites these digital spaces become important cultural locations where feminist artists can perform, (re)construct and share their identities and work. Thus it makes sense to explore how contemporary artists use transmedia and in particular digital media because not only are they important locations because of how identity is represented there, but they also important because of their great popularity as sites of identity construction. The implications for this research, then is that notions of identity and representations are at the very least considerations that each of these users must make when posting profile picture, accepting and adding photographs of themselves to their timelines, uploading SELFIES via two or more platforms – pictures which in essence reflect a manufactured identity or branding of the self to their network of friends. The term friends in this context, digital friends, reflect society's present use of social media which usually means a "wider, looser web of acquaintances" (Morrison, 2010: 4). Digital media has enabled people to connect more globally and in turn opened up new ways for individuals to represent themselves.

Transmedia storytelling across various platforms clearly provides the opportunity for the fictional artist to reach a potentially wider audience. The way the fictive artists are presented across a variety of media platforms also reflects contemporary society's fascination with mythologised identities particularly through photographs. The allure of

the Selfie reinforces this where such imagery mirrors Western hegemony and continues to persist in shaping contemporary expectations of what roles women as individuals should play in society. Since there are several entrance points to begin exploring the fictional artists, this give the audience a possibility to examine the personas in more depth and delve into the imagined life that has crossed over into reality.

1.9. Summary

The goal of this research is to contribute to and participate in academic discourse in evolving digital literacies and feminist pedagogy, particularly in its ability to construct identity through transmedia storytelling. At the intersection of these scholarly discourses is an underwritten understanding that digital media provide significant pedagogical opportunities that have yet to be fully embraced or exploited. Equally this research argues that this form of new literacy contributes to a body of knowledge that provides guidance to researchers interested in the semiotics of identity in an increasingly digital world. More specifically this research will offer an argument for exploring the importance of transmedia practice in constructing a persona brand for artists and for society at large. Such practices for artists could be extremely beneficial in the development of marketing strategies and reaching wider audiences.

With social media globally playing such an important part in people's lives, a phenomenon reflected in the emerging popularity of fictive artists it is important more than ever to "consider how the subjective field of vision itself is produced through sexual, racial and gendered difference – and how looking and seeing, as cultural practices, are always constructed 'in the field of sexuality, gender and race'" (Hall, 1999: 314). To that end, the critical reflection made possible through transmedia texts, particularly the visual form of representation in digital media, presents an opportunity for researchers and artists to explore notions of identity, representation and the construction of social knowledge.

2
Literature Review

Figure 2.1: #1 Digi Art Selfie (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

2.1 Gender, Genius and the Canon of Art

"Art History structurally ad actively excluded women from being considered able to participate in the realm of art, and from being considered an artist"

(Parker & Pollock, 2013: xviii – xix)

"The fact of the matter is that there have been no supremely great women artists, as far as we know, although there have been many interesting and very good ones, who remain insufficiently investigated or appreciated…but no amount of manipulating the historical or critical evidence will alter the situation; nor will accusations of male-chauvinist distortion of history."

(Nochlin; 2003: 230)

Feminist art critics' initial focus was to draw attention to the reality that canonical artworks systematically characterise women and men correspondingly to deeply ingrained stereotypes. As art historian John Berger encapsulated, "men act and women appear" (Berger, 2008: 47), the mythology surrounding the figure of the artist as an empowered white man and a canon of "great artists" that was class, race and gender exclusive, developed out of the increased social status guaranteed to artists during the renaissance, in which they were considered as more than mere craftsmen (Meskimmon, 1996: 15). Parker and Pollock's statement that "The woman of genius does not exist, but when she does she is a man" (2013: 13) reinforces this wide held belief by feminist art scholars that the concept of genius has strong male connotations.

However, it is perhaps essential to begin with Linda Nochlin's 1971 seminal essay, *Why Have there Been No Great" Women Artists?,* in which she considers the issue that there have been no female counterparts to the Great Masters as well as stressing that this is not because women lack artistic talent, but because women have been customarily prevented access to art institutions thus making their full participation in the art world impossible. This essay is extremely important since it brought feminist concerns to the forefront of art history for the first time. In addition art history has advocated this inequality by not documenting it and by reiterating the belief that women are not great artists. "In the field of art history, the white Western male viewpoint, unconsciously accepted as the viewpoint of the art historian" (Nochlin, 2003: 229).

Nochlin's essay focuses on specific aspects of art education in order to expose how women have been excluded from art institutions and how this has had an impact on women's skills

as artists "things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class, and above all, male" (Nochlin, 2003: 231).

Beginning during the Renaissance and lasting until the late nineteenth century women were prohibited from working with nude models, Nochlin argues that without this crucial training, women did not possess the knowledge or skills necessary to work on history paintings, the pinnacle of artistic enterprise during this period "it was indeed institutionally made impossible for women to achieve artistic excellence, or success, on the same footing as men, no matter what the potency of their so called talent or genius" (Nochlin, 2003: 233).

Whilst Nochlin's essay which is now regarded as "canonical" helped form feminist art theory in the 1970s "like all other forms of historical discourse, it had to be constructed" (Reilly, 2015) it also opened up debate which perhaps still defines scholarly concerns in feminist art today (Nochlin & Reily, 2015). Although the essay makes some pertinent points regarding the role of women artists, her argument is lessened by her frequent use of generalities. Rather than focusing specifically on a particular historical period or cultural context, Nochlin considers the absence of the woman artist across a vast expanse of time thus lacking depth to her argument. For instance, critics of Nochlin suggest that her argument regarding women artists' training "ignores the complexity of contradictory possibilities" (Mullarkey, 1988: n.p). While this idea is certainly acceptable, there could be countless other reasons for the discrimination of women artists, including financial concerns, differing social statuses, prevailing attitudes about females of the time, and obligations in the home. By only attributing the discrimination of women to their lack of the nude model, it seems that Nochlin is limiting herself and greatly weakening her argument. In particular, whilst Pollock and Parker (2013) criticise Nochlin for being an equal-rights feminist they instead embrace the Marxist assertion that society is structured by relations of material inequality, but contend that society is equally structured by sexual inequality and gender divisions. Thus by extending the existing framework of historical materialism they compose new feminist analyses of sexuality and gender identity.

As a result of Nochlin's essay (1971) a great deal has been written on the feminist critique of genius in art during the last forty years in a response to Rousseau (1844 – 1910), Kant

(1724-1804), and Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860) who pronounced that it is only men that can be regarded as genius since women are perceived to possess characters and mentalities too weak to produce genius (Battersby, 1989; Barzman, 1994; Parker & Pollock, 2013; Pollock, 2003; Salomon, 1998; Duncan, 1993; Preziosi, 1998; Jones, 2003; Chadwick, 2007; Guerrilla Girls, 1998; Broude & Garrard, 1982, 1992, 2005; Hounsokou, 2009; Brand & Korsmeyer, 2010). For instance A.W Eaton's essay *Feminist Philosophy of Art* (2008) offers a critical survey of major developments in the field and proposes from her findings that feminist philosophy of art is interdisciplinary, drawing from many fields such as the arts, art criticism, art history, film studies and psychoanalysis. She quickly points out that "All of the different philosophical approaches to ending women's subordination in the arts and in discourses about the arts take as their point of departure the fact of situatedness"(Eaton, 2008: 874) - the key factor being gender.

Traditionally, traits such as logic and strong intellect have been regarded as 'masculine' therefore men are regarded as superior, qualities that women do not naturally possess hence reinforcing their inferiority. Correspondingly women are commonly deemed more sensitive as well as emotional and as a result less intellectual. Yet ironically the artistic genius is praised not only for the strong mentality that has always been attributed to men more than to women, but also for sensitivity and creativity that partakes equally of supposedly feminine attributes however it is especially exclusionary of women artists. Feminists and postmodernist theorists have worked hard to debunk the myths of genius. *God's Little Artist* (1981/2013), an essay by art historians Parker and Pollock examine how the myth of the genius as a creative individual is tied to the emergence of a new meaning for the word 'artist'. Until the eighteenth century the term was applied to an artisan, craftsman, or someone who displayed taste. Parker and Pollock (2013) maintain that the modern perception (which developed from the Enlightenment onwards) of the artist as imaginative, creative, unconventional – a bohemian and a pioneer – is a constructed idea that came into being as certain craftsmen strove to become more respected members of the cultural elite. Nanette Salomon's 1991 essay, *The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission,* traces the roots of the art historical canon by exploring Giorgio Vasari's sixteenth century book *Le Vite De'piu eccellenti Architetti, Pittori et Scultori Italiani* (1550), and evidencing its influences on scholars that follow concluding with H.W. Janson and A F Janson's *The History of Art*: The Western Tradition (1962). Salomon's essay is "a historical survey of the nature of such 'omissions' of women from standard art historical survey textbooks, it shares many of Nochlin's perspectives and those of another contributor to the earlier art historical debates on the subject, Griselda Pollock" (Preziosi,

1998: 341). She argues that Vasari's created notions of the artist, art critic and canon still persist to current times, as can be observed in Jansons' twentieth century text. Salomon investigates how the canon has worked to omit women artists and reinforced hierarchical structures.

Whilst women artists have not been perceived as capable of works of genius, feminine symbols such as conception, labor, and birth have been freely appropriated in descriptions of (male) artistic creativity; demonstration of feelings in women's art was identified as a manifestation of characteristic female emotions, whereas strong emotions expressed in the work of men were interpreted as emotions expressed with mastery and control. Feminist scholars therefore have contested the idea of the great male artistic genius arguing that women artists throughout history have been overlooked or omitted from the canon of art "...feminists have opposed the exclusion of women from the canon for over twenty years and, more recently, have refused meaning "imposed" by male critics" (Barzman, 1994: 327). Due to this wide range of studies exploring women's historical accomplishments in the fine arts and the ways they have been neglected it is important to point out that a number of women practitioners have been brought to the attention of both scholars and general audiences. Thus emphasising that although there have been relatively few women artists recognized as 'great' or 'genius' they have not been altogether absent from the historical record. Rediscovery of the work of women of the past was one of the major efforts of feminist scholars during the second-wave feminism of the 1970s and 80s, whilst informing a good deal of feminist scholarship in the critical disciplines in order to attain the goal of sexual equality in the arts. Although an important stage in the development of work in feminist aesthetics this proved to be a temporary objective since "Perhaps it is time to stop worrying about female artists and their objects, at least temporarily, in order to cast a critical eye on art history itself" (Barzman, 1994: 327).

There has been considerable deliberation among feminist scholars concerning how to measure the qualities related to genius and artistic accomplishment. It has been argued that the idea of genius itself is questionable because it highlights inequalities within society, and instead the concept itself should simply be discarded thus "...feminist art historians might serve their own interests best at this point by refusing finality in the fixing of meaning and depending instead on counter-hegemonic practices that are relational and even in some sense dialectical" (Barzman, 1994: 333). Some feminists argue that praising the achievements of one individual woman artist perpetuates the hegemonic practices that feminist art theory has attempted to dismantle since "counter-hegemonic

practices must be unfixed, protean, and ready to shift, for they are themselves dislocated in and through the very process of destabilizing the status quo" (Barzman, 1994: 334). Other feminist scholars disagree and have located alternative criteria at work in women's achievements, claiming that one can discern traditions of female genius at work in the body of art produced by women (Battersby, 1989).

There has been a wide cross section of writings which have especially been pertinent to the subject of gender in relation to contemporary art historical practices (Chadwick, 2007; Borzello, 2000, Parker & Pollock, 2013; Broude & Garrard, 1982, 1992, 2005). Whitney Chadwick's survey of women who have contributed to visual culture since the Middle Ages in *Women, Art, and Society* (2007) challenges the assumption that great women artists are exceptions to the rule that transcended their sex to produce major works of art. Chadwick's book presents not only an alternative canon of women artists it re-examines the works themselves and the ways in which they have been perceived as marginal, often in direct reference to gender. The infamous Guerrilla Girls as part of their manifesto in *The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion* (1998) demonstrate how men have dominated the art scene and discouraged or obscured women's involvement in the history of art. Frances Borzello's *A World of Our Own: Women as Artists* (2000) also draws attention to the fact that women have always practised as artists however their lack of recognition has been due to the influence and power of the dominant male establishment. This study examines how they overcame these difficulties and turns the focus away from women artists as 'victims' to give an account of how they actually practised their art. The book considers how women dealt with the exclusionary tactics of the male dominated art establishment and accepted the standards of their chosen profession. Beginning in the Renaissance, and culminating with the work of contemporary women Borzello reconstructs the changing world of the female artist, tracing its development through the centuries as artistic and social attitudes evolved. Parker and Pollock's seminal work *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (2013) critique of Art History's sexism reflects how the changing historical social realities of gender relations and women artists' translation of gendered conditions into their works provide keys to novel understandings of why we might study the art of the past. Key to this is the proposal that "Women's art practice has never been absolutely forbidden, discouraged or refused, but rather contained and limited to its function as the means by which masculinity gains and sustains its supremacy in the important sphere of cultural production" (Pollock & Parker 1981) thus in response to Nochlin's essay, it is argued that women have always created great art, yet what constitutes great art within society has been moulded by cultural hegemony.

This consideration of creativity (Spacks, 1975; Ecker 1986; Hein and Korsmeyer 1993; Nathanson &Young, 2006) offers an opening into wider debates regarding whether women's art might represent a kind of 'gynocentric' tradition different from the androcentric practices of male artists where a "necessary or privileged relationship between female gender and a particular kind if literary [or artistic] structure, style or from" (Felski, 1989: 19). An issue arises with this approach since it implies that the works of women artists inevitably exhibit specific feminine aesthetic attributes due to the fact that as producers they are women. As a result, many feminists respond negatively to this view, questioning the assumption of a stereotypical view of woman as artist, and in turn femininity, since such ideas stifle feminist discourse and interpretation. Since it is "… especially pressing given third wave feminism's insistence that one cannot properly understand sex oppression without simultaneously attending to the struggles of other disenfranchised groups" (Eaton, 2008: 4). Equally gynocentrism does not take into account any other social positions such as historical, national, ethnic, racial, sexual orientation that clearly would influence women artists consequently some scholars question the overt simplicity of reducing the analysis of artists' work to gender (Fraser & Bartky 1992; Nathanson & Young, 2010; Sommers, 1995; Coward, 1999; Felski 1989, 1998).

Alternatively, some scholars reason that women artists and writers often create work that offers a uniquely different approach which offers a counter voice and which be considered to claim its own aesthetic. Although this has held great appeal for feminists and an opportunity to celebrate women's art it was also greatly problematic. "To insist that women's art and female creative processes differed inherently from men's reintroduced a form of gender essentialism associated with patriarchal conceptions of the nature of men and women" (Devereaux, 2005: 654) thus demands for a practice of feminine aesthetics have been extensively criticised for reducing women to a distinct nature whilst disregarding their many social and historical differences. However, an alternative approach to a specifically feminist aesthetic focused on the distinctive nature of women is explored by Christine Battersby in *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (1989). Battersby argues that identifying that women are treated differently justifies a need to establish a feminist aesthetic "a female creator needs to be slotted into the context of male traditions…but to understand what the artist is doing and the merits or demerits of her work, she will also have to be located in a separate female pattern that runs through the first in a kind of contrapuntal way" (Battersby, 1989: 152). Therefore the female genius occupies an intersection between "the matrilineal and patrilineal patterns that make up culture" (Battersby, 1989: 157). To return to Eaton's

essay *Feminist Philosophy of Art* (2008) she also argues that the central issues of feminist philosophy that must be confronted now is that it is a mistake to categorize women artists through the "assumption that our anatomical sexual and reproductive features can only be understood as a group of immutable and inherent properties that unite all women" (Eaton, 2008: 10). Eaton suggests that rather than taking an essentialist view of sex it "might instead be understood in terms of the phenomenological experience of anatomical difference, where this is understood to be shaped by social norms" (Eaton, 2008: 5).

This approach follows in the tradition of the pioneering work of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) where approaches to the understandings of sexual difference that focuses on the phenomenology of embodiment have been developed within feminism in a much more subtle and complex way. It is important to note that this feminist phenomenological focus on anatomical difference as shaped by social norms, *sex* is perceived as an essentialist concept but, rather, selects one significant aspect of *social* location. With this in mind it is important to acknowledge that art is typically made with and appreciated through the body. It is the body that has been the preferred subject matter of the visual arts throughout history, thus it is quite logical to presume sex, realised in this way, to make a difference to the appreciation and production of art.

French feminism that emerged in the 1970s was more focused on 'the body' where the work of Hélène Cixous explored the concept of *écriture féminine*, arguing that writing and philosophy are *phallocentric* therefore focusing on 'writing from the body' as a subversive exercise in response to this (Cixous & Clément , 1975; Irigaray, 1985). Although Luce Irigaray's mutual belief of writing the body derives from differing theoretical underpinnings to Julia Kristeva's approach which focuses on semiotic discourse, each propose parallel systems to singularize creativity distinct from androcentric styles. Despite differing theoretical frameworks employed by the French feminist scholars, such ideas have proven invaluable in the development of a feminist philosophy.

Whilst Feminist art theory has developed a great wealth of research on issues surrounding the great art canon it has also as part of this discourse focused on the art system itself. It is acknowledged that not only have women been excluded from training as artists, the gallery system has also prevented women artists from exhibiting and selling their work, as well as being excluded from museum collections thus reinforcing dominant culture's, particularly Western, patriarchal heritage. During the last sixty years feminist scholars have endeavoured to open up debate surrounding gender in order to explore deep-rooted

beliefs, expose the male dominated art history canon, as well as the under-representation of women within it. This has had a great impact in revealing how previous writings about art history have generally ignored the achievements of women artists, offered possible institutional reasons for women artists' work historically being considered as less important in the visual arts as well as begin to unearth the histories of female artists and celebrate their achievements by incorporating their work to the existing canon of art. As the field of study has illustrated, it is equally important to recognise that women artists still create their work within a male dominated art world and within an aesthetic system that is based on a patriarchal language. To integrate women's art within masculine-normative structures is not clear-cut since there is a risk of seriously misinterpreting women artists' work since the very language in which such interpretations are written is itself gendered, (Meskirnmon, 1996: 69).

Feminist art challenges the ideas central to a patriarchal society by recognising that throughout history, the depiction of women has been constructed for a male audience.What it means to speak of 'female experience' in relation to the production of art, what a specific 'feminist' art practice might imply and finally, how women artists tried to circumvent the problem of the objectification of the female body. Much has been written about women artists and their focus on the personal as well as the feminist focus on women's identity and motherhood. An essential aim is to gain autonomy without the acceptance or inclusion within the 'accepted male attitude'. To gain this autonomy, many women artists have had to, and continue to, challenge the negative ideas and attitudes that suggest that women are inferior. It is important, for the contextualisation of contemporary female artists and for the acknowledgement of the achievements of previous generations of feminist artists, to be aware of these issues. Especially, as will be shown, as these concerns are still valid today and contemporary women artists not only produce certain art works, but very likely get them accepted by art institutions due to the foundations laid by their female predecessors.

Furthermore feminists also need to acknowledge that:

> "Although the debate about how to deal with gender bias in artworks, canon formation and traditional theories of art is lively and ongoing, these concerns no longer dominate feminist philosophy of art as they once did. As philosophers have developed and elaborated various positions on these matters, the field has started to move in less reactive and more positive directions'" (Eaton, 2008: 15).

In spite of poststructuralist efforts to de-construct the author (Barthes 1977), Foucault 1979), the concept of genius has lived on (Dietrich, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Hill, Brandeau, Truelove & Kent, 2014; Craig, 2015; Robinson, 2011, 2015). Battersby perceptively, argues that the privileging of male artists continues since the criteria for artistic excellence continue to "...have their origins in theories that specifically and explicitly denied women genius" (Battersby 1989: 23). Yet perhaps feminist art research needs to move in different directions since Nochlin herself now reflects that the "whole idea of "greatness" is out of date, as far as contemporary art is concerned, and rightly so" (Reilly, 2015). It seems pertinent to conclude with Jennifer Chan's *Why Are There No Great Women Net Artists? Vague Histories of Female Contribution* (2011) a response to Nochlin's 1971/2003 work essay and Steve Dietz's similarly titled essay *Why Have There Been No Great Net Artists?* (1999) which examines women artists' contributions to web based art. Chan acknowledges that "In its infancy, women artists co-opted video as a mass medium for channeling affective and durational realities" (Chan, 2011: 2) however during the last four decades when examining web based women artists she argues that they are inadvertently trapped in paradigms of performance "Curated "feminist video" of the now is still characterized by presencing the self in front of the camera – a genre overdetermined by narcissism: role-playing, autobiography, pop-cultural appropriation and bodily performance constitute what we now know as "feminist" video"(Chan, 2011: 28).

As a result concerns regarding equal representation of women artists in exhibition spaces appear to be an ongoing feminist debate that clearly has not been resolved. Therefore Nochlin's (1971/2003) essay and the question it asks could be regarded as a benchmark for the feminist reassessment of art history. Whether scholars agree or disagree with Nochlin, her question subsequently has been used as a starting point by numerous writers in their investigations, which as demonstrated, over the years has pushed its boundaries, showing why other questions need to be asked.

2.2 Feminist Art – A Herstory

"By now, most people - not just feminist people - will acknowledge that feminism has made a contribution to the avant-garde and/or modernist arts of the 1970s."

(Lippard. 1980: 362)

Feminist perspectives of art first surfaced alongside the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s from a combined involvement in political activism in the contemporary art world

and critiques of the historical traditions of the arts. This field of study developed alongside the postmodern debates about culture and society that have taken place in many academic disciplines in the last fifty years through the questioning of Western Philosophy Legacy. Lippard's assertion that "'Feminist art' is a political position... It is also developing new forms and a new sense of audience" (Lippard, 1980: 362) demonstrates the continuing importance of a feminist approach to contemporary art theory. Thus justifying the persisting need to critically examine the issues surrounding Western traditional values and theories when engaging with art in order for them to be addressed and challenged by feminist artists and scholars alike.

"Feminism's major contribution has been too complex, subversive, and fundamentally political to lend itself to such internecine, hand-to-hand stylistic combat" (Lippard, 1980: 362) thus reflecting that re-evaluation and critique of these values opened up possibilities to question the art world structures and power relations that were established during the 1970s. It was at this time that artists, frustrated with the existing structures of the art world, instigated the creation of an alternative scene in which they had control over the type of art they created and how it was exhibited. This led to a blurring of the boundaries between what the art world considered fine art and other art forms, as artists, particularly women, began to experiment with performance, photography, video art and book art. Through these artistic modes and exploration of popular culture, an array of approaches was fostered thus developing concepts such as post-minimalism and conceptualism. Now seen as the beginnings of post-modernism, the 1970s were political in nature and women played a significant role in the questioning of dominant ideology and breaking down the barriers of the traditional art world. The feminist movement played a crucial role in the development of post modernism, particularly through art. Women artists formed collectives and through unified sisterhood began to reject the established art canon (Pollock, G. 1999/2013: 23) which led to the consideration that whilst "Difference is what it's all about, but not just gender difference" (Lippard, 1989: 29) thus signalling how women artists were now not only concerned with issues of gender but also with race, ethnicity and sexuality.

The Feminist Art Movement by perceiving that "Feminism is an ideology, a value system, a revolutionary strategy, a way of life" (L. Lippard, 1980: 362) focused on the fact that few women were represented in galleries and museums and that they were excluded from the canon of art history, all of which greatly influenced contemporary art practices. In its pursuit for equality, feminist content and gender issues were introduced, establishing the

concept that gender is socially, rather than naturally constructed. Other devices used to subvert hegemony were the validation of art forms not considered high art such as craft, video and performance art. Many feminist artists explored an aesthetics that arose from female experience - the female body, women's history, and individual autobiography. "The 1970s might not have been "pluralist" at all if women artists had not emerged during that decade to introduce the multicolored threads of female experience into the male fabric of modern art" (Lippard, 1980: 362) Furthermore, the feminist art movement which had distrusted the cult of genius and questioned the classification of greatness thus placed an emphasis on the concept of pluralist diversity rather than traditional held beliefs (Pollock, 1993/2001: 23-39). In refuting the universal, feminist art theory widened the boundaries of the field of study however with the end of the 1970s an era of radical idealism in the arts came to a close.

In contrast feminist artists of the 1980s focused more on psychoanalysis and Postmodern theory, which observed the body in a more intellectually removed approach than the one exemplified by the female experience that dominated the art of the 1970s. During the 1980s, artists continued to develop the definition of feminist art and while they were not always affiliated with a coherent social movement, their key focus through their works still conveyed the need for women's equality.

Although the Feminist artists of the 1970s had made many advances, women were still not close to equal representation in the art world. "Critical interventions in representation have, however, continued in the work of artists associated with the post-structuralist theory led practice of the 1980s such as Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer and the Guerrilla Girls"(Johnson, 2013: 90). The fight for equality within the art world led to the creation of the Guerrilla Girls in 1985, an anonymous group of women artists renowned for their engagement with issues of gender and racial inequality within the art world. Their legendary protests, debates, and performances across New York drew attention to the inequalities of the New York Art scene. To hide their identity the group wore gorilla masks and adopted pseudonyms to avoid real-world repercussions for speaking out against powerful institutions. Through their protest art, the Guerrilla Girls expressed their pointed political message and took Feminist art in a new direction. Other 1980s Feminist artists such as Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger also focused on mass communication that drew on the visual lexis of advertising in both use of graphics and the representation of political statements into catchy slogans. These artists sought the deconstruction of male-dominant

social precepts, and focused less on the differences between men and women associated with 1970s Feminist art:

> "Third-wave feminism manifests itself in "grrl" rhetoric, which seeks to overcome the theoretical question of equity or difference and the political question of evolution or revolution, while it challenges the notion of "universal womanhood" and embraces ambiguity, diversity, and multiplicity in transversal theory and politics."
>
> (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006: 2)

A critical exploration of Third wave feminism, reflects on how it emerged out of a critique of the politics of the second wave (Gillis, Howie & Munford (Eds), 2007; Heywood & Drake, 1997; Zack 2005) as many feminists considered that earlier generations had oversimplified the white, middle-class, heterosexual women experiences and discounted the viewpoints of women of colour, the poor, gay, lesbian, transgender as well as women from the non-Western world. According to Lise Shapiro Sanders, focuses on the "diversity of women's experience over the similarities amongst women,' with a particular focus on addressing the inadequacies of second-wave ideology to deal with women's experience beyond its 'white, middle-class biases" (Shapiro Sanders; ed. Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2007: 7). It is also associated with a radical reclamation of the symbols associated with traditional femininity and the emergence of, so-called, 'lipstick' or 'girly' feminisms and the rise of 'raunch culture' whereby feminism in all its guises "Lipstick feminism, girlie feminism, riot grrl feminism, cybergrrl feminism,transfeminism, or just grrl feminism—feminism is alive and kicking" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006: 15).

Whilst Barry and Flitterman-Lewis (1980) identify four types of women's art practices it is the fourth type of art practice that is of particular relevance to the fictive artist examined within this study. The selected case studies to differing degrees locate "women at a crucial place in patriarchy which enables them to play on the contradictions within it" by specifically identifying art work as a textual practice to examine, the social construction of meaning "demonstrates the importance and function of discourse in the shaping of social reality" (44)

Barry and Flitterman-Lewis (1980) criticize the first three art practices for lack of representational theory of women whilst commending the fourth as employing theory to affect change within the patriarchal representation system that constitutes and constrains women through social practices in culture. Although the importance of a theoretical

underpinning to the art produced by women in relation to gender politics is an important factor that is relevant today it must be remembered that this examination of art created by women artists was published over thirty five years ago and raises concerns when considering art produced by contemporary women artists. This argument is also raised by Bloom (2003) who questions how relevant these questions of women's visual representation within a patriarchal system are for all women globally suggesting a need to establish "a space to articulate transnational feminist visual cultural practices" that is not only focused on the Western notion of feminism" (18) since "defining features of Western feminism do not always neatly translate from one context to another" (19).

Second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 70s which strongly rejected traditional representations of women and stereotypes of female attractiveness part were now reclaimed as potential sources of female empowerment. Third-wave feminism, as it applied to women of the 1990s and beyond, redefined the struggle for equality. Consequently, becoming less about women seizing power from men, and more focused on resisting the narrow definition of power circumscribed for them by others, including pioneering feminists. In *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century* Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (2016) draw attention to how women today have benefited from the progress made by grassroots social activists in the 1960s and 1970s yet women are more hesitant to identify themselves as feminists and seem indifferent to addressing the on-going sexism and gender-based barriers that still exist today where:

> "Young women today have more options available to them than at any other time in history, and because of these options, they feel, as we ourselves have felt, that not only can they accomplish anything they want to but there are no gender-based barriers; sexism, these young women are sure, is a thing of the past."

(Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016: 3)

Whilst the text disputes the notion that this is a post-feminist age, it does identify a third wave of feminism "the third wave operates from the assumption that identity is multifaceted and layered" (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016: 10). Thus third-wave feminisms are defined not by common theoretical and political standpoints, but rather by the use of performance, mimicry, and subversion as rhetorical strategies. This paradigmatic feminist shift is signalled by Gender theorist Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990/2011) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993/2011) which led to a radical critique of the inadequacies in feminism. Often regarded as the most groundbreaking work on feminist theory and gender studies, Butler's central thesis argues

that gender identity does not oppose sexual biology but, on the contrary, performs the possibility of something otherwise than male or female.

Linked quite closely to third wave feminism as well as to postmodernism, Cyberfeminism most active in the 1990s focuses on cyberspace, the Internet, and technology where the dominant perspective perceives the use of new technology as a means of freedom from gender constructs (Haraway, 1985, 2006; Daniels 2009; Orgad, 2005; Plant 1997; Podlas 2000). Cyberfeminism views technology as a vehicle for the dissolution of sex and gender as well as a means to link the body with machines. Faith Wilding in *Where is the Feminist Cyberfeminism?* reflects on the First Cyberfeminist International Conference in 1997, highlighting "The question of how to define cyberfeminism is at the heart of the often contradictory contemporary positions of women working with new technologies and feminist politics" (Wilding, 1998: 6). Wilding clearly points out that although there was a refusal to define cyberfeminism, collectively there was "a profound ambivalence in many wired women's relationship to what they perceive to be a monumental past feminist history, theory and practice" (Wilding, 1998: 7). This is as a result of the following factors summarised by Wilding: Rejection of old style (1970s) feminism, cybergrrl-ism, net utopianism and fear of political engagement.

The repudiation of historical feminism by cyberfeminists is problematic for Wilding since although they perceive 1970s feminism as limiting and anti-technology therefore not relevant to women's circumstances in the new technologies, its alignment with popular fears, stereotypes and misconceptions about feminism is more disconcerting. This attitude is contradictory since cyberfeminism has implemented many of the approaches of the avant garde feminist movement. Cyberfeminism in a similar way has utilised comparable strategies to combat stereotyping and sexism for instance women networks, feminist cultural, social, and language theory and analysis as well as the creation of new images of women such as avatars, cyborgs and gender fusion on the Net. Wilding suggests that it is important to acknowledge feminist history in order to negotiate issues of difference through new technologies for an informed practice of cyberfeminist politics. Whilst Susanna Paasonen (2011) investigates the histories of cyberfeminism addressing the meanings of the prefix cyber in cyberfeminism considering its appeal and attraction whilst also offering possible explanations for "this appeal gradually fading in the perpetually changing landscape of contemporary digital culture" (Paasonen, 2011: 336). Paasonen concludes that although cyberfeminism captured the utopian ironic zeitgeist of the 1990s

the "term no longer has the same appeal as a point of identification" (Paasonen, 2011: 349).

Wilding (1998) identifies cybergrrl-ism as one of the most popular feminist avatars offered to young women on the Net and an important manifestation of new feminine subjective and cultural representations in cyberspace. Although a platform to criticise men Cybergrrl-ism reflects a sense of net utopianism yet does not engage in a political critique of women's position on the Net, instead adopting an anti-theory attitude. Wilding recognises that although there is a growing body of feminist research exploring the ways some popular portrayals of women are persisting to reflect negative representations through digital media, as well as examine the strategies and work of digital feminist artists combatting this, there are clearly obvious shortcomings also. For instance some sexist and stereotyped images of women from popular media are frequently redistributed and re-presented without any analysis or critical consideration. There is a real need, Wilding suggests, that to break the gendered codes prevailing on the Net to create more positive and multifarious images of women in order to upset the traditional masculine/feminine binaries. It is important for cyberfeminists to reclaim feminist research such as Haraway's (1984) cyborgs or Butler's (1990) gender masquerade in order to identify and transform the traditional structures, content, and effects of the new technologies.

Many cyberfeminists perceive that new technologies offer a net utopianism, providing women with the opportunity to develop a new wave of feminist practice which can contest technologically complex territories, and chart new ground for women. However Wilding (1998) points out that it is of utmost importance to recognize that the new media exist within a social framework that is already established in its practices and embedded in economic, political and cultural environments which reinforce hegemony.

Another inconsistency identified about defining cyberfeminism by Wilding (1998) is the fear of defining this approach as simply reflecting historical feminist identity politics. While cyberfeminists do not want to be pinned down by preceding feminist ideology there are many cyberfeminists scholars who are developing extremely sophisticated feminist theories of language, subjectivity, the body, technology, and female representation in cyberspace. Yet there is little understanding of how these concepts relate to women's experiences of the Net and how they could be interpreted into a transformation of digital practices and structures particularly when considering:

"Current feminist art theory remains engaged with the body, but works with embodied subjectivity to explore alternative conceptions of women's agency, develops situated knowledges to reconfigure pleasurable, feminist aesthetics and examines its own critical premises through concepts of corporeal theory…New approaches to 'the body' helps us rethink the past histories of women's art practices as much as to produce critical work on contemporary art"

(Meskimmon, 2008: 389)

Equally it is important to note Haraway's work in shaping the contemporary use of the term cyborg which has been a vital component in the ways critical posthumanism discourse has advanced. Key feminist texts that have emerged from a posthuman approach are Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingstone's collection of essays from 1995, Posthuman Bodies, Katherine Hayles's How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics (1999), and Rosi Braidotti's essay Posthuman Feminist Theory (2016). Central to each of these texts is the ways in which the body is interpreted as a site where what it means to be human in a contemporary age is fundamentally contested by focusing on the idea of embodied difference where "posthuman bodies thrive in the mutual deformations of totem and taxonomy" (Halberstam & Livingstone, 1995 : 19).

While the editors Halberstam and Livingstone (1995) assert that attempting to establish an all-encompassing definition of the posthuman is unattainable; alternatively they propose that posthumanism needs to be considered in terms of the processes through which it emerges. Posthuman Bodies (1995) challenges the idea of identity being constructed through social categories claiming "that the posthuman condition is upon us and that lingering nostalgia for a modernist or humanist philosophy of self and other…is merely the echo of a discursive battle that has already taken place…"(Halberstam & Livingstone, 1995 : 19).

In contrast, Halyes's (1999) consideration of posthuman focuses on welcoming "the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and that understands human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continued survival" (Halyes, 1999: 5). The emphasis is placed on reconsidering the supposed connections between posthumanism and disembodied forms of existence. Through a historical assessment of cybernetics combined with literary critique, Halyes examines how scientific discourses and popular literary texts work concurrently to redesign notions of the human. Such an

approach reinforces the importance of the ways anxieties surrounding identity in relation to cyber and literary discourse are culturally embedded in relation to the collapse of bodily boundaries. This is incomplete contrast to Halberstam and Livingstone's (1995) assertion that "history is inefficient as a method of processing meaning; it cannot keep up" (Halberstam and Livingstone 1995: 3) who consider posthuman from the position of a "past and future lived as present crisis" (Halberstam and Livingstone 1995: 4). It is felt that navigating a position between the two approaches would offer the most advantages since to understand how body and identity through technology are being transformed requires an acceptance of the importance of a historical context in order to redefine the new ways identity is transforming.

Of most interest to this research is how both Halberstam and Livingstone (1995) and Hayles (1999) assert that there are possible advantages for women to consider a potential posthuman existence as empowering because it disrupts traditional representations of identity. Although Hayles (1999) acknowledges that characteristically cybernetics discourse, due to its position on disembodiment and notions that "information and materiality as distinct entities" (Hayles 1999: 12), is juxtaposed against a feminist politic that seeks to redress the negation of female subjectivity, embodiment and experiences.

To combat this Hayles (1999) seeks to reposition the posthuman as an embodied mode of being, placing the embodied experience at the core, thus challenging the cybernetic material/informational divide. What is of most interest is how Hayles's (1999) recognises the importance of reinstating the body and understands the continued value of bodily materiality; by integrating an approach that unites feminist studies with technology, cyberspace and embodiment, Hayles (1999) puts the body back into information, amending the value of posthuman as an embodied mode of being.

This stance reflects in many ways Kirby's (2009) digi modernism approach and reinforces Elwell's (2014) exploration of identity as the transmediated self both recognising the blurring of boundaries, whilst like Hayles, advocating an embodied virtuality that perceives human life as "embedded in a material world of great complexity" (Hayles 1999: 5). It is perhaps Kim Toffoletti (2007) who aptly identifies that "It is at the site of the collapse between reality and fiction, referent and image, that I locate the posthuman as a figuration that reformulates identity as a process of transformation" (Toffoletti, 2007: 17) which she argues, enables feminism to explore notions of identity, representation and reality in new ways.

Whilst drawing comparisons between posthuman and Haraway's (1985) cyborg, Toffoletti (2007) also identifies differences in the approaches resulting in her claim that from a posthuman perspective technology "emerges as a possibility or potentiality to refigure bodies and identities outside of self/Other relations" (Toffoletti, 2007: 21). This is further explored by Rosi Braidotti (2015) who argues that a posthuman perspective allows us to make sense of our adaptable and multiple identities, with reference to "feminist becoming woman (Braidotti 1991, 1994), then the "virtual feminine" (Braidotti 2002, 2006)" (2015: 689)" where " feminist posthuman politics is an experiment with intensities beyond binaries, that functions by " and, and," not by " either-or"" (2015: 689) she presents the need to recast political agency. By accepting this blurring of boundaries she asserts that it is essential "to adopt a multi-layered feminist politics: contain and resist the negative aspects while continuing to experiment with intensities" (2015: 689). Braidotti (2015) thus aptly recognises that in order to explore the multifaceted fused virtual and physical self a multidimensional approach must be assumed.

Developing on the feminist practices of the 1980s, many women artists began to produce work that specifically engaged with their individual concerns rather than articulating a specific feminist message. Although she does not identify herself as a feminist artist, Cindy Sherman, the "iconic American photographer has been considered a feminist artist by scholars in the fields of art history and art criticism" (Kendrick, 2012: 1) based primarily on her earlier works *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980) *Centrefolds* (1981) and *Sex Pictures* (1992). Each of the works question the male gaze prevalent in popular culture as well as commenting on gender roles within society, demonstrating how heavily informed her work is by the feminist movement.

However, notwithstanding the progress made by previous generations of feminist artists, many contemporary female artists no longer necessarily feel the responsibility to identify themselves as a woman artist or to explicitly engage in feminist discourse. Moreover, at the height of gender debates and queer politics, Butler's work on performativity and fluidity of gender has allowed further freedom for artists to expand boundaries. In the 1990s artists such as Emin, showed the influence of feminist art on their work. Emin, by focusing on personal narratives and using non-traditional materials, her exclusive subject matter is her own life. Throughout her oeuvre she poses serious feminist questions about women's sexual responsibility and draws attention to late 20th century society's 'double standard' in works such as *My Bed* (1998) and *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* (1995). Lucas's work, in contrast to Emin's art, is not autobiographical but presents instead a perspective informed by post Freudian social theory and feminism. Such practices, even if

not directly identified as feminist, have grown from and are clearly connected to the First and Second Generation Feminist artists and critics in the variety of materials, mediums and perspectives they exhibit. All of the artists discussed are located within feminist discourse through elements of the subversion of gendered stereotypes demonstrating that whilst "Feminism was the site of female reinvention in the 1970s, and therefore of its deconstruction in the 1990s" (Bedford-Turner, 2011: n.p.).

The contemporary art world and the role of the woman artist whether a declared feminist or not, the situation is certainly complex *"…curators and critics have increasingly come to see that feminism has generated the most influential art impulses of the late 20th and early 21st century"* (Cotter, 2007: n.p.) - women have produced and informed some of the most significant work of the past two decades in large part under the influence of ground–breaking investigations of identity, gender and sexuality by early feminist artists.

In light of this, Nochlin's (1971) original question once again proves to demonstrate its continued relevance as a starting point for contemporary feminist scholarly criticism with research considering art, gender and the feminist perspective (Vogel, 1974; Issak 1996: 1; Robinson, 2015). In recent years due to the development of digital media there has been a great amount of discussion considering whether feminism is witnessing a Fifth Wave. Closely linked to the moniker digi feminism a new generation of women artists are utilising new technologies to explore issues of gender where the internet offers the perfect platform for feminist discussion and activism (Munro 2013) where the message of "Vision is political, as is visual art, whatever (else) it may be about" (Scheman 2014: 159) continues to manifest itself within feminist artists' work which in turn "raises consciousness, invites dialogue, and transforms culture" (Raven,1988: 24).

Shaped by the Net Art movement artists such as May Waver, Nancy Leticia, Signe Pierce, Sadaf H Nava, Rachel Rabbit White, Claudia Maté, RAFia Santana, Bunny Rodgers, Alexandra Marzella, Jungle Pussy, Leah Schrager, Anne Hirsch, and Erin Grant, and Juliana Huxtable use a range of digital mediums such as video, poetry, and photography to explore gender politics. It is also interesting to note that the selfie has been adopted by some scholars and feminist artists as one of the tools for reclaiming the female image. Derek Murray (2015) critically engages in feminist representational politics in order to contemplate whether the Selfie is simply a compulsive act of narcissism, or rather can be considered as a politically oppositional and aesthetic form of resistance. Exploration of the Selfie phenomenon will be discussed later in this chapter. Whilst there seems to be a growing group of feminist artists using digital technology to exhibit their work, it is

important to note that very little scholarly exists at this time on digi feminism and the proposed fifth wave feminist movement.

Body Anxiety an online exhibition which opened in January 2015 and is curated by Chan and Schrager examines gendered embodiment, performance and female self-representation on the internet (http://bodyanxiety.com/gallery/landing/). Building upon the work of earlier feminist artists the exhibition focuses on the subject of the female body and the political issues surrounding it. In their curatorial statements both Chan and Schrager discuss Nochlin and consider the role specifically of the female painter in contemporary society and the need for a 'new female-gendered artistic practice' (Schrager, 2015). Schrager calls for a new definition for 'painter' for women artists since "the aesthetic variables that make "female painting" [are] different from male painting" (2015) and cannot be compared but rather require to be considered as distinctive genres in relation to their own separate histories, objectives and methods.

The contemporary woman artist whether a declared feminist or not, have benefitted from the feminist art movement and its impact on the Art world, albeit small and on society where "…curators and critics have increasingly come to see that feminism has generated the most influential art impulses of the late 20th and early 21st century" (Cotter, 2007) thus women have and continue to produce significant work in large part under the influence of ground –breaking investigations of identity, gender and sexuality by early feminist artists.

2.3 Portrait of an Artist as a Young Woman – Identity, Transmedia Storytelling and Self-Branding

 "Sociology has long conceptualized persons as occupying multiple positions in organized sets of social relationships, and as playing out the diverse roles associated with those multiple positions"

(Stryker & Burke, 2000)

"An identity is a set of meanings applied to the self in a social role or as a member of a social group that define who one is."

(Burke and Tully, 1977)

To understand the creation and development of a fictional personas' identity it is essential to clearly explore the existing research surrounding issues of identity. In a world saturated by the media, pop culture and society the question of how identity is defined has resulted in a vast body of research (Evans & Hall, 1999; Hall & Du Gay 1996; Weir, 2008, 2014; Consalvo & Paasonen, 2002; Griffiths, 1995; Ross, 2010; Butler, 2011; Carter & Steiner, 2003; Lawler, 2015; Elliott, 2012; Woodward, 2004; du Gay, Evans & Redman, 2000). Research suggests that issues of identity in the twenty-first century and the impact of social media on their construction, reflects that the relationship between the two is increasingly multifaceted and challenging, but also of crucial, mounting significance. Social media provides the perfect platform where "individuals strive to maintain or enhance their self-esteem; they strive for a positive self-concept" (Tajifel and Turner, 1979/2004). Social networking has provided people with the opportunity to project themselves as they want to be seen, whether these are authentic depictions or false portrayals, thus leaving identity in a state of crisis. As a result contemporary approaches to identity consider the concept as adaptable and in constant flux due to varying social and ideological conditions (Turner 2010; Bazin &Selim 2006; Robards & Bennett 2011). Current theories interpret identity as discourse (Chun 2005; Doja 2006), variable, complex, reflexive and subjective (Derrida 2000). This dimension aptly is captured by Elliott who suggests that "All forms of identity are astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical" (Elliott, 2013: 10/11).

From the twentieth century onwards, the customary notions of *identity* and *the self* in the arts have been radically questioned and revised; where the relationship between society and art has been constantly in flux. In the case of women in particular, their status in relation to family, society and art has drastically changed. Women artists have had to contend with all these issues as well as deal with long established patriarchal attitudes towards women's art practices. Coinciding with the development of new technologies, women artists have turned to digital media art forms to explore women and identity providing "a rich and fruitful terrain of interdisciplinary research on the self and identity" (Elliott, 2013: 112).

The figure of the female artist in recent years seems to have appealed to artists as being especially suitable to reflect upon all these topics. Furthermore, such creative work in which these fictional personas have been created and explored appear as particularly sensitive to the most conspicuous and delicate vicissitudes brought about by the modern and post-modern condition. Artists' use of digital technologies reinforce Sigmund Freud's

suggestion in *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* (1908/1995), that artists are remarkably prone to question reality and the world surrounding them as well as the means at their disposal for dealing with it in their creative work. Life, reality, society, the self and art are issues recurrently dealt with by each of the fictional artists discussed in this research. Establishing self-identity is an important process for the artist and even more so for the fictional artist.

As briefly outlined earlier, traditional notions on identity and the self have been dramatically pulled apart since the early decades of the twentieth century, prompted, among others, by Freud's work on psychoanalysis and Saussure's *Course on general linguistics* (2011). The consequent revision of notions of identity, individuality and subjectivity has been reflected in artists' work exploring notions of identity by creating fictional personas that are no longer conceived as stable, prefigured, coherent entities but rather as fluid, fragmented, multi-layered, and complex, fictional intimations of modern men and women.

The woman artist's identity throughout history has been dominated by western paradigms of the male dominated art world. During the late twentieth century, however, non-essentialist feminist and cultural theory arguing that gender is a sociocultural construction began to emerge resulting in contemporary women artists campaigning through their work for female autonomy, power and self-reliance. By exploring themes of power, female representation and objectification "Feminists have been especially preoccupied with investigating the deep and lasting connections between self, sexuality and patriarchy – the dominance of male power within gender relations and in the context of other social institutions" (Elliott, 2013: 112) where by exploring deeper themes of control as well as expose how the female body is commoditised in all areas of society this provides the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of the female persona. In this way, the contemporary art world, in this case fictional female artists, is a microcosm reflecting significant aspects of the larger world in which we live. As women have become more accepted within the contemporary art world, they have found innumerable ways of conveying through their work many aspects of their identity.

The specific field within feminist theory focused on here is feminist aesthetics and art. Female identity is often formed and realized through the male gaze, and it is usually depicted to appeal to male fantasies (Mulvey 1975/2003; Pollock 2003; Berger 1972/2008; White, 1999; Doane 2013; Chanter 2008; Beauvoir 1949/2014). Equally the woman artist's identity traditionally is constructed by a male dominated mainstream art world. To

consider issues surrounding women artists it is necessary to consider the role of feminist art in relation to their work whether they present themselves as feminist artists or not. The term in itself - *feminist art* – is a complex one since it encompasses a wide assortment of diverse and multifaceted concerns, as will be explored in this chapter. The underlining question is does the work of women artists differ to the work of art created by men?

Lucy Lippard, as a feminist and established contemporary art critic, has curated and written art criticism since the early 1960s. Her collected essays in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (1976) focuses on the difficulties facing women artists and in 'Sexual Politics' Lippard observes: "The worst sources, not only of discrimination, but of the tragic feelings of inferiority so common among women artists, are the art schools and college art departments (especially at women's colleges), most of which have few or no female faculty despite a plethora of unknown male names" (1976: 33).

Lippard's continued concern and exploration of the impact of feminism on art, and art on feminism is chronicled in *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art*. It is here that she considers the complexities of defining feminist art, "It is useless to try to pin down a specific formal contribution made by feminism because feminist and/or women's art is neither a style nor a movement…It consists of many styles and individual expressions and for the most part succeeds in bypassing the star system" (Lippard, 1995: 172). Thus indicating why feminist art and art theory are somewhat impossible to entirely define. Lippard alludes that it is impossible to provide a simple description of what feminist art engages with because the range is eclectic and presented through a wide variety of art forms. Lippard further asserts "feminism questions all the percepts of art as we know it" (Lippard 1995: 172). This opinion is shared with many other academics exploring feminism and art (Carroll 2000; Pollock 1998, 2013; Reckitt & Phelan 2001; Parker & Pollock, 1987; Robinson 2015; Deepwell 1995). Equally, it is recognised that feminist artists collectively share a sense of the historic social subordination of women and an awareness of how art practices have circulated a critique of that subordination. *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* by Carolyn Korsmeyer (2004) considers the classic concepts of fine art in relation to genius – the idea of genius modelled on the male artist, which will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter (Korsmeyer, 2004: 76).

Equally it is important to draw attention to the fact that there is a shared feminist approach to art and art history that is founded on the concept that gender and sexual politics are a prerequisite in comprehending the creation, content and evaluation of art

(Devereux, 2003: 648) Regardless of practical and theoretical differences explored by the body of research, feminists seem to be cohesive in their recognition of the importance of bringing to light the power of patriarchy in society. Its impact is examined through discovering and investigating the way institutional organisations, social practices and belief systems reinforce hegemony whilst illuminating the means by which patriarchy makes this domination difficult to identify or oppose (Pollock, G. 1993: 12/13).

By considering a number of scholars work on stardom and celebrity it allows for the exploration of the artist identity as brand since the transformation occurs in a similar way (Boorstin, 2012; Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2004; King 2003; Turner, 2004). In recent debates about the ever growing presence of stars and celebrities in digital media, the artist as a star/celebrity identity has become a defining characteristic of our mediatised society - it is ever present on artist and gallery websites and social media platforms. Digital media representation of the artist has become a valued resource since it gives those who have it discursive power and functions also as a marker of success. Such is the proliferation of on line identity culture that several academics have discussed its importance for social cohesion and identity formation. There has been a great deal of research on celebrities and artists as brands. It is where the spectacle has become a carrier of celebrity content. Thus to consider Baudrillard, it is not a world of events, history, culture, and ideas produced from shifting contradictory real experiences, but artefacts produced from 'elements of the code and technical manipulation of the medium'.

Inevitably, the comparison has to be made between this new star system and film history's account of stars and star discourse. A review of this material will help the research understand how and why the cinematic star as a culturally produced body has evolved into a digital star system in which signifiers, identities, and bodies themselves are called into question. More than the indulgence of looking in at these stars within filmic worlds, we now embrace the very real pleasure of communicating directly with these entities. The subject, object, audience, artist, viewer, creator tangle and double over; these roles blur into a new phenomenon that refuses to take on a shape.

Artists' use of social media, websites in order to construct transmedia texts is the confirmation of the creation of an identity and consist of the embodiment of a subjectivity that unites 'the spectacular with the everyday, the special and the ordinary' (Dyer, 2007 [1979]: 35). In a similar way to the paradoxical nature of celebrities as both ordinary and extraordinary, fictional artists are real and illusory. Consequently, the transformation

from imagined to tangible identity can be seen as a media ritual that both confirms this juxtaposition and legitimates the personas existence.

In the same way that stars "are both labour and the thing that labour produces" (Dyer, 2004 [1986]: 5) the contemporary fictional artist is also manufactured by artists in order to produce and assist to market other commodities, however at the root of the creation of the persona is usually to expose the representation of women, ethnic minorities and act as a critique of the art world in general.

Consequently, with the continuous technological development of and accessibility of social media, this platform allows individuals to explore the issues surrounding identity in the 21st century as well as the opportunities to subvert traditional representations.

Transmedia storytelling is a relatively new scholarly approach and very little research exists on the topic. The term transmedia was coined by Marsha Kinder in 1991 where she explores the impact of the emerging "commercial super system of transmedia intertextuality" (Kinder p.3, 1991) and stresses its significance as where "In these expanding networks of synergy, connectivity, collectability, restructuring, new world orders…that transmedia intertextuality is a powerful strategy for survival"(Kinder p.38, 1991).

Henry Jenkins further developed the concept of transmedia focusing on its ability as "a process in which integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience." (Jenkins, Transmedia 202). Jenkins, through his exploration of emerging participatory culture and media convergence culture, Transmedia Storytelling reflects the new methods being utilised to communicate brands that signifies the shift in consumer culture. The central concept of this approach is the consumers' engagement through storytelling which requires their active involvement to progress the brand message while simultaneously exploiting the synergetic impact of distributing unique content through a variety of platforms. Currently, research mainly focuses on market changes and contemporary culture with insufficient attention placed on examining this method's relationship to branding and effective communication. The transmedia storytelling model has been effectively employed for many purposes and its successes well documented by Jenkins. Its impact has had a far reaching scope due to its ability to generate "spreadability"; from Hollywood entertainment franchises, to independent and public media productions, and most recently, new approaches to public relations and advertising.

Such an immersion into the ever changing media landscape can now be seen in the ways individuals brand their identity across media platforms. The convergence of different media texts has allowed for artists to use a transmedia branding framework to develop their fictional artist persona effectively. Presently, there is no current literature addressing the relevancy of this approach in identity branding thus it requires further study.

Briefly it is felt that it is important to consider how the principles of transmedia have been applied to branding. Transmedia branding packages a brand into an integrated narrative by communicating across multiple media channels for the purpose of creating a participatory and engaging brand experience. Thus contemporary audiences as consumers are connected, informed and active participants who readily engage with brands through discourse and interaction resulting in co-created experiences.

For some time now, scholars have noted the ways in which confession of the self has been repackaged as entertainment reflecting the rapid development of mass mediated confessional culture. Ranging from documentary, television sitcoms, reality shows to talkback shows along with the mass consumption of gossip magazines and tabloids using confession formats all of which can be perceived as definite factors influencing the way individuals construct their transmediated self.

To consider how individuals have begun to utilise celebrity branding to promote their own self-branding, particularly in the realm of social media it is perhaps pertinent to consider scholarly research that has documented the ways celebrity and consumption work to create a celebrity brand. Whilst existing literature regarding this specific area of study focuses mainly on the benefits of branding celebrities as similar to the effects of branding products, services, and organizations in the past there has been a recent trend to examine how individuals are applying these branding tactics. Furthermore recent research has established that brands can work in multiple ways, resulting in a shift in focus from brand producers toward consumer response to understand how branding produce meaning (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Firat and Shultz, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2003; Johar et al., 2001; Ritson and Elliott, 1999; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004; Thompson, 2004). McCracken (2005) and Brownlie and Hewer (2009) have appropriately documented the phenomenon of obsession with fame and celebrity as well as its correlation with the continual rise of image-driven branding. Grant McCracken in *Culture and Consumption II: Markets, meaning and brand management* presents a perceptive argument exploring the relationship between

consumer society and its obsession with the celebrity world which he considers "is one of the most potent sources of cultural meaning at the disposal of the marketing system and the individual consumer"(2005, p. 113).

The concept of human branding has been of particular interest to scholars exploring various aspects of consumer culture (Kerrigan, Brownlie, Hewer & Daza-LeTouze, 2011; Thompson, Stringfellow, Maclean, MacLaren & O'Gormon, 2014). The introduction of the term celebritisation has arisen in response to recognising that consumer society "As the audience for all media invention…is in constant search for spectacle and entertainment" (Brownlie, Hewer &Kerrigan, 2011).

By considering a brand as a media object that can be identified as "the broadcast distribution of commodities" (Lury, 2004: 6) individuals can deliberately manipulate social media to develop their branding and by regarding their persona as a subject are able to frame and narrativise themselves by adopting the "lens of celebrity iconography" (thus this cultural logic of celebrity has been adapted to suit the needs of the individual where the public persona is "organized recursively as a mode of production," replicating the established processes of "discursive practices of celebritisation" (Daza-LeTouze, Brownlie, Hewer & Kerrigan, 2011). The term *celebritised* and *celebritisation* are defined as "what happens when the logic of celebrity is exploited as a mode of production in the service of economic calculation and marketing ends" (Daza-LeTouze, Brownlie, Hewer & Kerrigan, 2011). Therefore with the rise of the individual as celebrity, an effect of the cultural logic of celebrity (and of the celebrity of celebrity) reflects that at the core of the spectacular consumer society Debord's argument that authentic social life has been replaced by its representation implies perceptive prediction of contemporary self-branding.

Individuals' output via social media in particular has confirmed that personal branding is an important emerging strategy demonstrating that they have the ability to utilise current branding tactics to develop their public online persona where "the proliferation of self-representation in digital media has the effect of making anyone into a celebrity, a cultural construction where the representations of one's person becomes a commodity" (Poletti & Rak, 2014: 11). Linking the evolvement of digital forms of identity production and circulation directly to Privacy law, celebrity and capitalist forms of identity production Poletti and Rak recognise the importance connection between identity and narrative they also acknowledge that "identity in digital and online registers can be understood in other than narrative terms" and consequently argue that "the long standing connection between

identity and its technologies deserves new critical tools" to examine how ideas of the self are metamorphosing within a digital environment.

What is interesting is how individuals are applying these marketing strategies to social media to enhance their own self-brand. This clearly shows how changes in popular culture and digital technology are shaping the way people are beginning to, in the same way as stars and celebrities using their own names to capitalize on their brand and strengthen their public persona. Thus by recognising the significance that "Brands are inherently visual" (Schroeder, 2005: 1292) personal branding has rapidly developed as a strategic way to develop presence through social media and increase visibility of an individual's constructed identity. By acknowledging that "Celebrity, spectacle, and media interests live in entangled relation, feeding off and energising one another symbiotically" (Kerrigan, Brownlie, Hewer & Daza-LeTouze, 2011: 1505) it can be argued that celebritisation is now the engine of individual celebrity culture, where self-branding also operates as 'map-making' devices which situate the creators and consumers (followers/friends) within networks of symbolic resources thus building upon the concept of Celebrity Brandhood. Individuals as brands through social media sites can be perceived as transmediated marketing accomplishments which in the same way as celebrities draw on allure, charisma and glamour, individuals also employ similar devices to present a constructed narrative of belonging, intimacy, and affect thus reflecting the commoditisation of the public face of individuals into celebrities in their own right (for their followers/friends).

Whilst Jonathan Schroeder in his essay *The Artist in Brand Culture* states that "The branded world intersects with the art world in numerous ways" he also recognises that scholarly research in the fields of art and business have traditionally been separated "into high and low forms of communication and culture" (2009). He suggests that a more art centred approach to marketing, branding and consumer research is required in order to understand how they so closely interrelate whereby "artists can be discussed within a branding perspective" (2009).

Schroeder defines a brand as "inherently visual; corporate websites, logos, marketing campaigns, packaging, and product design all draw upon visual materials to create distinctive brand identities designed to attract attention and stimulate the senses" (Schroeder, 2005: 1292). It is this perceived view of brand culture that has allowed for recent scholars to explore its impact on individuals and the ways in which they cultivate their digital persona to enhance their self-brand. From this perspective by considering

both art and business collectively, branding signifies a powerful contemporary representational system. Firstly, by producing knowledge of how as a marketing strategy it influences the ways in which individuals' represent themselves via digital media thus drawing attention to the importance for many in society to participate in self-branding. Secondly, visual culture provides opportunities to understand contemporary marketing practices and branding processes in more depth in relation to building brand identities by specifically fixing value to images, namely photographs that support a positive public persona since this can "provide a rich picture of the underlying mechanisms driving the evolution of consumer culture" (Schroeder, 2005: 1293).

By considering the relationship between branding and the artist, as David Aaker proposes "Observing brands in contemporary art can be instructive…" since it offers a way to consider how individuals have established their own brand identity by using similar techniques to establish a public persona. If "art is a commodity", then the contemporary artist in a world of self-branding inevitably has also become a creation for consumption thus by examining fictional artists this "offers an excellent, underutilized vehicle for studying and understanding cultural forces in brand marketing"(Schroeder, 2005: 1293). By looking at fictional artists, theoretical links between brand management, digital and visual culture can be made to explore the impact of these factors influence individual self-branding thus helping to develop a cultural perspective of self-branding through digital technology.

Branding for contemporary artists is an extremely essential facet of the profession. Simply defined branding for an artist is essential in order to present their commercial identity where it is crucial to present a visual, aural and intellectual way of communicating the core principles of their artistic identity. Thus the artist brand is the commercial personae, the mask presented to the public and in marketing. The performance of the mask is central to the presentation of the artist's identity in attracting an audience, developing a following, increasing knowledge of their artistic work in order for potential consumers to spend time and money participating in the artist brand.

In turn, technology has created ways to transfer our role from reader to author where we increasingly live our lives across a range of media thus participating creative traversal culture which "makes meaning across boundaries: between media, genres, sites, institutions, contexts" (Lemke, p.579: 2011). The fictional artists utilise a variety of media texts in order to shape their styles, beliefs, and values in the pursuit of establishing their

identity and in turn brand as an artist. This participation in multiple media platforms reflects contemporary society's preoccupation with identity work. The key to successfully developing the fictional artist's persona is that each platform needs to develop her narrative identity in a unique way.

Yet some scholars are currently claiming that there has been a noticeable shift into a new paradigm, where although it still encompasses many of the postmodern attributes, is greatly influenced by, and reliant on technology. Alan Kirby coins this shift digimodernism asserting that new technologies have dismantled the postmodern and reconfigured our culture (Kirby, 2009).

Although as discussed briefly earlier, artists have always experimented with identity through their work, digital media now provides opportunities to explore this more fully. The case studies selected for this research demonstrates how artists are creating personas to exist as individual separate entities through the use of media texts. Taking Hall's stance that "representation connects meaning and language to culture" (Hall, 1997: 15) the personas representing female artists exemplify the continued contemporary cultural concerns of women's role within society. This encoding is further developed through the constructed identity promoting themselves and their relationships through social media platforms. As digital media makes advances becoming more interactive and personal it now plays an increasingly constant role in our lives where the "current generation…are accustomed and acclimated to being (inter)active with their media experiences" (Jenkins, 2010).With such a greater level of accessibility to multiple media platforms this has created opportunities for individuals to engage with and operate technology with ease and proficiency. This allows for information on identity to be shared on several levels, through a variety of mediums and at different points of depth.

Jenkins in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* defines transmedia through a discussion of the "relationship between three concepts - media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence" (Jenkins, 2008: 2). According to Jenkins, "convergence occurs within the brains of individuals(s)" where out of the fragments of information extracted from the media personal mythology is constructed (Jenkins, 2008: 3). Therefore, transmedia stories "are stories told across multiple media…the most significant stories tend to flow across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel & Robison, 2006: 46).

According to Jenkins for this synergy-based strategy to be successful there needs to be engagement from media audiences, therefore in relation to branding of fictional identity there needs to be a sustained relationship with the audience where the narrative of the fictional persona is rich enough and complex enough to hold their interest over time and thus motivate a succession of consumer choices. (Jenkins, 2003: 284) The growing success of fictional personas reflect audiences' ability to utilise expertly "new ways to interact with media content" (Jenkins, 2003: 286). "With content playing an increasingly central role in communication, concepts such as content marketing and transmedia branding provide new ways of developing and establishing brand personality, while turning communication into a participatory process that brings the brand to life" where "Branding is in a state of disruption and re-invention" (Tenderich, 2014: 9). As a result, brand messages and icons are now shaped as much by the people who consume them as by those who originate them. Consumers have now become, in essence, extended members of an organization's branding team.

Tenderich identifies the common elements of a transmedia framework as narratives, participation, and brands where each of these notions depends on specific enabling components. Firstly the "notions of narratives and media are inextricably linked" (2014: 22). Exploring Jenkins's key enabler of transmedia "spreadability", he considers the unique ways "an integrated narrative across many different media channels" where "pieces of content are dispersed in unique bits and collectively make up a narrative" (2014: 22). In this context, fictional artists map out a narrative in each medium and taken together they create a full story and enhance the construction of the artist persona. Due to its spreadable nature memes are particularly suitable for transmedia narratives. A term originally introduced by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* in 1976, deriving from Ancient Greek meaning "imitator, pretender", Dawkins defines it as "a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit *of imitation*" (2006: 192). He suggests that "memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" where not only have they become a central component of Internet culture they also play an important role in transmedia narratives.

Tenderich also emphasises the importance of participation which he deems as central to the transmedia branding process since this forms the "narrative seeds reasons for the audience "to care."" and makes participating in the story for people easy (22). As an audience participate in a brand story, consequently they make it specifically personal,

relevant, and targeted to them as an individual something that is difficult for a brand to do itself thus ensuring spreadability.

According to Tenderich "The most basic component of transmedia branding is the brand - an abstract idea used to differentiate products, whether that product takes the form of a consumer good, personality, company or idea" which needs "To be expressed in form of a narrative, a brand requires a protagonist or main character…" (Tenderich, 2014: 27). From the perspective of marketing research gaining insights on target audiences is essential to building a successful transmedia campaign. With the expansion of technology, Internet-based research has become widespread and has led to the development of new methods. Scholars such as Robert Kozinets have proposed netnography as an online marketing research technique which he defines as "a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications" which he puts forward a specific methodology for systematically discovering qualitative online content (Kozinets, 2002: 62). This is interesting to this research because netnography uses "the information publicly available in online forums to identify and understand the needs and decision influences" of individuals thus offering a potential unobtrusive research technique which also provides continuing access to informants in a particular online social situation (2002: 62). Whilst Tenderich demonstrates that Transmedia branding can be developed across a wide range of industries to develop awareness and expand audiences, he also highlights that the principles of transmedia branding manifest differently across industries and brands - An important factor to consider when examining the case studies.

Mariana Ciancia identifies transmedia as an approach that has the potential to overcome "contemporary complexity" through the use of storytelling, collaboration and audience engagement (2013). The framework design she developed based on her research signifies the importance of certain key features: action, character, thought, language, melody (pattern) and spectacle (enactment). "The most important consequence is the breakage of the 'fourth wall'… one of the key features of the transmedia phenomenon, which allows people to enter story worlds through the dissemination in different media of 'points-of-entry' (access points to the story), and 'rabbit-holes' (primary access points to the fictional world)" (Ciancia, 2013: 1). Ciancia through her case study research demonstrates that transmedia from an artistic perspective has great potential and has "become a real design practice, and one which is not restricted to big Hollywood projects, as demonstrated by the independent productions that have incorporated it" (2013: 2).

However what is more interesting is her consideration of transmedia as "an approach potentially able to support the construction of a 'human landscape', relying on storytelling ability to foster multiple perspectives, and allowing people to become aware of their leading role in the contemporary 'mediascape'" (2013: 2). Indeed through the rise of digital media people have the ability and access to construct their own narratives to refine and enhance their presentation of identity – individual brand identity.

Ciancia's research based on Brenda Laurel's work in *Computers as Theatre* (2014) acknowledges "the notion of dramatic interaction and the interplay between structure and experience" (Laurel, p. xvii, 2014) which demonstrates that "transmedia design is not new, but doing it well is a relatively new design arena" (Laurel, p.180, 2014) thus consequently focusing on action, character, thought, language, melody (pattern) and spectacle (enactment). Therefore confronted with the evolution of uses and digital media consumption habits, the need for artists to be transmedia operators where selling their artwork is a part of their on-going narrative not simply discrete art works. In a similar way that pop stars are using different media platforms as briefly touched upon in chapter 1, artists also need to shift their audience's focus between real life, artwork, exhibitions, fiction, catalogues, social media and websites – each offering a piece of the experience to complete the branding of artist identity.

J Sage Elwell in *The transmediated self: Life between the digital and the analog* (2014) identifies that "the line between life online and life off-line has become blurred in an existential equivalence of the digital and the analog" (Elwell, 2014: 233) thus demonstrating dramatic changes in the presentation of the digital self. Consequently, Elwell recommends that "A new paradigm for conceptualizing the dialectic of digital–analog self-identity" is needed and asserts that the ways in which self-identity is being shaped can be directly connected to practices of transmedia production (2014: 233). Thus " the transmedia paradigm, taken as a model for interpreting self-identity in the liminal space between the virtual and the real, reveals a transmediated self constituted as a browsable story-world that is integrated, dispersed, interactive, and episodic" (Elwell, 2014: 234). Elwell proposes that in order to conceptualise contemporary self-identity construction in relation to the impact of digital technology the transmedia paradigm offers a means to explore this phenomenon.

Whilst the article acknowledges that there is a great deal of scholarly research in relation to representation and self-identity online, Elwell also draws attention to existing research limitations where studies have focused on specific Web sites only. Elwell highlights

correctly that there has been insufficient attention focusing on contemporary self-identity that are constructed through a "broader networked ecosystem where online and off-line identity are yoked together as mobile devices and ubiquitous computing usher in the Internet of life" (2014: 234). Elwell in response to scholars such as Turkle correctly draw attention to how digital technology is now "integrated into our lives" where the Internet is part of the "infosphere where we already are and of which we are increasingly a part" (Elwell, 2014: 235). Elwell demonstrates this integration by asserting that off line identities and online identities are intrinsically linked socially and commercially. He also emphasises the ways in which technology's development has influenced the ways in which digital media is consumed and stresses the importance of it as an ever present presence of our lives "whereby experience and identity take shape in the space between online and off-line" (Elwell, 2014: 235).

It is made clear that both online and offline identity construction has developed further than merely complimenting counterparts, since they cannot be perceived as functioning in the same way and consequently cannot be interchanged for one another, rather "together they cocreate the experience of identity in the space between the digital and the analog" (Elwell, 2014: 235). However it is difficult to agree with Elwell when he considers online identity play being "less common" stating that the "identity to a 'real' person is a valuable, if not necessary, social and economic premium" (Elwell, 2014: 236) since this does not take into account pseudonyms used by artists, drag queens, the LBGTQ community, persecuted groups, human rights activists, journalists whom have legitimate reasons for using aliases.

Equally the issue of how can a *real* person be defined or measured comes into question since individuals through their adept use of social media today are participating continuously in identity play that enhances the value of their digital self? Whilst it is accepted that Elwood draws attention to Facebook's real name policy for online profiles it is also important to highlight the controversy surrounding it which consequently resulted in Facebook amending the policy in December 2015 (Hassine and Galperin, 2015). This demonstrates the importance of alternative identities to individuals and groups within society for a variety of legitimate reasons thus demonstrating the significance and validation of a constructed digital persona. Whether under a pseudonym or using an *authentic identity* the potential to portray a preferred public persona demonstrates the growing importance of self-branding and identity play across contemporary digital media platforms. Nevertheless Elwell makes some pertinent statements regarding how individuals have evolved to construct transmediated selves. For instance the focus on Facebook's

2012 mandatory inclusion of a Timeline platform demonstrates through the combined use of photos, videos, and status updates users are drawn into narrating their life story in order to "re-present their 'real' off-line lives through an online self-identity narrative" (Elwell, 2014: 236). These digital life stories as Elwell emphasises promoted through a host of social platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Youtube illustrate the digital process of "(re)creation of identity" (Elwell, 2014: 236). What is interesting is that Elwell begins to focus on how individuals now present their digital identities across connected multiple platforms which "constitute a networked ecosystem of digital selves" where within this digital environment "we are transforming our private subjectivity into public content in a way and on a scale never-before witnessed (Elwell, 2014: 237). Elwell's recommendation that a new paradigm is required and his suggestion to apply the transmediated self as a model for understanding and interpreting the dialectic of digital–analog self-identity seems to be a legitimate proposal. Whilst Elwell recognises that the transmedia model is not perfect since certain aspects of the transmedia paradigm such as detailed planning, intentional scripting and predetermined narratives do not naturally relate to the construction of identity since it "is rarely so purposeful and in many ways is a product of the subconscious" (Elwell, 2014: 237).

Elwell also draws attention to another issue - the purpose of identity construction differs to transmedia projects since they are perceived as economic products designed for market consumption. However Elwell misses the fact that identity construction for individuals is beginning to demonstrate these exact aspects since the construction of identity via social media sites is providing individuals with authorial control and the ability to script a particular persona. The projected persona of the user is quickly becoming a commercial product of sorts and it can be argued that the identity is being specifically crafted to attract consumers/followers. It is for this reason that this transmedia model offers a new way to explore how digital technology is impacting contemporary transformations of identity, namely what Elwood coins "the transmediated self" (Elwell, 2014: 239). Elwell cites Jeff Gomez's definition of transmedia focusing on the term *process*, which he sees as reinforcing the "nonlinear, immersive, and dialogical model of participatory cocreation" (Elwell, 2014: 240). Elwell determines that for transmedia projects to work they require essential characteristics which he identifies as dependent on being "integrated, dispersed, episodic, and interactive" (Elwell, 2014: 241). The essay then turns to the scholarly research exploring the links between narrative and identity where Elwell states that within the narrative identity debate he aligns himself with Diana Tietjens Meyers (2004) who's description presents narrative theorists as embracing an exceptionally wide ranging interpretation of narrative whereby he asserts that "narrative in all its possibilities – from

the visual to the linguistic and from the dislocated memory to the vaguest ambition – describes the way the complex story of selfhood is relayed and understood…(which)in today's onlife …that story is a transmedia production"(Elwell, 2014: 242). Therefore the transmediated self is perceived as encompassing the "integrated, dispersed, episodic, and interactive" in the construction of the narrative identity which blurs the boundaries between the virtual and the real and exhibits "the identity experience emerging from the feedback loop between the digital and the analog whereby one domain informs the other in an ongoing dialectic of existential equivalence" (Elwell, 2014: 243)

Therefore the transmedia model offers a way to explore the construction of self-identity through digital technology where "narrative integration is woven around the onlife activities and preferences of the individual" (Elwell, 2014: 243). In a similar way to traditional transmedia projects, transmediated personas across platforms narrate convergent stories that are constructed around a collective identity framework of core plotlines and themes linked to the self. Furthermore, Elwell reasons that digital technology are devised to further advance self-identification, self-branding and disclosure particularly through social networking which support the narrative of self-identity "that is integrated around a principle of personalization that at once independently creates onlife identity through secondary actors while simultaneously catering to primary interactive cocreation" (Elwell, 2014: 243). Accurately, Elwell identifies that the "combination of primary self-disclosure and secondary identity construction via that disclosure creates a reinforcing – integrated – identity story-world of the self" (Elwell, 2014: 243).

Each of the artists as transfictive heteronyms reinforce Theresa Senft's suggestion that the "Internet has become a stage" for individuals (Senft, 2015: 347). In light of this, the artists when considered as specific art works reflect the ways in which society perform through digital technology specifically to stage a preferred reading of self. This concept is mirrored by Seren Sanclêr exemplified through the way "she manages her online self with the sort of care and consistency normally exhibited by those who have historically believed themselves to be their own product: artists and entrepreneurs." (Senft, 2015: 347) thus reinforces the argument that individuals do not simply maintain a place on the stage. The habitual act in the digital age has created a platform for everyone to be a celebrity brand.

Consequently, where "individuals themselves can turn into transmedia brands" (Tenderich, 2014: 28), it is the narrative-building of identity which strengthens the fictional persona, and allows audiences to interact and work within the blurred boundaries

of reality. However for this to be successful it requires detailed construction of the persona, just as it requires knowledge of the mediums. Thus, the fictional artists emerging within this new media culture now are more complex and intricate in their dependence on autobiography and documentation through photography and other artefacts, where there is a need to build audience's familiarity with persona's identity through social media, and more playful in their performance.

2.4 Going Viral - Digital Technologies, Social Media and Digi Feminism

Whilst Foucault's work on embodiment, power and subjectivity considers how "the mechanics of power" (1995: 138) assists in creating a discipline which allows authority to produce "'docile' bodies" (1995: 138) in contrast more recent work by certain scholars has focused on the possibilities of digital media offer identity where it has the potential to be free of such conventional restraints. In the last thirty years there has been a growing body of research exploring digital transformations in media, culture and society. Studies have examined rapid technological development, social change, and the ways digital technologies which have become an integrated part of people's everyday lives (Bolter, 2000; Manovich, 2002, Kember, 1998, 2002, 2015; Kember & Popelier, 2014, Rush 2005; Paul 2008; McNeil, 2014; Hansen 2006; Greene 2004).

There is a growing number of scholarly studies on identity presentation (boyd, 2006b; Ellison et al., 2006) with a specific focus on profile-based sites, particularly social networking services such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, all of which have proven that profile owners are specifically attentive to audience. Correspondingly, self-presentation theory has also been employed in order to understand further this relationship between self-construction, audience and digital media. Such analysis has also concentrated on digital technologies specifically focusing on social network sites (boyd, 2007; Livingstone, 2005), blogs (Hodkinson and Lincoln, 2008; Reed, 2005), dating sites (Ellison et al., 2006) as well as personal homepages (Papacharissi, 2002; Schau and Gilly, 2003). Such studies have led to Marwick and boyd furthering examining how "people using the microblogging site Twitter imagine their audiences and what strategies they use to navigate networked audiences" (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 2).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) particularly in the past decade have a sizeable body of research addressing its complex variety of usage and links to identification, interconnectivity, behavioural and marketing potential (Barker, 2009; Wright 2012; Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe, 2008, Jenkins, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009; Jenkins & Ford, 2013;

Jenkins & Thorburn, 2004; Couldry, 2012; Van Dijck, 2012; Turkle, 1997, 2005, 2011, 2013; Baym 2010; Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011; Barker, Dozier, Schmitz Weiss & Borden 2013; Castells, 2009; Turkle, Clancey, Helmreich & Loukissas, 2009). Thus social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook are growing in popularity, people are able to create careful constructions of their identity and share selected aspects of their self within cyberspace. This factor, more than any other, becomes the defining feature of interest where digital media working within a transmedia sphere allows for the exploration of identity and the ways people structure narratives of the self. Of particular interest for this research is how people put their trust in the identities shared through social media by others without any real thought that, like Hershman's Roberta Breitmore, they could be meticulously constructed fictional entities or for a better word, fakes. Each of the artist case studies in this research demonstrate that there is a blurred boundaries of authentication surrounding issues of identity thus raising issues on a wider scale regarding construction of self through transmedia texts in particular the authenticating of the digital self's transactions in the physical world.

Whilst Susan Sontag's consideration that "There is always an assumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what is in the picture" (2001) was reasonably accurate at the time, with the emergence of digital photography and the ease of access to manipulate digital images via social media has become so commonplace that now such an supposition is no longer conceivable. McAlpine (2005) ascertains that "people have different identities associated with multiple roles" which are performed within "differing physical or temporal spaces… (where) within cyberspace, self-presentation is to some extent controlled by the individual" (380).

With the continual advancement of digital media has come the opportunity to explore ways to assume multiple identities simultaneously where through the construction of these identities it is no longer perceived as 'having' ownership but instead as 'being' them or associating with the acts they are performing.

Particularly during the last decade the use of social media sites by society at large has offered individuals the opportunity to carefully construct a 'meta-narrative and meta-image of self' (Hearn, 2008). According to Jodi Dean (2002) publicity culture has influenced the way individuals in society present and perceive themselves, particularly having a great impact on the public persona where it could be argued that "publicity is the ideology of technoculture" (Dean, 2002: 4).

Although Marwick and boyd examine Twitter specifically to consider how individuals construct and market their personal brand in order to cultivate and maintain followers it is useful since as they themselves identify that this is "part of a larger social phenomenon of using social media instrumentally for self-conscious commodification" (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 6)

Roger Clark's work on digital identity over two decades still proves to be authoritative on the issues surrounding society and technologies and his working definitions of key terms underpinning his study of identity in the information society are still relevant today. (1994a, 2009, 2012). The first scholar to coin the term 'digital persona' in order to develop a greater understanding of the then emerging digital world defined "the digital persona is a model of an individual's public personality based on data and maintained by transactions, and intended for use as a proxy for the individual" (Clark, 1993a, 1994a, 2012). Clark attempts to build upon the limited amount of information technology literature concerning human identification and considers issues such as how people through digital technology can have multiple identities, digital surveillance, data collection systems and cyborgisation (Clark 1993, 1994, 2005, 2011, 2012). Linking his research to Jungian psychology Clark explores the digital persona in relation to the inner personality *anima* and public personality presented to the world *persona* thus with the development of digital technology and social media the concept of the digital persona is reinforced as a construct.

Anna Poletti and Julie Rak in *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (2014) assert that "it is now commonplace to assume that personal identity work is foundational to the production of social media" (2014: 4) and propose that auto/biography studies could offer an approach to explore the complexities of identity production in digital media. Poletti and Rak accurately identify that it is important when examining the effects of self-representational digital media that "analysis must remain attentive to the self as an effect of representation – the affordances, strategies, techniques, and intended audiences – rather than one's identity being expressed through online practices" (2014: 6). Interestingly their exploration of narrative in relation to identity acknowledges the issues surrounding what actually constitutes a narrative particularly when considered in relation to digital practices do not build identity into a story but considered from Butler's approach as "expressions of identification, which might through repetition, result in that internals sense of identity as an effect" 2014: 10).

More pertinent is Haraway's (1991) important feminist work which when considering identity and digital technology perceives how high tech culture could challenge dualisms persistent in Western tradition such as self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female where "certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systematic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals – in short, domination of all constituted as others…"(Haraway, 1991: 177). Therefore Haraway predicted accurately the power of digital technology where "our sense of connection to our tools is heightened". It is this point that Alana Brooks Smith (2009) frames her discussion on in her essay *The Politics of Participation* in order to explore the shift of society from consumers of media to producers where she interprets Haraway's essay as drawing attention to the potential of technology as a source of power to be used in "creative and political ways" and that with developments in digital communications technology " that a visible flip side to the informatics of domination is emerging" (Brooks Smith, 2009: 68). In fact Brooks Smith consideration of Haraway's proposal to move away from identity centred politics to embrace multiplicity linking it to the amateur revolution that has evolved through "technological advancement in and increased access to the tools of cultural production" (Brooks Smith, 2009: 73). She agrees with Haraway's assertion that "science and technology provide fresh sources of power" by considering how the rise of social media sites has enhanced "communication and relationships between people" (Brooks Smith, 2009: 73) where for a generation brought up with digital media there is a fluidity between life online and real life where people "move freely between their offline identity and virtual self" (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004: 105). Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) is pertinent to the way contemporary society responds to informatics and how boundaries are transgressed through taking responsibility for their construction whilst taking pleasure in the blurring of the fiction and the real thus it is easy to support Brooks Smith view that "Her cyborg has come to life" (Brooks, 2009: 76) through society's use of digital technology. The artist personas studied for this research reflects society's embracing of digital media and present preoccupation with social media where "We live an increasingly fragmented, multi-roled existence" (Davis, 1999: 73) and identity is flexible and constantly modifying to new contexts in both real and virtual space.

With digital technologies in mind, Sherry Turkle initially considers the postmodern self in *Life on the Screen: Identity in the age of the Internet* (1995) focusing on cyberspace and the Internet in what interests her is the "erosion of frontiers between the real and the

virtual, the animate and the inanimate, the unified self and the multiple self" (Turkle, 1995: 12).

Turkle's research explores the concept that online practices have drastically transformed and challenged traditional ideas of "identity" (Turkle, 1997b, 1999) where "one's view of nature and society and one's sense of personal identity might well be changed by the complex and ultimately random nature of internet interactions" (Singer, 2009: 1018). The media landscape has changed significantly through digital media and dissemination of content via various networks, particularly handheld devices where people have the opportunity to explore, experience and express the endless possibilities of the self (Turkle, 1999). Although Turkle's work mainly explores MUDs (Multi-User Domains) and other role playing games to examine identity, her research is extremely relevant to this study as digital media develops so does the opportunity to portray, experience, and perform different aspects of the self. The use of different media forms today allows people to play where such boundaries between digital self and other physical selves are blurred and identity is now regarded in terms of multiplicity and fluidity (Turkle, 1999: 643). Turkle's focus on simulations' "holding power" (Turkle, 1984) has become more and more central when considering digital technology's force as a culturally powerful object particularly in terms of embodying postmodern aesthetic (Davis, 1999). In the last twenty years it could be argued that we have progressed further than the postmodern aesthetic values of surface, simulation and performance over depth and reality (Davis, 1999). Where certain scholars identify the postmodern self as decentred, transitory, illusory and lacking in core Walker (2000) for Turkle the self is perceived as not "unitary but as multiple" (Davis, 1999: 72).

Turkle (1997) argument that "*Since everything is surfaces to be explored, and no surface has any more legitimacy than any other*" still has an impact on the ways multiple identities of the self are constructed via a multitude of media modes when identity branding. Turkle further develops her line of reasoning of digital technology contributing to discourse on "identity as multiplicity" (Turkle, 2011: 178) by reflecting on the work of Lacan who perceives the self as "a realm of discourse rather than as a real thing or permanent structure of the mind" (2011: 178). Instead Turkle sees digital technology in this case the Internet as providing people with the possibility to "build a self by cycling through many selves" (2011: 178).

The partaking in these virtual worlds is portrayed in this work as a simulation of something, a simulation that has invaded our lives for a long time, a vision that Baudrillard anticipated (1991). Turkle focuses on the concept of the *performing relationship* "we project onto our computer screens our personal fantasies in which we are the producers, directors and stars" (Turkle, 1995: 37). It is in virtual worlds, that characters can be created and performed thus reinforcing the idea of how identity is fluid, multiple and complex process. The potential of assuming a different or ambiguous gender through new technologies, allows for the suspension of reality by broadening the possibilities of performance which can only be fulfilled in a virtual world, thus reinforcing Butler's ideas of gender performance "the manner in which individuals experiment online with their sense of self; the ways in which people invent themselves as they go along, exploring, constructing and reconstructing their identities" (Elliott, 2008: 141). Construction is at the centre of the debate when exploring contemporary experiences of construction of digital identities thus supporting Butler's belief that:

> "There is a tendency to think that sexuality is either constructed or determined; to think that if it is constructed, it is in some sense free, and if it is in some sense fixed. These oppositions do not describe the complexity of what is at stake in any effort to take account of the conditions under which sex and sexuality are assumed. The "performative" dimension of construction is precisely the forced reiteration of norms"

> (Butler, 2014: 94)

These unfolding disposable identities that mirror simulations of real life demonstrate Turkle's echoing Baudrillard view (1991) regarding the production of simulations from other simulations. Turkle explains how the virtual world can be used as a laboratory to experiment with identity "On the Internet nobody knows you are a dog" (Turkle, 1995: 16) where the invention of identities and their evolvement occurs through experimentation. Turkle suggests that this is an element of attraction to the virtual worlds: the possibility of experimenting, playing, testing identities. What Turkle's book does not predict is the use of social media and personal weblogs currently utilised by society at large transmitting a new relationship of the individual with the reflectivity and the autobiography thus offering new spaces for performing. This type of performance is far more sophisticated than the creation of avatars where the presentation of identity through images, creation of networks of friends, descriptions of autobiography establishes itself more and more as a performance space for the subject. The creation of the virtual character explored by

Turkle now plays a secondary role to the present preoccupation with constructing one's own identity online through social media sites and presenting a virtual public life. Turkle's book however still demonstrates how the emerging culture of simulation affects the ideas of body, mind and machine, which poses the questions: "What is real? What are we willing to consider real? Up to what extent are we willing to take simulations for reality? How do we maintain the perception that there is a reality which is distinct from simulation?" (Turkle, 1995: 108). According to Elliott, Turkle perceives technology as potentially emancipating for the self "…she finds this liberating in the sense that self-identity can now be fashioned free from the strain of traditional social markers, such as class, race and gender" (Elliott, 2008: 142).

Elliott reflects on identity through Turkle's consideration of postmodernism in relation to how the Internet exemplifies postmodern tendencies; signalling a fragmented, fractured and dislocated world where people can explore and develop new selves "…there is the desire to celebrate the potentialities of postmodern identity, to assess the liberating possibilities opened for the self, self-identity and subjectivity" (Elliott, 2008: 143). With this in mind the core concepts of the postmodern identity are outlined by Elliott as problematic firstly due to fragmentation "the contemporary self is so fragmented, multiple and dispersed that the symbolic consistency and narrative texture of experience disintegrates" (Elliott, 2008: 145). Consequently a world saturated by new technologies the self loses its consistency and becomes shattered. Elliott highlights that the focus of identity is on appearance "narcissistic preoccupation with appearance, image and style dominates the regulation of self" (Elliott, 2008: 145). Thus the self can easily lose anchorage and become self-absorbed '*there is a new centrality accorded to fantasy and phantasmagoria on the personal and social levels*' (Elliott, 2008: 145). Elliott then turns his attention to Baudrillard where he critically evaluates Baudrillard's in regards to sense of self and identity. Baudrillard's claim that the self has become more and more diminished as the world has become increasingly globalised and mediated. Elliott sees this as limited. "Lost is the sense in which individuals explore alternative possibilities, fantasize new worlds for self experimentation and autonomy and experiment with different definitions of the self" (Elliott, 2008: 151).

Baudrillard sees the self as a primarily passive entity which shows little awareness of other forms of human activity and social practice since the self does not exist only in media saturation. Elliott also questions that Baudrillard incorrectly assumes "that media and cultural production today stands over and above individuals to such a degree that the philosophy of subjectivity is rendered obsolete" (Elliott, 2008: 151). Elliott concludes with

consideration of where the modern and postmodern self fit in "we are living at a time in which we see the emergence of new strategies of the self, new ways of personal living and communal belonging" (Elliott, 2008: 153).

However almost two decades later *In Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other* (2011) Turkle's observations of online identity are not as optimistic as her original explorations. Now Turkle is more concerned with the ways that digital media are influencing our sense of identity (Turkle, 2007). She proposes that society's consumption of digital technology has in some way caused a shift away from genuine self-reflection that, she claims, is essential to discovering an identity (Turkle, 2007; Dretzin, 2009). This culture of simulation for Turkle has become more cautionary particularly when considering the impact on children and adolescents who as a generation as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) have grown up immersed in digital technology and naturally been immersed in simulation (Turkle 2004). Although she acknowledges that for adolescents that "online worlds provide valuable spaces for identity play" she raises concerns regarding that "…some people who gain fluency in expressing multiple aspects of self may find it harder to develop authentic selves" (p. 26, 2004). In addition, Turkle also voices concerns regarding what she perceives as a dependent relationship with technology which she potentially considers could critically influence our formation of identity (Else, 2006). Turkle observes that society's "breathless techno-enthusiasm" has resulted in a tethered self where digital dependency seems to be a part "of a larger trend in media culture for people" that is "not necessarily a culture that contributes to self-reflection (Else, 2006).

This research considers Turkle's cautionary tales as too pessimistic. Whilst Turkle claims to be not a Luddite, it is difficult not to feel her distrust of technology leaking into her later work. It is perhaps more important to remember how humans instinctively adapt to survive and embracing digital technology is just another step in the process of our evolution where "the new millennium's second decade introduces technology stardom: an embrace and glorification of the tech word within society's cultural psyche" (Rosenfeld, 2015: 49). Whilst Turkle perceives this as a loss of human agency, other scholars contrastingly perceive this as potentially liberating where the opportunity for individuals to experiment with identity projection through their online selves is not something that should not be feared. Rosenfeld highlights this and draws attention to the fact that society is aware of this cultural change and is aware of how technology is intertwined and embedded in our lives therefore "the price of breaking this complex addiction is to be off

the grid and disengage from society at large as well as from our very identities" (Rosenfeld, 2015: 49).

It can be agreed that Turkle urging for an increased awareness of media literacy in relation to computers, online interaction, and simulations (Turkle, 1997c) is important. Yet could it not be perceived that individuals are becoming and are adept digi literate readers in the culture of simulation; whom can measure, criticize, judge and interrogate simulations on the screen and the nature of simulations in and of themselves (Turkle, 1997c). The case studies selected for this research exemplify this move towards digi literacy where boundaries are blurred in relation to identity, understanding and challenging the built-in assumptions about technology and simulation. Her recommendation that there is a need to create simulations that teach about the nature of simulation itself (Turkle, 2004; Turkle, 1997c) is realised through the creation of fictional personae. In this ever-changing culture of simulation the case studies reflect society's understanding and ability to discern the influence of technology on our identity thus indicating that we are in fact becoming more informed and active participants.

Other scholars reject potential "apocalyptic philosophies" surrounding the digital evolution, instead they focus on the concept that media transition is a gradual process that occurs naturally in which emerging and established systems interact, modify, and integrate with one another (Thornburn & Jenkins, 2004). Instead it is argued that "there is an urgent need for a pragmatic, historically informed perspective" to recognise that the present cultural and technological shift is simply mirroring previous anxieties that have occurred throughout history in regards to media in transition where convergence takes place and results in "a mix of tradition and innovation, in which emerging and established systems interact, shift, and collide with one another" (Thornburn & Jenkins, 2004).

Richard Coyne's focus on pervasive media and their creation of place demonstrates that "many ubiquitous media and devices…are conspicuously social media, dedicated to communication" (Coyne, 2010: xviii). It is in these social media spaces that identity is formed through the collective construction of information in the shape of stories, conversations, photographs and artefacts thus allowing for technological devices to act as a gateway to culture as well as a mirror reflecting how culture affects us. With the rise of tablets and smartphones, apps at our fingertips that offer instant and portable media interaction, each provide opportunities to share experiences with a selected community.

In a way transfictive artists can also be perceived as a performance of virtual dress up. Scholars such as performance anthropologists Victor Turner and Richard Schechner have examined how costume in ritual and theatre create an embodied alternate persona for the wearer. In social and cultural contexts, the construction of fictional artists through dress-up not only provides an opportunity for artistic expression, but also occupies a unique intersubjective domain as establishing a persona's identity, whether physically or virtually costumed, can together create a more authentic identity simply by "putting them on" thus providing the opportunity for transformative play. It is through virtual dressing "When we step through the screen into virtual communities, we reconstruct our identities on the other side of the looking glass"(Turkle, 1995) particularly through social media that the fictional artists can develop their identity which allows us to learn more about identity construction in relation to digital technology.

Scholars working within a semiotic tradition have demonstrated through their research an appreciation of the semiotics of dress and appearance thoughts where it is perceived that the self is established through communication (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959; Roach & Eicher 1965, 1973; Blumer 1969; Hollander 1978; Turner 1980; Barthes 1983; Davis 1988; Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1992; Cerny 1993; Damhorst 1999; Barnard 2002). Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis in the seminal book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) explores the relationship between performance and life where he identifies that "When an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, -a social relationship is likely to arise" (1956: 8). Sociologist Gregory Stone (1965) argued that identity has many advantages over the more fixed, psychological concept of personality, and that identity is not a code word for "self." Rather, identity is an announced meaning of the self—one that is situated in and negotiated through social interactions. He argued that appearance is fundamental to identification and differentiation in everyday life. The "teenage phenomenon" of the 1950s and 1960s made this very apparent by fostering an awareness of age identity as it intersected with a variety of musical and personal preferences—all coded through appearance styles. The social movements (civil rights, feminist, gay and lesbian rights) of the late 1960s and early 1970s further accentuated stylistic means for constructing and transgressing racialized, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities.

For Eicher "…dress is a communication device" and "when the self is not presented effectively by these artifacts, the self is challenged" (1981: 39). Building upon the work of Stone in relation to the theory of appearance and the self which she identifies as three conscious parts: the public self, the intimate self and the secret self (1981: 40). Social

media blurs the boundaries between the public self and intimate self, whilst sometimes also incorporating the secret self within this representation of identity. According to Eicher and Evenson "dress is an art form; an essential part of the literary, visual, and performing arts" (Eicher & Evenson, 2014: 326). Dress is therefore important to identity construction since it offers "… a social skin through which we communicate our social status, attitudes, desires, beliefs and ideals (in short our identities) to others" (Turner, p.14, 1980). Thus the personal appearance that the fictional artist adopts provides an ever present culturally coded source for non-verbal communication of identity and "can enhance the credibility of the individual…" (Eicher & Evenson, 2014, p.329) and exemplifies the role that creativity and plays in costume and dress-up play in constructing an identity. As discussed earlier there are many examples of gender play by artists such as cross-dressing Dadaists Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray assuming the role of female identities whilst Frida Kahlo appeared in men's clothing in a number of her self-portraits.

As Butler points out "Gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed…There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." (Butler 1990: 25) Now, more than ever through digital media and in particular social media, gender becomes a site of performance and play, in this case for artists, with both males and females experimenting with its manifestations. In a similar way to gaming when considering Yee's research which focuses partly on male gender-bending as another form of dominating the female body, the construction of female artists demonstrates relevant links to the practice of dress-up performance.

Van House investigation of how feminist theorizing can help Human Computer Interaction (HCI) be more accountable for the sociotechnical assemblages that it helps to create and its role in the configuration of identities. Van House takes into account Lucy Suchman's argument that "the line between human and machine is constructed, not natural or inevitable" (Van House, 2011: 423). This concept is further explored by Van House in relation to Suchman's consideration of Butler's argument "that sexed and gendered bodies are materialized over time through the reiteration of norms is suggestive for a view of technology construction as a process of materialization through a reiteration of forms " (Suchman, 2009: 9). Van House presents an alternative way of understanding the processes of on-line self-representation by considering Butler's approach to performance and agency which although has not been greatly explored in HCI suggests that "Butler's approach offers a useful alternative for SNSs and HCI" (Van House, 2011: 426). This approach exploring both Social Networking Services (SNS) and HCI can be perceived as relevant to

exploring the transmediated self since similar to other feminist theorists Butler maintains that identity is not determined by the body, but is performed through an ongoing construction. Salih (2002) describes Butler's approach as focused on the "idea that the subject is an effect rather than a cause is the key to Butler's theories of performative identity" (Salih, 2002: 48).

Therefore Van House and in turn Suchman demonstrate how Butler's approach can offer new opportunities to research online performance and personal identity development. Van House draws attention to the fact that "We are never fully unconstrained in our actions because we are never outside of our cultural context..." (Van House, 2011: 427). Thus, this suggests that performance is enacted in accordance with an understanding of personal cultural experience.

Butler adoption of the term "interpellation" to describe how identities are both ascribed to and assumed by people as they are ''hailed into their subject positions'' reinforces her interest in issues of power, specifically how these relationships, identities, and norms are constructed and perpetuated, not as a result of some deliberate imposition by an outside force, but by cultural norms and discourse, and how individuals' unexamined acceptance of these in ways that enable certain identifications but not others.

Whilst some scholars Salih (2002) find Butler's attempts lacking depth when explaining how the subject, who cannot step entirely outside of discourse, can engage in resistance and subversion. In contrast Haraway and Suchman contend that an awareness of the constructed, controlled nature of categories and conventions is a positive since it allows the subject to exercise some agency. In some ways Butler's approach to subject formation and her notions of performativity, citationality, and interpellation can be useful in beginning to understand the transmediated self and particularly helpful when examining self-branding through social networking sites; and, more specifically, as part of a feminist critique of fictive women artists as transmedia texts.

From Butler, we can conclude that the design, norms, and practices around SNSs do not simply shape how people present themselves, but that they discursively produce the subject by means of the identifications that are enabled versus those foreclosed. Social networking sites, given their popularity and availability across space, time, and social and other boundaries, may be particularly powerful sites of performativity – or of awareness and resistance.

Van House asserts that "By describing and categorizing oneself, explicitly (via profile choices, group membership, and the like) or implicitly (by content and contacts); in posting content; even in the choice of SNS(s), a member engages in citation and accepts interpellation" (Van House, 2011: 428). Therefore the transmediated self can be understood partly by people's use of social networks and how this engagement supports subject formation whether this is generally reinforcing the social conventions or in some way subverting it. By considering Butler's approach in relation to social media "Both the design of technology and the ways that users engage with it, then, can be seen as the reiteration of social formations in the construction of sociotechnical configurations" (Van House, 2011: 428).

Rob Cover (2012) also utilises Butler's theories of identity performativity in order to further develop a critical framework for examining SNS since he argues that this approach offers enormous capacity to further understanding of field of research and asserts that "social networking activities are performative acts of identity which constitute the user" (Cover, 2012: 178). Cover, in his article, considers firstly how social networking profiles are used as a device to perform, develop and stabilise identity; the ways in which identity performance takes place through continued maintenance and communication, as well as considering in what ways this impacts identity in relation to digital technology (Cover, 2012: 177). Concerns are also raised regarding the juxtaposition of these issues, particularly focusing on the implications of their conflicting modes of practice. Cover argues convincingly that by exploring SNS through Butler's theories of performativity, it is possible to demonstrate that construction of the transmedia self through digital technology "activities and behaviours are both means by which identity can be performed and stabilised and, simultaneously, made more complex and conflicting" (Cover, 2012: 178). Thus similar to Van House, Cover reinforces the importance of *interactivities* of SNS and the labour required "to perform a coherent, intelligible selfhood extending across all these online activities in addition to offline behaviours" (Cover, 2012: 178).

Whilst Cover acknowledge existing discussions of online social networking which identifies two key activities that are acts of identity performance: the exploration of online performance of subjectivity through development and modification of a profile through categorisation together with the process of updating, refining and manipulating one's profile. However Cover also states that the extent these two social networking activities perform together to construct a coherent unified self needs to be explored further.

Focusing specifically on Facebook and MySpace, Cover argues that Butler's approach to performativity has great significance in developing a greater understanding of digital identity and selfhood which via SNS are "constituted by the available, provided categorisations in line with available discourses of selfhood" (Cover, 2012 : 182). Focusing on the complex role of *friending* for SNS in relation to identity Cover draws attention to the fact that the "framework of identifications that occur across the network in its very instability, amorphousness and flux are multiple, and this aligns with Butler's point that identifications are always multiple and occurring all the time, therefore never driven by a singular identification or rule" (Cover, 2012: 186). Cover persuasively identifies the SNS profile as "the site of a reiterative performance or practice of identity that, carefully constructed, works as part of an overall narrative and a strategy towards the coherent performance of a unified identity/subjectivity" (Cover, 2012: 187) yet also stresses that the juxtaposition of these activities still need to be considered in relation to all other aspects of digital identity construction. Cover raises the question about whether users will "tire of the additional 'identity work" required for identity performance is answered by individuals' continued use of digital technology to construct the self. The accessibility of technology is playing a key part in the way individuals have naturally absorbed the work required for these platforms to develop self-branding thus Cover rightly concludes that "it is important to bear in mind that social networking uses, activities, changes, updates and account management are not only conscious representations and choices made for access, but simultaneously activities or performances which construct identity and selfhood" (Cover, 2012: 191).

Both Cover and Van House persuasively consider Butler's approach providing an important perspective for the study of social networking and identity construction extending the concept of performance from the bodily to the digital self. Indeed their research presents a compelling argument in perceiving online social networking behaviour as an important element of the performance process in constructing a sense of self and identity.

Van House recognises that there is a "recurring problem from a Butlerian perspective" when considering agency because of an "inability to step outside of our cultural and discursive contexts" (Van House, 2011: 428) thus demonstrating that there is a tension created between the prevalence of social media sites which facilitate explicit self-construction, and the appearance of a self, constructed through such media, that must appear to have organically emerged. Jenny Davis in *Identity Work and the Authentic Cyborg Self* (2010) summarises perceptively that construction of the transmediated self

requires constant maintenance of the self-branded identity which in itself is a laborious limitless process. Paradoxically such efforts in identity construction are required to be invisible to portray an effortless authentic representation of the self. What is interesting is in pursuit of self-branding and developing our transmediated personas, digital media and in particular social media Van House rightly identifies how their influence through their architecture is impacting the way we explicitly represent our digital selves.

By incorporating dress-up performance as a means to further develop a fictional artist's identity it demonstrates the importance of dress up for individuals via social media in both present and future digital culture. Therefore by combining the act of dressing-up within the narrative arc, dress-up as an act of identity performance reinforces the credibility of the artist and also raises issues regarding gender boundaries.

Amelia Jones in *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (2006) explores the experience and understanding of the self in relation to performances of the body via technologies of representation from analogue photography to the Internet *'to deploy technologies of visual representation to render and/or confirm the self'* (Jones, 2006: xvii). Through Barthes, Derrida and Lacan the body and its representation of identity manipulated by new technologies through artists' work is explored in depth in order 'to interrogate the dynamic between the changing nature of technologies of representation and continually shifting conceptions of the self' (Jones, 2006: xix). Jones considers the importance of the image related to the self and how imaging technologies are connected to ideological conceptions of seeing and knowing. Utilising psychoanalysis Jones considers Mulvey's model in relation to artists' works whilst considering Copjec and Crary's responses to Mulvey's exploration of visual representation (Jones, 2006: 7). Her consideration of self-portrait photographs focuses on how artists demonstrate that beneath the mask of performative self-portraits lies yet another mask - explicit connections between photograph and document, self and image, are accordingly negated. Rather than the image of the portrait performing to consolidate a fixed identity, instead these self-portraits are invocations of the fluidity and malleability of identity. An idea which is further explored through the signification of the body via Jones's consideration of postmodern theorists Debord and Baudrillard as well as techno theorist Manonvich (Jones, 2006: 18).

By considering "The image of the artist tells us precisely that, while we now…"know" that everything is a simulacrum, an image, a representation… we also "know" that the

simulacra world always leaks…Subjects continue to be objects" (Jones, 2006: 24) which reflects the playfulness of artists and audience alike. It is this pursuit to capture identity that continually propels artists to engineer and exploit new technologies in a pursuit to comprehend 'self' as a complex combination of mind and body. "That is the lesson of self imagining: that representation can only deliver what we think we (want to) know about the other, who is never real but always (somewhere) Real in its "indefatigable expression"" (Jones, 2006: 248) thus demonstrating that subjectivity is multifaceted and not unitary and coherent.

Beth Kolko's research explores how avatars were used to represent virtual bodies in multi user graphic virtual realities (GVRs) such as *Second Life* (1999) and considers representations of selves in relation to gender and this impact on online interaction. The article focuses on how in both text-based and graphical virtual worlds, users are represented in the world by discursive or visual avatars. Kolko dismisses the previously widely held belief that asserted the physical and online self as separate and totally distinct entities. She argues that the ways in which "physical bodies can be represented in electronic spaces ultimately reveals how gendered bodies come to affect gendered voices" (Kolko, 1999: 179) thus focusing on the issues surrounding the construction elements of gender which she purports that the users creating the avatars do have sole control of their designs. Kolko's argument is reinforced by her relating her work to the research of Kress and van Leeuwan (1996) claiming that the author of an avatar can only work within the confines of the programme thus the ultimate power lies with the designers resulting in a "denial of agency encompassed by this dynamic" (Kolko, 1999: 184). Similarly, Morrison's focus on avatars raises questions such as how avatars might (or might not) contribute to the meaning of identity and representation in the online and digital spaces on which they appear" (2010: 3)

Turkle perceives digital media as vehicles for self-exploration and identity play in what can be described as a form of "identity workshop." Given the purposeful and deliberately autobiographical intent behind this study's development of fictional artist personas, this research aligns itself more closely with Turkle's earlier work and although acknowledges Turkle's later work still feels the identity workshop is still a key area in the development of representation in contemporary society.

Dean (2002), when evaluating early scholarly work on digital technology and identity, regards it as a "nostalgic evocation of a pre-political time of freedom and possibility that

was never there" instead perceiving the pioneering experimentation of cyber identity performance more closely linked to consumer culture "driven to find the next new thing, to produce and reproduce themselves via images, technologies, entertainment, and commodities" (Dean, 2002: 115). Individuals' use of social media reflects how publicity culture influences society to value social skills that encourage performance (Sternberg, 1998). Social media provides a platform for people to publicise their talents where the carefully cultivated persona is afforded with an array of endless snapshot opportunities to display themselves "in an easily-consumed public way using tropes of consumer culture" (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 6). According to Marwick and boyd (2010) "tweeting for oneself suggests a true-to-self authenticity" which is recognised as a social construct that is influenced by audience, however this statement could also be claimed for all social media platforms when constructing an individual's brand where "Celebrity is the form of subjectivity that posits – that presupposes and reproduces – the ideology of publicity. Publicity in technoculture functions through the interpellation of a subject that makes itself into an object of public knowledge" (Dean, 2002: 114).

Drawing from Goffman's (1959) work on face-work, this research understands that identities are negotiated and validated in everyday face-to-face settings where encounters are akin to "staged" performances. In turn social media sites offer a cyber stage for similar performance.

Whilst the creation, the resulting performance and digital distribution of a particular type of modern self-portraits better known as selfies have been discussed as a recent phenomenon where "We live in the age of the selfie" (Saltz, 2014), the art of self-portraiture and personal writing in the form of diary and journals are in fact a well-established form of documenting the self. Although selfies are now being considered as a "new visual genre - a type of self-portraiture formally distinct from all others in history" (Saltz, 2014), scholarly research in this area is in its infancy. Exploration of identity however is an area of study that has been well explored (Burke; Mead; Goffman; Althusser; Berman & Brockman; Donath, 1999). To consider how the self has evolved into becoming a media object it is essential to consider sociologist Herbert Mead's notion of the identity as projections of the "I and the me"; as well as Goffman's thoughts about presentation of self as an act of "everyday performance," whilst of equal importance psychoanalyst Luis Althusser's argument focuses on interpellation where our sense of identity stems from how we negotiate with or reject the limited set of roles assigned to us by dominant culture since "Selfies come from all of us; they are a folk art that is already expanding the language and lexicon of photography" (Saltz, 2014). Selfies as a visual

medium offer scholars new opportunities to explore identity performance further in relation to digital technology and twenty-first century construction of the self.

Criticisms of selfies of women reflect continued scholarly debate of the ways in which women are represented by contemporary media forms. For instance Kristeva (2008) calls the twenty-first century the "century for women: for better or for worse?" (1) claiming that meaningful change has eluded the feminist movement and that women are not just submitting to the will of the patriarchy but actively participating in its preservation. Whilst of equal relevance is Berger's (2008) consideration of the impact of gender on ways of seeing which focuses on a man's presence centres around a "promised power" over an/other and whose "object is always exterior to the man," rendering woman's presence bound by social restrictions and limitations, in constant survey of herself, "continually accompanied by her own image of herself" (Berger, 2008: 37). Where from this position "she has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life" (Berger, 2008: 37).

From this position it can be argued that selfies of women are reinforcing traditional representations because of how ingrained within society's psyche is the concept of "women watch themselves being looked at [which] determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (Berger, 2008: 38). This is also supported by Cheng (2003) who considers sight in relation to gender and subjectivity stating that the act is integrally linked to the other, as the viewer who projects beliefs, meanings and desires on the visual object is "capable of seeing only that which stands apart from our eyes" (30). Similarly, Mulvey's (2003) seminal essay makes the connection between preconceived ideas and lived experiences and their influence of the sight of the viewer in reveals the unconscious desires of the dominant patriarchal order and how these desires have developed both the structure of film and the image of women within films (19).

Pham "critically examines the political uses and potential of "networked vanity"" and considers the issues surrounding the Selfie and the "practices of self-regard and self-promotion [which] have been disparaged as examples of "digital narcissism"—a new culture of self-absorption wrought by social media" (Pham, 2015: 221) The Internet, according to Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, "serves as a giant narcissism multiplier" that, among other things, has normalized "provocative and self-promoting public dress" (Twenge & Campbell, 2010: 271).

Erin Gloria Ryan on the website Jezebel criticises the selfie phenomenon concluding that selfies are "a high tech reflection of the fucked up way society teaches women that their most important quality is their physical attractiveness" (2013). Ryan, perceives that selfies are perpetuating the traditional practices of objectifying women through digital technology by encouraging women to collaborate in their own objectification reducing them to their physical appearance which devalues their individual identity and renders them digital narcissistic.

In relation to the gender politics of self-photography Agger throwaway comment during an interview asserted that "selfies promote "the male gaze go[ing] viral"…the selfie anticipates and exercise control over one's reception, which is a smart move, given the imbalance of gender power" resulting in "The textual and post textual blur as people self-objectify, proffering themselves to others" (Agger, 2015: 46).

Agger (2015) identifies the history of selfies as having three stages noting that Rembrandt in the 17th century painted self-portraits, as well as other significant painters such as Van Gogh and Picasso. It is disappointing that Agger does not take this opportunity to highlight that women artists were also notable producers of self-portraits particularly since his main argument places the selfie as a female pursuit. There is no mention of significant women painters such as Frida Kahlo, Alice Neel, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Jenny Saville or Caterina van Hemessen who predates Rembrandt. Stage two is identified by Robert Cornelius in 1893 taking his own photograph whilst stage three "is traced to the early 2000s in Australia, when someone took a super selfie…and then someone in Australia used the term selfie online" (Agger, 2015: 48). Agger asserts that people's desire to take selfies is directly related to solving the "problem of embodiment" (2015: 48). This argument is further developed by Agger's consideration of Rene Descartes Cartesian dualism which splits the mind from the body and Agger notably questions this privileging of the mind because of bias of privileged male mind over women's body. Agger's interpretation of this concept and its impact initially on artists and equally for selfie creators today is interesting where all "self-portraits and selfie-photographs s[ay] as a subtext, "Here I am"" (Agger, 2015: 46).

However this is followed by Agger identifying that many selfies are taken by girls and women which "convey an additional message: "I am adorable…who want to assert their personhood and claim identity" (Agger, 2015: 46). This statement seems like an oxymoron and Agger's reading of women sits uncomfortably since "adorable" reinforces the idea of weakness as well as perpetuate traditional views of women.

Equally Agger's statement that "embodiment can readily lead to objectification and even degradation" seems to oversimplify this form of self projection in relation to women and this is reinforced by Agger's generalisation that "men have a tendency to evaluate women in terms of their appearance" (Agger, 2015: 49). This study feels that Mulvey's essay was written in the 1970s and whilst still an important feminist piece of work questions how relevant it is in relation to social media, digital technology and theoretical foreknowledge of society of the twenty first century. This directly in turn raises questions regarding the relevance of Agger's concept of the male gaze gone viral in relation to the selfie. It is debatable where power lies in relation to the gendered dynamics of the selfie particularly when the feminine is usually often the object of her own gaze. Where Agger allows for divergence from Mulvey's theory it does not go far enough and whilst it is acceptable that Agger associates the format of the selfie mainly with female self-representation. Could the selfie be perceived as reclamation of the female body? Whilst as Agger identifies, the links to selfies and Instagram have mostly identified as being synonymous with female celebrities such as Beyoncé Knowles, Kim and Khloe Kardashian and Taylor Swift reflecting that selfies could potentially be a platform mainly of women for women. It is accepted that images of some of the transfictive artists in this study could be read as reinforcing traditional objectification of the body however it is essential to note they are also the author of their image and in turn disrupting as Jones (1998) considers "the rhetoric of the pose" through mimesis. It is these considerations that need to be taken into account when attempting to unravel the complications involved within this particular related gender politics.

Alternatively such digital preoccupation with the self could be perceived as "an emergent notion of twenty-first century vanity … in which self-regard is intertwined with relationality and responsiveness to others" (Tanner, Maher & Fraser, 2013: 153) where the practices of self-branding through social media are serving the social need "of enhancing connection with others" (2013: 157). Self-branding is perceived in a more positive light which acknowledges that "while narcissistic behavior may be structured around the self, it is not motivated by selfish desire, but by a desire to better connect the self to society" (Papacharissi, 2011: 270). Indeed, Pham rightly identifies that "The networked subject is now caught in the regime of ubiquitous visibility constituted by mass distributed technologies and technical platforms [with] unprecedented control of the frames of vision within which they are seen" (Pham, 2015: 224).

"Participatory media allows the networked subject-as-represented object a hand in shaping and controlling their representation. They make choices about when to take a

selfie or fashion blog style outfit photo; where to position the head, face, and body in relation to the camera; which blog platform, HTML tags, and hashtags to use; how to caption, crop, and otherwise edit the image; and when to share it online or whether to share it at all" (Pham, 2015: 225) Pham suggests that "In participating in the representational process, individuals who are the objects of the gaze are also co-creators of the interpretative conditions through which media images of their bodies and selves are seen" (Pham, 2015: 225). It is precisely this shift in the visual relations of participatory media that make practices of selfies art created by women artists potentially so powerful for women who been historically subjected to the dominating gaze of men.

In relation to the representation of women in Selfies, within this frame, it could be argued that this medium in a similar way to mainstream cinema is a breeding ground for voyeurism as the image of women continues to be used as an erotic object of desire for the viewer. However this is counter argued by those supporting the use of selfies who assert that men no longer control the action, it is women who are authoring the representations. Indeed alternative ways to consider the intersection between feminism and visual culture focuses on how an image is interpreted by the viewer rather than on the intended message. By taking into consideration that the "way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (Berger, 2008: 3) this offers a useful way to explore visual culture and feminism by assigning shared responsibility between image creators and consumers.

Intrinsically linked to the phenomenon of the Selfie is society's preoccupation with confession. Within this field of study, research has focused on the understanding of mediated confessional communication in the context of confessional and emotional culture in neo-liberal society (Foucault 1979; White 2002; 1992; Fejes & Magnus 2013; Furedi 2004; Giddens 1991). In relation to media culture, exploration of confession has focused primarily on television and journalism where it has been identified as an act of sharing where the "celebration of public feeling seems to have acquired the status of a religious doctrine and is now widely promoted in all walks of life"(Furedi, 2004: 38). Whilst research on mediated confessional culture has been connected to discussions on feminisation and intimatisation (Van Zoonen, 1998), emotional determinism (Furedi, 2004), tabloidization and the " message of the I-me-mine" (Aldridge, 2001: 106), as well as the emergence of mediated confessional and therapeutic cultures (Furedi 2004; Illouz 2008; White 1992), participation in digital media (Jenkins 2007) and social media use and participation (Gennaro & Dutton 2007; Huberman et al. 2008; 2009; Schrock 2009). It could be argued that the emerging transmediated self is a direct product of mass

mediated confessional culture where according to Mark Andrejevic reflects the contemporary desire for subjection to "a discursive regime of self-disclosure whose contemporary cultural manifestations include not just the mania for interactivity, but the confessional culture [and]… the ethos of willing submission to comprehensive surveillance" (2002: 234) in the pursuit of cultivating a preferred self-branded identity thus demonstrated by the Facebook Wall and visually through Instagram uploaded pictures and videos. Equally WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr and other digital biographical sites also reflect this culmination of a confessional society. (Kennedy, 2006: 870).

Digital and social media are used by the fictional artists to establish their transmedia identity, not just to construct and authenticate the fictive persona but also to develop self-branding. Self-branding is established through the daily ritual of publishing posts/comments/photographs/tagging which not only remind people/followers/friends of the artist but also motivate a response and opportunities to engage and further develop the digital narrative of the persona. The transmedia story continues to develop via people/followers/friends through documentation of events, photographs, responses and shares thus maintaining existing relationships and opening up the possibility to create new ones.

Photographs via Blogger, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr are valuable not only for artefacts validating the fictive identity but also for the connections among them between the fictive persona and for the people represented, consequently revealing the active role they play in establishing narrative identity thus ensuring the persona continues to evolve. Where previously "the photographer is rarely in the picture… [and] is often the least visible" (Van House et al, 2004: 7) it is acknowledged that photographs are "used as self-expression" however when considering Van House et al's connections between self-expression and self-presentation they now seem outdated. The phenomenon of the Selfie has given rise to more self-portraiture – the photographer is no longer hidden. Whilst traditionally Selfies have always been taken, with developments in digital cameras and smartphones that commonly now have two cameras as a standard features thus making the self-portrait snapshot easy to negotiate.

As a result Selfies have become a main form of self-presentation via social media sites in the development of self-branding, serving to maintain existing relationships as well as creating new social relationships whilst continuing to develop the narrative of the transmediated self through the continued management of "others' views of oneself" (Van

House et al, 2004: 7). Self-presentation and self-expression have merged where the preferred identity constructed for promoting the self-brand is presented as an authentic self. Rather than being labelled a "deception" it has now become part of the identity performance. (Van House et al, 2004: 7).

Key to the transmediated self is the use of social media platforms in creating the digital persona and supporting the self-branded identity. Selfies blur the boundaries even more between self-presentation and self-expression where in the pursuit of self-branding the construction of the transmediated persona is a fusion of both, an orchestrated identity which portrays a preferred representation of the authentic self. This concept as part of the process of creating the transmediated self is continued across all the platforms.

For the person portrayed, the photo, Barthes says, ''is the advent of myself as other. Photography transformed the subject into object'' (Barthes, 1981:12–13). In front of the lens, he says, he is at one and the same time the person he thinks he is; the one he wants others to think he his; the one the photographer thinks he is; and the one the photographer makes use of to exhibit his or her art.

Van House has explored how people use photographs, particularly of themselves and their belongings in relation to self-representation (Van House et al., 2005; Van House, 2007, 2009; Ames et al., 2010). Attention is drawn to how images are perceived as "''more real'' than text (Van House, 2011: 425)" where in particular the photographs are "also described as saying more than the photographer may have intended" (Van House, 2011: 425)

Van House highlights the fact that through social media "we have explicit access to what others are saying about us and the photos they make of us" (Van House, 2011: 425). It is this visibility and persistence of activity on social network sites that makes the actions and practices of other people apparent; it is this practice that supports the fictive artists' development of narrative. The structure of the sites themselves have encouraged people to perform and think more carefully in the construction of self-representation to make self-branding a natural process where "These constructed self-representations are part of a complex interplay among the offline self, with its complexity, contingency, and dynamicism" (Van House, 2011: 426). Van House accurately defines that individuals are "not simply representing but constructing themselves" (Van House, 2011: 426).

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Virtually me A Toolkit about Online Self* (in Poletti & Rak, 2014) counteract the argument that holds that there are distinct differences in the

ways self-presentation via digital media are composed and assembled compared to more traditional autobiographical writing by citing Baym (2006), Nakamura (2008) and Schmitz (1997) who alternatively identify many parallels. Consequently, Smith and Watson assert that a life writing analytical and theoretical framework "can help provide helpful concepts and categories for thinking about the proliferation of online lives in varied media and across a wide range of sites" (Smith & Watson, in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 70).

Viewer participation through responses to the fictional artists' demonstrates the importance of storytelling. This is evidenced through comments and ongoing discussions, even the simple response of a social media *like*. Social media in particular supports the transmission of the transmediated identity as well as perpetuate the promotion of self-branding. The life narrative of the artists' personas to establish the fictive identity is the reoccurring process of the transmediated self across the platforms where stories, events, live performance and photographs combine to authenticate identity.The transmediated self's narrative identity is conveyed across the platforms to structure and transmit the artists' personas. Artefacts, particularly in the case of transfictive artists being art works and photographs documenting art practices, are deeply implicated in the authentication of their identity. The perception of photograph being tangible, even in digital format and viewed via digital technology is an inextricably part of the practices of the transmediated self-storytelling.

The question of navigating multiplicity has been a constant focus in identity research (Goffman, 1959; Deleuze, 1953, 1966; Deaux 1996; Deaux et al. 1995) This interest holds equal importance for scholars today particularly exploring identity and digital technology (Turkle, 1997; …) Whilst scholarly research such as Deleuze and Guattari 's position of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) and Stuart Hall's essay *Who Needs Identity* (1996) demonstrate the ongoing debate regarding the usefulness of the concept of identity which in turn have influenced the ways certain contemporary researchers have explored internet identity (Kennedy, 2006; Parisi &Terranova, 2001,2010). However, Helen Kennedy justifiably points out that "despite these critical interventions, the tropes of identity and community endure" (Kennedy in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 26). Her essay which addresses the continuing consideration of the relevance of identity as a useful focus for digital technology research highlights the problems surrounding Turkle's claim that virtual identities are anonymous since "online identities are often continuous with online selves, not reconfigured versions of subjectivities IRL" (Kennedy in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 26). The findings of Kennedy's study of Her@ students discussed in her essay lead her to suggest that there is a need for Internet identity research to move beyond the accepted belief

that "photographs and other autobiographical detail…reveals the "true" identities of their authors and so erases the possibility of anonymity" (Kennedy in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 36) as well as considering cultural study approaches to the problem of identity in order to engage with Internet identity in a more conceptual way that could be more effective.

Goffman, (1959), conceptualises identity as a continual performance. Goffman's (1995, 1974) influential work is frequently cited in HCI research on self-representation (e.g., Van House, 2009; Krämer and Winter, 2008; Grasmuck et al., 2009; Gibbs et al., 2006; Walther, 2007; Marwick, 2005; Bellotti et al., 2002; Ducheneaut and Watts, 2005; Miller, 1995; Robinson, 2007; Voida et al., 2005; Wadley et al., 2009). A central concept to his work is the assertion that meaning is constructed through language, interaction, and interpretation, a sociological perspective which is usually regarded as symbolic interactionism where identity and self are claimed to be shaped through constant interactions with others, thus a collaborative process (Blumer, 1962; Strauss, 1993). Contemporary scholars have adopted his dramaturgical metaphor in order to analyse people's digital practices, thus demonstrating the continued relevance of his work as a starting point when exploring the brand of self through digital technologies. Indeed Goffman's suggestion that individuals should be perceived as actors that shape and adapt self-presentation based on context and audience clearly offers research in identity and digital technology a wide range of opportunities for exploration. However what is particularly pertinent is the blurring of boundaries between 'frontstage and 'backstage' for people navigating digital media particularly social media sites and their collaborative nature in constructing a preferred self-image. Goffman's research in relation to digital self-branding is particularly relevant when considering *impression management* since social media platforms clearly demonstrate how individuals monitor the ways people respond to them when presenting their brand persona (1959).

Whilst Goffman offers ways to begin to examine the transmediated identity it must be remembered that Goffman's perception of the "stable, pre-existing self who makes conscious choices about what to reveal and how to present himself or herself depending on the audience" (Van House, 2011: 426) whilst the presentation of the transmediated self via social networking is complicated by a potentially wider global audience where relationships and expectations of audience responses cannot be predicted. Thus where Goffman proposes that these self-representations are not just for others, but part of the process of developing a sense of self, this is now complicated by the application of digital technology.

With the growing popularity of taking selfies and exhibiting them via social media it is now important to consider selfie culture's impact in relation to branding, celebrity and micro-celebrity. As discussed earlier individuals in a similar way to celebrities and politicians can now potentially command large audiences through social media technologies. Such changes in the ways outputs are consumed and produced raises questions regarding subjectivity, the impact of digital technology on identity presentation, as well as the way it is shaping social interaction.

Taking Senft's theory of "micro-celebrity" (2013) as a starting point this offers an opportunity to explore how the individuals, in a similar way to celebrities or a brand, have established themselves as a model for certain types of social media interaction.

Furthermore Marwick and boyd (2010, 2011) assert that the ways individuals choose to edit and present themselves is influenced by how they perceive their audience online. By using the fictional artist as an object to think with, the research will be able to examine the concept of the "edited self" and how individuals are incorporating well established techniques from consumer culture and advertising in order to present themselves online.

Microcelebrity, a relatively new form of notion of self is "…linked almost exclusively with the Internet and increasingly spoken about through the language of crisis" (Senft, 2013: 346).   Coined by Senft in 2001, the term simply describes the communicative technique of "deploying and maintaining one's online identity as if it were a branded good" by employing "still images, video, blogging, and crosslinking strategies to present themselves as a coherent, branded packages to their online fans" (Senft, 2013: 346). During the last decade it can be argued that Senft accurately identifies that "the practice of microcelebrity …has moved from the Internet's margins to its mainstream" (Senft, 2013: 346) thus strongly indicating that "all individuals have an audience that they can strategically maintain through ongoing communication and interaction" (Marwick & boyd, 2010: 8).

2.5. Summary
Whilst it has been anticipated that celebrities and public officials would embrace the techniques of microcelebrity to further their public persona presence, what is more interesting is how "Each day, "regular" people post their words and images to websites" (Senft, 2013: 351). By embracing social media to engage directly with an audience individuals have established a presence online using the same methods in order to seek wider attention and enhance their identity brand reinforcing the concept that "cultural

notions about notoriety, celebrity, and fame appear to be expanding and inclusive" (Senft, 2013: 349). Thus this clearly demonstrates a clear "erosion between private and public has spread beyond those who are famous and those who wish to be famous" (Senft, 2013: 351). By documenting the rise of the "digital native" Senft's work builds upon the impact of digital technology on identity where she ascertains that "As the recent rise of the prefix "social" makes clear, this identity has shifted over time: once originally conceived as a space for housing research and a tool for collaborating for scholarship, the Internet has morphed into a place fostering everyday congregation, communication, and "hanging out"" (347). Senft acknowledges the wealth and variety of scholarly research of the Internet whilst also recognising it as more than a marketplace since it "contributes to a dynamic by which users frame themselves simultaneously as seller, buyer, and commodity"(348). Senft also identifies how transmedia storytelling techniques are being adopted by individuals who with great expertise are "curating, rearranging, and recirculating what they consider to be their best pictures, videos, and status updates in multiple venues online...carefully cultivating what in a professional venue would be a concerted audience-segmentation strategy" (350). With this in mind Senft aptly turns to consider Andy Warhol's belief that "In the future, everyone will be famous in fifteen minutes" in order to reinforce the growing impact of microcelebrity which "changes the game of celebrity" by fusing audiences and communities together (Senft, 2014: 350).

In relation to the concept that microcelebrity is perceived in terms of crisis, Senft suggests that it "means new threats and opportunities" particularly because "it reworks the old question "Who am I?" to read "Who do you think I am?"" (353). Consequently, this raises issues surrounding ownership of identity where traditionally the principle of personal identity was intrinsically linked to self-ownership. Senft suggests that it now belongs to the perceiver a concept that although is a "new and challenging way to think about identity" reinforces the point that this also foreshadows new responsibilities since it is the perceivers that now "have historically unprecedented opportunities to establish whose identities, communities, and stories will matter to the rest of the world" (353).

Concerning the societal and cultural embedding of fictional artists as transmedia texts denotes the mobility of artists to explore new media technologies to capture people's attention and consequently establish a following for the personas. The role of (new) media technologies and platforms is crucial in the creation of the fictional artist's identity. The internet, social websites and interactive media have provided the artist with a new canvas to develop lifelike personas who are individuals in their own right with their own body of

work. This has paved the way for fictional entities to become publicly visible and exist in their own right. It follows therefore that we need to explore more than the unique and diverse character of the fictional artist but rather we need to pay attention to how and by whom it is produced, which obviously bears ideological consequences.

3

Methodology

Figure 3.1: Dancing Identity – Part of the Maenad Series (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

3.1 Autoethnography as a Qualitative Research Method

"Just as a traditional ethnographer's immersion within the naturally occurring realities of others allows much deeper, richer, and more complete understanding than is possible via other methods such as survey research, autoethnography enables access to vital aspects of human experience that cannot be accessed using other available methods."

(Vryan, 2006: 407)

In order to contextualise the study's discussion of methodology particular issues are considered in detail - the impact of feminist research, the inherent distrust brought to research through postmodernism, the post structural destabilisation of text and perspective and their influences on the development of autoethnography as a research method.

Consequently in order to address the research question, Is transmedia storytelling an effective method to develop fictional artists' identities?, it became evident quite early on in the study that by deciding to include a creative practice element in the form of the creation of a fictional persona within the research that there was a clear necessity to externalise this inner dialogue of the process of creation and develop fully the central themes and questions that were emerging from the initial exploration of the case studies included within the research. Such a study was essential to undertake and develop alongside the other case studies thus a method in which the lifeworld and internal decision making of the researcher were considered justifiable and important. The study required methods that fostered systematic reflection and ensured scholarly account. As a result the methods applied to this study reflect a sense of fluidity whereby the feminist, cultural and social issues explored through the research and practice element are in intertwined with a postmodernist approach which focuses on the research process driven by the investigator's dual role as artist and researcher. The method of analysis in this study focuses on different textual and visual analytical approaches applied through autoethnography, art, feminist and visual culture criticism. In the spirit of autoethnography these practices are modified in order to substantiate the focus of the personal and authenticate the research study as a whole.

It is also important to note that a feminist stance has also been incorporated to the approach since the researcher feels that one aim of the study is to "capture women's lived experiences in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as sources of

knowledge" thus reinforcing that the process of research is as important as its outcome. (Liambuttong, 2007: 10)

It has been argued that qualitative methods as "technique(s) for ... gathering data" (Harding 1986) are more pertinent for feminist research by being accepting of subjective knowledge (Depner 1981; Duelli Klein 1983), and allowing a more equal relationship between the researcher and the researched (Oakley 1974; Jayaratne 1983; Stanley & Wise 1990). Campbell and Wasco (2000) elaborate that "feminist social science legitimates women's lived experiences as sources of knowledge" (Campbell & Wasco, 2000: 775) where the "the overarching goal of feminist research is to capture women's lived experiences in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as sources of knowledge...the process of research is of as much importance as the outcome"(783). The debates surrounding feminist research and its relationship to qualitative methods have been explored at great length (Bell and Roberts, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Ribbens and Edwards, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Delamont, 2003 and Letherby, 2003). However the research's interest lies in a particular qualitative method and methodological approach – ethnography and in turn autoethnography. Sara Delamont in *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education* (2012) observes that "ethnography has often been thought to have a great deal in common with feminism" (Delamont 2012: 94). Therefore, it was felt that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate for this study by allowing subjective knowledge (Depner 1981; Duelli Klein 1983), a more equal relationship between the researcher and the researched (Oakley 1974; Jayaratne 1983; Stanley & Wise 1990) and justification of an "intellectual biography" (Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1990) in order to incorporate an autoethnography methodology.

Ethnography allows researchers to examine a culture's relational practices, shared values and beliefs, and collective experiences for the objective of helping *insiders* (cultural members) and *outsiders* (cultural strangers) in order to better appreciate the culture (Maso, 2001). Willis (2007) defines ethnography as "an umbrella term for fieldwork, interviewing, and other means of gathering data in authentic (e.g. real-world) environments ..." (2007, p. 237). This approach requires the researcher becoming a *participant observer* in the culture; documenting their part in and others' engagement with cultural happenings by taking *field notes* (Geertz, 1973; Goodall, 2001), interviewing cultural members (Berry, 2005; Nicholas, 2004), examining members' ways of speaking and relating (ELLIS, 1986; Lindquist, 2002), investigating uses of space and place (Corey, 1996;

Makagon, 2004; Philipsen, 1976), and analysing artefacts and texts (Borchard, 1998, Goodall, 2006; Neumann, 1999; Thomas, 2010).

Emerging from postmodern philosophy, in which the power of traditional science and research is challenged, questions surrounding the validity of any one method for acquiring authoritative knowledge about the social world (Agger, 1990), resulting in critical assessment of traditional writing practices for qualitative research (Richardson, 2000). Richardson and St Pierre (2005) recognise that postmodernism critiques of traditional qualitative practices alongside feminism and post structuralism have resulted in writing conventions being challenged and ethnography "CAP [creative analytical processes]" has become "blurred, enlarged and altered" which are perceived as "valid and desirable representations of the social" (962). Ethnography, in particular has been greatly scrutinised, has assured the rise in popularity of autoethnography as an appealing and valid qualitative method. The rise of these innovative ethnography approaches which encompass autoethnography, layered and visual texts signify for Ellis and Boucher (1996) a paradigm shift in qualitative research. Consequently as a research method the "movement toward personalized research reflects calls to place greater emphasis on the ways in which the ethnographer interacts with the culture being researched" (Holt, 2008: 18) thus liberating researchers to document investigations in a variety of innovative ways. Similar to post modernism and in turn autoethnography, artistic inquiry provides researchers to be able "to tap into imagination and to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently 'real'" (Diamond & Halen-Faber, 2002: 125).

Richardson's (2005) signposting of Poststructuralism in relation to CAP ethnographies, asserts that "knowing the self and knowing about the subject are intertwined…" the theoretical movement furthermore encourages "us to reflect on our method and to explore new ways of knowing" (2005: 962). This concept is further discussed in relation to CAP, where Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) suggest that both the writing process and product are of equal importance because of their inseparable links with one another, hence their existence depends on one another. Richardson stresses the need to explore different and interesting ways to present qualitative research since "Just as a piece of literature is not equivalent to its "plot summary", qualitative research is not contained in its abstract" (Richardson, 2005: 960).

Based on this concept, Richardson describes CAP ethnography as a fusion of the scientific and the literary, a method which is comparable to an autoethnography approach that combines evocative (literary) and analytic (scientific) where "creativity are valued

qualities in the scientific research process" (Guyotte & Sochacka, 2016: 7). Furthermore the belief that objectivity is at all possible has been strongly disputed by postmodernists resulting in reconsidering traditional ideas of objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) since it is reasoned that methods and procedures employed in research are ultimately and inextricably fused to the values and subjectivities of the researcher (Bochner, 2000). Subsequently it is impossible to achieve objectivity because ethnographers always have predetermined concepts that guide what they settle on to describe and how they decide to describe it (Wolcott, 1999).

Traditionally, data in ethnography comprises of artefact exploration, document analysis interviews, participant observation field notes and research diaries (Mayan, 2001; Morse & Richards, 2002). Such methods have continued to be important for autoethnographers when collating data sources (Sparkes, 1996; Holt, 2001; Etorre, 2005). The importance of collecting concrete evidence in which to construct explanations and make assertions to support autoethnography as an approach is still in general greatly valued. This research agrees with Duncan (2004), that for autoethnography to gain legitimacy and credibility of as scholarly work it is essential that multiple sources of evidence to support personal opinion are used, thus the personal element of the research is supported by solid evidence. Despite problematic issues of legitimacy and representation surrounding autoethnographic research it is this method that was employed in the study since it was the only method that could have most appropriately answered the research question (Duncan 2001).

Whilst Hayano (1979) is acknowledged as the originator of the expression autoethnography is a relatively new research method. However a great deal has been written about autoethnographies in the last thirty years; from how they should be approached (Ellis, 2004) to recommendations on how not to do them (Coffey, 1999); issues surrounding whether as a research method they are legitimate (Tierny, 2002), and academic papers asserting that they are legitimate (Ellis, 2002). Scholars such as Ellis and Bochner (e.g., Ellis 1991, 1995, 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2000; Bochner and Ellis 2001), Laurel Richardson (1994) and Norman Denzin (1989, 1997), have served a pivotal role in defining autoethnography as an innovative methodology.

3.2 What's in a Name? Defining Autoethnography

'Autoethnography begins with a personal story.'

(Wall, 2008: 39)

Since this research study deals with autoethnography and discusses some of the different research methods within this field - evocative autoethnography and analytic autoethnography – it is acknowledged that there is the potential that some readers will be unacquainted with the terms and hypotheses that emerge here may be unfamiliar. This issue will briefly be addressed by providing an overview.

Autoethnography as qualitative research simply defined is "an alternative method and form of writing" (Neville-Jan, 2003: 89) which falls "somewhere between anthropology and literary studies" (Denshire, 2014: 831). Whilst Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams and Art Bochner (2011) define the autoethnographic approach "as both process and product", stressing that "a researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write auto-ethnography" (2011: 273) whereby acknowledging and accommodating the researcher's influence on the study through subjectivity and emotionality, ''research, writing, and method that connects the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social. This form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection'' (Ellis, 2004: xix). Certain scholars call attention to the fact that this approach is generally written in the first person (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Whilst Stacey Holman-Jones argues that that it cannot be categorised rather it is "a blurred genre … believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating auto-ethnographic texts is to change the world" (2005: 765). Whereas Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013) observe that "autoethnography creates a space for a turn, a change, a reconsideration of how we think, how we do research and relationships" (21) this line of thought is supported by the need to "…reflexively explore their personal experiences and their interactions with others as a way of achieving wider cultural, political or social understanding" (Denshire, 2014: 843).

Identified by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as the fifth moment in the history of qualitative research, 'concerned with experimental writing and participatory research' (Averett, 2009: 1), autoethnography follows the tradition of ethnographic research and whilst case study based participatory research and experimental writing feature more strongly. Indeed ethnographic approaches in the twenty-first century reflect the influence of postmodernism, as well as the dismantling of postmodernism by metamodernism and digimodernism on academia. In light of postmodernism, narrative approaches typical of ethnography have demonstrated its impact with an emphasis on reflexivity and personal voice in order to reflect a more personal point of view (Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Tierney &

Lincoln, 1997). Scholars have gradually begun to question conventional research methods, perceiving them as narrow, limiting, and parochial. Turning to autoethnography, academics have attempted to move away from the objective, disembodied practices of a traditional academic discourse (Bochner, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Rorty, 1982).

Such focus on the researcher as an equally important part of a multi-layered lifeworld is also deemed worthy of expression. Autoethnography places the researcher as the insider from the outset where the exploration of the lifeworld of the researcher is the context of the study. Autoethnography studies differ widely in their weighting on *auto* (self), *ethno* (the sociocultural connection), and *graphy* (the application of the research method) (Reed-Danahay, 1997, Ellis 2004, Holman Jones 2005). Although '…many fields of research have published autoethnographies' (Averett, 2009: 1) it is still a contested field. Thus scholars such as Sparkes (2002) recognise how problematic and difficult it is to accept different research traditions when compared to traditional methods. Consequently judging such approaches proves equally challenging.

Current genres of autoethnography embrace the following fields: collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2013), collaborative writing (Wyatt et al., 2011), co-constructed, community autoethnography, decolonizing autoethnography (Diversi and Moreira, 2009), duo-ethnography (Norris et al., 2012), Indigenous auto-ethnography, interactive interviews, layered accounts (Ronai, 1995), narrative ethnography, performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003; Spry, 2011), reflexive interviews, reflexive ethnography, sociopoetics (Pelias, 2011) and, most controversially, personal narratives that stand alone first-person style such as a short story or novel (Ellis 2004, Ellis et al., 2011, Bartleet 2009), inviting personal connection rather than analysis (Frank, 2000), investigating matters of personal significance within an explicitly recognised social framework (Holt, 2001; Sparkes, 1996), evaluating one owns actions (Duncan, 2004), or reviewing existing literature on a subject matter of personal importance (Muncey, 2005).

Whilst a small group of autoethnographers have extended the creative boundaries of their research by also incorporating graphic, audio-visual or performative components in their work (Scott-Hoy 2002, Saldana 2008, Miller 2010). Certain scholars define this research method as focusing on the researcher as the subject-object (Clough, 2000) whilst others reflect on the blurring of autobiography and ethnography through a direct challenge to the researcher/researched divide (Foley, 2002).

"Although ethnographic and autoethnographic reports are presented in the form of personal narratives, this research tradition does more than just tell stories" (Duncan, 2004: 30) for not only does this demonstrate that there are a wide range of definitions and forms autoethnography's importance as a methodology is reflected by the wide-ranging subject matter that have used this approach addressing issues such as anorexia (Mukaia, 1989), bereavement and grief (Ellis, 1993), political resistance (Kideckel, 1997), prison life (Svensson, 1997), Corsican identity (Jaffe, 1997), performance autoethnography (Spry, 2001), Jewish identity in the workplace (Berg, 2002), autoethnography in relation to realist representation and criteria (Holt, 2003), teaching (Pelias, 2003; Cook, 2009), art as research (Bochner & Ellis, 2003), hypermedia design theory (Duncan, 2004), disability (Jenks, 2005; Mogendorff, 2013 ;Castrodale & Zingaro, 2015), professional practice (Humphries, 2005; Denshire, 2014), international adoption (Wall 2008), feminist identity (Averett, 2009), national identity and cultural adaption (Jones, 2013), Rude boy subculture (Williams, Kamal & Zaini, 2014), exploring the challenges of writing an autoethnography in university (Forber-Pratt, 2015), issues of writing and publishing an autoethnography (Dashper, 2015), PhD Journey (Stanley, 2015) and fandom (Sturm, 2015). However it is art based autoethnographic research that is particularly instructive for this study where there is a blurring of "boundaries, crafting fictions and other ways of being true in the interests of rewriting selves in the social world" (Denshire, 2014: 831) and "offers a way of giving voice to personal experience to advance sociological understanding" (Wall, 2008: 39)

It is clear from scholarly research in this field that autoethnographers in a similar way to qualitative researchers generally hold a central supposition that reality is constantly shifting and is not completely external. Rather, reality is perceived as constructed and influenced by the life experiences, the continual transforming perceptions and beliefs of the observer. Some scholars initially feel uncomfortable utilising an autoethnography method, since it "seemed totally inappropriate and non-academic" (Cook, 2014: 270). Yet, "It also reveals the potential and power for change that exist through the practice of telling one's own story" (Averett, 2009: 2).

Whilst such a subjective view has been negated by certain social science scholars (Delamont, 2009), it "has gradually come to be seen as an acceptable platform for the practice of research" (Duncan, 2004: 30). Peter Clough asserts that new representations in social science research are required whereby "…Translating life's realities as lived by men

and women into story, and doing in such a way as still to be believed, is the ethnographic challenge" (Clough, 2002: 64).

Questions are raised, however, on the self as the only data source (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Sparkes, 2000). Criticised for being narcissistic, self-indulgent and introspective (Coffey, 1999; Holt 2003) due to the focus on the use of self as a source of data. Sarah Delamont (2009) has strongly expressed her concerns regarding autoethnography as being self-interested and ethically weak. It is the inward-looking and personal performances that are, to varying degrees, vital components of the autoethnographic study which still raise questions today about the value of such research being conducted using this method. Indeed, for certain scholars, autoethnography does not represent research, instead dismissing it as nothing more than frivolous theatricals of self-obsessed narcissism (Coffey, 1999; Delamont, 2009). Although Delamont makes a persuasive line of reasoning in her critique of autoethnography her "concrete examples" exemplifying her belief that this approach is simply a "narcissistic substitution" for qualitative research seem trivialised and unconvincing (2009: 51).

Arguments against the viability of autoethnography when contrasting this approach with traditional ethnography have been discussed at length (Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, 2003; Atkinson, Delamont, and Housley, 2008) where by focusing on the nature of social science and ethical issues it is asserted that it does not "meet core social science objectives" (Delamont, 2009: 59). Central to ethnographic research in Anthropology is the fact that it should make the familiar strange and the strange familiar hence some scholars argue that autoethnography due to its personal approach cannot do this (Becker 1971; Delamont 2002; Delamont and Atkinson 1995; Geer 1964) since "Studying ourselves can never make anything anthropologically strange" (Delamont, 2009: 59). In addition to this there are serious ethical implications surrounding the writing and publishing of autoethnographic research since when writing the personal there will undoubtedly be other performers within the study who will be easily be identified due to the nature of autoethnography (Atkinson and Delamont 2008). As well as a case being made regarding that traditionally research is expected to be analytical not just experiential concerns are raised regarding the worth of studies studying academics' viewpoints on subject matters. Thus Becker's classic question "whose side are we on?" (1967) for scholars such as Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003) indicates that autoethnography methodology from the outset is worthless for ethnographic research. Furthermore the argument implies that autoethnography focusing on the personal aspects of the researcher is not important or

worthwhile enough for investigation in comparison to the rich diverse social worlds of the unknown. Subsequently it is felt that academics have "a moral obligation to gather data, analyse them and publish the results" (Delamont, 2009: 59) therefore autoethnography as an approach is from the outset ethically problematic since "Introspection is not an appropriate substitute for data collection" (Delamont, 2009: 59).

Denzin identifies how certain scholars "speak favourably of a global, reflexive, critical ethnography" identifying that the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) is a theoretical reflexivity advocating "an epistemologically reflexive sociology and ethnography grounded in everyday cultural practices" (Denzin, 2003: 235). Despite the approach combining field experience with theory, a detached objective position is maintained rather than autoethnography's approach which depends on the "literary language of metaphor, irony, parody, satire as much as they rely on social scientific metalanguages" (Foley, 2002: 475). Consequently, this form of reflexivity, as Foley cites Bourdieu & Waquant (1992), questions the value of autoethnography perceiving it as "excessively subjective, shallow "textual reflexivity" (Bourdieu & Waquant, 1992)" (Foley, 2002: 475).

"Although much recent emphasis on uses of the term autoethnography refers to writing that conveys the emotional experiences of the anthropologist-as-individual (see especially Ellis 2004), there has been less attention to other possible uses and meanings of this term"(Reed-Danahay, 2009: 31). Reed-Danahay also highlights the need to distinguish between the different types of autoethnography and uses the term *critical autoethnography* to identify the method that "captures more of the reflexive approach" (2009: 31). It is this self-reflexive approach Reed-Danahay asserts that Bourdieu endorses where the focus is "not that of exposing your feelings about fieldwork or your informants" rather central to this method is how "one critically examines one's own position within the field of academic production—not in order to be more objective and less subjective, but rather to understand the false distinction between these two categories" (2009: 30). Indeed, Bourdieu's consideration of reflexivity is defined by his term "participant objectivation undertakes to explore not the 'lived experience' of the knowing subject but the social conditions of possibility – and therefore the effects and limits – of that experience and, more precisely, of the act of objectivation itself. It aims at objectivizing the subjective relation to the object which, far from leading to a relativistic and more-or-less anti-scientific subjectivism, is one of the conditions of genuine scientific objectivity" (Bourdieu, 2003: 282).

Thus Bourdieu interestingly talks of a balance between achieving objectivity whilst avoiding an objectivising distance which at the same time allows for a closeness which avoids emotional identification on the researcher's part – a tall feat and something for many researchers it is felt would find almost impossible to do.

In fact Sparkes (2000) suggests that autoethnography is at the fringes of academic research since such approaches do not conform to traditional criteria to evaluate qualitative inquiries where it could be argued that they might not be suitable for autoethnography (Garratt & Hodkinson, 1999). Delamont for these reasons perceives autoethnography as "antithetical to the progress of social science, because it violates the two basic tasks of the social sciences, which are: to study the social world and to move their discipline forward" Delamont, 2009: 60) so this makes it problematic as social science research. Delamont states that "there should be demarcation between the ethnographer's reflexive self when there is a research topic, and the academic who focuses on themselves rather than having a research topic" (2009: 60) since she observes that reflexive autobiographical writing can improve research because it has "analytic and pedagogic power" (61) whilst autoethnography is "an intellectual cul de sac" (Delamont, 2009: 51).

While some academics regard a personal narrative to be a comparable method to autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), other scholars utilise autoethnography as a way of explicitly connecting theories to the narrated personal experience (Holt, 2001; Sparkes, 1996) in order to support an approach as rigorous and validated as any other form of inquiry (Duncan, 2004). Autoethnography focuses on more than the experiences and opinions of the researcher rather scholarly research in this field is based on multiple sources of evidence and data that can corroborate or triangulate those opinions to increase the credibility and validity of the results. The application and combination of different research methods of collecting data utilised in autoethnography include participant observation, reflective writing, interviews, collating documents and artefacts. However the most significant method is participant observation since it is through this practice that reflections are acquired and the configuration of other data collection methods established. Duncan argues that such research methods offer ethnographic researchers in comparison to traditional approaches less challenges as a participant observer since "autoethnographers already fully immersed in the focus situation, issues of accessibility, permissibility, and unobtrusiveness do not present such obstacles" (Duncan, 2004: 30).

Denshire (2014) argues that notable journals publish regularly autoethnographic research where such writing "goes beyond the writing of selves" (Denshire, 2014: 833). Scholars advocating autoethnography as a valid research method identify contemporary approaches evolving from a range disciplines. It is suggested that autoethnography can in fact offer "vehicles for talking to each other often, across the borders of discipline and identity locations" (Burdell and Swadener, 1999: 25).

As clearly outlined Ellis and Bochner (2006) have categorised variations in terms of evocative and analytical approaches, where both methodologies can be distinguished through the different relationships they each have between the personal and the wider social and cultural world each approach seeks to enquire into. Thus the key to an evocative autoethnography is the foregrounding of the researcher's personal stories whilst analytical autoethnography in contrast makes connections to "some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves" (Anderson, 2006: 387). This binary categorisation is beneficial as an initial means of observing the variations of methods autoethnographic writers assimilate the aspects of self and culture in their writing.

Although Anderson asserts he is "a friend of evocative ethnography" and professes an appreciation for the efforts scholars have made in articulating and exemplifying this emergent research method he has also expressed that the evocative approach has limitations for those who want to practice autoethnography within a realist or analytical tradition (2006: 452). Anderson (2006) defines autoethnography basically as texts which specifically focus on the researcher as the subject matter, yet this simplification of the method dismisses the many nuances of this research approach. He begins to distinguish the differences between evocative and analytical autoethnography as well as considers these approaches alongside autobiographical ethnography and finally contrasting each in relation to traditional realist ethnography. Anderson alleges that the key purpose of evocative autoethnography scholarship is to create an emotional resonance with readers accomplished through subjective narratives supported by enthralling descriptions (2006: 377).This approach therefore does indeed share postmodern sensibilities particularly issues surrounding representation of "the other" and reservations concerning the generalisation of theoretical discourse.

In contrast, the analytical approach values a sense of objectivity. Anderson (2006: 378) allocates the following essential elements for conducting analytic auto-ethnography; "(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility

of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis". In his article *Rescuing Autoethnography*, Atkinson endorses Anderson's account that insists "on the *analytic* aspect of autoethnography" (Atkinson, 2006: 402). Indeed Anderson whilst considering the importance of theoretical enquiry writes: "The definitive feature of analytic autoethnography is this value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader generalization" (2006: 388). It is this particularly that distinguishes the crucial differences of this approach with that of evocative autoethnographers. The main criticisms of this approach are that Anderson's definition of analytic autoethnography is too restricted and potentially problematic. To counteract this, Vryan (2006) proposes some recommendations in order for this method to be more open and wide-ranging. However Vryan finds Anderson's requirement of collecting data from people other than the researcher problematic since he believes that it is not a necessary requirement of all analytic autoethnography rather "the necessity, value, and feasibility of such data will vary according to the specifics of a given project and the goals of its creator(s)" (Vryan, 2006: 406). Furthermore Vryan (2006) is also cautious about framing analytic autoethnography in terms of it not being evocative or emotional autoethnography.

Equally, although evocative and analytical are the most commonly explored approaches scholars such as Reed-Danahay (1997) and others extend further than these binary classifications in ethnographic studies shaped by poststructuralism. Considering the ethnographic worth of autoethnography requires reflexive analysis of theories of both self and culture in terms of writing. In this regard, Reed-Danahay suggests that autoethnography "… synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, [with] the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography … and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self [has] been … called into question" (1997: 2)

This fusion between postmodernism, autobiography and ethnography calls for a re-evaluation of how the self and culture are theorised and deliberated. Some contemporary autoethnographic accounts influenced by post-structuralism replace the focus on a cohesive self as the primary site of experience and meaning, instead transferring attention to the decentred self by destabilising through multiple speaking positions and representations (Denshire and Lee, 2013) thus "the writing writes the writer as a complex (im)possible subject in a world where (self) knowledge can only ever be tentative,

contingent, and situated" (Gannon, 2006: 474). Using such methods it has been argued that autoethnographic writing can be concurrently personal and scholarly, evocative and analytical as well as descriptive and theoretical (Burnier, 2006).

Postmodern debate exploring the blurring of boundaries of truths and fictions (Smith, 1996) continues to inform critical understandings of the worth and effectiveness of contemporary autoethnographic writing (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Somerville, 2007). Equally feminist researchers continue to struggle against patriarchal male-created, prejudices and some scholars have opposed such politics by engaging in critical autobiographical narratives which ''transgress academic and disciplinary expectations about 'acceptable' research topics, and violate norms about how research is 'supposed' to be conducted'' (Kimpson, 2005: 73). Thus some definitions of autoethnography it could be argued that similarities could be made with the concept of second-wave feminists made popular, 'the personal is political.' For instance Allen and Piercy (2005) state that when feminists ''tell and analyse our own stories, we begin to see how their content is derived from our culture'' (159).

"This statement has particular meaning for feminist(s) …because autoethnography can develop their understanding of themselves, others, and social conditions…"(Averett, 2009: 2) since this process of researching the self, Allen and Piercy (2005) argue that writers become better researchers and more active in resisting oppressive social conditions through their research. Whilst DeVault (1999) asserts that feminist research offers ''smaller, more tailored, and more intensely pointed truths than the discredited 'Truth' of grand theory and master narratives. They are truths that illuminate varied experiences rather than insist on one reality'' (3). Whereas Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) theorise that autoethnography includes new and creative writing practices, which is how this research is positioned as feminist autoethnography.

Equally autoethnography has an appeal to the sensibilities of scholars within the creative and performing arts. This combination of the characteristics of ethnography and autobiography is acquiring momentum as a research tool, to a certain extent because of the opportunity it offers for artists in a variety of fields to reflect critically upon their personal and professional creative practices.

This research incorporates autoethnographic methods in order for it to be evaluated in terms of its inclusion of multiple data sources, particularly because they are necessary

according to the nature of the research inquiry. Scholars defending a personal narrative as a valid auto-biographical method use a range of approaches to counter autoethnography criticisms. Two particularly interesting techniques include the intentional use of second personal pronoun 'you' (Mykhalovskiy, 1996) and writing in the third person, as 'she' or 'he', (Cauley, 2008) in order to distance 'the self' from the research, thus refuting claims of self-indulgence.

The experimental nature of this methodology ensures that by continuing to experiment with successive transferences of the self as the primary site of experience and meaning such research clearly contributes to new understandings about the potential for autoethnography across a wide spectrum of disciplines. One particular approach of interest to this research is the "layered account" (Ronai, 1995: 395) which integrates 'personal experience, theory, and research practices' as the researcher travels 'back and forth between narratives and reflections on those narratives or their content' (Goodall, 2008: 68) thus making the problematic issue of only studying the self redundant. Simply defined a layered account usually focuses on the researcher's experience in conjunction with data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature. This method places emphasis on the procedural properties of research. Comparable to grounded theory, layered accounts demonstrate how "data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously" (Charmaz, 1983: 110) where existing research is framed as a "source of q*uestions* and *comparisons*" rather than a "measure of truth" (117).

However this is where the methods diverge since a layered account's writing mode can include vignettes, multiple voices, reflexivity and introspection (Ellis, 1991) rather than the traditional analysis report. Denshire (2014) considers how layered accounts may gain popularity as an 'assemblage' approach in the future "… juxtaposing multiple tellings from more than one point of view, especially via new media…' (843). By offering a new approach focusing on practice this method can challenge how existing ideas of the individual and the social within autoethnography can be disrupted. Thus it could be claimed that as an approach within autoethnography it "…displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 739).

Anderson draws attention to the fact that this approach "…requires considerable narrative and expressive skills..." where a key strength to the work of these scholars is "…that they have not just produced discourse about evocative autoethnography" (2006: 377) but created works of art of equal importance.

To begin to analyse digital identity and in particular female identity as the transmediated self it is perhaps appropriate that this study with feminist leanings has decided to use autoethnography which presents the researcher as "living, contradictory, vulnerable, evolving multiple self, who speaks in a partial, subjective, culture-bound voice" (Foley, 2002: 474).

The construction of Seren Sanclêr for this research grew out of my need to acquire experiences first hand in order to bring me "closer to the social phenomenon" (Contreras, 2014: 28) however unlike other ethnographers that take a carnal sociology approach, the knowledge attained to understand life is not from an "unfamiliar world" due to my background in the arts.

Indeed as Wacquant (2005) demonstrates, the construction of Seren Sanclêr has similarly transformed the researcher into an artist who is slowly beginning to be a "recognized member of the craft" (Wacquant, 2005: 466) which "enables us to grasp human conduct not as the raw precipitate of external structures (causes) or the refined outgrowth of internal drives and decisions (reasons) but as a mutual moulding and immediate "inhabiting" of being and world"" which he defines as a "carnal entanglement" (Wacquant, 2005: 466). As the creator of Seren Sanclêr, placing the researcher in a position to experience directly the process, the research could afford a creative element chapter. The opportunity to create a long term art project also meant that as the researcher's assessments based on the experience as a practitioner could be reported on directly, a necessary perspective when describing the tacit inference (Polyani, 1967) or knowing-in-action (Schön, 1987) proved to be an essential element of the study process. This concept of design as a reflective "conversation with materials" Schön (1987: 78) is defined as being exceptionally research-like in quality, encompassing continual exploration, investigation, and hypothesis assessment.

3.3 Arts Based Research and Visual Methodologies

Arts Based Research (ABR) practices draw on a variety of creative methodologies that might be incorporated into interdisciplinary research projects as methodological innovations, providing new perspectives on and extending existing knowledge as well as materialising a different kind of knowledge practice. Since the transfictive performative element is a key component for all the case studies – including the creative practice - the method of analysis incorporated a combined approach of descriptive analysis, comparative analysis taking a theoretical feminist art approach to engage with performance, identity and digital technologies. As transfictive heteronyms their performance across the

platforms demonstrate their power as mediums of communication and can be useful as highly impactful approaches for investigating representing the ways in which contemporary identity is performed. Performance is therefore an investigation and a representation (Worthen, 1998). Taking the stance "that performance is inseparable aspect of social life" (Leavy, 2015: 176) in relation to Goofman's (1959) dramaturgy, under this theoretical framework the case studies and creative practice can be explored. Connected to feminist art, postmodern and visual theory, a hybrid approach allows for a detailed exploration of performance and identity work which Homi Bhabha (1993) identifies as a "third space". Thus the intention of this research is to fuse "the synergies between qualitative inquiry and arts practices" (Leavy, 2015: 177) particularly when considering the feminist theoretical approach taken by this study. Taking a feminist approach to examine the phenomenon of transfictive heteronym artists resulted in a theoretical exploration of the case studies and creative practice with a particular focus on Goffman's (1956) work on performance; Butler's (1990, 1993) assertion that gender itself is a performance; Elwood's (2014) consideration of the transmediated self and Senft's (2013) thoughts on self-branding. Such a multi-disciplinary methodology exploration was required in order to analyse the case studies and creative practice thus highlighting the need to explore them through performative means since this allowed for a space where identity could be renegotiated and challenged.

Taking Leavy's (2015) consideration of visual arts-based research practices as a starting point, this research through the case study and creative practice examines photography, painting, drawing, installations, mixed media art and digital art (Leavy, 2015: 231). As the researcher creating art was a crucial element of the research approach since the transfictive heteronym artist created "serves as both as data, and may also represent data" (Leavy, 2015: 232) thus demonstrating the importance of multimethod research design. The visual autoethnography chapter thus elaborates on the data. Photographic images documenting the case studies and creative practice reinforces the imrpotance of the visual practice of identity performance across the platforms thus supported more traditional methods of analysis.

Visual culture studies focuses on the ways images in arts, communication, and advertisements can be used and understood. The emergence of visual culture as trans-disciplinary and cross-methodological field of inquiry is reflected upon by Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999) who clearly identifies the ways in which visual culture studies has emerged from a range of different disciplines which are "concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual

technology" (Mirzoeff, 1999: 3). His assertion that "there is now a need to interpret the postmodern globalization of the visual as everyday life" (Mirzoeff, 1999: 3) is ever more relevant with present use of digital technology.

The importance of visuals in this research strongly impacted how the research was approached. It was an instinctive decision to analyse the transfictive artist's work as well as their physical appearance and visual presence online in order to begin to deconstruct the process of their persona construction. The inclusion of the visual autoethnography chapter equally demonstrated my critical pedagogy since it was felt that it is through my transfictive artist project, the development process of her identity across platforms could be clearly visually communication. Therefore, central to the analysis of the case studies was the importance of critically and analytically engaging with visuals particularly highlighting the ways in which communication is happening increasingly through visuals due to the use of vastly developing technology.

Gillian Rose's (2001) book *Visual Methodologies* proved to be an invaluable text which formed an insightful and well-grounded argument validating the importance of recognizing "critical visual methodology" (Rose, 2001: 3) thus further justifying this research's approach. Central to Rose's approach is her assertion that it is necessary that critical visual methodology considers and recognises the impact of cultural significance, social practices and power relations on visuals which in turn can be analysed through a variety of combined approaches such as psychoanalysis, semiology and discourse analysis (Rose, 2001: 3).

Other notable key factors which have been clearly marked out in Chapter 1 and 2 are the ways in which feminism and feminist art criticism's impact on the ways in which visual culture would be interpreted. From this stance it was important for the researcher to consider how the case studies could be read and understood visually, as well as what politics is embedded in the ways such visual information is appreciated. As Pink (2007) suggests:

> "'visual research methods' are not purely visual. Rather, they pay particular attention to visual aspects of culture. Similarly, they cannot be used independently of other methods; neither a purely visual ethnography nor an exclusively visual approach to culture can exist''

> (Pink, 2007:21).

In light of this, through the representational decisions I have made during my research process when creating the visual autoethnography chapter I aim to convey how visuality, tacit knowledge, creativity, and my evolving understanding of epistemology have interactively formed my understanding of the multimodality of identity.

In order to understand and consider the importance of photographs in establishing identity and authenticity of the fictional persona via social media platforms, it is important to have an understanding of the relationship between existing personal photographic practices and new practices emerging from camera phone usage. Interestingly, despite personal photography tremendous popularity as a practice and its exponential growth during the last decade, it has received relatively limited attention from scholars despite significant studies by Sontag, 1978; Bourdieu, 1990; Barthes, 1980; Chalfen, 1987; Hirsch, 1997; Van Djick, 2008 and Van House, 2005, 2007, 2009; Van house et al., 2004. "As photographs have begun to be credited by social and scientific research, cultural theorists, intent on exploring the psychological, biological, social and political aspects of representation, have addressed the family album" (Langford, 2001: 34) which in relation to this research can be linked to the ways photography is used within social media. Of particular interest is the way Van House et al have developed a framework to understand the motivation for people to take personal photographs which begins to focus on the importance of the following concerns for individuals: constructing personal and group memories, creating and sustaining social relationships and for the personal development of self-expression and self-presentation (2004).

Pierre Bourdieu in *Photography: A Middle Brow Art* views personal photography as tribal ritual, centred on the family which "is both subject and object" (Bourdieu: 19) where photographs document "climatic moments of social life in which the group solemnly reaffirms its unity" (Bourdieu: 21). Clear connections between scholarly work examining family photography and the rituals of photography published via social media sites and in particular the phenomenon of the Sefie reinforces personal photographic ritual and the ritual of identity formation reinforcing the continued preoccupation with spectatorial identification. As Sontag defines in her seminal essay *On Photography*, the taking of pictures as "a rite of family life" so in turn the publishing of photographs and in particular Selfies to a global audience via social media has become a rite of developing the self-branded persona. As Sontag highlights the importance of cameras in documenting family life, the Selfie demonstrates the continued importance of documentation which has now expanded to the daily record of an individual's life in the twenty first century. The Selfie and other artefact photographs capturing events and moments reinforce the persisting

importance of visual narrative in the construction process of chronicling the transmediated self. As Sontag draws attention to the importance of photography in relation to tourism where "As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure" (Sontag: 177). Photographs for the fictive artists "offer indisputable evidence" of the persona's existence, a "way of certifying" the identity (Sontag: 177). Sontag's exploration of the method of converting experience into an image is extended to the ways in which there is the continued and more demanding pursuit of the photogenic for dissemination across social media sites.

Research on new uses of photography is also beneficial for understanding the potential uses of technology and the ways in which individuals are constructing their transmediated selves. As Bourdieu notes, as "a private technique, photography manufactures private images of private life ... Apart from a tiny minority of aesthetes, photographers see the recording of family life as the primary function of photography' (1990: 30) however where Bourdieu perceives the documenting of family life as the primary function of photography, digital photography in all its forms as well as the dissemination of such images is transforming this concept to include the transmediated self. Artefacts in particular photographs, as Richard Chalfen argues is 'primarily a medium of communication' (Chalfen, 1991: 5) which reflect the identity narratives but also help construct and maintain the persona. Sharing photographs is integral in the construction and maintenance of the transmediated identity since their key function is to authenticate the identity and anchor the life narrative. The transmediated self via the platforms through photographs and artefacts reinforces the performative act of showing and telling which is integral to the ritualized use of social media which in turn reflect the view of ourselves that we want to project out into the world. The recurrent use of photographs in storytelling, particularly through social media, authenticates the fictive persona by calling upon and serving the following factors: memory, relationships, self-expression, materiality, and narrative. The use of social media and in particular the inclusion of photographs highlights the importance of visual evidence in the authentication of identity as well as supporting the persona's narrative.

Vision and the visual are secured as the key sense of social media users and creators, in the same way as the *tourist gaze,* a term coined by Urry (1990) has permeated scholarly understanding of tourist in relation to photography, the practice of *selfie gazing* is rapidly becoming an area worthy of attention through signposting, signification and meaning interpretation thus it is "important to address the role of the visual as a tool for accessing

and mobilising affectual and embodied expressions of self" (Scares, 2013: 3). Scarles (2013) considers the method of photo-elicitation turning her attention to "the notion of images as *producing* data" which explores the ways in which photographs can "become active agents within the research process as greater emphases lie on subjective meaning and the practices and processes behind the creation of the image" (Scarles, 2013: 5).

The use of photography/images in this study offers "a means of furthering communication and opportunities… to express and explore experiences of particular research phenomenon" (Scarles, 2013: 5) resulting in "Visuals become active agents and co-performers in the research process" (2013: 23). Indeed Dawn Mannay (2015) draws attention to the fact that there is growing body of social research that is deploying visual methods to enhance "our understanding of these very different fields of research, providing theoretical insights, ethical reflections and implications for practitioners" which results in "the blurring of the lines between researcher and researched" (481). It is from this stance that this study perceives the utilisation of visual methods as a central component of the research's approach thus allowing for greater opportunities to explore transfictive construction and performance identity in order to consider the researcher's role not only as an image creator but also as transfictive artist creator.

This is further strengthened by R. Lyle Skains (2016) who's work exploring art as research asserts "not only offer insights into art and the practice of art as it occurs, but can throw new and unexpected light onto a range of topics as wide as human experience itself" (2016). Her perception that practice related researchers by engaging "in the act of creation" (2016) leads to potentially a more thorough examination through personal observation and anaslysis where "direct study of the self as an artist at work and the practice of art in cultural and social contexts can bring us closer to ourselves and our communities (2016). Whilst both Mannay and Skains acknowledge that researchers need to be cautious when employing a visual and creative practice approach Skains's recommendations for mitigating potential limitations mirrors the methods similar explored by autoethnographic scholars earlier as discussed earlier in this chapter. Taking Skains's framework outlined in *Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology* (2016) this study ensured that the visual autoethnography and the construction of the transfictive artist developed out of a clearly defined research question as outlined in Chapter 1. As presented in chapter 5 and chapter 6 both illustrate the researcher's observations and activities in situ as well exemplify that interpretation and refection has clearly taken place at a later time in order to allow for "a distanced perspective" thus allowing for the researcher to "identify patterns in the creative process and narrative artifacts that may

not have been apparent while the activity was underway" (Skain, 2016). Therefore as outlined in this chapter a combination of methodological approaches, including a visual approach, provides a more robust approach to the study.

3.4 An Analytical/Visual Autoethnographic Approach

"The beauty of autoethnography is creating your approach yourself and finding your own voice." (Forber-Pratt, 2015: 12)

This research interweaves through the case studies to some elements of lived experiences which demonstrate how the approach has clearly been informed by critiques of autoethnography, particularly those that were considered the most compelling, largely grounded in Delamont's (2007, 2009) arguments against autoethnography but also with consideration of the tensions between evocative (Ellis, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 2006) and analytic (Anderson, 2006) approaches in order to strengthen the depth of engagement, quality, and potential impact of this research.

It is believed that the methodology selected for this study best reflects the investigation's understanding of knowledge, research, and the researcher's personal reflections on the construction of identity through transmedia texts. This chapter as outlined above considers the importance of identity, digital media, transmedia and visual culture in relation to the study, thus locating the research in the field of feminism, performance and transfictive representation. As briefly discussed early, this study also incorporates arts-based research and autoethnography which informed and shaped the research throughout the study.

The intention of this research was not to create a descriptive, free form style of literary writing that uses emotion in the aim to evoke empathy from the reader (Ellis, 1997) rather the study lies closer to analytical autoethnography an approach focusing on connecting self-experience to existing research and theory. Critical analysis is still at the core of this research, thus autoethnography as a methodology serves to directly understand and critique social structures, processes and forces (Anderson, 2006). Framed in this way, this study, to a certain extent can acknowledge issues concerning self-centred research (Coffey, 1999 and Delamont, 2009) however such problems can be averted by assessing and evaluating the personal in light of social theories and processes. Subsequently autoethnography could be considered more of a philosophy than a precise method (Wall,

2006), thus offering extensive creative freedom in the construction of autoethnographic research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

This study attempts to avoid such issues by creating the visual autoethnographic chapter of the research as artefact to be explored in the same way as the other case studies. Thus the transmedia material created by the researcher remains intact and will not be sacrificed "at the altar of traditional sociological rigor" (Ellis & Bocher, 2006: 440). This method allowed the study to produce an in-depth, rich, and comprehensive collation of data that was able to assemble via fully-immersive (and documented) self-observation, self-interviewing, and self-analysis.

To begin with this research's first focus on self-reflection was to develop a reflective account of the researcher's exploration of art practice prior to the beginning of the research period. Arising from this retrospective account, the researcher began to develop a fictional entity where the documentation of the process was collected over a seven year period reflections-in-action consisting of handwritten entries in journals, created on a regular basis and supported by other documentary evidence such as e-mails, photographs, artwork or sketches then later via social media; examples of this primary material is illustrated in the visual autoethnography chapter 6.

For the case studies and creative practice analysis it had to be decided whether to write these sections in the first or third person in relation to creating a space of analytical distance to the narrative since Wyatt (2006) stresses the importance for autoethnographers to decide "…how close we choose to position our readers" (Wyatt, 2006: 814). Given that the personal for this research is limited to the focus of constructing a fictional artist and not involved in sensitive issues, occasional use of first person would allow the narrative to be "completely explicit about the events being analysed" (Méndez, 2013: 283). A second ethical consideration Méndez highlights is that of the issue of consent however again this is in relation to critical intimate personal experiences thus getting formal consent for this research again proved not to be problematic and did not result in harm to the researcher or people involved. Regardless of the subject matter dealt with in this study, concurring with Méndez's (2013) and Ellis's (2007), this research sought to be " ethical and honest about the events described as well as the content of words expressed by all the people involved in these events" (Méndez, 2013: 283).Therefore this research's intentions to include sections that recreate the researcher's experiences in a reflexive way were to make "a connection to the reader which can help him or her to think and

reflect about his or her own experiences" (Méndez, 2013: 284), in this case individuals' experiences of personal branding and construction of the transmediated self. Jonathan Wyatt reflections on ethically writing in third person focus on "creating distance for others (including readers), establishing distance within myself, and striving to write "without power" (Stone, 2004, p. 23)" (Wyatt, 2006: 813) whilst avoiding the possibility of sounding too "distant and disembodied, the tone of the omniscient, invisible author" (Wyatt, 2006: 815). This study felt that using third person would allow for the opportunity to speak authentically about the construction of a fictive persona in relation to the other case studies whilst also creating an "appropriate distance within myself (i.e., from my experiencing self)" (Wyatt, 2006: 815). Since this research is a blending of both analytical with creative practice, it is the interaction between theoretical analysis, the self and its personal experiences that a greater understanding of the fictive artists as transmedia texts is accomplished.

This study acknowledges and agrees with Richardson (2000) that whilst "Writing in different genres… does not ensure a better product" the fusion of both creative and scientific approach for this research ensures a more detailed examination reinforcing the concept that the "Creative arts is one lens through which to view the world; analytical/science is another. We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified" (Richardson, 2000: 254). Although Richardson's (2000) criteria refer to all types of ethnography focusing on: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, the impact the narrative causes the reader, and how much the narrative expresses a reality; whilst some are more relevant than others to autoethnography they still offer beneficial ways to evaluate the approach.

Tolich (2010) after consideration of Ellis's (2007) ethical guidelines which are perceived as valid in themselves lose some of their authority due to Ellis not following her own recommendations in relation to her own study by ensuring that she "gained neither informed prospective consent nor ongoing process consent" (Tolich, 2010: 5). In response to this Tolich presents a "foundational guideline for autoethnographers" (2010: 5) where it is inbuilt to be "constantly reflecting critically on ethical practices at every step (Tolich, 2010: 6). However, in contrast to Tolich's (2010) assertion that "autoethnographic ethics being not thought out and … in relation to process consent, as not being followed" (2010: 6) this study would refute these claims since research participants including the researcher are mainly from an academic background and are informed rather than as Tolich categorises as *naïve*. Tolich's (2010) cautions for autoethnographers are acknowledged "choose the topic very carefully [and] treat all the persons mentioned in

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the text as vulnerable, including the researcher" (2010: 7) both of which in this study adhered too even when facing the complexities of studying fictive personas. Tolich, informed by scholars such as Ellis, 2007; Jago, 2002; Rambo, 2007 and Chang, 2008, consolidates an ethical framework of ten guidelines for autoethnography however it is the practice of process content originally defined by Ellis (2007) that is most relevant to this study that of consent where "process consent" is conducted at each stage to make sure participants still want to be part of the project (Ellis, 2007).

Equally, the intentions of the visual autoethnographic chapter was to further expand the concept of branding the transfictive artist identity through digital media as well as exploring the development of feminist art through a fictional artist persona. In light of feminist scholarly discourse (Nochlin, 1971, Pollock & Parker, Chicago) the purpose of the visual autoethnography primarily was to analyse and discuss what it means to construct a fictive artist as a transmedia text. By this research identifying with the statement "Feminist Art is all the stages of a woman giving birth to herself" (Chicago,1977: 1) its exploration of creating an artist personas it is proposed that this will bring to light the complicated negotiations facing contemporary artists engaged with identity in an attempt to "address the complex political terrain of feminism in the 21st century" (Tani, 2015). In addition there was a clear need to investigate the impact of feminist theory informed by "a political consciousness of the differential position of women in our society" (Parker & Pollock, 2013: 157) in relation to combating the dominated art world's mythologizing of the individualistic male artist- genius. The intention of the visual autoethnography was to both build upon and subvert these myths and representations of identity as well as begin to understand the process of developing an artist identity for a transfictive heteronym.

From the position of practitioner (creator of a fictive artist)/researcher, it was felt that from this stance this would potentially provide opportunities to write in a powerful way in order to reach out to and connect with a wide range of readers (Bochner & Ellis, 1996) and, in particular from the researcher's perspective, as a way to critically engage in the ways in which the transmediated self can be successfully constructed.

The case study chapters seemed a natural place to ''reach'' this audience, where interviews with the creators of the fictive artists would be presented as interspersed conversational and descriptive language that would potentially connect readers to immerse themselves in the narrative of the construction of the fictive artists and provide an opportunity for readers to understand the practitioner/researcher attempts to unravel and interrogate the experience of creating Seren Sanclêr as a transmedia text (Ellis,

1999). Whilst Ellis' evocative approach to autoethnography, inspired the development of the visual autoethnography and the structure of chapter 5 whereby the creative excerpts which would bring a little of the researcher into the writing, this was counteracted by firstly the main approach to the research remaining more traditionally theoretically in its analysis and secondly to balance the evocative interludes by pinning them down with what Anderson (2006) defines as ''theoretical illumination'' (2006: 388).

This subversion begins with the artist journal's format and sequencing. Inspiration was taken from: *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self Portrait* (Lowe, 2006), *Tracey Emin: My Photo Album* (Emin, 2013), *Strangeland* (Emin, 2005), *Tracey Emin: Love is What You Want* (Corris, 2011), *Nan Goldin: The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (Goldin, 2004), *Corinne Day: Diary* (Day 2001) and *Sarah Maple: You Could Have Done This* (Maple, 2015). Seren Sanclêr's Artist Journal and retrospective exhibition catalogue were utilised to create a photography embedded fiction. The text begins by presenting the traditional codes and conventions of an artist journal and catalogue: a forward written by an academic, photographs of her work, personal photographs of herself and art friends to reflect how she fit in or didn't within the artist community. Texts focused particularly on the YBA movement and contemporary Artists in Wales also proved insightful in mapping an artist persona: *Lucky Kunst: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art* (Muir, 2009), *Seven Days in the Art World* (Thornton, 2009), *33 Artists in 3 Acts* (Thornton, 2014), *Spit Fire: Photographs from the Art World* (Shand Kydd, 1996), *Crash* (Shand Kydd, 2006) and *The Life Histories of Five Contemporary Welsh Women Artist: The Interweaving of Art into Living and Living into Art* (Collet, 2012).

Whilst Bryant and Livholts (2015) examine gender by focusing on location and non-location in relation to bodies their approach helps to inform this study "written words through memory or diaries give a sense of bodies in space whilst a photograph captures a still image of bodies in place" (Bryant & Livholts, 2015: 115). Therefore in a similar way this research has "used photography to complement memory and imaginings and allow for the opportunity to extend the data to document" the construction of the fictive artist by the researcher (Bryant & Livholts, 2015: 115). This approach is further justified by Bryant and Livholts who cite Rose (2007), Haraway (1988) and Sontag (1999) where using "the camera in parallel to our research diary" is reinforced by critical visual methodology and the controlling power of photography is combined with using third person (2015: 115).

The art journal format for the visual autoethnographic chapter served the following purposes: At the outset, the process of documenting the process of creating a fictive identity externalised assumptions and reactions to theories, hypotheses and actions that

could otherwise have remained unacknowledged. Equally, the art journal format helped ideas to take shape and develop the identity design thus capturing the internal formulation plan mapping out the creative process. In addition this method helped to define and resolve internalised creative conflicts; consequently, the final visual autoethnographic chapter presents data documenting significant stages evidencing the progression of concepts, skills and expertise, each contributing to the development of ideas resulting in the emergence of an artist persona developed through a range of transmedia texts. The act of self-reflection presented in chapter 5 is clearly realised through exploring and assessing each of these purposes as well as strengthening the need for this study to utilise a visual autoethnographic approach.

It is the intention of this research to apply "a unique combination of qualitative methodologies in order to construct" an approach that incorporates elements of "a visual autoethnography" (Ownby 2013: 2) which means the inclusion of researcher generated photographs to reinforce the reflexive text. As a study of transmedia it was felt that the use of photographs was essential to illustrate and provide anchorage to the research in order to interrogate visual and textual data for understanding self-identification construction. Thus the inclusion of the visual autoethnographic chapter is further reinforced as an attempt to explore the construction of Seren Sanclêr across platforms, comprising of narrative text and photographic images as well as reflect visually the narrative that emerged as the fictive artist's transmediated self-evolved. The inclusion of Seren Sanclêr as part of the group case study fulfils one of the five essential criteria for analytic autoethnography suggested by Anderson (2006) where the researcher through the fictive artist's construction becomes a ''full member in the research ... setting'' (2006: 375).

Thus the researcher's membership in the research setting can be viewed in terms of the more traditional approach of participant observation and conducting interviews as well as through the more progressive method the auto observations of the construction of a fictive artist which also served as an important element of the inquiry. Each of these membership settings were equally vital to the research, mutually existing, informing one another, as it was the amalgamation of analytical and evocative that afforded a better understanding of the case studies analysed, while it was the construction of Seren Sanclêr herself that brought forth a heightened state of consciousness first hand of what it entailed to develop a fictive entity as a transmedia text. An autobiographical approach allowed for the researcher to ''retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or

are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity'' (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011: 276).

As engagement in the formation of Seren Sanclêr progressed, this clearly resulted in a rapid transferal away from the superficial comprehension of a seemingly spontaneous act towards a personally experienced deeper understanding of the nuances and layers of assembling a fictive artist across multiple platforms. This shift, due to the inclusion of the researcher/creator's fictive artist was instrumental to developing a greater understanding of the mechanics of self-branding and the importance of presence across platforms to strengthen the transfictive heteronymic idenity. Thus this research, it was felt, had something relevant to offer existing conversations on digital identity.

In this way, an autoethnography approach was vital to both the emergent understandings of and evolving progression of knowledge of understanding the systems at work contributing to the performance of the transmediated self. Where Delamont (2009) reproaches academics for "contemplating ourselves and our bodies'' (60) rather than going out into the world, such criticism acted as a safe guard when contemplating the inclusion of the researcher within the research. Whilst the main body of the research critically and reflexively (Anderson, 2006) examines the collection of case studies, the inclusion of the researcher's observations as a creator of a fictive artist was essential to the research to have a deeper understanding of the processes involved. For these reasons, the researcher being a part of the research was critical to contributing to the broader discourses surrounding digital identity, self-branding and the transmediated self. Therefore the inclusion is justified since it offered the research opportunity to be ''self-reflexive but not self-obsessed'' (Denzin, 2006: 421) thus avoiding "self-absorbed digression'' (Anderson, 2006: 385).

The researcher felt that the experiences of constructing a fictive transmedia text offered something interesting and innovative whilst also making original contribution to knowledge and current conversations on transmedia, identity and performance. Whilst is could be raised that it was presumptuous that the researcher should think that the personal experiences observed were interesting and worth researching, this could be counter argued by the fact that explorations into digital identity, the transmediated self and personal-branding are in their infancy. It is a continuously evolving field of study thus bringing different, partly experimental qualitative approaches allows for greater opportunities to explore the ways in which identities can be developed across a range of platforms as well as lead to further consideration of the impact of digital technologies on these constructions. Therefore the focus on the self through the researcher/creator as a

method of inquiry that can serve the interests of the study well since it offers access to rich qualitative data since it is a "viable way to learn about ourselves and [our] research topic"(Richards & St. Pierre, 2005: 959).

By constantly engaging in critical discussions in relation to autoethnography as an approach, particularly Delamont (2009) and Wacquant (2005) as well considering the disparities between analytic (Anderson, 2006) and evocative (Ellis & Bochner, 2006) autoethnography all of which proved to be extremely informative to the methodological development of the research. Whilst Delamont's (2009) concerns as discussed earlier safeguarded and steered the research away from spiralling narcissism, the influences of analytical and evocative approaches was something that was negotiated continuously throughout the research resulting in aspects from both becoming part of the research process. Contrary to Delamont's (2009) critique of autoethnography the research which transpired during the seven year period proved to be challenging, physically and intellectually exhausting and demanding, something that is clearly evidenced in Chapter 5 and 6. However, this research, as stated earlier, is clearly more influenced by an analytical and layered autoethnographic approach rather than one influenced by evocative whereby the boundaries of traditional scholarship are challenged.

Although Anderson outlines an approach for analytical autoethnography no study examples are offered as guidance. Therefore Duncan's research outlined in her article (2004) proved to be extremely useful in mapping out this study in relation to adapting Anderson's methodology. Duncan's discussion of her application of an autoethnographic approach is also beneficial since she explains in detail how she addressed the issues of legitimacy and representation surrounding this ethnographic approach and justified her use of autoethnography as a research method. Her particular approach outlines how she uses a framework that tackles six key issues "…study boundaries, instrumental utility, construct validity, external validity, reliability, and scholarship" in order to defend her choice of research method in opposition to "the potential bias against the value of inner knowing within research culture" (Duncan, 2004).

With this in mind this study felt consciously aware that there was a real need to demonstrate how traditional research criteria had been addressed. As stated earlier in this chapter, autoethnography perceived by Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) as the fifth moment of research may be accurate to a certain extent yet Duncan aptly recognises that perhaps 'we are still moving through the fourth moment, in which issues of legitimacy and representation are problematic (Duncan, 2004).

Therefore the research used Anderson's guidance of what he deemed the essential elements for conducting analytic autoethnography (2006) as a starting point to develop an approach. Firstly CMR status was achieved by the researcher negotiating a new art project – the creation of a female artist persona whereby as a complete member was clearly a part of the local artist community as well as globally through social media. In order to consider the development of the persona through transmedia texts analytic reflexivity on this process seemed the best method to conduct this, whereby narrative visibility of the researcher's self was clearly evident in order to explore the creative element practice with certain amount of objectivity and ensure the dual role of the researcher was fulfilled. Interviews and discussions with artists, curators, academics and the public were essential in supporting the development of the artist persona as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the process through case studies thus highlighting that this study went beyond the self. Ultimately for this research to be justified there also had to be a complete commitment to theoretical analysis since it this that underpins the entire study.

Consequently, although it is important to take into account the risks of autoethnography as a scholarly approach it should not be dismissed so quickly. As a newly developing method of qualitative research it offers certain studies a valid way to explore issues surrounding identity in the twenty-first century thus demonstrating the importance of the researcher's role "…for attempting to know one's own experience and sharing that knowledge" (Duncan, 2004: 38).

The research has outlined above a commitment to an autoethnography framework for approaching the research questions. With this in mind it is now important to explore the merits of case study and ethnographic approach that support the analytical autoethnographic methodology adopted for this study. In order to contextualise this discussion of methodology, the research also sees the need to draw attention to the difference between method and methodology. McGregor and Murname (2010: 2) write:

> "The word methodology comprises two nouns: method and ology, which means a branch of knowledge; hence, methodology is a branch of knowledge that deals with the general principles or axioms of the generation of new knowledge. It refers to the rationale and the philosophical assumptions that underlie any natural, social or human science study, whether articulated or not. Simply put, methodology refers to how each of logic, reality, values and what counts as knowledge inform research."

A case study research approach is defined in some of the following ways: firstly it is perceived as a method to examine in depth the characteristics of individual unit in order "to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitutes the life cycle of the unit (Cohen & Manion, 1989 as cited in Bassey, 1999: 24). This is reinforced by Kathleen Eisenhardt who identifies it as "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (1989: 534). "Case study is often equated with fieldwork, ethnography, participant observation…" (Merriam, 1998: 26)

MacDonald & Walker (1975) regard this approach as a 'the study of the instance in action', whilst Robert Yin's characterises this approach as an "empirical enquiry to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (2003:13). Yin also ascertains that case studies can be qualitative or quantitative. Stake (2005), a significant scholar in the case study approach to research, supporting this idea, proposes that a qualitative case study often focuses on experiential knowledge of a certain case and is closely related to the social, political influences defined by an 'interest in the individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used' (2005: 443). Stake identifies that there are three different types of case study (2005). It is the last category, comparable, multiple case study or collective case study, which is of most interest for this research since this method consists of several cases in order to explore a certain phenomenon – Is transmedia storytelling an effective method to develop fictional artists' identities? If considered in this way, this study's use of multiple or collective, case study is justified since it is hoped that this will lead to 'better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases' (Stake, 2005: 446).

This approach provides this study with the opportunity to investigate whether there are similarities or differences among the cases' characteristics to get better understanding of the ways fictional women artists are constructed as transmedia texts. The choice of case studies selected was based on the researcher's interest in fictional artists and their relationship to feminist art as well as offer an opportunity to learn more about how digital media is shaping the ways identity is being constructed to develop self-branding (Stake 2005). It is through comparing and contrasting that qualitative research reinforces the belief that "people's interpretation of realities have a tendency to be social, cultural, situational and contextual" (Suryani, 2008: 119).

Willis (2007) proposes that case studies are "about real people and real situations …" (239). Willis demonstrates how this method generally relies on inductive analysis which "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study' (239) by outlining

three specific attributes of case study research: Firstly, it allows the researcher to gather rich, detailed data in an authentic setting; secondly it supports the concept that much of what is known about human behaviour is best understood as lived experience in the social context and thirdly in contrast to experimental research, it can be done without predetermined hypotheses and goals (Willis, 2007: 240).

Primary sources such as interviews and the work of the five artists and consideration of the practice element, as well as secondary sources, such as critical reviews of their work and the participation in lectures, seminars, symposia and courses at various different institutions, all contributed to the understanding of contemporary art debates and revealed new underlying connections to digital technologies and art created by women. Finally, the outcome of this research was not only tested in various conversations and interviews with art critical writers, but it was also presented at regular symposia at Cardiff University and in front of a non-academic audience at FORUM, Chapter Arts Cardiff, discussing the issues surrounding the development of an online identity as a key part of my work with fictional artists. (FORUM is a monthly event for early career artists, students and graduates. It is a platform for practitioners from various disciplines to exchange ideas, experience and opinions on visual culture.)

Personal narratives are employed within the case study chapters to de/construct identities (Cohen, Duberley, & Musson, 2009; Learmonth, 2007; McKenna, 2010; Muncey, 2005; Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2001; Spry, 2001; Wright, Nyberg, & Grant, 2012) in an attempt to further understanding the construction of the fictive artists and their position as transmedia texts.

By using this approach, the researcher challenges "the distanced and detached observer and [looks] towards the embrace of intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006: 433-434). However, as explained earlier the research does not fully commit to Ellis and Bochner's (2006) evocative autoethnography since it was felt that it was still important to acknowledge the importance of more traditional methods of social inquiry. Consequently adopting a blended analytic/evocative approach to autoethnography (Anderson, 2006; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2012), which provide a phenomenological reading of the case studies as well as interviews with the creators of the artists presented as biographical narratives where combined contribute to the advancement and development of theoretical understandings of self-branding and transmediated identity.

Furthermore, autoethnographic approaches have also been criticized for disregarding theory. In this research's creative/autobiographical/phenomenological approach, the focus on personal narrative is blended within the case study chapters which are fully engaged with theory throughout. Whilst there is an element within the research that focuses on the researcher as creator of a fictive artist, the main body of the study remains deeply theoretical in relation to de/constructing transmediated identities.

The ability to engage critically with visual culture during the last three decades has become even more significant with the rise of new media technologies and many scholars have continued to explore how visual images play an increasingly important role in society (Jenkins 2008; Kress 2010; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Mirzoeff 2009; Pink 2007; Sturken and Cartwright 2009; Wells 2009). It is clear that art that connects everyday experience with social critique and creative expression becomes a vital means of reflecting upon the nature of society and social existence.

In order to answer these questions, a case study methodology was selected and adapted elements of interpretive biography, and narrative approaches as developed by Wallace and Gruber. According to Denzin, interpretive biography involves the collection and analysis of personal experiences, life documents, stories, accounts, and narratives that describe turning-point moments in individuals' lives. Denzin argues that personal experiences and personal stories are derived from a larger cultural, ideological, and historical context. The intent of the biographical project is to problematize the social, economic, cultural, structural, and historical forces that shape, distort, and otherwise alter lived experiences.

Peta Cook's description of autoethnography particularly suits this research's approach where "In this format, autoethnography is a case study approach that is informed by personal observation, experience and reflection, and social theory and research" (Cook, 2014: 271). Cook further asserts that "The self in context, as sociologically analysed, is important and relevant" where the blending of traditional forms of qualitative inquiry with subjectivity and personal experience viably "allows the sociologist to deconstruct and contextualize their own experiences as well as that of others" (Cook, 2014: 271). Thus Cook argues that many of the issues surrounding autoethnography as an approach "…can transcend this problem by analysing and critiquing the personal in light of social theories and processes" (Cook, 2014: 270) whereby "critical self-reflexivity allows the researcher to speak personally by focusing on their lived experience in direct relation to the social context" (Cook, 2014: 271).

Cook citing Stanley (1993) reflects on how the "distinctions between the self/other, participant/observer, immediacy/memory and private/public, become hazy" and asserts that autoethnography challenges such divides therefore making it "a research method that complements interpretive sociological practice" (Cook, 2014: 271). The use of the creator/researcher's personal experiences of developing a fictive artist thus becomes a means through which the researcher can understand, contextualize and study transmedia texts. Such an approach combined with the other case studies allows the researcher to perceive the experience of constructing a fictive artist "as not purely individual, but connected to and influenced by social structures, forces and issues" (Cook, 2014: 271).

Cook identifies "how important critical self-reflexivity is for sociologists in understanding the outside world and our role within it…that we are not somehow 'unique' and immune to social influences. We do not operate outside of them. We are social agents enmeshed in a social world" (Cook, 2014: 279). Hilde Rossing and Susie Scott (2016) consideration of "embodied learning" which they perceive offer valuable insights in field work (Rossing & Scott, 2016: 1), their approach they state is adapted from Sparkes' (2004) analytical autoethnographical framework whereby the "blending the techniques of 'writing with self' and 'writing with academic voice(s)': stepping in and out of the experience and reflecting on what we learned "Rossing & Scott, 2016: 3). Maris de Andrade's (2014) use of analytical autoethnography to explore her hybrid professional identity as journalist/ academic demonstrates how "the researcher's experiences to become the topic under investigation" (2014: 118) with an "aim was to produce an analytic autoethnography that could add, enhance and extend theoretical understanding" (2014: 131).In a similar way as de Andrade claims, this research "could not have been told using other qualitative and quantitative methods" (2014: 132).

Another aspect of the writing/research process consisted of the embodied methodological movements. As discussed, the construction of the fictive artist and the interrelated autoethnographic journey was extended over seven years, beginning with the initial planning of Seren Sanclêr in September 2009 and developing each year as her persona was modified, enhanced and different platforms were selected and experimented with to develop her identity to the persona she has become and continues to evolve in 2016.

Much of the sustained reflexive inquiry into the construction of Seren Sanclêr took place during 2014 – 2016, in an attempt to make sense of and interrogate the experience of developing a transmediated self and explore the ways in which personal branding could be in expanded, extending into the first half of 2016 as writing was revised and reconsidered since as a fictive persona she continues to develop.

By using an autoethnographic approach, the research explores elements of self-identity formation, cultural identity, gender issues, personal thoughts, artistic expression, the meaning of artworks, professional achievement, and life circumstances. The selected fictional artists examine are explored with consideration of artist historical canon, cultural, social, and political environments. The research attempts to interpret the fictional artists' outer lives (what they do) and inner lives (feelings, thoughts, inner self) to capture their life experiences. The research examines specific aspects of how their identity is established and how the role of their art and artistic activity is utilised as a further narrative to develop their persona. A further investigation of their professional activities is conducted in order to identify the multiple roles that contribute to personal and professional identity formation.

3.5 Developing a Multidiscipline Methodology

This section explains the general methodological framework of my research. As discussed earlier I describe my research as a visual autoethnography however there were other crucial methodological approaches required to develop this research process.

To create a visual and textual narrative chapter through the creation of a transfictive heteronym through which I hope my readers/viewers will be able to critically engage with created and the creative process I as a researcher went through to produce the resulting persona.

Initial selection of case studies proved to be quite complex. Whilst initially being inspired by Boyd's artist Nat Tate, as outlined in Chapter 1 it was the potential creation of female fictive artists that interested me the most. Inspired by *The Encyclopedia of Fictional Artists* (Eds Brams & Gruijthuisen, 2011) a compilation of biographies of fictional artists as presented in world literature. Although published and distributed in a different context (literature), this compilation provokes the perception of the art context as a descriptive narrative and is therefore to be seen as a conceptual framework for potential artistic additions.

This research was undertaken initially by internet searches but also developed out of conversations with artists and other scholars such as LaFarge(2006). Initial cataloguing of fictive artists needed to be undertaken (refer to appendix). Deciding on what defined a fictive artist thus proved extremely important from the outset since artists creating personas proved to be too wide a field. So essentially the fictive persona had to be an artist in their own right.

Equally I did not want to examine alter egos such as Grayson Perry's Claire whilst offering potential opportunities as a critical study of the increasing similarities and consequently blurred lines between artist as luxury product management and high art.

Rather transfictive heteronyms that were personas in their own right with detailed biographies, lives and interests.

Therefore Cindy Sherman's various female personas, Lynn Hershman Leeson's Roberta Breitmore and Tracey Moberly's Moira Minguella were regrettably but immediately dismissed. Another important aspect was that there needed to be a body of work that would justify critical analysis. Whilst Sophie Calle's collaboration with Paul Auster Double Game fulfilled some of the criteria – fictive female artist Whilst potentially this meta project initially influenced by Auster's novel Leviathan and its fictional artist Maria, whose work in turn is based on Calle's, the fictive artist element seemed limited in the sense that Calle's adoption of the Maria persona was specifically in response to the fictive character created by Auster rather than an exploration of the construction of fictive artists in their own right.

From this catalogue female artists stood out due to their scarcity specifically leading me to consider why construct a female artist? Whilst a wider scope of fictive artists were initially considered this led me to consider further criteria to consider in my selection of case studies. Since I wished to explore transfictive nature of artists in relation to digimodernism and blurring of boundaries of real and cyber a physical presence seemed essential requirement for selection. Whether this was a delegated performance or by the creator themselves did not matter. Therefore entities without a physical presence were also discounted such as Claire Fontaine, Reena Spaulings and Norma Jeane (refer to appendix). It was decided quite quickly that after this process of elimination that the gender of the creator would not be a criterion since my interest laid in the creation process behind constructing a female fictive artist thus the inclusion of both genders would prove more fruitful investigation. Furthermore I was also interested in collectives that had created a woman artist thus by including male, female and mixed collectives it was felt would offer a more wide ranging exploration of the process behind this art practice. Key to this exploration was that each of the case studies could be considered transfictive – presented across a variety of platforms. It was felt the inclusion of Susan Fielder was essential since her persona signifies the development of this art practice over the last thirty years as well as charts the innovative advancement of digital technology within this particular art practice.

The intention was that potentially the inclusion of this process depicted through this body of work would allow for other researchers/artists/readers to create fictive persona/ explore the transmediated self in a similar way.

My feminist concerns explored through my transfictive heteronym and inquiry are intertwined with a digimodernist (Kirby, 2009) approach to thinking about art, in which the process of using a diverse range of texts produces distinctive forms of author and reader/viewer, which, in turn, lead to altered notions of authority, truth and legitimization. Thus reflecting the way artists/audiences are intervening physically in the creation of texts/artworks and collaborating in the development of narratives. The case studies and practice based research are interpreted within personal, historical, social, and cultural contexts.

The process of analysis in my study focused on different textual and visual analytical approaches applied from autoethnographical literature, feminist art criticism, performance, transmedia and visual culture studies. These practices were then further modified to fit my specific analytical intentions. Whilst offering an objective analysis of my transfictive artist, the interpretative process driven by my artistic process in creating, thinking and practice it must be noted were of equal importance.

As presented this research, methodologically is predominantly a study of the concepts, ideas, and working methods utilised in the creation of fictional artists through specific contemporary transfictive artists: Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and the fictional persona created for this research - *Seren Sanclêr*. The selection of case studies ensured that the focus of the research would primarily be identity performance, exploration of artists from a feminist perspective, artists' use of transmedia to develop the persona and artists' use of digital technologies. At first, a historical analysis and literature review helped to determine the parameters that were used for the comparison of the development of each artist's persona. This included, for example, questions such as, what is important to develop an artist persona? How is this achieved? How are digital technologies utilised to offer credibility to the fictive artists' persona? In addition, how do the creators in question approach the issue of establishing their transfictive artists' status as artists? To answer these and other questions, certain texts and works dealing with fictional women artist in the United States, Australia, New Zealand/France and Great Britain, were systematically analysed in order to compare approaches to establishing a transfictive identity, with those of Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr. Performance from a feminist

perspective supported the research, by enabling a better comprehension of the production, reading and interpretation of fictive artist.

Whilst undertaking a study of fictive artists and their representation through transmedia texts it was also important to consider contemporaneity: how have representations of women artists been transposed in the constitution of the female artist today and in particular the fictional women artist? The incorporation of ethnographic methods in to cultural studies suggests a refusal to theorise women artists monolithically, as well as a willingness to observe difference and lived experience. A major task for this research is thus to develop a framework that interrogates whether the fictional entities offer a different interpretation of women artists today and thus construct a *dispositif*: "isolating a cluster of power relations sustaining, and being sustained by certain types of knowledge" (Foucault, 1980: 196). As Deleuze has noted in each *dispositif* it is vital to make a clear distinction between the historical part and the current part (1992: 164) thus how women artists have been represented in the past and in the present as well as how women artists are in the process of becoming. It was therefore in the construction of the *dispositif* of the research that it was natural to select ethnographic practices as one of the ways to relate to the contemporary reality of artists.

What was particularly striking at examining feminist scholars exploration of past women artists as well as conducting traditional ethnographic practices thus 'the present' and 'the past' symbiotically co-exist as planes informing the research and actively interacting with each other. Pen Dalton's study of women and art education was particularly illuminating when considering "Discourses of the "lady artist" have proliferated in the modern period and are continually being reactivated. The ideology of the "lady amateur" has been synonymous with bad art: art that is unprofessional, weak, unskilled, trivial, bourgeois, merely decorative" (2001: 47). Equally, the case of contemporary fictional artist Donelle Woolford was remarkably informative in opening up an area of analysis that had not been included in the research's initial hypothesis and research questions: the forceful interrelation between ethnicity and authorship in relation to the construction of a fictive identity.

From this position, the case studies informed the development of the visual autoethnography interpretation of the construction of fictional artist Seren Sanclêr and her transfictive identity. By re-examining the role and function of the artist's identity and its legacy in today's context the researcher's creation of a contemporary feminist fictive artist allows the investigation to consider further how women artists are continuing to combat "the privileged and seemingly universal term, artist, as the space for masculinity,

whiteness, heterosexuality" (Parker & Pollock, 2013: xix). Moreover the practice element, as the study progressed, expounded the rationale for constructing a woman artist identity thus authenticating the researcher's need to explore performance of identity through transmedia texts in more depth. As a case study included as part of the research this component could also document contemporary feminist artists practices which clearly mark a shift away from the traditional position of exclusion. Instead it documents the advancing relationship between feminist artists and digital media to create virtual platforms for their work on a global scale hence eliminating the myth that feminism is dead whilst at the same time challenging the traditional perception of male genius artist.

Therefore at data collection stage, a great deal of time was devoted to developing personal interest and contact with the case studies, particularly when developing the fictional entity Seren Sanclêr. The creative element of this study depended on spending time at research locations and with participants, in order to interpret and make reflective observations the natural phenomenon thus providing detailed comparison. Crucial to this is the concept of triangulation which Stake (2005) defines as "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation." Stake believes that by formulating triangulation of the observations of the case studies, the research 'a part of scientific methodology' (460), is able to develop interpretation of the data collected. However this more conservative approach does not blend well with the feminist, autoethnographic and researcher-inclusive paradigmatic position of this study.

Instead it is the way Willis (2007) defines the case study approach as "one of the most criticized and most used forms of social science research" (2007: 239). "Part of the confusion surrounding case studies is that the process of conducting a case study is conflated with both the unit of study…and the product of this type of investigation" (Merriam, 1998: 27). Merriam refers to her earlier definite of case study focusing on the case study "in terms of its end product: "A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p.21; in Merriam, 1998: 27). She now revises this definition concluding that "the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (1998: 27). Acknowledging Smith (1978) and Stake (1995), Merriam develops her definition further perceiving the case "as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (1998: 27). Thus reinforcing the justification of examining fictional women artists since this ensures that as case studies they are "a specific, a complex functioning thing" (Stake, 1995: 2). The decision to focus on a qualitative approach is

further warranted since this study is particularly "interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1995: 28). Such an approach is further termed as being "particularistic, descriptive and heuristic" (Merriam, 1995: 29). Therefore suited to a more autoethnographic approach as Wilson (1979) asserts that findings "use prose and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyse situations…They present documentation of events, quotes, samples and artifacts" (Wilson, 1979: 448; in Merriam, 1995: 30). Framed in this way, this study's reflects a particularistic and heuristic approach examining "…real situations … [which] illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study' (Willis, 2007: 239).

Willis's framework identifies three specific attributes of case study research which also validate its inclusion as a method since it provides an opportunity for the researcher to gather rich, detailed data in an authentic setting; supports the concept that a lived experience in the social context offers valuable data and in contrast to experimental research, it can be done without predetermined hypotheses and goals. (Willis, 2007: 240)

Several contemporary ethnographic doctoral studies focusing on artists have called on case study methods reinforcing this research's decision to utilise a similar methodological approach (Kennedy, 2013; Droth, 2014; Ferguson, 2012). Of particular interest is the importance of acknowledging that "the creative person is unique, developmental change is multidirectional, and the creative person is an evolving system" (Gruber & Wallace, 1999: 93) thus when focusing on the creative process it is important to "look searchingly at each case" (97). Gruber and Wallace (1999) whilst acknowledging that "the issue of objectivity of critical" it is for this reason that they assert that the "investigator has two central roles, a phenomenological one and a critical one" in order to become "as close as possible to the case" whilst simultaneously "distancing oneself from the subject, and by evaluating "from a height"" (111). It is this perception of the researcher's role as "continually moving between these two roles" that sits well with the autoethnographical approach selected for this study. A qualitative perspective is further justified in relation to the comparative case study approach employed for this research which "allowed the cases to be compared and contrasted to reach general conclusions" (Kirschenbaum & Reis, 1997: 252)

Therefore the case studies selected for this study including the researcher's practice allowed the enquiry to encapsulate a wide range of variables and provided opportunities through autoethnography to probe perceptions of decisions, emotions and to reflect on contextual influences. Equally the researcher's practice case study in a similar way to the other selected case studies is "grounded in reality" (Hodgson & Drummond, 2012: 6). By

using five case studies, each study contribute something to the investigation's knowledge and understanding of identities creating through transmedia texts thus "By piecing together the individual patterns the researcher can draw a more complete theoretical picture" (Eisenhardt, 1991: 620).

It was a deliberate decision to interview the creators of the fictional artists towards the end of the research so that I felt my creation was not influenced by their process and analysis of all case studies, including mine could be more objectively explored and compared whilst encouraging critical self-understanding and create new perspectives in understanding the potential of media platforms in creating fictive personas.

The complex nature of transfictive artists' identity required the exploration of rich data such as opinions, observations and anecdotes. The perceptions and viewpoints of the creators were important and because this research focused on the processes and practices of constructing fictive identities interviews were conducted to support the autoethnographical approach.

Interviews were conducted for different purposes. Firstly, interviews with artist including Anna Fox, Tiff Oben, Ruth McClees in 2011 revealed new layers around the intersection of popular culture, gender and digital media in the constitution of the identity of the artist. It was felt that semi-structured/narrative interviewing would be of most benefit when developing the practice research of the study. This decision was based specifically in relation to Kohler Riessman (2006) description of narrative interviewing which outlines distinctive features such as the interview is viewed as more discursive where participants engage in an evolving conversation with interviewer/listener; collaboratively producing and making meaning of events jointly constructing meaning (Kohler Riessman, 2006).

Secondly a similar interview approach was taken when interviewing the creators of the transfictive artists where combinations of open and closed questions were used. This method allows interviewees to answer questions flexibly, expanding on topics and themes in which they are interested but also provide unambiguous answers when required. Questions were emailed prior to all interviewees so that they could prepare for the interview as well as have an understanding of the context of the research (refer to Appendix A). This non-prescriptive structure enabled to elicit in-depth answers in the form of detailed accounts and anecdotes. The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, with an average duration of 45 minutes per interview. All interviews were fully transcribed. Thus the creative interviews entail critical examination of the fictive artists with their creators reinforcing a theoretical stance interweaved through the dialogue.

From this stance this research employed an approach that was interpretive, whereby an understanding of identity through the interpretations made by its participants was considered. This reinforced the research strategy which is case study based, through the examination of four fictive artists, their respective artwork, and their use of platforms to construct their identities.

Initially all paintings and drawing created by Seren Sanclêr were physical acrylic paintings on canvas created by the researcher. This proved to be time consuming and not viable for the duration for the research due to work and research commitments. However works created proved to be useful during the study particularly when they were used in exhibitions or sold. Equally images of the art works were used to further develop the authenticity of the transfictive artist and proved to provide quite fruitful dialogue with followers/friends/audiences.

Whilst manipulating images that I had created using Photoshop was extremely useful throughout the research the art works were further enhanced by the use of Instagram filters and Prisma app. Although the free photo editing app was only launched in June 2016 it proved to be the most useful in the development of Seren Sanclêr's art work in the last year of the research. By combining Photoshop and Prisma app, building the transfictive artist's profile and body of work became extremely easy. Art works could be completed and shared via the artist's social media sites. Indeed the ongoing use of Photoshop and the simplicity of Prisma app ensured the researcher becoming a more skilful digital artist which further supported the authenticity of the transfictive artist.

During the seven years undertaking this research a variety of digital platforms were used to explore the ways in which they could further the identity narrative arc for my transfictive persona. Seren Sanclêr and the researcher have faced directly the changes in the ways society use social media as well as experienced how they have changed and developed. It was felt that a wide selection of platforms would be used in order to consider their potential and further developing the fictive identity. The researcher initially began with developing the fictive persona via MySpace, Facebook and Blogger in 2010. Between 2010 – 2016, other platforms included Wix, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, Portfoliobox all of which were utilised with varying success. Whilst it is acknowledged that some platforms have clearly declined, decisions to continue using specific platforms depended on usability, variety of tools available and accessibility all of which would offer opportunities for multi-platform development of the fictive persona.

Given the influences of postmodernism, digimodernism and feminism on the approach this clearly influenced the way in which I approached the creating, collecting and analysing of case studies. Similarly, artistic inquiry "allow[s] us to tap into imagination and to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently 'real'" (Diamond & Halen-Faber, 2002: 125).

The intention of including a visual autoethnography/creative practice chapter was to document findings in a way that pushed the limits of traditional research by inventing alternative original formats. The visual autoethnography chapter in my inquiry stands independent, representing knowledge that would be impossible to translate to textual form. These visuals do not reflect reality, nor do they reflect the words; they "contribute social argument in their own right" (Chaplin, 1994: 3). This research argues that without the chapter I could not have arrived at this epistemological position from a solely theoretical background. Therefore the purpose of the chapter is to illustrate the ways in which visual art, pedagogy, and research can be seamlessly woven. The format of the visual chapter needed to reflect the researcher's intentions and attempt to demonstrate as well as continuously question the methods used to explore the creative process of constructing a fictional transmediated persona. Since visuals and artistic behaviours contain, fabricate, formulate, and carry information and knowledge that can greatly enrich our understanding of meaning construction it was felt very important to ensure the correct format was utilised for this chapter. Planning the visual autoethnography chapter proved to quite complicated since I wanted to present information regarding my transfictive heteronym that captured the essence of the creative process building an identity narrative across a range of platforms.

Initial inspiration grew out of Tracey Emin's *My Photo Album* (2013) Corinne Day's *Diary* (2000) and Leanne Shapton's novel *Important Artifacts and Personal Property From the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry* (2009). Art Catalogues and artist diaries were of particular interest and seemed a natural format to present the transfictive artist through a legitimate artist form which in turn presents visually a comprehensive depiction of the created persona. Ultimately it was *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait* (Lowe, 2006) an illustrated journal documenting the last ten years of the artist's life that proved to be of most interest. To provide readers with an insight into the extent of work that was undertaken to develop the transfictive artist over a period of seven year the visual autoethnography chapter took the format of Seren Sanclêr's art journal which specifically explores themes of celebrity, identity, and the transmediated self. Thus the chapter could be perceived as being

created by the artist herself. The page layouts appear to be taken from an art journal, include personal photographs, handwritten notes and art work. To develop the narrative further and demonstrate the extent of the researcher's immersion into creating the fictive artist as well as her use of a wide range of platforms the inclusion of iPad/iPhone depicting her presence on social media were depicted. Equally photographs documenting her live performance and engagement with other people at exhibitions and events as the artist were also included to demonstrate her movement between the real and cyber world thus reinforcing her legitimacy as exemplifying an accurate portrayal of a transfictive heteronym. It was felt that this representational format selected for the visual autoethnography chapter best reflect my understanding of knowledge, research, and myself during the creative process. In creating this visual autoethnography, I hope that other researchers are inspired to find explore more visual ways in interpreting their findings.

The inclusion of a creative practice case study whereby the researcher was actively involved in experimentation to explore the possibilities of transmedia texts, allowed for a clearer in-depth understanding of the creative art practice being examined but also have a better understanding of the fictional artist's identity as it emerged during the course of the research. Such insight reinforces the choice of autoethnography as a research method since in this case the analysis can be considered constructive. "If the value of autoethnography is to be understood more clearly by the wider research community, those engaged in this emerging art need to assist their readers in judging its worth" (Duncan, 2004: 37). Taking Duncan's framework into account, this study also saw the importance to mark out the study boundaries in order to legitimately define and report the research. As noted a significant seven year period was covered by the study, during which numerous major developments in digital technology occurred, including the widespread use of social media platforms, the expansion of social media being utilised as a marketing strategy, the rise of the Selfie, the rapid increase in users' development of identity presence via digital media and a growing body of artists utilising digital media to develop their art practice creatively and for branding purposes. The study although positioned at times globally through use of social media sites was mainly located within the Cardiff Art scene involved in artist group forums, G39 voluntary work and exhibitions.

Although the visual autoethnography chapter reflected the researcher's art practice as a fictional artist the study was still observed from the scholarly point of view and this dual role ensured that a consistent perspective was maintained throughout the study in order to provide a quality of description that would otherwise be impossible. It was also felt

that by incorporating a visual autoethnographic approach it was important to present the fictive artist's work not only in chapter 6 but throughout the thesis in order to have more of a sense of the artist's practice as well as some understanding of the practice work untaken by the researcher during a seven year period.

Whilst acknowledging that there are differences between case studies and ethnography, when employing an interpretivist framework Willis (2007) proposes that case studies are much more similar to ethnography than dissimilar since "researchers do not seek to find universals in their case studies. They seek, instead, a full, rich understanding (verstehen) of the context they are studying" (240).

Following these methodological considerations, it is clear for this research that the possibility of assembling a combination of autoethnography with the inclusion of ethnographic and case study approaches was required. It was felt that there were many advantages in using a case study within the autoethnography research approach. In particular, by examining Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar, Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr it was felt that they would offer larger details about self-branding in relation to transmedia storytelling, offering clearer picture through analysis and interpretation of this particular phenomenon.

By defining the boundaries of the study as such ensured that the appropriateness of employing an autoethnographic methodology could be defended with justification. As an artist actively involved in creating a fictional artist as a new art project, to be able to explore this practice within an academic context offered a unique opportunity to reflect on the study and document the factors influencing the development of an identity through transmedia texts.

It is important to reiterate that autoethnographers similarly to ethnographers have need of methodological tools and research literature in order to analyse experience, however this approach also calls for documenting personal experience to illuminate aspects of the cultural experience familiar for insiders and outsiders. This can be accomplished in the following ways; by comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research (Ronai, 1995, 1996), interviewing cultural members (Foster, 2006; Marvasti, 2006; Tillman-Healy, 2001), and/or examining relevant cultural artefacts (Boylorn, 2008; Denzin, 2006). In the case of this study existing research does not presently exist therefore the need to interview and examine artefacts from relevant case studies proved to be the most constructive approach.

Therefore it has been made clear that by choosing an autoethnographic method that encompasses elements of evocative and analytical in a layered structure this provides the most appropriate means of investigating the research focus. Such an approach allowed for invaluable opportunity to experience first-hand the tacit understandings of a practitioner involved in the complex task of creating a fictional artist identity through transmedia texts as well as, an opportunity to develop a better understanding of how society and performance are interlinked whilst utilising a variety of methods in particular social media sites to establishing a particular 'brand' identity. By including aspects of a narrative account in the chapter exploring Seren Sanclêr within the study ensured that the research moved beyond mere emotional expression by demonstrating a more in-depth sense of reflexivity and analysis achieved by employing a scholarly style of authorship mirroring the other case studies. The inclusion of the practice element as a chapter alongside the four case studies ensured that the study rather than being critiqued as emotional or overly subjective was instead established as a scholarly account.

Whilst Eisenhardt (1989, 1991) advises that research needs to begin with well-defined hypotheses and testable propositions in contrast Dyer and Wilkins claim that story is central in developing theory since "Good story telling is what makes the most difference in the generative capacity of …studies" (1991: 634). Although this research sees the real need in qualitative research to "try to tell good stories" (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991) through a more in-depth exploration of reflexivity through a practice case study element it also recognises the continued importance of a theoretical structure at the heart of the methodology.

Therefore this study, by taking the stance that autoethnography is "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 733) and reflexivity, in turn is "the turning back of an inquiry or a theory or a text onto its own formative possibilities" (Macbeth, 2001: 36) allowed for an in-depth analysis into the formation of identities through transmedia texts. As a result the investigation inclusion of a practice element and exploration of the researcher's experience was essential in order to exemplify how autoethnographic accounts can "illuminate the culture under study" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 740). In claiming that the inclusion of the practice element makes the study richer because of its personal reflexive nature, it is easy to concur with Richardson (2000) who argues that "the ethnographic life is not separable from the self" (253).

By taking this multidiscipline approach, the combination of feminist theoretical analysis, with creative practice further illuminated the researcher's personal exploration of constructing a fictive artist, the practice of developing a transmediated self and the process involved in self-branding in a visible way that cements the more traditional theoretical assertions made by the study.

3.6. Summary

By taking into consideration an analytical approach this allows this study to use an autoethnographic approach whilst retaining to retain some aspects of more traditional forms of qualitative inquiry albeit in a different format thus reinforcing the concept of "The self in context, as sociologically analysed, is important and relevant" (Averett, 2009: 271).

By developing a layered account that facilitates objectivity and analysis whilst equally allowing for subjectivity and personal experience it is asserted that this ensures that the study is viable investigation where "Autoethnography allows the sociologist to deconstruct and contextualize their own experiences as well as that of others" (Averett, 2009: 271). This study by using critical self-reflexivity allows the researcher to analyse the personal by focusing on the experience of creating a fictional artist persona through transmedia texts in direct relation to the social context. It is this layered approach through a combination of case studies and creative practice that has strengthened how this investigation understands the connections between the five case studies as well as gain a deeper understanding of the influences by social structures and issues in developing a fictional artist identity. It is through such an approach that "knowledge of others and the self are expanded and deepened" (Averett, 2009: 271). Equally the combination of practice research presented as a visual autoethnography alongside more traditional methods ensures that the approach to the study is thorough.

To conclude, it is felt that sufficient justification for the choice of autoethnography as a method and demonstration of how appropriate evaluation criteria have been applied has been presented in order for reviewers of this study to appreciate the choice of methodology selected for this research. By demonstrating through detailed well-defined descriptions outlining the research, any issues that initially appeared confusing or unclear were clarified and the autoethnographic approach validated through the use of multiple sources of evidence and the importance of theoretical analysis at the core of the research.

The intention of this research therefore is to join "the wave of autoethnographic studies that integrate multiple methodologies" (Demjanenko, 2011: 12). As a final note, given the newness of this methodology as scholarly unchartered territory, the approach used in this study might benefit artist-researchers proposing to adopt a similar autoethnography structure but who also want to use analytic reflexivity to improve theoretical understandings of their own creative practice.

Chapter 4

The Performance of Fictive Artists: Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist

Figure 4.1: # 2 Digi Art Selfie (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

4.1. Case study Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the results from the detailed exploration of the case studies in relation to the research methodology. It was decided that the analysis of Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist would be integrated into one chapter. The reason for doing this is to be able to instantly analyse what the results mean and to avoid repetition regarding the findings and the analysis. Whilst this could pose limitations by combining the results and the analysis into one chapter it was felt that this was the best way to have an overview of the development of the artists as transfictive entities which would consequently inform the construction and analysis of Seren Sanclêr as the practice research component presented as a visual autoethnography chapter.

4.2. Susan Fielder: Why have there been no great women artists? Constructing the Failure as a Woman Artist

"I began painting in 1970, and finished in 1974. I'll explain how it began, why it ended, and what happened in between" (Susan Fielder/Murray, K. 1991)

Susan Fielder is an Australian woman who during the 1970s had a short career as a professional artist who now works as an oncologist. Her background in philosophy, her Master's Thesis and interest in phenomenology "led directly to my decision to start painting" Susan Fielder/ Murray, K. 1991) beginning with a series of abstract paintings that were circular in design, followed by her presentation of roundabouts in a series titled *Swings and Roundabouts* and culminating with work of cancerous cell slides. However on the eve of her first solo exhibition, she abandons painting and returns to university to study medicine where ultimately "Fielder sees the promise of a more fulfilling life in the practise of medicine and cancer research" (McQualter, 1996).

Thus it wasn't until 1991, that Susan Fielder had her first and only exhibition titled *Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective* which documents the ways in which "Her work went from a mathematical, geometric base to paintings that looked like blood" (Stephens, 1994). The work of Susan Fielder reflects "some of the actual phenomenological work being done in Melbourne" (Murray. 1991: 2) whilst her background in philosophy is built upon by her artist talk and reflected in her art work. The show was curated by Kevin Murray and was exhibited at 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne 4 - 26 October and the Institution of Modern Art, Cairns, 15 January - 26 February 1992. Susan Fielder was

present at the exhibition and details about her life as an artist could be enquired first hand or through her exhibition catalogue which included a photograph of the artist, her work and background detail. Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 (Bridie & Murray, 1991) illustrates the importance of visual and real archives to support the construction of the artist.

Despite the exhibition taking place twenty five years ago and the fact that the artist no longer practices, it is important to note that Susan Fielder also has an artist website http://www.kitezh.com/susanfielder/sf2.html which illustrates her artist's talk that accompanied her retrospective at the gallery.

Of course Susan Fielder does not really exist she is a fictive character constructed by three individuals: the curator Murray, artist Bride and embodied by Beddie. During an interview conducted on 5th February 2016 Murray stated that the creation of Susan Fielder came out of "an interest in the postmodern perspective of life as a construction". Murray also states that after being initially approached by Bridie to work on a project together he suggested that "it would be good to work with someone from theatre to have a real presence to embrace the character" (2016). The collaboration for each individual brought together different concerns: Bridie, the artist, focused on the question of how such a life could give birth to a series of work; the actor, Beddie, assumed the role of Susan Fielder and was responsible for ensuring the character could be dramatically embodied; whilst Murray's role in Susan Fielder's identity development was to generate "a theoretical question for which her life could be seen to speak" (Bridie/Murray, 1991).

"From this we worked together to come up with an artist, Sandra to work on the paintings, Melanie to work on the embodying the character and myself to create the conception work" (Murray, 2016)

It seems that whilst Beddie and Bridie claim that Susan Fielder is "very much the creation of Kevin" (Beddie, 2016) and "she comes from his world...she is not really an artist and doesn't understand the artist's thinking and making" (Bridie, 2016) the importance of collaboration seems to be essential in the labouring of constructing the persona when working as a collective. A statement reinforced by Murray "This was a three way dialogue, so we were getting ideas back and forth and ensuring that the various elements would connect with each other. It was a collaborative work" (Murray, 2016).
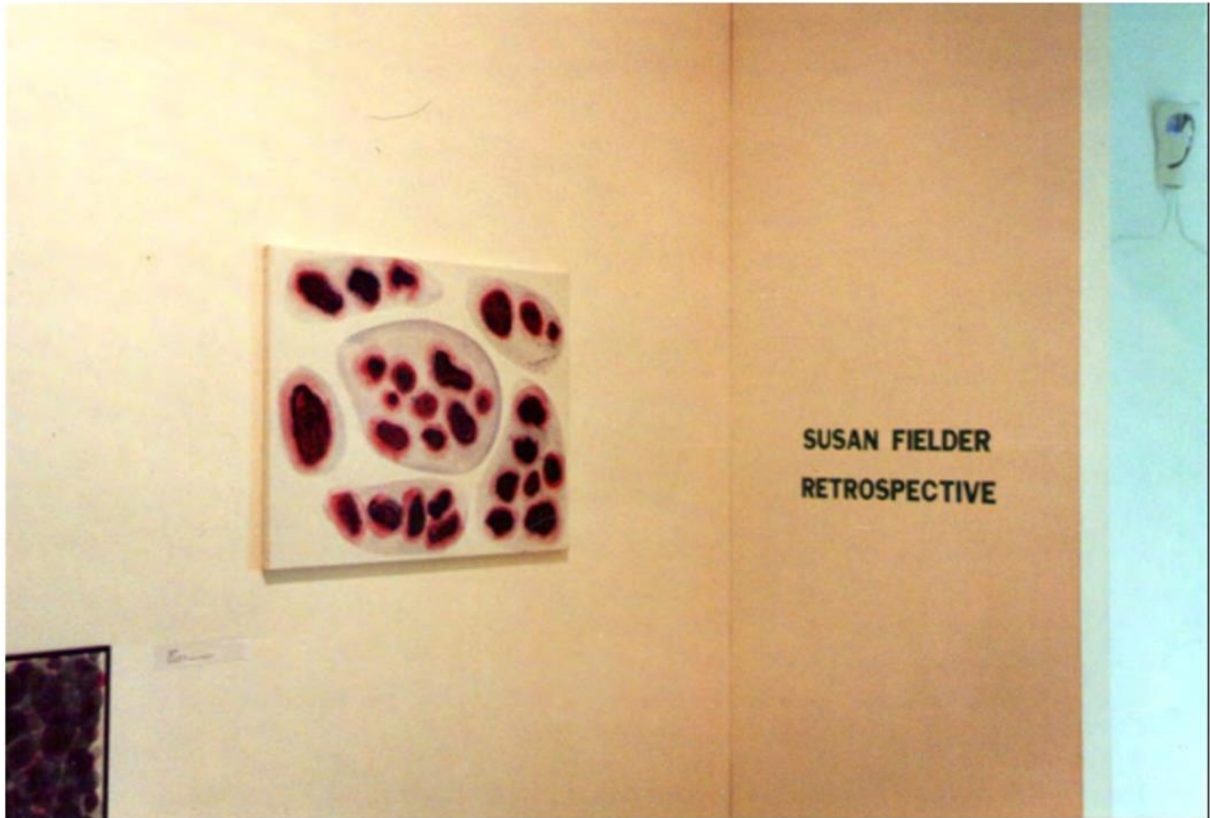
Figure 4.2: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective Exhibition Photograph (Sandra Bridie & Kevin Murray 1991)
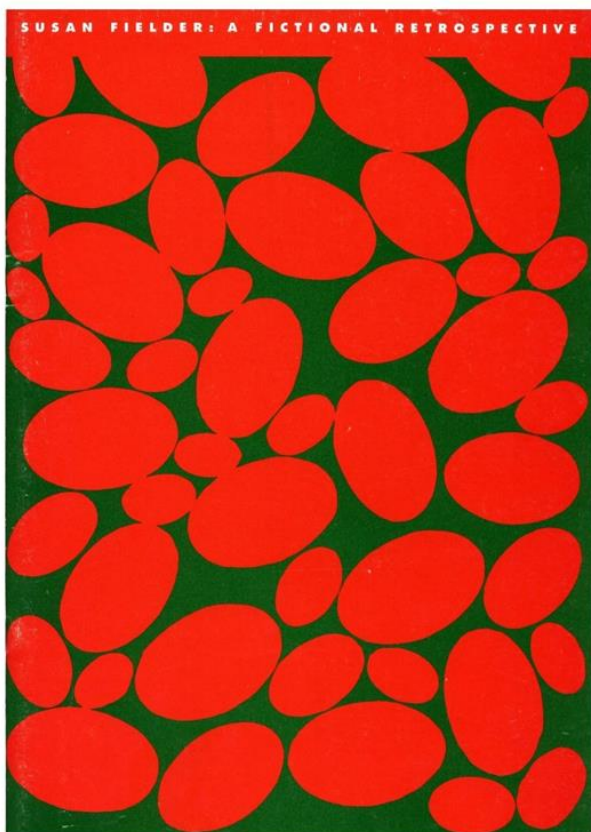
Figure 4.3: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective
Catalogue Cover (Sandra Bridie & Kevin Murray 1991)

Figure 4.4: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective
Catalogue Preface (Sandra Bridie & Kevin Murray 1991)

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Welcome to my home page. Though I currently work as an oncologist, I was once a successful artist.

Art is still an important part of my life. This web site is an opportunity for me to show my work and talk about my ideas.

Excuse the mess, I've just moved in, but please, do come in.

[bottom.htm]

Figure 4.5: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective - Susan's Website Home Page(Kevin Murray, ND)

Hello and thank you for coming. It's a bit overwhelming up here. I've never given a public talk before, so forgive me if I'm a little nervous. I'm not quite sure what an artist's talk should be. I've spoken with the gallery staff and they tell me to talk about the works in the exhibition. *Can you hear me down the back?* Just let me know if I get too soft.

I imagine most artists are quite good at talking off the cuff about their work, but because it's so long since I made these paintings I've had to labour over this talk a bit more. I'll stick with the printed page if that's alright. I imagine they'll be opportunities for questions at the end.

The usual preliminaries, just to set the scene. You can skip this if you like and go straight to the next screen.

Figure 4.6: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective - Susan's Website Page 1 (Kevin Murray,ND)

I began painting in 1970, and finished in 1974. I'll explain how it began, why it ended, and what happened in between.

Up until 1970, I had been following the path of philosophy. I'd completed a Master's Thesis at Monash University under the supervision of Hans Teichen. I should explain something of this thesis as it led directly to my decision to start painting. My thesis was in a field of philosophy known as **phenomenology.**

Dr Teichen had established a name for himself in the field of phenomenology with his theory of oscillation. I realise that 'oscillation' might sound a little obscure to you this afternoon, but Teichen's theory strikes to the heart of our understanding of order and disorder. I'll briefly explain this theory:

In philosophy, cosmologies have generally been of two kinds: those that see the world gradually falling apart into disorder, or entropy, and those that expect the world to acquire order and meaning over time. It is rare to find a fully worked theory which involves both kinds of processes. Hans Teichen claimed that the lived world oscillated between the two states of order and disorder; in phenomenology this is called 'Rückbezogenheit'

'Rückbezogenheit' -- the rocking-back of reality. This Rückbezogenheit is essential in the experience of future time, perceived either as the coming separation from objects of care, or the anticipated restoration of one's responsibilities. His examples included travel, psychoanalysis, religious conversion, rites of passage. It was a way of reading experience that allowed for a kind of rhythm of meaning without seeming to reduce it to an abstract

It's pretty heady stuff, I admit. But those were the days when you could talk about 'phenomenology' without being embarrassed.

Figure 4.7: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective - Susan's Website Page 3 (Kevin Murray, ND)

Artist's Talk by Susan Fielder: 6

In my thesis, I'd drawn some rudimentary diagrams of circles and ellipses. I asked my husband to bring home some materials from his shop in Malvern and started re-drawing them -- nothing fancy, just colouring them in, more or less. I didn't know exactly what I was doing.

Neville said I was making art. When he said that, I thought he was making light of what I was doing: it meant that I was doing something quite useless. To prove him wrong, I went through some of the magazines in his shop hoping that none of them would have paintings that lacked as much artistry as mine. I was distracted in the course of my defence by a very curious article in an issue of *Art International*, entitled 'Endgame abstraction' by a woman called Tass Wolfe.

Tass Wolfe. It's difficult to explain how strongly this article impressed me at the time. It did come at a very uncertain part of my life. Though I had begun to play with paint, I had no real understanding of art as a serious pursuit.

She liked to be called 'Tass', but I sometimes slip and call her 'Taz'.

Figure 4.8: Susan Fielder: A Fictional Retrospective - Susan's Website Page 6 (Kevin Murray, ND)

As a transfictive artist, the combination of live performance, exhibition, catalogue, secondary fictive characters, reviews and website allows for the artist's persona to be developed in more depth by constructing the artist's biography; engaging participants to build awareness of the artist's work and her motive for taking up a career in art then discarding it; providing a real insight into the motivation of her art work; offering reasons why she decided to abandon her career as an artist. The narrative and timeline established through the different texts reveals to the audience Susan Fielder's expectations that a life as an artist would be an active expression of the philosophical ideas.

The narrative allows for Susan Fielder's identity to be constructed in more depth as well as introduce particular themes in relation to perceiving the transfictive artist also as a work of art herself. From a transmedia perspective the exhibition, the art catalogue, art critic reviews and actor's live performance at the opening as Susan Fielder could be perceived as a primary platform. Figures 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 (Murray, N.D) illustrating the content of the website offers a secondary platform in comparison to the exhibition in the development of the fictional artist. The audience can engage with the artist website. The continuity in the way Susan Fielder is presented in the website as slightly awkward through the text written as her, amateurish website graphics and the incomplete pages reinforces her identity as an artist who has abandoned her career. The different platforms correspond with the overall timeline of the fictional artist's life and reinforce her persona as that of someone who has walked away from the art world that she clearly did not fit into."Fielder painted for five years in between doing phenomenology and oncology" (Stephens, 1994) consequently the purpose of the different media texts collaborating together demonstrates the beginnings of developing the artist as a transmedia text.

The storytelling assumes a simplistic style hiding the subtle complexities of the carefully crafted framework of the artist's biography. The artist's identity is initially established through the prominent reportage style photography of Susan Fielder which is found in the catalogue and on the Homepage of her website. The black and white photograph has a snapshot aesthetic. The close proximity of the photograph of Fielder suggests an intimacy. She appears smiling suggesting a happy carefree attitude. It is interesting to point out that the artist uses the same photograph from the exhibition catalogue despite the website being a more recent addition. This could perhaps imply that the website reflects her life as an artist just like her exhibition as retrospective – her image symbolises that her

persona as an artist is in the past. However the inclusion of the website, which can be found on Kevin Murray's website, could be regarded as an important aspect of the self-branding of artists today makes her persona more authentic. Her direct address to the audience through the website and her discussion of her art practice blurs the line between fiction and the real world creating the beginnings of an immersive experience for the audience.

However, it is important firstly to explore the catalogue and exhibition in more depth since it is essential to acknowledge the value of an exhibition catalogue. The exhibition catalogue documents that a show has taken place thus as an artefact in fictive art it is extremely important in the development of the persona of the fictional artist. Susan Fielder's exhibition title's inclusion of 'fictional' of draws immediate attention to the audience that her persona is potentially a construction. This is supported by the accompanying preface text within the exhibition catalogue which concludes with "another word of advice to the reader: the artist does not exist" (Bride & Murray, 1991). This is supported with the final website page "Thanks especially to Sandra Bridie, Melanie Beddie, and Kevin Murray, without whom I would not have been possible" (Fielder, Murray, 1991).

For the persona to be perceived as credible Murray asserts that "whilst Melanie contributed to the formation of the artist to inform the content of her performance, the most important element is the art and Sandra's particular way of working with abstraction which was something very important, probably the main stimulus"(2016). Artefacts in the form of the paintings therefore solidify and add credence to the fictive artist's authenticity. Indeed Bridie's practice primarily explores the creation of fictional artists presented via a series of art works and accompanied by a published 'interview' with the artist describing the journey towards the work seen. A key theme for Bridie in producing such fictions and the accompanying artworks, is a process that enables her to produce art works "outside universal criteria of excellence" where a "fictional artist's works have only to be as good as the fiction demands" (McQualter. 1996). Thus Susan Fielder depicts an unsuccessful artist whose works are of a questionable aesthetic standard and her position as an artist is peripheral to the art world.

Susan Fielder "provides an antidote to romantic critical or literary constructions of the artist" (McQualter, 1996). The theme of this fiction concerning an artist life is clearly one of exploring success and vocation. Susan Fielder's persona depict the failure in particular of women artists by exploring her work and brief career raising questions about the role of

women artists, the factors influencing the decision that her work is a failure and also rasing questions about what it means to be perceived as an artist. "In most cases, the artist's biography provides a narrative frame within which categories such as 'progress', 'phases', and 'mid-career' can occur" (Bridie, Murray 1991). Susan Fielder is "an individual that produced works that are a symptom of her life rather than the product of a life lived entirely in the service of art" (McQualter, 1996).

"Bridie places the text and the artwork on equal footing" (McQualter, 1996). The audience through the different texts is invited to read the work and the text together and assess the value of the artist's work in the light of the information gained from the text rather than by comparison to external standards. Susan Fielder as a constructed persona demonstrates an awareness of the success of an artist's work and career as reliant on the manufacture of critical discourse and fictions about the artist's life whereby "The measure of success or failure is dependent on contingent and relative standards rather than external criteria of excellence" (McQualter, 1996).

Although as Murray states that there was no extensive discussion of making the artist a woman, he does stress that "given that Sandra was a woman, it seemed to have constructed an artist as a man would have meant it would be a greater remove from Sandra" thus demonstrating the importance for creators and collaborators to be able to be able to sustain an authentic performance. However Susan Fielder's persona from Murray's interpretation of the creation of the character states emphatically that she was not created to reflect second wave feminist issues of the 1970s in relation to concerns surrounding women artists rather he perceives her narrative as being "the appeal of her as an artist is that she was kind of an innocent, with a sense of not belonging to any established movement" (Murray, 2016). Bridie supports this view "she is presented pretty much as a failed artist and there is always a question mark over her ability and quality of her work and so it is a kind of decision between philosophy and science, oncology so her art work illustrates that trajectory." (Bridie, 2016)

Indeed Beddie, Bridie and Murray discuss her fictive status in relation to Ern Malley, a fictitious poet who was central to a famous Australian literary hoax in the 1940s thus reflecting a cultural acknowledgement of historical fictive performances of artists. However whilst informing the work, each of the collaborators firmly assert that Susan Fielder is a project that was never set up to be a hoax, rather the focus was on the concept that "somebody whose creativity seemed to spring spontaneously without fitting in to any particular movement" (Murray, 2016). Consequently, the process of her

construction reflects historical and cultural influences on methods of creation where "in Australia it is one of the ways in which people would construct a fictional artist" (Murray, 2016). However, Susan Fielder's reasons for abandoning her career although not intentionally do reflect the wider feminist concerns that are still prevalent today since "Despite encouraging signs of women's improved status and visibility in the art world, there are still major systemic problems" (Reilly, 2015).

Equally Beddie also draws attention to the gender dynamics of the group which would inadvertently influence the development of the fictive artist where "anything we did would be informed from a feminist position" (2016). It is interesting to note when questioned to approaching Susan Fielder as a feminist reading Beddie contemplates her depiction as "a woman of intellect and a curious woman in the 1970s might well have had that trajectory. Necessarily if you invent somebody, someone who is forward thinking and has that time line. The big cultural movements are going to affect her" (2016).

Expanding upon a feminist interpretation of the artist is the project's premise that an artist who is a woman is presenting a retrospective show some twenty years after her short painting career from this approach is more feasible because of her gender. Beddie offers in her interview that the construction of a female character offered a more convincingly credible narrative since as a woman "it's possible that she could have been in some part of suburban Melbourne making art and nobody else has ever heard of her" whereas "for a man to emerge fully grown from the suburbs as an artist seems quite unlikely" (2016). In this way the instinctive choice to construct a woman reflects the ways in which gender has traditionally perceived in relation to women who are artist. Susan Fielder's narrative appears authentic since her history seems genuine for the artist as an outsider.

Returning to the concern of authenticity in order to give her character depth, Murray felt that "It was important to ground her in the everyday" (Murray, 2016). The art works created reflect this particularly the *Roundabout* series which working together with the catalogue and performance provides the artist with a more layered identity. Her varied career and educational experiences presented through her work offer an authentic portrayal of an artist. Combining issues concerning the end of philosophy with oncology and interpreting them as each process paralleling a terminal point reflects the artist's conceptualisation of ideas and the process of art making as credible.

A crucial aspect of self-branding, as discussed in the introduction and literature review, for the artist is their physical presence. Susan Fielder authenticity is further enhanced by

Beddie embodying her at the exhibition opening. It is clear that collaboration between the three was key to the development of this particular character as Beddie states in a personal interview on 7th February 2016 that Murray "wanted to have someone who wanted to be involved rather than just perform as the end product which was great opportunity for me since I was really excited by it" (2016). Beddie elaborates on the working process of the performance in more detail affirming that Murray developed the writing however that the process of developing the artist's speech script for the opening exhibition was developed during workshops. Beddie's experience as an actor and dramaturge reinforces the idea that "an actor we work with fiction all the time and we embody characters all the time so it is not so strange to me" which ensured that she "had some good inputs into how to try to make the piece feel more authentic, for instance we inserted deliberately casual remarks" (2016). Through the collaboration between each of the creators the fictive persona is pieced together to present an authentic artist identity. This illustrates that the project is clearly more than the simple construction of a life of an artist but entails the detailed manufacturing an authentic persona whose construction assumed the role of the role of a credible "narrator from whose point of view the life could be presented" (Bridie, Murray 1991). It is also important to remember the roles that the physical performance of the fictive artist whilst secondary to the art work itself is extremely important. The script of the artist talk combined with the physical dramatic performance continues the idea of Susan Fielder as a naïve outsider:

"Hello and thank you for coming. It's a bit overwhelming up here. I've never given a public talk before, so forgive me if I'm a little nervous. I'm not quite sure what an artist's talk should be. I've spoken with the gallery staff and they tell me to talk about the works in the exhibition. *Can you hear me down the back?* Just let me know if I get too soft" (Fielder/Murray, 2016). Equally, acting and the art of theatre itself is traditionally regarded as quite different to the art world, the Susan Fielder project demonstrates that the production of the transfictive artist blurs the boundaries between the two art forms.

By Beddie as an actor, working with Murray and Bridie, the embodied performance of the artist was able to be shaped into something that could be more "spontaneous and authentic rather than something preconceived" (Beddie, 2016). The collaborative group state that "We installed 'counter-weights' such as clumsiness, to offset her ability to win people's trust and an interest in Jung to soften her intellectual realism, etc." (Bridie, Murray 1991). Interestingly, Beddie is able to offer an insight into her performance at the opening which clearly reflects the development of the character of Susan Fielder to

present a sense of her inexperience of discussing her work and of her being in the spotlight as an artist:

"There was a lot of looking up and down from the pages. There were parts of the text I had learnt so I used them as thoughts rather than scripted. We built in a couple of events where I dropped the papers...so little things to try and up the dramatic sense of the piece. It was an interesting process" (Beddie, 2016).

Beddie is able to establish for the research a more in-depth understanding of the project relaying that her embodiment of the role was a one off performance. Since the artist Susan Fielder was fundamental to the project as a whole Beddie draws attention to the artist talk being "was probably quite long as far as artist talks go but we had constructed so much of this woman's life that we probably wanted to tell all the parts of it whereas an actual artist talk would be more specific about the works. But it was a retrospective of course". With the focus on establishing the artist's narrative as authentic there does seem to be a need to develop a more in-depth background in order to further construct a realistic persona.

Just as the performance, the art work and indeed the website reflect deliberate strategies on being playful it is interesting in the ways the creators discuss her in the interviews. Beddie perceives her as "Passionate about art at the time and now she's moved on to something else. She has these moments of great concentration and enthusiasm and then she becomes expert at something else" (2016).

It is important to note that Susan Fielder, whilst never attempting to present herself as a real artist, in a similar way to Donelle Woolford which will be discussed later in the chapter, received negative criticism despite the exhibition title clearly presenting the fictiveness of the work. For some, Murray states, that the project was perceived as potentially undermining the authority of the art world "mocking the process of curating, mocking of showing it being a construction which wasn't the intention at all" (2016). This is supported by Beddie since her performance was embodying a woman twenty years older than her present age at the time thus the performative aspects of the project are further underlined emphasising that from the creators' stance "There was no desire to pretend. I was twenty years too young. I did wear a costume, a baby blue suit ...There was a sense of formality about the costume. I suppose there were some people that may have imagined her as a real person but we weren't trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes" (Beddie, 2016).

Beddie further corroborates how their collaboration to create an authentic fictive artist could be misconstrued "There was Kevin's writing and Sandra's painting, I think my presence as an embodied performer who was presenting on the day brought the whole thing into the present moment which can be a little confusing for people." Despite misunderstandings of the project and criticism the physical embodiment of the artist, the text and paintings as artefacts working across the platforms clearly highlights the need to have the presence of the live performer to further the persona's authenticity. However Susan Fielder's artifice is always visible and whist criticised as Beddie comments "In some ways it meant we were successful in what we doing that seemed to be believable although if you look at it in detail it's improbable" (2016).

The benefits of constructing a fictive artist as a collaborative effort, something which will be discussed further in relation to Donelle Woolford can be summed up quite clearly by Beddie "If you think about it in an Andy Warhol sort of way you actually outsource the various roles, Sandra can stay at home and do her painting which she loves, other people can front up and do the artist talk – and you could outsource it to any city in the world" (2016). As discussed in the literature review and within this chapter the transfictive artist's identity is a labour intensive project. The manufacturing of the artist persona as a collaborative effort reflects their efforts as a labour force working together to produce the persona as an authentic whole.

"Welcome to my home page. Though I currently work as an oncologist, I was once a successful artist. Art is still an important part of my life. This web site is an opportunity for me to show my work and talk about my ideas. Excuse the mess, I've just moved in, but please, do come in" (Fielder/Murray, 2016). The website as a narrative further extending the artist's persona ensures Susan fielder's longevity as an artist and digital media offers artists the potential not only to archive but to continue to develop fictive artists across various platforms to further authenticate their performance. As digital entities they can live infinitely and as Murray encapsulates so well "That's what you hope for these characters that they will have a life beyond your construction of them. That's the ultimate reward" (Murray, 2016). Susan Fielder's website has created a point of entry for a wider audience as it has allowed for people who did not attend the artist's exhibition to have some involvement with the artist by reading her prepared talk for the show. The availability of the catalogue as a PDF online also offers an audience to examine Susan Fielder's work thus demonstrating the potential of digital technology for developing fictional artists as transmedia texts.

It is important to point out that Susan Fielder's short career as an artist dates originally back to the 1970s with the retrospective being held in 1991 – a decade prior to social media beginning to become an integral part of modern society. "…in our era of scepticism it is now possible for us to think that the artist's life is as much a created product as the art" (Bridie, Murray 1991).

Therefore the construction of Susan Fielder's artist persona is established through her personal history, the theoretical influences on her work and the art work itself in the exhibition. All of these narratives demonstrate the beginnings of using different platforms in a variety of ways. With the basis in the exhibition, the retrospective show was utilised as a platform to develop the identity of Susan Fielder.

An important part of the process to develop the authenticity of Susan Fielder's character, as a transfictive process of narrative verisimilitude, is the creation of secondary characters. This is demonstrated by the project constructing "a number of fictional contributors" (Bridie, 2016) including the New York art writer Tass Wolfe who encourages Susan Fielder's pursuit of creating art. Therefore part of the process of authenticating her persona is due to the assistance of further fictional characters to further legitimate her existence.

The fictional artist through different platforms is taken to the real world through the exhibition and the website, allowing the audience to engage with her physically reflecting the collaborative group's assertion that "This fiction is based on the understanding that works of art are perceived in the context of an artist's life" (Bridie, Murray 1991). The art works Susan Fielder has created, the catalogue and the website can be considered strong anchors in the development of her fictional artist persona where "the life is seen as the primary ground out of which the art is 'constructed'" (Bridie, Murray 1991). Susan Fielder's artist talk in relation to theory influencing her work create a range of realistic specifics that reinforce her identity demonstrating that "It would seem that the givenness of the artist's life does provide an unquestioned base on which to solidly fix the value of their works" (Bridie, Murray 1991).

"What happens then, if the life is seen to be as much a constructed product as the art?" (Bridie, Murray 1991). This case study demonstrates the early potential and ongoing development of the existence of Susan Fiedler short term career as an artist. It also establishes how media platforms, such as websites and catalogues can be used in

conjunction with an art exhibition to construct a more detailed artist persona and digital media in particular provide an opportunity to document the practice of fictive artists and accumulate an archive of the process.

Consequently Susan Fielder can accurately be defined as an early example of what this research defines as transfictive since the project not only utilises a variety of platforms it also incorporates early digital technology in the form of the artist website. Considering transfictive in the same way as Dena (2009) defines the term, each of the platforms work together to complete the Susan Fielder persona. This can be clearly seen through the construction of her identity which is composed of devices of fiction with real art and artefacts "to establish a hermeneutic circle of understanding" of the fictive artist identity (Jenkins, 2006: 3).

4.3 Donelle Woolford: And Man created Woman? Collaborative embodiment of Race, Gender and Feminism

"I make all the paintings, props, so I guess my role is as writer, director and prop master and travel agent" (Scanlan, 2016)

For several years Donelle Woolford (1954/1977/1980 – Present), a successful Bronx based African American artist has exhibited her work across the world. Donelle Woolford's work is varied ranging from wooden assemblages inspired by Cubism, installations, paintings and performance. The influences informing her work are presented in a credible way "the birth of the Cubist movement and the use of African masks, and how painters at that time were influenced by seeing these so-called 'primitive' aesthetics. So, for me, palm trees are a kind of camouflage but they also function as a sign of the exotic, the Other, in relation to my work" (Bishop, 2008). Blurring the boundaries further is the fact that the artist is represented by Wallspace, New York and Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna.

During the undertaking of this research Donelle Woolford's artist biography has adapted in interesting ways this is particular exemplified by Figures 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13 (Scanlan, 2010). Donelle Woolford, whilst the inspiration for her name and her actual name has remained constant (inspired by an Afro American football player), there is disparity in her artist biography. Whilst she was initially presented as being "an African-American woman who was born in Conyers, Ga., the second of three children in a relatively affluent family. Her father is a lawyer, and her mother a natural healer. Interested in art from a young

age, she experimented with numerous mediums in her youth and earned a B.A. in fine art, with a concentration in graphic design, from Yale" (Russeth, 2014) this account has been altered as her life as an artist has progressed. Consequently, depending on which history timeline you read Donelle Woolford as presented by her three different birth dates has a split timeline and conflictingly states that she was born in Detroit and Conyers, Georgia respectively. Her family and background is also divergent; contradictory information presents her as sometimes as the eldest of three children then switching to second position, whilst her parents move from working class to that of professionals – all of which presents the playful manipulation of her fictive characteristics.

The life of the artist has been at the core of the project as presented in Figure 4.9; where key to her narrative development has been the art work and performance as the artist itself. Donelle Woolford as part of the ICA's Double Agent exhibition (2008) consisted of working in a fabricated studio open to the public during the show. This delegated performance could be interpreted as a process to illustrate how the artist can be resituated as both subject and object raising questions such as "Can you trust the artist? Moreover can you really believe that what you see is what you get? Authenticity, reality and truth are often taken at face value, but what happens when artists use other people to communicate their message?" (Federico, 2008).

Donelle Woolford's participation in *Double Agent* was orchestrated through the form of residencies in the exhibition's three venues, where in each she used one of the galleries as a studio to create her work, which was also open to the public. Donelle Woolford was present on Saturdays and Sundays, where in her temporary studio, the artist made "wooden assemblages that reference Cubism and which are designed to coincide with (and challenge) the one-hundredth anniversary of that movement" (Bishop, 2008). Similar to Beddie's performance as Susan Fielder, Abigail Ramsey as Donelle Woolford presented a talk about her practice, her participation in the Double Agent show, as well as her 'double life' in London, followed by a discussion with the exhibition's curators. The blurring of boundaries is further extended through the performance where during her residency at the Mead Gallery she gave critiques of local art students' portfolios and following her position at the ICA, Donelle Woolford existence as an artist led to her practice evolving into working with and on paper.

The discussion between Donelle Woolford and the curators Mark Sladen and Claire Bishop demonstrates the development of the fictional artist's persona for an audience. In a similar way to Murray, Bridie and Biddie's construction of Susan Fielder authenticity of her

persona is established by other people such as the fictitious critic Tass Wolfe, in this case however Sladen and Bishop are actual people.

Similarly to the live performance by Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford's embodiment by an actor is integral to the project through her public discussion about her art practice "Good afternoon. Thank you for coming today to hear me talk about my work. First I want to thank Claire and Mark for inviting me to participate in Double Agent. It's been a great adventure to be a resident here and a fascinating experience for me to create work in a public venue" (Bishop, 2008). During the interview Donelle Woolford discusses her relationship with Scanlan "Well I've known Joe for many years. He was my first sculpture teacher at Yale, and for a little while afterwards I worked as his assistant" (Bishop, 2008). The interview develops a background history for the fictional persona that explores her development as an artist and the process of figuring out "how to insert myself in the art world" (Bishop, 2008). It reflects the playfulness of her history as reflects issues of authenticity through her biography as well as demonstrating through her narrative the difficulties facing Afro American women artists illustrating that "in the beginning for me it just seemed very difficult as an unconnected, unknown artist from the South, and a black female in a predominantly white male environment" leading to her deciding to self-promote and participate in self-branding especially through social media "And so I did and I pushed Donelle Woolford out there so she had her own space, her own work, and her own narrative" (Bishop, 2008).

Donelle Woolford in the exhibition interview openly explores her nature and the construction of her existence "I think every young artist is a character ready to be consumed" which maintains the idea that now more than ever individuals are blurring the boundaries between reality and performance. This is demonstrated by the actor Ramsey stepping briefly out of character to discuss her role as the artist and the collaborative nature of the project. As a delegated performance she reveals the intense audition process for the role, followed by the preparation for assuming the artist's persona where Scanlan's instructions for the role were based on different types of art, critical readings on art and attending art shows specifically by Afro American artists such as Kara Walker and African Art. In a similar way to Susan Fiedler Donelle Woolford is pieced together to create a complex multifaceted entity across media platforms. Equally, Scanlan demonstrates the importance of image for the fictional artist since "he's very much into

DONELLE WOOLFORD

**BORN 1977 IN CONYERS, GA
LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK, NY**

Woolford's performance *Dick's Last Stand* explores the central role given to the male sexual organ in both American art and politics, perpetuating the tradition of phallic humor in popular culture. It is a reenactment of Richard Pryor's stand-up routine from the last episode of his short-lived 1977 television show, in which he continually played with the notion that Richard Pryor, comedian, was someone who could not be pinned down or controlled. *Dick's Last Stand* honors Pryor's brash political humor and marks its return to the live stage, with Woolford playing Pryor playing Pryor playing Mudbone—across generations and in drag!

ON VIEW
FOURTH FLOOR AND OFF-SITE

Donelle Woolford's work is on view in the Museum's fourth floor galleries. Performances of *Dick's Last Stand* take place off-site, in locations across the country. View the listings below for additional information.

DICK'S LAST STAND
TOUR DATES, 2014

Jan 31: LA Art Book Fair, Los Angeles, California
Feb 2: La><art, Los Angeles, California
Feb 6: Wattis Institute, San Francisco, California
Feb 8: Solespace, Oakland, California
Feb 14: MOCAD, Detroit, Michigan
Feb 18: Dorchester Projects, Chicago, Illinois
March 7: JACK, Brooklyn, New York
April 1: The Kitchen, New York, New York
May 20: Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota
May 21: Duffy's Tavern, Lincoln, Nebraska
May 22: White Flag Projects, St. Louis, Missouri

Donelle Woolford, Avatar, 2007. Digital file. Collection of the artist. Photograph by Donelle Woolford.

Figure 4.9: The Whitney 2014 Biennial's page promoting Donelle Woolford (Whitney Museum, 2014)

Figure 4.10: Abigail Ramsay as Woolford in 2008 and Jennifer Kidwell as Woolford in 2008. (Donelle Woolford, 2008)

DONELLE WOOLFORD:

PLOT STRUCTURE
&
CHARACTER
DEVELOPMENT

by Donelle Woolford
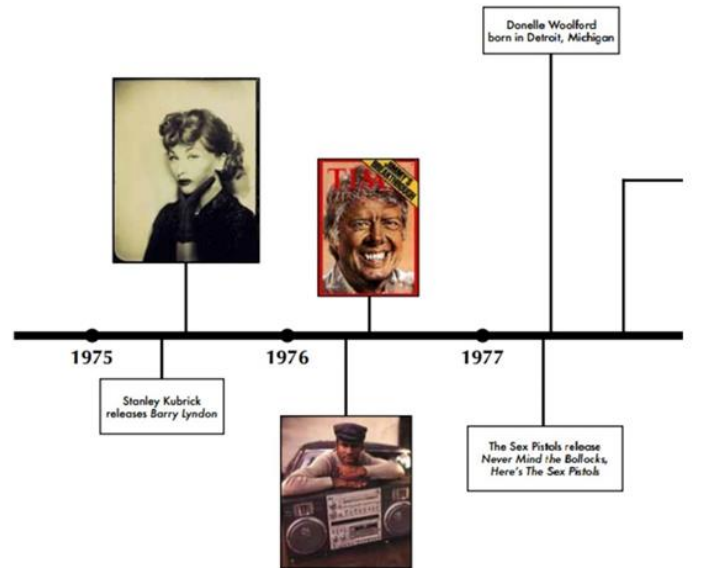
Figure 4.11: Donelle Woolford: Plot Structure and Development Timeline - 1970s (Donelle Woolford, 2010)
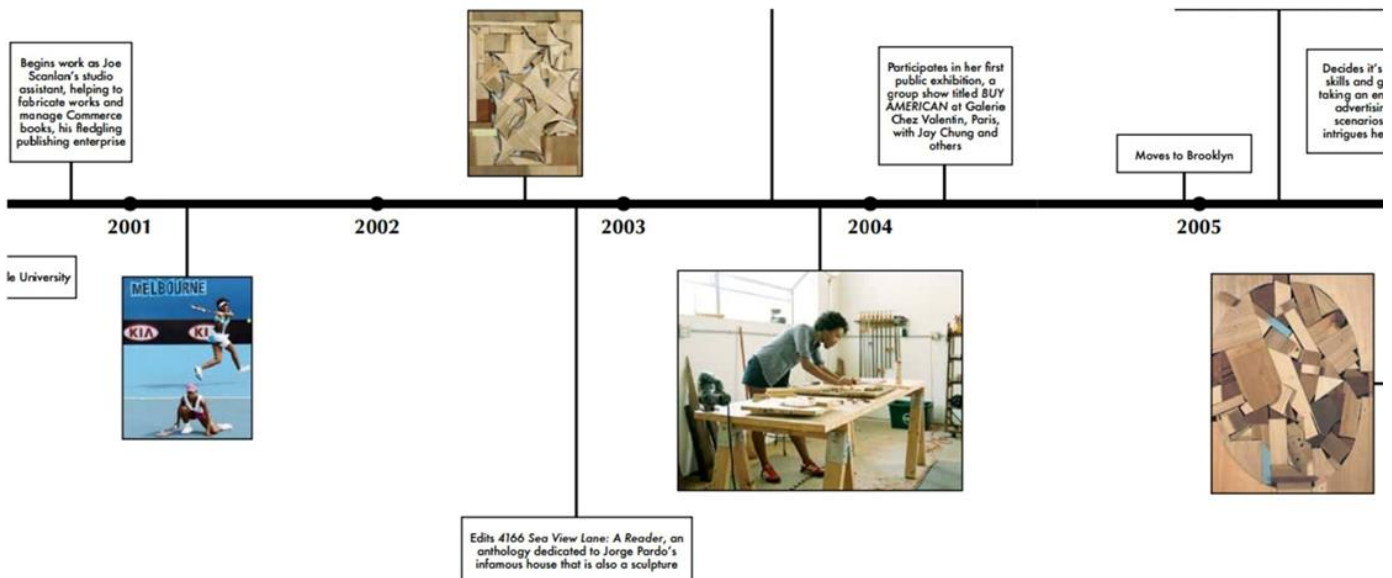
Figure 4.12: Donelle Woolford: Plot Structure and Development Timeline 2001 - 2005 (Donelle Woolford, 2010)
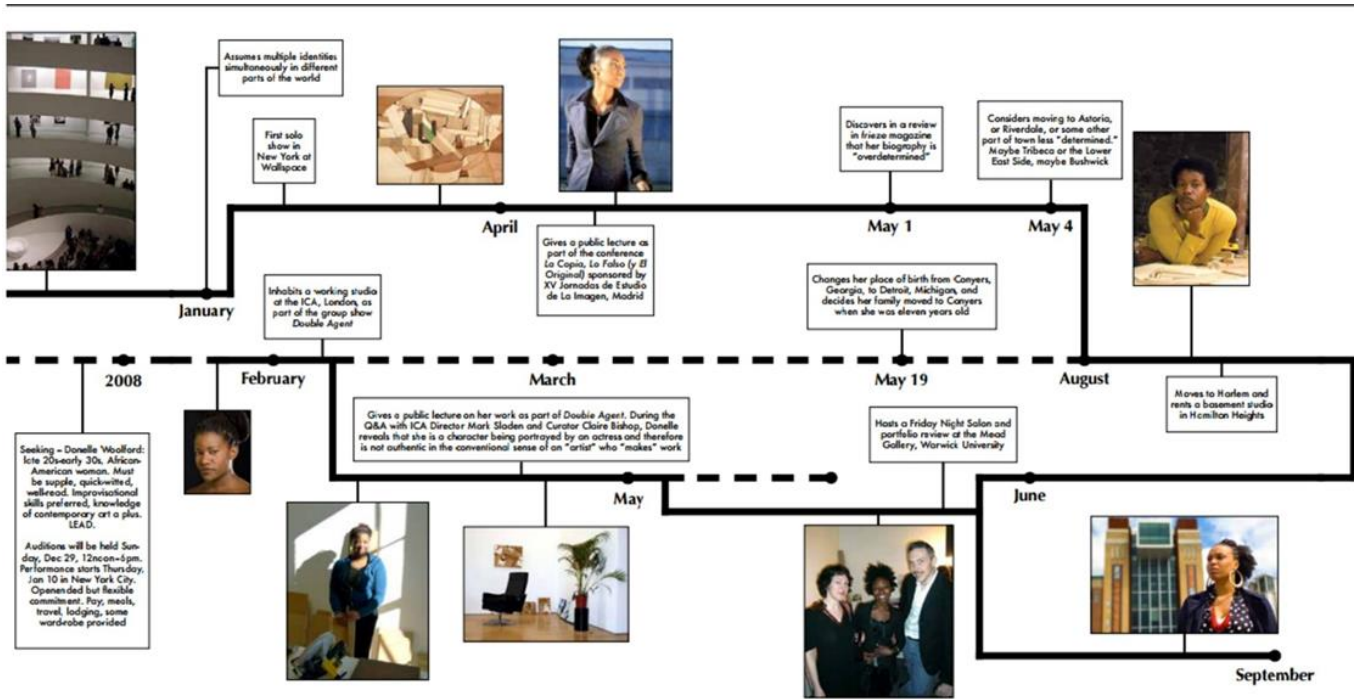
Figure 4.13: Donelle Woolford: Plot Structure and Development Timeline 2008 (Donelle Woolford, 2010)

Figure 4.14: Donelle Woolford exhibition (Donelle Woolford, ND)

Figure 4.15: The artist's studio (Donelle Woolford, ND)
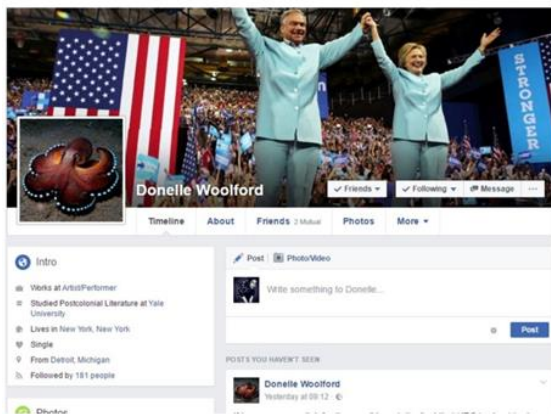
Figure 4.16: Donelle Woolford Facebook Profile
(Donelle Woolford, 2016)

Figure 4.17: Namik Minter as Donelle Woolford at work
during the opening of Sharjah's Biennale 2007 (Haupt
& Binder, 2007)

the image of what I look like and so, like, this jacket, which is Dries Van Noten, I've never heard of him in my life, but this was something that was very important that I should wear, as well as my fifteen dollar glasses that I can't see out of at all [laughs] and my shoes, so this has been my uniform which has been very helpful in forming my character" (Bishop, 2008). What is fascinating is how Donelle Woolford as a project has developed into a much more fluid collaborative construction where authorship has become a collective effort between artist and performers.

She has own website titled http://www.tthheeffoorrreeesstt.com and uses Facebook as shown by Figure 4.16 (Scanlan, 2016), posting regularly on her wall to 1829 friends. Her timeline reveals she has been posting since 2009 providing a personal archive documenting her performance as an artist. Figures 4.14, 4.15 and 4.17 (Scanlan, N.D) demonstrate the importance of visual images. From uploaded photographs of her studio installation at the Sharjah Biennial, to intimate snapshots of her life in New York, opening exhibitions, images of her work, images of herself all of which build a specific narrative exhibiting the typical characteristics of any user of Facebook. However there are deliberate slips where her Facebook account clearly provides clues to the fictiveness of her as a persona and this is done in an intelligent and educated but comedic way. For instance, searching the artist's Facebook About pages firstly reinforces basic information about her working as a Performer/Artist, her graduating in Postcolonial Literature from Yale class of 2004, the places she has lived, her status as single and her insightful choice of favourite quote citing Cher "All of us invent ourselves, some of us just have more imagination than others" (Woolford, D. 2009).

Equally Donelle Woolford's profile pictures as demonstrated by Figures 4.9, 4.10, 4.15 and 4.17 vary significantly reinforcing the idea that as an entity she cannot be pinned down. Indeed the chameleon like transformation of Donelle Woolford is based on the fact that she is enacted by five actors such as Abigail Ramsay, Jennifer Kidewell and Namik Minter, - all of whom are African-American women – whom by collaborating with Scanlan play and develop their own take on the artist further developing her work, persona and trajectory. Thus, while the artist's body of work has been created by Scanlan, the collaborative involvement of his co-workers further enhances the ways in which Donelle Woolford's fictiveness becomes even more played out into reality.

Donelle Woolford's website cements her construction through a detailed biography, critical essays, photographs of her art work and herself. Whilst a fictive persona the website as well as her presence on Facebook document the ways in which she interact in

the real world thus reinforcing the idea that "It is now impossible to isolate the process of the real or to prove the real" (Baudrillard, 2001: 182). Her digital presence whilst playing a small part in the construction of artist is still significant in the development of her identity as a whole. Her website is updated regularly, similarly her Facebook status is frequently updated thus sustaining the facade of a real person. Such documentation continues to play on the blurring of boundaries whilst also exposing the fabrication of an artist's life.

Equally, her website, for anyone who is unaware of the project could quite legitimately assume at first that this Donelle Woolford is a real artist, and in a sense she is real. Considered from a Baudrillard stance it could be argued that her art work, her representation by galleries, inclusion in shows and biennials around the world, her website and presence on Facebook is real. All the platforms interacting in the construction of the transfictive artist are authentic despite the fact that at the source of is something completely fictional.

Therefore, the fictive artist's use of digital media as seen by Susan Fielder's website and Donelle Woolford's digital practice which incorporates both website and social media illustrates the contemporaneity of Goffman's work and of its applicability to the analysis of identity and presentation of transfictive self. Indeed, Donelle Woolford's use of digital media emphasises the key premise in Goffman's work that when in *front stage*, particularly the *front stage* of social media, the fictive artist uses this form as an extension of the fictive performance to further project the fictive persona. As discussed in Chapter 2 Goffman's original framework in relation to examining the fictive artists is invaluable as an explanatory framework for understanding fictive identity through interaction and the presentation of self as a transmedia project. Equally, digital media and in particular social media, as observed in the construction process of the case studies, working in conjunction with more traditional ways to present a fictive artist such as live performance, art as artefacts, exhibitions, ensures a more complete experience of the fictive artist's transmediated self. Donelle Woolford's multi-threaded timeline reinforces the idea that across all the platforms, the use of digital media and its enhanced potential for editing the self, can offer opportunities to contribute to the further development of the Goffman framework. Goffman's use of metaphors borrowed from *dramaturgy* to examine identity construction is also pertinent to the specific case studies since both Susan Fielder and Donelle Woolford are discussed by their creators in relation to performance and theatrical influences on the process of constructing the fictive

characters. It is important to remember also that collaborators for both the fictive artists discussed are performed by professional actors, several performers in the case of Donelle Woolford, which as collaborative art projects illustrate clearly the many facets of the fictive artist persona, a process that as individuals we are practicing within our own digital identity construction via social media.

Authenticity is again emphasised different actors inhabiting the body of Donelle Woolford which is demonstrated via her website and discussed during the interview in relation to the catalogue image of the artist reinforcing the fact that Ramsey is a different representation of the artist "There have been a few times that… well, everyone has that gallery guide and clearly that woman is not me! [laughs] It's been interesting dealing with it: from hearing that I've gained a lot of weight [laughs] to people staring at it and staring at me for a while in the corner, and then finally coming up to me and saying, "Are you the artist?"" (Bishop, 2008). Ramsey also provides an insight into how the persona develops in an improvisational way where "in this environment your character becomes… how does Joe see it? How do I see it? Who's this woman? How did the last woman play it?" (Bishop, 2008). The construction process is further considered by his instructions to move away from a historical and political approach to move to a more instinctive emotional led in order to "inhabit this role" where the emphasis is "on the visuality of Donelle: what she's wearing is important, how she looks in the space and what the space looks like that she's operating in. There's much less emphasis on motivation for the character" (Bishop, 2008).

Scanlan describes Donelle Woolford as a "fully-fledged artist in her own right: she has a body and opinions and a developing oeuvre. Her only drawback is that by conventional measures she is not real. My role is that I invented her, just like any other author who invents a character whom they hope will enter the public imagination" (Bishop, 2008). Bishop also explores the collaboration's interest in perceiving Donelle Woolford as a real life virtual avatar living in the artist's life, performing in "a theatre without a frame: some people are seeing Donelle but they don't even know she's Donelle. And one way in which to seed that idea is to have her on the publicity material of the exhibition" (2008).

By having more than one actor assume the role of Donelle Woolford, this could be understood in relation to Goffman's consideration of the self and masks. The different actors performing as Donelle Woolford of different ages, different physical appearances, different personalities through the Goffman framework, exemplify the concept of the self as merely the *mask* one chooses to wear depending on the art works, the exhibition or the situation. The fictive persona in this way subverts the performance of self by drawing

attention to the mask; Donelle Woolford in particular by not having a fixed physical identity image plays conceptually with the idea of artist as brand.

The Double Agent exhibition catalogue playfully refers to Donelle Woolford as "an up-and-coming young African-American artist" whereby her authenticity as a legitimate artist is validated through the biographical detail. This is further substantiated by of her work history documenting her experience as Scanlan's former studio assistant. Her professional profile outlines the collaborative history of Scanlan and Donelle Woolford such as *The Massachusetts Wedding Bed* (2005), "a press conference in which Donelle Woolford, Scanlan, and his brother lay in a queen-sized bed in an Amsterdam gallery and answered questions about being American" (Bishop, 2008). The catalogue is clear in its defining of Donelle Woolford as a construction since it carefully focuses on Scanlan's "presentation of Woolford" and how Donelle Woolford's art and the idea of the artist as a work of art herself "brings together several of Scanlan's interests" which explore the importance of artist biography, the manufacturing of artistic reputation and the "relationship between myth-making and salesmanship" (Bishop, 2008). The development process of her as an artist is clarified by Scanlan who states in an interview that "there was a time early in the project for it to get off the ground, I would hand over invitations to her which seemed like a good way to get her started" (2016).

Scanlan does not consider Donelle Woolford as an alter ego, "I don't think of her as an alter ego I think of her as a character in a story" (2016) in a similar way to Murray and Bridie's explanation of Susan Fielder the fictive artist is seen as an extension of the creative process "where one could make a person or a character just as well as a painting or a photograph or film and understood as a work of art" (Scanlan, 2016).

Whilst there has been certain controversy surrounding this project as discussed earlier mainly because of the taboos surrounding a white man constructing a female afro American artist. Scanlan notes retrospectively how suspension of disbelief is accepted in theatre whilst the same cannot be said for visual art where "there is a fundamental inability to suspend disbelief" (2016). Similar to Murray and Bridie's concerns with fictitious characters, Scanlan identifies his role within the collaborative group as the writer, director and creator of artefacts which reinforces the theatrical aspects of the fictive artist as a performance. Whilst Scanlan has never performed her in body at exhibitions, embodiment of the fictive artist does take place through social media. However even her digital presence is a collaborative process where Scanlan and the actors within the group log on to her Facebook account and interact as her.

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Scanlan in the interview states that Donelle Woolford in a similar way to Susan Fielder is a collaborative effort however what is significant is the way he discusses the term collaborative as more closely linked to way collaborations work in theatre rather than the art world perception of collaboration "we approach that term in a different way, that's another great thing about the project introducing a wider definition of what that means" (Scanlan, 2016). Therefore the group dynamics shifts in relation to responsibility and power depending on the type of project being undertaken reflecting the continued evolving identity of Donelle Woolford. Whilst initially Scanlan could be perceived as the instigator of the project mainly because the fictive character is an artist and consequently supported by his knowledge of the art world and its traditions, it is understandable that the preliminary identity framework of Donelle Woolford would require his expertise. This dynamic has clearly changed as the fictive artist has developed since with each project the actors performing as Donelle Woolford become more informed and have a greater understanding of the world she resides in. With this knowledge as exemplified by later projects demonstrates a comfortable familiarity presented by the actors embodying the fictive artist. As Scanlan states in the interview "the Whitney piece was totally Jennifer Kidwell's idea, I receded into the background" (2016). This demonstrates the idea of collaboration having a continuously shifting power dynamics and reinforces the concept of manufacturing identity as labour intensive. Fictive artists created as collaborative projects depend on a pool of workers that like Goffman's masks where co- creators have the opportunity to vary the ways they participate within the project, the masks are interchangeable. Through the exhibitions, multiple live performances and the use of digital media which supplements her transfictive construction, it is clear that Donelle Woolford is not a simulation but exhibits elements of the hyperreal, presenting herself as an artist that exists in the real world and is acknowledged as an artist in her own right. By using different actors to represent her she has become not a copy of a copy or a simulation but has grown dramatically developing into a more real, more discussed artist whilst continuing to avoid a fixed physical form.

The collaborative examples presented clearly illustrate the ways in which the fictive artist's identity performance as a whole are considered from more of a theatrical, literary approach thus illustrating the labour of manufacturing the persona as a transfictive entity. This is visibly demonstrated by the chameleon nature of the Donelle Woolford project through the actors performing as her which is exemplified by Scanlan stating that "the highlight of her existence for me is that there was a little window of time in early 2014 where she was in three places at once and was a different age in each of those places and was functioning perfectly. Young career artist Donelle was performing in Vienna, and

middle age Donelle was getting ready to go on the road for the Whitney and future Donelle was already in Marrakesh taking a vacation after the biennial that hadn't happened yet" (2016)

Whilst Donelle Woolford has not been politically declarative about being a feminist Scanlan and Kidd assert that she is. This is reinforced with Scanlan describing her in the following way: "she believes that she can do anything, she has power and that she is in control mostly of her fate" (2016) and developed further with his perception of her "she is kind of supernatural powers she can travel in time and space she can suddenly be ten years ago or thirty years older and we all of those things are just narrative devices that we have at our disposal". Narrative devices, an important feature of self-branding and identity construction are made visible in the ways Donelle Woolford changes her history profile, her age and her appearance "We think it is important that she also, that her form changes that she can be tall short, dark, light, bubbly, sullen - that she is not a fixed in the way one could fetishize like a pop star…We see this not as a weakness but another form of power" (Scanlan, 2016) thus reflecting the identity transitions in the development of her construction. "One of the favourite things we did was when she realised she would be much cooler if she said she was born in Detroit and so she just writes that in" such redrafting of a persona's identity forces the viewer to consider the importance of the project illustrating the ways in which individuals' at large are manufacturing the lives we present as transmediated selves.

Donelle Woolford is clearly related to Baudrillard's simulacra, like the other fictitious artists she is a composite of myths and narratives anchored through works of art, biographies, photographs and performance orchestrated and written by other people. In Baudrillarian terms a copy of a copy where repetition of familiar codes and conventions is so familiar the audience easily accepts as truth, as real. As a transmedia text, the fictive artist blurs the boundaries of their fabrication, constantly shifting between the real, virtual and imaginary presented through exhibitions, live performance, catalogues, photo texts and digital technology that meaning and a sense of what is real, has become destabilized; the fictional and the real are interwoven. To use Baudrillard's words the performance of actors such as Kidwell and Ramsay could be perceived as "real without origin or reality: a hyperreal". The hyperreal is a reproduction of the real and the collaborative efforts in constructing Donelle Woolford demonstrate that she has taken a life of her own; criticism of her as a project have occurred because of the blurring of boundaries. Thus she is a fictional creature composed of fictions that is continuing to develop and evolve as a singular being in reality.

Equally as an unfixed entity, Donelle Woolford can be considered as challenging the ways artists self-brand, by highlighting the performative aspects of creating an artist's biography and identity to anchor their work to. In fact the Donelle Woolford as a project reveals how the subject can be mediated in this capitalist, consumer culture and postmodern world. It could be argued that the question of the identity of the subject has been a modernist question, with the division between the subject - object and the private - public spheres creating a sense of the subjective individual and sense of self. However the collaboration's construction of Donelle Woolford demonstrates that there are characteristics that subvert these modern notions of the subject creating a postmodern subject or as Baudrillard argues an absence of the subject. Yet the subject in this case could not be more real. It could be argued that Donelle Woolford's work can generally reveal to the audience that although the subject has become simply an image or simulacrum it does not lack depth, and can mediate between interior and exterior spaces breaking down the subject - object boundary.

As briefly discussed earlier, Donelle Woolford as a project, has not been without criticism, particularly surrounding her inclusion in the Whitney Biennial in 2014. Firstly it would be pertinent to consider issues surrounding the dispute surrounding the 2014 Whitney Biennial over the inclusion of Donelle Woolford in the show since "As a survey of the broadest possible cross section of what is happening in American art, the Biennial, like the art world itself, is never without controversy" (Thompson, 2015, p.147). Issues surrounding race and representation continue to be central to debates surrounding racism within society and in this case the art world and the exclusion of Afro American artists in general. Bob Duggan in What Does/Should/Can the 2014 Whitney Biennial Mean? (2014) highlights that "only 9 of the 118 participants are African Americans, making for even paltrier percentage of 7.6% (just to make that sadder, consider that one of those 9 African-American artists, "Donelle Woolford," is a female artist character created by white male artist Joe Scanlon)" (Duggan, Bigthink.com, 2014).

The artist group HowdoyousayYamin African? also known as the Yams Collective, it is important to note, is that their immediate response to her inclusion was to withdraw from the show publically stating that they "felt that the representation of an established academic white man posing as a privileged African American Woman is problematic, even if he tries to hide it in an avatar's mystique" (Heddaya, hyperalleric.com, 2014). The group's response to the fictive artist reinforces the power of the fictional identity, although perceived as harmful in this case since her existence and inclusion in the show "negates our presence there, our collaborative identity as representing the African

diaspora" (Heddaya, hyperalleric.com, 2014: n.p.). The identity politics debate that ensued in is further exemplified by Sienna Shields, the Yam's instigator, who contacted Scanlon directly stating:

> "We're sure that we don't need to explain how the notion of a black artist being "willed into existence" and the use of a black FEMALE body through which a WHITE male "artist" conceptually masturbates in the context of an art exhibition presents a troubling model of the BLACK body and of conceptual RAPE. The possibility of this figure somehow producing increased "representation" for the black artists both furthers the reduction of black personhood and insults the very notion of representation as a political or collective engagement.

(Heddaya, hyperallergic.com, 2014: n.p.)

This criticism of the fictional artist highlights many problematic issues regarding authenticity and performance of identity. The construction of Donelle Woolford, despite the collaboration with the actors Kidwell and Ramsay, Scanlan's role as architect has been construed as *blacking up* thus perpetuating racial prejudice which is reinforced by the Whitney Biennial itself who are deemed to be demonstrating "an institutional discrimination in their choice to only host 8 black artists" (Perkins Rowland, 2015: 18).

From this viewpoint the responses to Donelle Woolford reduce her to being crudely defined as an Afro American artist who is the construction of a white man, which is simply not accurate of the collaborative process that exists. As a result this position makes it impossible to move away questions about dominant cultural appropriation's context and its' repercussions, something which as central racial "issue went viral and young social critics took to the internet to express their concern" (Perkins Rowland, 2015, p.18).

Thus her status as an Afro American artist – a perception that some accept whilst others have alleged that for her to be considered in this way raises concerns regarding identity politics as Kidd acknowledges:

> "…identity politics complicate Donelle Woolford: Joe is white, male, and middle-aged; Donelle is black, female, and young-ish. The conceit that a(nother) middle-aged white man is profiting off a young black woman who, not being an actual person, can reap no benefit from this relationship is certainly disturbing. Many argue that Scanlan's creation of Donelle exploits her political body. "

(Kidwell, 2014)

However, whilst Kidwell demonstrates that she recognises that if read from a superficial understanding of the project, without a real understanding of the collaborative nature of the construction of Donelle Woolford this could and did lead to controversy. Conversely Kidwell defends the project drawing attention to several concerns regarding the misreading of the work and specific details that have been overlooked "Donelle not only has a body of work, both plastic and live, she also has bodies" (Kidwell, 2014).

Certainly throughout the criticisms raised regarding the project, the actors involvement is always reduced to a minimum or overlooked completely where in reality "We are the performative authors in this project and Joe the visual author" (Kidwell, 2014), a factor that Scanlan has stressed throughout his discussion of the project. What is even more disconcerting is the fact that critics did not seek to clarify the dynamic of the collaboration "Our participation could complicate what many consider a clear example of exploitation. But, so far it hasn't, because Abigail and I have largely been left out of the discussion, as if we, like Donelle, do not exist" (Kidwell, 2014).

To understand the complex and problematic issues surrounding the fictional persona Donelle Woolford it is important contextually to have an understanding of the challenges faced by African American women in art and consequently the marginalization of this ethnic group whom contend with the challenge of visibility and recognition. On the surface and taken at face value, Donelle Woolford could be argued that she is reflecting how the voice of the Black female artists contribute to contemporary mainstream art.

The nature of her genesis needs to be considered in relation to the uncomfortable position that she is an Afro American woman created by a white man. According to bell hooks (1995) the "willingness to critically engage art by black folks in all its profundity is still very difficult in a culture of domination where people do not learn to look beneath the surface" (p. 32) in a way, superficially misread, Scanlan's construction of Donelle Woolford could be perceived as reinforcing this assertion since many critics argue that beneath the surface of the artist is yet another example of hegemony. Where Hooks (1995) attributes the lack audience and fear of appropriation to what she describes as "patriarchal politics in the realm of the visual" (xiii) it is clear from this position that critics of Donelle Woolford perceive her as reinforcing dominant ideology simply by her existence.

Therefore because Scanlan is the originator of the project, and consequently because of this, it is his name that is most closely associated with it, the other collaborators which are Afro American women have been more or less discounted, thus paradoxically reinforcing prejudices and discriminatory practices that they are supposedly arguing

against since "discussions have centered on the positioning and use of the black body in this work, little attention has been given to mine and Abigail's artistic contributions (performative, authorial, and otherwise), the actual black bodies being discussed" (Kidwell, 2014). It is in this sense that the collaborative efforts resulting in the creation of Donelle Woolford can be termed as parafiction or transfictive – as she has become more real, her controversial presence at the Whitney biennial combined with her fictiveness and Scanlan's whiteness, she as an entity has triggered real identity politics debates.

Thus critics allegedly attacking the project for the portrayal of a fictive Afro American female artist through their actions of overlooking the performers and their role within the project continue to perpetuate the concept of "anonymous black bodies in service of a white male" rather than considering that for the performers "Our bodies serve our art" (Kidwell, 2014). As Kidwell surmises:

> "This patronization is emblematic of the inherent irony: this white man — within the context of castigating Joe for exerting his white male privilege — tried to contradict me and override my self-identification. And so it often happens that by dismissing my agency and in turn, my artistry, the same public that seeks to decry Joe's practice negates mine"

> (Kidwell, 2014)

The central question that develops from this is the issues surrounding delegated performances in relation to collaborative forms of art practice. Indeed who is delegating? Since it is clear from discussion with Scanlan and Kidwell that delegation of work is negotiated within the group. It is here perhaps similarities can be drawn between Biddie's performance as Susan Fielder and the various actors employed to assume the identity of Donelle Woolford. Key to this is art historian Claire Bishop's examination of the collaborative mode of practice, a phenomenon which she identifies as emerging in the early 1990s "when artists in the West began to adopt the strategy of using other people as their medium and material" (Austin, 2009) thus Bishop "demonstrates a significant trend in which artists delegate their labour to others…" (Harvie, 2013: 35) identifying that the delegated performance incorporates a wide range of approaches and thematic concerns that can be categorised into five specific modes of practice however it is the practice of using "surrogate bodies to examine issues of authorship and authenticity" that is of particular interest to the examination of the case studies. Bishop ascertains that the artist is "no longer the singular authorial figure in charge of the work, but something that's more varied, unpredictable or risky, emerges from these new structures" (Federico, 2008).

Bishop argues that " in contrast to the body art of the '60s and '70s, in delegated performance artists no longer use their own bodies as medium and material but chose to foreground the bodies of hired, non-professional participants" (Austin, 2009). In relation to Donelle Woolford it is essential to point out that the actor assuming her persona is not simply on display rather as proved by the controversy surrounding the Whitney Biennial she demonstrates directly the problems surrounding the concept of a modernist authenticity since the Donelle Woolford shows how unclear the distinction now is between authentic and constructed subjectivity. It is Austin's assertion that the construction of subjectivity in delegated performance because "it is always an invested, two-way interaction between performer and artist" (2009) which does reflect the ways the collaborative framework has been negotiated between artists in the construction of Susan Fielder and Donelle Woolford.

Donelle Woolford is more than a simple spectacle and as illustrated, cannot be easily regarded simply as a controversial project; rather the contradictory and multi stranded narrative of the fictive artist as well as the importance of the collaborative nature of her construction as an Afro American an artist more accurately suggest a complex multifaceted interior. The misunderstood dynamics of the collaborative group constructing Donelle Woolford not only opens up issues over race and gender appropriation it also provokes concerns regarding the blurring of boundaries between works of art and commercial product in an age "propagated with art-world celebrities, the artist, rather than the work, is always already the commodity being sold" (Cesare Schotzko, 2014: 69).

The power of the transfictive artist in relation to identity politics, if considered in light of the controversy surrounding Donelle Woolford and Whitney Biennial's classifying her as a representation of Afro American artist included within the show reinforces the idea of white male privilege that is ever present within the art world since "when white artists appropriate people of colour, their assumed intellectual intention or observational distance lends them greater art world credibility and exposure than the appropriated people of colour" (harshbrowns.com, 2014). The question raised is would Donelle Woolford have been included in the show if she had not been the construct of a white male artist? This issue is accurately conveyed by Kidwell "while it is true that Joe Scanlan would not have gotten into the Biennial if Donelle Woolford weren't black, it is just as true that Donelle wouldn't have gotten in, nor would I, if Joe weren't white. The symbiosis of access and privilege inherent in this relationship is far more complex and provocative than most of the contention that's hitherto been raised reflected" (Kidwell, 2014). Whichever stance taken in response to her as a transfictive artist it is perhaps

important to reflect on the collaborators' intentions that because of the potential complexity of her construction elicit such dramatic responses: "I hope Donelle continues to provoke and challenge and, moreover, that she manages to affect a dialectical shift" (Kidwell, 2014).

4.4 Cherry Lazar: The Second Self, Eroticism and Celebration of Female Sexuality

🍒 Enter the Lazarniverse , all things planet Cherry🍒

(Lazar, 2016)

"There is always space for artists to use their bodies in their work and I am part of this next generation who are interested in using the internet and social media"

(Key, 2016)

Cherry Lazar is an early career artist who currently resides in France. Her art work which is mainly based on self-portraiture has, through her use of Instagram to publish her work and promote herself as an artist has led to her first solo exhibition titled *Cherry on Top* as presented in Figure 4.24 which opened in Paris May 2015 followed closely by Dans Quel Monde Vuitton a joint show with Belgian artist Damien Paul Gal in February 2016 and part of a group exhibition Love Me Tinder in May 2016 in the French capital.

Figures 4.18, 4.22 and 4.26 (Key, 2016) illustrate how her physical persona is so striking and an important aspect of her visual branding as an artist; her image reminiscent at times of a film noir siren, softened by the interchange of bright red or pink hair which establishes a distinctive artist brand image. She is a pop art, super saturated, hyper feminine, hyper sexual presence which somehow disrupts traditional representations of women whilst exploiting that very same visual presentation by personifying it. Her first show reflects the signature elements that she returns to most of her work, usually the use of flowers, bright pastel colours, visual narratives that have satirical intent, soft focus that imparts an ethereal quality, culminating in a playful approach to representation of the female body.

Stephanie Key, a New Zealand artist and the creator of Cherry Lazar, as the alter ego demonstrates through her art the desire to indulge in the pleasures the world has to offer. In a decidedly post-feminist manner, the artist displays sexuality as a social phenomenon, as a search for identity, and as a question of control. As Cherry Lazar, the artist also presents herself to the observer, with an awareness of her appeal and the feminine power

cherrylazar Follow

Cherry Lazar 🍒 Enter the Lazarniverse , all things planet Cherry 🍒 👻snapchat: CherryLazar ❤️Lazarcherry@gmail.com

193 posts   **6,427** followers   **492** following

Figure 4.19: An illustrative self-portrait (Cherry Lazar 2016)

Figure 4.18: Cherry Lazar's Instagram presence as artist (Cherry Lazar, 2016)

cherrylazar Follow

143 likes   29w

cherrylazar 📷I am in the NZ Herald today! Pick up a copy !!! 📷 #newspapers #cherrylazar #herald #sushi #bridal

timphin 🔮

janelummertzsi 👁️🌸

the_twenties_club YAAAY go girl! #SupportYourLocalGirlGang ❤️❤️

leatherobscura It was a great article! I can't believe I'd never heard of you before ha! Love what you're doing, it's pleasingly provocative, yet beautifully and artfully executed. Hope you keep it up!

kellyhalabi Waaaw! Bravo Cherry!!!🌸🌸

tomenr82 Cool :)))

allipoole ❤️

annemiekepritchard_ Luff you girl!

~~fionabcox Where can we buy come art?~~

Log in to like or comment.   •••

Figure 4.21: Media coverage promoted via Instagram, (Cherry Lazar, 2016)

So I started a snapchat

Figure 4.20: Snapchat presence as artist promoted via Instagram, (Cherry Lazar, 2016)
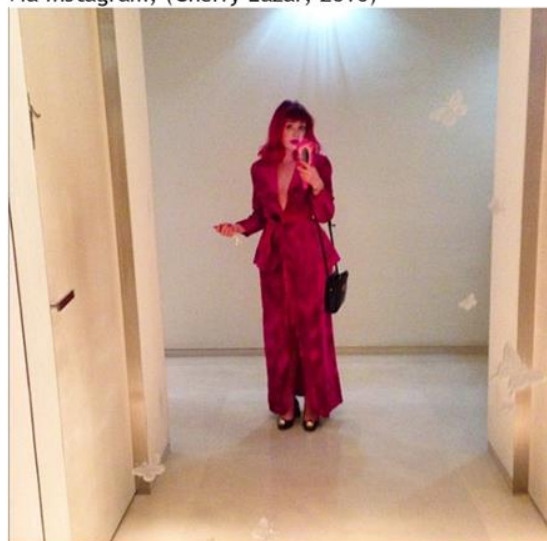
Figure 4.22: Distinctive artist brand image Selfie (Cherry Lazar, 2016)

Figure 4.23: Promoting Art Work reflecting artist's focus on the body and popular culture (Cherry Lazar, 2016)

Figure 4.24: Art Show Exhibition Flyer (Cherry Lazar, 2015)

Figure 4.25: The Artist at work (Cherry Lazar, 2015)

Figure 4.26: Live Performance as Opening of Art exhibition (Cherry Lazar, 2016)

Figure 4.27: Promotion of Art Work in new Art exhibition (Cherry Lazar, 2016)

of her sexuality. In surrendering her own body, which functions as a sculptural measure vis-à-vis the observer, she constructs the hyperreal sexualised fictive entity, highlighting Cherry Lazar's interest in the body and in sexuality where in this context, the body also signifies the medium. Cherry Lazar whilst also falling into the category of the transfictive artist, is very different to Susan Fielder and Donelle Woolford particularly when specifically considering her construction and her purpose. Firstly, she is the sole creation of a single artist, Stephanie Key and secondly she is more closely related to personifying the artist's alter ego. It is interesting to note that for a young career artist she has received quite a lot of media attention not only for the reason that her artwork raises issues concerning the aesthetic possibilities of erotic portrayals of women but because of the fact that she is the daughter of the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Whilst the research is not directly interested in the artist's biography and how this could potentially influence Cherry Lazar's self-branding as an artist it is felt that acknowledgment of Key's status should be recognised when considering possible motives for constructing a fictive artist for oneself which justifies the reasoning to create an alter ego: "I sort of needed another name or a pseudonym so that I could categorise my life and that of this character" (2016). However it could be asserted that Key's Cherry Lazar is more than simply an alter ego and can be more closely interpreted as a heteronymic entity similar to the other fictive artists in this study.

As explored in Chapter 1 artists for many years have been exploring the self by creating and existing as fictional characters. Cherry Lazar as a fictive persona can be more closely compared to the works of Claude Cahun, Hershman Leeson's alter ego Roberta Breitmore and Sherman's many cast of female characters. However Cherry Lazar steps out of the frame of her art work and into the real world attending her own exhibitions. In an interview 2016 Key explains the creative process of being two people "when answering questions about Cherry's art I tend to be Stephie and when I'm making the work I am Cherry and when I go to the gallery exhibitions as her" (2016).

Whilst the artwork speaks for itself and Cherry Lazar's persona is clearly encapsulated through the work, her presence in the real world is also central to the performance. Whilst Cherry Lazar has "been developed over a very long time" (2016) she is not the first fictive character Key has constructed thus demonstrating how exploration of second selves has been a central theme to her work. What is interesting is the way Key discusses Cherry Lazar, which is very similar to the ways the creators of Susan Fielder and Donelle Woolford discuss them as characters, she is able to detach herself from the fictive identity "it

doesn't feel like a part of me when I'm doing it. When I look at the photos I don't recognise myself in them" (2016).

The importance of names of fictive personas is reflected in the case studies. Whilst the name Susan Fielder fits the character, seems quite ordinary and gives the impression of going unnoticed and therefore easily accepted this reinforces her persona and authenticity. Donelle Woolford as discussed briefly earlier in this chapter is purportedly named after an Afro American football athlete which could be perceived as an intentional ploy to draw attention to her potential fictiveness. The invention of Cherry Lazar's name whilst simple "My mother's mother's maiden name was Cherry and my father's mother's maiden name was Lazar, so I just thought that they kind of work together so I went with that" (2016) also characterises the fictive artist herself completely.

The influences of Greek and Roman myths in particular permeate Cherry Lazar's work: "I always saw her as not born of this world, since I am very obsessed with mythology, especially stories about Venus and her birth, particularly Botticelli's painting The Birth of Venus. I see her as this character coming from another planet or another universe that is here to bring love back into the world" (2016). Indeed the repetition of the rose as an image in her work reflects connotations of love and in particular this influence is clear evident in the depiction of the birth of Cherry Lazar suggests a mythic creature fully formed surrounded by rose petals. Key sustains the mythic origins of her character by "I often write for her artist statements that she comes from the morning star which is another word for planet Venus" (2016). Figures 4.18 and 4.27 show that by framing herself via Instagram posed in ways that some would and have criticised Cherry Lazar for putting women back in the frame thus reinforcing traditional representations of women. However it is important not to overlook that Cherry Lazar as visual author and creator is her own muse. Her art is clearly a celebration of womanhood and in particular sexuality and what she frames with her camera and in turn the frames on Instagram is art about being a woman who is comfortable with visualising her sensuality. Whilst presenting herself as a provocative entity within her work, she enacts the ways in which women throughout history have been portrayed in art thus becoming a simulation of the traditional ways women have been represented. Through this simulation combined with her hyper feminine empowered persona it could be argued that her work reflects, critiques and mocks the prevailing stereotypes of women that continue to saturate contemporary media forms.

Two works in particular which reflect her playfulness in exploring contemporary representations of the female form portray Cherry Lazar as illustrating the Japanese practice of Nyotaimori. Figure 4.23 (Key, 2016) illustrates how the artist in the first instance simulates this custom of serving sushi from the naked body of a woman by donning a black bobbed wig, her pale flesh modestly covered by strategically placed makizushi and a squid concealing her genitals. However what makes this more than simply another erotic portrayal of a woman is the way Cherry Lazar steps out of being just the object by using the v sign signifying the popular culture photography pose. In contrast the second image titled Happy Meal (2014) whilst also simulating Nyotaimori, Cherry Lazar is now decorated with McDonald products and surrounded by French fries. Both artworks demonstrate light-heartedness in drawing attention to the ways in which women are represented as commodities. By assuming the role of the object and placing her naked body as central to the works she raises troubling questions about how we expect to be able to consume the female body, not least in the art world itself, but also reflecting on media forms visual obsession with presenting women as consumable commodities.

In this post digital era where images via social media flatten their subjects, Cherry Lazar embraces the movement; her self-portraits present smooth bodies on flat surfaces which reveal the physical and social construction of the featured subject: Cherry Lazar as a hyper sexual feminine figure. As typified by Figure 4.27 (Key, 2016) Cherry Lazar replays the romanticized forms of the female body from pre modern visual styles such as Baroque and reinterprets the idea of the icon that becomes a self-portrait with the sexual charge of Venus. Such mythic symbolism is a constant theme in her work with the many layers of her digital art reinforcing the other worldliness of Cherry Lazar.

By the artist assuming a persona which projects work that explores female sexuality in a provocative way it could be argued that whether it is reinforcing or subverting traditional representations ultimately it is forcing people to question their own attitudes toward female sexuality. However, as illustrated by Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist this degree of empowerment does not come without complex implications.

The performance of hyper sexuality illustrates how Cherry Lazar is taking control of her body by exhibiting it with the intention of exploring what it means to be female in the post digital age. Cherry Lazar through her work exposes the ways in which female sexuality has been forced to conform to the male gaze. Whilst on the one hand Cherry Lazar conforms to traditional expectations of female representation her positioning as a

female comfortable in her sexuality forces us to question our need to place women in fixed sexual identities.

But this persona, to some extent in a similar way to criticism of Donelle Woolford has the potential for controversy and criticism. Major themes reflected in her work such as eroticism and female empowerment are further elucidated by Key: "the things that I am fighting for with this character are so valid and really do need to be discussed, issues that I don't think they would be sorted out in my lifetime, so I think that Cherry will be around for a very long time" (2016).

The ways in which each of the transfictive artists are distinctively perceived by their creators demonstrates that whilst each are diverse, all the personas at their core are characters that are underpinned with exploring in a more creative way authenticity, the artist's narrative, branding and particular themes through their existence. Whilst Key's solo efforts lead to her reflecting on Cherry Lazar as "more as an alter ego. I've created her world but her world is also my world so we live in the same universe. She is definitely more of an alter ego" (2016), the collaborative endeavours of crafting both Donelle Woolford and Susan Fielder also reinforce the importance of the artist's biography in the development process. Character building is central to the practice which reinforces that the construction of fictive artists is more closely linked with theatre practices when considering audience/viewers engagement with the persona.

Key's consideration of the character as an alter ego is demonstrated through her differentiation between herself and that of the fictive artist "I am very down to earth and quite subdued whereas the Cherry character is very loud, flirtatious and playful. She is definitely a part of me" (Key, 2016).

Costume as illustrated in Figures 4.22 and 4.26 (Key, 2016), whilst not explored in great depth earlier in this chapter in relation to the composition of Donelle Woolford and Susan Fielder becomes an essential aspect of the performance when considering Cherry Lazar's image. "I really get into designing her outfits and her look; she'll often wear costumes that are a lot more provocative like PVC" (Key, 2016). Continuing this concept of the transfictive artist construction being construed as labour heavy with a varying pool of workers sometimes working in groups, sometimes as solitary individuals; the costume for the artists can be seen as functioning as a uniform. Cherry Lazar's uniform in particular reinforces the importance of her self-brand image. It is her distinctive look and use of the

colour pink which reflects a consistent theme which authenticates her brand image as an artist.

Key as the youngest artist within the research reflects the ways a new generation of artists are utilising social media as part of their artistic process, a theme which is also explored in relation to Schrager's Ona Artist later in this chapter. Cherry Lazar's use of Instagram in particular demonstrates the potential of the platform in further authenticating the transfictive artist's identity "It enables us to really encapsulate the fake and it is so instantaneous. Before you could maybe give a profile on who this character was and what they were doing but you also wouldn't see interesting things like be able to see their everyday life. Pre social media age you just wouldn't have had an insight into a character like that" (Key, 2016).

Cherry Lazar's work in relation to the body, eroticism and empowerment does offer potential debate for contemporary feminism, something that is reinforced by Key's assertion that "whilst I would say I am a feminist as a person and as much as I discuss feminism as an influence for me, I wouldn't say I am a feminist artist. I am just a woman making art work inspired by my life and my experiences" (Key, 2016). However whilst taken a well-informed feminist position, central to the development of her art practice is the creative practices visible via social media sites where her "main influences are looking at the ways girls are presenting themselves on Tumblr and Instagram. It is really important to me for women to fight for openness for female sexuality" (Key, 2016). In the same way Lorde (1984/2016) discusses how empowering and liberating eroticism can be for women "Recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world… For not only do we touch our most profoundly creative source, but we do that which is female and self-affirming in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society" (2016: 209). Key's response to criticism equally reflects this stance "A lot of people see my work as counter feminist… however it is I who is objectifying myself for my own work. I am the author" (Key, 2016).

Whilst, as this research acknowledges the history of the construction of fictive artists in Chapter 1 it is important to emphasise how digital technology has presented artists with new ways in which they can extend their inventive, and creative presentations of fictive entities. The incorporation of digital identity to other platforms has transformed the ways in which the fictive artist exists exemplifying what Wittkower (2014) defines as a

dramauthentic identity. The dramauthentic model is useful in particular when considering the strategies of self-exposure and identity.

In contrast Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist are performed by the artists themselves respectively. Both artists whilst exhibiting in the real world, creating art artefacts and assuming the role of the fictive artists, in reality the digital environments, particularly social media provide the artists the potential to perform and present their transfictive-self more extensively. Thus the digital platforms provide the transfictive artist with another facet to enhance the persona's authenticity and strengthen the creators' construction of a *real* fictive persona.

In this context, the off line and online environment can both be perceived as a stage for the fictive artist, the backstage exists outside of their world only for the creators. Cherry Lazar in particular strongly invests in her costume and particular image she wishes to project. This allows Key to be able to emphasise and minimise certain aspects of the transfictive self, particularly appearance and the way this informs Cherry Lazar's art practice as typified in Figures 4.19 and 4.25 (Key, 2016). Key's use of Instagram is of particular importance since this reflects the ways in which the artists examined for this research have digital media at their disposal to supplement the identity construction of their fictive entities.

The image of the female body has long been a disputed issue for feminists of different generations and waves where "each wave of feminism has fought its own battles of body image" (Richards, p.196). Whilst the first two waves fought to establish women's rights and further advance women's status accordingly, for the Third wave feminists which acknowledges the importance of diversity of individual identity thus demonstrating "image and body are at the centre of feminist analysis" (Richards, p.196) and postfeminism encourages women to define femininity for themselves, celebrating sexuality, femininity, furthering the idea of empowerment.

Although it is accepted that artists have created self-portraits for many reasons throughout art history, the concept of the self-portrait is regarded specifically within the context of the fictional artist, namely Cherry Lazar. The artist's work conveys how self-portraiture by women artists, particularly digi feminist artists has gained in popularity due to the feminist movement and advancements in digital technology. Through her photography, paintings and drawings Cherry Lazar exemplifies how her artwork explores female social roles, the artist's identity and contemporary art trends, particularly the use

of social media. Contemporary self-portraiture is still utilised as a primary tool in visibility politics, a visual declaration: 'I exist'" (Avgitidou, 2003: 133). Digi feminist artist are using self-portraits to not only explore their own identity, but to artistically convey the social roles they inhabit and experience changing.

One of the most painted subjects in the history of art is the depiction of the female nude, particularly by male artist. Cherry Lazar's self-portraits can be construed as hyper sexual yet her work demonstrates the importance of the female body to the work of women artists since it could be argued that this is a way to control the representation, to move away from the traditional passive portrayal of women as subjects/objects. It is this authorial control employed by the artist that leads to considerations about feminism, social stereotypes, female performance and the artist's identity. Cherry Lazar's self-portraits therefore, force the consideration of ideas about the roles women play as well as the stereotypes which are projected onto them by others.

Cherry Lazar's work can be read from a post feminism stand point – a celebration of sexual pleasure and subjectification reflecting the importance of sexual pleasure, freedom and choice thus demonstrated by the erotic self-portraits. Such art works indicate a blurring of boundaries between erotic art, pornography and other related genres where sexulaity is constructed as something requiring constant attention, discipline, self-surveillance and emotional labour (Gill, 2007, p. 151). Cherry Lazar's reflects the changes in representation with a shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification, demonstrates the transference of focus from a traditional male gaze to a self-regulating narcissistic individualistic gaze. The transfictive artist demonstrates a post-feminist discourse, with the emphasis placed on sexual subjectification, the fictional artist presents herself as active, desiring sexual 'neo-liberal subjectivities'. The hyperreal constructed image of the artist reflects post-feminist media culture's preoccupation with the body which demonstrates conflict with earlier representational practices. Cherry Lazar's portraits imply that femininity is defined as a bodily property rather than a social, structural of psychological one. The hyper sexualized body consequently is now represented as women's key source of identity.

The hyperreal portrayal of Cherry Lazar as a postmodern representation is constructed though irony, the main focus here being a rejection of body politics by identifying the body as key signifier for women's identities and also critiquing its hegemonic values consumer culture of neo-liberal societies. Cherry Lazar is a paradox that fits within

postmodern/post-feminist paradigms where ambivalence and contradiction are typical and central characteristics. Just as in popular culture, the post-feminist critique on neo-liberalism is predominantly articulated through humour, irony and overemphasising.

In relation to Butler who perceives subversive power in dissolution of binary codes, Cherry Lazar hyper sexuality as a fictive concept is demonstrated through performative acts in the art work and her everyday life documented through Instagram. Key argues that Cherry Lazar works influenced by "seventies feminists" disrupts hegemony. However Cherry Lazar's extreme feminine image paradoxically upsets her potentially subversive message demonstrating the complexities of post-feminist art approach. Since Cherry Lazar image manifests itself through a feminist insistence on expressive femininity. Cherry Lazar's art work and persona exemplifies Riviere's *Womanliness as masquerade* (1929) illustrating that the fictional artist's construction which depends on the illusion of hyper femininity/sexuality as a defence mechanism in patriarchal society. Consequently the performance has actually become an integral part of female identity. As a transmedia text, the artist's persona demonstrates this approach through her art work in exhibitions, interviews and most importantly on Instagram.

Cherry Lazar reflects a post-feminist mask of emphasised femininity and hyper sexuality. Her accentuated sexualisation is one of the characteristics of postfeminist mask and it's regarded as obligatory visual code that necessary leads to sexual commodification of her body which contrary to its original feminist purpose, empowers the dominant heterosexual matrix and male hegemony.

In sexualised culture there's a phenomenon also described as pornification that blurs the boundaries between pornography and mainstream. Hyper-sexualised and hyper-feminine female body becomes the basis for construction of post-feminist subjectivity which marks woman as the desirable one but also as the one that desires.. Her new identity is carefully envisioned as a product of popular culture that emits the image of positive and desirable hyper sexualisation. Her art work and the images shared via Instagram mirror a commodified sexuality, the artist's play with popular culture iconography demonstrates how they are inextricably linked. It could be argues that Cherry Lazar's female sexuality is based upon feminist principles of emancipation through acknowledging and stressing her own personal sexuality and femininity illustrating that explicit sexuality is now fully immersed and an acknowledged facet of contemporary popular culture and an indicator of

the shift of boundaries of acceptable when it comes to women in relation to sex and sexuality.

As exemplified through the work of Lynda Benglis, Marina Abramovic and Hannah Wilke each used their own bodies as the main strategy of resistance to criticize patriarchal society in the 1970s. Performance art created an environment that enabled the articulation of female sexuality, where the female body became a subversive tool that dissolved stereotypical concepts of sexuality. With this in mind, Cherry Lazar's focus on self-objectification through her work on one hand can be viewed as functioning as opposition to dominant models of acceptable femininity as well as offering a heterogeneous insight into female identity. Equally such portrayals also offer contradictory messages regarding the representation of women. Baudrillard states that "sexuality everywhere orientates the `rediscovery' and consumption of the body today" (Baudrillard, 1998:133) where through popular culture manipulation of the body is shaped towards its transformation as an expendable commodity which is part of the economic process. This concept is further reinforced by the declaration that the "body is no longer an object of desire, but a functional object, a forum of signs in which fashion and the erotic are mingled… It is no longer, strictly speaking, a body, but a shape" (Baudrillard, 1998:133).

Cherry Lazar as a transmedia text reminds the viewer of how the male gaze has dominated the passive female body, simultaneously reflecting on how women throughout history have been reduced to objects of male voyeurism. In the twenty-first century, the fictive artist constructed through various platforms continues to echo the feminist *Personal is political* slogan which through her artwork the female body reclaimed is used to accentuate the autobiographical character of her performance. However Cherry Lazar due to her hyper sexuality this ironically affirms beauty and cultural standards suggesting that the female body cannot be liberated from traditional hegemonic connotations that can still be read as a performance for the male gaze.

4.5. Ona Artist: Body as Gesture and Feminist Performance

"Who is Ona? Painter? Check. Dancer? Of course. Musician and extreme selfie model? Do you even need to ask? Though some days she's Leah, a girl from Brooklyn with an MFA from Parsons School of Design. Other days she's Sarah from her website sarahwhitetherapy.com... And, in totality, she is Ona: DIY artist, kinesthetic-poetic visionary" (Tom, 2016)

Ona is described as a "musician, artist, dancer, and model" (Ona/Schrager, 2016) and has been working as a visual and online performance artist since 2009, living in Brooklyn and on the web. Defining herself as an "extreme selfie model".

The first image on Ona Artist's website *All things Ona* is a large self-portrait that dominates almost the entire screen. Illustrated by Figure 4.28 (Schrager, 2016), although the semi clad Ona is positioned in a traditional pose in a classic black and white shot of her kneeling, leant against a bed, the conventional representation is disrupted with the addition of a kaleidoscope of coloured paint that obscure the body and the direct gaze of the woman. With the addition of the painting the self portrait of Ona Artist becomes more than another selfie as demonstrated in Figures 4.34, 4.35, 4.36 and 4.37 (Schrager, 2016). Her body works with the acrylics fusing into almost an abstract work which supports the belief "While some (in and out of the art world) consider selfies vapid narcissism…it's important for us to start considering selfies an advanced and florid kind of self-portraiture" (Schrager, 2016).

Schrager on her artist website states that "My current project is ONA, my band, at OnaArtist.com. It's goal is to create a celebrity as part of an art practice. It started in July 2015 and is expected to run 4-5 years" (Schrager, 2016). Year one of the project titled *Sex Rock* documents Ona Artist's process of becoming a celebrity. The art practice is established through performance both in the real and virtual world and across a variety of platforms demonstrates how Schrager is illustrating through the fictive artist how social media platforms are the primary means of communicating the transmediated self.

Ona Artist, continues the Schrager's exploration of marketing her own photographic image as well as the issues surrounding digital documentation of the female body. As an artist who comes from a history of modelling in which she was the commercial object for other artists very much informs the themes of her work where searching for agency and power has led to her objectifying herself through art forms that by repeating commodified representations of women consequently subverts them. What is interesting about Schrager is how her life experience has informed her artwork particularly the difficulties she faced working as a model regarding ownership of her image which has led to all her "current images are either selfies or taken by assistants" (Schrager, 2016). In relation to costume and similarities between her fictive artist and herself, Schrager states that "Ona is always sexily dressed, even if it's cheap clothing whilst I wear the same clothes every day and don't care about style or how I look. However we're both similar in that we aren't very

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consumerist – we prefer naked to fancy clothes. In terms of psyche perhaps we are more similar. So maybe she's an aspect of me" (Schrager, 2016).

Her background as a modern dancer and largely her work as a model clearly continue to inform her work, something which is reflected also as part of Ona Artist's narrative/background. The "artistic value and merit of selfies" is justified by Schrager her website with an emphasis placed upon authorship and ownership since she argues that selfies "provide the model full legal and economic control over her images" (Schrager, 2016). This reasoning is further developed in her defence of this art form as she refers to critics who "consider selfies vapid narcissism…it's important for us to start considering selfies an advanced and florid kind of self-portraiture" (Schrager, 2016).

This high art/ low art (or as critics of her work refer to as not art) binary in relation to selfies as art is exemplified by Schrager being blackballed in 2012 by the West Chelsea Artists Open Studios because the director called her a "commercial entity" and "not an artist" where her response to this was to stage "her own protest show at the Hotel Americano in Chelsea" which also reflects perhaps the irony that "The problem, according to the event organizers? The performance seemed like "self-promotion," rather than art. Those are mutually exclusive now? Have they looked around the art world lately?"(Malone, 2012). Schrager's background as a model, her interest in web design as well as her experience managing and maintaining erotic websites has clearly influenced the ways in which she has developed her art form particularly linked to the use of performance via photography and the Internet which for Schrager "seemed to simultaneously break and maintain the fourth wall. It seemed like a potential place for performance art and an exciting and new place to explore" (Galperina, 2014).

Schrager's interest in the representations of women has initially manifested itself through her project as the persona Sarah White, *The Naked Therapist*. Her female positive body leanings have also been demonstrated through her role as co-curator for an online exhibition at BodyAnxiety.com in 2015. The reoccurring themes which are inherent in her work are not only specific to being a woman of the 21st century, but also explore wider-ranging contemporary concerns, that of sexuality and equality, commodification, subversion, liberation, representation, authenticity, the dual role of muse and creator, fame, branding, appropriation and documentation of the self. Schrager in 2014 collapsed her multiple identities into one entity in order to focus on what she recognised as society's ongoing cultural fascination with celebrity and the ways social media as influenced the development of the transmediated self where "in a way every individual is

their own press release organization" (Schrager 2016). "My experiences as the Naked Therapist have led to a new artistic exploration – that of _OnAartist.com_. These onas are very different from Sarah White, yet are informed by her" (Galperina, 2014).

The sexualised female form is an underlining theme throughout Schrager's work and developing art practice. It was whilst Schrager was completing her MFA that she began to develop the concept of onas (online personas), a term which she has coined, to define her practice as a series of ona manifestations. "I'm also addressing in my visual work what it's like to stare at oneself a lot — either on cam or through images — what it's like to have others looking at me, and to be looking at myself" (Galperina, 2014) thus reflecting her exploration of female identity in relation to examining and subverting traditional perceptions of female body as art object particularly through digital technology. Her artistic self-portraits and repeated focus on documenting identity reflects aptly the significance of society's preoccupation with capturing the self visually to enhance the transmediated self. It could be argued that Schrager's fascination with the female body, social media and the self-branding, her art practice has naturally led to the construction of Ona Artist which has "evolved out of the question of celebrity as art practice" (Shrager, 2016).

Schrager's liberating utilisation of digital technology and social media through her practice encompasses as demonstrated by Figures 4.28, 4.29, 4.30, 4.31 and 4.32 (Schrager 2016) the ways in which women are in different ways (re)presenting themselves online "I think it has opened up a completely new vocabulary for women. Also, the safety of the digital wall allows women to explore in ways they perhaps haven't been able to (when men have been in the same room as them). I think the self-curation, populist audience, cheap platforms, self-reflexion, and many more elements are quite exciting" (2016).

Whilst Schrager in an interview states that she has a "complex relationship with social media" mainly because of the ways in which "the social media platform is a given parameter set, requires self-curation, and is performative for everyone, it just depends on what you wish to perform" (Schrager, 2016). The issue surrounding ownership and censorship is a crucial one as Schrager exemplifies "In 2011 I had a fan page of 5k, which was a lot at that time, and it was deleted from Facebook with no reason given. So I have a deep mistrust of social media, and after that incident stopped using it for some time. But that's one of the risks, since you are using a platform owned by someone else, they can always delete you" (Schrager 2016).

Schrager perceives Ona Artist "as a heteronym. A different name for myself." Which directly links to Pessosa's literary concept of creating imaginary characters. Considered in this way Ona Artist parallels Donelle Woolford, Susan Fielder and Cherry Lazar. Since all the transfictive artists are more than false names because of the personas have their own physical bodies, biographies and artistic styles. However what is unique about Ona Artist is that as an entity she is unlike the other transfictive artists in this study since she presently only exists as a virtual persona, Schrager does not perform as her at exhibitions, her performance is for the camera and the digital screen only. Consequently, the process of developing Ona Artist's persona and celebrity status and the importance of having a presence across social media platforms is illustrated by Schrager's prolific use of various social media platforms and her use of different sites is clearly informing the ongoing project is of particular significance:

"I'm mostly interested in online celebrity status. OnaArtist's Instagram is doing so well that the first year was a huge part of the formation of the music and the establishment of her as a bit of a celebrity. But I've also learned that Instagram celebrity is quite different than mainstream celebrity. So I'm now crafting a new image on Instagram titled @onamania that hopefully will be safe for work enough for the mainstream to be interested" (Schrager 2016).

Over a short period of time, following the release of her first EP *Sex Rock*, her presence across a multitude of platforms has resulted in an Instagram following exceeding 350K as well as a part of an exhibition Profit-Positive Pu$y presenting a retrospective of Ona Artist's first year as an evolving celebrity titled aptly *The Celebrity Project, Year 1: Sex Rock* at Superchief Gallery in SOHO, New York in February 2016. Ona is a true social media disciple with a presence on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Soundcloud, Spotify and iTunes demonstrating the transmediated self which is evolving and developing across platforms, presenting Schrager's "on-going celebrity-as-art-practice project in which she strives to make ONA a real world celebrity so she can (among other goals) successfully appropriate her own image into her art while also investigating how, in the digital age, everyone is conducting their own "celebrity project"" (Sokol, 2016).

Indeed Ona Artist ""The self-proclaimed "extreme selfie model"" (Sokol, 2016) epitomises the concept of the celebrity project and society's labour intensive preoccupation with creating a selfebrity brand. It is through this project that Schrager exemplifies how she advocates the importance of "considering the artistic value and merit of selfies,

emphasizing the fact that selfies provide the model full legal and economic control over her images" (2016).

The transfictive heteronym accentuates Schrager's role as author and editor, designing and creating the fictive artist's self-representation, choosing what to bring to the foreground or hide in the background. Goffman's *impression management* understood in relation to the construction of the transfictive self therefore has further implications. In a similar way that an actor would approach a role in a play or film, the performance across all platforms for the transfictive artist is managed in order to sustain a sense of an authentic identity for the audience. Whilst at times this management can be intentionally disrupted for creative purposes, there needs to be a certain amount of control of presenting aspects of the fictive artist's self in order for it to be convincing.

It is important to remember that the fictive artists are works in themselves and each of the case studies make this apparent, therefore in Goffman's terms, unmasking to a certain degree has been made redundant since the creators of the projects make it quite clear that the artists are constructions. As Wittkower (2014) highlights when considering the presentation of self in relation to Facebook he asserts that the "dramauthentic self–presentation, identity is *multiply anchored*" – this is affirmed by the construction process of the fictive artists particularly in relation to the importance of the spectacle in the construction process. Across the platforms, the fictive artist's persona relies on the strategy of interaction which for purposes of self-branding and the nature of the project itself seeks to create a spectacle of identity which closely links to Debord's consideration of the spectacle as discussed in Chapter 2.

The creators of Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist through carefully selected images, strategically planned performances in the real world and online, tactically considered postings and comments, as well as carefully considered artwork. The importance of social media for the contemporary fictive artists is that "personal life becomes a capital to be shared with other people," which illustrates how "the self becomes increasingly structured by simulation and performance, and life becomes characterized by a fuzzy distinction between fiction and reality" (Baroncelli & Freitas, 2011: 1). As a project the fictive artist places emphasis on the manufacturing of identity as a consumable product as well as draw attention to the labour intensive requirements of the construction process.

Indeed Ona Artist's talents are numerous; her masquerade of celebrity is multi stranded not only producing art on a daily basis via social media, as a musician, her band, ONA,

releasing its first EP, *Sex Rock*, in April 2016. In her Bio on her website she highlights that *Dazed and Confused* Magazine claim she is "a digital artist to keep your eye on" (Ona, 2016). Ona's identity as a brand is further developed with the use of multi social media platforms including music on OnaSong.com, selfie modelling on Instagram and Snapchat accounts, @OnaArtist, and her art can be found at her Instagram @OnaArtist and OnaGallery.com. She states in the interview that ""I think sexiness in music is linked to men in clothes, but sexiness in music for women is limited since women have to go a bit farther to be supremely sexy to men. That's why as a part of my music I also have a naked paysite where my fans can see me naked. I just want to be really sexy for my fans and give them the 'sexy rockstar' experience."" (Sokol, 2016).

Ona Artist's justification is that "To have that rock 'n' roll excitement, you need to be sexually aroused by the performer, and to do that for men, you need to be naked. I think that the Internet and listener data and porn usage proves that. You can try to wish the fact away, as some people do, but I'm fine with reality" (Sokol, 2016).

Ona asserts that criticism of her work "is because people look at female nudes differently when the artist and model are separate. Women who take their own nude photos are seen as vain and attention-seeking, while those whose nude photos are shot by someone else are celebrated. Translation: to some critics, women are not allowed to take credit for our own nudes unless a man is involved in the creative process." (Uzer, 2016).

The fictive artist also draws attention to what she terms the "star-slut complex" reflecting upon the biased and imbalanced way different women are judged where it is "the public's tendency to only grant the privilege of sexual expression to a select few" (Uzer, 2016). Ona Artist expands this concept to consider how female stars exhibiting their bodies across media platforms can usually have a different, more positive reception than a woman without star status who displays her body in a similar fashion. Interestingly Ona Artist recognises the connections between the female body and the historical influence of a male dominated media industry "If a woman is institutionally sanctioned, has proven herself by working up through the man hands of a modeling agency or a music producer or Hollywood directors or fashion photographers, then she's gone through the conditioning it takes to get there, and often it's men who are partners and making a lot of money off her labors…But a woman doing it on her own is literally not discussed in mainstream media. They're often part of or grouped with sex cam girls or porn stars or escorts and brushed under the rug. They're demeaned and not allowed social respect, and thus held down financially as well." (Uzer, 2016).

Coining the term *man hands*, which she defines as men selling women's images as art, Schrager asserts that people, particularly women, who are exploring and presenting their visual selves as art should because of their position as author be supported as offering an alternative to traditional male dominant interpretations of the female form. This assertion is reinforced in her own practice "My work is about full ownership and authorship, devoid of man hands" (Schrager, 2016).

Ona Artist's website also includes an essay titled *The Ona Generation* (2016) reflecting an Ona manifesto of sorts which asserts that "a new ageless, auto-erotic, DIY, multi-personified online generation is changing the world one share at a time" (2016). In the essay Ona Artist defines the meaning of her name "*An ona is a virtual profile or presence through which a person seeks to share, sell, or hook up online*" where the performance is not as an alter ego but made up of multi egos where "It is the virtual actions of these ona(s) that give the OnaGen its unique qualities" (Ona Artist, 2016).The fictive artist's name is explored in greater depth in relation to meaning – making clear associations with her nature as an art work and key themes such as branding/gender and feminism:

 "The first quality emerges from the connotations of its name: Ona. The word sonically echoes the imperative to own (get it now!) and Japanese for woman (onna), semantically references singularity (Latin), and, of course, O stands for orgasm…" (2016)

Ona in her essay perceives that the Internet provides an outlet for desire "through cyber sex" whilst providing "a sexual play space for women where virtual distance prevents violence and eroticism can be safely explored" (Ona Artist, 2016). Ona perceives OnaGen as "ageless…as it utilizes whatever age serves its (or their) distributive ambitions" referencing Facebook as a prime example of this change where "Every FB profile is an ona that is used by its root person for specific purposes" (2016). Ona Artist asserts that "*the web is a fertile ground for female empowerment*… a woman has control over what happens and can start or end the exchange on her own terms" claiming that "it is also inherently a female performance space" (Ona Artist, 2016).

Schrager states that:

"The Ona project grew organically out of my interests. After being both the model and photographer in the work I was able to *appropriate* my own image. And I felt that being in both roles gave my art a different perspective than someone who was
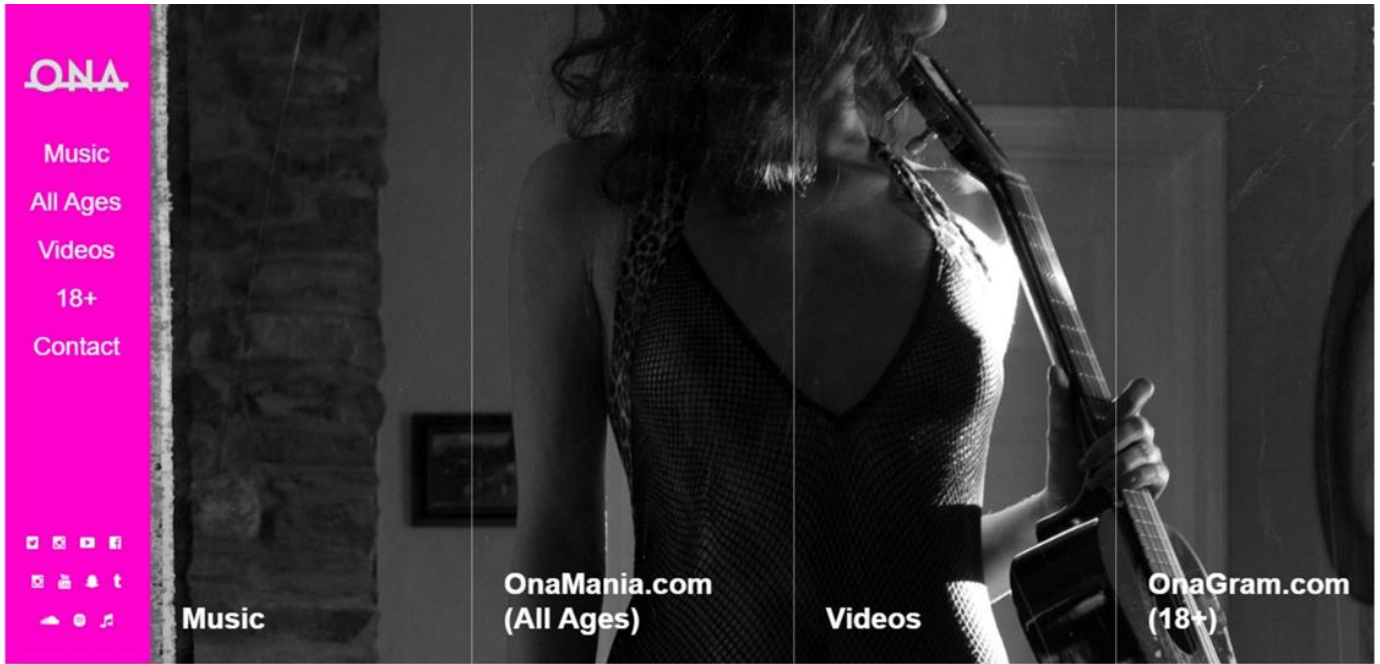
Figure 4.28: Ona Artist Website Home Page (Ona Artist, 2016)
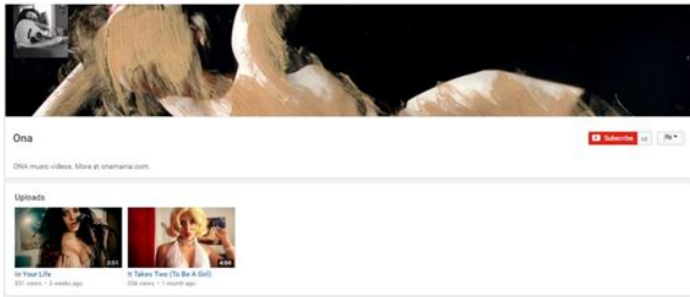
Figure 4.29: Ona Artist YouTube Channel (Ona Artist, 2016)
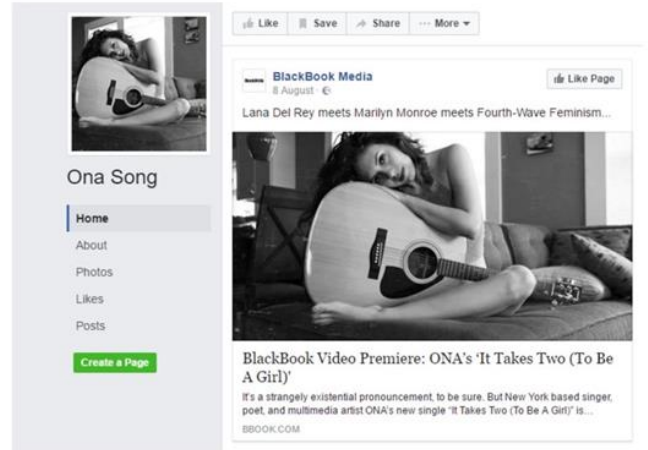
Figure 4.30: Ona Artist Facebook Page (Ona Artist, 2016)

Figure 4.31: Ona Artist Tumblr (Ona Artist, 2016)

Figure 4.32: Ona Artist Instagram (Ona Artist, 2016)

Figure 4.33: Ona Artist Twitter (Ona Artist, 2016)

Figure 4.34: Photo digital art self-portrait # 1163 (Ona Artist, 2016)
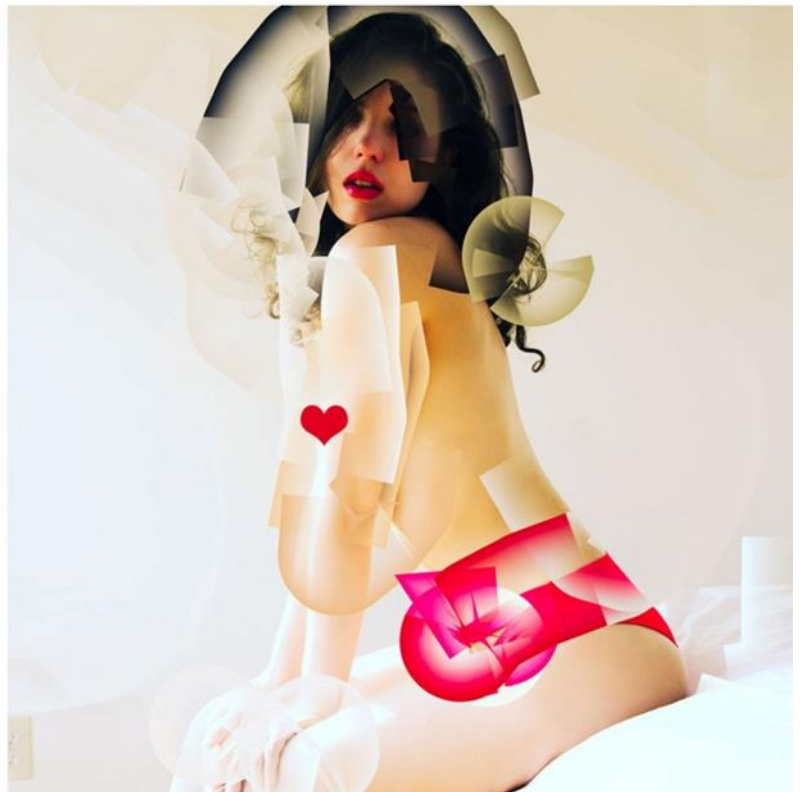
Figure 4.35: Photo digital art self-portrait # 1184 (Ona Artist, 2016)
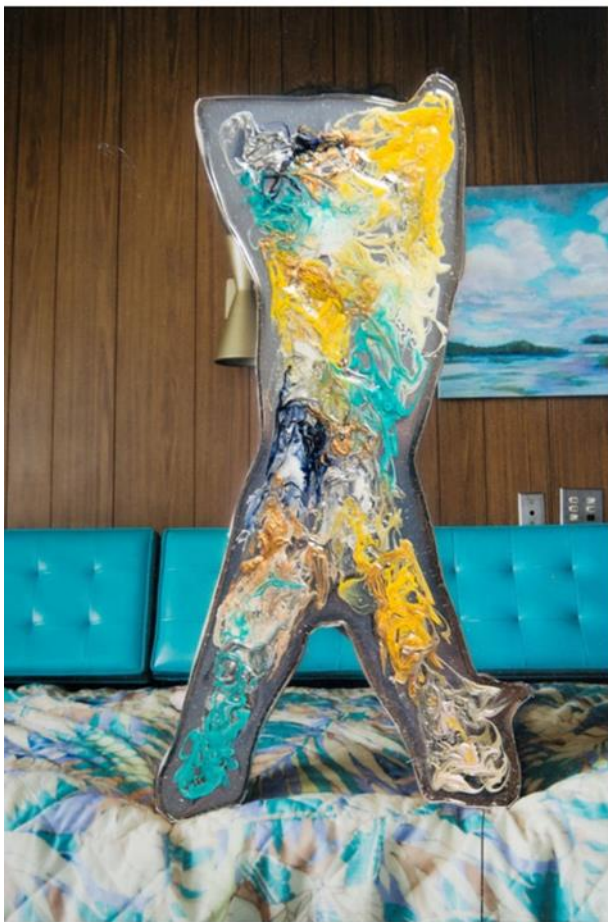
Figure 4.36: Multimedia art self-portrait # 1229 (Ona Artist, 2016)
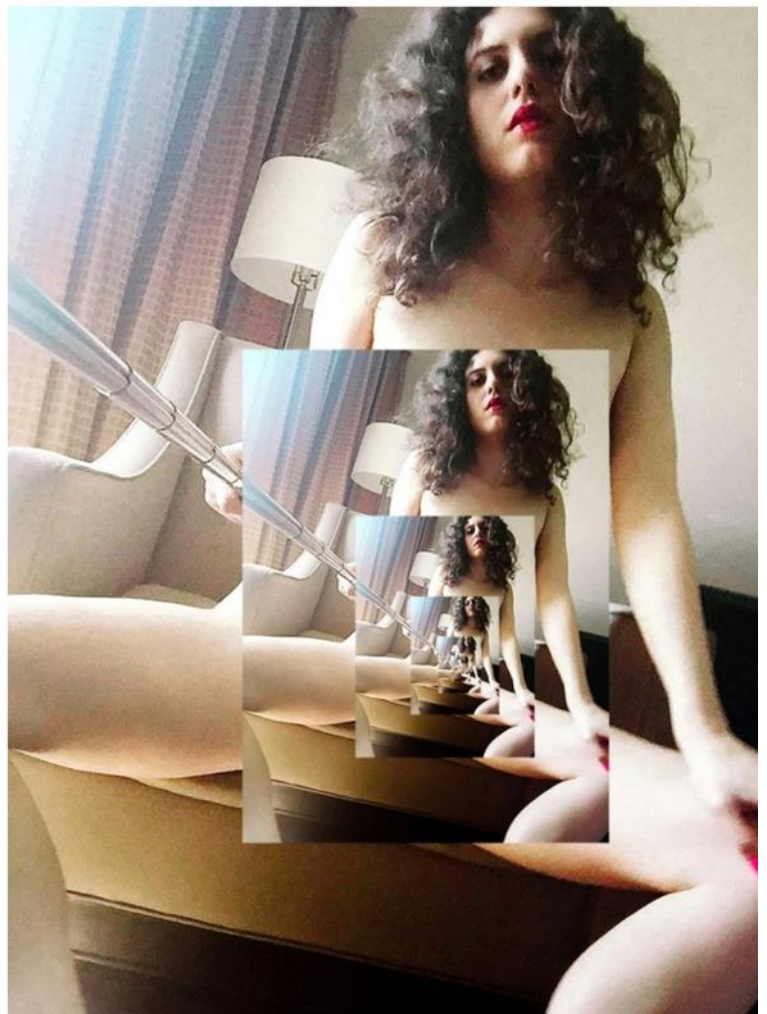
Figure 4.37: Photo digital art self-portrait # 1166 (Ona Artist, 2016)

in either one or the other role. When I considered what other images were commonly appropriated it was that of the celebrity. So as with the model, I decided I had to be both a celebrity and artist."

(Schrager 2016)

Returning to the theme of eroticism in relation to female empowerment it is noteworthy that Schrager was advised by her academic professors that the sexuality present in her work removed it from being seen as art whilst conflicts with the ways in which celebrities' images are manufactured to personify sexuality, consequently Ona Artist represents "my attempt to have female-authored sexy be accepted as art" (Schrager, 2016).

Whilst acknowledging the hyper-sexuality of the Internet, the continued presentation of women as commodity where the body is commodity she perceives that despite this "women of the OnaGen, unlike generations past, are less obsessed by inter-gender competition and more comfortable with each other expressing themselves erotically"(Ona, 2016).

Her use of extended sexual metaphor is further explored in relation to online performance being compared to the act of masturbation where the "performer seemed more intent on satisfying themselves than the audience, more intent on showing how smart and beautiful they were than actually being what they are, more intent on sharing something somewhat tmi about themselves than verifying something irl about the world" (Ona, 2016) which in a way could represent the ways in which all individuals labour over representation of self – a projected selfebrity version of their selves - via social media.

Schrager through her multiple identities demonstrates the potential of exploring identity politics in a multitude of ways for digital artists where "I like that if someone looks at me they have one entry point, and depending on how far they want to look there's a lot more... it's a rabbit hole" (Schrager, 2016). It is clear that social media has been invaluable for the development of her practice and her visibility as a digital artist "I did a lot of art world networking on Facebook in 2014 and 2015, and it was very important for me though I really still don't like it. I've moved on to Instagram where it's very valuable for me to see just my art on a page. Then Instagram got taken over by Facebook and I can tell already the algorithm is quite bad. So who knows where I will go." (Schrager, 2016). Schrager, through Ona Artist's embodied transfictive state achieves Butler's assertion that

feminists should "locate strategies of subversive repetition" (188) in order to contest problematic markers of gendered identity. Ona Artist's Instagram self-portraits and digital artwork, emphasise the body through repetition which in turn strategically disrupts traditional representations of the female body. Ona Artist whilst operating within dominant paradigms, also promotes positive social change by exaggerating—and thus challenging—accepted norms. Such performance strategies highlight the way a person may be "constituted by norms and dependent on them" while also trying "to live in ways that maintain a critical and transformative relation to" these norms (Butler 2004, 4).

Ona Artist highlights the ambiguities of social media platforms in particular surrounding issues of nudity, identity and performance suggesting that "as each platform seeks to distinguish itself from the others, its rules force the creation of distinct onas able to operate in each one, resulting in a literal partitioning of the self into onas optimized to exploit the niches created by comparative advantages in a competitive market" (Ona Artist, 2016). As Schrager rightly highlights, Instagram for Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist has provided artists with the perfect platform to explore fictive identity. Equally its potential capabilities for self-branding should not be overlooked either. Practically "Instagram is… helpful for multiple personas in that it allows a different handle/name for each persona, which adds some clarity. Also different aesthetics can be explored under different handles. My @OnaArtist Instagram is at 370k+ and it's been exciting to reach an audience outside of the art world" (Schrager, 2016).

This further establishes the idea of the individual's pursuit of selfebrity recognising it is an ongoing labour and a direct reflection of the impact of capitalist processes of production and consumption becoming entwined with notions of the self. Thus the most important aspect of identity is the continued enhancing of the personal brand, a concept accurately encapsulated by Ona Artist:

> "Fluffing yourself up. Creating to sell. Self-producing. Attracting frands, strokers or buyers. Spilling your concern seed. Checking your newsfeed. Changing your profile photo. Tweeting your most recent clever notion. Sharing your selfies. Posting non-stop your ranting political grievances. Updating your status. Taking tests to find out what you are. Staring at yourself as you Skype with another. Commiserating with fellow forum dwellers over unreal threats. Chatting with your favorite cam girl. Self-publishing. Doing it yourself. Living your fantasies. Brutalizing from a safe distance. Onas self-satisfying thru voyeuristic engagement with a multiplicity

of onas, getting off all the time, allalone, all together. *The auto-erotic lifestyle. The Ona Generation"*

(Ona, 2016)

Ona Artist's enactments through selfies in direct response to theorized socio-cultural values such as issues of individual identity and self-representation thus whilst an emerging genre, the art work of Schrager demonstrates the "selfie's function as an effective medium for performing the body as representation, and as selfie object in order to challenge the female body as a site of oppression" (Pasani, 2015: 1).

As an artwork and as a fictive artist illustrates how the selfie and in turn the transmediated self is performative on many levels reinforcing the claim that "all selfies are performative" (Pisani, 2015: 4). Performance of the constructed self is clearly evident from the assumed preparation by Schrager for the image of Ona Artist, initially through dress, setting, and pose; the captured image in itself is both an image-object as well as a performance re(presenting) selfie culture; editing and any further creative labour of the image further reinforces the concept of performance whilst the sharing of the selfie on social media platforms is an extension of the performance of the transmediated self, as it furthers the activity of developing a preferred identity and may potentially strengthen the self-brand. Schrager through these technologies - the apparent immediate capture of the selfie as object, the constant theme of female body as subject and the daily posting of the selfie as practice establishes Ona, a fictive persona, as a vehicle for feminist activism art.

Schrager's role playing and self-image manipulation are at the centre of her work, embodied through the fictive artist Ona Artist, the project clearly centres on the roles women perform, the personas they construct for themselves and the *selfebrity* masks they wear in pursuit of self-branding. The selfies evoking posed enticing semi-nude portraiture which on one hand conform to traditional social expectations of woman as object, it is clear the real focus is on artifice and how woman as author is (re)constructing the presentation of the female body. Schrager's subverted representation of the female body are realised through Ona's performance in the objectification of her body thus allowing her body to become the object of the selfie image and providing a platform to exhibit resistance to a potentially global audience.

Criticism of her work resulting from her approach to feminism and the female body also demonstrates the diverse and conflicting feminist digital arena which she feels that "media has been really overrun with anti-sex *feminists*" where she states "Women are

incredibly mean to me" (Schrager, 2016). Ona Artist whether celebrated or vilified demonstrates how society and the art world continue to have so many issues with sexual heteronormative representations of women created by women perhaps as Schrager offers "A young woman being respected as an artist, and also being openly sexy and heterosexual, is just not okay for the art establishment, and the art establishment is the one that makes artists" (Schrager, 2016). Whilst feminism clearly informs Schrager's art practice particularly surrounding the claim that "all women should be respected and allowed to explore their sexuality without shame and hate" she also acknowledges feminists that refute this view thus drawing attention again to the division between feminists.

Schrager has also created OnaGram.com which is a pay website where subscribers have access to naked photos of Ona Artist and it is as Schrager states her "primary income" which also provides material for her practice "I also use many of the photos from there as basis for my visual works" (2016). This leads back to ideas surrounding the labour involved in constructing a Selfebrity and individual identity branding particularly via social media sites, equally by establishing this website and having complete ownership of the site, Schrager whether you agree with her practice or not, it is irrefutable that she has absolute control over the way her digital body is consumed.

Schrager anticipates using her body to inform her art practice throughout her career since she is "interested to see how my practice changes as I age. I'm a performance artist and deal in reality, so I don't have any preconceived ideas of how it will go. But I'm also really excited to have these photographic vestiges of my youth to potentially use too" (Schrager, 2016). This demonstrates a long term commitment to the documentation of the female form and it will be interesting to observe Schrager's practice as she moves from mid-career to established artist. Interestingly Schrager suggests that "I think its likely people will respect my work more later when I'm not *young*" (2016).

By considering the concept that the self-portrait is a "technology of embodiment" (Jones, 2002: 950) Ona Artist's pursuit of advancing self-branding demonstrates that social media, especially selfies are essential aspect of the performance of the self. Schrager in exploring female celebrity uses the body to act as representation, whilst from a feminist perspective plays with the concept of authenticity through the persona Ona. Her fictive persona as a transmediated self is authenticated and made real by the selfies that capture her corporeal body, contextualised in relation to the surrounding physical space of the photograph frame, cementing her existence across the platforms implying a sense of her body moving in both physical and networked spaces. Ona Artist's portrayal in a similar way

to the way Claude Cahun is described by Jones "presents herself to us in a manner that transforms, at once, the conception of the self-portrait and the very notion of the subject" (Jones, 2002: 947). Indeed Ona through "an exaggerated mode of performative self imaging that opens up an entirely new way of thinking about photography" in relation to the "sexually, and gender-identified subject" (Jones, 2002: 948).

Schrager in a similar way to Wilke, through the Ona Artist project, demonstrates the importance of self-portraiture for female artists primarily because of the control it affords as simultaneously being author and subject/object. Whilst Ona Artist in some ways is a product of society and culture Schrager's portrayal of Ona Artist equally challenges traditional representations of women. Schrager's enactment of feminist gestures through Ona Artist's body as representation challenges phallocentrism and the male/female gaze, illuminates female sexuality and eroticism and celebrates modes of existence that transcend patriarchy whilst legitimately furthering her self-brand as a celebrity. All of the self-portraits of Ona display how Schrager is subverting traditional portrayals of the female form by using her own body as a site of commodification: her glamorous erotic images of Ona Artist challenge the ways in which female music artists have been constructed for a male audience; the sexualised self-portraits manipulated using Photoshop challenge the issues surrounding the gaze through an acceptance and demonstration of female sexuality.   Schrager through the fictive persona Ona Artist is directly addressing the female body as a site of patriarchal oppression whilst simultaneously through hyper sexuality demonstrating a clear understanding of the male fan psyche.

Schrager, uses Ona Artist's body as representation of the ways in which women have been traditionally been portrayed, where through purposeful semi nudity Ona Artist's status as a celebrity is furthered whilst attempting to create desire for a music star by a male audience which emulates the same desire of a female fan for a male star. Institutions, such as social media sites, which are acknowledged as male controlled, are directly questioned, particularly surrounding issues of censorship, banning and blocking. Schrager's artistically edited images of Ona Artist's body highlights the reclaiming of the vagina through the edited images. Ona Artist's images via social media and other media platforms are circulated and publicly displayed, simultaneously as a commodity and feminist communication since the purpose of the project is exploring the construction of a female celebrity.

Each of the images are clearly part of a feminist discourse and their circulation via social media and her paid website allows for a wider audience which in turn demonstrates the

importance of self-portraiture in establishing a self-brand whilst elevating the status of the selfie as an art form particularly for feminist artists. Ona Artist's performance is twofold: Schrager the creator of Ona Artist offers a feminist performance, where by embodying Ona, Schrager's body itself is captured and documented in the photographs as the fictive artist, thus becoming a visual representation of the feminist statement. Secondly, Ona, as the fictive artist performs the role of female celebrity, actively participating in the performance of self-branding and establishing a preferred visual presence. Therefore Schrager/Ona Artist as subject/object "… performs herself… within the purview of an apparatus of perspectival looking that freezes the body as representation…" (Jones, 2002: 949). Ona demonstrates that as a fictive artist, self-portraiture is crucial since the body is fixed as representation of both the image as object as well as the image of the objectified, each of which are essential in furthering the transmedia narrative and self-branding. This is more than a visual document of a performance art, the photograph itself is the performance thus demonstrating its instinctively performative nature for enhancing identity storytelling thus cementing online "presencing" (Couldry, 2012: 50). Equally whilst Jones conflictingly concedes that the photograph is a "death dealing apparatus" she also recognises that "the self-portrait photograph is eminently performative and so life giving" (Jones, 2002: 949). This is especially pertinent since as a fictive artist the photograph contributes to the actual existence of Ona Artist.

In a similar way to Key's Cherry Lazar, performance is at the centre of Schrager's art work as Ona Artist. Naturally the issues surrounding the portrayal of women by women in selfies is epitomised by the photographic portraits of Ona, particularly in relation to the pose. Schrager's art work draws immediate attention to the current cultural tension of selfies – the juxtaposition of commodification of the female body for artistic purposes and feminist message. Since Ona's self-portraits are carefully constructed products created by Schrager, the frozen pose framed as object reinforces the concept of the fictive artist's body being a site of performance, the representation of the female form as well as asserting Ona's existence. The positioning of Ona's body in each art work illustrates how "…the embodied subject is exposed as being a mask or screen, a site of projection and identification. It is thus through the pose, via the screen, that the subject *opens into performativity and becomes animated*" (Jones, 2002: 959). Undeniably it is the ways in which Ona is strategically positioned by Schrager that reinforces the idea of the pose as a direct link between the subject as a subject and the subject as the image object. Jones's (2002) discussion of fetishizing of female/feminine in relation to self-portraits is realised by "the apparently static object (the person depicted, frozen, fetishized in the

photograph) becomes a subject, a dynamic that is particularly charged in relation to the self-portrait, where the object is, indeed, the subject of making" (Jones, 2002: 960). From this stance Schrager's performative selfies as Ona, function as "mirror-masks" reflecting "specifically, the masculine desire to fix the woman in a stable and stabilizing identity" (Owens: 183).

Whilst Schrager has faced some criticism related to the fact that she is the author of her own objectification, reinforcing traditional portrayals of women it can also be equally argued that her use of personas also draw attention to the artifice of her representations of the female body. By portraying Ona Artist's body as the object, Schrager is responding to the fetishization, this is further developed as a conscious feminist act in itself as it is projected through different social media platforms.

The artist's website on her background pages presents quite a detailed life story for the artist whilst also blurring the boundaries between Schrager's life and that of her fictive artist. For instance Ona Artist "studied dance and biology as an undergraduate and received an MFA in Fine Art from Parsons School of Design" Schrager also received an MFA in 2015. Her background also highlights the development of her transmediated self where "Her work has appeared across 1000's of media, internet and broadcast channels" (Ona, 2016)

Similarly to Schrager, Ona Artist "practices a DIY aesthetic by self-producing all her own content: shooting her own photos, crafting her own videos, and designing her own websites" (Ona, 2016).

Schrager whilst identifying with fourth wave feminism she states that she does not consider her "art works to have a political agenda" however she does "believe that objectification is a natural part of relationships, and it adds a strong level of power, agency, and artful beauty to the woman" (Korvette, 2015). In relation to the ways in which Schrager presents self-portraits and in turn the female body she justifies her work as "So while I am heightening the objectification, I am also heightening the power" (Korvette, 2015).

Although Schrager states her heteronym only exists virtually Ona Artist's performance is staged both in the real and virtual world – each are of equal importance reflecting the hybridisation of identity. For the transmediated self to evolve it is necessary for the masquerade of selfebrity to seamlessly play out across the platforms in order to maintain a sense of authenticity. Her existence is further cemented through interviews that extend

the narrative of her identity and in turn promote her transmediated self. Of equal importance is her live performance in the real world which in turn is documented and narrated across the platforms and through collaboration with "Frands" (a term coined by Schrager meaning a hybrid of friends and fans):

> ""Me and my fans chatted, listened to music, I danced around, and then later there was a Snapchat after-party and a naked swag bag (videos and photos) for my website members. I premiered my naked music videos that night too. I think I'm the first to do that. Is that right?"" (Sokol, 2016)

Schrager through Ona artist creates a cultural discourse of women on women, a female intervention on patriarchal culture. Mulvey's *male gaze* is a concept that for contemporary artists particularly Ona Artist, Cherry Lazar and Seren Sanclêr demonstrates how art and the different forms of media have positioned women as an *object of desire* framed by masculine scopophilia thus informing their work and their subversion of it by transforming it into the empowering female gaze where the female form is one that is admired, addressed, challenged and celebrated by women artists.

Ona Artist is clearly a transfictive artist, albeit virtual in a sense compared to the other fictive artists, and the role of information and technology in the construction of the digital star cannot be ignored. Beyond the attraction of technology, however, this research suggests that it is through the excess of information and development of identity, the absence of the *authentic*, and the development of an intricate subject/object relationship that these fictional personas have organized into a truly new form of star system personified through fictive artists.

"One might ask – are nudes of women by women really any different than those by men? When viewing the work of these artists it is clear that not only do women have a very different voice and treatment of the nude, but also are breaking boundaries with work that often reveals details only a women can understand intimately." (Cesarine, 2016).

Ona Artist, Cherry Lazar and Seren Sanclêr's work attempt to combat the historical domination of the *male gaze* in an attempt to upset the image of woman as the patriarchal culture signifier for the male other. Instead, the fictive artists self-portraits become makers of meaning that are no longer shackled by the imposed fantasies and obsessions of men.

Ona Artist and Cherry Lazar exude a confidence in their sexuality: there is a power in the portrayal that is not often seen in overt depictions of female sexuality however it is clear

through their work that digital media and female authorship is slowly changing this. Indeed the self-portraiture nature of the work of Cherry Lazar and Ona, as an emerging digi fem genre of art needs to be considered from emerging scholarly feminists perspectives that are more sympathetic to the ways in which digital feminists in particular are utilising technology, particularly when considering feminist work and the representation of the female body.

4.6. Summary

"The first decade of the twenty-first century has been marked by a surge of interest in feminist art, its futures, and its histories" (Meagher, 2011: 299)

The theme of these fictions concerning artists' lives are success and vocation. The fictions of Woolford, Spaulings, Fontaine and Fielder depict the successes and failure of artists' work and career. But on whose terms are these artists' works successes and failures? Indeed, who said they were artists?

The success it seems of all case studies is the multi-layered narratives building a detailed identity through multimedia texts. The credibility of the fictional personas depends upon how the texts are orchestrated. The viewer is invited to visit the exhibition, read the novel, speak to artist in some cases, and explore the website and social media – thus being able to assess the authenticity of the artist and artist's work in the light of the information gained. Simulation, in their image world through photography embedded fiction, websites, exhibitions, has become the real.

Whilst there is a continued trend for individuals to create media output that supports their public persona in a style similar to celebrities where "Elites are increasingly set apart by their ability to turn themselves into stars by marketing themselves as brands of one" (Bennet, 2012). Similarly, successful artists are metamorphosed into pop stars reducing them to a part of the markets mechanisms. Each of the transfictive artists reinforces this idea of artist identity as commodity but in different ways. Whilst it is acknowledged that Donelle Woolford positions herself in opposition to this, simply by having several actors performing as her sometimes simultaneously and that this stance could be perceived as anti-branding. In contrast Ona Artist embraces selefbrity, the concept of branding and stardom being at the centre of Schrager's project. Whichever position the creators of the fictive artist have taken all of them through their live perfroamnce, social presence via digital media and their work as artefact remind the audience constantly to notice their fictive existence and complicate their notion of reality. Thus by refusing to integrate into the world of art-as-commodity or embracing it in order to expose the contemporary labour

of constructing a selfebity, each of the transfictive artists offer an insight into the mechanisms involved in self-branding and present potential possibilities of breaking free from issues of ownership as well as the desire it creates.

Each of the transfictive artists highlights the importance of the fictionalization of artistic authority and the fictionalization of the artist identity, in particular, the artist biography. This fictionalization process as a construction makes visible the fictitiousness of the ways in which identity is now being constructed by contemporary society particularly through digital technology. As discussed earlier in chapter 1, the creation of fictional personas and dual/multi identities in art has historically been utilised as an authorial strategy.

Of particular relevance is the fact that the transfictive artists, like many contemporary feminist artists, exist largely in cyberspace thus demonstrating that artists no longer require an actual physical place to create and present work, and to some extent are not dependent on a gallery system to promote their art. Thus the fictive artist directly challenges hegemony, deliberately drawing attention to the cult of self-promotion, "this Warholian moment of the fifteen minutes" (Anastas et al, 2006: 115), whilst directly opposing traditional authoritarian definitions of authenticity.Fictional artists perhaps remind us that hegemonic realities which must be continuously renegotiated, contested and reconstructed.

The life of the fictional artist and their oeuvre is easily accepted as a reality. However this perceived life is not real, it is both the audience's and the author's creation. The audience's preconceptions are based on what they understand of the art world through the media, films and popular culture roles. Thus the audience makes assumptions based on their experience of the art world and artists and contemporary stereotypes popularized by various art movements such as the Young British Artists. This tells us that, knowingly or not, the signs and imagery of contemporary culture have been absorbed to such an extent that it affects a judgment of what is real.

All of the authors discussed the use of established marketing techniques such as critical reviews (sometimes by highly regarded critics), publicity photography, artist websites and exhibitions of their art work in the same way an actual artist would be promoted. Fictive artists, when considering the projects explored in this chapter are a product of the combined manipulation of digital media and more traditional methods. It is important to remember that each of these creators in turn have conceived the 'real' birth of a persona which has in one way or another taken a life of its own, absent from its maker. Photographic evidence of the artist, of their distinctive artistic work anchored by a

complex biography and critical analysis of their artistic influence exhibited as a book, an art show or more importantly as a website reinforces the complexities of deciphering a true path between fact and fiction. The overall practices of these artists that create fictional artists, raises broader arguably more timely questions about the relationship between identity, digital media and public reception.

The preceding investigation of artist persona, hyper-reality and identity provide the theoretical foundation for the construction of my own fictional artist. Cardiff's contemporary Art scene is explored through the hyperreal; *The Secret Lives of Seren Sanclêr* is an attempt to address notions of Baudrillard's simulacra, simulation and the hyper-real operating as testing ground for the concept of the artist itself.

Art and identity are narrative. Art is a social form of communication whereby the artists is building a narrative for an audience. In this case contemporary Artists typically construct narratives that question and subvert dominant ideologies. Equally the artist as brand has become an essential part of the way the artist presents their image, identity and work in the public sphere. Art has always embraced technology and the movements that have been created out of this relationship. Digital technology particularly social media offer new creative channels for artists who in turn are documenting the ways in which society are producing and consuming endless narratives. The transfictive heteronyms explored in this study demonstrate for these reasons how extremely pertinent they are in reflecting the ways in which identity through social media and the internet are perpetually being edited and re-edited in pursuit of the perfected transmediated self.

The artist's identity is built up through narratives and infiltrates their exhibitions as well as through their on line presence. The identity of the artist is the story and it is this narrative that allows the public to connect with the artist and their work. Linear and non-linear narratives, hyper realities and virtual identities are designed to create a more credible artist persona for the public.

When considering fictional artists the narrative strands that emerge are similar to the ways contemporary artists present themselves. Biographical information, use of photographs and films, interviews, novels, retrospective and group shows that contextualise the fictional artist's work in a broader cultural movement. A retrospective exhibition identifies an underlying biographical or chronological narrative to establish the fictional artist's persona. These examples reveal how fictional artists through exhibitions, social media, novels, performance establish identity.

Fictional artists emerge at a time when post postmodern notions of human/digital media are shifting emphasis. Whilst Cherry Lazar's and Ona Artist's sexual performance could be criticised as a display for men since they play into a male voyeuristic experience it is possible to consider both transfictive artists through the historical lens of feminist performance art, which is not staged for the male gaze, but rather attempts to explore the relationship between that of the gaze in relation to female bodies, and female fantasies.

Both Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist demonstrate potentially through their artwork and social media presence the theme of exploring female sexuality for their own pleasure. Ona Artist's digital art in particular seems to be almost in a tradition of Hannah Wilke, as discussed in chapter one, an artist who is exploring the relationship of her body to a history of erotic imagery of women—as a way of discovering her own fantasies, her own self-image.

The artists share gender and it is this that connects their varied social and ethnic position in to a single identity category. While the concept of fictional artists has blurry boundaries in practice these artists run galleries, have exhibitions around the world, take interviews, interact on social media sites. Within the art market they have social capital, take part in group exhibitions and are accepted as professional by the mainstream art world.

It is their fictional status that defines them. Their identity as an artist is directly linked to the biographies of the artists and the transmedia narratives that authenticate their existence as artists. Photographs, video films, the work they produce and social media interaction infuse the meaning of their identity.

The fictive artists demonstrate that the development of their personas through representation and enactment on a daily basis reflects the ways they are negotiating their selfhood to a global audience whilst further augmenting their preferred identity. Using Mulvey's theory of the male gaze in relation to Selfies, it is important to consider whose viewpoint does a prospective audience view the selfie portraits? Where some academics argue that selfies of women created by women disrupt the dominant stance of media texts centralising from a male perspective thus reclaiming the female body, others criticise these selfie portrayals as reinforcing as well as perpetuating traditional representations of the female form. It is clear that the positives and negatives of the selfie and the female form is a tangled mess that cannot so easily be unravelled, perhaps it is better to acknowledge the power of the male gaze on popular culture in an attempt to subvert it, draw attention to it whilst celebrating female authorial control.

It is important to remember the function of selfies and in turn the selfie gaze which are produced and shared because of the aesthetic pleasure they provide for the viewer (the most important aspect is that the viewer includes also the creator of the selfie image). This further complicates how selfies of the female form should be examined and critiqued, where with an acknowledgement of postmodernism/post digital/digital feminism and perhaps most importantly, post-selfie, particularly in relation to issues surrounding objectification, authorship and agency. In light of this, it could be argued that the selfie gaze cannot be simply reduced to a predominantly male heterosexual one, whilst clearly influenced by dominant popular culture and the ways in which women have been portrayed, female authorship ensures that their own bodies may be used as objects they are no longer devoid of agency. As transmediated selves, the use of selfies by women is no longer passive reinforcing instead their active position in driving the personal brand/identity narrative forward. The active/passive divide is blurred, thus subverting hierarchical power relations. Women are reclaiming the body since by objectifying their own bodies they demonstrate their power of ownership. As transmediated selves, the use of selfies do not exist purely to be looked at they are used to compliment the complex existing identity narrative across the platforms.

The artists as transmedia selves reinforce to varying degrees Butler's theory of performativity, their constructed personas through the development of their identity and subjectivity demonstrate that it is an ongoing process of becoming, rather than an ontological state of being. In the same way as individuals, the artists illustrate across the media platforms that becoming is a sequence of acts/narratives that retroactively establish identity. The formation of the transmediated self illuminates the influences of culturally-given discourses, structures and practices where the act of self-branding has become instinctive.

This research is in agreement with Pisani (2015) that "the possibilities for identity play provided by new technologies have allowed for widespread challenges of the objectified and commodified (female) body" (2015: 6) the fictive artists examined for this study demonstrate how the transmediated female self is more than "technological productions" (Halberstam, 1991: 440) of enacted gender. More accurately, coinciding with technological advancement, the transmediated self has evolved exponentially since there is now greater access to platforms to promote and cultivate a "selfebrity" persona (Cherry, 2005) through transmediated storytelling. Equally the ways in which the transmediated female

self are drawing on technology to explore gender performance in relation to identity demonstrates the ways in which the norms are being challenged. Perhaps the fictional artists as a construct allow us to study what it tells us about ourselves, about the art world and the social cultural myth of artists.

Figure 5.1: #1 Secret Soiree - A Polaroid Performance (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

5.1.   The Fictive Biography of Seren Sanclêr

Seren Sanclêr is an artist who was born in St David's Wales in 1976 and raised by artist parents who dropped out in the sixties and relocated to the island of Ibiza during the late seventies as documented in figures 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11. Her alternative and unconventional upbringing is reflected in her approach to her artwork which is explored through the medium of painting, photography and digital art. Thematically her artwork is usually autobiographical and confessional; exploring miscarriage, drug use, feminism, rave scene, the body, conceptual, friends and family. Spending the nineties in London she has also encapsulated the contemporary role of the nomadic artist by relocating to Hong Kong, Berlin, Glasgow, Milan, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona and Dubai through the first two decades of the twenty first century. Seren Sanclêr is presently based between Cardiff and Lisbon reflecting the move away from art centres such as London.

Although very little is written about her as an artist it is suggested within the art world that that she mainly sells her work under several pseudonyms or to private buyers directly. Her exhibitions are exclusively by invite only with exhibitions merely lasting a day. In the spirit of 1980s rave culture her exhibitions are not in art galleries but in abandoned warehouses, old banks, large yurts and in people's houses. Occasionally she agrees to have some of her work in collective exhibitions such as the International Women's Day Shows as illustrated in figure 6.31. The last show she exhibited her work was in 2011 in Cardiff's contemporary gallery Off the Wall, under the pseudonym Sara Sylvester. The two paintings were from her *Venus in Faux Fur* series: The Monroe and Russell portraits. Later work has concentrated on digital art and exhibiting through the Internet exclusively. She is currently the artist in residence at Cardiff University, school of Journalism, Media and Popular culture (2009 – Present) although the details of her role there are unclear.

This chapter elucidates the line of research undertaken for the creative element and reinforces the justification for this approach within the research. The examination of Seren Sanclêr is conducted in the traditional sense, analytically. The chapter also documents an exploration into the device and use of the fictional women artist personas in recent visual arts practice specifically and analyses how these constructed selves operate as projections of feminist theoretical concerns as well as more importantly demonstrate how Seren Sanclêr works as a transmedia text. An interest surrounding an individual's self-branding and the transmediated self to construct a specific persona would offer an opportunity to consider this issue on a wider scale.

Since this research focuses on specific artists around the world who have created fictional artists as artists in their own right, mostly in the first two decades of the 21st century, consequently, central to the research has been the development of a fictional artist persona Seren Sanclêr.

5.2. Making a show of herself: Seren Sanclêr and the creation of an artist

By reconsidering that "Fictive artworks have clearly fictional elements but extend outside the realm of the textual in various ways, principally through the creation of realia" (Lafarge, 2007) it is through a body of artefacts and texts presented across a series of platforms that Seren Sanclêr has become a "plausible fictions created through production of real-world objects, events, and entities'" (Lafarge, 2007).

The fictional artist has been constructed by one person, the researcher and in this way differs very much in the construction of Susan Fielder, Donelle Woolford, Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist. The researcher has created the biographical narrative, assumed the performance aspects through photography and created artwork for dissemination through different media texts. Seren Sanclêr is more than an alter ego she is a transfictive entity that has developed digitally a strong identity of her own during a seven year development of the persona who "plays at being" (Baudrillard, 2001: 173). The artist journal initial construction of her development is mapped out clearly by figure 6.2 illustrating a clear understanding of the importance of both real and virtual identity performance.

Equally it can be accepted that creating a fictive persona although her personality and life history is not based on the researcher/creator's there will be expected certain overlaps. For instance the researcher/creator's feminist leanings have clearly influenced the construction of Seren Sanclêr in order to explore an artist who is a woman and is to some extent relatively successful. In addition following Elwell's (2014) model for the transmediated self and Senft's (2013) work on self-branding the purpose for developing a transmedia identity is to explore how effective this technique is for contemporary artists who construct fictional artist personas as art work, a growing genre in digital art, as well as begin to consider how individuals are now utilising these techniques to construct a specific public persona, an opportunity to reinvent themselves, as well as highlight how this phenomenon is not only emerging as a fashionable choice but also dramatically increasing and how this is transforming theorised contemporary conceptions of the self.

Seren Sanclêr during her seven year existence clearly demonstrates how she has evolved as a transfictive persona and as a transmedia text, in a way she also documents the changes in use of social media as technology has progressed. Firstly her development can be seen physically through the alteration of her appearance, behaviour and biographical data as demonstrated in figures 6.3, 6.4 and 6.8. Evidence of this approach is manifest through the amassing of fragments of images, artworks and photo documentation via the social media platforms in particular as seen in figures 6.14, 6.19, 6.20, 6.21 and 6.25. The conception of Seren Sanclêr as artist allowed the researcher to ground the investigation in an area of study that the researcher was already familiar with, art, in particular feminist art and photography. From this wealth of knowledge it is evident that the creator was able to construct the identity of a contemporary woman artist around her understanding of feminist art, artists, thematic understanding of artwork and feminist art theory. Key to this was the idea that the researcher wanted to create an artist with a strong feminist art background. Using family photographs combined with photo manipulation the Sanclêr matrilineal family line was created to develop a biographical narrative that would reveal that Seren Sanclêr came from a long line of female artists as well as have an unusual ancestry where lineage is matrilineal as illustrated in figure 6.12.

As part of the development of the artist biography a specific childhood narrative was established – that of the child prodigy demonstrating that the artist has been immersed in the art world from an early age. Figure 6.11 use of fabricated news articles and manipulated photographs further cement this mythmaking. This is consolidated by her unusual childhood in Ibiza as presented in figure 6.10 which cultivates her bohemian alternative upbringing thus securing her authenticity as artist.

Equally it is evident that Seren Sanclêr as a fictive persona as a transmedia text exemplifies developments in feminist art theory, digital modern theory, the rise of the feminist digital artist thus her identity is a process to explore these wider issues. Furthermore her identity provides a continued critique of the art world in relation to women artists' success as well as how digi artists are using social media to reach a global audience all of which is implied through the various strategies used in the construction of Seren Sanclêr. It is clear that the artefacts, particularly the art works were not conceived as for an exhibition, thus deviating from the four previous case studies whose whole purpose is to present their artwork. Rather it could be argued that the art work produced could be perceived as a residue of the research process and should be considered as support in the construction of the artist, a means of validation.

Thus, the fictional artist Seren Sanclêr through her blog and social media, demonstrates that she has a real web presence even before the release of a novel and potential retrospective art show, thus it is argued, that she has been an evolving transmedia text from her inception. Schroeder (2005) draws attention to the importance of name recognition asserting that "the relationship between name recognition, value, and branding" is crucial to the way contemporary artists interact with self-branding (1300). Artefacts included in chapter 6 also demonstrate the importance of secondary heteronyms such as art critic Myfanwy Morgan's essay on the artist and ArtSpace's gallerist Chay Connor's Forward for an art catalogue that further attempt through narrative to authenticate Seren Sanclêr's legitimacy as an artist.

As presented in Chapter 4, each of the artists has a distinctive style to their work and in some cases a particular style image furthering brand recognition. As presented by the artists the majority of the fictive artists have unique names. Selecting Seren Sanclêr as the persona's name for the research into constructing a fictive artist reflected a Welsh element indicated by the Welsh name. Of equal importance was the translation of the name – meaning star thus signifying success and direct links to stardom and celebrity status. Originally I had considered Rhys as a surname however whilst undertaking investigation of search engine optimization – returning poor results and difficulties in locating the fictive artist, the surname Sanclêr was selected. The change in choice of name was dramatic Seren Sanclêr. All google results on the first page relate to the fictive artist in question thus demonstrating engine optimization. Presently Seren Sanclêr is the only artist in existence with this specific name.

5.3. Selfebrity - the self-branding of Seren Sanclêr

The photographs of Seren Sanclêr are of the researcher herself and the images are in character as the artist persona and usually also manipulated as presented in figures 6.8 and 6.13. Many of the images used for self-portraiture present the artist wearing sunglasses a key symbol that the researcher wanted to reinforce as a key signifier directly linking stardom with artist persona "as a sign of personality and more generally a fashion marker" (Mäkelä, 2004: 113).

It was a conscious decision to use sunglasses as a prop since "in the realm of stardom, sunglasses have long been a symbolic icon of public personas donned by generations of star to barricade the private spaces" (Promkhuntong, 2014: 352). This appropriation of star iconography through the use of sunglasses reinforces Seren Sanclêr's self-brand message – I am a star as well as demonstrating that "the fastest way to look glamorous is to put on

sunglasses" (Postrel, 2013: 109). As seen in figures 6.4, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9 this consistent image is exploited through photographs of the artist as a child also wearing sunglasses is a creative strategy to connect her artist work with her cultivated star image. Although the researcher instinctively decided to use sunglasses as a prop, Virginia Postrel in *The Power of Glamour: Longing and the Art of Visual Persuasion*(2013) aptly corroborates this decision by asserting the importance of sunglasses in relation to glamour since they "enhance the wearer's appearance by implicitly enlarging the eyes...most important, they create mystery" (2013: 109).

Equally the humorous image of the artist as a child wearing sunglasses as seen in 6.9 also implies that she has been cultivating a specifically preferred self-image from a very early age. This also sits well with the fictive artist's work: whilst her image connotes privacy since her use of "Sunglasses hide emotion" (Postrel, 2013: 110) this is in direct contrast to her exploration of autobiographical art since it juxtaposes issues of privacy and exposure simultaneously. Seren Sanclêr by consistently wearing sunglasses demonstrates that she is addressing and acknowledging her star status through her strictly controlled digital identity across the platforms. It also reflects the self-branding strategy which can be linked closely to traditional stardom where the construction of the star as commodity – a manufactured self.

In a similar way to Tracey Emin, Sophie Calle and Nan Goldin, Seren Sanclêr makes works of art that reference and reflects her personal and private life. In a way this also reflects the intimacy of self-branding of individuals via social media as well as exemplifying how social media as a medium has grown in popularity as an art form for digital feminist artists in particular. In a similar way to the narrative identity constructed across social media platforms Seren Sanclêr's works of art demonstrate how the transmediated self is inherently fragmentary. The fictive nature of the artist persona is always made clear across the social media platforms as well as in live performance at art exhibitions. The term *fictive artist* is applied to ensure that transparency of the artist's construction can be immediately realised by the viewer/follower to reinforce that her fictional persona is not concealed rather viewers are invited to interact and actively participate in the fictional narrative.

Seren Sanclêr's *Secret Soiree: A Polaroid Performance* project reflects how an intimate personal narrative can be constructed with the cooperation of audience/followers/friends actively being involved and influencing the narrative of a fictitious birthday party (see 6.26 and 6.27). By focusing on *Secret Soiree: A Polaroid Performance*, the project

demonstrates how individuals welcome opportunities to participate in the ways narratives develop thus reinforcing the growing popularity in performance particularly across social media platforms. The blurring of boundaries between real life and fiction is welcomed, contributors are willing participants who are as keen as the creator to watch the narrative unfold. On another level, *Secret Soiree: A Polaroid Performance* also presents how individuals upload personal photographs of an event/occasion to social media sites structured within a narrative framework for viewers. This is part of the constructive process of self-branding. Seren Sanclêr's *Secret Soiree: A Polaroid Performance* project consists of one hundred high contrast black and white Polaroid photographs of a fictitious surprise party celebrating her fortieth birthday at an unknown location. The photographs are chronologically ordered sequencing the narrative plots of the night's event and experiences of the guests and artist. Although participants selected photographs to be included, the creator transformed the photographs into black and white, cropped and edited them, completing the process by applying a Polaroid frame. "Polaroids are those instant self developing photographs, and usually have an appearance distinct from the other photos" (Cycleback, 2011, p, 121) so by changing the photographs in this way they appear more uniform which implies an authenticity to the narrative presented. This project demonstrates the continued importance of photography for social media. Each snapshot in the project exemplifies how photographs have the ability to encompass a moment and experience in time, visual and factual evidence of an event, documentation of the existence of the self. This documentation is now extending for individuals through the use of social media where photographs and albums are uploaded and tagged, through some social platforms published to be consumed by a potential global audience.

Therefore photography is an essential element in not only constructing the transmediated self but also in promoting self-branding. The Polaroid photographs with their "distinct white border, many with a wider bottom edge" (Cycleback, 2011, p, 121) in the project reinforce the importance of documentation as a verification of identity, although fictitious, the project still conjures a sense of memories and nostalgia being triggered. The significance of using a Polaroid frame for the photographs is also significant since the Polaroid camera is acknowledged as capturing a moment with immediate distribution pre digital technology age which suggests that Polaroid photographs capture a moment that is free of being distorted, disrupted or edited as well as reinforcing the Polaroid connotation of being "vintage, original and unique" (Cycleback, 2011, p, 122). This reinforces the authenticity of the photographs in the project even more so. However this is a continued play with fictional/reality binary since whilst "To a large degree Polaroids are self

authenticating" (Cycleback, 2011, p, 121) contributors have personal foreknowledge that the majority of photographs have been taken with digital or mobile cameras which are considered as lacking this authentication.

By Seren Sanclêr publishing the project via Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook, the reception demonstrates the importance of photography within social media as well as further mark how self-branding and the transmediated self has become popularised among individuals today, demonstrating the value of capturing and sharing experiences in pursuit of constructing a public digital persona. This act reinforces how "Photographs really are experience captured" (Sontag, 2005, p. 2) in this case the experience being the fictitious surprise party. This manipulation of photographic form disrupts the fictional and real binary as well as questions the held belief that there is a lack of emotional attachment and issues of authenticity surrounding digital created photographs.

The emotional connection of a polaroid image illustrates how Polaroid allows for a true image to be created, in which editing, enhancing or manipulating does not exist through 'Photoshop' or other means. The project plays with the concept of capturing immediate memoires and experience raising issues around whether any photograph can act as visual evidence. Where the Polaroid could once emphasise how "photograph images do not seem to be statements about the world, so much as pieces of it" (Sontag, 2005, p.2) the manipulation of such photographs through digital technology now suggests that authenticity of any picture needs to be debated.

As Hess identifies "In an era when the photoshopping of images is frequent, selfies are typically understood as spontaneously performed but rehearsed, lending them a character of performed legitimacy" (Hess, 2015: 1632). All of the photographs of Seren Sanclêr have purposely been photo shopped to reinforce her fictiveness as well as reinforce the concept of performance and draw attention to authenticity of identity. Seren Sanclêr's images personify how self-portraiture photography utilised to further the self-brand are "staged performances… [which] generate a sense of corporeal ethos—a proof of an emplaced and embodied self" (Hess, 2015: 1632/1633).

Instagram selfies of Seren Sanclêr at art galleries in particular illustrate the visual performance required for self-branding within social media platforms in pursuit of advancing the transmediated self where " while staged, they purport an intimate sense of

self that is honest and accurate: This is me, right here, right now" (Hess, 2015: 1633). The authenticity is further established by follower/friend comments responding to the images.

In a similar way Instagram attempts to simulate Polaroid photography feigning a sense of captivating a moment without disruption but equally reinforcing how digital technology despite its accessibility to be manipulated still enhances the narrative of the identity. Instagram in particular has become a visual daily diary for individuals blurring the boundaries between traditional albums and photo narratives. The project thus demonstrates there is no longer any distinction between reality and its representation. Some of the individuals captured are in several of the photographs but are dressed in different clothes, appear younger, different hairstyle as well as Seren Sanclêr herself being photo shopped into some pictures, a duplicate of the same image, thus revealing the lack of authenticity of the album.

5.4.   Strategy and the question of the transfictive artist as a feminist

By employing autobiographic subject matter and diaristic means, Seren Sanclêr's use of social media and her art work are intertwined, both addressing the intimate, personal subject matter of establishing her persona where "by veiling and obscuring details, they permit the audience to mingle its desires with [her] visible characteristics" (Postrel, 2013: 110). As a transmedia text Seren Sanclêr's art work reflects social media's unpolished, ephemeral, and performative modes. Seren Sanclêr's allusions to social media through her work, reinforces the importance of photography as a visual diary to establish her identity. The visual presentation across the platforms suggests the importance of a strong narrative component in establishing her persona. The performance across the platforms presents a critique of the rise of self-branding and the transmediated self.

Art work created during the seven year period was inspired by feminist art specifically. This is particularly evident in the water colour selfies collection which present typical selfie poses of women illustrated using a water colour app and also specific digital art works such as *In Safe Hands* (Figure 6.16), *I am not a robot* (Figure 6.17) and *The Simulacrum of Seren Sanclêr* (Figure 6.18). The creator through the persona Seren Sanclêr offers a critique digital feminist art, self-branding and the transmediated self through the performance as the fictive artist. By placing herself as Seren Sanclêr in order to analyse fictional women artist as transmedia texts, she reveals how the construction of an individual's identity, the art of performance and the importance of narrative across

platforms reflect not only the work of artists creating fictive identities but how it is growing phenomenon.

Seren Sanclêr's fashioning of self-identity as self-branding is exemplified firstly through her fictiveness and cemented by the extensive series of self-portraiture across the different platforms reflecting the ways in which individuals have adopted work is central intense consumerism and image as ways to package their identity in the twenty-first century. Thus demonstrating that "All forms of identity are astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical" (Elliott, 2013: 10/11).

Clearly influenced by feminist artists the aim of the practice was to acknowledge the long tradition of self-portraiture and the importance of theatrical role-playing in art across the platforms in order to draw attention to the various concepts of selfebrity, authentication of the preferred self as well as the manufacturing process undertaken to further develop the transmediated self. Building upon the ways in which Sherman has developed performance in photography, Seren Sanclêr adopts the performative aspects of photography and in a similar way to Key and Schrager incorporates the images created to encompass a broader range of digital technology in order to further develop the artist's narrative where the fictive artist illustrates how she can be perceived as "substituting signs of the real for the real itself" (Baudrillard, 2001: 170). Indeed it is anticipated that Seren Sanclêr also reflects that "Feminism in the 21st century bears a broader, deeper, and more diverse range of voices and interests than ever before" (Tani, 2015: n.p.) since it is clear that her art practice is engaged with the body exploring "embodied subjectivity to explore alternative conceptions of women's agency" (Meskimmon, 2008: 389) in an attempt to offer new approaches to the body as presented in Figures 6.16, 6.17 and 6.18.

Seren Sanclêr demonstrates that postmodernism has made way for individuals to explore and experiment in the realm of digital modernism. Artifice and simulacra are acknowledged and embraced as individuals through digital technology have access to constructing their identities and actively engage in the act of performance. The innate artificiality of Seren Sanclêr is reinforced across the platforms for viewers/followers/friends thus their engagement with her reveals the ways in which people engage with performance play and the ambiguity of authenticity. As a transmedia text she highlights the importance of construction of narrative via text and photographs as

well as the need to plan in detail prior and as the project progressed in order to create a multifaceted persona across all platforms.

The Polaroid project raises issues around the confused status of fact and fiction in photography since "these fictions are experienced as fact" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Despite the authenticity of the original photographs submitted by participants, the popular snapshot aesthetic, reassuring use of black and white and Polaroid frame, the work also has a secondary effect: they remind the viewer, in particular the participants, that whilst the posturing of individuals within the pictures is genuine, the Secret Soiree party they are a part of is not. Seren Sanclêr as a fictive artist performed by the researcher and the participants as viewers, initially the project reflects a collection of images of a party; however viewers also observe Seren Sanclêr and the contributors performing at a fictitious party. The artifice of the images is also confirmed by their relation to one another, demonstrating the ease of creating a narrative sequence out of unrelated pictures.

5.5. Summary

In a similar way to Cherry Lazar and Ona Artist artists Seren Sanclêr's work demonstrates how digi feminist artists are using digital technology which in turn shows how society's use of digital technology reflecting how "The convergence of the camera and mobile phone has proved to be highly popular" (Gye, 2007, p.279). Mobile camera phones and related photo sharing apps reinforce how accessible documenting and publishing photography has become in the 21st century where "camera phones are both extending existing personal imaging practices and allowing for the evolution of new kinds of imaging practices" (Gye, 2007, p.279).

In relation to construction of the transmediated fictive self the process confirms the centrality of personal photography to authenticate identity and support id formation of the persona particularly through social media platforms. Seren Sanclêr's transmediated identity shows that the ways in which a public persona is cultivated and fashioned, the narratives formed, published and disseminated suggests that the ways identity construction in light of personal self-branding and creative use of digital technology will have important repercussions for how we understand who we are and how we engage in the act of performance in order for our individual story to be "told over multiple channels…alternating between channels" (Dena, 2007: 3).

Seren Sanclêr's viewers/friends/followers through interaction with her across the platforms immerse themselves in the world of the fictional persona which exists in the real and the imaginary. The researcher, by building a strategy around self-branding and live performance as the artist, the use of social media to document her life and the actual creation of artefacts in particular art works helped establish her persona as an artist. During seven years her transmediated identity has unfolded creating a multidimensional and organic immersion of her persona across the platforms as well as involving real world participation at art exhibitions. By materializing organically her persona over a long period, the Transmedia Strategy has permeated the real world by inserting Seren Sanclêr within it and created a multi-layered narrative for the persona. Within the Transmedia context, although Seren Sanclêr has been constructed by one person by her engagement via the different platforms her narrative does not belong solely to the author but also to a community made up of friends/followers through their engagement with her.

Where Butler makes the post-structuralist argument that it is inaccurate to consider that there is a distinction between real and constructed identities rather identity is always a constructed performance, something that could be demonstrated by the artists' digital identities. The artists exemplify the way individuals make constant choices about self-presentation via digital media, a practice that is now perceived as natural and instinctive, thus demonstrating that the work of identity construction is no longer invisible. By using the artists as case studies the research demonstrates how individuals within society are knowingly performing. This conscious and deliberate performativity is most visible in the case of Seren Sanclêr as a fictive artist, whose persona is developed through detailed planning and calculated self-construction, whilst simultaneously reinforcing the artifice of her existence and mirroring the emerging digital spectacle of self-branding by (re)presenting a conceptualised, mediatised transmediated package which exposes the mechanisms of performance and how this process is intrinsically linked to the formation of the real/authentic persona.

This demonstrates that whilst people recognise the importance of and have demonstrated expertise in constructed performativity there is also still an expectation for maintaining and presenting an authentic identity. Whilst Goffman as discussed earlier, highlights that performance is specific to the stage where it occurs, the implications of a global stage through digital media, particularly social media has provided individuals with a platform to construct the preferred self-branded self.

The visual autoethnographical chapter that follows interprets the researcher's personal exploration of constructing a fictive artist clearly exemplifying the importance of media convergence. The most challenging and most rewarding element of developing the fictive artist has been the development of interactivity since it is this factor that has the greatest potential for audience engagement. It is evident that for the development of Seren Sanclêr the use of Social Media in particular has been a key element in encouraging audience's participation. As demonstrated in chapter 6 through figures 6.26 and 6.27, the fictive party documented illustrates the implicit collaboration of the consumers of the fictive artist. This particular art project demonstrates how audiences engage and interact with construction of the artist as transmediated self.

As observed visually in Chapter 6 the development of Seren Sanclêr's identity unfolds across multiple platforms where each of the platforms are used to further develop a distributed narrative of the transfictive persona. However it is crucial that the platforms work together in order to bring the audience closer to the persona since each media platform contributes to the whole thus strengthening the persona's narrative identity.

Whilst each platform engages the audience in a different manner, to fully appreciate the fictive artist it is necessary to have engagement through every platform since this offers a more complete understanding and appreciation for Seren Sanclêr as a transfictive self.

The presentation of findings as a visual autoethnography ensures that the distributed narrative of the fictive persona and clearer understanding of the process of constructing her is collected for audiences experiencing the persona's and can be reflected on as an archive.

Constructing Seren Sanclêr – A Visual Autoethnography
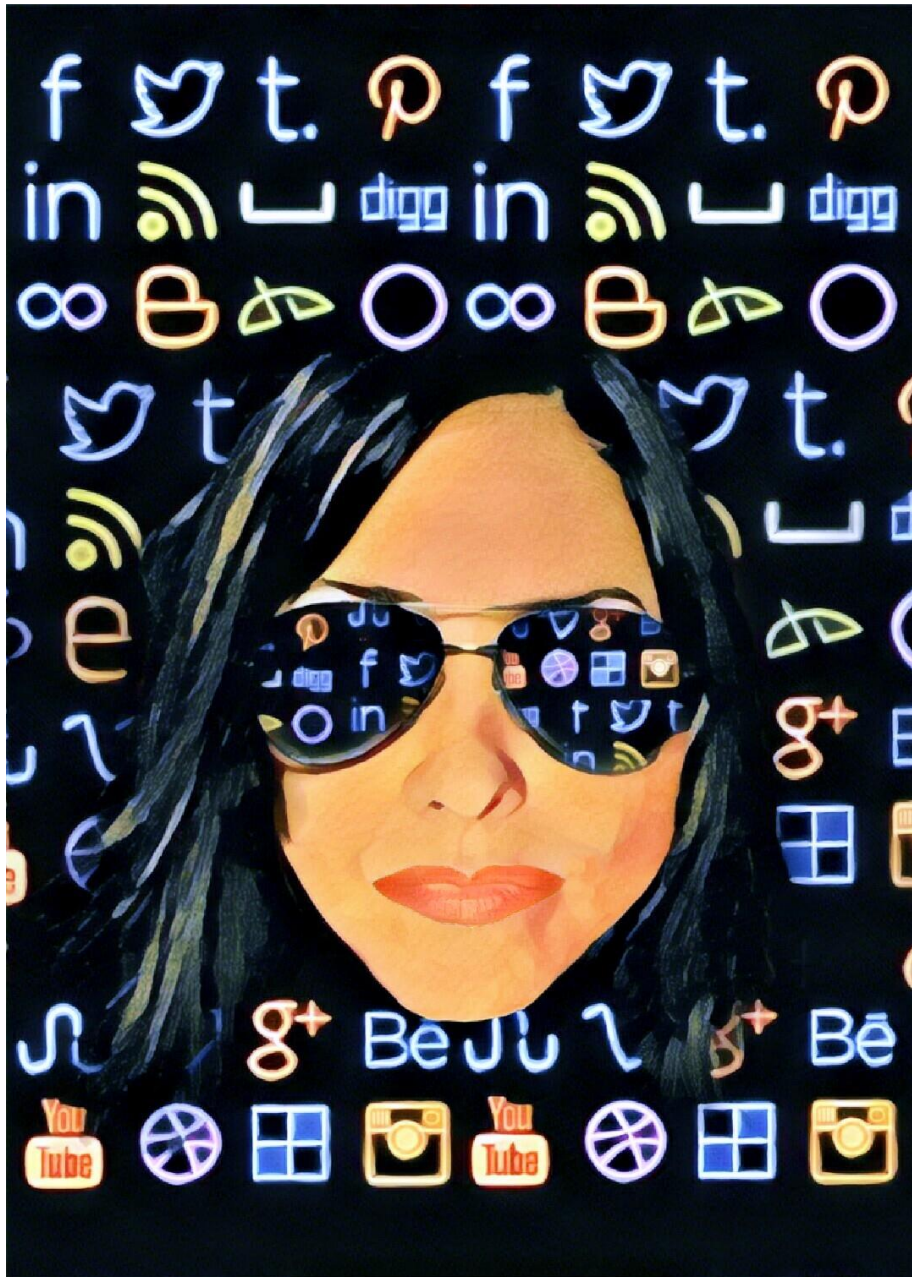
Figure 6.1: The Art of the Transfictive Self (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Phase 1
The Seren Sancler Project
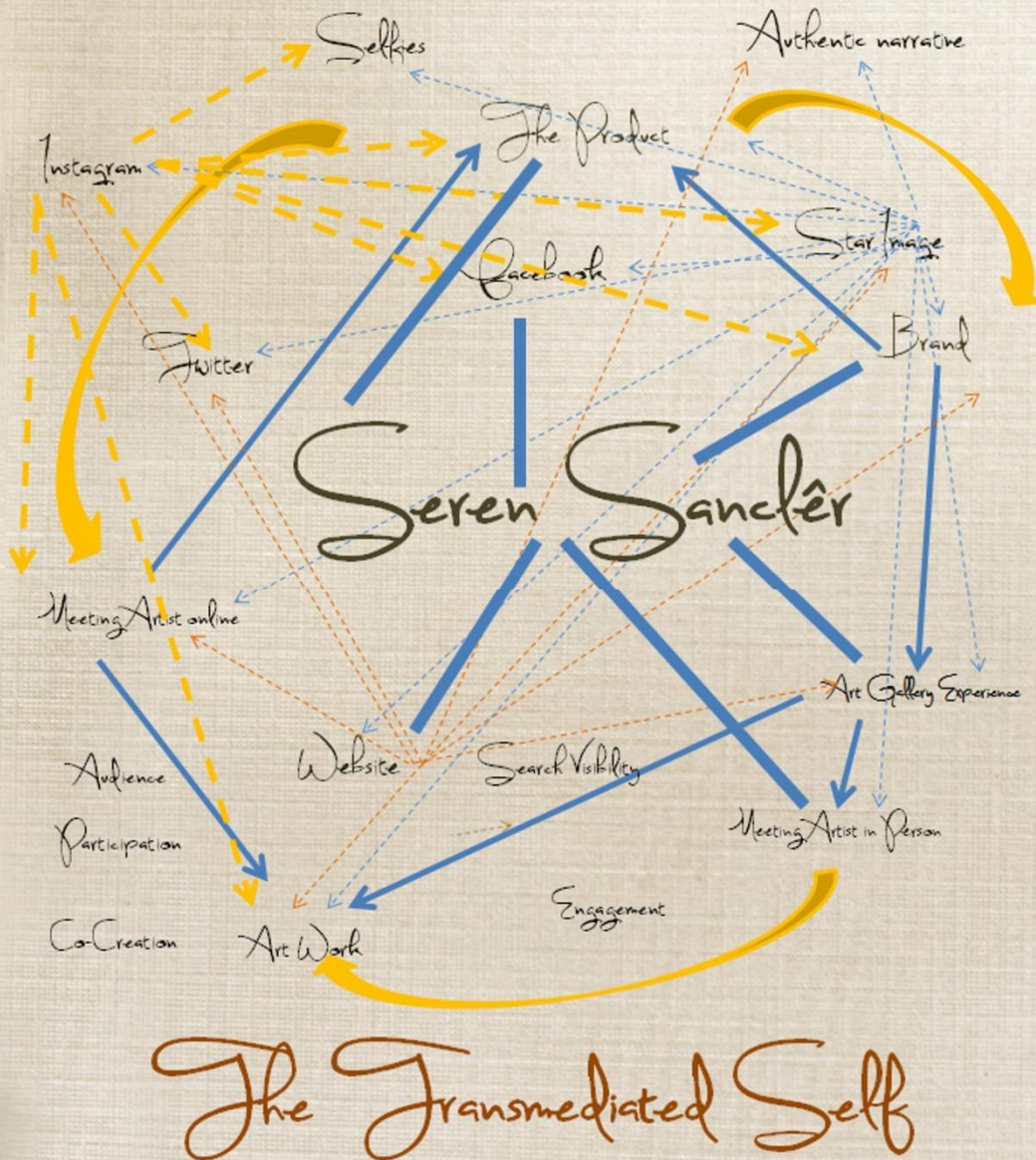
Figure 6.2: The Seren Sanclêr Project – Transmediated Self Plan, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2009)

Figure 6.3: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Repetition of Self-Image, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2009)

Figure 6.4: The Seren Sanclêr Project - The Concept of Self, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

SELF BRAND

CORE IDENTITY

The Product

Constructing the Authentic Artist Image

Identifying Brand Attributes

Figure 6.5: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Self Brand/Core Identity, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Figure 6.6: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Documenting Development of Artist Image, an extract taken from the Artist Journal
(Seren Sanclêr, 2015)

Figure 6.7: The Seren Sanclêr Project – Assembling the Artist's Appearance, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Repeated poses across platforms will expose the constant moulding of my public image

Building and Creating a Self Concept

Image linked to creating credibility as an Artist and Artist Brand

Trademark black lob hairstyle

Sunglasses in constant use night and day

Rayban, Paul Smith, Gucci

Nude lips

Attire/Costume

Eclectic, usually black (playing on the stereotype of Artist)
By wearing black all the attention is on the person, a symbol of individuality

Ageless Appearance

Manufacturing Identity

The physical Construction of Seren Sancler

Figure 6.8: The Seren Sanclêr Project – Constructing Brand Image, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2015)

Manufacturing a Life Story

Figure 6.9: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Manufacturing a Life Story, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

My hippie childhood in Ibiza

Salvador Dali

Childhood photos further develop artist brand
and interest in the persona

Figure 6.10: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Artist's Childhood, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2013)

The New Y

Monday, March 14, 1977

Seren Sancler - Artist Prodig

Across the globe, the 1970s art world has been shaken by reverberations from the social and political climate ignited in the previous decade, opening up new frontiers in the art landscape, extending it beyond the great art capitals of the world.

So perhaps it is not surprising that in this time of such optimism a 5-year-old girl would be the latest sensation. An exhibition of work by the art prodigy Seren Sanclêr opened on March 14 at the ArtSpace Gallery in Manhattan for a three-week run.

Replete with colorful

portrait canvases that make no uncertain reference to Abstract Expressionism and Cubism, most of the work has been sold, according to the gallery's owner. Coll
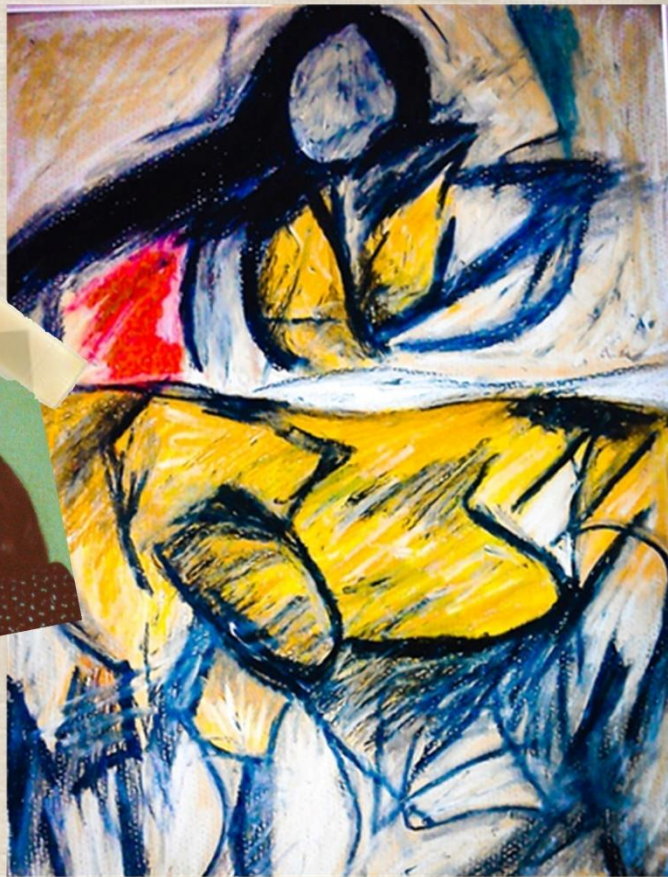
Establish backstory narrative to

reinforce identity as well as

Establish Unique

Selling Points UPS

Artist as Brand

Interesting childhood

Monday, March 14th, 1977

5-year-old Girl Takes Art W

A little girl becomes the youngest artist ever to be featured in a New York gallery.

A British artist, living on the Balearic island of Ibiza, Spain is making a splash in the New York art scene and she's only four years old.

Seren Sanclêr has a solo exhibition that opened last weekend at the ArtSpace gallery in Chelsea, but she's already sold paintings worth upwards of $10,000 a pop on the side.

The ArtSpace gallery director, Joan Foster, said she judges works without

first learning about the artists as a practice, but was surprised to find out the talented artist she wanted to feature was merely a toddler. "I saw great colors, great movement, great composition and very playful, and I thought, 'This is fantastic,'" said Foster. "Who is this person? Only to find out, she's a child."

Seren Sanclêr is the youngest artist to show at the ArtSpace Gallery. She made many of the works featured in the exhibit when she was about years old, but her parents say her passion for painting began long before

'All my best artworks have figures in them. Since I began drawing as a child that has always

been my

primary interest'

Figure 6.11: The Seren Sanclêr Project – The Artist Prodigy, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2013)

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Sanclêr

Matrilineal

Family Lineage

through maternal

ancestry

Elan
Great Grandmother

Elan Sanclêr and Mor Morgan

Aneira My Grandmother

Mor Owen and Cari Sanclêr My Mother and Father

Cari Sanclêr and Andy Warhol

Warhol the

Ultimate Brand

machine

Figure 6.12: The Seren Sanclêr Project – A Family Herstory, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2013)

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An Education Art School

My time at Goldsmiths
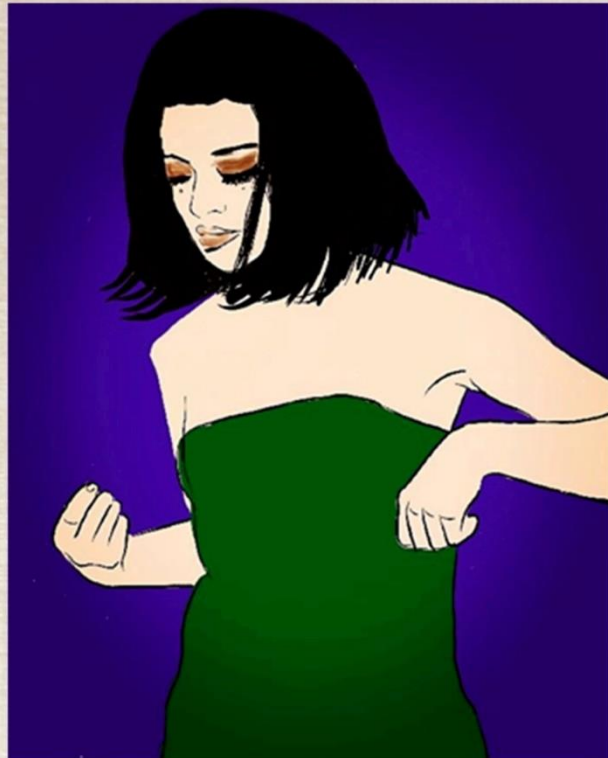
Art Work Style and themes developing in my work

First Self Portrait, 1994

Maenad Series of Paintings portraying
Women in relation to dance culture and identity

Figure 6.13: The Seren Sanclêr Project - An Education Herstory, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Black Sheep: Enfant Terrible Founder of Beca RiArt

Myfanwy Morgan

Beca RiArt was an anonymous group of feminist, female artists devoted to fighting sexism, racism and anti-Welsh sentiment within the art world and society. Associated with third wave feminism, the group formed in Cardiff in 1997 during the Welsh devolution referendum with the mission of bringing gender and racial inequality within the fine arts to light, addressing issues such as sexuality, racism, patriarchy, and female empowerment. It was not until 2012 when the Beca RiArt disbanded that the artists revealed their identity: Seren Sanclêr, Jesse Pryce, Megan Matthews, Bronwen James and Fflur Salois.

Influenced greatly by the Guerrilla Girls the five founding members of Beca RiArt were instantly recognised for the black sheep masks they wore to remain anonymous. at what radical art you will create and exhibit when you wear a mask."

Their name partly inspired by the nineteenth century protests against unfair taxation by south and mid Wales rioters - men dressed as women – reinforced the artist's group desire for anonymity and a homage to Beca, an anarchistic group of artists formed in the 1970s in Wales who were responsible for instigating the movement in the politicalization of art in the country.

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The group as a result have examined how various women artists have contributed to the artistic and cultural identity of Wales such as Gwen John, Nina Burnett, Mary Lloyd Jones, Claudia Williams and Nina Hamnett. Often overlooked, these female artists have played an enormous role but have rarely been given credit for their achievements thus Beca RiArt reclaim these women and celebrate their work and achievements. Also, group also explore the problems women face that impede or contribute to their artistic drive such as motherhood and family responsibilities.

The founding members mainly of Welsh descent decided upon the black sheep masks because Black sheep is an idiom used to describe an odd or disreputable member of a group, especially within a family. When asked about the masks in a recent interview, Seren Sanclêr answered "We wanted to show our heritage, our roots and reclaim the stereotype of the sheep, playfully expose Cymrophobia, but it was also important that we recreated the image of the sheep in our own way. White sheep reflect the herd mentality too so by using the black sheep we were making a statement that we were not prepared to follow conventions. From the beginning the press wanted publicity photos. We needed a disguise. It gave us our 'mask-ulinity'. Anonymity behind a mask is extremely liberating - You'd be surprised at what radical art you will create and exhibit when you wear a mask."

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Figure 6.14: The Seren Sanclêr Project - An Authentic Herstory, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2013)

Production of Art Work

Watercolour

Selfie

encapsulates the

self as a human

brand image
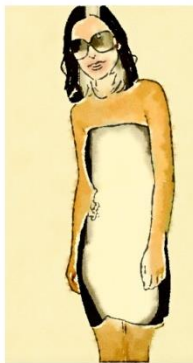
Constructing a self brand, self narrative

through various platforms. Especially social

media and through the art work itself.

Figure 6.15: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Creation of artefacts, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Figure 6.16: The Seren Sanclêr Project - In Safe Hands, Digital Art work (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)
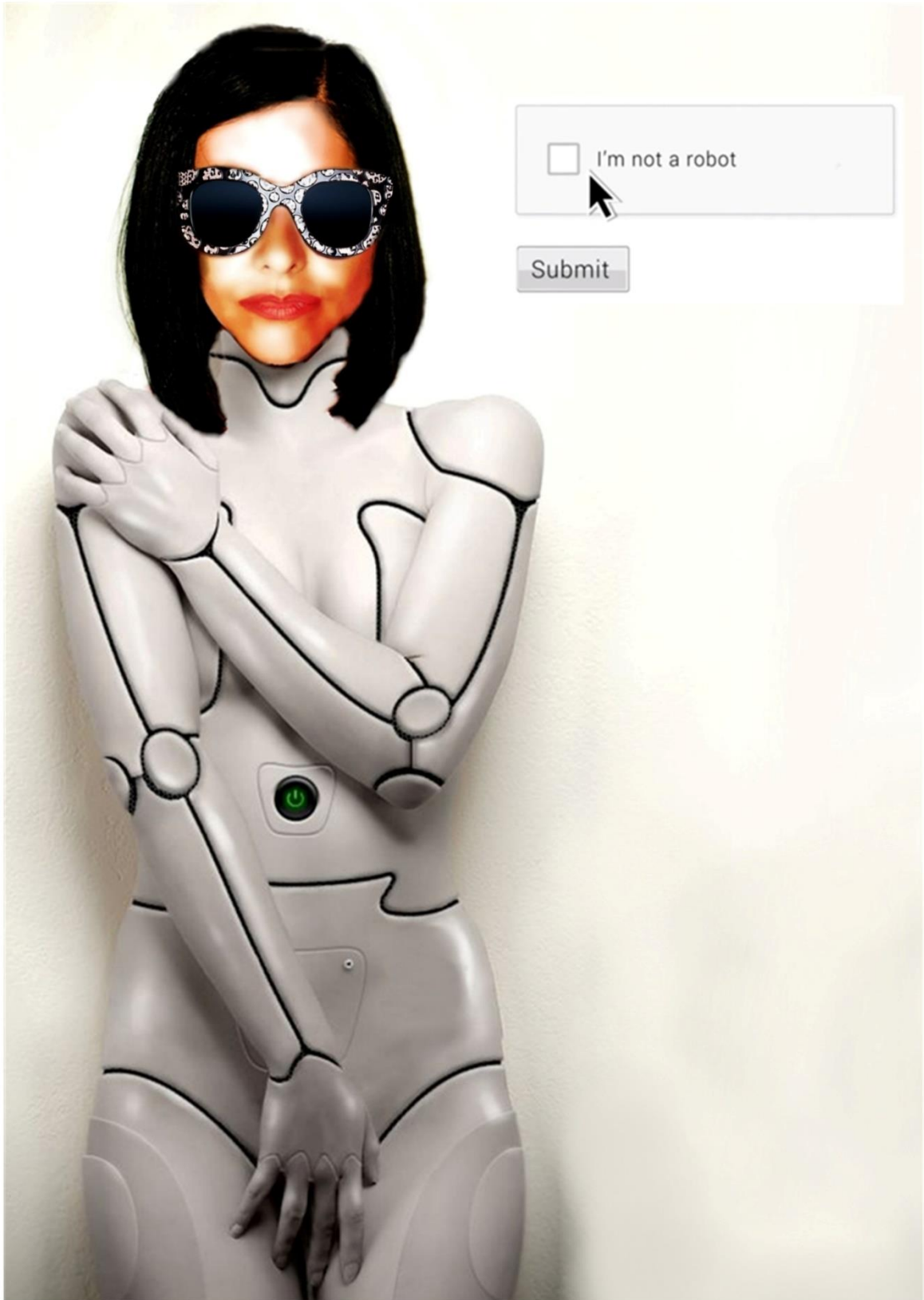
Figure 6.17: The Seren Sanclêr Project - I Am Not a Robot, Digital Art work (Seren Sanclêr, 2015)

Figure 6.18: The Seren Sanclêr Project – The Simulacrum of Seren Sanclêr, Digital Art work (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Labour Intensive Use of Platforms

Spectacles of Self

Networked Individualism
Reflections on digital culture
Selfcebrity
A product of a media saturated society

The development of my identity unfolds across multiple platforms

Figure 6.19: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Developing a Strategy for Identity Construction across platforms, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Figure 6.20: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Facebook Profile, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Figure 6.21: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Self Branding through Facebook, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Facebook Account

Implicit consumers

of the fictive artist

Favourable and consistent self

identity published, based on

self enhancement

Figure 6.22: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Promoting Art Work through Facebook, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Figure 6.23: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Facebook Page, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2010)

Each of the platforms are used to further develop a distributed narrative

ARTSPACE GALLERY

SHAPESHIFTER

THE MANY SELVES OF SEREN SANCLER

EDITED BY
SARA SYLVESTER

Academic Collection of Essays on my Work

Figure 6.24: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Collection of essays, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Foreword

Seren Sanclêr: I Want to Be Adored is the artist's first substantial survey exhibition in London, following on some twenty years after her first gallery show at the infamous [Blow-Out] gallery titled *Beautiful and Damned*. In the interim Sanclêr has become one of the most renowned women artists of her generation.

From the beginning, her art, a visual journal of photographs, paintings and sketches, has intently explored and celebrated the Acid House scene and subculture lifestyle of the community she belonged to in her twenties.

Love, desire, the body, miscarriage, motherhood and death have all been scrutinised through her work. Concerns about belonging, nationality, identity and womanhood have all served as starting points for works that have new modes for intimately tackling subjects of an explicit, disconcerting nature. Free of the constraints of conventional society, the artists, writers, musicians, drug dealers and other members of the demi monde. Sanclêr's art makes use of an extensive assortment of people in close proximity of her while disclosing her own personal experiences as raw material. Consequently, it is easy to believe that we are on intimate terms with her.

With this exhibition, Art Space Gallery hopes that by presenting the full range of the artist's output in the numerous media in which she has worked, including drawing, painting, photographs, sculpture and video that this will offer a clearer picture of the artist's world as interpreted by herself.
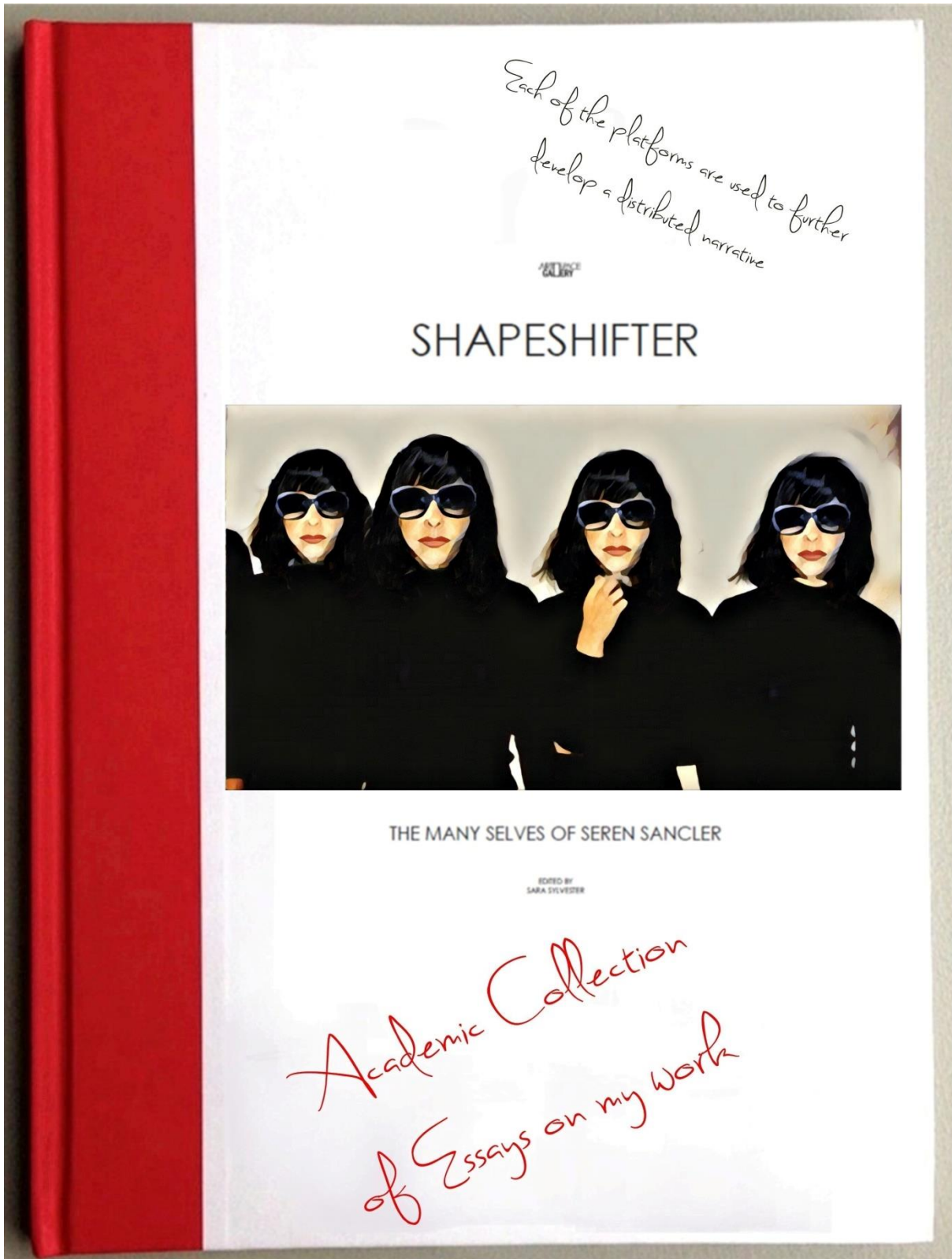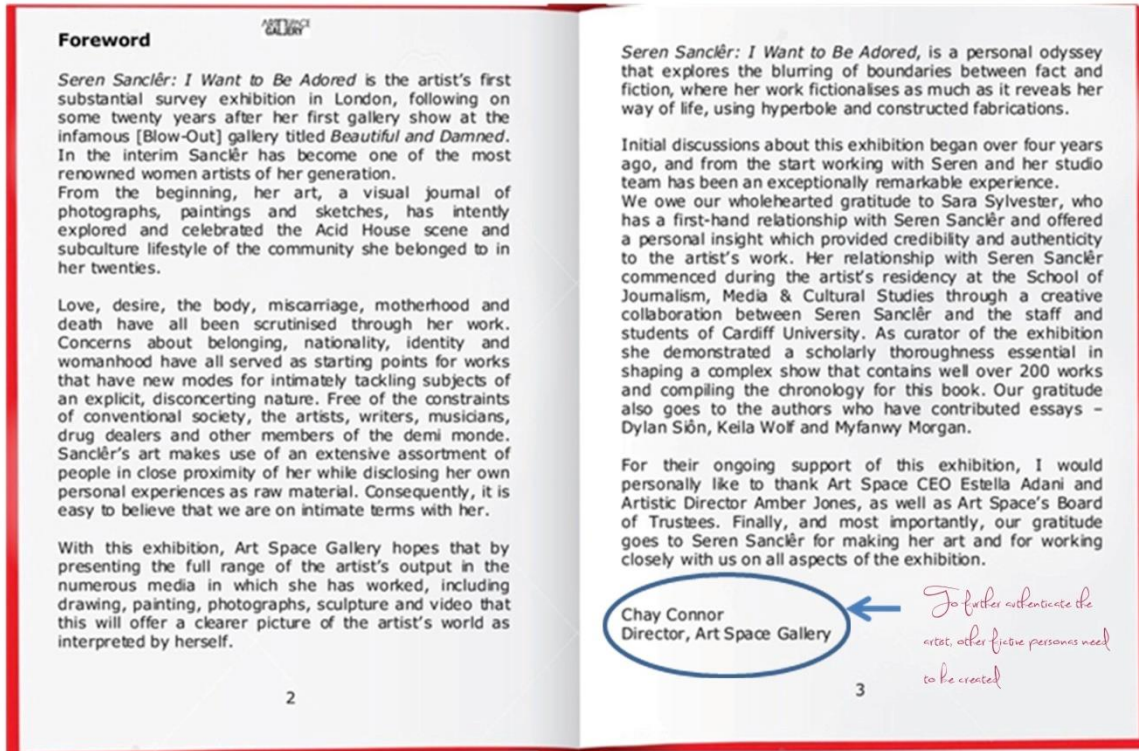
2

Seren Sanclêr: I Want to Be Adored, is a personal odyssey that explores the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction, where her work fictionalises as much as it reveals her way of life, using hyperbole and constructed fabrications.

Initial discussions about this exhibition began over four years ago, and from the start working with Seren and her studio team has been an exceptionally remarkable experience.
We owe our wholehearted gratitude to Sara Sylvester, who has a first-hand relationship with Seren Sanclêr and offered a personal insight which provided credibility and authenticity to the artist's work. Her relationship with Seren Sanclêr commenced during the artist's residency at the School of Journalism, Media & Cultural Studies through a creative collaboration between Seren Sanclêr and the staff and students of Cardiff University. As curator of the exhibition she demonstrated a scholarly thoroughness essential in shaping a complex show that contains well over 200 works and compiling the chronology for this book. Our gratitude also goes to the authors who have contributed essays – Dylan Siôn, Keila Wolf and Myfanwy Morgan.

For their ongoing support of this exhibition, I would personally like to thank Art Space CEO Estella Adani and Artistic Director Amber Jones, as well as Art Space's Board of Trustees. Finally, and most importantly, our gratitude goes to Seren Sanclêr for making her art and for working closely with us on all aspects of the exhibition.

Chay Connor
Director, Art Space Gallery

[handwritten annotation: To further authenticate the artist, other fictive personas need to be created]

3

The Sanclêr's: A Family Journey in Art

The Sanclêr family of artists is an important line of Welsh artists that reaches unbroken from the 16th century to the present. Just how far back before that their work extended is unclear, but the first artists who appear in recorded history served the Elizabeth the first. Royal women after Elizabeth, the first being Nell Gwyn, were the most important patrons for the women artists in the family.

Over the past 450 years the ten leading Sanclêr artists, extending through eighteen generations, have used a wide variety of media, styles, and techniques. In this way the family embodies an outline of main developments in women art history. Within the family all have been women artists, through the generations, in effect a case study for the emergence of women in public life and artistic leadership in Britain. By the same token, the Sanclêrs are based on an ancient Celtic matrilineal descent pattern, where lineage is traced through the mother and maternal ancestors including the inheritance of property and titles through the female line, hence the mother-line surname. Consequently, the way the family has often used adoption and marriages to reinforce certain desirable traits associated with the family's customs has ensured the continuation of the Sanclêr matrilineal customs. Therefore the Sanclêrs represent an interestingly rare example of the favourable position of its women historically whilst coexisting within patriarchal structures and ideologies.

Notably the last four generations in particular have marked the artistic talents of the Sanclêrs with each woman reflecting the great social changes and art movements through their work; these being Elen Sanclêr (1891 - 1996), Aneira Sanclêr (1920 - Present), Cari Sanclêr (1948 - Present) and Seren Sanclêr (1972 - Present).

Elen Sanclêr
British artist Elen Sanclêr was also a writer and illustrator, however she was famous more for her flamboyant bohemian

[handwritten annotation in margin: My history as an artist is further developed through the critical essays reflecting her feminist influences]

5

Sanclêr's Confessional Art: Blurring the Boundaries of Fact and Fiction

Sanclêr has collected mementos of her life conscientiously since childhood. Photographs, poems, journal entries, letters, art work and other memorabilia have been preserved like artefacts or sacred relics to be used to retell or re write the past through her art. This was evident in her first solo exhibition *Beautiful and Damned*, at White Cube, London, in 1995, which exposed a vast array of mementoes from her unconventional childhood in Ibiza to her life as a young artist in London, documenting London's burgeoning rave community. The title of the exhibition taken from F. Scott Fitzgerald's second novel portraying the Eastern elite during the Jazz Age is at once a morality tale, a meditation on love, money and decadence, and a social document. Paintings, photographs, text and slide shows focused on capturing and displaying the essence of her experiences and her relationships with lovers and friends on the periphery of the YBA movement and the acid house club movement.

However it was Sanclêr's contribution to the Royal Academy's *Sensation* exhibition in 1997 that first brought her to the attention of the general public and made her a household name. The famous series of photographs and reconstructed bathroom as a crime scene *I Wonder Who You Were*, document Sanclêr's miscarriage in minute detail emulating forensic photography.

The work in the guise of crime scene photography attempts to aid in the investigation of the events leading up to the miscarriage. Sanclêr did not know she was pregnant and was taking illegal drugs at the time thus the work explores the artist's guilt and her belief that she has committed a murder. These different expressions conjure up acute and oblique associations with the miscarriage. Together, they provide an artistic time capsule cementing her memory of the miscarriage to the physical and psychological cost of experiencing it. The series of photographs reveal the importance of the process of

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Figure 6.25: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Excerpts from Essays, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2014)

Instagram as Colaborative Mythic Drama

This art project demonstrates how audiences engage and interact with construction of the artist as transmediated self

Social media in particular invite the audience's participation

Photographs are props to construct a visual narrative between the artist's self brand and brands both embody the role of protagonist
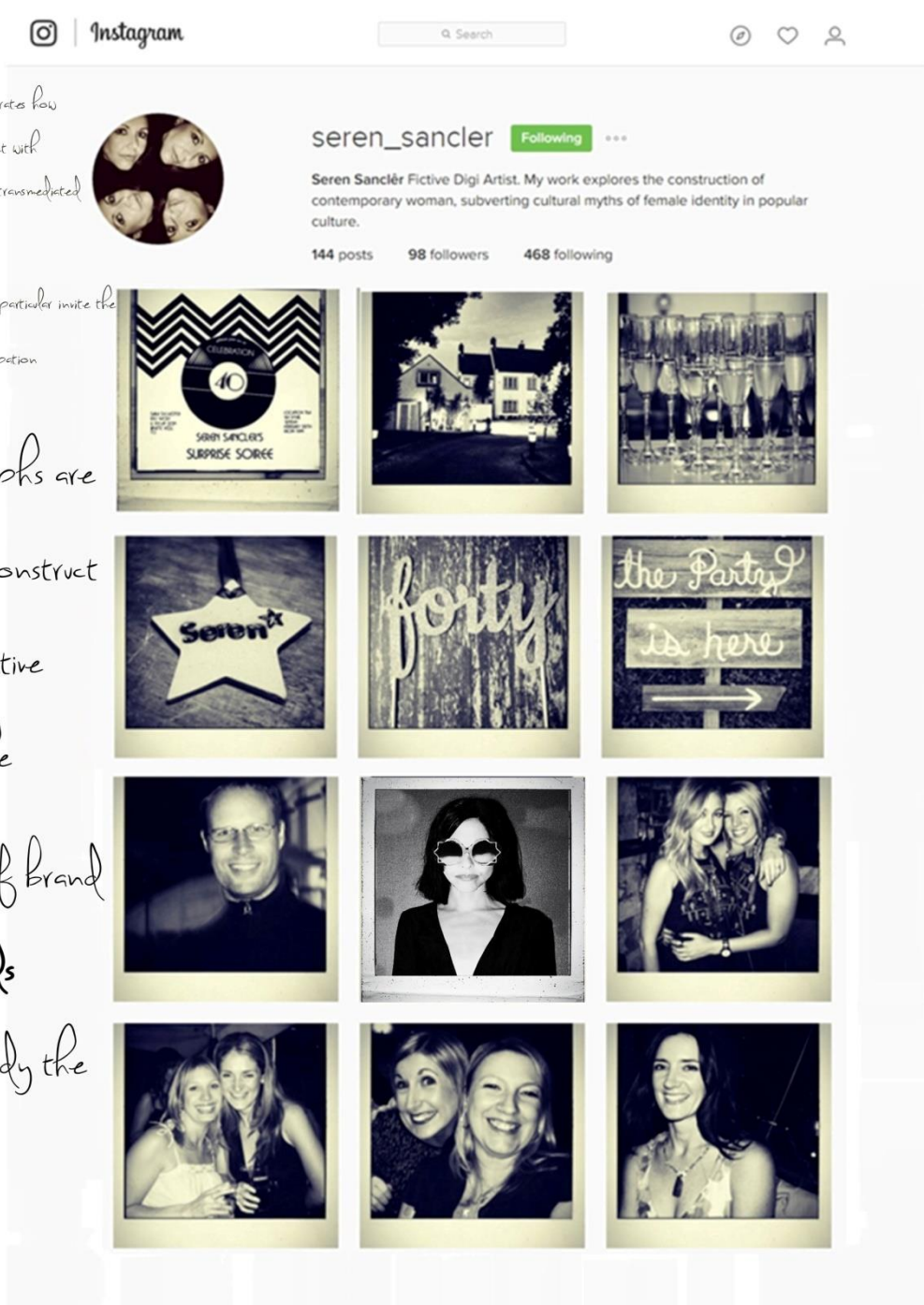

Figure 6.26: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Art Work on Instagram, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

253

seren_sancler Following ...

Seren Sanclêr Fictive Digi Artist. My work explores the construction of contemporary woman, subverting cultural myths of female identity in popular culture.

144 posts   98 followers   468 following

Definitely up for it! I'm sure a few friends would be too xx

This is brilliant and know I've got the party pictures to supply! X

Loving the sound of this!

Sounds wicked Xxxxx

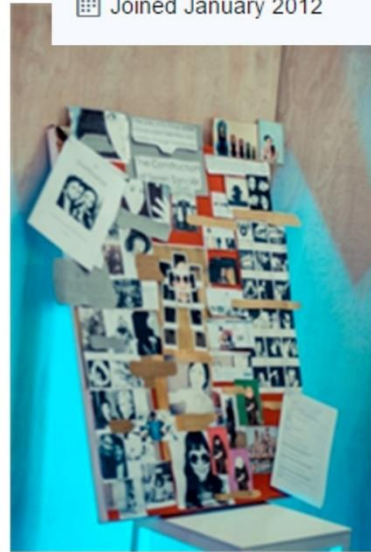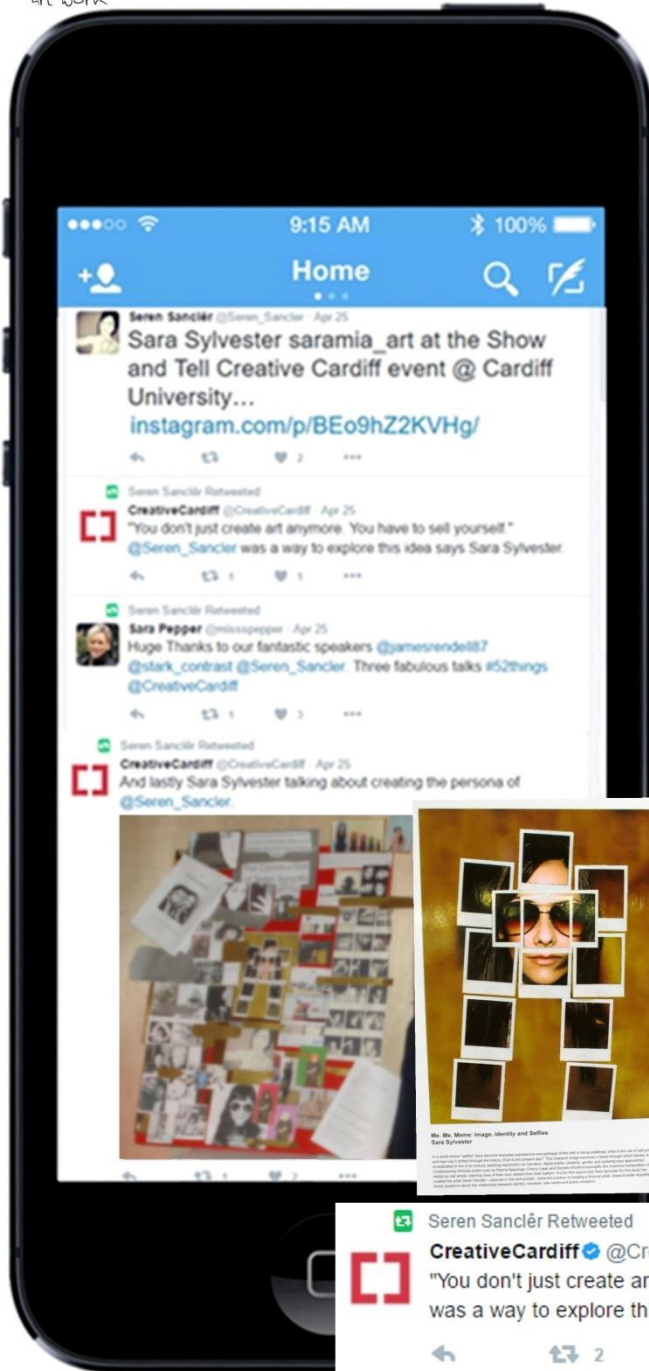@seren_sancler Wicked nite. Happy birthday seren

It's amazing!! I feel like I am there!!! I wanna be there I am in photo spirit

Fictitious disco momma, a celebration dance for your fictitious 40th!

Figure 6.27: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Synergy demonstrated between Facebook and Instagram, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Twitter

Academic discussion regarding my persona, the importance of branding and art work

Seren Sanclêr
@Seren_Sancler

My art is one of exposure, using life events as inspiration for works ranging from painting, drawing, photography, video and installation.

📍 Wales/ London/Lisbon
🔗 serensancler.blogspot.com
📅 Joined January 2012

The platforms working together bring the audience closer to the persona.

Seren Sanclêr Retweeted

CreativeCardiff ✔ @CreativeCardiff · 25 Apr 2016
"You don't just create art anymore. You have to sell yourself." @Seren_Sancler was a way to explore this idea says Sara Sylvester.

Figure 6.28 The Seren Sanclêr Project - Platforms working together Live performance and Twitter, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)
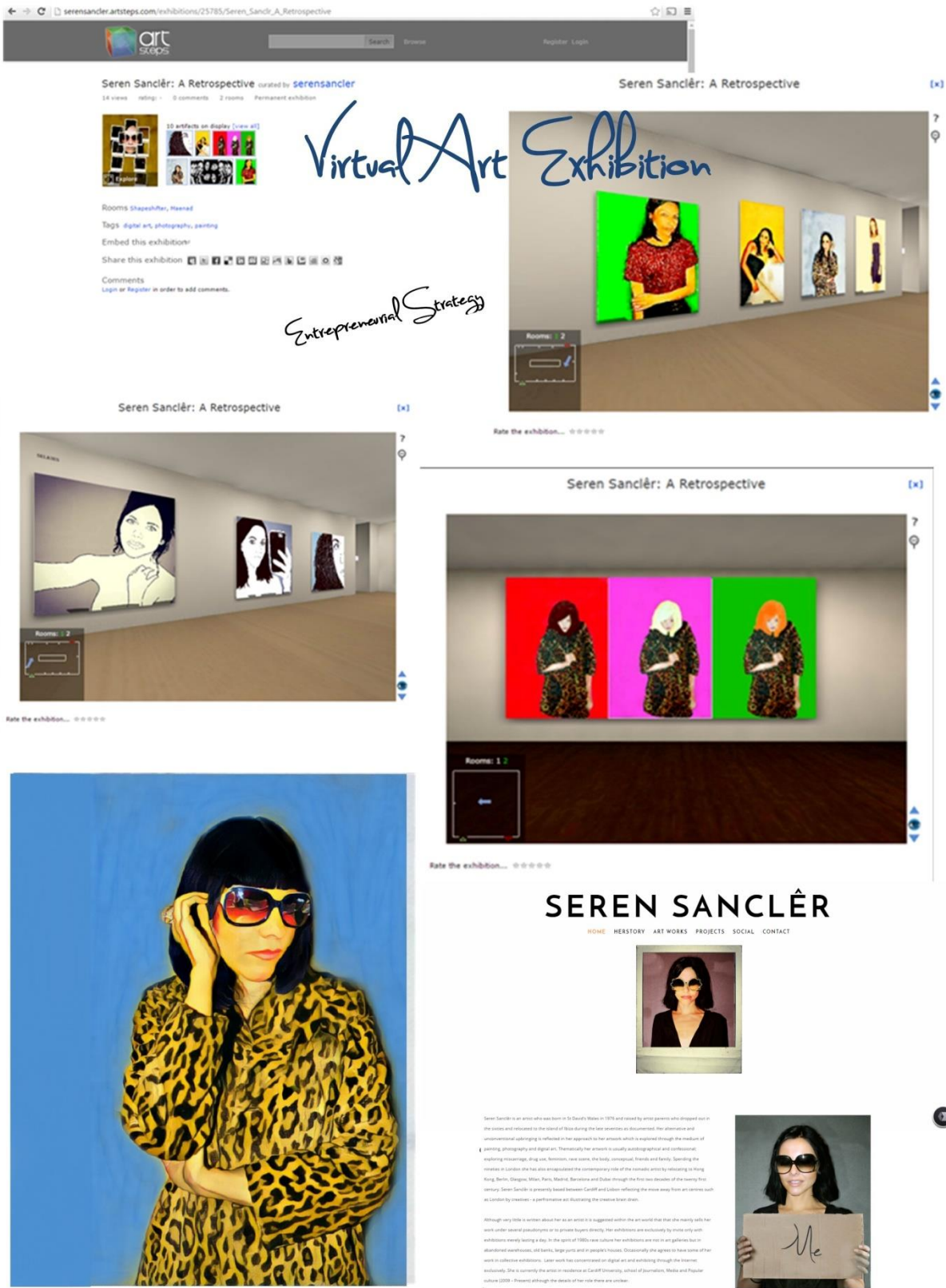
255

Figure 6.29: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Interactive Art exhibition, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

Facebook Thread 7th February 2015

Seren Sanclêr

Original one off modern art painting of Dubai Marina
90cm x 90 cm
Acrylic on canvas.
by myself.
1000 AED ono
Pick up Al Barsha

A N
Nope...not paying more than 1000 fills for this

Seren Sanclêr
Not asking you to...

J Q
That is so rude A N. How dare you!

S A I
A N go to Dragon Mart u should find good art for ur standards there

J Q
I think it is beautiful, I wish I had the money and I would buy it like a shot! I am disgusted that A N has the audacity to make a comment like that. So rude! Obviously no manners whatsoever! Go back to charm school!!!

L H
That's wonderful Seren! Totally agree with Johanna.

A H
Okay no offence but really how can you call that art. A six year old could do better. And if someone buys it for 1000dhs....that is just plain stupid.i wasnt insulting that girl that drawing

S A I
A N u must be 40 show us how can u paint and then we will argue

J Q
Oh my God...just keep your comments to your rude self! Didn't you get taught that if you can't say anything nice then don't say anything at all! You are making yourself look like a prick!

Seren Sanclêr Thank goodness the art galleries in the UK don't agree with you.. .

Seren Sanclêr
I think a troll would be a more closer a description. Cyber troll :)

J Q
Hahahahah ooops yes, you are right! Get a life troll!!!!!!!!!!!!

A N
Okay fine...im sorry i was rude to you miss **Seren** but since all these girls think i was being unreasonable and stupid why dont one of you buy it. Anyone?

J Q
If I had the money I would buy it straight away, give me the cash and I will buy it...TROLL!

A N
Oh and one more thing...i never said i looks bad..i just said people won't spend the money on it. Anyways i'm gone.

Seren Sanclêr
I suggest good sir that you should go away and leave us to the usual buying selling of items and keep your opinions of what merits art to yourself. Since you have no interest in the goods simply as you say - go.

K A
Seren Sanclêr you have great skill. Don't sell this masterpiece on Facebook page. first check the galleries in dubai. you probably will get higher.1000 dirham too less for it.

Seren Sanclêr
Thank K A. You are too kind. I am running out of room in my studio and want to make room for new works. Galleries also charge a lot more and I end up getting about the same amount. I am in the process of setting up my website. Just thought I'd test the waters. Didn't realise I'd have the critics responding as well! :)

J Q
GOOD...Mr Charming

K M
I wonder how you would value a Picasso though A N?

P J H
Try selling through More Cafe? Gold and diamond park? Good luck. Just ignore the uneducated ill mannered, rude and obnoxious!

Conversation started 7 February 2015

Hi Seren

I noticed your post on second hand Dubai. Love your work!

I am the organiser of an upcoming consumer art fair called world art dubai - Google us and have a look. If your interested in exhibiting and selling your work we would love to have you take part

Look forward to hearing from you

Art, Aesthetics, Objectiveness and Trolling

Figure 6.30: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Art Work and the Facebook Thread, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2015)

Live Performance
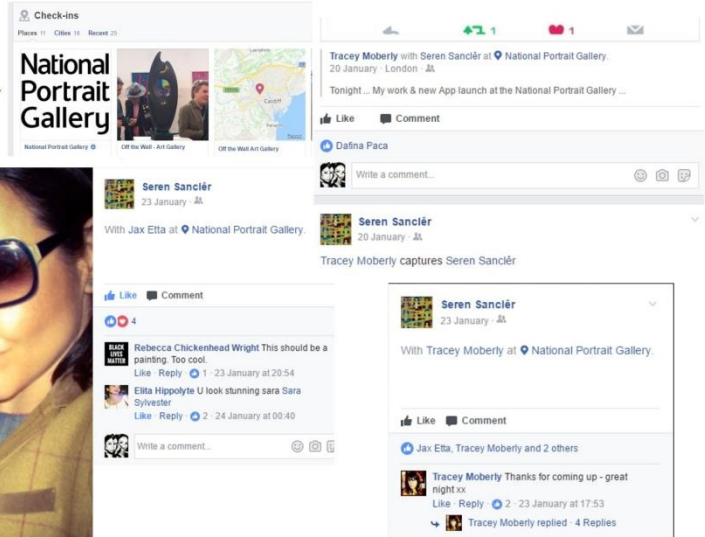
Live Performance is essential for the fictive artist as furthering the transfictive or transmediated identity

The artist identity as narrative is contingent on all story pieces across all mediums.

FORUM, member 2013

Volunteer work at artist run contemporary art gallery G39 2012/2014

Painting at my study in Dubai, 2015

Opening Evening at Off the Wall Contemporary Art Gallery Cardiff

Figure 6.31: The Seren Sanclêr Project - Documentation of Live Performance across platforms, an extract taken from the Artist Journal (Seren Sanclêr, 2015)
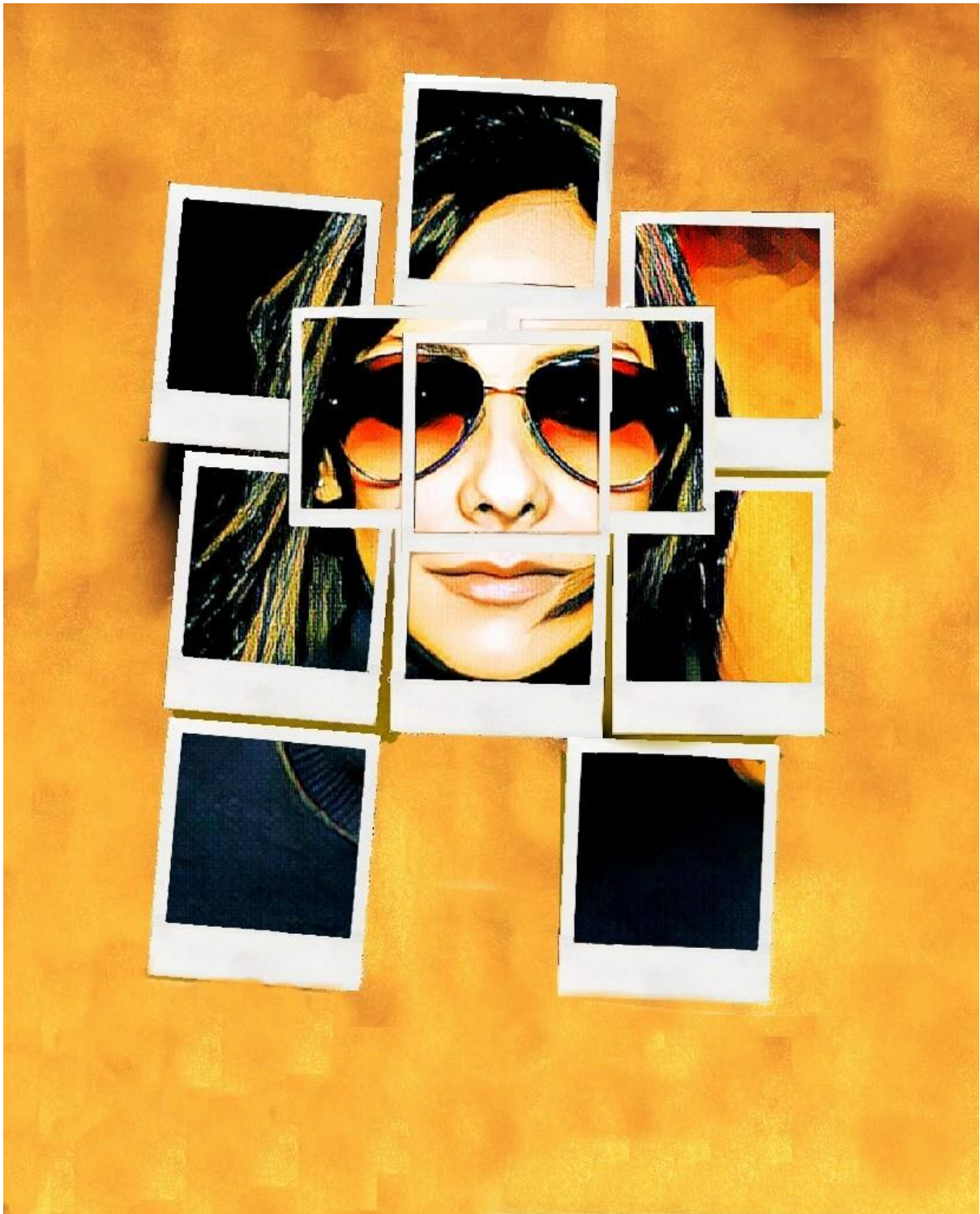
7

7

Conclusion

Figure 7.1: Me Me Memes (Seren Sanclêr, 2015)

6.1. Reflecting on Transfictive Heteronyms Artists

In this thesis through an analytical and visual autoethnographical approach I present ways to distinguish and study the transmediated self phenomenon with a specific focus on transfictive entities. Building on a growing interest in scholarly research whilst incorporating new forms of pedagogic innovation to explore transmedia practices, particularly the transmediated self, the supposition underlying this thesis is that it needs to be recognised as a distinctive area of study within the field of transmedia and consequently needs to be extricated from other transmedia practices.

The approach taken as presented in this study explores the ways in which transmedia practices are being used to construct fictional identities which in turn is reflecting the ways in which individuals within society are manufacturing their self-brands in a form of hybrid media/identity convergence.

The digital documentation of our lives is arguably the most central artistic form of our time since many of us live our lives through a documentary lens via social media. We record and curate our days through Snapchat, Instagram stories, Periscope, Twitter, Facebook Live. More than ever, our everyday lives are mediated through media, which suggests that the transfictive heteronym artists are the most appropriate art form to explore how we live now as well as offer an alternative playful way of exploring the fake news conundrum. By challenging and subverting the codes and conventions of the transmediated self through parafictive and mimesis the transfictive artists engage with the fragmentation of contemporary identity.

When considering the importance of establishing a clear identity for a transfictive artist from the research conducted examining the case studies and the autoethnographical work undertaken the construction of a fictive entity requires a well-planned and detailed biography. Establishing narratives to strengthen the identity of the fictive artist allows for the creators to explore issues of authenticity, identity politics and even play with storytelling of the self – where rewriting of a life history can illustrate the ways in which individuals can mould and perfect their preferred persona.

Motivation for the artists choosing to create fictive artists from a female perspective is presented as being wide-ranging for the different creators – where each fictive project explores different aspects and themes associated with parafiction art. Whilst it appears perhaps an instinctive choice to construct an artist who happens to be female because the

creators are mainly female and it seems a natural process to create a life experience from a female perspective for a fictive character. Yet the central role both Murray and Scanlan play in the construction of their fictive artists respectively, particularly in relation to the initial conception, should not be overlooked.

The identities of each of the transfictive artists is realised through the combined use of platforms which each as singular components enhance and support the construction of the personas respectively. As a combined whole the components ensure a more cohesive narrative which is as complex and demanding as any real life artist counterpart. Narrative in its many forms across the platforms is the essence of this particular transfictive practice.

As illustrated by the selected case studies, the influences of singular and collective authorship as well as gender and race can potentially have differing impacts on the construction of a fictive entity. Equally, each of these factors can also have implications which directly affect public reception of the fictive projects. Whilst some of the fictive artists have not been directly created to explore identity politics with a feminist agenda, concerns regarding representation of women are inescapable. Intrinsically linked to this is the issue of woman as object, since if feminist artists are attempting to subvert patriarchal representations of women, where does feminism fit when considering the issue of artist as brand when identity is potentially reduced to a commodity?

As evident in Chapter 2 the literature review and Chapter 3 Methodology, the approach in this thesis has been to draw on research questions from a variety of fields in order to enrich understanding of the phenomenon of transfictive practice. By encompassing identity, performance, media convergence, feminist art, branding and digital technologies - each make evident that whilst different fields are driven by different research questions, when collectively combined they can provide a complex rendering of the object of study.

In chapters two, 4 and 5, the consideration of the practice of transfictive artists in light of feminism, branding, identity performance and the development of transmedia texts, namely the transmediated self through the significant use of digital technology is explored at length. I agree with certain theorists that digital identity illustrates the convergence of self across platforms both in the real and virtual world. Equally the ways in which the transfictive artists' identities are constructed does indeed emulate the ways in which individuals at large are self-branding via social media platforms.

The fictive artists as presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate whether with a specific feminist agenda or not, the influences and impact of feminism on art are overwhelmingly sensed. However whilst I acknowledge that there is still great debate regarding representations of the female body and how it is portrayed particularly through via social media, the fact that the transfictive artists exist somewhere between the real and imagined reinforces the importance of their narratives to be told.

Critically reflecting on the research process it is clear that the decision to incorporate creative practice was of great benefit to the research study. This was supported by the fact that the transfictive artist was able to be developed over a seven year period allowing for the persona to fully form with an extensive body of work. The space to be able to cultivate a fictive artist physically and virtually permitted me to really understand the process of constructing a persona; it allowed me to really engage in the development of her identity and explore different ways to utilise media a range of platforms. Equally, during the seven year period I was able to experience first-hand the developments in digital technology and experience social media through its many forms. This placed me in a prime position to document the rise and sometimes demise of platforms in particular in relation to the research.

Challenges faced whilst completing the research were mainly the time taken up creating art works and developing Seren Sanclêr's persona both in the physical and virtual world. It became evident as I became more immersed in the creative practice how overwhelmingly daunting the task could be at times. Output across social media platforms and performing as her at events and exhibitions, whilst with other commitments, demonstrated the intense labour required to maintain her identity.

6.2. Self and Performativity

As touched upon in chapter five's summary Butler's post-structuralist argument that it is inaccurate to consider that there is a distinction between real and constructed identities rather identity is always a constructed performance is exemplified by the transfictive heteronyms of this study. The parafictive personas undeniably reflect the ways in which gender could be perceived as an impersonation of an ideal dominant convention of gender. However what is more important is the ways in which mimesis is used to explore issues of gender, sexuality, race, branding, celebrity and authenticity of the artist.

This research offers through the artists discussed an insight in to the ongoing playful practices associated with digital technologies, reflecting the ways in which society engagement as users through a wide range of digital media practices demonstrate a playfulness to engage in fictive practices whilst also marking the blurring of production and consumption. Thus play continues to be embedded in digital production despite at a time when society has become most suspicious of professional media outlets. Equally the importance of the body in some of the fictive artists' work, particularly in the form of social media digital art, illustrates the potential of digital technology and platforms for women in general. The DIY aesthetic that selfies and other social media forms offer women is presently unknown but its potential is limitless with infinite possibilities to question and explore the female perspective. In a post digital age, feminist artists have access to a potential global audience.

Whilst I recognise certain theorists express concerns regarding the ways in which women present their bodies which could be argued perpetuate traditional depictions thus maintaining the male gaze, I would like to assert as illustrated by the fictive artists particularly Ona Artist, that Schrager shows imagination and ingenuity in using her body as a site of resistance in her art. Again it is important to reiterate that digi feminist art is in its infancy – artists such as Schrager are paving the way for all feminist artists to continue to unravel the patriarchal preconceptions and capitalist commodification of woman.

The processes undertaken in the establishment of the transmediated self are unsurprisingly closely connected to the practice of creating a transfictive artist - something which is demonstrated in chapter 4, chapter 5 and chapter 6. In the sphere of self-branding and identity storytelling, an individuals' transmediated self comprises of the actual world and the virtual where the fabrication of preferred-self portrayal particularly via social media exists within a blurred representation of a part real part fictional world. As presented the transfictive artists operate in the same way to establish a sense of authentic credibility.

By considering the ways in which the "Internet has become a stage" (Senft, 2015: 347) for individuals, this is established through carefully constructed concepts that create plausible connections between the illusory and actual reality of the potential audience. Whereas the transmediated self of an individual is usually firmly based in the real world and the manufacturing of the preferred-self is composed of enhancement for a desired identity; the transfictive artist as a completely invented construction requires the artist/s to assemble an entire believable entity that appears to live in both worlds. The key

component to this as presented in chapter 4, 5 and 6 is firstly the artefacts representing the work of the transfictive artist, the physical embodiment of the artist which further augments the existence of the artist both in the real and virtual world as well as the presence of the artist via digital technology which further facilitate the link between the fictive artist and the real world. While some of these devices can be observed historically in artists' development of alter egos and characters as art work, the rise of these practices, the growing popularity of this genre of art production and the increasing use of digital technological art methods is undeniable and noteworthy.

Transfictive artists and in turn theoretical concerns surrounding the transmediated self reinforce the importance of performance in relation to identity where the embodiment of self is enacted across the platforms; where each platform in the real and virtual world has become a stage. Thus demonstrating the ways literary and performance approaches to the practice of identity construction by merging the actual and virtual world in an attempt to can manufacture a plausible persona, which in turn because of its transfictiveness highlights the heavy labour driven manufacturing of constructing an identity.

It is important to bear in mind all of these concerns are also explored from a design perspective, explicating my practitioner approach as seen in chapters 5 and 6. Whilst the inclusion of case studies reinforces and cements the findings of the research, a key methodological difference with this thesis is the inclusion of a visual autoethnographical chapter which illuminates transfictive practices directly. From this position the employment of an autoethnographical approach, as argued throughout this thesis, encapsulates the unique knowledge and skills needed to create a transfictive persona project.

The emerging theories of scholars Senft (2013) and Elwood (2014) reinforce the importance of examining the ways the transmediated self is transforming the ways identity construction is being (re)packaged and influenced by identity stardom and the self-brandsphere. This research through an exploration of fictional women artists and the creation of a fictive identity signifies and identifies the emerging trend over the last thirty years whilst also recognising its impact on society in relation to the development of digital technology. This thesis asserts that rather than performance being limited the opposite can be documented as the growing interest in exploring self and fictive personas in art reflect the larger phenomenon of reinvention and marketing of self which are prevalent across social media sites. Digital technology, Social media and transmedia marketing strategies have encourages people to see themselves as users, products, and packaged

commodities. Such marketing approaches have been adopted by people to create an edited persona, cultivating their *identity stardom* applying these tactics enhance social status by strategically appealing to viewers and sharing personal information.

6.3. Rebooting Cyberfeminism

With the current resurgence of interest in feminism and growth in the proportion of women artists choosing to digital as an art form, this study clearly the need to re-visit cyber-feminist discourse. The case studies, while transfictive artists, each embodies the present resurgence of contemporary feminist artists who are creating experimental, innovative work which extends the boundaries of gender, identity and authenticity thus illustrating what digital feminisms can mean today. Where the introduction asserted a reluctance to define feminism through the wave metaphor, favouring that key changes in the movement should be signified more as signposts, there is an equal reluctance to differentiate feminist factions.

Instead as presented throughout the thesis, the research interest lies in the ways digital technology had supported the development of a participatory culture, one that has reinvigorated a rise in digital feminist artists. What is important is that in light of digimodernism it can be argued that contemporary digital feminisms are equally impacted by the blurring of real and cyber boundaries. Whilst post feminism, echoing postmodernism, considers the fragmentation of identity, digi feminism embraces this fragmentation by fusing the physical and virtual.

The creators of Ona Artist, Cherry Lazar and Seren Sanclêr in a way represent women artists as Pygmalion - using technology to carefully construct and bring to life Galatea. A contemporary Galatea that exists partly in the physical and virtual world, a simulacra which illuminates the fabricated nature of women's socially constructed identities whilst also embodying the fluid nature and complexities of female identity and the performance of gender as well as critiquing men's cultural constructions of female representation.

6.4 Post Postmodern Tease - Identity formation

Reflecting on concerns regarding the fragmented postmodern self particularly in relation to Goffman's work and recent scholarly interest in revisiting his exploration of identity performance, there is clearly a need for further research to explore identity in light of digital technology. Key to reconsidering contemporary identity is the need to reassess society's use of digital technology and in particular use of social media. The case studies

demonstrate that whilst the self can still be perceived as fragmented, the construction of self via social media centralises the importance of authoring a preferred persona. Where a postmodern identity formation is marked by the self being erased through a saturation of media images, the transfictive heteronyms through mimesis reflects the fluidity of the transmediated self.

In this way the virtual self as a sign has indeed become a reality, where identity presented through social media is a commodity however the transmediated self allows for people to author/play multiple selves simultaneously in real time and cyberspace. The transfictive heteronyms of this study show that the fragmented self needs to be explored in new ways building upon the ideas of postmodernism.

6.5. And Woman Created Woman – A Posthumanism Process

On balance, it is hoped that this research offers a response to what it means to be human in an increasingly technologized and networked world. Re-evaluating Haraway's Manifesto for Cyborgs (1985) in light of the transmediated self, highlights perhaps the importance and potential relevance of posthumanist scholarship, focusing on the constantly changing boundaries between ourselves and our material surround thus demonstrating the hybridity of our nature. The concept of the transmediated self in itself cements this research's belief that our virtual and physical are organically intertwined. The mimetic nature of the transfictive heteronym artists explored demonstrate the ways art mirrors cultural movements demonstrating the fluid nature of self between the physical and virtual.

As it has been made apparent throughout this thesis, consideration of postmodernism and its impact on the development of transfictive personas and society's engagement in constructing the transmediated self has been a key component. Whilst this research argues with feminists that postmodernism is a significant influence on the ways the artists and in turn society are using digital technologies in creative ways reflecting the continued importance of mimesis for a variety of means such as the reclaiming of the female body. The researcher would like to assert that it is clear we are at a time of great change where with growing media literacy, the impact and development of postmodernism coinciding with the continued development of digital technology at society's disposal this clearly signposts a shift. Whilst this research demonstrates the hybridity of the postmodern self, digimodernism illustrates the ways in which this is exemplified by society through their ubiquitous use of social media. The transfictive heteronyms as art works demonstrate the ways in which self and identity are not fixed. In turn the transmediated self illustrates the

continual process of labouring a preferred self, as the boundaries between self and others, and between the different selves are negotiated.

Bringing the appearance of life to the artists and increasing identification of Self in fictive personas is essential for the self-brandsphere, especially when displaying an identity across multiple-platforms. The multi-layered production of auto transmediality within the self-brandsphere to construct the transmediated self reflects how digital technology has given rise to the ways in which individuals are assembling a preferred self that in a similar way to Hollywood stars and established celebrities actively design their own identity stardom.

It is clear from this research that the growth in popularity of the construction of fictive artists is directly related to the development of digital technologies which allows for seamless inventive shifts and infinite opportunities for performance in exploration of identity play. This in turn reflects how individuals are involved in identity play and the careful construction of their digital self. Equally digital cameras and mobile phones, and in turn programs such as Adobe Photoshop and the Prisma app, have made playing with reality accessible to all. As demonstrated by the five case studies, digital technologies are continuing to open new avenues to explore transmediated selves.

Fictional artists as transmedia texts through their constructed narratives and imagined identities transgress boundaries in order to establish a persona that exhibits and performs existing in both the real and digital world. The artists' use digital media to promote their work, present work in exhibitions, sometimes are physically present, use archival footage and photographs, post and respond via social media as if they are real. People respond to them as real entities as exemplified by the case studies included as part of this research.

The embodiment of the fictive artists' persona' explored in this research and the creative construction of Seren Sanclêr and her evolution over a period of time is paradigmatic of a transformation of subjectivity induced by the continuous evolving digital technology. The case studies specifically make evident the increasing co-existence and interweaving of realities and fiction in relation to identity construction and development of the transmediated self. The fictive artists magnify the ongoing merging of virtual and physical selves as well as the emerging importance of self-branding of individuals within society in the twenty-first century.

While certain scholars have raised concerns regarding the potential dangers of digital technology in relation to identity as well as harbouring fears of a disappearance of the Real behind its simulacrum, this research in a similar way to emerging studies reinforce that the Real and Virtual have demonstrated the capability to complement and expand one other by giving rise to individuals play with identity performance where fiction and authenticity interweave. Where in the case of women artists the opportunities to experiment in digi art and explore the potential of digi feminism resulting in a rich and innovative creative digital landscape which inspires more engaging and embodied interactive fictions to perform identity.

The case studies testify of the power of the fictive identifies as transmediated identities to different degrees to create a blurring between fiction and reality as well demonstrate peoples' interest in constructing public personas, self-branding and performance play. The identities of each of the fictional women artists reflect the possibilities of transmedia storytelling for constructing and establishing a persona. The development of the transmediated self emerges through the selected case studies demonstrating the complex interaction of signs of the Real combined with the constructed fiction of the artist. This fusion between reality and fiction leads to interaction on the parts of viewer/friend/follower actively seeking to engage in the performance. The artefacts and constructed narrative across the platforms such as the artwork, photographs, live performance, interaction via social media all reinforce the effects of the Real and helps establish the fictive persona as an authentic identity thus the viewer/friend/follower becomes to some extent immersed in the fictional life of the artist. By using fictional artists as a basis it allows the research to explore how fictive personas are created but it also reveals how people are using the same methods to engage in their own fictive performance of a constructed identity of their choosing.

The transfictive heteronyms demonstrate how digital technologies have given feminist artist a range of evocative and powerful figurations to imagine new ways of being a subject in the world. Indeed further research into the ways a feminist posthuman approach could be useful model for understanding women's existence in an age of digital manipulation and alterations in relation to social media.

From this stance, a posthuman approach, as presented through this research, can potentially offer feminism a new way of thinking about considering the dynamics of the subject/technology relationship, and in turn, a politics of identity. As inferred throughout this study, the influence of digital technologies on postmodernism is extensive. The

transfictive heteronym exceeds signification; simulation is just the beginning of the process as it transforms into something else, a product of the fusion between the virtual and physical with the potential of an infinite memetic effect. Consequently, alternative methods of interpreting self and identity is needed - one that interrogates what defines the real and virtual, machine and organism, self and Other in this post digital era.

Thus this research advocates a new approach to images, reality and subjectivity in the context of twenty-first century technologies.

As explored earlier in Chapter 5, taking Dyer's (1979) exploration of the paradox of the star as a means to consider the methods by which I performed as Seren Sanclêr it became extremely important in the process of developing the transfictive heteronym that I became more absent whilst Seren Sanclêr became more present. In this pursuit it can also be argued that Seren Sanclêr's body, theoretically also my body, becomes an interface system, such a strategy offered an alternative to conceptualising the virtual and the real as oppositional terms. A transfictive heteronym artist whether as delegated performances or by the artist's themselves suggests possible ways by which women might engage with representations of the self beyond the restraints of identity politics.

As clearly evidenced in this research Baudrillard offers feminist engagements in relation to the digital technology human relationship; where exploration of the image serves as an incisive tool for feminist analysis of contemporary culture in relation to social media, and digital technologies. However this research asserts that the blurring of boundaries has broadened; complete disruption of the binary system distinctions between the real and illusion, self and Other, origin and sign. In analysing concepts such as identity, reality and the body in the context of simulation, this study through the transfictive heteronyms has offered ways to consider how such displacements may be understood. In turn it also proposes new possibilities for theorising representation of identity in a society of post simulation. Thus it is perhaps pertinent to suggest that the transfictive artist represents the "blurring boundaries without burning bridges" (Braidotti, 1994: 4) and signposts the need for feminist scholars to reconsider the ways in which women today are using technology; projecting their selves in the real and digital, demonstrating a coexistence that is both physically and virtually simultaneously.

6.6. Authorship Resurrection

Whilst this research acknowledges that social media represents a paradigmatic shift in the use of digital technologies, and provide new possibilities for developing new art practices, these technologies also challenge notions of authenticity and authorship. As discussed

briefly in Chapter 2, the concept of author has been conflicting. Whilst Barthes argues against the method of reading and criticism that relies on author's identity rather favouring that the text should be liberated; authorship in relation to the transmediated self, digital technologies and in turn the creation of transfictive heteronyms offers further complexities. The fictive artists demonstrate that authors are not eliminated rather they are multiplied through transmedia engagement, demonstrating that as transfictive entities they reflect the changing nature of the author-reader.

Individuals, such as those studied in this research creating fictive personas as art work challenge the authenticity of the art object and the authorship of the artist whilst also demonstrating the importance of networked digital technologies in the lives of individuals and groups worldwide. The emergence of the transmediated-self announces a media symbiosis that will transform the ways identity formation and the increasing importance of performance is evolving in light of digital modernism. The impact of digital technology on identity construction and self-branding across platforms seem to lead towards user-centric employments with authorial control unlike any other time in history and increasingly sophisticated performances where identities interweave as multiple constructed personas, real and virtual, factual and fictional, welcoming and accepting of symbiotic interactions with digital entities in hybrid realities. As the fictional artists demonstrate, individuals are interweaving narratives of the self across platforms in unparalleled ways, profoundly redefining the embodied experience of the digital persona and the systems of representation.

Each of the artists demonstrates the mechanics of identity construction thus making visible the performance and the efforts required to continue the evolvement of the transmediated self, whilst simultaneously reconsidering if it is still accurate to perceive identity construction and authenticity as being diametrically opposed. Self-branding of each of the artists as transmediated personas demonstrate different degrees of success where each artist seeks to project and establish a specific artist persona in order to produce a particular reaction from people, whether to highlight the life of an artist, play with authenticity, reject labelling and hide behind anonymity or for fame and career success. However it can be ascertained that they exemplify the impact of digital technology on society in the twenty-first century particularly when considering identity in relation to performativity.

There is no doubt that transmedia storytelling is having an impact on the established ways in which the ways individuals are constructing a public persona in order to successfully

participate in self-branding. By the same turn, digital technology and the way individuals' record and archive personal narratives, create and maintain social relationships and express and present ourselves to our friends, family and the world reflect the growing importance of self-branding and constructed identity formation for individuals within society.

Where it is recognised that social networks and channels can present brands with a broad array of media opportunities to engage customers, the same can be applied to the ways the transmediated self is developed across platforms. The marketing strategies which were primarily used to engage with brands have been adopted by people and in turn artists to develop self-branding in all its forms (complete reinvention of identity/deliberate categorisation of self/alter ego exploration). Using a transmedia approach, an individual's preferred public persona can be constructed across each medium in different ways, creating the appearance of a more authentic representation of the persona and supporting the development of self-branding. Instinctively individuals have embraced transmedia storytelling into their self-presentation construction through a combination of media strategies which defines a new Self-brandsphere.
The artists explored in this research, demonstrate how as transmedia texts they can capture attention, steer online experiences of the persona, and initiate conversations whilst ensuring the continued development of self-branding.

Identity stardom is driven by the desire for status. The development of the artists' transmediated selves can be measured by the attention, visibility and engagement with others thus demonstrating the process where essential components of a fictive persona are dispersed meticulously across multiple deliver channels for the purpose of constructing and advancing the artists' identities. The artist's identity and establishing its authenticity relies specifically upon creation and distribution of information in its many forms, where the narrative or transmedia myth making extends over a range of different media platforms. The artist's identity develops through the different forms of media where distinctive elements emerge in multiple places with each medium contributing and enriching the fictive persona in different ways. Such identity construction reflects the work process required to sustain the self within the self-brandsphere.

Where the artists deviate from traditional transmedia texts is the fact that they are not focused on the creation of a fictional world but on the development of a singular persona that appears to live in the real world, therefore the focus is on the process of identity

building. The collective influence of digital technologies, transmedia storytelling and brand marketing strategies has directly influenced how the fictive artists as consumers construct the flow of stories across multiple media platforms in order to develop identity stardom. Equally the important role of social media sites in this exchange commodifies the Self within a digital context thus establishing a technology of subjectivity.

As a result it can be argued that subjectivity, by incorporating strategies of commodification and promotion adopted from advertising, marketing, and celebrity culture are now applied to the presentation of the self. Transmedia Storytelling, therefore offers a means of comprehending the ways in which identity performance is incorporating self-branding which are transforming individuals' personas into commodities. The artists examined for this research plot the development of the transmediated self and as an emerging popular art genre signify they ways in which people in general are consciously participating in identity stardom, regarding oneself as a commodity and strategically constructing a preferred Self within the self- brandsphere. The varying successes of the artists explored demonstrate the need to create a visible presence online, particularly through social media since the potential outreach for a global audience cannot be ignored.

This thesis has argued that the development of the transmediated self has grown exponentially with the corresponding rise of social media thus encouraging the artists to construct fictive identities in ways that are clearly influenced by traditional marketing strategies in the development of branding.

Each of the artists in different ways demonstrate the famous slogan of the second wave feminist movement - the personal is political, whether this has negative or positive connotations is debateable. The transmediated self in the purist of self-branding demonstrates that whilst the fictive artists demonstrate creative expression through labour they also reflect neoliberal influences on the ways these constructions take place. However this does not mean that this should be perceived as always a negative factor, rather, digital technology demonstrates that as a model, the transmediated self as an artist is not only viable but a successful merging of creative and branding identity discourse. Whilst it is accepted that the case studies are composed of mainly white creative professions with high education, when examining the broader picture of individual's development of Self across social platforms in particular it echoes a neoliberal philosophy that many people have become entrepreneurs when constructing their own image. The accessibility and ease of social media sites identified through the case studies

examined and particularly through the construction of Seren Sanclêr demonstrates the ease to begin and continue the process of self-branding across a variety of platforms.

Key insights were obtained through the practice of creating a transfictive heteronym by the researcher. The process from personal experience offered a unique insight into this specific art form and the creative means of fabricating a persona as an art work. The concept of playfulness both as creator and through audience engagement was further realised as the research progressed through the development of the fictive artist. All of which raises broader questions about the ways in which society respond to fictive art in light of contemporary concerns of fake news, manipulated images and a general mistrust of professional media outputs. By immersing the researcher within the study, it allowed for a more intimate opportunity for this phenomenon to be explored, particularly when considering the findings in relation to the other case studies. In particular a deeper understanding of the other case studies and their creative processes could be appreciated especially when identifying similarities such as those related to the labouring of the performance.

Seren Sanclêr, as an emerging artist, in a similar way to the some of the other contemporary fictive artists, exists as an entity on and offline. She can have discussions on Facebook and defend herself via groups, she can present her life story through blog posts and tweets; attend and check-in at exhibitions and events upload pictures to Instagram a minute after it was taken. She has demonstrated how she has monitored her own personal data, applying the strategies of brand marketing in conjunction with digital technology to develop an artistic presence. Whilst providing a rich source of data to explore it has to be acknowledged that the transfictive artist is still in the early stages of being constructed. Limitations to the development of her persona it is felt have been partly hindered by balancing the practice research component with the more traditional aspects of the research - an issue that will now be resolved following the completion of this study, since more time can now be spent on developing her artist persona to explore this particular art practice in more depth.

Whilst early digital media scholarship determined offline and online conceptualised as separate spheres with different social patterns and practices (Coleman 2010), in contrast this research puts into practice the assertions of Senft and Elwood by demonstrating how digital technology shaped society into a highly-mediated culture where the pursuit of identity stardom had made this division is blurry and liminal. Thus raising questions

regarding how should identity in the twenty-first century be theorised in relation to digital media?

The transfictive artist and in turn the transmediated self should perhaps be considered as requiring a range of platforms that not only include social technologies that project the virtual persona but incorporate an actual physical entity, as asserted in this dissertation. The fictive artists that have a physical persona (whether a delegated performance or performed by the artist themselves) offer greater opportunities for exploring their effectiveness as transmedia texts across platforms since they more closely reflect the ways people in general utilise different mediums to self-brand and how they operate within social media sphere and real world. Whilst this does make it difficult to draw any sort of contributory factor connecting the many media platforms and specific patterns of the construction of the self as a transmedia text, it does demonstrate how digital technology, particularly social media are making self-branding an accessible attribute. Although it is accepted that differences exist between virtual and real interaction with the fictive persona, it can be argued that the line between them is blurred and shifting.

For example, as discussed in chapter 5, Seren Sanclêr's Facebook friends that are artists have initially been acquired through real meetings at social events and exhibitions. Those that followed have been based on presence online and through friendship links where she has been added by association with another artist. Real social interaction has continued to be a strong factor in cultivating social network relationships thus demonstrating the power of the real working alongside the virtual. Despite the fact that this suggests that traditional face-to-face interactions are still important, when people are creating self-branding strategies, social media is providing individuals with a platform   to cultivate a preferred persona for public exhibition. The transfictive artists exemplify the ways in which "experience and identity take shape in the space between online and off-line" (Elwell, 2014: 235).

6.7. The Rhetoric of the Transfictive Pose

As Hall identifies "the body is central to identity" (Hall, 1993:14) thus it is hoped that through this thesis that some insight has been provided as to why artists create fictive personas. To surmise, each of the case studies whilst all exploring identity also deviates in their intentions by utilising the fictive artist as a vehicle to explore differing purposes. Where Susan Fielder acts as a foil to explore the importance of biography and the motives that inspire artists to create art work; Cherry Lazar as alter ego offers Key the opportunity to liberate herself and produce hypersexualised work within a safe fictive environment;

Donnelle Woolford illustrates the ways in which through multi delegated performance and the endless possibilities of re-editing an artist's profile the fluid nature of contemporary identity; and Ona Artist personifies the rhetoric of the transfictive pose simultaneously through mimesis reproducing traditional representations of the female body whilst also mirroring/paying homage to past feminist artists exploration of the body.

Indeed it is Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr that illustrate the relevance of Owens' and Jones' work in relation to feminist artist enacting themselves through their bodies in relation to the long standing western codes of female objectification. Both case studies in a similar way to the artists Barbara Kruger and Hannah Wilke enact body/self for radical ends. The importance of the process of mimesis both by the fictive artists which in turn also reflects the selfie phenomenon highlights the importance of repetition whilst creating something which signifies something new – a new image of a woman created by a woman for a woman (audience). Thus reinforcing Cixous's assertion that the female body should be used a s medium of communication where "woman must write herself" (Cixous, 1976: 875).

Both Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr offer further research opportunities to explore the ways in which digital feminist artists and women at large are attempting to subvert gendered oppositions by structuring conventional models of image production and interpretation. Indeed the researcher's experience of the ongoing development of the transfictive heteronym demonstrates that by distancing herself from the fictive persona self, allowed for her to use her own body to explore feminist concerns.

The need of a physical body to further enhance the transfictive heteronyms' persona demonstrates the continued importance of the carnal identity in a post digital age. The transfictive artists use their bodies both physically and virtually as narrative. They make us pay attention to the rhetoric of their gestures across the platforms demonstrating a need to re-examine the rhetoric of the pose. Each of the artists as art works signifies the complexities of constructing a persona whilst using this as both subject and object.

6.8. Final Reflections

From Benjamin's phantasmagoria to Debord's spectacle and Baudrillard's simulacra, it is evident from this study that scholarly research documenting the influences of the media on society demonstrates the impact on an individual's notion of self. In turn, each document the ways in which contemporary society reflect how commodity identity fetishism, social media of spectacle and deliberate simulacra through digital technology have naturally resulted in willing maintenance of what Elwell's (2014)defines as the

transmediated self. Equally their bearing on contemporary feminist theory is undeniable. Mimesis particularly when considered from a feminist theoretical stance through the case studies and creative practice demonstrates how through construction of fictive personas body politics is explored. As art works they demonstrate the capabilities of technology to provide individuals with the ability to experiment with identity in creative ways at best demonstrating the fluidity of self, in narcissistic self-branding at worst. Regardless, society's playful participation in networked communities cannot be denied.

Whilst the transfictive heteronyms are concerned with not just relaying information or stories as an art form they also represent how society through social media are interpreting our most private selves in a very pubic way as a performance of a preferred self. Living in a post postmodern age as a media savvy society, individuals via social media are not only imitating and duplicating desires of self, defined by commercials and commercialized images but through repetition subverting the signs of the real to create new realities. Fictive artists such as Ona Artist in particular illustrate the rhetoric of the pose where her art work demonstrates the continuing force of feminism and mimesis for contemporary digi artists. Schrager through Ona Artist represents the resurgence of new digi feminist artists who are claiming agency and embracing sexuality. The mimetic quality of her art work whilst in which in some ways inhabits idealised representations of the female form as object demonstrate the playfulness of her poses through the obsessive and repeated capture of the images of her body which refigure western aesthetic of the female form. Ona Artist also mirrors the ways in which women are using social media to self-represent the female body highlighting how though digital technologies are both objects and producer/observers of their represented image.

Where Baudrillard suggest that we have lost all ability to make sense of the distinction between nature and artifice, it could be argued that this research reflects that not only can society distinguish the difference between the two; in fact we have entered an era of post truth playfulness. The transfictive artists demonstrate the ways in which society through digital technology is engaging in identity construction and embracing the blurring of boundaries. Digi feminist artists' as exemplified by Schrager's Ona Artist, work which explores the female body, this research argues, is explicitly a feminist act. Feminist mimesis therefore, particularly digi feminist mimesis demonstrates the ways in which artists are presenting their bodies through social media to disrupt traditional representation of women as objects in a reformulation of a new female feminist subjectivity. This feminist mimesis also reflects the ways in which women in society are reclaiming the body and instead of enacting the death of the author, they reinstating the

relevance of the author as subjectivity is transformed and recognised as a fundamental element to the formation of a politicised feminist identity in a post digital age. Consequently a feminist mimesis as demonstrated by the transfictive artists must, when considered in relation to the theories of Jones, Irigaray and Butler not only manipulate signification but develop it as a pedagogical tool in order to not only subvert but metamorphose the framework of subjectivity.

Consequently, digital technologies, through feminist mimesis provide new ways for women to explore representation. This innovative, transformed mimesis within visual structures, in many ways follows Irigaray's (1977) and Cixous's (1975) critical questioning of the construction of women within phallogocentric systems. Since this multi mirroring builds upon mimesis it can argued that the transfictive artists particularly Ona Artist exemplify what Irigaray identifies as subversion from within. This research asserts that Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr in particular through their art work, visually attempt to deliberately dismantle the phallogocentric structures. In this way, feminist mimesis signifies the need to redefine and a rethink, not only the way mimesis is understood in a post digital age, but also of how certain digi feminist artist represent themselves as female subjects.

The significance of these conclusions firstly demonstrate the ways in which digital technologies are impacting how society are producing and consuming media texts, particularly in relation to the labouring of the transmediated self thus demonstrating the ways in which identity is a process always under construction. Reinforcing Foucault's consideration of "technologies of self" (Foucault, 1988: 16), individuals through digital technologies are able to constantly transform themselves in order to perpetually attain a preferred self.

Secondly, feminism in all its forms demonstrates its continued relevance today as a discipline. Its recent resurgence as a practice and as an art form reflects how "new waves of feminists are on the rise" (David, 2017: n.p.). Whilst, as discussed in Chapter 2, this research demonstrates how feminism has expanded its meaning and considers the ways in which different waves are defined it reasserts that perhaps the "metaphor has outlived its usefulness" (Nicholson,). Although it is acknowledged that the wave metaphor is useful in identifying moments in history that generated large scale feminist political movement however perhaps it is time to now reconsider the ways in which we define feminism today?

Thirdly, in some ways it could be argued that the transfictive heteronyms, particularly Ona Artist and Seren Sanclêr move beyond the traditional limitations of gender, feminism and identity politics. Their fictiveness in a similar way to Haraway's (1985) cyborg

breakdown the boundaries between the physical and virtual thus demonstrating the ways in which digital technology is changing the ways in which society perceive the self. This research offers new ways to consider the impact of transmedia and in turn self-branding practices on individuals and the ways they navigate their ways through their real and virtual sense of self.

Finally it is anticipated that persona studies, particular the relevance of Goffman's work in relation to a digidramatugy is clearly acknowledged since the theatrical performance of the presentation of self continues to be of importance when examining the ongoing development of the transmediated self.

Implications for future research reinforces the concept that social media in particular creates a space for the body to perform as subject and object, as illustrated by the case studies. The practice of creating fictive artists also allows individuals, particularly the creator of Ona Artist, Cherry Lazar and Seren Sanclêr to explore their performance of identity and exploration of physical self-representation across the platforms to consider greater issues surrounding identity and gender in a post digital world.

It is hoped that this research through the comparable case studies selected reflects how "many contemporary artists [regardless of gender] know their feminist history, and they understand that standards of taste, beauty, relevance and value have long been debated without women's voices" whilst also demonstrating the continued battle surrounding these issues which still "remain powerful in the art world" (Tani, 2015). Taking into consideration Goffman's assertion:

> 'When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be.'
>
> (Goffman 1969: 17)

Indeed each of the transfictive heteronyms as part of the performance expect an audience to play through engagement with their identities and what is more important is how audiences willingly want to participate and be immersed in the fictive art work. This playfulness on the part of the audience demonstrates the impact of digital technologies, the development of transmedia storytelling and the creative potential of social media on society at large. Equally it also indicates the appeal of fiction as resistance against fears

of alternative facts and post truth. As artists explore the complexities of constructing transfictive heteronyms whilst also encouraging audiences to collaborate in the development of these fictive personas, perhaps simply put we are all just trying to make sense of the post truth age that we live in.

8
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Figure 8.1: The Many Faces of Seren Sanclêr (Seren Sanclêr, 2016)

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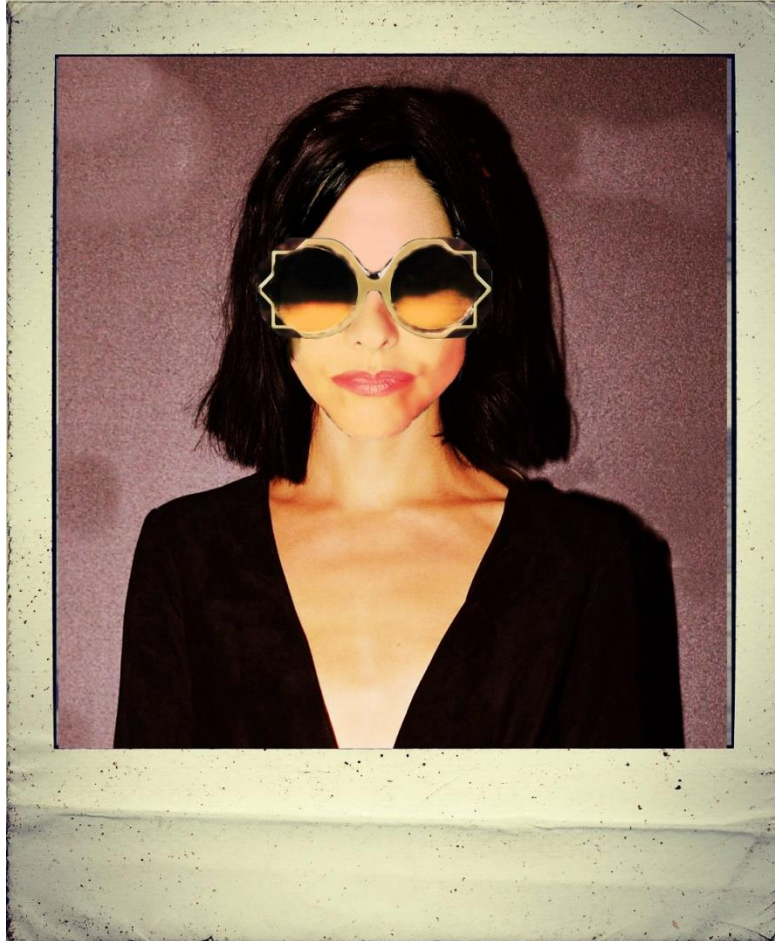
9

Appendices

Figure 9.1: Polaroid Seren Sanclêr (Seren Sanclêr, 2015)

Appendix A

Initial Questions for Artist Interviews

Have you always been interested in a career in art?

Who are your influences for your art practice? (Influences can be from any field).

How do you think digital technology and social media are influencing the ways in which women in general are (re)presenting themselves online?

How do you think digital technology, particularly social media is providing a platform for a new female-gendered artistic practice?

Describe your relationship with social media. In what ways do you feel that you have negotiated your multi artist identities online?

In your experience, how has social media and other digital platforms helped you develop your fictive artist's identity?

How does feminism inform your art practice?

How did you initially envision the fictive artist project? What were some of your theoretical/artistic influences?

How would you define your fictive artist? Do you think the term alter ego, nom de plume etc are defunct in a digital world?

How important is having a presence across social media platforms is in developing your fictive artist's persona and celebrity status?

Besides her background information on her website does your fictive artist have a more detailed narrative for your own understanding of her?

As a performance how important is dress/costume?

Developing your fictive artist's persona – how do you organise and create content to ensure continuous output?

Is there any advice you could offer Seren Sanclêr as a transfictive heteronym fictive artist to develop her persona as an artist via social media?