

WE KNOW THAT "GREAT ART"
IS GREAT BECAUSE MALE
AUTHORITIES HAVE TOLD US SO
After the revolution, who's going to pick
up the garbage on Monday morning?

We utilize sexually explicit words
pictures and performance to
communicate our ideas and emotions

MANIFESTO DESTINY

A brief history of calls to artsy action

BY BRITTANY SHOOT | ILLUSTRATION BY MAGHEN BROWN

Feminist writers, artists, and activists have a long, proud history of producing powerful manifestos. Some center on themes of economic justice or gender-based equality, some on the importance of sex as an artistic medium, but all occupy a unique historic space, guiding their creators' own artistic endeavors and influencing individuals, collectives, and even generations of artists and thinkers. These documents often carve out space for feminist and political art to converge with explicit purpose, and because many are authored collaboratively and distributed within like-minded networks, they regularly put into action the very theory they espouse. Not surprisingly, feminist artists often view their work and related manifestos as resistance against the malecentric, white, heteronormative art world. Though it's by no means a comprehensive list, the manifestos below offer a window into art and performance movements that have made careers, made waves, and made many of us think.

THE DOCUMENT *S.C.U.M. (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto* by Valerie Solanas (1968)

OVERVIEW Intent on destroying many aspects of patriarchal culture, Solanas's self-published manifesto devotes a section to taking down "Great Art" and explains that male artists construct an artificial world of self-importance. Solanas later claimed her work was satire.

SALIENT QUOTES "We know that 'Great Art' is great because male authorities have told us so, and we can't claim otherwise, as only those with exquisite sensitivities far superior to ours can perceive and appreciate the greatness, the proof of their superior sensitivity being that they appreciate the slop that they appreciate."

"The veneration of 'Art' and 'Culture'—besides leading many women into boring, passive activity that distracts from more important and rewarding activities, and from cultivating active abilities, leads to the constant intrusion on our sensibilities of pompous dissertations on the deep beauty of this and that turd."

INSPIRED Separatist feminists, people who also wanted to shoot Andy Warhol.

SEEN AND HEARD Various musicians—from Manic Street Preachers to Matmos—have since quoted Solanas or written songs devoted to her life.

THE DOCUMENT *Manifesto of Maintenance Art 1969!* Proposal for an exhibition by Mierle Laderman Ukeles

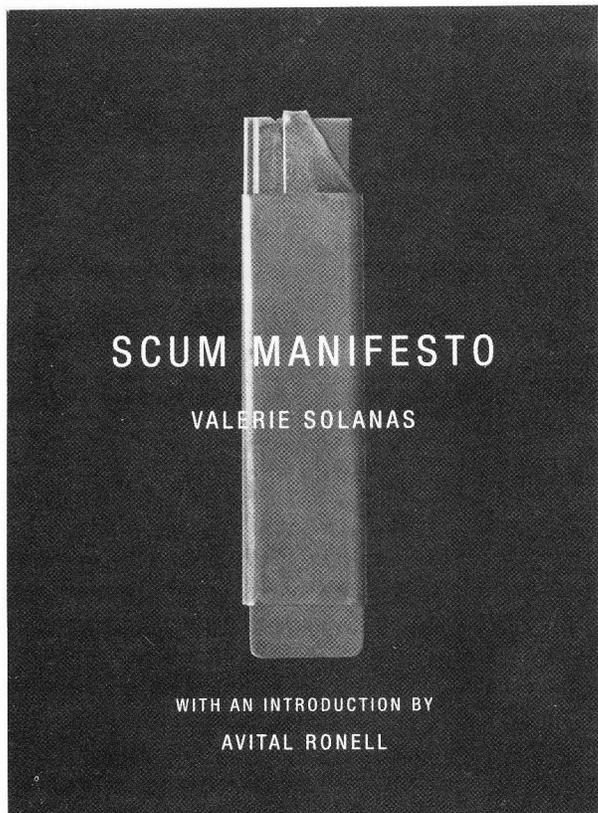
OVERVIEW Infuriated by the post-childbirth expectation by male colleagues that she was now relegated to the home, performance artist Ukeles wrote her manifesto in one sitting. A number of portraits followed, depicting Ukeles performing "maintenance" tasks like washing dirty diapers and mopping.

SALIENT QUOTES "I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order.) I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also (up to now separately), I 'do' Art."

"After the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"

SEEN AND HEARD Ukeles continues to work and regularly exhibit around New York City.

THE DOCUMENTS *WAR (Women Artists in Revolution)* led by Nancy Spero and Muriel Castanis, among others; *WSABAL (Women Students and Art-*



ists for Black Art Liberation) led by Faith Ringgold, among others (early 1970s)

OVERVIEW WAR and WSABAL protested the underrepresentation of women and minority artists in major galleries. WAR began as a splinter group of the male-dominated Art Workers' Coalition (AWC). Later WAR splintered further, and the New York Ad Hoc Women Artists' Committee was created. Between 1970 and 1971, thanks to the rabble roused by WAR, Ad Hoc Women Artists' Committee, and WSABAL, female inclusion in Whitney Museum exhibitions rose from 5 percent to 22 percent. In 1971, New York's first alternative workshop space, the Women's Interart Center, acquired its first building. WAR manifestos were visual works of art instead of written testaments.

INSPIRED After WSABAL, Ringgold, her daughter Michele Wallace, and others went on to found the National Black Feminist Organization. While WAR later became many offshoot groups and coalitions, its influence continued throughout the 1970s as women began to receive recognition through publications like the *Feminist Art Journal* and organizations like Women in the Arts. WAR also influenced activists like the Women's Action Coalition (WAC) and the Guerrilla Girls, who have continued to campaign for female inclusion in art spaces

for the past 20 years.

SEEN AND HEARD

Among other works, Michele Wallace authored *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*, a history of emergent black feminist theory. Now 93 years old, Nancy Spero was most recently seen in the 2008 film *Our City Dreams*, an homage to feminist artists living and working in New York City.

THE DOCUMENT A Manifesto for the Feminist Artist by Rita Mae Brown (1972)

OVERVIEW Originally published in the journal *The Furies: Lesbian/Feminist Monthly*, Brown's manifesto stated that all art was either "nostalgia [or] porno-violence," and called for an alternative media to be built, one that

transmits the voices and experiences of women, lesbians, people of color, and others at the intersection of identities. A founding member of the Furies collective, Brown has long opposed political and personal sexual binaries.

SALIENT QUOTES "Art in the past has been the pursuit of the privileged with few exceptions, it has been white, male, usually middle to upper class, and overwhelmingly heterosexual."

"As women artists we are in deep revolt against this rotting art just as we are in revolt against the syphilitic political structures that damage us and endanger world peace."

SEEN AND HEARD While Brown is arguably best known for her seminal 1973 novel *Rubyfruit Jungle*, she currently writes two mystery series based on the adventures of a cat and the drama at a local fox-hunting club, respectively.

THE DOCUMENT Women's Art: A Manifesto and Aspects of Feminist Actionism by Valie Export (1972)

OVERVIEW Associated with the Viennese Actionism artists, Austrian performance artist Export's personal motto was "Feminist Actionism." Export rejected commodifiable art of the establishment by

labeling her work "anti-art." Her manifesto, inspired by an all-female group art exhibition and originally published in the journal *Neues Forum*, explains the importance and inevitability of the (female) body in performance art.

SALIENT QUOTE "The position of art in the women's liberation movement is the position of women in the arts movement."

SEEN AND HEARD Export has held a variety of teaching positions and continues to exhibit work worldwide.

THE DOCUMENT A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century by Donna Haraway (1985, revised 1991)

OVERVIEW Haraway's seminal cyberfeminist proclamation posited a more stable relationship between feminists and technology. While not directly related to visual art, it has been influential in discussing the intersections of artistic practice, emerging technology, gender identity, and feminist thought.

SALIENT QUOTE "Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism."

INSPIRED Postmodern and cyberpunk feminists, including the Australian VNS Matrix collective, which penned *A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991) and the *Bitch Mutant Manifesto* (1996).

SEEN AND HEARD In 2003, Haraway wrote *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. She is the current chair of the History of Consciousness Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

THE DOCUMENT Post Porn Modernist Manifesto by Veronica Vera, signed by Annie Sprinkle, Candida Royalle, and others (1989)

OVERVIEW Written by Veronica Vera and cosigned by 18 men and women, the PPMM originally accompanied one of Annie Sprinkle's solo performance pieces. The manifesto champions sex and pornography in art; its name is derived from Dutch artist Wink Van Kempen's 1986 art exhibit "Porn Modernism." Vera, a former sex worker, believed in elevating pornography

to a pure art form, and the manifesto celebrates sex as a life-giving force.

SALIENT QUOTE "We utilize sexually explicit words, pictures, and performances to communicate our ideas and emotions. We denounce sexual censorship as anti-art and inhuman."

INSPIRED Writer and filmmaker Tristan Taormino, writer-performer-educator Dr. Carol Queen, performer-model Sadie Lune, and pornography collective Girls Who Like Porno.

SEEN AND HEARD In 2007, writer-artist Tim Stüttgen organized the

Post Porn Politics conference in Berlin.

THE DOCUMENT *Extropic Art*

Manifesto by Natasha Vita-More (1997)

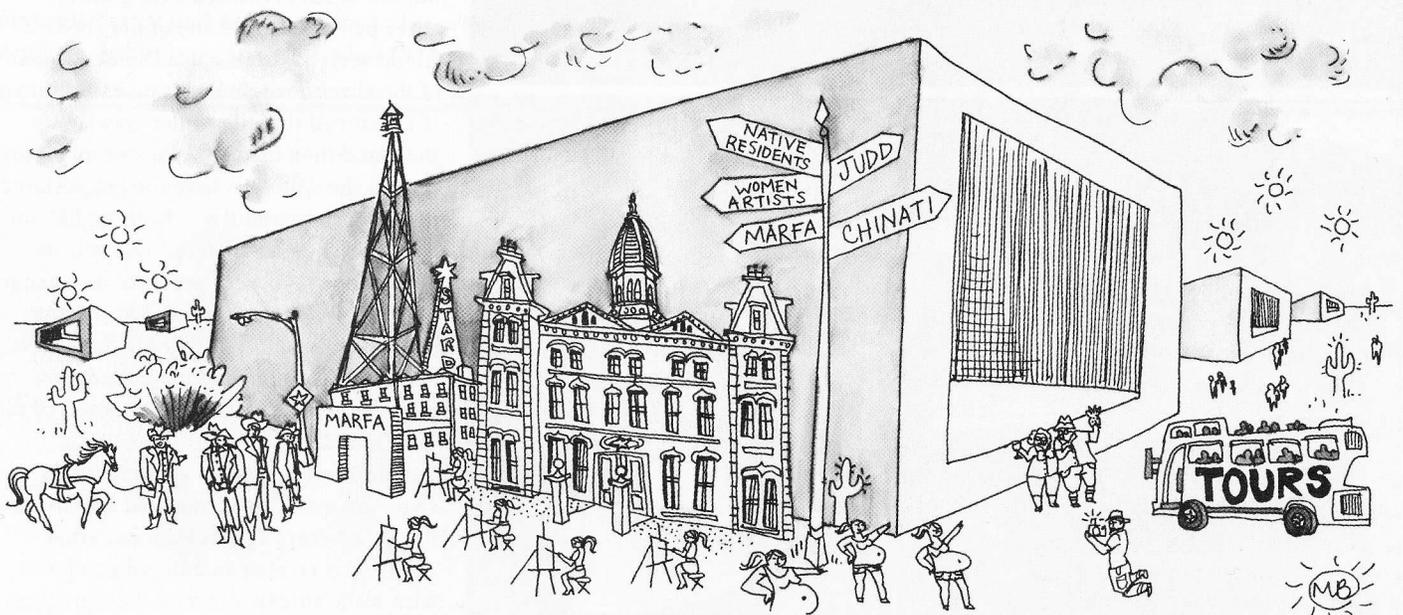
OVERVIEW Futurist Natasha Vita-More believes that even those least likely to be considered artists—academic professionals in the hard sciences, for example—nevertheless influence the vision of "transhumanity," which she feels is deeply entrenched in artistic movements. Because Vita-More believes that art is more than relic, it influences social change and

action—and of course, the future.

SALIENT QUOTE "Art influences social and cultural change: how we live and who we are."

SEEN AND HEARD Vita-More regularly appears in the media speaking about transhumanism and personal freedom. In 2008, she gave a talk in Second Life about morphological freedom.

Brittany Shoot is a freelance writer currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark. You can read her words at brittanysshoot.com



MINIMAL IMPACT

Feminism, art, and occupation in Texas

BY ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE | ILLUSTRATION BY MAGHEN BROWN

In 1971, three years after his Whitney retrospective and at the peak of his renown, the minimalist artist Donald Judd left city life to settle in what he believed to be a beautiful but podunk town just past Nowheresville, West Texas: Marfa.

That the ranching town was already home to a few thousand people at the time didn't bother Judd; throughout the 1970s, he worked on a plan to purchase much

of it with the assistance of the Dia Art Foundation. This led, eventually, to two separate foundations in Marfa dedicated to upholding his legacy: the Chinati Foundation and the Judd Foundation. Today, the name Judd, as well as the artist's creations, appear on nearly every block in Marfa and take up 340 acres nearby—branding the town, despite all other attributes, Judd's biggest project.

The teen pregnancy rate in Marfa is rumored to be astronomical, and it's tempting to think that it may be a response to the cold inhumanity of the Judd-made metal boxes that decorate the two former artillery sheds on the site of U.S. Army Fort DA Russell that are painstakingly maintained by the Chinati Foundation. The two football fields' worth of brushed aluminum are not to be touched, and are scrubbed dutifully at