Birgitta Hosea
The Digital Écriture Féminine: Cyberfeminism in Experimental Computer Animation

Since the beginning of computer animation, artists, avant-grade filmmakers and creative technologists have been creating new methods of expression through digital processes. For pioneers of experimental computer animation, such as Lillian F Schwartz, artists brought freedom, new approaches and an assertion of the human spirit to an instrument with the potential to be a 'devastating tool of oppression' (Schwartz, 1974, p. 159). Moving on from the desire to create unique forms of digital art to a vision of a total change in society, by the late 90s, as access to personal computers became more widespread, techno utopianists and cyberfeminists made a number of grand claims for the computer age including the potential for the creation of new, virtual worlds and the transformation of gender relationships. Building on the work of post-structuralist French feminists, such as Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray, in seeking new forms of feminine language, Sadie Plant's 1998 book *Zeros + Ones* made a series of connections between the essential nature of women and the new skills needed for an information society; between the traditionally female craft of weaving and non-linear hypertext. The book proclaimed that 'The future is female', a zeitgeist which had already inspired artists such as VNS Matrix and Linda Dement to create new kinds of female-centred work using (what was formerly known as) 'new media'.

With the current resurgence of interest in feminism and growth in the proportion of women choosing to study animation and graphic arts at university (Vankin, 2015)(Siddall, 2014), this paper will re-visit the cyber-feminist discourse. Did women go on to adopt the cyber-feminist discourse and liberate themselves through technology? Does their work continue to innovate and extend the boundaries of what is possible or has it become bound to off-the-shelf software and a nostalgic re-iteration of that which has gone before?

References

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Biography

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Birgitta Hosea is a media artist and curator, who works in the fields of expanded animation and experimental drawing. Her work, which is included in the Tate Britain archive, explores presence, time, the invisibility of labour and digital materiality and ranges from video installation and animated performance art through to drawing on paper. She works as Head of Animation at the Royal College of Art, is a Visiting Professor of Chengdu University, has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally and has been the recipient of numerous awards and artists' residencies. Before this she was Course Director of MA Character Animation at Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London), where she gained her PhD in Animation as Performance. Most recently she was artist-in-residence at Cill Rialaig, Ireland; Goan Conversations, India; Atina Asilo, Italy and Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Azerbaijan. Her latest exhibitions include *Beyond Noumenon*, Media Arts Centre, Sichuan Fine Arts Centre, Chongqing, China; *Empire II,* Venice Biennale; *Mysterious Objects at Noon*, Objectifs Centre for Photography and Film, Singapore and *Dans Ma Cellule une Silhouette*, Centre d'Art Contemporain, La Ferme du Buisson, Paris. She is currently co-authoring *Performance Drawing: New Practices since the 1960s* for I B Tauris.

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