

Article

Performing Everydayness and Feminist Aesthetics

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Abstract: As a Colombian scholar and artist, the author of this essay interrogates feminist aesthetics and artistic practice in a choreographic mode; improvising to see where movement takes her. This first impulse creates the space for performing writing and opening the space of creation. The movement starts at home, immersed in everydayness, aided by poetry and the analysis of the work of three other contemporary Colombian artists who also start at home in their artistic practice. Here, home is also a reference to all the artists' (including the author's) place of birth: Barranquilla, Colombia. The aesthetic philosophical tradition comes into play against the backdrop of the ideas presented by Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal *The Second Sex* (1949), who urges women in the middle of the twentieth century, to transcend, to fight against immanence. The works of Clara Gaviria, Raísa Galofre and Jessica Sofía Mitrani accompany the author's journey while she arrives at the realization that it all starts with the need to transcend the quotidian while using, precisely, the apparent banality of such everyday things and tasks. Through the created art objects, the author creates an essay about, around and beyond artistic feminist practice and aesthetics.

Keywords: everydayness; immanence; transcendence; *oikos*; *polis*; *poiesis*; contemporary female Colombian artists; performative writing; gaze



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Everyday life has interrupted my time to write about and around feminist aesthetics. It is impossible to honor the aesthetic values inherent to writing when throughout the day at each moment when one could be writing, one is attending, as most women of the world still do, to immediate needs at home, at family and at work. When we are constantly focused on how everything around us needs to function, our thoughts are about immediacy, or as Simone de Beauvoir would say, in-transcendence. Implicit in this concept is the view that being in-transcendental is a menace to true subjectivity. This distinction between immanence as the opposite of transcendence is underpinned by the distinction between *Oikos* (home) and *Polis* (public realm), it is a dictum that has divided humans into opposing realms since ancient times. De Beauvoir discusses in *The Second Sex* how “the woman problem” rests in cultural assumptions about women’s responsibility for the care of other people, and the placing of this not only in their “nature” but also in the realm of immanence, the private sphere, *oikos*, the home. This essay had to be created, given a structure, performed into materiality, in between tasks. I needed to enter a choreographic mode; one that allows improvisation to begin setting the stage, to follow other movements that can lead and thus discover the threads that shall appear in order to weave the present work. My own search for the pleasure in writing is lured by what the ancient Greek philosophers named as the source of *poiesis*: enthusiasm. Passion needs to fuel the movement on the starting line. Invoking the gods and goddesses of poetry, I start to set the scene for this essay:

As always
the afternoon escapes.

But we are amongst family.

The smell of cake traverses the heat.
 Chocolate waits for its turn.
 Milk thickens and brandishes a new shape.
 Cinnamon eats away some corner of this house.
 Baby cries signal towards a window.
 We look at each other.
 And smile.

In the realm of the specular, a new spectacular place is set, we can see and begin to theorize about the photograph of a woman, artist Raisa Galofre, who sets her home as a stage and herself as the object of her own gaze. As we contemplate Figure 1, we try to discern every detail of her performance caught in a moment of time that keeps on stretching out to other times and places. In most houses in the Caribbean coast of Colombia there is typically one place that is almost never touched by the women who still employ other women to clean and wash everything in their homes. This is the place where Raisa Galofre is lying with her face erased. It is known as “el lavadero”, the washing place (the scullery), the domain of the lower-class women who serve middle- and upper-class homes. Mops, dried leaves and clothes lie beside and beneath her dressed up female body. It is an image that immediately names an impossibility, because given the way she is dressed, it is obvious she is not the maid, she is not dead, but she is instead playing for the camera, that is, for herself, her gaze.



Figure 1. Raisa Galofre, *Autoficciones* (series), 2010—image provided by the artist.

Women like Raisa Galofre (Barranquilla 1986) feel that a particular and yet very diverse oppression is still present in women’s lives all over the world, even as they are divided by class and income. The body of a woman is a sign of difference that always remains marked as an ideal, even when its leisure and wealth are supported or made possible by the labor of other women. Representations of women like this signal a crack, a symbolic cleft that

divides humanity into those who are looked (gazed) at and those who look (active position of the gaze). Monique Wittig reminds us that:

By admitting that there is a «natural» division between women and men, we naturalize history, we assume that «men» and «women» have always existed and will always exist. Not only do we naturalize history, but also consequently we naturalize the social phenomena which express our oppression, making change impossible.¹

This crack is material, has a body and is imaginative as a myth. Luce Irigaray (1987) used Plato's Timaeus dialogue to demonstrate that in philosophical tradition, the materiality of woman became a metaphorical space, making the feminine an ontological impossibility that marks the possibility of the transcendent subject—man. For her, this crack is a virtual hole, a possibility the vagina holds as it folds unto itself. This vessel is attributed to the feminine in most cultures around the world, a *khora*, this unknowable thing beyond space or time where everything happens, the receptacle, a nurse of what is to become, prior to whatever is, something unnamable that does not create, but allows creation, this thing that Plato defines in one of his most famous cosmological dialogues and that is obviously linked to the feminine body (Plato 2018, p. 45; 52B). Posing in her own home, Raisa Galofre situates her body in quotidian spaces, trying to accomplish something Wittig viewed as the task of a feminist:

Our first task, it seems, is to always thoroughly dissociate «women» (the class within which we fight) and «woman», the myth. For «woman» does not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while «women» is the product of a social relationship. (Wittig 1993, p. 106)

Only within this crack, understanding its existence, can woman reclaim a subject position akin to the one that was gained with the right to vote. If the construct called *woman* is imaginary, then imagination is the best weapon to take this task on. Simone de Beauvoir wrote about “the woman problem” as a product of cultural assumptions that have kept women from taking responsibility for their lives through placing their “naturalness” in the realm of immanence, that is, the home. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* arrived by the late 1960s in Colombia and was widely read by the new class of educated women interrogating the normalized patriarchal principles widely accepted at all levels in its society.² By the 1970s, in Colombia, educated women understood that the way they were participating in politics was an expression of the same values that had kept them at home, for example, serving coffee at revolutionary meetings and also being companions and acting as secretaries to the men in charge of “change”.³ It is interesting that a twenty-first century woman in Colombia still feels the need to take her camera and question her place at home in order to investigate her subject position by literally posing, as Galofre does, for herself. The resulting art object becomes a mirror that allows her status in her culture to become conscious, more real, understandable.

Galofre started her art practice by looking into the different selves she could be if she chose to follow local familial customs, that is, the inherited ideas of a supposed “female essence”, those qualities, values, and roles one enacts due to a biological nature. The fact that she studied communications at university encouraged her to look beyond the possibilities she was presented with, including the dishes she had been served at her home's dinner table (see Figure 2) as a young Catholic Colombian girl. As she performed for her own camera, her intention was to use social media⁴ as a way to arrive at the public square. Galofre states that her main concern after graduation was to discover through a camera what she needed to explore: her identity as a woman⁵. I find that that this question of identity, of needing to understand what a woman is supposed to be beyond cultural constructs and biological essences, is still important for a woman starting her artistic quest in the second decade of the twenty-first century in Colombia. How is it that the *oikos* and the political, “transcendental” arena, are still so abysmally divided? Is it not obvious—still—that what happens at home happens in the public sphere?



Figure 2. Raisa Galofre, *Autoficciones (Series)*, 2010. Image provided by the artist.

Latin American feminists started questioning the tenets of second-wave feminism as it was regarded in “advanced economies” and began a new trend of very diverse feminisms that were intended to be inclusive of the divisions of class and race across the gender spectrum (De Giorgi 2018). Feminisms that became very strong in the political arena demanded attention to issues pertaining to very diverse populations whose situations were as different as the women themselves: displaced, black, indigenous, lower-class women, etc. How is it then that a young middle-class woman like Galofre still feels the need to go back to the “immanent realm” in order to question her place in society?

Grass
 overflowing pots and pans
 and sheets
 we sit
 on the porch and yawn
 birds nestle on drawers
 chairs
 we watch
 as clouds take by water
 what was once singing and dry
 in our land
 we do not cry:
 tears would mean
 a last drop.

Immanuel Kant’s ideas about art and the value of contemplation of that which is not desired, utilized or consumed, have been valuable for the enunciation of aesthetics. Yet, in contemporaneity, we cannot forget how art is actually desired more and more as a market commodity, as a financial asset. Just as women still are. After so many decades, women are still the preferred models for the marketing of many products. Woman, in many senses is a product herself, an inessential void (De Beauvoir), a masquerade (Riviere), a quotidian performance (Butler). Many women still find a means of economic survival as trophies for men. If a woman does not succeed in the art market, the objects she creates cannot

be contemplated as beautiful or even sublime since they will remain in the domain of the *oikos*, quotidian life, apart from the valued public square, within the culturally devalued everyday world. By contrast, that which is beautiful and that which is sublime must be contemplated by male philosophers in order to gain validity. Woman as artist or even as philosopher never crossed Kant's (2001) mind when delivering his dictates on aesthetics as a science to be studied. In his essay, 'What is Enlightenment?', he deemed women as the beautiful sex that should stay in infancy, dependency, and therefore, in immanence.⁶

Figure 2 is a photograph from Galofre's series of images entitled *Autoficciones*. In this image, Galofre's body is naked on a set table where forks and knives point towards her. She is the meal, she is the body that is devoured, consumed, trafficked. The artist seems to be following Ana Mendieta's experimentations with her own marked body as a woman. Mendieta places herself mainly in nature, as if to fuse with the mother earth, the beginning of humanity, in order to make a powerful feminist statement that was in synchronicity with the second-wave feminism of the "developed nations". Ana Mendieta was Cuban but she lived in the United States and before she died, the contestations posed by Latin American feminists, the idea of the decolonization of aesthetics had not yet become a strong voice coming from the south of the continent. Yet, when Mendieta let her own body, the body of a Latina, become colonized by nature, she was transforming aesthetics, forming, in a sense, a type of feminist aesthetics that came back to the land, to the body, to the immanent, a signal, a post for honesty in creating beyond what was understood as valid art.

Galofre's own image is fragmented into different roles across the *Autoficciones*. She does not know how or why to assume femininity in order to feel integrated to her culture. She is too many, she is diverse yet she is one, the same, attached to a place, a situation. Raisa Galofre belongs to a mestizo nation and as such she is Caribbean, Spanish, Black, Indigenous and a woman with all of the others in her. Like Mendieta, also a Caribbean woman, she wonders where her identity lies and searches for a way to connect to all of the women before her in her lineage. Mendieta searched for goddesses of the Caribbean in order to regain a sense of identity, Galofre, in that sense, is searching for the mythical role that women in her own family have played. Mendieta bares her body in order to find these other women in her consideration of Earth as her home. Galofre bares and clothes her body in order to pose in positions of the "natural spaces for females" of a house, her house, and many of the houses she knows. Through this very private act, the artist imagines a jump from the private into the public sphere, reminding us of how long-standing essentialist ideas still link women's bodies and privacy to the earth and hearth. Yet, she is questioning how we all may be able to re-perform these assigned places of femininity, emulating another artist, one of her favorites, Cindy Sherman, who uses her own camera to pose and investigate what it is to be a woman artist and owner of the gaze.

I get up in order to finish the soup that I left on the stove while trying to write this essay. I need to set the table and serve it, eat it, clean the dishes and come back to the page. I am glad of the life I have crafted for myself, one in which I am mainly alone, not having to care for too many people as I age. Virginia Woolf (1935) knew, one hundred years ago, that even if Shakespeare's sister (if he had one) would have been born with the same talents he bore, she could have never been a poet. Woolf was a poet, a visionary writer and her life ended in suicide. Too many female artists have taken the same path. Their desperation in their life has not erased their art practices, even as it reveals the possibility of in-transcendence, evident in how everyday existence seemed to drown their creative projects.

I drink the hot soup
 slurping on noodles I listen
 how the radio vomits songs
 repeating
 over and over
 you are the only one
 your eyes say you have not forgotten me

traitor
abuser
please tell me you still love me

I use the white napkin
wipe, relish my lips
I do not have to listen to anyone
saying crap
time of false promises has gone
it is the moment for mirrors

broken
they do not answer
they do not cry
they do not wait
but for the song of a bird or the taste of carrots.

For Giorgio Agamben (1999), art can be something that others may contemplate exercising some sort of detachment, as Kant (1951) stated, but Agamben also believes that, art is in itself an exercise of peril, where we need to consider the doer, the person who is an artist for whom the act of creation is a matter of life and death. Art is not something to just give us the pleasure that Kant described as the play of the senses and the intellect. Art is a dangerous craft, so also thought Rainer Maria Rilke (1943), who knew quite well that the poem, his work of art, was always the result of having been exposed to the danger of never being able to finish where the experience must take him.

Jessica Sofia Mitrani (Barranquilla 1968) plays and at the same time puts her life as a contemporary artist in peril when she decides to take a simple everyday object like a handkerchief and convert it into an art piece. In her work entitled *Por lo menos me entretengo* (*At least I entertain myself*), seen in Figures 3 and 4, she manipulates and plays with this semantic phrase about the pleasure of work, which points to the “not transcendental” work of women who embroider on a daily basis. She turned evidence of this invisible work into a piece of art that hung at the Museum of Modern Art in Barranquilla in 2011 by commissioning expert embroiderers in Barranquilla to produce 100 handkerchiefs that displayed the embroidered sentence: “At least I entertain myself”. The work honors their labor and refers to the design of a handkerchief that her grandmother used to dry her sweat when she was a girl. Very “feminine” in their style, this installation attests not only the beauty and utility of such objects, but how they put into question the domestic work of women and its invisibility.



Figure 3. Jessica Sofia Mitrani, *At least I Entertain Myself* (2011). Image provided by the artist.



Figure 4. Jessica Sofia Mitrani, *At least I Entertain Myself* (2011). Image provided by the artist.

These handkerchiefs are precious objects that pass as quotidian ordinary objects but that also remind us that in order to do such work, a lower-class woman must have finished all her other invisible work at home before having the time to embroider for pleasure. The questions about the immanence implicit in living as a woman in her assigned place are the same questions that a woman artist asks herself when producing a “transcendent” art piece. When these handkerchiefs move into the public square, in such a way, that is, by becoming something other than a handkerchief, an artwork, it is precisely by the transformation of everydayness into a particularity linked to transcendence. Mitrani seems to be saying: see me now, I am a woman, doing these things that are seen as entertainment while the males in my family do the serious work, but while I entertain myself, I use your mocking words in order to become an artist, but the women who did the actual work of embroidering the pieces that made possible the art piece are as invisible as any other housewife or factory worker, or secretary, nurse, or female artist. They drive the social machine, yet they are not heard or seen. They do not sign any of the embroidered pieces of cloth; the artist does. Jessica Sofia Mitrani, as artist, has transcended and broken the *oikos* model that she has inherited and jumped onto the public sphere with her artwork and in doing so, she has at the same time made the absence of these other hands that embroidered, futile. Could we, ourselves, as spectators of an art piece go beyond the beauty of the statement or can we see the labor that in its absence completes the performance? In a sense, Mitrani, an upper-class woman, has had the privilege to engage and pay other women to do the hand-work of the kerchiefs but at the same time her installation reminds us of the gap in regard to the economics still present in exercising the different feminisms that decolonization theories have put forth.

Linda Nochlin (1971) rightfully explained in her seminal art history essay how insidious the historical process has been in silencing and making invisible women’s artworks. Being an Absolute Other, as Simone de Beauvoir named us, most of our work in everydayness centers on others. Life at home depends on us literally, and this is why, it seems, we have been punished, banned from the public square in earlier centuries and still in some countries around the world. Joanna Russ (1983) was able to name each strategy that has been taken in order to suppress the emergence of women into the literary canonic public scene. Any work of literature, visual art, performance art, etc., that can overcome the walls of anonymity, ignominy, and invisibility, is a triumph, even if it is small and ephemeral, just as everyday life is. Likewise, women artists have had to devise their own strategies in

order to present their views on their own lives through their creative practice. They have had to start the deconstruction of their world while intending to construct a new world where they can feel more at home. Can we consider this as a political act?

The ideas presented by Beauvoir in 1949 are still applicable to many women who are laboring to provoke change in countries like Colombia. Many seem to be urging women, empowered in civil life after the right to vote was granted, to dare to create their own representations of the world, to debate against old myths while creating new ones, to become subjects who make choices that make change. Artists like Clara Gaviria (Barranquilla 1973), an educated middle-class woman, are attempting to re-create themselves anew through their various practices. Gaviria graduated as a psychologist in 1997. As she started working with patients in a mental hospital, her artistic interest emerged when confronted with the possibilities that artistic processes yield healing. She decided to start again, studying art, which became her therapy.

Gaviria still sees herself as a homemaker who is also a professional woman and an artist who works from her home. When her grandmother died as the result of a violent home intrusion, she had a revelation. As the family started to re-order the house after the burial, she realized that her grandmother had collected all sorts of little objects in little boxes. She also found texts her grandmother had written about handicrafts she had located in various magazines destined for women, texts about “frivolities”. She was starting to understand this need her grandmother had had for the many years she was accumulating all sorts of little insignificant everyday objects. This was the beginning of the shadow boxes she then started to create; she had not known what to do with those apparently useless objects her grandmother had collected over the years, but these became the seed of her future artwork, a continuous line of boxes she produced and filled with these small collectibles.⁷

It is poignant that Gaviria constructed the shadow box seen in Figure 5, in 2008, sixty years after the United Nations urged the countries that had not declared female suffrage legal to do so. On the back of the box’s interior, a barely readable text discusses the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, while in front of this are miniature reproductions of fashion items. In putting these two elements together, Gaviria plays with the traditional ways that most cultures accent women’s otherness through clothing as a masquerade via another seemingly banal game. Namely, that those women, who are so pre-occupied with keeping up with the latest trends and seasonal fashion statements, are engaging in a sort of aesthetic play in real time, but one that may prevent them from occupying themselves with changing or improving the status of women in society. The text in the box about the convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is, thus, obstructed from view by the little cutout dresses, bags and shoes with which girls often play. Behind the fun pretty cutouts, a question emerges: is this what postmodernity is really all about? Culture, like fashion, currently presents itself as at the forefront of a utopian vision of the world, forever renovating and renewing itself in order to obscure the truth of imminent death as the stuff of life. In the midst of a liquid modernity, as Zygmunt Bauman (2011) has shown, the meaning of life is a problem kept at bay by forgetting past utopias while we are pursuing others thought to be more graspable, like perfect homes and passing fashions. Fashion passes, Gaviria seems to say, but transcendence, that is, finding meaning beyond everydayness, is elusive.



Figure 5. Gaviria, Shadow Box, 2008. Image provided by the artist.

Gaviria seems to be bound to domesticity by her culture's collective imagination, and thus, she encases her art within four walls, so that it can be admired. She has filled the spaces designed for femininity by her culture with lots of little found items in an attempt to overcome the gaps, negotiating the cracks in the assumptions about the place of women, possibly shattering her almost perfect world. Taking her craft lightly, Gaviria is delicately (in a "womanly" way?) pointing towards the difficulties of relationships for women when one is labeled an inessential creature (women) and not assigned as the transcendent maker of meaning (man). What meaning can little everyday objects have, found in any wife's house? Gaviria intentionally places these seemingly meaningless little domestic items as a sort of insignificant barrier that shelters her from the local culture and its common beliefs about femininity. Within her apparently simple, kitschy and cute boxes, she tells the hidden story of growing up as a girl in Barranquilla, and the nostalgia that comes with no longer playing at being a woman in order to later welcome home the strangeness of becoming a mother, and the fact of living with a stranger who becomes the father of her children. How is it that Woman is the mystery, the eternal object of idealized desire in public discourse? But what about the man of the house, the *marido*, husband? In the shadow box below (Figure 6), Gaviria's husband, everyone's *marido*, becomes the absolute other, the unknown, the mystery.

What we can see here (Figure 6) is a clear bottle among white ones, and this clear one shows a dark object inside of it. The white bottles in the box are associated with old milk bottles. They are made to be filled with soap bubbles and blown by the guests at weddings. The male body is implied by its contrast as the only transparent bottle. The image created by Gaviria with this box is that of a difference disrupting the sameness. She inverts the mystery, the myth of woman, and brings otherness home, signaling her husband as the Other in that milieu. It is an image that points toward a similar understanding that Beauvoir had when critiquing Levinas: "When he writes that woman is a mystery, it is understood that she is a mystery to a male. Thus, this description that intends to be subjective is in truth an affirmation of masculine privilege" (De Beauvoir 2012, p. 6). In a very subtle way, in the same way that she situates herself within a relationship with the nuclear family, Gaviria critiques the position

of privilege her husband has when he is taken seriously in the institutional art scene while she is usually identified as “Clara, Marco’s wife”.⁸



Figure 6. Clara Gaviria, shadow box, 2011. Image provided by the artist.

Gaviria’s collection of objects of personal significance are always more than items arranged in a pretty way. The artist makes boxes that not only decorate her own house but also enter those of the buyers of her art, with the added ingredient that her pieces offer an intelligent discourse that situates the artist somewhere else other than at home. As the image suggests, she references marriage as a defined ritual that cannot be escaped, framing the new as the little dark blue rock at the bottom of the transparent bottle; the old is the lace that covers the box (not seen in the photograph). The borrowed are the white bubble soap bottles that scatter and disappear at the very moment the event happens.⁹ Clara frames, within a box, a set of meanings through which she can hopefully subvert in her own daily life, while still fulfilling the roles assigned for her own *oikos* to be able to function, an inescapable situation.

Another of Clara Gaviria’s pieces consists of twenty white coffee mugs, each one stamped with a letter. When lined up together in a cupboard, they read: *Lo personal es político* (*The personal is political*) (Figure 7). These aligned coffee mugs constitute an ironic comment on an issue still unresolved in Colombian society. It is a definite statement about her seemingly unimportant artwork, one that could resemble any wife’s menial everyday work at home. “The personal *is* political” becomes a subtle but very strong statement, spoken by a woman through mugs that should hold Colombia’s main export. Coffee is a drink ingrained in the whole community as a source of pride, and it is an essential part of everyday existence. The same can be said about any minute part of a woman’s day played out in domesticity. Why, one may ask, is a young wife making art that directly addresses the same question that second-wave feminists posed defiantly? Let us listen to Gaviria:

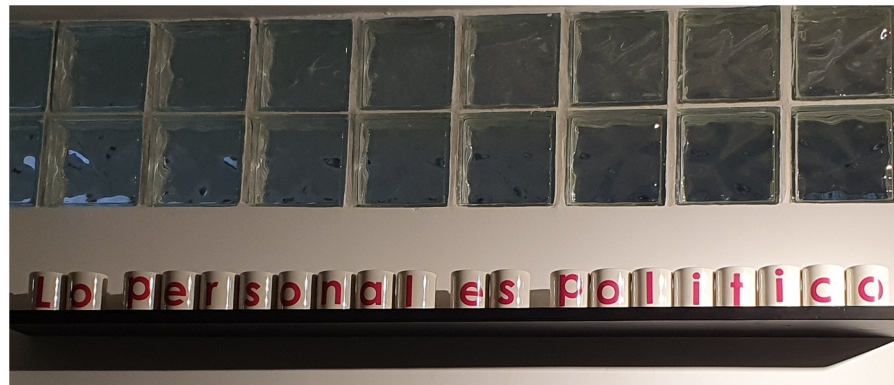


Figure 7. Photograph by the author of this essay. Barranquilla, November 2022.

I believe that we young women have not really understood the feminist slogans, and we have also misunderstood the legacies of our mothers and grandmothers . . . I want to remember, to reflect on these things . . . otherwise, how is it that we are now more than ever, in this city, seeing so much abuse, so many feminicides?¹⁰

Looking twice at everyday trivial objects and arranging them in ways that transform their status, as she did with the ordinary white mugs where each letter is not meaningful by itself, but recreated in a repetitive row, which forces one to read carefully. It converts those clichéd phrases into something that deserves a second look, brings us back to the shared strength of early feminism and long forgotten slogans, lost amidst today's commercially appropriated ones and the strong push for a new feminisms that embraces the other that Latin American women are.

For Simone de Beauvoir, subjectivity is linked to action upon the world, action as culturally assigned to men. Women must also reach this point where they can go beyond the place where they have been confined, the place of immanence: home. Artists like Raisa Galofre, Clara Gaviria and Jessica Sofia Mitrani are acting upon their worlds, just as Beauvoir posed, but they are going even beyond acting, they understand the power hidden behind the assumptions of women's supposed inessentiality. Women are not doomed to immanence anymore, they confront this assumption about them in order to outpace the culture that still wants them confined. They have learned De Beauvoir's lesson and prepared through their art-making to become transcendent subjects:

The individual who is a subject, who is himself, endeavors to extend his grasp on the world if he has the generous inclination for transcendence: he is ambitious, he acts. But an inessential being cannot discover the absolute in the heart of his subjectivity; a being doomed to immanence could not realize himself in his acts. (De Beauvoir 2012, p. 684)

We cannot avoid noticing the "he-s" that De Beauvoir uses in writing but this makes the point stronger, given that he is the transcendent being that she is basing her analysis on. Male artists are these "Hes" (symbolic or real) that the women in this text have been confronting while creating their art objects and trying to enter the public sphere. Doing their art, these artists have negated the interruption that everyday life has upon the materiality of exercising their creative selves. In a sense, this interruption is a hiatus only because life continues with its everyday demands upon our bodies, ourselves.¹¹ However, we can learn to use parentheses in order to write, to paint, to weave, to embroider, to photograph, to make boxes. We can put into action a feminist aesthetics by performing our own active contemplation of diverse women's art as something more than objects that speak to our senses. We can humble our own labor as we view the artists and their production horizontally, next to us, as gestures that speak to our own everydayness and our own "real" lives. We could see our work studying the work of female artists as a discovering journey that can also be seen as a sort of ethnography that does not strive for perfection in observation through detachment from its subjects of study, nor does it exert the

disinterestedness of the observer's gaze, the gaze of domination. We can perform feminist aesthetics, understanding our work as if entering a different culture, that is, positioning our own bodies as researchers, our own complete presence, into the field that needs to be understood, studied, analyzed and embodied. A performative turn in aesthetics could bridge the separation between doer and gazer.

Performance is polysemic and slippery because performance wanders in the realm of Jacques Derrida's *indecidabilities*. However, this is precisely what art does, and performative texts can also do it, allowing for the openness of the aesthetic experience just as many women of many different cultures have dared to be open to creating within the supposed immanence of their situated lives. I hope I have performed here what Della Pollock (1998) has proposed when she put forth at least some conditions that will make us understand how one can perform through writing. I wanted to find, by the doing of this essay, a sort of writing that performs by opening possibilities, by talking metaphorically, metonymically, by displacing meanings and doing something with words while placing the gaze on the same field as that of the artist, in this case, women artists, in an exercise of humility. Understanding that we toil with the same subjects, whatever our field of expertise or discipline is. Our everydayness is on the same plane, most surely. Why not start from there, here?

The intrusion of everyday life on my creative work has subsided, but its interruptions have been fruitful for this purpose. Thinking about everydayness as intrusive has transformed my essay into something else, has given it its purpose. Concentrating on everydayness and its fruitfulness can seem as if not addressing the fact that since the 1980s, Latin American feminists have tried to disengage Simone de Beauvoir as a reference, preferring to find a decolonization of feminist thought and aesthetics (De Giorgi 2018). This choice has been about going back to everydayness as an appropriate starting place from which a feminist artistic practice can spring forth. It has been a process that has arrived at the understanding that this is the place, the situation where it all begins, independent of class and race. The quotidian traverses all realms and should be investigated, transformed and be able to inundate other spaces where it has been banned from in the name of power. Who would dare to say that these works presented here are not political enough? Or that they do not reflect the aesthetic of Latin American women? Gómez and Mignolo (2012) have given some clues in their book *Estéticas y opción decolonial (Aesthetics and decolonial option)* when they propose a de-westernization of aesthetics that commenced with Baumgarten and followed by the philosophical views of Kant and Hegel. I would like to propose here that it is in precisely making art in and from the most invisible of situations, everydayness, that a political stand can be generated that puts in the public sphere the necessity to care about care. There is a visceral need to revindicate the intimate sphere, the quotidian. Simone de Beauvoir needed to exhort us away from what she saw as a prison, the non-transcendent realm of the feminine in her analysis. Now we can go back, de-romanticize "femininity" and its supposed values, by taking a second, a third look and engaging aesthetically with its implications.

Now another poem is needed in order to end this essay. Galofre, Gaviria and Mitrani continue their artistic practices from different places, situations and times. While Gaviria continues living in Barranquilla, Galofre lives in Berlin and Mitrani in New York. They continue exploring, immersed in the diversity of moments and objects. Unlike the present essay, they do not need an ending. Everydayness might not be part of their present work, but its meaning stays real, attached to their art. The works discussed here, in some ways represent a beginning, an early post in their artistic performance. Art as a performative practice has happened and shaped their paths. The following poem is a way of exiting. One can only wonder what else are these three artists are performing in the present and whose ears are there to catch the sounds of their doing.

One sits
silent
in the living room

and watches silence
like music that wanders
through all the other places
free
as if expecting an ear
prepared to catch it.

One stands up and questions:

How will my heart sound
if it were made of wood
and served as threshold?

One walks softly
over clean floors
demanding order
and prays that bare feet
can take a step beyond
the door.

One lies down
later

from the bed gazes
at the perfect picture:
an iron bar across the door
the entrance

the exit.

One observes how
a simple violent line

dark scream over wood
seizes

the lying order
cleanliness

everything that promises
that it is a new dawn

full of warm coffee and bread
eyes ready to work

for emerging light
has forgotten the horizon line
once more.¹²

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Notes

- ¹ *One Is Not Born A Woman* is the text of a speech given at the City University of New York Graduate Center, September 1979. It was first published in French as «On ne nait pas femme» in the journal *Questions Féministes*, no. 8, mai 1980. The English version was first published in *Feminist Issues* vol. 1 no. 2 (Winter 1981).
- ² Personal interview via telephone with Gabriela Castellanos. She is one of the most recognized feminist researchers in Colombia. March 2014.
- ³ This is the time when the leftist movements became radicalized in Colombia and the main guerrilla factions still operating today, were formed.
- ⁴ Personal interview, January 2012.
- ⁵ See note 4.
- ⁶ *Berlinischen Monatsschrift* (December 1784), pp. 481–94.
- ⁷ Personal interview, May 2012.
- ⁸ Gaviria's husband is an artist that enjoys recognition and financial success.
- ⁹ As related by the artist during personal telephone interview in May 2013.
- ¹⁰ Personal interview videotaped during fieldwork in Barranquilla, May 2012.
- ¹¹ *Our Bodies Ourselves* was a pioneering book on women's health and sexuality written for women by women, edited by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective in 1970, published by The New England Free Press.
- ¹² The poems in this essay are by the author.

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