

A.I.R.

After the presidential election, I asked an artist about her definition of feminism. She explained that she is a feminist because the very physicalization of her body is read as transgressive.

I could not resist this line of reasoning. In 2017 women's bodies are hardly the only bodies read this way. The confluence of transgression and bodies calls up some crucial questions about the body essentialism of some feminist definitions and the regulatory coercion of gender binaries. We know from the important work of Judith Butler and colleagues that while gender is "performed," this performance is never "free," although it is often free of charge, and indeed is naturalized into everyday actions as fixed. We know that gender is a biopolitical category, one used to sort people into bodies. Our identities are incorporated so that we can be seen, so that we can sell ourselves, but also so that we can be overseen, governed, policed.

One way to evade stasis is to stay transforming. Transition is the logic of a sensible body, of an involute organism, which morphs and changes. Transitional asks: How to transform our understanding of the spectrum of bodies—what to correct so the group may respond to emerging needs of its constituents? I'd like us to apply "transition" to the object of feminism, to think how feminism might be altered, and about how a self-governing organization like A.I.R. may in turn articulate a response to the control of bodies.

The 12th A.I.R. Gallery Biennial, *Sinister Feminism*, serves as a prompt to discuss the body in its transitional form, as it collides with, enacts, and makes vulnerable a feminist vector. The artworks on view present bodies that are performed, augmented, incomplete, excessive in corporeality, and changeable. If feminism has been at times too essentialized around the body, it is also essential to remember that as the body changes over lifetimes, so too can — and must — feminism.

The exhibition surveys contemporary art practice in light of recent governmental challenges to bodies, foregrounding a discussion of how contemporary art mobilizes the representation of bodies. While the artists whose works are presented here are of differing age, gender, race, they are all asking us to ask ourselves at least one question: How do we transition? How do we move?

Piper Marshall, Morningside Heights, 2017