

CAVE GIRLS + TRASHY FASHIONS: Unseen Post-Punk Videos by Women



A screening of short films, performance footage and experiments by women artists, filmmakers and bands made in the context of late 1970s + 1980s post-punk, no wave and related music scenes in the United States. Largely unseen for decades, the videos shown in this program were digitized from obsolete video formats in 2013 as part of the XFR STN project at the New Museum and uploaded to the Internet Archive. Digging for gold, curator Herb Shellenberger has compiled a video mixtape featuring: the hilarious pop promo/commercial hybrids for imaginary products by **TWINART**; performance artist/fashion designer **Colette Justine** (of Justine and the Victorian Punks) showing her dreamy, surrealist apartment studio and installation at Danceteria; the speculative history of "CAVE GIRLS" and their bizarre relation to punks like **Bush Tetras** and **Y-Pants**; and much more. Program duration: 67 minutes

TwinArt – Interview (part 1), 1982, from "Identity," 0:46

TwinArt – Instant This Instant That, 1980, from "Consumer's Choice" (1984), 3:50

TwinArt – Hands On – Hands Off, 1980, from "Consumer's Choice" (1984), 3:40

One of the major rediscoveries of post-punk era video in the United States has to be the ironic advertisements made by sisters Ellen and Lynda Kahn, also known as **TwinArt**. Creating a series of commercials for products that don't really exist (but should (?)), the artist duo recorded post-punk songs to go with the visuals, anticipating the 1981 debut of MTV. The pair still collaborate under the same name, producing branding and design for clients as diverse as Polaroid, Alanis Morissette, AOL and the title sequence to "Arrested Development."

Tina L'hotsky – Snakewoman (excerpt), 1977, from "Weekends 1" (1988), 0:48

Downtown NYC scene celebrity **Tina L'hotsky** directed several short films, this one channeling 1940s jungle movies. The writhing of actress Patti Astor recalls a previous generation of 1960s underground films like Jack Smith's *Normal Love* and Ira Cohen's *Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda*.

Cave Girls, 1981, 5:47

"*Cave Girls* (1981) is a collaborative work that seeks to establish a relationship between pre-historic women and the mediated image. Ghostly, hypnotic and blurred video of a tech-savvy tribe of women are interspersed with shots of crewmembers during the film's production, fuzzy SoHo hang sessions, mechanical apparatuses, and scenes from the overgrown backyard of ABC No Rio. Featuring music from Bush Tetras and Y-Pants, with artists Cara Brownell, Ellen Cooper, Ilona Granet, Marnie Greenholz, Julie Harrison, Becky Howland, Virge Piersol, Judy Ross, Bebe Smith, Kiki Smith, Teri Slotkin, Sophie VDT." — Laura Kenner and Rachel Valinsky

Kembra Pfahler – Cowboy Stories (excerpt), 1986, 2:49

Legendary performance artist, founder of the band The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black and Nick Zedd/Richard Kern film star **Kembra Pfahler** is shown engaged in ritual performances with her then-husband Samoa Moriki, who provides the video's soundtrack (a cover of Abba's "Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!"). This short excerpt especially highlights the influence of Butoh dance on her performance style.

Shana Moulton – Superimposed, 1991, 4:33

A teenage camcorder experiment by would-be video artist Shana Moulton made at home in California. The simple VHS tape would be interesting enough even if it wasn't recorded over a garish, pink-hued exercise

video which peeks through between takes, anticipating Sylvie Fleury's landmark video installation *A Journey to Fitness or How to Lose 30 Pounds in Under Three Weeks* (1993).

Dancenoise performance (excerpt), June 9, 1990, from "The Decade Show Performance Series," 4:07
Performance art duo Dancenoise (Anne lobst and Lucy Sexton) delivering a cabaret-style show as part of "The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s" organized by the New Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem. The duo ends their chant: "If Trump's in the poor house, we're all in heaven."

Carmelita Tropicana – (excerpt), June 15, 1990, from "The Decade Show Performance Series," 2:24
Carmelita Tropicana's irreverent and humorous performances play on cultural stereotypes, fantasy and queer cultures. This "Decade Show" performance event was held at the Studio Museum and also featured poetry by Cecilia Vicuña and a reading by David Wojnarowicz.

J. Kathleen White – Dr. Jeckyll & Ms. Hyde (excerpt), 1980s, 5:02
"A myopic visionary, Dr. Jekyll pursues her need for change and power through a labyrinth of falls, fires, transformations and escapes. This b/w studio production gains much of its power from the elaborate hand-painted sets." —MWF Video Club

Sophie Vieille – Four Fashion Horses (excerpt), 1984, from "Potato Chips," 1:35
"Come here, little rabbit, the seasons are so long when you're gone." Green screen backgrounds frame models dancing in fabulous fabrics, all underneath a beautiful and far-away tune. An overlapping of art and fashion with a poetic and wistful narration, **Sophie Vieille's** tape was meant to showcase her designs. Vieille organized the film, music and fashion series Witness New York at the nightclub Hurrah and the Ballgown show at the Mudd Club.

TwinArt – Interview (part 2), 1982, from "Identity" video, 0:56

TwinArt – Trashy Fashions, 1980, from "Consumer's Choice" (1984), 2:50

TwinArt – Poodle Paper, 1980, from "Consumer's Choice" (1984), 4:15

Carole Fischman – 28, 1980s, from "Weekends 1" (1988), 3:31

Carole Fischman is a mystery to me at this point. *28* plays like a sweet sixteen... just twelve years late. In three and a half minutes the video goes from Edith Piaf to Altered Images and back again, with plenty of cake, party favors and gratuitous butt squeezing along the way.

Shana Moulton – Saccharification (excerpt), 1999, from "Three Performances," 1:46

A performance ritual with sugar.

Penelope Wehrli – In a Storm Even Dinosaurs Trip (excerpt), 1986, 2:39

A Swiss artist residing in New York during the 1980s, Wehrli's dreamy experimental films are more akin fantasy-based artists like Steven Arnold, Pierre Molinier and Dore O. This short excerpt features a noise soundtrack and silhouetted, ghostly figures.

Colette Justine – Fuck Art... Let's Dance (excerpt), 1980, 2:00

Colette Justine – CBS2 In our Town interview, 1981, 7:07

Colette Justine – Justine Joins La Rocka, 1981, 6:00

One of the most interested and unheralded artists of the 1970s and 80s in New York, Colette is shown inside her installation "Fuck Art... Let's Dance" at Danceteria in July 1980, interviewed by CBS on television explaining her artwork (sleeping is a frequently-used medium) and performing with her band Justine and the Victorian Punks.

All videos taken from the XFR STN archive at www.archive.org/details/xfrstn

Curated by Herb Shellenberger. To screen this program elsewhere, get in touch: htshell@gmail.com