



Aanant & Zoo

# LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON

## HOW TO DISAPPEAR

July 19 - September 06 2014

Opening: Friday, July 18, 19 – 21 Uhr

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Aanant & Zoo extends a public invitation to the first Berlin solo exhibition of pioneering US multimedia artist Lynn Hershman Leeson. Spanning over fifty years, Hershman Leeson's interdisciplinary practice has made a significant impact on the post-modernist art canon of her home country, as well as opening up discourses internationally regarding the intersection between feminism, cybernetic technology and the art institution itself. Hershman Leeson is known as one of the most influential practicing feminist artists today. Her ability to materialise complex concepts through a wide range of interdisciplinary mediums has led her to exhibit photography, drawings and performances, along with installation, video and digital works. She is also an award-winning director, writer and producer; her most applauded films include *Teknolust*, *Conceiving Ada* and *Strange Culture*. Her 2010 documentary *!Women Art Revolution* was judged one of MoMA's top three most important films of 2011. It is with great pleasure that Aanant & Zoo presents *How to Disappear* – a diverse selection of monumental works from Hershman Leeson's extensive portfolio. Most notably, *How to Disappear* will unveil a new video by the artist – *The Ballad of J.T. Leroy*.

The renewed interest of art institutions and contemporary philosophy in the relationship between cybernetic technology and human nature in the wake of the social media revolution vindicates the emphasis Hershman Leeson has placed on such concerns throughout her career. These interests have led her to experiment with the different players and variables implicated within this (wo)man-machine relationship, using unorthodox methods which were largely unexplored by her post-modernist peers. These experiments are all the more impressive when it is considered that both artificial intelligence and feminism have undergone dramatic transformations within the last fifty years, and that Hershman Leeson's work has remained topical and insightful at all points of this development. In light of these concerns, the question of *How To Disappear* is negotiated on two levels. The so-called *Suicide Pieces* (*Abortion*, *Burned Bride*, etc) and *Phantom Limb*-series interpret disappearance by foregrounding the often violent and traumatic methods of erasure that patriarchal society enacts upon women. *How to Disappear* also interprets disappearance through the cybernetic absorption of the body into technology and vice versa, seen through the iconic video *Seduction of a Cyborg*. Despite the often graphic and abject nature of many of these works, Hershman Leeson's utilisation of technology is never entirely



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cautionary, and every work approaches technology as an interactive apparatus containing still unutilised emancipatory potential.

What does it mean to gender cybernetics as female? What can cybernetics and computer technology contribute to discourses of subjectivity and lived experience? Does there exist a commonality between the vulnerabilities of the body and the vulnerabilities of hardware? What are the limitations of interactivity? And in what ways does the machine-as-performance impact other lived realities in ways we could not predict? These are the issues *How to Disappear* calls into question through open-ended experiments. These experiments contain no preordained thesis from the artist other than to consider how the realms of subjectivity, corporeality and the cybernetic overlap and develop each other over time. *How to Disappear* brings these issues together to form one link in a chain of significant exhibitions dedicated to Hershman Leeson's practice, which includes her major survey exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bremen in 2012 and her planned retrospective at the ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie) opening December 2014.

-Text by Carmen Ansaldo

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Artist talk with Lynn Hershman Leeson and Tom Marioni, hosted by Marc Glöde  
4pm Saturday, 19th July