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Jen Kennedy
Queen's University

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Abstract: This paper identifies and explores an oscillation between subjectivization and objectification in young girls' participation in digital culture as a site of self-exploration and sexual experimentation. Using media artist Anne Hirsch's performance *Playground* (2013) as a case study, it examines how the ways that adolescent girls use the internet not only complicate the subject/object opposition at the crux of many Western feminist critiques of representation but may even suggest forms of agency that think beyond this binary.

Keywords: digital art, embodiment, subjectivization, objectification

> A man is not a thing. It is true that we speak of a young girl who is faced with a task that is too difficult for her as being a young thing, still too young for it, but only because we feel that being human is in a certain way missing here and think that instead we have to do here with the factor that constitutes the thingly character of things.
> — Martin Heidegger, *The Thing*

In November 2013, Ann Hirsch debuted her two-person performance, *Playground*, at the New Museum in New York. Considering her previous work, which alternately appropriates and parasitizes existing digital and televisual platforms, and the billing of the performance as a "cybersexual adventure," the audience may have been surprised to find a scene that resembled, if anything, a traditional theater set. On either side of the stage, a heavy desk angled slightly toward the other. On top of both desks, there were 1990s-era computer monitors, keyboards, and collections of objects that suggested not offices but homes. As the play began, the desk on stage left was occupied by a white teenage-ish girl, Anni, and the desk on stage right by a white twentysomething man, Jobe. A first-generation AOL chat room window, projected onto a large screen behind them, displayed their text as they typed. Jobe, using the unsubtle handle "lieshadow," initiated the conversation: "Hi Anni."

    Playground's narrative is a familiar one told in an unfamiliar way. It is adapted from *Twelve* (2013), an app based on the relationship Hirsch formed with an older man whom she met in a chat room when she was a preteen. The app was banned by iTunes for explicit content (the details of the relationship between twelve-year-old "Anni" and twenty-seven-year-old "Jobe") but has since been distributed as an edition by Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery in New York.[1] Whereas *Twelve* displays synchronicity between content and platform by telling a story that is unique to digital culture through digital media, in *Playground* content and platform are juxtaposed. *Playground* is a story unique to digital culture enacted in material form. What begins as a formal disparity expands to unsettle the premise Hirsch initially sets up (the "cybersexual adventure") and, by extension, the categorical distinction between online and offline spaces and experiences that would

conventionally guide viewers' interpretation. In other words, *Playground* challenges the popular notion that the Internet is a completely dematerialized space and, as such, a space of disembodiment.

Through a close reading of Hirsch's material rendering of her adolescent "cybersexual adventure," this paper identifies and examines a mirroring between its formal destabilization of online and offline dichotomies—along with the risks of symbolic and material violence associated with them—and the character Anni, who transgresses the narrow and often mutually exclusive understandings of agency and vulnerability or victimhood that constitute contemporary discourses of the sexuality and sexualization of adolescent girls. Rather than tracking the flow from embodied to virtual that preoccupies many artists and thinkers concerned with the effects of digital culture on subjectivity, Hirsch homes in on the interstitial space between them and finds an allegory for this space in the figure of the teenage girl, who, neither child nor adult but bearing characteristics of both, is identified by her liminality. Awkwardly waffling between uncertain and determined self-exploration, at the same time that she is subjected to Jobe's exploitation, Anni's story does not fit readily within the narratives of sexual and subjective liberation offered by either second- or third-wave Western feminisms. The ambiguously violating, ambiguously liberating encounter depicted in *Playground* nevertheless raises critical issues confronting emerging feminisms.

As Elizabeth Freeman writes, "Girl embraces an embarrassing past as the crucial augur of a critical, yet also contingent future" (2000, 741). At its crux, *Playground* is an exploration of the subversive potential within the codified cultural scripts that underwrite Western cultural conceptions and representations of girlhood in the digital era. Terry Flew (2005, 21) has shown that the early analyses of the internet quickly split up into utopian and dystopian oppositions, and these oppositions have become the script that delimits the possible ways in which adolescent girls engage with digital culture. Neither a web 2.0 version of the Lolita story nor a neatly packaged cautionary tale, Hirsch's autobiographical script troubles the cultural narratives attached to stories about girls' sexuality and sexual expression on the web. Instead, she orchestrates a scenario in which the scene of Anni's exploitation (by Jobe) converges with the scene of her self-realization. This scenario dramatizes the subjective structure of the internet, where desire, agency, and engagement necessarily converge with the production of images and the objectification (or imagification) of the self. Jobe, who instrumentalizes Anni for his own purposes, is a character from Hirsch's past, the villain in the play, and a placeholder for compromises and complexities of participation in the digital sphere. Anni is both a cipher and a self-portrait, a contradiction that embodies the generalizing neoliberal construction of "the girl" and Hirsch's idiosyncratic, contingent self-representation.[2]

Contrary to early optimism that the cyberspace would be radically decentered, democratic, and thus a blank slate unmarked by the material and ideological systems of gender, sexual orientation, race, ability, and class that structure lives "offline," digital culture has proven to intensify these systems. Gendered, sexual, and race-based forms of discrimination and harassment are ubiquitous in online communities and networks (Henry and Powell 2015). While their causes and effects are manifold and, according to web theorists and social scientists Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell (2015, 670–72), continually being identified and articulated, the preponderance of gendered, sexual, and other forms of identity-based harassment and victimization on the web is evidence of the ways in which digital codes reflect social codes. Offline social and cultural biases are written into the algorithmic architecture of networked media and therefore structure user experiences and engagement.[3] For Hirsch, this is precisely why the digital sphere is a necessary and generative testing ground for exploring the new contours of feminist politics, and particularly politics that examine historical distinctions between subjects and objects; the implicit and explicit gender biases that are embedded in the web create the conditions in which deep cultural sexism is

normalized and perfected. Indeed, as the predominant modality of self-presentation and social engagement in the contemporary world, the digital sphere has become a petri dish for emergent feminisms, despite the paradox that participating in it requires self-objectification. At the same time that the internet has become a crucial scene of possibility for contemporary feminisms, it challenges one of feminism's fundamental goals: achieving subjective emancipation from the objectifying structures of patriarchal culture.

The digital impasse between objectification and agency is analogous to the paradox that, according to Catherine Driscoll, has made the figure of the girl "an index of the problem of the present" (2008, 15): girls are relentlessly exploited and victimized by the same technologies that purportedly enable their self-determination. (Social media exemplifies this double bind.) That the figure of the girl amplifies this constitutive problem of contemporary culture is likely one of the reasons she has appeared increasingly often in feminist art and criticism in the "post-Internet" age. The fact that she occupies the peculiar position of being both vital to and excluded from contemporary capitalism is another.[4] To invest in girls' self-fashioning as a serious site and subject of critical inquiry (Marxist, feminist, or otherwise) is not merely to instrumentalize, as some would suggest, the already oppressed and exploited but also to acknowledge that any reckoning with contemporary politics must attend to that which appears to be most outside of its fray, yet is fully interpellated by its systems and social relations: deceptively spontaneous, informal, and intimate expressions of everyday life––like the love lives of preteen girls (Agamben 2015, xix).[5]

This point was made somewhat controversially by neo-Situationist Franco-Italian collective Tiqqun in their book-length manifesto, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*. Tiqqun argues that "the Young-Girl" is the exemplary subject of neoliberal capitalism, wherein the logic of capitalism has invaded all aspects, and all levels, of life. The sexism of this equation has been correctly identified by several writers, perhaps most eloquently by the translator Ariana Reines in her preface to the English edition of the text.[6] Along with its shortcomings, affronts, failures, and frustrations, Tiqqun's text productively and, in my reading, earnestly attempts to articulate the condition of being of, and inside, the crisis of subjectivity constituted by capitalism. This crisis is not a failure of feminism, as Tiqqun writes; however, it is the location of feminism. Despite first appearances, Tiqqun's theory is indebted to, and puts to use (Mansoor, n.d.), diverse-thinking feminists who have, since the 1970s, consistently shown that living itself has been coerced into use by capitalism. Everyday life, social life, intimate life, and even interior life have become sources of value, closing the gap between humans and commodities (Federici 2012). To borrow from Italian feminist theorist Carla Lonzi, capitalism "operates through the mind and the body, and the only way to reach freedom [is by] working on one's own subjectivity" (quoted in Fontaine 2013). But how to work on one's own subjectivity if, as it forms, it is always already in the process of being objectified? Indeed, not only objectified but produced by capital as always already objectified, as though ready-made, as though women and their sexuality were produced on the factory floor to the dictates of masculinist desire. This issue is at the center of *Playground*, which borrows the aesthetic language of anticapitalist, second-wave feminist art, live embodied performance, to explore the subjective-sexual becoming of its protagonist through the intimate correspondence between her and her online boyfriend, which is both mediated and made possible by the intermediary screen.[7]

Hirsch is best known for her Internet-born performances that explore the production of ideologically appropriate subjects through networked media. *Scandalishious* (2007–09), for example, consists of over 100 video blogs that Hirsch posted under the pseudonym "Caroline" on the then nascent video-sharing platform, YouTube. Over the course of nearly two years, from 2007 to 2009, Hirsch as Caroline, an MFA student, shared the intimate details of her life, ranging from her crushes to gossip about classmates to

her feelings of depression. At the end of each video, she would play trendy indie-pop music and dance. Altogether, the project has garnered over one million views. Through its exploration of the production and distribution of the self-as-image online, *Scandalishious* also engages in contemporary conversations about the gendering of visibility and, by extension, gendered forms of digital labor, in which subjectivity is the site of labor, the instrument of labor, and its ultimate commodity.[8]

Hirsch's earlier works, like *Scandalishious*, occupy and examine the irresolvable tension between agency and objectification that Driscoll identifies as the defining paradox of girlhood in mass culture's field of representation. While Internet may not have created this paradox, it has certainly magnified it (Driscoll 2002, 279). For Hirsch, whose work is better described as interrogative than as critical, this tension is entangled with desire, sexuality, and sexualization, linking these experiences—and even more so their corresponding discourses—together in complicated ways and making the border between expressions of sexuality and sexualization difficult (if not impossible) to identify. As Hirsch explains in a statement written for Jennifer Chan and Leah Schraeger's online exhibition *Body Anxiety*, "Whenever you put your body online, in some way you are in conversation with porn" (Shraeger and Chan 2015). From an intersectional feminist perspective, the stakes of this conversation are ambiguous. As Peggy Phelan (2002) and others have suggested, taking control of one's own representation, and by extension body, may be viewed as a type of agency. Yet, this agency is operative only within the codes of visibility that govern the web, which are not only objectifying but defined by structural protocols that entrench racist, cis-sexist, misogynistic, ableist, and classist bias (Dean 2016).

As Julian Gill-Peterson (2015) has shown, these biases are reproduced in the hegemonic social, cultural, and legal discourses of girl's sexualization and self-presentation in the digital era. Specifically, Gill-Peterson unpacks the "reparative" argument that sexualized self-presentation (especially in the form of sexting) turns girls into creative and self-determined agents by showing that it rests on a neoliberal correlation between girls and malleability or "plasticity" and, by extension, a presumption of whiteness (145). Drawing on Arun Saldanha's historical analysis of whiteness as a "force whose strength … lies in its concurrent implicitness and plasticity" (2007, 197; my emphasis), Gill-Peterson productively points out the racial problematics of contemporary discourses of girlhood. On account of their plasticity, the girls figured by these discourse as volleying between agency and objectification are, in Gill-Peterson's terms, "always already figured as white" (145). The politics of visibility and "empowerment" that have emerged around girl's self-fashioning online are tied thus to historical regimes of radicalized sexuality and visuality. Rather than reproducing these normative readings by equating self-presentation and visibility with agency—characterized by plasticity and whiteness—Gill-Peterson asks what it might mean to feminist analysis to insist that such representational modalities may be produced from a position of subjugation (146). While I would not suggest that Hirsch's work explicitly examines her own whiteness—in fact, writer Aria Dean (2016) cogently argues quite the opposite—I would propose that her whiteness should not be taken as neutral in analyses of the scenes of subjugation her art presents. The interpretive possibilities and social significance of Hirsch's work are as determined by race as they are by youth, heterosexuality, and gender.

In *Playground*, Hirsch moves her inquiry into the gendered and sexual valences of digital subjectivity in an unexpected direction, offline, presenting her semi-autobiographical "cybersexual adventure" as a fairly traditional piece of theatre: two actors on stage, space demarcated by a minimalist set, temporality and tone signified by lighting.[9] By using sentient bodies to enact an exchange that happened in digital space, she tactically layers offline and online space, giving the audience access to both at the same time. The apparatus of this work is a reminder that the so-called immaterial is never fully dislodged from the

material; the corporeal may be obscured, shattered, and extended through digital mediation but is still there, somewhere. The actors playing Anni and Jobe, whom the premise separates by time and space, move around one another and touch bodies in the physical space of the stage, even as the narrative space, the online chatroom, demands that they objectify themselves (turn themselves into representations mediated by the computer screen) and each other to communicate.

Another effect of this scenario is that tension and intimacy between the human and nonhuman are muddled up in the tension and intimacy of the (cyber)sexual encounter. Anni's desire to become self-fulfilled and her desire for Jobe are enmeshed and only realizable through representation. For a number of thinkers who are invested in diagnosing the effects of capitalism on human subjectivity, this scenario is a hallmark of both alienation and aesthetics. Artist Hito Steyerl (2010), however, proposes a way through this quandary when she writes, "A desire to become this thing [or image] ... is the upshot of the struggle over representation." Assessing the valences of subjectivization after the "neoliberal revolution,"[10] Steyerl puts forth an unusual proposal:

> Identification is always with an image. But ask anybody whether they'd actually like to be a JPEG file. And this is precisely my point: if identification is to go anywhere, it has to be with this material aspect of the image, with the image as thing, not as representation. And then it perhaps ceases to be identification, and instead becomes participation.

These concomitant shifts from image to thing and from identification to participation make up the conditions of possibility of Hirsch's work. Steyerl is describing a situation (the current situation) where the promises of subjectivity—agency, autonomy, the capacity for action—cannot be clearly separated from the realities of subjugation: "the subject is always already subjected." Rather than continuing with the self-contradicting and ill-fated struggle to become a "full subject," Steyerl asks her reader to imagine the political possibilities contained within its apparent opposite: the object. She asks, "Why not be a thing?" Hirsch's *Playground* can be read as a rejoinder to this question.

Anni's subject position, the tween/teenage girl, is one of the most historically subjected. Of course, the degree of this subjugation is affected by race, class, ability, ethnicity, faith, and a myriad of other intersecting factors, yet across these differences self- and socially defined girls officially have relatively limited access to subjective autonomy (being relegated to the guardianship and authority of adults) and political agency ("girlhood" is conceived of as temporary, transient). Media scholar Sara Projansky (2014) has shown how mainstream visual culture in North America not only reproduces this degraded and limited construction of girlhood but puts it to work for neoliberal capitalism by pressing girls into the binary "can-do/at-risk."[11] "Can-do" identifies girls who already work for capitalism, who invest in themselves as human capital. "At-risk" identifies girls who do not, girls whose time, bodies, and subjectivities are not put to use but to "waste," usually by engaging in sexually promiscuous behavior, rejecting neoliberal paradigms for self-help and self-care, and rebelling against the dual authority of parents and the law. In this framework, the "at-risk" girl's insubordination is no less driven by capitalism than the "can-do" girl's compliance. Rather, the "at-risk" girl, more commonly known as the "bad girl," reifies neoliberal capitalism's inherent savior complex.[12] As Projansky notes, mass media representations of girls use this dichotomy to legitimize the surveilling and discipline of actual girls' subjectivities and bodies by creating a situation in which living as a girl is living in a constant state of threat (2014, 4).

By crafting a situation in which the perceived external threat is also Anni's context for self-realization, Hirsch exploits this double bind. Anni objectifies herself (by digitizing herself) in order to express and

experience desire at the same time that she is objectified by Jobe. To attempt to press *Playground* into a clearly defined victim-predator narrative or to resolve it with mainstream ideas about sexual experimentation, risk, and morality would be to miss the point. One of the most generative (if extremely challenging) aspects of Hirsch's premise is how uncomfortably it sits with hegemonic thinking about the sexualization and sexual lives of teenage girls.[13] From the audience's perspective, twenty-seven-year-old Jobe is a sexual predator grooming an adolescent girl. This reading reaffirms girls' malleability (Anni is being manipulated by Jobe) and links this malleability to vulnerability. Yet, it becomes clear that Anni sees things differently: for her, malleability is a mode of self-fashioning and creative subjective exploration.[14] Refusing to acknowledge the discrepancy that Hirsch so carefully set up between Anni, the audience, and Jobe is to reproduce another conventional assumption about girls: that they are dupable, and that somehow adults could know more about their desires than they do. Assumptions like this lead to a deeply uncomfortable position where, instead of Jobe manufacturing Anni's desires, the viewer presumes to do so.

Hirsch has been candid about the personal experience that *Playground* is based on, about how she went on the internet as a preteen to learn about sex and was often excited by what she found. She has also stated that sexual liberation and sexual subordination are not always easily parsed for her—physically, emotionally, or intellectually (Hirsch 2014). This ambivalence is written into *Playground*. Anni is not a container for viewers' anxieties about young girls and sex but a vehicle for her own desirous experimentations that disturb common conceptions of pleasure and danger, empowerment and objectification. Shifting from Anni to XoaNNioX (her online handle), she becomes the sort of object-image that Steyerl describes, not an object that exists passively and above all for consumption or use by others but a more complex "thing that feels." XoaNNioX (a shifting string of HTML code) is the convergence of "senses and things, abstraction and excitement, speculation and power, desire and matter" (Steyerl 2010). She is an image-object-human-thing.

Steyerl borrows the formulation "a thing that feels" from Mario Perniola's 1994 book, *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*, in which he describes the contemporary world as a place where sexuality has been wrested from the realm of nature, procreation, and the biological, and resituated in the realm of the artificial, the technological, and the inorganic.[15] (This certainly seems true of Hirsch's personal narrative.) (Hirsch n.d.) Human beings, as a result, have become "feeling things" (Perniola 1994, 1). According to many critical frameworks (including Marxism and most mainstream feminisms), this transgression begets a dystopian nightmare—a further consolidation of the cult of the commodity or collapsing of representations and reality. For Perniola, however, the identification of bodies and things unfurls to new "radical and extreme" experiences and extends the horizon of sexual and subjective emancipation (1).

In *Playground*, Hirsch links the emancipation of sexuality and identification from the limits of corporeal body to the advent of the Internet. Set in the mid-1990s, the time of the performance predates the popular smart-phone applications like Tinder and Grindr and even social platforms like Tumblr and YouTube—presently the most trafficked architectures for sex online. When *Playground* was first performed in 2014, the cumbersome computers that Anni and Jobe sit behind, as well as the pale blue hue and basic text interface of the chatroom projected on a massive screen behind them, already harkened a past era, likely unfamiliar to people born after 1990. Hirsch selects this historical moment not only because it corresponds to her own adolescence but also because, by today's standards, 1990s social media has a distinctly material weight and feel. To engage in cybersex, Anni and Jobe had to be rooted in physical space, which Hirsch emphasizes by placing them behind clunky wooden desks and large, boxy black monitors. Hirsch traces these lines between the material and the virtual in order to show how easily they are dissolved. As the

performance unfolds, the actors playing Anni and Jobe get up, move around, and even touch each other. Typed exchanges are simultaneously spoken out loud. The conversation moves from the computer to the phone and back. The threshold between how Anni experiences sex online and offline breaks down.

In a recent interview, Hirsch revealed that, once she started working on *Playground*, she quickly realized that its story was not singular (Alvarez 2014). Learning about and experimenting with sex online were experiences she shared with many of her peers. While sexual experimentation online is also common among contemporary teens, the 1990s did not have the fully articulated discourses—and attendant anxieties—about the threats and effects of online violence and catfishing that exist today and which tend to delegate girls' online activities to one of two opposing categories: empowered or victimized (Gill-Peterson 2015). This binary, it should be noted, is often mapped onto the divide between the (empowered) subject and the (subjugated) object. Hirsch carefully crafts a scene in which Anni is neither (or both) of these things. That is, her experience cannot be neatly squared within the dominant frameworks and thus calls the efficacy of these frameworks into question.

Hirsch's comments on her 2014 solo show *Muffy* at the American Museum in Brooklyn are useful for understanding the aesthetic and affective dynamics between the so-called "real" (material) and "representational" (digital) dimensions in *Playground*, which debuted the year before:

> The Internet, contrary to popular belief, is actually a really emotional place. Interacting with people online heightens emotions in ways that real life interactions don't. So much of the translation of my work to the gallery space was about translating that emotion when you're really caught up with something online, just projecting everything onto it … and the total anger and horror you feel when things don't go your way. (Hirsch 2014)

For Hirsch, the human sensorium is expanded by the screen, rather than split or cut off by it.[16] Her specific reference to the effects of "interacting with people online" anthropomorphizes the dialogic possibilities of this screen, which, Hirsch suggests, produce affective intensities that flow through the material border between online and offline. *Playground*, then, can be read as a response to the challenge of "translation"—to the challenge of tracking these intensities as they pass between her human body and her self-as-image onscreen.

Anni willfully—at times excitedly and gleefully, at times nervously and skeptically, and at times because she is bored—becomes an image (XoaNNioX) and participates in the sexualization of that image. "Participating in an image," argues Steyerl, "is not the same as being represented by it. The image is the thing in which senses merge with matter. Things are not being represented by it but participate in it" (2010, note 3). Anni does not merely identify with the image, she is the image. By collapsing digital (the screen and the relationship it mediates) and material space (the set, actors, and performance space) within the scene of the performance, Hirsch picks apart the concept that the intensities of the encounter chronicled in *Playground* would be less real or less felt than any other because this encounter takes place online. In Hirsch's intricately constructed and deeply complex mise-en-scène, blurred temporalities, layered material and virtual spaces, and undefined bodies serve to simultaneously amplify and make ambiguous the transgression of dominant moral and social codes.

Yet, strategically exploiting reification as Hirsch and Steyerl do does not definitively resolve the historical and present-day problem of the body, specifically the female body, conceived of and exchanged as a commodity. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau so deftly argues in "The Other Side of Venus: The Visual Economy of Feminine Display," the conflation of women and commodities has, in fact, been fundamental to the historical development of capitalism. The preponderance of images of sexually available women in

the public sphere at the onset of consumer capitalism is no coincidence; rather—in a system that is as much semiotic as it is economic—images of the "seductive, possessable, feminine" became ciphers for the "seductive, possessable, commodity" (Solomon-Godeau 1996, 114). Or, as Walter Benjamin wrote, "To desire the fashionable, purchasable woman-as-thing is to desire exchange value itself, that is, the very essence of capitalism" (quoted in Solomon-Godeau 1996, 129). Such semiotic and connotative associations between women, representations of women, and commodities confuse subjects with images with objects, and vice versa, effectively gendering and naturalizing one of the most challenging and insidious characteristics of the capitalist system: that capital and commodities are not the only things being produced and exchanged, so too are desires, affects, ideas, values, and emotions—all aspects of our psychic and social lives (Solomon-Godeau 1996, 116–17).

The economy described by Solomon-Godeau is the context of *Playground*, where collective fantasies of the adolescent girl as an ideal (sexualized) commodity and fears for adolescent girls as a category of identity are two sides of the same coin. The figure of the girl (like female-identified people in general) has become a screen for the capitalism run amok, into and through all aspects of life. Mapping desire for commodities onto desire for sex naturalizes the former, and, as Driscoll has shown, girls are now the "publicly preeminent image of desirability" (2002, 2). It is precisely by conflating the production and exchange of commodities with that which, according to dominant thinking, is supposed to be outside the capitalist economy that capitalism has masked not only the extent of its reach but also many of its caustic effects.

Hirsch's question (and Steyerl's too) is whether the reification that Solomon-Godeau and Driscoll identify can be turned against itself to exploit the subversive potential of a self that is always already commodified. Anni doesn't refuse the characteristics that define girls as commodities and sites of desire—malleability, naiveté, indeterminacy—but redirects them in ways that challenge hegemonic interpretations of what they mean. In this way, she is not necessarily a subversive figure but an ambivalent one.

Yet, this ambivalence is enough to significantly unsettle the "can-do" and "at-risk" paradigms through which capitalism defines girls. Seeing Anni engage XoaNNioX is seeing gender and sexuality in process, moving in ways that resist categorization and, specifically, the "can-do"/"at-risk" binary (Projanski 2014, 2–12). As white, presumably heterosexual, and middle class, she occupies "can-do" status. She is also articulate and demonstrates that she is willing to perform the emotional labor that capitalism demands of girls and women (Solomon-Godeau 1996, 131–39). But her work is misdirected, it is "wasted" on Jobe. While her self-sexualization may be a flashpoint for anxieties about girls and sex, the level of risk involved in her cyber affair is difficult to discern. If the viewer does presume to know better, to fit Anni into their own understanding of what it means to be young and female, they risk swapping places with Jobe, the manipulator who instrumentalizes the girl. This suggestion is not to diminish the very real threats and violences that face adolescent girls in the contemporary world. My aim is to show how Hirsch's compelling and challenging work forces the viewer into a position where they can't fully condone Anni's behavior but are not in a position to fully condemn her either. In doing so, Hirsch illuminates the challenge of addressing a subject whom patriarchal culture has forced into a position where she is not allowed to speak for herself and the conditions that make this so.

Notes

1. The edition of *Twelve* distributed by Klaus von Nichtssagend takes the form of a "jailbroken" iPad Mini containing the app and laser-engraved with Hirsch's signature.

2. For a rigorous analysis of the numerous ways that neoliberalism has instrumentalized images of girls, see Lamm 2015.

3. Facebook's gender identifiers are a good example of this; until 2014, in order to register for a Facebook account, a user was required to identify with one of the binary categories, "female" or "male."

4. The literature on this topic is extensive. See, for example, Driscoll 2002, Harris 2004, McRobbie 2001, and Tiqqun 2012.

5. It may seem odd to cite Agamben, who has been criticized for his instrumentalization of the figure of the girl and for otherwise overlooking issues of gender, in an essay on feminist art. My proposal, although beyond the argument of this paper, is that if we refuse Agamben's universalist terms and consider his forms-of-life theory through the lenses of gender and sexuality, we may very well find it useful for feminisms trying to shift or expand the terrain of politics to include that which lies outside without negating subjective difference.

6. See also Weigel and Ahern 2013, Power 2013, and Lamm 2015.

7. While this mediation between subjects and objects (and between subjects, objects, and themselves) long precedes the Internet, digital culture has undeniably amplified it. For a feminist analysis of mediation before the Internet, see Suleiman 1990.

8. On the production of subjectivity as labor, see Feher 2009.

9. See documentation of *Playground* at http://www.newmuseum.org/calendar/view/222/ann-hirsch-playground.

10. "Neoliberal revolution" is shorthand for the expansion of the logic of capitalism to all aspects of life.

11. Projansky borrows the "can-do"/"at-risk" framework from Anita Harris and applies it to the study of representations.

12. For a nuanced discussion of the "can-do/at-risk" paradigm, see Lamm 2015, 115–17.

13. For example, in popular television programs like MTV's *Teen Mom* (reality) and ABC Family's *Pretty Little Liars* (scripted) and in self-help parenting books, including Peggy Ornstein's *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the New Girlie-Girl Culture* (2012) and Mary Piper's *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994).

14. Early in the performance, Anni brings up Jobe's reputation in the chatroom ("u hav a big reputation in 12"), suggesting that she is aware he may not be who he seems ("every1 in the chat says uR like a hacker or something") but decides to keep the chat going nonetheless. From the beginning, Anni pushes the correspondence, too, using it as a context for self-exploration.

15. The title of this book is borrowed from Walter Benjamin. Following Steyerl, I am taking up Perniola, but I do so with a grain of salt. Despite his celebration of posthuman "things that feel," Perniola's own position (reproduced in his use of language) is troublingly androcentric and, like so many thinkers before him, he equates "universal" and "neuter" with masculine subjectivity.

16. See Krauss 1976, 53. While it is tempting to read this work through the lens of Krauss's pioneering essay, Internet art practices that use social media, like Hirsch's, do not position the subject in the same way as their video art predecessors. In fact, social media-based practices seem to have transformed the way that identity is constructed and conceived through real-time, screen-based art.

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