



Rachel MAYERI
Primate Cinema: Apes as Family 2011
 Image courtesy of the artist



Tarsh BATES
The Tangled Field: After McClintock 2016
 Image courtesy of the artist

ARTISTS

Trish Adams
 Tarsh Bates
 Gina Czarniecki
 Svenja Kratz
 Rachel Mayeri
 Helen Pynor
 Jillian Scott

SCIENTISTS

Lucia Galeazzi Galvani
 Alison Jolly
 Esther Lederberg
 Rita Levi-Montalcini
 Lynn Margulis
 Barbara McClintock
 Margaret Floy Washburn

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Curatorial Team

Rachael Parsons – Curator, Digital Media QUT Precincts
 Lubi Thomas – Curator, Creative Projects and Digital Media
 Trish Adams – Adjunct Professor and Curator, QUT Creative Industries
 Zoe Grey – Assistant Curator (Intern)

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QUT creative industries
 precinct

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 19 July to 19 August 2016

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COVER IMAGE Helen PYNOR
Liquid Ground 1 2010
 C-type photographic print face-mounted on glass
 160 x 110 cm / 100 x 68 cm
 Edition of 5 + 1AP / Edition of 5 + 1AP
 Image courtesy the artist, Dominik Mersch Gallery,
 Sydney, and GV Art gallery, London

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FEMEL_FISSIONS

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The first *Femel_Fissions* curatorial meeting occurred at Merlo Café, QUT Gardens Point, in mid-2014, although at the time we did not recognise it as such! Back then, the exhibition was still a nebulous concept rotating around our mutual enthusiasm for art/science practice, where the collaborative collides with and converges into hybrid forms. In 2014, this growing field of contemporary art included a range of pioneers, as well as a profusion of emergent artists, researchers and writers: an innovative, transdisciplinary community generating exciting work through knowledge, ideas, skills and techniques from both art and science. Since the foundation of the Arts Catalyst in London in 1993ⁱ and Art & Science Collaborations, Inc. (ASCI) in New York in 1998ⁱⁱ, the enthusiasm for art/science has expanded dramatically. The ongoing vitality of programs like SymbioticA Research Laboratory, founded in 2000ⁱⁱⁱ, the establishment of institutions such as Singapore's ArtScience Museum, opened in 2011, and dedicated publications like Artlink's 2014 *Bio Art* edition show the impact of art/science on contemporary culture.

At the same time as engaging with this growing practice space, however, we became increasingly aware of the problematic and continued underrepresentation of women in both the arts and sciences. Over the past fifteen years there has been a broadening recognition of the gap between male and female representation within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, and in art that engages with science and technology. The Athena Swan Charter, initiated in the UK in 2005 and subsequently introduced in Australia, provides clear goal-based incentives for organisations to move towards gender equality by including more women scientists (SAGE)^{iv}. But one just needs to read *The CoUNTess report* (2016)^v, engage with the *Art+Feminism* Wikipedia project (started in 2014)^{vi}, or read the many newspaper articles reflecting on the challenges facing women working in STEM or the arts to find that the contemporary landscape, physical and digital, career and cultural, continues to reflect a gender gulf.

As curators and practitioners within the digital new media/media arts landscape we became increasingly concerned about this gulf. Our initial conversations regarding the representation deficit of women began back in 2009, when *mellifera*^{vii} was shown at the Block. Part of the Block's ongoing program of exhibitions and project presentations drawn from creative practice positioned at the nexus of art, science, technology and engineering, *mellifera* was one of the few co female-led projects at that time, and for us it was a tipping point in recognising that the divide was already establishing itself within the QUT Creative Industries Precinct (CIP) program. Even though the CIP program was run by women with a conscious policy of including female practitioners in all exhibitions, work by women was still underrepresented. *mellifera* explored aspects

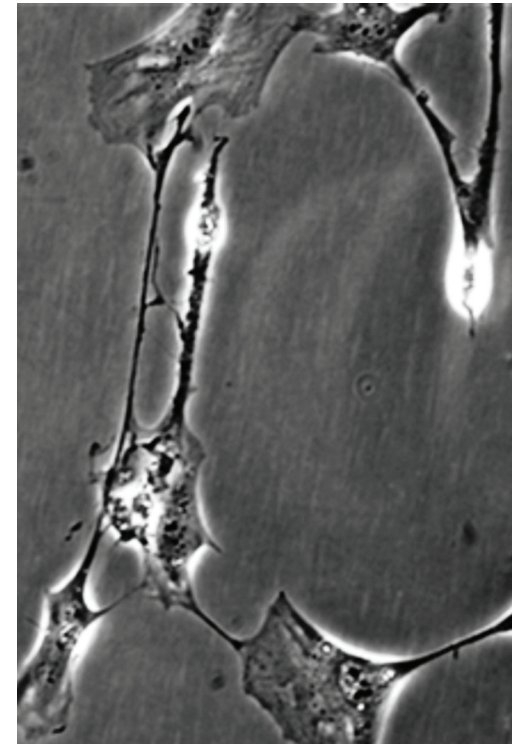
of gender through its use of the Internet software platform, Second Life, the inclusion of a resident gender-neutral 'bot', and the corporeal ambiguity introduced by avatars. But the issue of unequal gender representation continued to vex us over the years until that café meeting in 2014, when the idea of *Femel_Fissions: women, art & science* was conceived.

Clearly we were not alone in this thinking. 2016 has seen a number of high profile, women-only shows, including one at the renowned blue chip gallery Saatchi, London^{viii}, and Hauser Wirth & Schimmel's inaugural Los Angeles show^{ix}. Maybe this culmination has been built upon the traction of reports and articles addressing the representation gap, including the previously mentioned *CoUNTess report* (2016), *ARTnews Women in the Art World* issue (June, 2015)^x, and *The White Review* (2013)^{xi}. As expressed in the recent New York Times article, "Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn"^{xii}, the representation challenge is a multifaceted one that requires engagement across the whole art landscape, including public, private and commercial galleries, festivals and fairs. This year, *Femel_Fissions* comes to fruition as part of a broad project of focusing on female artists in the CIP's 2016 program.

It is important, however, to note that while engaging with this vital critical discourse we also witnessed the work of women who, in spite of these challenges, produced the most innovative and cutting edge research and practice. Women, within the arts and sciences, both past and present, have been succeeding, leading and innovating. Yet, as projects such as ART + Feminism reveal, the contribution of women to art and science is not widely known. It was this realisation and the wish to make visible the historic achievements of women, as well as supporting contemporary work, that formed the conceptual basis for *Femel_Fissions*.

Femel_Fissions traces and highlights the critical influence of female scientists from the past on scientific developments and theory through the work of contemporary female art/science practitioners. The premise of the commissioning program was for new artworks to be created in response to the ground-breaking work from selected female scientists in various fields, including neurobiology, cytogenetics, and primatology. The exhibition presents works by seven contemporary female artists who have each taken as their departure point the pioneering research of one female scientist. Through these creative, transdisciplinary intersections, *Femel_Fissions* illuminates the ongoing contributions and innovation of women in multiple fields of practice and explores a return to more fluid boundaries between art and science.

Rachael Parsons, Lubi Thomas, Trish Adams



i www.artscatalyst.org, Director/CEO: Nicola Triscott

ii www.asci.org, Executive Director: Cynthia Pannucci

iii <http://www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au/home/about>

iv Sciencegenderequality.org.au

v Elvis Richardson (2016). *The Countess Report*: February 2016. Retrieved 14 June 2016, from <http://www.thecountessreport.com.au/The%20Countess%20Report.FINAL.pdf>

vi Art+Feminism (2013 – ongoing). Retrieved from <http://art.plusfeminism.org/>

vii www.mellifera.cc Dr Trish Adams and Dr Andrew Burrell, *mellifera*, 2008-2009,

viii Saatchi Gallery (2015). Champaign life: 13 January – 9 March 2016. Retrieved 14 June 2016, from <http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/champagne-life/>

ix Hauser Wirth & Schimmel (2016). Revolution in the making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 – 2016. Retrieved 14 June 2016, from <http://www.hauserwirth.com/exhibitions/2712/revolution-in-the-making-br-abstract-sculpture-by-women-1947-y-2016/view/>

x Douglas. S. (ed). (2015). *Women in the Art World* [special issue]. ARTnews June 2015, New York.

xi Elderton. L. (2013). Redressing the Balance: Women in the Art World. Retrieved 14 June 2016, from <http://www.thewhitereview.org/art/redressing-the-balance-women-in-the-art-world/>

xii Sheets, H.M. (2016, march 29). Female Artists Are (Finally) Getting Their Turn. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/arts/design/the-resurgence-of-women-only-art-shows.html>

TOP LEFT Jill SCOTT
JELLYEYES 2016
Image courtesy of the artist
Funding: Pro Helvetia, Switzerland

TOP RIGHT Trish ADAMS
APOPTOSIS video still, my fibroblast cell dying 2016
Image courtesy of the artist

TOP Svenja KRATZ
Life and Death Vessels: A Collection of Curiosities 2011
Image courtesy of the artist

BOTTOM Gina CZARNECKI
I. 2014
Images courtesy of the artist