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RESEARCH

The Theatre of the Selfie: Fictive Practices of the Instagram Artist

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In a world where presentation of the self (Goffman) performed through 'selfies' have become everyday expressions, portrayal of the Self is being redefined by contemporary feminist artists. Building upon the legacy of artists such as Hannah Wilke, Lyn Hershman Leeson and Cindy Sherman a new generation of feminist artists through technology and particularly social media continue to explore gendered representations of the body by using their own bodies in their creative process. Using concepts of identity work, dramaturgy and impression management this paper considers the ways in which artists are using self-portraiture/selfies as art to exemplify the ways in which social media sites can be perceived as spaces to explore and document the construction of an ongoing series of narratives about the self.

Taking an ethnography and visual studies approach this investigation considers the ways in which fictive personas constructed and performed by artists Leah Schrager as *Ona Artist* and Amalia Ulman's *Excellences & Perfections* series respectively are brought to life. Both artists demonstrate how Instagram as a platform provides a stage for identity work that offers an opportunity to explore visual self-branding; the potential of narrative construction of identity via selfies and the effect of social media on identity construction.

By exploring the art selfie phenomenon as well as observing the extent of selfie taking in contemporary culture this analysis identifies specifically how digifem artists are both claiming control over their own bodies and questioning issues of gender, technology and identity through a fictive lens.

Keywords: Goffman; online identity; performance; fictive art; exhibition

“Fictive artworks have clearly fictional elements but extend outside the realm of the textual in various ways, principally through the creation of realia. A working definition of the term might be: plausible fictions created through production of real-world objects, events, and entities.” (Lafarge, 2004).

Visual images can now be easily reproduced, manipulated and anchored to create new meanings; their impact and society's insatiable desire to consume; it is not surprising that Walter Benjamin's use of the term phantasmagorias (Cohen, 1989: 87) in relation to commodity culture so aptly reflects the phantasmagorical powers of contemporary digital media. Selfies, fake news and social media self-branding all call into question what is authentic at this time of rapid information exchange and society's desire to present their individual identity to the world in a post truth age. In a world where it has become easy to obscure the boundaries between reality and the imaginary a growing number of artists are exploring the multimodal nature of contemporary identity construction in order to unravel questions of self, authenticity and subjectivity. Drawing from Goffman's (1959) work on face-work, the goal of this article is to clarify the ways in which, what I term Digi fictive heteronyms, such identities are negotiated and validated; where encounters demonstrate the how artists are utilising social media sites to illustrate “staged” virtual performances. In making this assertion, I contend that it is possible to extend current theories of identity performance online. Consequently, the main research question focus: what is the role of self-portraiture in relation to ‘the body’ for contemporary feminist artists; how has such performance shifted through the use of digital technology? How is presentation of self realised through the creation of a digifictive persona via social media in establishing and constructing narratives? Therefore a key concern for this paper is to understand specifically how digifictive personas through Instagram craft their identities. Addressing such questions entails considering concepts of identity work, dramaturgy and impression management in light of feminist art theory, the rise of the Selfie and the importance of social media in the virtual presentation of the self. Such distinctions should be useful to scholars who are concerned with presentation of self specifically via social media as well as those interested in the

growing phenomenon of digi artists; and those, like this this author, consider an impression management approach as a valuable theoretical means to understand social media behaviour (Krämer & Winter, 2008; boyd & Ellison, 2007; DiMicco & Millen, 2007; Triberti et al., 2017; Hogan, 2010).

I begin this article with a review of Goffman's dramaturgical approach providing an overview of its extensive use within the field of social media research. I then introduce feminist art approach, paying particular attention to the themes of self, the body and autobiography. This is followed by a section examining two case studies specifically exploring the Instagram digifictive performances of Leah Schragger's *Ona Artist* (2016–Present) and Alison Ulman's *Excellences & Perfections* (2014), where shifting the focus towards online performance of fictive personas may reveal new insights and offer future research.

Goffman's Dramaturgical Self

For artists a fictional persona, by definition, allows for the creation of a separate identity and the opportunity to explore the story of the fictional artist's intellectual and emotional growth as well as question key issues about the contemporary art world, women's roles as artists and society itself. The fictional subject, is not a new phenomenon, to the contrary it has been widely employed throughout modern art history. This rich tradition of fictional personas in art making allows artists to experiment with identity in and through their work in order to present an alternate, idealised or transformed self or as a tactic to investigate a different approach to their practice. These alternative constructed selves can function in diverse ways, often as a strategy for transgression, dispensing with accountability and/or for maintaining the freedoms and possibilities of a mutable identity. Thus establishing self-identity is an important process for the artist and even more so for the fictional artist.

In a modern world of digital media where society have become adept at reinventing or masking identities this research focuses on a largely ignored phenomenon why artists have decided to create fictional personas. A critical examination of many such fictional artists, considered chronologically, tells the larger story of the importance of branding, the desire to play with identity and exposes the complex and gender biased

world of professional art. Although much has been written about portraits of artists in novels, there has been very little work exploring artists' creation of fictive artists as art practice. This research will restrict its focus to works about contemporary fictional women artists, to allow for a sharper focus on the many and varied transactions between the fictional artists and the artists who create them.

In order to portray a fictional artist, the artist is obliged to conjure out of words and images, through a range of texts, the identity of the fictional artist and her history as well as create her imaginative vision. When the fictional persona is created the artist or artist collective begin with an implicit or explicit dialogue between themselves as a creator and the fictional artist. The fictional artists examined in this study explore the ways artists are portrayed as well as the way their art is presented and how it compares to real artists. Each of the fictional artists should be considered a complex work which exists across a wide range of media platforms: installation, exhibitions, catalogues, interviews, live performance, social media and other internet sites particularly the artist website all of which support the development of the persona's authenticity as an artist.

For a fictional artist to be successful the persona needs to reinforce their identity through their relationship with their audiences through storytelling which is authentic and credible. Therefore it is clear that building a narrative universe for an artist's identity is crucial and a narrative arc for each exhibition is essential. Thus the creation of a global narrative universe is built, in large part, on the artist's personality, which can be a way of reinforcing the engagement of an audience already more or less intrigued by the fictional element of the persona.

Such art practices could be perceived as an excellent example of something that can be loosely identified as "fictive art" (LaFarge, 2001) a term coined by Antoinette LaFarge which she defines on her website titled fictive art as "plausible fictions created through production of real-world objects, events, and entities" (Lafarge, 2007: n.p.). The use of the term fictive in scholarly research has grown exponentially in the last forty years, particularly in the fields of anthropology and ethnography. Of particular interest is the literary anthropologist Wolfgang Iser's study of the term in *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (JHU Press, 1993), where he asserts that fiction and reality are

no longer binary opposites. Iser's hypothesis proposes a triadic relationship to understand the fictionalising act, which he states comprises of the real, the fictive, and the imaginary. For Iser (1993) the fictive is an act of boundary crossing where the referential world is disrupted and doubled – the act of fiction becomes an act of transgression. The important word here is act, in other words, fiction is no longer defined against an idea of the real, nor is it tied solely to the literary.

As such art practices have developed so too have scholarly exploration of this art form. Of significance is Carrie Lambert-Beatty's (2009) consideration of parafiction and the concept of fictiveness specifically in relation to contemporary art practices. Her examples involve "a diverse range of practices and practitioners" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 71), including the artist Michael Blum's construction of the fictive persona Safiye Behar reinforces the complexities of what is real and what is authentic particularly when in view of the artist's statement that "Behar was "real to me"" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 53) which demonstrates her assertion that "fiction or fictiveness has emerged as an important category in recent art" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Whilst there are specific nuances to both definitions of fictive and para fictive art, key to each respectively is the importance of real artefacts.

Key to unravelling both terms is the theoretical concept of mimesis which within Western traditions of aesthetic thought has been central to attempts to theorise the essence of artistic expression. Whilst the term has been theorised by many scholars, of specific interest to this research is the exploration of mimesis from a feminist perspective, particularly the work of Luce Irigaray (1977), which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2. From this stance the consideration of the ways in which women are imitated and represented through contemporary media forms allows for discourse exploring how traditional representations of the female body can be disrupted. Keeping in mind the importance of artefacts for para fictive and fictive art, what could be considered transfictive mimesis is that paradoxically the use of multi platforms to create a fictive artist depends on using mediums that depict reality more efficiently whilst also engaging with fictions, narratives, and made-up worlds.

Lambert- Beatty aptly defines parafiction as "related to but not quite a member of the category of fiction [where] real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect

with the world as it is being lived" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Acknowledging the work of scholars such as Baudrillard she perceives parafictional strategies as post-simulacral which are less concerned with the departure of the real and alternatively build upon the premise that "these fictions are experienced as fact" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 54). Her approach considers the issues surrounding parafictions' juxtaposition of truth status and potential deceptive nature identifying that between 1998 and 2008 this genre of art, including "legions of fake artists" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 56) reflects the growing popularity of and establishment of fictive art illustrating how these artists "produce and manage plausibility" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 72). Lambert-Beatty states that central to the success of a parafiction is "stylistic mimicry" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 60) which in the guise of established and contemporary conventions present art that could be perceived as authentic. Whilst Lambert-Beatty acknowledges how certain viewers/audiences have been 'duped' by the artworks she more interestingly draws attention to the growing scepticism of people and the little explored pleasures of satisfaction and a sense of superiority due to the recognition of fictive nature being identified. What is particularly interesting is her discussion of the impact of the fictive work on viewers where the experience itself coinciding with the deliberate plausibility of the parafiction will "have a lingering effect even after the disillusionment" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 66). Equally the issue surrounding a fictive work's tenuous ethical position is deliberated particularly in relation to society's suspicion of "media culture at large... to the epistemological shock that the rapid mainstreaming of the Internet has caused, especially in the last ten years" (Lambert Beatty, 2009: 78) yet it is argued that such fictive experiments "prepare us to be better, more critical information consumers, and therefore citizens" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 78). Central to this view is how individuals are acquiring "post-parafictional alertness to the possibility of play" (Lambert-Beatty, 2009: 83) resulting in the development of a more informed critical outlook.

The construction of fictive artists is considered specifically in relation to them being perceived as transmedia narratives, their personas established across multiple mediums or platforms. Whilst it is generally accepted that this is an accurate way to define transmedia storytelling the level of integration between these platforms has

been greatly contested. According to Jenkins (2006), each branch of the story should be independent enough that an individual could enjoy each one without needing to experience the others. Whilst Jenkins (2006) asserts that each platform should be independent Christy Dena (2009) disagrees with this definition preferring the term transfiction, which refers to a story that is contingent on all story pieces across all mediums. By this definition, no single branch would be adequate to experience the story. It is the term transfiction that seems to encapsulate the construction process of the fictive artists more closely. Whilst it could be argued that Jenkin's definition ensures more accessibility and creates more widespread engagement, the fictive artists as transfixive selves mirror the ways in which society utilise different platforms to self-brand. By building an interconnected identity narrative that depends on all platforms this creates a more authentic and satisfying experience of the fictive artist as a whole.

Consequently, research such as this is vitally important since Transmedia practice is "an important phenomenon that has emerged in the practices of individuals and companies alike, across art forms, genres, industries, time and countries..." (Dena, 2009: 3) thus needs to be documented mainly because "Transmedia practices are not just the concern of conglomerates who are horizontally organized, but also of individuals with limited resources. It is important, therefore, to recognize the breadth of the phenomenon" (Dena, 2009: 4).

Digifictive Heteronyms – A Brief History and defining the art form

As highlighted earlier, the creation of fictional artists is not a new phenomenon. Artists have always played with identity. Since the beginning of the 20th century, artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Claude Cahun and later Cindy Sherman, have played with the existence of a second Ego through their work.

Perhaps artists, by using another persona – whether anonymous, fictitious, or both – it is a way of creating a space outside the market: a space where things can't be pinned down so easily and exchanged. This creative model research exemplifies the underlying context of digital platforms – where everybody can create anonymous personae – and a broader cultural shift into a kind of irrational space.

Artists, frequently develop characters or different personalities in and through their work in order to present an alternate, idealised or transformed self or as a tactic to investigate a different approach to their practice. These alternative constructed selves can function in diverse ways, often as a strategy for transgression, dispensing with accountability and/or for maintaining the freedoms and possibilities of a mutable identity. What is interesting is that many of the fictional artists are introduced to the public initially as real entities and only later revealed as fictitious or a hoax. Even more fascinating is the acceptance of these fictional artists in their own right after the revelation.

The various ways these fictive personas have been labelled or defined gives an indication of why fictional artists are somewhat impossible to entirely define. They manifest themselves in too many forms to enable a simple description of what defines a fictional artist. The term alter ego has altered significantly during the last century resulting in the definition developing into a personal attribute, demonstrated as a second Ego to the outside world. Many artists particularly during the last two centuries have made use of a persona as part of their art work. More than just artistic pseudonyms, the personae explored in this research are independent characters used either as the focus of the artist's work as or as artists in their own right. Creating a new persona offers a chance to explore one's identity; consequently through the construction of alter egos and fictional life histories, the fictional artist provides a specific context and an entry point into the identity of the woman artist.

In the wake of 1990s identity politics, and following the postmodernist dialectic concerning the constructed self, such as those explored in Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, 1991, many artists working today question the possible meanings of 'identity'. The artists in this research use their own bodies and those of others in order to express individual and particular cultural positions as a fictional persona, namely that of the artist.

Although the domain of fictional artists is ostensibly defined by the fact the artists do not "[exist]", in practice their art is known through the virtual existence of the artists and this is "fictive art" (Lafarge & Patt, 2001). It is the artists' existence

through virtual world of social media, physical presentation of self-image, performance and their work – that their identity is established and legitimised in the art world. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) explore identity theorising that identity refers to “position in a multi-dimensional space defined by particularistic categorical attributes such as race ethnicity or gender” (2000: 7). However there has currently been an upsurge of interest in the possibilities that a constructed female identity offers to contemporary artists whether working individually or collaboratively.

Returning briefly to Goffman (1956) presentation of self, comparisons can be clearly drawn with the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) when considering a working definition of fictive artists. Both Baudrillard and Pessoa deal with representation as the only experience possible and question how society grasps truth and reality. Pessoa, it is important to note, coined the literary term heteronym which he used to define the series of invented selves that he perceived not as pseudonyms since he felt that this term did not capture their true independent intellectual life. Unlike a pseudonym or alter ego, Pessoa perceived heteronyms as autonomous agents with their own specific interests, literary styles, biographies and physical physiognomies. It is from this stance that the fictive artists explored in this research are specifically identified as *digifictive heteronyms*.

How have these transfictive heteronyms gained success in the art world when by definition they do not exist? How do they justify their fictional persona as a real entity? In the case of fictional artists these ideological structures pose alternative models of esteem, relating to power of the individual importance of creativity and role of women artists. The ideology of authenticity suggests that the fictional artist exists as a transmediated self.

Whereas Amalia Ulman’s online presence as a result of *Excellences & Perfections* presently has 157,000 followers on Instagram (2019); was included in Tate Modern’s ‘Performing for your Camera’ group show in 2016; perhaps reflects the ways artists are utilising social media to their advantage. However it is Ona Artist perhaps, that best encapsulates digi feminist artists’ utilisation of digital technology, particularly social media, illustrating the power of the transfictive heteronymic identity to explore contemporary feminist issues.

In the last decade this has given rise to Digi Feminist artists specifically exploring identity, women and the body through their work thus demonstrating that “Women artists are no longer held back by their limited access to the traditional gallery ... Technology has given society an unprecedented amplification of the feminist voice” (Tell, 2014: 4). Artists specifically relevant to this research are Leslie Kulesh, Ivana Basic and Leah Schrager. Kulesh, through her performances and sculpture across multiple platforms, examines the role of technology as a symptom of contemporary culture production and its convergence with feminism thus using “...the filter of popular culture to tackle contemporary feminism and late technology” (French Riviera, 2012: n.p.). By questioning identity politics through digital illustration, where the digital offers the ability to become, instantly, she examines CGI authorship and the potential liberation of an online avatar focusing on her research into self-editing. This is exemplified in her *Oh My Goddess! Series* (2012) which “presents an environment situated between the digital and the organic” (French Riviera, 2012: n.p.). Thus giving rise to the issues surrounding identities, particularly public personas where in the past they were carefully constructed over a lifetime, now, in the form of the avatar, they can be taken on instantly then discarded and replaced indefinitely.

Ona Artist

Schrager, as stated earlier, also works with digital technology to examine identity, the biography of the female body and issues of ownership through her own image. Works such as *My Modeling Portfolio* (2012), *SarahWhiteModeling.com* (2012), *ArtSexyStudio.com* (2013) and an ongoing project *EscartGirl.com* (2013) demonstrate her interest in the legal and economic control over an individual's images. However it is her present art project *Ona Artist* that is of most interest to this research. Schrager expresses that “it’s important for us to start considering selfies an advanced and florid kind of self-portraiture... People are exploring themselves and they are owning their explorations, which should be supported as an alternative to what I call “man hands” (men selling women's images as art)” (Schrager, 2015: n.p.). Schrager has specifically focused on her own identity on the Web where “Since 2010 I’ve conducted an ongoing interaction with my Google Image search results. First

was Removal, then Multiplication (necessitated by an act of GF Revenge), and now conflation" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.). Her examination of the female body where she feels "It is conceptually central to my work that I use my own image" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.) in relation to ownership and her personal experiences as an artist "when the director of the West Chelsea Artists Open studios kicked me out of the event in 2012; he claimed my artwork was an "ad" and not "art" and that I was a "commercial entity" not an "artist"" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.).

Despite "Slut Shaming" (Schrager, 2015: n.p) she directly considers the role digital feminism has had on feminist artists since "I own the rights to myself and use my own image" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.) and the ways they have exhibited their bodies as art and demonstrates that "women should have the right to do what they wish with their bodies" (Schrager, 2015: n.p.) thus reinforcing the concept that it is important for women to present their bodies in diverse ways within the art world.

Alison Ulman

Maguire (2018) explores how Ullman's piece disrupts Instagram "by playing with audience expectations of authenticity" (2018: 179) and considers the ways in which Ulman constructs her online identity focusing on the artist's employment of aesthetics considering her use of "technological elements like filters and captions to give a sense of texture and voice to the representation" (178). Maguire asserts that Ulman's piece whilst acknowledging the artist's intent to explore contemporary social media conventions for feminine self presentation through image based social media, draws attention to the ways in which social media particularly Instagram illustrate the performative nature of social media for society emphasising "highly mediated versions of lives and selves that circulate and reflect meanings about gender, class and race" (2018: 178).

Maguire considers the ways in which Ulman demonstrates the potential of social media platforms for fictive purpose and Instagram's "capacity as a space for provocative art" by examining the identity of the Instagirl which Maguire identifies as "an identity particularly reflective of the commodification of the self on social media" (2018: 179).

Indeed Maguire's assertion that "narcissism pervades practices of online self-presentation" opens up the idea that it needs to be repositioned "as a positive force that enables the construction of cohesive selves" (2018: 179).

Within cyberspace, artists have ever evolving opportunities to construct identity in both realistically conceived and alternative forms that explore key notions of identity and representation. The rapid growth in popularity of social networking sites as well as accessibility to construct websites these digital spaces become important cultural locations where feminist artists can perform, (re)construct and share their identities and work. Thus it makes sense to explore how contemporary artists use transmedia and in particular digital media because not only are they important locations because of how identity is represented there, but they also important because of their great popularity as sites of identity construction. The implications for this research, then is that notions of identity and representations are at the very least considerations that each of these users must make when posting profile picture, accepting and adding photographs of themselves to their timelines, uploading SELFIES via two or more platforms – pictures which in essence reflect a manufactured identity or branding of the self to their network of friends. The term friends in this context, digital friends, reflect society's present use of social media which usually means a "wider, looser web of acquaintances" (Morrison, 2010: 4). Digital media has enabled people to connect more globally and in turn opened up new ways for individuals to represent themselves.

Transmedia storytelling across various platforms clearly provides the opportunity for the fictional artist to reach a potentially wider audience. The way the fictive artists are presented across a variety of media platforms also reflects contemporary society's fascination with mythologised identities particularly through photographs. The allure of the Selfie reinforces this where such imagery mirrors Western hegemony and continues to persist in shaping contemporary expectations of what roles women as individuals should play in society. Since there are several entrance points to begin exploring the fictional artists, this give the audience a possibility to examine the personas in more depth and delve into the imagined life that has crossed over into reality.

The goal of this research is to contribute to and participate in academic discourse in evolving digital literacies and feminist pedagogy, particularly in its ability to construct identity through transmedia storytelling. At the intersection of these scholarly discourses is an underwritten understanding that digital media provide significant pedagogical opportunities that have yet to be fully embraced or exploited. Equally this research argues that this form of new literacy contributes to a body of knowledge that provides guidance to researchers interested in the semiotics of identity in an increasingly digital world. More specifically this research will offer an argument for exploring the importance of transmedia practice in constructing a persona brand for artists and for society at large. Such practices for artists could be extremely beneficial in the development of marketing strategies and reaching wider audiences.

With social media globally playing such an important part in people's lives, a phenomenon reflected in the emerging popularity of fictive artists it is important more than ever to "consider how the subjective field of vision itself is produced through sexual, racial and gendered difference – and how looking and seeing, as cultural practices, are always constructed 'in the field of sexuality, gender and race'" (Hall, 1999: 314). To that end, the critical reflection made possible through transmedia texts, particularly the visual form of representation in digital media, presents an opportunity for researchers and artists to explore notions of identity, representation and the construction of social knowledge.

Portrait of an Artist as an Instagirl – Identity, Performance Art and presentation of self

"Sociology has long conceptualized persons as occupying multiple positions in organized sets of social relationships, and as playing out the diverse roles associated with those multiple positions." (Stryker & Burke, 2000)

"An identity is a set of meanings applied to the self in a social role or as a member of a social group that define who one is." (Burke and Tully, 1977)

To understand the creation and development of a fictional personas' identity it is essential to clearly explore the existing research surrounding issues of identity. In a

world saturated by the media, pop culture and society the question of how identity is defined has resulted in a vast body of research (Evans & Hall, 1999; Hall & Du Gay 1996; Weir, 2008, 2014; Consalvo & Paasonen, 2002; Griffiths, 1995; Ross, 2010; Butler, 2011; Carter & Steiner, 2003; Lawler, 2015; Elliott, 2012; Woodward, 2004; du Gay, Evans & Redman, 2000). Research suggests that issues of identity in the twenty-first century and the impact of social media on their construction, reflects that the relationship between the two is increasingly multifaceted and challenging, but also of crucial, mounting significance. Social media provides the perfect platform where “individuals strive to maintain or enhance their self-esteem; they strive for a positive self-concept” (Tajifel and Turner, 1979). Social networking has provided people with the opportunity to project themselves as they want to be seen, whether these are authentic depictions or false portrayals, thus leaving identity in a state of crisis. As a result contemporary approaches to identity consider the concept as adaptable and in constant flux due to varying social and ideological conditions (Turner 2010; Bazin & Selim 2006; Robards & Bennett 2011). Current theories interpret identity as discourse (Chun 2005; Doja 2006), variable, complex, reflexive and subjective (Derrida 2000). This dimension aptly is captured by Elliott who suggests that “All forms of identity are astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical” (Elliott, 2013: 10/11).

From the twentieth century onwards, the customary notions of identity and the self in the arts have been radically questioned and revised; where the relationship between society and art has been constantly in flux. In the case of women in particular, their status in relation to family, society and art has drastically changed. Women artists have had to contend with all these issues as well as deal with long established patriarchal attitudes towards women's art practices. Coinciding with the development of new technologies, women artists have turned to digital media art forms to explore women and identity providing “a rich and fruitful terrain of interdisciplinary research on the self and identity” (Elliott, 2013: 112).

The figure of the female artist in recent years seems to have appealed to artists as being especially suitable to reflect upon all these topics. Furthermore, such creative work in which these fictional personas have been created and explored appear as

particularly sensitive to the most conspicuous and delicate vicissitudes brought about by the modern and post-modern condition. Artists' use of digital technologies reinforce Sigmund Freud's suggestion in *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* (1908), that artists are remarkably prone to question reality and the world surrounding them as well as the means at their disposal for dealing with it in their creative work. Life, reality, society, the self and art are issues recurrently dealt with by each of the fictional artists discussed in this research. Establishing self-identity is an important process for the artist and even more so for the fictional artist.

As briefly outlined earlier, traditional notions on identity and the self have been dramatically pulled apart since the early decades of the twentieth century, prompted, among others, by Freud's work on psychoanalysis and Saussure's *Course on general linguistics* (2011). The consequent revision of notions of identity, individuality and subjectivity has been reflected in artists' work exploring notions of identity by creating fictional personas that are no longer conceived as stable, prefigured, coherent entities but rather as fluid, fragmented, multi-layered, and complex, fictional intimations of modern men and women.

The specific field within feminist theory focused on here is feminist aesthetics and art. Female identity is often formed and realized through the male gaze, and it is usually depicted to appeal to male fantasies (Mulvey 1975; Pollock 2003; Berger 1972; White, 1999; Doane 2013; Chanter 2008; Beauvoir 1949). Equally the woman artist's identity traditionally is constructed by a male dominated mainstream art world.

By considering a number of scholars work on stardom and celebrity it allows for the exploration of the artist identity as brand since the transformation occurs in a similar way (Boorstin, 2012; Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2004; King 2003; Turner, 2004). In recent debates about the ever growing presence of stars and celebrities in digital media, the artist as a star/celebrity identity has become a defining characteristic of our mediatised society – it is ever present on artist and gallery websites and social media platforms. Digital media representation of the artist has become a valued resource since it gives those who have it discursive power and functions also as a marker of success. Such is the proliferation of on line identity culture that several

academics have discussed its importance for social cohesion and identity formation. There has been a great deal of research on celebrities and artists as brands. It is where the spectacle has become a carrier of celebrity content. Thus to consider Baudrillard, it is not a world of events, history, culture, and ideas produced from shifting contradictory real experiences, but artefacts produced from 'elements of the code and technical manipulation of the medium'.

Inevitably, the comparison has to be made between this new star system and film history's account of stars and star discourse. A review of this material will help the research understand how and why the cinematic star as a culturally produced body has evolved into a digital star system in which signifiers, identities, and bodies themselves are called into question. More than the indulgence of looking in at these stars within filmic worlds, we now embrace the very real pleasure of communicating directly with these entities. The subject, object, audience, artist, viewer, creator tangle and double over; these roles blur into a new phenomenon that refuses to take on a shape.

Artists' use of social media, websites in order to construct transmedia texts is the confirmation of the creation of an identity and consist of the embodiment of a subjectivity that unites 'the spectacular with the everyday, the special and the ordinary' (Dyer, 2007 [1979]: 35). In a similar way to the paradoxical nature of celebrities as both ordinary and extraordinary, fictional artists are real and illusory. Consequently, the transformation from imagined to tangible identity can be seen as a media ritual that both confirms this juxtaposition and legitimates the personas existence.

In the same way that stars "are both labour and the thing that labour produces" (Dyer, 2004 [1986]: 5) the contemporary fictional artist is also manufactured by artists in order to produce and assist to market other commodities, however at the root of the creation of the persona is usually to expose the representation of women, ethnic minorities and act as a critique of the art world in general.

Consequently, with the continuous technological development of and accessibility of social media, this platform allows individuals to explore the issues surrounding identity in the 21st century as well as the opportunities to subvert traditional representations.

For some time now, scholars have noted the ways in which confession of the self has been repackaged as entertainment reflecting the rapid development of mass mediated confessional culture. Ranging from documentary, television sitcoms, reality shows to talkback shows along with the mass consumption of gossip magazines and tabloids using confession formats all of which can be perceived as definite factors influencing the way individuals construct their transmediated self.

To consider how individuals have begun to utilise celebrity branding to promote their own self-branding, particularly in the realm of social media it is perhaps pertinent to consider scholarly research that has documented the ways celebrity and consumption work to create a celebrity brand. Whilst existing literature regarding this specific area of study focuses mainly on the benefits of branding celebrities as similar to the effects of branding products, services, and organizations in the past there has been a recent trend to examine how individuals are applying these branding tactics. Furthermore recent research has established that brands can work in multiple ways, resulting in a shift in focus from brand producers toward consumer response to understand how branding produce meaning (e.g., Aaker, 1997; Firat and Shultz, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2003; Johar et al., 2001; Ritson and Elliott, 1999; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004; Thompson, 2004). McCracken (2005) and Brownlie and Hwer (2009) have appropriately documented the phenomenon of obsession with fame and celebrity as well as its correlation with the continual rise of image-driven branding. Grant McCracken in *Culture and Consumption II: Markets, meaning and brand management* presents a perceptive argument exploring the relationship between consumer society and its obsession with the celebrity world which he considers "is one of the most potent sources of cultural meaning at the disposal of the marketing system and the individual consumer" (2005, p. 113).

In turn, technology has created ways to transfer our role from reader to author where we increasingly live our lives across a range of media thus participating creative traversal culture which "makes meaning across boundaries: between media, genres, sites, institutions, contexts" (Lemke, p. 579: 2011). The fictional artists utilise a variety of media texts in order to shape their styles, beliefs, and values in the pursuit of establishing their identity and in turn brand as an artist. This participation

in multiple media platforms reflects contemporary society's preoccupation with identity work. The key to successfully developing the fictional artist's persona is that each platform needs to develop her narrative identity in a unique way.

Although as discussed briefly earlier, artists have always experimented with identity through their work, digital media now provides opportunities to explore this more fully. The case studies selected for this research demonstrates how artists are creating personas to exist as individual separate entities through the use of media texts. Taking Hall's stance that "representation connects meaning and language to culture" (Hall, 1997: 15) the personas representing female artists exemplify the continued contemporary cultural concerns of women's role within society. This encoding is further developed through the constructed identity promoting themselves and their relationships through social media platforms. As digital media makes advances becoming more interactive and personal it now plays an increasingly constant role in our lives where the "current generation...are accustomed and acclimated to being (inter)active with their media experiences" (Jenkins, 2010). With such a greater level of accessibility to multiple media platforms this has created opportunities for individuals to engage with and operate technology with ease and proficiency. This allows for information on identity to be shared on several levels, through a variety of mediums and at different points of depth.

It is made clear that both online and offline identity construction has developed further than merely complimenting counterparts, since they cannot be perceived as functioning in the same way and consequently cannot be interchanged for one another, rather "together they cocreate the experience of identity in the space between the digital and the analog" (Elwell, 2014: 235). However it is difficult to agree with Elwell when he considers online identity play being "less common" stating that the "identity to a 'real' person is a valuable, if not necessary, social and economic premium" (Elwell, 2014: 236) since this does not take into account pseudonyms used by artists, drag queens, the LBGTQ community, persecuted groups, human rights activists, journalists whom have legitimate reasons for using aliases.

Each of the artists as transfixive heteronyms reinforce Theresa Senft's suggestion that the "Internet has become a stage" for individuals (Senft, 2015: 347). In light of this, the artists when considered as specific art works reflect the ways in which society perform through digital technology specifically to stage a preferred reading of self. This concept is mirrored by Schrager's Ona Artist exemplified through the way "she manages her online self with the sort of care and consistency normally exhibited by those who have historically believed themselves to be their own product: artists and entrepreneurs." (Senft, 2015: 347) thus reinforces the argument that individuals do not simply maintain a place on the stage. The habitual act in the digital age has created a platform for everyone to be a celebrity brand.

Whilst Foucault's work on embodiment, power and subjectivity considers how "the mechanics of power" (1995: 138) assists in creating a discipline which allows authority to produce "'docile' bodies" (1995: 138) in contrast more recent work by certain scholars has focused on the possibilities of digital media offer identity where it has the potential to be free of such conventional restraints. In the last thirty years there has been a growing body of research exploring digital transformations in media, culture and society. Studies have examined rapid technological development, social change, and the ways digital technologies which have become an integrated part of people's everyday lives (Bolter, 2000; Manovich, 2002, Kember, 1998, 2002, 2015; Kember & Popelier, 2014, Rush 2005; Paul 2008; McNeil, 2014; Hansen 2006; Greene 2004).

There is a growing number of scholarly studies on identity presentation (boyd, 2006b; Ellison et al., 2006) with a specific focus on profile-based sites, particularly social networking services such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, all of which have proven that profile owners are specifically attentive to audience. Correspondingly, selfpresentation theory has also been employed in order to understand further this relationship between self-construction, audience and digital media. Such analysis has also concentrated on digital technologies specifically focusing on social network sites (boyd, 2007; Livingstone, 2005), blogs (Hodkinson and Lincoln, 2008; Reed, 2005), dating sites (Ellison et al., 2006) as well as personal homepages (Papacharissi,

2002; Schau and Gilly, 2003). Such studies have led to Marwick and boyd furthering examining how “people using the microblogging site Twitter imagine their audiences and what strategies they use to navigate networked audiences” (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 2).

Whilst Susan Sontag’s consideration that “There is always an assumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what is in the picture” (2001) was reasonably accurate at the time, with the emergence of digital photography and the ease of access to manipulate digital images via social media has become so commonplace that now such an supposition is no longer conceivable. McAlpine (2005) ascertains that “people have different identities associated with multiple roles” which are performed within “differing physical or temporal spaces... (where) within cyberspace, self-presentation is to some extent controlled by the individual” (380).

With the continual advancement of digital media has come the opportunity to explore ways to assume multiple identities simultaneously where through the construction of these identities it is no longer perceived as ‘having’ ownership but instead as ‘being’ them or associating with the acts they are performing.

Particularly during the last decade the use of social media sites by society at large has offered individuals the opportunity to carefully construct a ‘meta-narrative and metaimage of self’ (Hearn, 2008). According to Jodi Dean (2002) publicity culture has influenced the way individuals in society present and perceive themselves, particularly having a great impact on the public persona where it could be argued that “publicity is the ideology of technoculture” (Dean, 2002: 4).

Although Marwick and boyd examine Twitter specifically to consider how individuals construct and market their personal brand in order to cultivate and maintain followers it is useful since as they themselves identify that this is “part of a larger social phenomenon of using social media instrumentally for self-conscious commodification” (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 6).

Roger Clark’s work on digital identity over two decades still proves to be authoritative on the issues surrounding society and technologies and his working definitions of key terms underpinning his study of identity in the information society

are still relevant today. (1994a, 2009, 2012). The first scholar to coin the term 'digital persona' in order to develop a greater understanding of the then emerging digital world defined "the digital persona is a model of an individual's public personality based on data and maintained by transactions, and intended for use as a proxy for the individual" (Clark, 1993a, 1994a, 2012). Clark attempts to build upon the limited amount of information technology literature concerning human identification and considers issues such as how people through digital technology can have multiple identities, digital surveillance, data collection systems and cyborgisation (Clark 1993, 1994, 2005, 2011, 2012). Linking his research to Jungian psychology Clark explores the digital persona in relation to the inner personality anima and public personality presented to the world persona thus with the development of digital technology and social media the concept of the digital persona is reinforced as a construct.

Anna Poletti and Julie Rak in *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (2014) assert that "it is now commonplace to assume that personal identity work is foundational to the production of social media" (2014: 4) and propose that auto/biography studies could offer an approach to explore the complexities of identity production in digital media. Poletti and Rak accurately identify that it is important when examining the effects of self-representational digital media that "analysis must remain attentive to the self as an effect of representation – the affordances, strategies, techniques, and intended audiences – rather than one's identity being expressed through online practices" (2014: 6). Interestingly their exploration of narrative in relation to identity acknowledges the issues surrounding what actually constitutes a narrative particularly when considered in relation to digital practices do not build identity into a story but considered from Butler's approach as "expressions of identification, which might through repetition, result in that internal sense of identity as an effect" (2014: 10). consideration of where the modern and postmodern self fit in "we are living at a time in which we see the emergence of new strategies of the self, new ways of personal living and communal belonging" (Elliott, 2008: 153).

In a way transfixive artists can also be perceived as a performance of virtual dress up. Scholars such as performance anthropologists Victor Turner and Richard

Schechner have examined how costume in ritual and theatre create an embodied alternate persona for the wearer. In social and cultural contexts, the construction of fictional artists through dressup not only provides an opportunity for artistic expression, but also occupies a unique intersubjective domain as establishing a persona's identity, whether physically or virtually costumed, can together create a more authentic identity simply by "putting them on" thus providing the opportunity for transformative play. It is through virtual dressing "When we step through the screen into virtual communities, we reconstruct our identities on the other side of the looking glass" (Turkle, 1995) particularly through social media that the fictional artists can develop their identity which allows us to learn more about identity construction in relation to digital technology.

Goffman, performance and digital dress up

Scholars working within a semiotic tradition have demonstrated through their research an appreciation of the semiotics of dress and appearance thoughts where it is perceived that the self is established through communication (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959; Roach & Eicher 1965, 1973; Blumer 1969; Hollander 1978; Turner 1980; Barthes 1983; Davis 1988; Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1992; Cerny 1993; Damhorst 1999; Barnard 2002). Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis in the seminal book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) explores the relationship between performance and life where he identifies that "When an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, -a social relationship is likely to arise" (1956: 8). Sociologist Gregory Stone (1965) argued that identity has many advantages over the more fixed, psychological concept of personality, and that identity is not a code word for "self." Rather, identity is an announced meaning of the self—one that is situated in and negotiated through social interactions. He argued that appearance is fundamental to identification and differentiation in everyday life. The "teenage phenomenon" of the 1950s and 1960s made this very apparent by fostering an awareness of age identity as it intersected with a variety of musical and personal preferences—all coded through appearance styles. The social movements (civil rights, feminist, gay and lesbian rights) of the late 1960s and early 1970s further

accentuated stylistic means for constructing and transgressing racialized, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities.

For Eicher “...dress is a communication device” and “when the self is not presented effectively by these artifacts, the self is challenged” (1981: 39). Building upon the work of Stone in relation to the theory of appearance and the self which she identifies as three conscious parts: the public self, the intimate self and the secret self (1981: 40). Social media blurs the boundaries between the public self and intimate self, whilst sometimes also incorporating the secret self within this representation of identity. According to Eicher and Evenson “dress is an art form; an essential part of the literary, visual, and performing arts” (Eicher & Evenson, 2014: 326). Dress is therefore important to identity construction since it offers “... a social skin through which we communicate our social status, attitudes, desires, beliefs and ideals (in short our identities) to others” (Turner, p. 14, 1980). Thus the personal appearance that the fictional artist adopts provides an ever present culturally coded source for non-verbal communication of identity and “can enhance the credibility of the individual...” (Eicher & Evenson, 2014, p. 329) and exemplifies the role that creativity and plays in costume and dress-up play in constructing an identity. As discussed earlier there are many examples of gender play by artists such as cross-dressing Dadaists Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray assuming the role of female identities whilst Frida Kahlo appeared in men’s clothing in a number of her self-portraits.

Van House investigation of how feminist theorizing can help Human Computer Interaction (HCI) be more accountable for the sociotechnical assemblages that it helps to create and its role in the configuration of identities. Van House takes into account Lucy Suchman’s argument that “the line between human and machine is constructed, not natural or inevitable” (Van House, 2011: 423). This concept is further explored by Van House in relation to Suchman’s consideration of Butler’s argument “that sexed and gendered bodies are materialized over time through the reiteration of norms is suggestive for a view of technology construction as a process of materialization through a reiteration of forms” (Suchman, 2009: 9). Van House presents an alternative way of understanding the processes of on-line self-representation by considering Butler’s approach to performance and agency which

although has not been greatly explored in HCI suggests that “Butler’s approach offers a useful alternative for SNSs and HCI” (Van House, 2011: 426). This approach exploring both Social Networking Services (SNS) and HCI can be perceived as relevant to exploring the transmediated self since similar to other feminist theorists Butler maintains that identity is not determined by the body, but is performed through an ongoing construction. Salih (2002) describes Butler’s approach as focused on the “idea that the subject is an effect rather than a cause is the key to Butler’s theories of performative identity” (Salih, 2002: 48).

Therefore Van House and in turn Suchman demonstrate how Butler’s approach can offer new opportunities to research online performance and personal identity development. Van House draws attention to the fact that “We are never fully unconstrained in our actions because we are never outside of our cultural context...” (Van House, 2011: 427). Thus, this suggests that performance is enacted in accordance with an understanding of personal cultural experience.

Butler adoption of the term “interpellation” to describe how identities are both ascribed to and assumed by people as they are “hailed into their subject positions” reinforces her interest in issues of power, specifically how these relationships, identities, and norms are constructed and perpetuated, not as a result of some deliberate imposition by an outside force, but by cultural norms and discourse, and how individuals’ unexamined acceptance of these in ways that enable certain identifications but not others.

Rob Cover (2012) also utilises Butler’s theories of identity performativity in order to further develop a critical framework for examining SNS since he argues that this approach offers enormous capacity to further understanding of field of research and asserts that “social networking activities are performative acts of identity which constitute the user” (Cover, 2012: 178). Cover, in his article, considers firstly how social networking profiles are used as a device to perform, develop and stabilise identity; the ways in which identity performance takes place through continued maintenance and communication, as well as considering in what ways this impacts identity in relation to digital technology (Cover, 2012: 177). Concerns are also raised regarding the juxtaposition of these issues, particularly focusing on the implications

of their conflicting modes of practice. Cover argues convincingly that by exploring SNS through Butler's theories of performativity, it is possible to demonstrate that construction of the transmedia self through digital technology "activities and behaviours are both means by which identity can be performed and stabilised and, simultaneously, made more complex and conflicting" (Cover, 2012: 178). Thus similar to Van House, Cover reinforces the importance of interactivities of SNS and the labour required "to perform a coherent, intelligible selfhood extending across all these online activities in addition to offline behaviours" (Cover, 2012: 178).

Whilst Cover acknowledges existing discussions of online social networking which identifies two key activities that are acts of identity performance: the exploration of online performance of subjectivity through development and modification of a profile through categorisation together with the process of updating, refining and manipulating one's profile. However Cover also states that the extent these two social networking activities perform together to construct a coherent unified self needs to be explored further. Focusing specifically on Facebook and MySpace, Cover argues that Butler's approach to performativity has great significance in developing a greater understanding of digital identity and selfhood which via SNS are "constituted by the available, provided categorisations in line with available discourses of selfhood" (Cover, 2012: 182). Focusing on the complex role of friending for SNS in relation to identity Cover draws attention to the fact that the "framework of identifications that occur across the network in its very instability, amorphousness and flux are multiple, and this aligns with Butler's point that identifications are always multiple and occurring all the time, therefore never driven by a singular identification or rule" (Cover, 2012: 186). Cover persuasively identifies the SNS profile as "the site of a reiterative performance or practice of identity that, carefully constructed, works as part of an overall narrative and a strategy towards the coherent performance of a unified identity/subjectivity" (Cover, 2012: 187) yet also stresses that the juxtaposition of these activities still need to be considered in relation to all other aspects of digital identity construction. Cover raises the question about whether users will "tire of the additional 'identity work' required for identity performance is answered by individuals' continued use

of digital technology to construct the self. The accessibility of technology is playing a key part in the way individuals have naturally absorbed the work required for these platforms to develop self-branding thus Cover rightly concludes that “it is important to bear in mind that social networking uses, activities, changes, updates and account management are not only conscious representations and choices made for access, but simultaneously activities or performances which construct identity and selfhood” (Cover, 2012: 191).

Both Cover and Van House persuasively consider Butler’s approach providing an important perspective for the study of social networking and identity construction extending the concept of performance from the bodily to the digital self. Indeed their research presents a compelling argument in perceiving online social networking behaviour as an important element of the performance process in constructing a sense of self and identity.

Van House recognises that there is a “recurring problem from a Butlerian perspective” when considering agency because of an “inability to step outside of our cultural and discursive contexts” (Van House, 2011: 428) thus demonstrating that there is a tension created between the prevalence of social media sites which facilitate explicit selfconstruction, and the appearance of a self, constructed through such media, that must appear to have organically emerged. Jenny Davis in *Identity Work and the Authentic Cyborg Self* (2010) summarises perceptively that construction of the transmediated self requires constant maintenance of the self-branded identity which in itself is a laborious limitless process. Paradoxically such efforts in identity construction are required to be invisible to portray an effortless authentic representation of the self. What is interesting is in pursuit of self-branding and developing our transmediated personas, digital media and in particular social media Van House rightly identifies how their influence through their architecture is impacting the way we explicitly represent our digital selves.

By incorporating dress-up performance as a means to further develop a fictional artist’s identity it demonstrates the importance of dress up for individuals via social media in both present and future digital culture. Therefore by combining the act of dressing-up within the narrative arc, dress-up as an act of identity performance

reinforces the credibility of the artist and also raises issues regarding gender boundaries.

Turkle perceives digital media as vehicles for self-exploration and identity play in what can be described as a form of “identity workshop.” Given the purposeful and deliberately autobiographical intent behind this study’s development of fictional artist personas, this research aligns itself more closely with Turkle’s earlier work and although acknowledges Turkle’s later work still feels the identity workshop is still a key area in the development of representation in contemporary society.

Dean (2002), when evaluating early scholarly work on digital technology and identity, regards it as a “nostalgic evocation of a pre-political time of freedom and possibility that was never there” instead perceiving the pioneering experimentation of cyber identity performance more closely linked to consumer culture “driven to find the next new thing, to produce and reproduce themselves via images, technologies, entertainment, and commodities” (Dean, 2002: 115). Individuals’ use of social media reflects how publicity culture influences society to value social skills that encourage performance (Sternberg, 1998). Social media provides a platform for people to publicise their talents where the carefully cultivated persona is afforded with an array of endless snapshot opportunities to display themselves “in an easily-consumed public way using tropes of consumer culture” (Marwick and boyd, 2010: 6). According to Marwick and boyd (2010) “tweeting for oneself suggests a true-to-self authenticity” which is recognised as a social construct that is influenced by audience, however this statement could also be claimed for all social media platforms when constructing an individual’s brand where “Celebrity is the form of subjectivity that posits – that presupposes and reproduces – the ideology of publicity. Publicity in technoculture functions through the interpellation of a subject that makes itself into an object of public knowledge” (Dean, 2002: 114).

Whilst the creation, the resulting performance and digital distribution of a particular type of modern self-portraits better known as selfies have been discussed as a recent phenomenon where “We live in the age of the selfie” (Saltz, 2014), the art of selfportraiture and personal writing in the form of diary and journals are in fact a well-established form of documenting the self. Although selfies are now being

considered as a “new visual genre – a type of self-portraiture formally distinct from all others in history” (Saltz, 2014), scholarly research in this area is in its infancy. Exploration of identity however is an area of study that has been well explored (Burke; Mead; Goffman; Althusser; Berman & Brockman; Donath, 1999). To consider how the self has evolved into becoming a media object it is essential to consider sociologist Herbert Mead’s notion of the identity as projections of the “I and the me”; as well as Goffman’s thoughts about presentation of self as an act of “everyday performance,” whilst of equal importance psychoanalyst Luis Althusser’s argument focuses on interpellation where our sense of identity stems from how we negotiate with or reject the limited set of roles assigned to us by dominant culture since “Selfies come from all of us; they are a folk art that is already expanding the language and lexicon of photography” (Saltz, 2014). Selfies as a visual medium offer scholars new opportunities to explore identity performance further in relation to digital technology and twenty-first century construction of the self.

Criticisms of selfies of women reflect continued scholarly debate of the ways in which women are represented by contemporary media forms. For instance Kristeva (2008) calls the twenty-first century the “century for women: for better or for worse?” (Kristeva, 2008: 1) claiming that meaningful change has eluded the feminist movement and that women are not just submitting to the will of the patriarchy but actively participating in its preservation. Whilst of equal relevance is Berger’s (2008) consideration of the impact of gender on ways of seeing which focuses on a man’s presence centres around a “promised power” over an/other and whose “object is always exterior to the man,” rendering woman’s presence bound by social restrictions and limitations, in constant survey of herself, “continually accompanied by her own image of herself” (Berger, 2008: 37). Where from this position “she has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life” (Berger, 2008: 37).

From this position it can be argued that selfies of women are reinforcing traditional representations because of how ingrained within society’s psyche is the concept of “women watch themselves being looked at [which] determines

not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves" (Berger, 2008: 38). This is also supported by Cheng (2003) who considers sight in relation to gender and subjectivity stating that the act is integrally linked to the other, as the viewer who projects beliefs, meanings and desires on the visual object is "capable of seeing only that which stands apart from our eyes" (Cheng, 2003: 30). Similarly, Mulvey's (2003) seminal essay makes the connection between preconceived ideas and lived experiences and their influence of the sight of the viewer in reveals the unconscious desires of the dominant patriarchal order and how these desires have developed both the structure of film and the image of women within films (Mulvey, 2003: 19).

Pham "critically examines the political uses and potential of "networked vanity"" and considers the issues surrounding the Selfie and the "practices of self-regard and selfpromotion [which] have been disparaged as examples of "digital narcissism"—a new culture of self-absorption wrought by social media" (Pham, 2015: 221) The Internet, according to Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, "serves as a giant narcissism multiplier" that, among other things, has normalized "provocative and self-promoting public dress" (Twenge & Campbell, 2010: 271). Erin Gloria Ryan on the website Jezebel criticises the selfie phenomenon concluding that selfies are "a high tech reflection of the fucked up way society teaches women that their most important quality is their physical attractiveness" (2013). Ryan, perceives that selfies are perpetuating the traditional practices of objectifying women through digital technology by encouraging women to collaborate in their own objectification reducing them to their physical appearance which devalues their individual identity and renders them digital narcissistic.

In relation to the gender politics of self-photography Agger throwaway comment during an interview asserted that "selfies promote "the male gaze go[ing] viral" ...the selfie anticipates and exercise control over one's reception, which is a smart move, given the imbalance of gender power" resulting in "The textual and post textual blur as people selfobjectify, proffering themselves to others" (Agger, 2015: 46).

Agger (2015) identifies the history of selfies as having three stages noting that Rembrandt in the 17th century painted self-portraits, as well as other significant

painters such as Van Gogh and Picasso. It is disappointing that Agger does not take this opportunity to highlight that women artists were also notable producers of self-portraits particularly since his main argument places the selfie as a female pursuit. There is no mention of significant women painters such as Frida Kahlo, Alice Neel, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Jenny Saville or Caterina van Hemessen who predates Rembrandt. Stage two is identified by Robert Cornelius in 1893 taking his own photograph whilst stage three “is traced to the early 2000s in Australia, when someone took a super selfie...and then someone in Australia used the term selfie online” (Agger, 2015: 48). Agger asserts that people’s desire to take selfies is directly related to solving the “problem of embodiment” (2015: 48). This argument is further developed by Agger’s consideration of Rene Descartes Cartesian dualism which splits the mind from the body and Agger notably questions this privileging of the mind because of bias of privileged male mind over women’s body. Agger’s interpretation of this concept and its impact initially on artists and equally for selfie creators today is interesting where all “self-portraits and selfie-photographs s[ay] as a subtext, “Here I am”” (Agger, 2015: 46).

However this is followed by Agger identifying that many selfies are taken by girls and women which “convey an additional message: “I am adorable...who want to assert their personhood and claim identity” (Agger, 2015: 46). This statement seems like an oxymoron and Agger’s reading of women sits uncomfortably since “adorable” reinforces the idea of weakness as well as perpetuate traditional views of women. selfie or fashion blog style outfit photo; where to position the head, face, and body in relation to the camera; which blog platform, HTML tags, and hashtags to use; how to caption, crop, and otherwise edit the image; and when to share it online or whether to share it at all” (Pham, 2015: 225) Pham suggests that “In participating in the representational process, individuals who are the objects of the gaze are also co-creators of the interpretative conditions through which media images of their bodies and selves are seen” (Pham, 2015: 225). It is precisely this shift in the visual relations of participatory media that make practices of selfies art created by women artists potentially so powerful for women who been historically subjected to the dominating gaze of men.

Intrinsically linked to the phenomenon of the Selfie is society's preoccupation with confession. Within this field of study, research has focused on the understanding of mediated confessional communication in the context of confessional and emotional culture in neo-liberal society (Foucault 1979; White 2002, 1992; Fejes & Magnus 2013; Furedi 2004; Giddens 1991). In relation to media culture, exploration of confession has focused primarily on television and journalism where it has been identified as an act of sharing where the "celebration of public feeling seems to have acquired the status of a religious doctrine and is now widely promoted in all walks of life" (Furedi, 2004: 38). Whilst research on mediated confessional culture has been connected to discussions on feminisation and intimatisation (Van Zoonen, 1998), emotional determinism (Furedi, 2004), tabloidization and the "message of the I-me-mine" (Aldridge, 2001: 106), as well as the emergence of mediated confessional and therapeutic cultures (Furedi 2004; Illouz 2008; White 1992), participation in digital media (Jenkins 2007) and social media use and participation (Gennaro & Dutton 2007; Huberman et al., 2008, 2009; Schrock 2009). It could be argued that the emerging transmediated self is a direct product of mass mediated confessional culture where according to Mark Andrejevic reflects the contemporary desire for subjection to "a discursive regime of self-disclosure whose contemporary cultural manifestations include not just the mania for interactivity, but the confessional culture [and]... the ethos of willing submission to comprehensive surveillance" (2002: 234) in the pursuit of cultivating a preferred self-branded identity thus demonstrated by the Facebook Wall and visually through Instagram uploaded pictures and videos. Equally WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr and other digital biographical sites also reflect this culmination of a confessional society. (Kennedy, 2006: 870).

Digital and social media are used by the fictional artists to establish their transmedia identity, not just to construct and authenticate the fictive persona but also to develop self-branding. Self-branding is established through the daily ritual of publishing posts/comments/photographs/tagging which not only remind people/followers/friends of the artist but also motivate a response and opportunities to engage and further develop the digital narrative of the persona. The transmedia story continues to develop via people/followers/friends through

documentation of events, photographs, responses and shares thus maintaining existing relationships and opening up the possibility to create new ones.

Photographs via Blogger, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr are valuable not only for artefacts validating the fictive identity but also for the connections among them between the fictive persona and for the people represented, consequently revealing the active role they play in establishing narrative identity thus ensuring the persona continues to evolve. Where previously “the photographer is rarely in the picture... [and] is often the least visible” (Van House et al., 2004: 7) it is acknowledged that photographs are “used as self-expression” however when considering Van House et al.’s connections between self-expression and self-presentation they now seem outdated. The phenomenon of the Selfie has given rise to more self-portraiture – the photographer is no longer hidden. Whilst traditionally Selfies have always been taken, with developments in digital cameras and smartphones that commonly now have two cameras as a standard features thus making the self-portrait snapshot easy to negotiate.

As a result Selfies have become a main form of self-presentation via social media sites in the development of self-branding, serving to maintain existing relationships as well as creating new social relationships whilst continuing to develop the narrative of the transmediated self through the continued management of “others’ views of oneself” (Van House et al., 2004: 7). Self-presentation and self-expression have merged where the preferred identity constructed for promoting the self-brand is presented as an authentic self. Rather than being labelled a “deception” it has now become part of the identity performance. (Van House et al., 2004: 7). Key to the transmediated self is the use of social media platforms in creating the digital persona and supporting the self-branded identity. Selfies blur the boundaries even more between self-presentation and self-expression where in the pursuit of self-branding the construction of the transmediated persona is a fusion of both, an orchestrated identity which portrays a preferred representation of the authentic self. This concept as part of the process of creating the transmediated self is continued across all the platforms.

For the person portrayed, the photo, Barthes says, “is the advent of myself as other. Photography transformed the subject into object” (Barthes, 1981: 12–13). In

front of the lens, he says, he is at one and the same time the person he thinks he is; the one he wants others to think he his; the one the photographer thinks he is; and the one the photographer makes use of to exhibit his or her art.

Van House has explored how people use photographs, particularly of themselves and their belongings in relation to self-representation (Van House et al., 2005; Van House, 2007, 2009; Ames et al., 2010). Attention is drawn to how images are perceived as ““more real” than text (Van House, 2011: 425)” where in particular the photographs are “also described as saying more than the photographer may have intended” (Van House, 2011: 425).

Van House highlights the fact that through social media “we have explicit access to what others are saying about us and the photos they make of us” (Van House, 2011: 425). It is this visibility and persistence of activity on social network sites that makes the actions and practices of other people apparent; it is this practice that supports the fictive artists’ development of narrative. The structure of the sites themselves have encouraged people to perform and think more carefully in the construction of self-representation to make self-branding a natural process where “These constructed self-representations are part of a complex interplay among the offline self, with its complexity, contingency, and dynamicism” (Van House, 2011: 426). Van House accurately defines that individuals are “not simply representing but constructing themselves” (Van House, 2011: 426).

Viewer participation through responses to the fictional artists’ demonstrates the importance of storytelling. This is evidenced through comments and ongoing discussions, even the simple response of a social media like. Social media in particular supports the transmission of the transmediated identity as well as perpetuate the promotion of selfbranding. The life narrative of the artists’ personas to establish the fictive identity is the reoccurring process of the transmediated self across the platforms where stories, events, live performance and photographs combine to authenticate identity. The transmediated self’s narrative identity is conveyed across the platforms to structure and transmit the artists’ personas. Artefacts, particularly in the case of transfixive artists being art works and photographs documenting art practices, are deeply implicated in the authentication of their identity. The perception

of photograph being tangible, even in digital format and viewed via digital technology is an inextricably part of the practices of the transmediated self-storytelling.

The question of navigating multiplicity has been a constant focus in identity research (Goffman, 1959; Deleuze, 1953, 1966; Deaux 1996; Deaux et al., 1995) This interest holds equal importance for scholars today particularly exploring identity and digital technology (Turkle, 1997; ...) Whilst scholarly research such as Deleuze and Guattari's position of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) and Stuart Hall's essay *Who Needs Identity* (1996) demonstrate the ongoing debate regarding the usefulness of the concept of identity which in turn have influenced the ways certain contemporary researchers have explored internet identity (Kennedy, 2006; Parisi & Terranova, 2001, 2010). However, Helen Kennedy justifiably points out that "despite these critical interventions, the tropes of identity and community endure" (Kennedy in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 26). Her essay which addresses the continuing consideration of the relevance of identity as a useful focus for digital technology research highlights the problems surrounding Turkle's claim that virtual identities are anonymous since "online identities are often continuous with online selves, not reconfigured versions of subjectivities IRL" (Kennedy in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 26). The findings of Kennedy's study of Her@ students discussed in her essay lead her to suggest that there is a need for Internet identity research to move beyond the accepted belief that "photographs and other autobiographical detail...reveals the "true" identities of their authors and so erases the possibility of anonymity" (Kennedy in Poletti & Rak, 2014: 36) as well as considering cultural study approaches to the problem of identity in order to engage with Internet identity in a more conceptual way that could be more effective.

Goffman, (1959), conceptualises identity as a continual performance. Goffman's (1959, 1974) influential work is frequently cited in HCI research on self-representation (e.g., Van House, 2009; Krämer and Winter, 2008; Grasmuck et al., 2009; Gibbs et al., 2006; Walther, 2007; Marwick, 2005; Bellotti et al., 2002; Ducheneaut and Watts, 2005; Miller, 1995; Robinson, 2007; Vaida et al., 2005; Wadley et al., 2009). A central concept to his work is the assertion that meaning is constructed through language, interaction, and interpretation, a sociological perspective which is usually regarded

as symbolic interactionism where identity and self are claimed to be shaped through constant interactions with others, thus a collaborative process (Blumer, 1962; Strauss, 1993). Contemporary scholars have adopted his dramaturgical metaphor in order to analyse people's digital practices, thus demonstrating the continued relevance of his work as a starting point when exploring the brand of self through digital technologies. Indeed Goffman's suggestion that individuals should be perceived as actors that shape and adapt self-presentation based on context and audience clearly offers research in identity and digital technology a wide range of opportunities for exploration. However what is particularly pertinent is the blurring of boundaries between 'frontstage' and 'backstage' for people navigating digital media particularly social media sites and their collaborative nature in constructing a preferred self-image. Goffman's research in relation to digital self-branding is particularly relevant when considering impression management since social media platforms clearly demonstrate how individuals monitor the ways people respond to them when presenting their brand persona (1959).

Whilst Goffman offers ways to begin to examine the transmediated identity it must be remembered that Goffman's perception of the "stable, pre-existing self who makes conscious choices about what to reveal and how to present himself or herself depending on the audience" (Van House, 2011: 426) whilst the presentation of the transmediated self via social networking is complicated by a potentially wider global audience where relationships and expectations of audience responses cannot be predicted. Thus where Goffman proposes that these self-representations are not just for others, but part of the process of developing a sense of self, this is now complicated by the application of digital technology. With the growing popularity of taking selfies and exhibiting them via social media it is now important to consider selfie culture's impact in relation to branding, celebrity and microcelebrity. As discussed earlier individuals in a similar way to celebrities and politicians can now potentially command large audiences through social media technologies. Such changes in the ways outputs are consumed and produced raises questions regarding subjectivity, the impact of digital technology on identity presentation, as well as the way it is shaping social interaction.

Taking Senft's theory of "micro-celebrity" (2013) as a starting point this offers an opportunity to explore how the individuals, in a similar way to celebrities or a brand, have established themselves as a model for certain types of social media interaction.

Furthermore Marwick and boyd (2010, 2011) assert that the ways individuals choose to edit and present themselves is influenced by how they perceive their audience online. By using the fictional artist as an object to think with, the research will be able to examine the concept of the "edited self" and how individuals are incorporating well established techniques from consumer culture and advertising in order to present themselves online.

Microcelebrity, a relatively new form of notion of self is "...linked almost exclusively with the Internet and increasingly spoken about through the language of crisis" (Senft, 2013: 346). Coined by Senft in 2001, the term simply describes the communicative technique of "deploying and maintaining one's online identity as if it were a branded good" by employing "still images, video, blogging, and crosslinking strategies to present themselves as a coherent, branded packages to their online fans" (Senft, 2013: 346). During the last decade it can be argued that Senft accurately identifies that "the practice of microcelebrity ...has moved from the Internet's margins to its mainstream" (Senft, 2013: 346) thus strongly indicating that "all individuals have an audience that they can strategically maintain through ongoing communication and interaction" (Marwick & boyd, 2010: 8).

Whilst it has been anticipated that celebrities and public officials would embrace the techniques of microcelebrity to further their public persona presence, what is more interesting is how "Each day, "regular" people post their words and images to websites" (Senft, 2013: 351). By embracing social media to engage directly with an audience individuals have established a presence online using the same methods in order to seek wider attention and enhance their identity brand reinforcing the concept that "cultural notions about notoriety, celebrity, and fame appear to be expanding and inclusive" (Senft, 2013: 349). Thus this clearly demonstrates a clear "erosion between private and public has spread beyond those who are famous and those who wish to be famous" (Senft, 2013: 351). By documenting the rise of the "digital native" Senft's work builds upon the impact of digital technology on identity

where she ascertains that “As the recent rise of the prefix “social” makes clear, this identity has shifted over time: once originally conceived as a space for housing research and a tool for collaborating for scholarship, the Internet has morphed into a place fostering everyday congregation, communication, and “hanging out”” (347). Senft acknowledges the wealth and variety of scholarly research of the Internet whilst also recognising it as more than a marketplace since it “contributes to a dynamic by which users frame themselves simultaneously as seller, buyer, and commodity” (348). Senft also identifies how transmedia storytelling techniques are being adopted by individuals who with great expertise are “curating, rearranging, and recirculating what they consider to be their best pictures, videos, and status updates in multiple venues online...carefully cultivating what in a professional venue would be a concerted audience-segmentation strategy” (350). With this in mind Senft aptly turns to consider Andy Warhol’s belief that “In the future, everyone will be famous in fifteen minutes” in order to reinforce the growing impact of microcelebrity which “changes the game of celebrity” by fusing audiences and communities together (Senft, 2014: 350).

In relation to the concept that microcelebrity is perceived in terms of crisis, Senft suggests that it “means new threats and opportunities” particularly because “it reworks the old question “Who am I?” to read “Who do you think I am?”” (353). Consequently, this raises issues surrounding ownership of identity where traditionally the principle of personal identity was intrinsically linked to self-ownership. Senft suggests that it now belongs to the perceiver a concept that although is a “new and challenging way to think about identity” reinforces the point that this also foreshadows new responsibilities since it is the perceivers that now “have historically unprecedented opportunities to establish whose identities, communities, and stories will matter to the rest of the world” (353).

Concerning the societal and cultural embedding of fictional artists as transmedia texts denotes the mobility of artists to explore new media technologies to capture people’s attention and consequently establish a following for the personas. The role of (new) media technologies and platforms is crucial in the creation of the fictional artist’s identity. The internet, social websites and interactive media have provided

the artist with a new canvas to develop lifelike personas who are individuals in their own right with their own body of work. This has paved the way for fictional entities to become publicly visible and exist in their own right. It follows therefore that we need to explore more than the unique and diverse character of the fictional artist but rather we need to pay attention to how and by whom it is produced, which obviously bears ideological consequences.

“The first decade of the twenty-first century has been marked by a surge of interest in feminist art, its futures, and its histories.” (Meagher, 2011: 299)

The theme of these fictions concerning artists' lives are success and vocation. The fictions of Ulman and Schrager's digi fictive heteronyms depict the successes and possible failures by documenting the routine lives of artists' work and career. Considering both Ulman and Schrager's work are fictive, this raises more interesting questions particularly surrounding media interest in both fictive entities.

The success it seems of all case studies is the multi-layered narratives building a detailed identity through multimedia texts. The credibility of the fictional personas depends upon how the texts are orchestrated. The viewer is invited to visit the exhibition, read the novel, speak to artist in some cases, and explore the website and social media – thus being able to assess the authenticity of the artist and artist's work in the light of the information gained. Simulation, in their image world through photography embedded fiction, websites, exhibitions, has become the real.

Whilst there is a continued trend for individuals to create media output that supports their public persona in a style similar to celebrities where “Elites are increasingly set apart by their ability to turn themselves into stars by marketing themselves as brands of one” (Bennet, 2012). Similarly, successful artists are metamorphosed into pop stars reducing them to a part of the markets mechanisms. Each of the transfictive artists reinforces this idea of artist identity as commodity but in different ways. Ona Artist embraces selefbriety, the concept of branding and stardom being at the centre of Schrager's project. Whichever position the

creators of the fictive artist have taken both Schrager and Ulman through their social presence via digital media and their work as artefact remind the audience constantly to notice their fictive existence and complicate their notion of reality. Thus by refusing to integrate into the world of art-as-commodity or embracing it in order to expose the contemporary labour of constructing a selfebity, each of the fictive artists offer an insight into the mechanisms involved in self-branding and present potential possibilities of breaking free from issues of ownership as well as the desire it creates.

Indeed the fictive artists highlights the importance of the fictionalization of artistic authority and the fictionalization of the artist identity, in particular, the artist biography. This fictionalization process as a construction makes visible the fictitiousness of the ways in which identity is now being constructed by contemporary society particularly through digital technology. As discussed earlier the creation of fictional personas and dual/multi identities in art has historically been utilised as an authorial strategy.

Of particular relevance is the fact that the fictive artists, like many contemporary feminist artists, exist largely in cyberspace thus demonstrating that artists no longer require an actual physical place to create and present work, and to some extent are not dependent on a gallery system to promote their art. Thus the fictive artist directly challenges hegemony, deliberately drawing attention to the cult of self-promotion, "this Warholian moment of the fifteen minutes" (Anastas et al., 2006: 115), whilst directly opposing traditional authoritarian definitions of authenticity. Fictional artists perhaps remind us that hegemonic realities which must be continuously renegotiated, contested and reconstructed.

The life of the fictional artist and their oeuvre is easily accepted as a reality. However this perceived life is not real, it is both the audience's and the author's creation. The audience's preconceptions are based on what they understand of the art world through the media, films and popular culture roles. Thus the audience makes assumptions based on their experience of the art world and artists and contemporary stereotypes popularized by various art movements such as the

Young British Artists. This tells us that, knowingly or not, the signs and imagery of contemporary culture have been absorbed to such an extent that it affects a judgment of what is real.

Both artists, but particularly Schrager use established marketing techniques such as critical reviews (sometimes by highly regarded critics), publicity photography, artist websites and exhibitions of their art work in the same way an actual artist would be promoted. Fictive artists, when considering the projects explored in this chapter are a product of the combined manipulation of digital media and more traditional methods. It is important to remember that each of these creators in turn have conceived the 'real' birth of a persona which has in one way or another taken a life of its own, absent from its maker. Photographic evidence of the artist, of their distinctive artistic work anchored by a complex biography and critical analysis of their artistic influence exhibited as a book, an art show or more importantly as a website reinforces the complexities of deciphering a true path between fact and fiction. The overall practices of these artists that create fictional artists, raises broader arguably more timely questions about the relationship between identity, digital media and public reception.

Fictive Ulman and Ona Artist through this investigation of artist persona, hyper-reality and identity provide the theoretical foundation to explore the construction of digital fictional selves and offer an opportunity to address notions of Baudrillard's simulacra, simulation and the hyper-real operating as testing ground for the concept of the artist itself.

Art and identity are narrative. Art is a social form of communication whereby the artists is building a narrative for an audience. In this case contemporary Artists typically construct narratives that question and subvert dominant ideologies. Equally the artist as brand has become an essential part of the way the artist presents their image, identity and work in the public sphere. Art has always embraced technology and the movements that have been created out of this relationship. Digital technology particularly social media offer new creative channels for artists who in turn are documenting the ways in which society are producing and consuming

endless narratives. The fictive heteronyms explored in this study demonstrate for these reasons how extremely pertinent they are in reflecting the ways in which identity through social media and the internet are perpetually being edited and re-edited in pursuit of the perfected transmediated self.

The artist's identity is built up through narratives and infiltrates their exhibitions as well as through their on line presence. The identity of the artist is the story and it is this narrative that allows the public to connect with the artist and their work. Linear and nonlinear narratives, hyper realities and virtual identities are designed to create a more credible artist persona for the public.

When considering fictional artists the narrative strands that emerge are similar to the ways contemporary artists present themselves. Biographical information, use of photographs and films, interviews, novels, retrospective and group shows that contextualise the fictional artist's work in a broader cultural movement. A retrospective exhibition identifies an underlying biographical or chronological narrative to establish the fictional artist's persona. These examples reveal how fictional artists through exhibitions, social media, novels, performance establish identity.

Fictional artists emerge at a time when post postmodern notions of human/digital media are shifting emphasis. Whilst Fictive Ulman and Ona Artist's sexual performance could be criticised as a display for men since they play into a male voyeuristic experience it is possible to consider both transfictive artists through the historical lens of feminist performance art, which is not staged for the male gaze, but rather attempts to explore the relationship between that of the gaze in relation to female bodies, and female fantasies.

Both Ulman and Schragers' digi fictive heteronyms demonstrate potentially through their artwork and social media presence the theme of exploring female sexuality for their own pleasure. Ona Artist's digital art in particular seems to be almost in a tradition of Hannah Wilke, as discussed in chapter one, an artist who is exploring the relationship of her body to a history of erotic imagery of women—as a way of discovering her own fantasies, her own self-image.

The artists share gender and it is this that connects their varied social and ethnic position in to a single identity category. While the concept of fictional artists has blurry boundaries in practice these artists run galleries, have exhibitions around the world, take interviews, interact on social media sites. Within the art market they have social capital, take part in group exhibitions and are accepted as professional by the mainstream art world.

It is their fictional status that defines them. Their identity as an artist is directly linked to the biographies of the artists and the transmedia narratives that authenticate their existence as artists. Photographs, video films, the work they produce and social media interaction infuse the meaning of their identity.

The fictive artists demonstrate that the development of their personas through representation and enactment on a daily basis reflects the ways they are negotiating their selfhood to a global audience whilst further augmenting their preferred identity. Using Mulvey's theory of the male gaze in relation to Selfies, it is important to consider whose viewpoint does a prospective audience view the selfie portraits? Where some academics argue that selfies of women created by women disrupt the dominant stance of media texts centralising from a male perspective thus reclaiming the female body, others criticise these selfie portrayals as reinforcing as well as perpetuating traditional representations of the female form. It is clear that the positives and negatives of the selfie and the female form is a tangled mess that cannot so easily be unravelled, perhaps it is better to acknowledge the power of the male gaze on popular culture in an attempt to subvert it, draw attention to it whilst celebrating female authorial control. It is important to remember the function of selfies and in turn the selfie gaze which are produced and shared because of the aesthetic pleasure they provide for the viewer (the most important aspect is that the viewer includes also the creator of the selfie image). This further complicates how selfies of the female form should be examined and critiqued, where with an acknowledgement of postmodernism/post digital/digital feminism and perhaps most importantly, post-selfie, particularly in relation to issues surrounding objectification, authorship and agency. In light of this, it could be argued that the selfie gaze cannot be simply reduced to a predominantly male heterosexual one,

whilst clearly influenced by dominant popular culture and the ways in which women have been portrayed, female authorship ensures that their own bodies may be used as objects they are no longer devoid of agency. As transmediated selves, the use of selfies by women is no longer passive reinforcing instead their active position in driving the personal brand/identity narrative forward. The active/passive divide is blurred, thus subverting hierarchical power relations. Women are reclaiming the body since by objectifying their own bodies they demonstrate their power of ownership. As transmediated selves, the use of selfies do not exist purely to be looked at they are used to compliment the complex existing identity narrative across the platforms.

The artists as transmedia selves reinforce to varying degrees Butler's theory of performativity, their constructed personas through the development of their identity and subjectivity demonstrate that it is an ongoing process of becoming, rather than an ontological state of being. In the same way as individuals, the artists illustrate across the media platforms that becoming is a sequence of acts/narratives that retroactively establish identity. The formation of the transmediated self illuminates the influences of culturally-given discourses, structures and practices where the act of self-branding has become instinctive.

This research is in agreement with Pisani (2015) that "the possibilities for identity play provided by new technologies have allowed for widespread challenges of the objectified and commodified (female) body" (2015: 6) the fictive artists examined for this study demonstrate how the transmediated female self is more than "technological productions" (Halberstam, 1991: 440) of enacted gender. More accurately, coinciding with technological advancement, the transmediated self has evolved exponentially since there is now greater access to platforms to promote and cultivate a "selfebriety" persona (Cherry, 2005) through transmediated storytelling. Equally the ways in which the transmediated female self are drawing on technology to explore gender performance in relation to identity demonstrates the ways in which the norms are being challenged. Both Ona and fictive Amalia present cultural narratives reflective of fiction and celebrity culture. Perhaps more significantly the fictional artists as a construct allow us to study what it tells us about ourselves, about the art world and the social cultural myth of artists.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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Building upon her recent research she has developed a transfixive heteronym artist, Seren Sanclêr, to examine the creative potential of social media platforms as well as to explore in more depth transfixive identities (serensancler.com).

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