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BRITISH SCHOOL
AT ROME

PRESS RELEASE

BSR Fine Arts Talks

TALK GENDER

The American writer Rebecca Walker defined the rebirth of the feminist movement in the early 1990s as 'third-wave', following the first and second waves.

This third wave was geared towards a radical rethinking of gender identity. Queer theory became the basis for the subsequent theory of gender, a subject which the selected artists will address from different perspectives in this series of talks.

As founder of the band Ludus in 1978, **Linder Sterling**'s subversive art work emerged from the punk movement. She is among the few female pioneers of the punk and rock scenes, alongside celebrities like Siouxsie Sioux and Patti Smith. Linder rose to fame as an artist (as well as musician, designer and filmmaker) with her cover design for the single *Orgasm Addict* by the Buzzcocks in 1977: a collage of a naked woman with an iron for a head and two Hollywood-style mouths for nipples. It is a fiercely critical image of the stereotype of woman-as-sexual-object, representative of the feminine condition in postmodern Western society. These ideas subtend her most famous collages which draw on fashion, cookery and pornographic magazines. Images of beautiful naked women with electrical appliances and flowers in the place of their genitalia show that the female body is nearly always defined by the male (chauvinist) gaze.

While Sterling uses magazines for her source material, **Clunie Reid** takes advantage of the web. The London-based artist and performer centres her work on sexual representation in capitalist culture, a subject that is particularly relevant in an era characterised by the widespread availability of free online amateur pornography. Reid claims back the web as a space for critiquing this phenomenon and seeks to manipulate the structures inherent in misogynistic discourse.

John Walter's works focus on a contemporary paradox: many will remember the government public information campaigns created to contain the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, a social emergency in the 1980s and 1990s. For a couple of decades there was a slowdown in rates of transmission, but in recent years we have witnessed an increase in

infections of diseases previously thought to be almost extinct (such as syphilis) or at least thought to be under control (such as HIV). Recreational drugs have had their part to play in this rise but conversely access to PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) has helped balance the problem. Walter has approached this subject in all its tragicomic complexity, making use of a variety of media in order to create a playful, carnivalesque experience, in which artistic and scientific discourses combine.

The Italian artist **Tomaso Binga**, works with sculpture, collage and writing. She was born in Salerno in 1931 and she took a pseudonym as an artist in order to ironically critique and undermine the masculine biases in the art world. From 1970s she has worked with Verbal-Visual Writing and with Phonetic-Sound-Performative Poetry. She has taken part in more than 1700 cultural events, including exhibitions and festivals. She has directed the cultural centre *Lavatoio Contumaciale* in Rome since 1974 and since 1992 she has been honorary President of *Fondazione Filiberto e Bianca Menna* in Salerno.

The final speaker in this series will be curator, writer, and editor **Rosanna Mclaughlin**, whose art criticism focuses on feminist and queer cultural histories, the martyrization of women artists, and the influence of the art market on contemporary art production. Nei primi anni '90, la scrittrice americana Rebecca Walker definisce la rinascita del movimento femminista con il termine *terza ondata*, dando seguito a una *prima ondata*, emersa nel mondo occidentale alla fine dell'Ottocento, e a una *seconda ondata* negli anni '60 del Novecento. Questa terza ondata si orienta verso un radicale ripensamento dell'identità di genere e la cosiddetta *queer theory* diventa la base per la successiva *teoria del gender*, argomento che gli artisti selezionati affronteranno da diverse prospettive in questa serie di talks.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Linder Sterling | Friday 16 November 2018

John Walter | Tuesday 26 February 2019

Tomaso Binga | Tuesday 26 March 2019

Rosanna Mclaughlin | Tuesday 16 April 2019

Clunie Reid | Thursday 30 May 2019

Marta Pellerini, Visual Art Residency and Programme Curator

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