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PRESENTS

*To Cast Too Bold a Shadow*



Betty Tompkins, *Apologia (Caravaggio #1)*, (detail), 2018.  
Courtesy of Betty Tompkins and P·P·O·W, New York.

**The 8th Floor**  
**17 West 17th Street, NYC**  
**(between 5th and 6th Avenues)**  
**October 15, 2020 - January 23, 2021**  
**On view, by appointment from October 15, 2020**

**New York, New York** (July 16, 2020) – The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation is pleased to present *To Cast Too Bold a Shadow*, a thematic exhibition that examines culturally entrenched forms of misogyny as a means to understand the dynamics between sexism, gender, and feminism. This exhibition, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage, features artists who have positioned their practices as acts of resistance in the face of oppressive societal conditions. Artists include **Anetta Mona Chisa & Lucia Tkáčová, Furen Dai, Tracy Emin, Hackney Flashers, Rajkamal Kahlon, Joiri Minaya, Yoko Ono, Maria D. Rapicavoli, Aliza Shvarts, Betty Tompkins,** and **Mierle Laderman Ukeles**, whose work collectively challenges the constraints women have endured across economic, cultural, and political lines. An

opening reception will be held during the run of the exhibition at the Rubin Foundation's exhibition space, The 8th Floor, in New York City.

The fourth installment of *Revolutionary Cycles*, an ongoing series of shows exploring art's social and political potential in uncertain times, the title *To Cast Too Bold a Shadow* is borrowed from a line in the late feminist thinker and poet Adrienne Rich's poem *Snapshots of a Daughter-In-Law* (1963). The exhibition posits that 'casting too bold a shadow' is not only a right, but a necessity, and that building on this potential for cultural transformation – namely, equality for women – will help form a more just society.

**Rajkamal Kahlon** and **Joiri Minaya**'s works reflect on the ways that colonization has shaped the cultural conditions faced by women throughout modern history. Kahlon's series *Do You Know Our Names?* (2017) questions how photography has been used to document the colonial subject. Based on 19<sup>th</sup> century portraits of women, Kahlon's painterly images humanize those whose histories have been reduced to nameless anthropological subjects. Also working with photographic reproductions, Joiri Minaya complicates the fetishization of 'the other' through her *#dominicanwomengooglesearch* (2016). Culling images from internet searches of the phrase "Dominican women," Minaya creates a three-dimensional, kinetic installation of female body parts and tropical imagery, amplifying the destructive effects culturally specific fantasies have had on the agency of women, specifically those from developing parts of the world.

The place of desire – specifically that of women in a patriarchal society – is analyzed through multiple lenses by **Tracey Emin**, **Yoko Ono**, and **Betty Tompkins**. In her 1995 video *Why I Never Became a Dancer*, Emin unpacks the misogyny she experienced as a teenager in the small English coastal town of Margate, where she learned firsthand the double standard for women, whose sexual adventures have the opposite effect of men's in terms of social standing. Staged as an instructional, participatory performance, Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964/2003) invited audience members, one at a time, to cut off a piece of her clothing, which they could then keep. The rules for the piece gave Ono the right to end it when she saw fit, ensuring that she maintained agency in the outcome, yet through cutting, the participant is forced to confront the implication of gender-based aggressions that play out in both fantasy and everyday life. As a response to acts of violence against women, Betty Tompkins hones in on the language of apologies delivered by men, including celebrities like Matt Lauer and R. Kelly, who have been publicly accused of rape or assault, using pages torn from art history books featuring historical paintings she has partly obscured with text. Individual works in Tompkins' *Apologia* series (2018) employ contrite statements made in the wake of the #MeToo movement, questioning their authenticity, while other works from *Women's Words* (2018) similarly superimpose text onto art historical images, that are instead based on women recounting derogatory language men have used to describe them.

In a new installation commissioned by the Rubin Foundation, created specifically for the exhibition, **Aliza Shvarts** will revisit materials from *Anthem* (2019-ongoing), a project that has involved collecting rape evidence kits utilized by different law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. The kits, which vary by state in the U.S., are used to document acts of violence endured by survivors of sexual assault. The

variations in anatomical detail reveal regional and institutional biases in responding to harassment and assault, that fail to recognize the range of gender identities subject to these crimes. In her new work, *Anatomy* (2020) Shvarts questions how victims' bodies are oppressed, through both policy and practice.

*To Cast Too Bold A Shadow* examines the long-standing prejudicial systems that contribute to misogyny: the societal, and often familial, pressures for women to marry and reproduce, which can lead to and reinforce the oppression by stripping women of agency and visibility. **Hackney Flashers**, **Furen Dai**, and **Maria D. Rapticavoli** critique the institutions of marriage and the apparatus of motherhood. In *Love for Sale* (2020), Dai transcribes verbal exchanges between parents in five different marriage markets held in parks in Beijing, highlighting the gender imbalance in Chinese culture, where men remain the "hot commodity." More broadly, Dai's project serves as a reflection of how parents regard success, relationships, love, and immigration, as these factors play out in their attempts at matchmaking. Concerned with the intersectional nature of migration as it pertains to women, Maria D. Rapticavoli's newly commissioned film *The Other: A Familiar Story* (2020) reconstructs the narrative of an Italian woman who was forced to emigrate to the United States from Italy after World War II. Based on the story of a relative, *The Other* highlights the more nuanced effects of immigration on women throughout history. Rapticavoli's project is supported by the Italian Council program (6th Edition, 2019), to promote Italian contemporary art in the world by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism.

Central to the exhibition is the invisibility of women's work. Active between 1974 and 1980, Hackney Flashers operated as a self-described socialist, feminist artist collective. The U.K.-based collective's core members included An Dekker, Sally Greenhill, Gerda Jager, Liz Heron, Maggie Murray, Christine Roche, Jo Spence and Julia Vellacott. Their 1978 project *Who's Holding the Baby?* critiqued the lack of state support for child care, and its effect on women's lives – in particular their opportunities for economic and educational advancement – as well as society as a whole. Renowned for her work with systems of labor – from women's domestic work, to that of the Sanitation Department – **Mierle Laderman Ukeles'** *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Inside, July 22, 1973*, is a performance of the hidden systems of labor that support art institutions, inside and outside of museums and galleries. In what might be read as a postscript to Ukeles' pioneering performance-based practice, artist duo **Anetta Mona Chisa & Lucia Tkáčova** photographically stage the architectural motif of caryatids, female mythological figures that serve as the support for the entablature of a building. By depicting figures standing above and beneath stacks of books, Chisa and Tkáčova connect institutional power with knowledge, emphasizing the importance of what women know.

*To Cast Too Bold a Shadow* advocates for equity in spite of the dominant culture of misogyny. While discreet and insidious forms of gender-based discrimination remain, and thrive, the reevaluation of social and political systems and constant activism are necessary, even after 100 years of women's suffrage. The exhibition makes visible the experience of women transcending history, geography, and economic constraints, and also serves to amplify issues – access to childcare, immigration, and fair pay – that intersect with women's rights. In a democratic society, having such human rights

reciprocally implies a responsibility to make these essential freedoms count for others, so that patriarchal systems can be dismantled.

The exhibition is organized by Sara Reisman, with George Bolster and Anjuli Nanda.

**Funding was provided by the Italian Council for a newly commissioned artwork by Italian artist Maria D. Rapicavoli, which will have its premier as part of this exhibition.**



### **About The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation**

The Rubin Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, sustainable communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supports cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations and areas of New York City in need. [sdrubin.org](http://sdrubin.org)

### **About The 8th Floor**

The 8th Floor is an exhibition and events space established in 2010 by Shelley and Donald Rubin, dedicated to promoting cultural and philanthropic initiatives, and to expanding artistic and cultural accessibility in New York City. [the8thfloor.org](http://the8thfloor.org)

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[Image Description: A torn book page features the print of a painting by Caravaggio depicting a boy playing a lute. To the right of the young man is a bouquet of multi-colored flowers on a table. In front of him are fruits, a booklet of sheet music, a violin, and bow. Pink, handwritten text across the boy's body and face reads: "R. Kelly has close friendships with a number of women who are strong, independent, happy, well cared for, and free to come and go as they please..."]

*Due to the ongoing public health emergency, dates for the exhibition are subject to change.*