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Performance and *Prostitution*: The Magazine Actions of Cosey Fanni Tutti

Eleanor Roberts

Everything in the show is for sale at a price, even the people.

COUM Transmissions, Prostitution, 1976¹

In *Caprice Issue No. 35*, exhibit number 26 of *Prostitution*, we see a collection of sequentially ordered images with an accompanying text, evidently taken from a magazine, under the heading 'Water Bed Orgy'.² Frame by frame a sex scene unfolds, beginning with two white, young, slim, naked women on a bed kissing with their eyes closed – one has long brown hair, the other blonde. The blonde woman has thrown her leg over the lap of the other, who grips and pulls back at the upper thigh beneath the buttock, exposing her hairless genitals for the camera. Later, the two women are on their knees, spread wide, face-to-face and pushing each other's breasts up, which bulge together. Looking down and away from each other, their eyelids are dropped. The dark-haired woman's half-open mouth registers ecstasy. In the following frame, a man has entered the scene; his head is craning into the centre of the shot as his tongue points and reaches towards the vagina of one of the women. She is identifiable only by her dark pubic hair and her waiting, open mouth as her blonde partner sits over and obscures the rest of her face. Next, the man is gone again and the women are side by side on their backs. Their legs are spread and flung up and over towards their heads, vulvas exposed in the foreground. Their smiling faces (the only smiling faces in the series of images) are in the background, and the dark-haired woman commands the majority of space. The smiles then disappear as a similar pose is performed, but this time the women spread their labia apart with their fingers, and their heads fall back with closed eyes. Tongues and fingers touch nipples and orifices in various scenes. The man's mouth contorts as he stretches to reach with his tongue, before the final image of the two women, their labia at the centre, stacked one on top of the other. The very top of the dark-haired woman's head narrowly comes into view behind the thigh of her blonde partner. The bottom-right corner of this frame is signed 'Cosey Fanni Tutti'.

Caprice Issue No. 35 is one of many *Magazine Actions* by Cosey Fanni Tutti, who is the dark-haired woman described in the scene above.³ In the *Magazine Actions*, Tutti appears as a model in pornography and glamour publications produced between 1973 and 1977.⁴ In addition to *Caprice Issue No. 35*, *Magazine Action* clippings taken from titles including *Exposure*, *Playbirds*, *Private* and *Sexpert* formed the central component of the COUM Transmissions retrospective exhibition, *Prostitution*, at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) (19–26 October 1976). Spearheaded by Conservative MP Nicholas Fairbairn's now-infamous denunciation of COUM as 'the wreckers of civilisation' (Ford 1999: 6.19–22), the 'porn show' prompted media scandal (Peacock 1976: 3). Indeed, the status of the exhibition as an 'infamous' event continues to contribute greatly to conceptions (or mythologies) of the ICA as a place of radical experimentation in the 1970s and beyond.⁵ In what follows, I offer a new, detailed account of the *Magazine Actions* and their reception in the context of *Prostitution* as a foundation for re-thinking resistance to classification (both formal and political) as a strength of Tutti's work. While the *Actions* have been incorrectly and unhelpfully categorized (e.g. as 'not art' or 'not feminist', as I will go on to explain), this chapter historicizes and theorizes Tutti's work in terms of its prescience as an example of pluralistic feminist practice in the 1970s, and formal innovation in performance and conceptual art. Using archival research and an interview with the artist, I propose that performance offers a lens through which to examine the 'troubling' effect of Tutti's variously interpreted works, and the fruitful strategies of equivocation she deploys. The extent to which the *Magazine Actions* are conceived of as photographic, documentation of live performances, or long-term convergences of art and everyday life – and whether they are contingent on display in art venues – are complex questions which will be explored in this chapter.

In her works of the 1970s, Tutti re-forms representations and politics of sex and sexuality, alongside a number of other women artists emerging and performing interventions into mainstream cultural landscapes. As increasingly collective movements begin to galvanize from the 1960s, this perhaps constitutes one of the most significant innovations of feminist art. Indeed, early performance works by women artists – such as Yoko Ono, Carolee Schneemann, Charlotte Moorman and VALIE EXPORT – who directly incorporate and critique a feminist analysis of the politics of sex in their work through performance continue to hold positions of inestimable influence on not only feminist art, but wider landscapes of contemporary art and culture more broadly. Later, new sites and modes for developing creative social practices in relation to sex and sexuality were explored as feminist tools of personal–political empowerment for women, for example, in the 'sex-positive' performances and activism of artist and former sex worker Annie Sprinkle in the 1980s and 1990s. Sprinkle has said that for her Tutti – as an artist among those who pioneered new ways of representing sex – has been a source of inspiration in both her life and her work (Stephens, Sprinkle and Tutti 2009: 90). Indeed, in her *Magazine Actions* and performances of the 1970s and 1980s, Tutti opened up new spaces for artistic experimentation, within which Sprinkle could also draw on her experiences of being a sex worker and performing in pornography as part of her art practice.⁶ Sprinkle had previously worked as a

'prostitute' earlier in life before moving on to star in pornographic films and stripping, while Tutti's sex work had mostly consisted of stripping, posing and simulating sex acts for still photographs in pornographic magazines. However, both have performed sex acts live for art audiences. For example, Tutti performed vaginal and anal sex with Genesis P-Orridge, using an art object which functioned as a double-ended dildo in a performance titled *Filth* at Art Meeting Place in 1974 (Ford 1999: 4.12; Stephens, Sprinkle and Tutti 2009: 98; Tutti 2017: 176), and Sprinkle has drawn on her experience as a sex worker to develop performance pieces, some of which have involved masturbation or other acts involving penetration (Juno 1999: 34).

While Tutti and Sprinkle share some representational strategies as artists, and both have elicited outrage in the mainstream press (for staging sexually explicit work in public venues), their works are very different in form and tone. Tutti's work cannot be comfortably classified on the same terms as Sprinkle's sex-positive performance practice – even though they share similar politics around sexual pluralism. Perhaps Sprinkle's most iconic performance was part of *Post Porn Modernist* and *Post-Post Porn Modernist* (1990–5), a series of touring solo shows written and performed by the artist. In an act titled *Public Cervix Announcement*, audience members were invited to view Sprinkle's cervix through a speculum with a flashlight. In this work, Sprinkle presents her sexually performing body for a range of artistic and also socially engaged reasons centred on pleasure and pleasure-giving, which include having fun ('fun is really important', she states), sharing the beauty of the cervix, and 'demystif[ying] women's bodies' (Juno 1999: 34). Contrastingly, Tutti's work does not appear to share the ameliorative, positive or therapeutic functions and aesthetics of Sprinkle's practice. In a review of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (The Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 4 March–16 July 2007), which displayed *Magazine Action* material from *Prostitution*, Carolyn Stuart notes visitors' 'quick walk-through' past Tutti's work, which appeared 'pornographic-looking' and were felt to be 'difficult to consume as art' (Stuart 2008: 477). Stuart notes a sense of discomfort in viewers' engagement with – or rather, disengagement from – the work, but also 'a failure to understand the feminism of [the] graphic photos' – adding, an 'explanatory wall text would have been helpful' (ibid.). Stuart's observations point to a weakness in the curatorial framing of the images, but also a continuing (and perhaps understandable) difficulty for advocates of feminist art to embrace images which appear to be produced in conditions that knowingly and purposefully utilize a woman's body as a sexual object instituted within the binary system of what Judith Butler calls the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler 2006: 47–106). Within this discursive construct (which has historically been naturalized) desire is established as a 'heterosexual male prerogative' (ibid.: 58), and it accounts for 'all desire for women by subjects of whatever sex or gender as originating in a masculine, heterosexual position. The libido-as-masculine is the source from which all possible sexuality is presumed to come' (ibid.: 72).

Butler has critiqued the psychoanalytic (structuralist) formulation of the 'heterosexual matrix' for its under-acknowledged set of assumptions in historical accounts of desire – both feminist and non-feminist. Her argument informs and is part of a discursive field which includes anti-censorship, sex-positive and queer feminisms

in that it illuminates ways in which women's desire has frequently failed to be accounted for outside of this masculine-orientated system. As Linda Williams – a film theorist and pioneer of feminist pornography studies – wrote in the late 1980s, 'for women, one constant of the history of sexuality has been a failure to imagine their pleasures outside a dominant male economy', which, she argues, has been conceptualized around women's victimization, heterosexual male aggression or sadism, and violent weaponizations of the penis and/or male sexuality as a means of control over women (Williams 1999: 4, 5, 23).

The fact that Tutti's modelling work was undertaken for reproduction in magazines and films specifically targeted for sexual use by heterosexual male consumers suggests that her images are not only 'pornographic-looking', as Stuart euphemistically describes them; they are produced within material conditions that are explicitly grounded in pornography. This interpretive difficulty for feminist commentators persists, despite the fact that a growing number of campaigns and discussions have become increasingly focused on inclusive practice, which promotes the rights and agency of sex workers (my own argument centres on concepts of feminist inclusivity throughout this chapter). While significant advances have been made in addressing the stigmatization, marginalization, and victimhood bound up with anti-pornography and anti-sex work discourses historically, feminist art criticism may still be haunted by the spectre of the 'porn wars', which emerged in the feminist movement from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. Resulting accounts of pornography as 'a unified (patriarchal) discourse with a singular (misogynistic) impact' (Duggan 2006: 6) led to legislation which had damaging knock-on effects such as revoked funding for queer and feminist performance artists whose work was deemed to contain 'obscene' content (ibid.: 3). Lisa Duggan has since been among the feminist scholars to persuasively respond to anti-pornography feminism by arguing that 'the sexually explicit materials called "pornography" are full of multiple, contradictory, layered and highly contextual meanings', and she strategically focuses instead on the vital issues of consent and sexist, capitalist Western economies in which women may choose sex work as 'not always the worst option' (ibid.: 6, 8). This tension between anti-pornography feminism and other models of feminist representation and interpretation is also the subject of renewed attention in curatorial strategies in contemporary art. For example, Tutti's *Magazine Actions* have recently been exhibited alongside works by US painters Joan Semmel, Anita Steckel and Betty Tompkins – who all focused on explicit representations of (mostly heterosexual) sex in the 1970s (Galo 2016; Newell-Hanson 2016). The group show, titled *Black Sheep Feminism: The Art of Sexual Politics* (Dallas Contemporary, 17 January–20 March 2016), which drew mainstream press attention in the United States and also in the United Kingdom, perpetuates enduring perceptions of Tutti as a 'black sheep' feminist (Gingeras 2015). While work such as Sprinkle's speaks in some ways to the enduring legacies of personal-political emancipation projects and consciousness-raising of 1970s feminism, Tutti's work counts as evidence for an equally relevant, and currently under-acknowledged dimension of the movement. It offers an example of a set of practices and discourses centred on work by women and others of a range of genders, engaged in the representation of sex and power after the 'feel-good' driving forces of 'liberation' arising from the 1960s were depleted. Emerging alongside the punk-related aesthetics

developed by COUM Transmissions, Tutti's harnessing of sex and sex work in her *Magazine Actions* of the 1970s enables entirely different representations of gendered agency which complicates existing narratives of '1970s feminism' – as well as the impact of performance practices on histories of conceptual art.

Active members of COUM Transmissions at the time of *Prostitution* were listed in the press release:⁷ Peter ('Sleazy') Christopherson, Cozey Fanni Tutti and Genesis P-Orridge (as then known, prior to later changes of gender and name to Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, and the collective identity BREYER P-ORRIDGE).⁸ The exhibition opening party also marked the formation of the founding industrial band Throbbing Gristle, of which Tutti was also member. In the exhibition at the ICA, *Magazine Actions* were displayed alongside documentation and artefacts of previous COUM actions and performances, including Tutti's bloodied tampons hanging from a walking stick.⁹ Another tampon sculpture by P-Orridge, *Venus Mound (From Tampax Romana)*,¹⁰ and objects and instruments including a double-ended dildo, a meat cleaver, a rubber suit, hair, Vaseline and a 'Chain Shower and Box' were also displayed. COUM's statement in the *Prostitution* poster and press release reads, 'This exhibition was prompted as a comment on survival in Britain', and describes Tutti appearing in pornographic magazines as a 'deliberate policy' of action.¹¹ The text continues:

All of these [actions] framed form the core of this exhibition. Different ways of seeing and using Cozey with her consent, produced by people unaware of her reasons, as a woman and an artist, for participating. In that sense, pure views. In line with this all the photo documentation shown was taken, unbidden by COUM by people who decided on their own to photograph our actions. (*Prostitution* poster 1976)

The document details ways in which the exhibition collects how 'other people' (Tutti's photographers) see and record Tutti's actions (as part of wider COUM actions), before finally adding, 'Everything in the show is for sale at a price, even the people'. The opening party (described by COUM in the press release as 'key') included live music from Throbbing Gristle (the group consisted of the listed COUM members plus Chris Carter) and the punk band Chelsea (billed as 'LSD'). A stripper named Shelley and a 'beautiful, tall, intimidating transvestite' (referred to in some accounts as a 'drag queen') named Java were hired for entertainment and security services, respectively (Stephens, Sprinkle and Tutti 2009: 98; Tutti 2017: 203). Throbbing Gristle's set of around six or so songs also involved the use of special effects make-up to simulate wounds across Tutti's topless chest, and P-Orridge gargling and spitting up fake blood. Tutti's own account describes the evening building to an explosive conclusion with a drunken brawl between P-Orridge and the artist Ian Hinchcliffe, which prompted further chaos and a trip to Charing Cross Accident & Emergency department (Tutti 2017: 204–5).

The ensuing scandal in the mainstream media was also represented in a kind of living archive, as reviews were added by the group to a display on the gallery wall across the span of the exhibition (Ford 1999: 6.19–22). As Simon Ford has illustrated, reactions (and indeed, the production) of the show were both constitutive and reflective

of 'moral panic' (as conceptualized by sociologist Stanley Cohen), enabled by anxieties over economic uncertainty and accumulating threats to established cultural values (ibid.). As Ford points out, this moral panic over *Prostitution* was partly fed by earlier controversial exhibitions and performances; particularly, the artist Mary Kelly's display of faecal stains on used nappy liners among other works in her *Post-Partum Document*, which had closed at the ICA only three days prior to COUM's show opening. Ted Little, the incumbent ICA director, continued to support COUM and *Prostitution*, which ultimately destabilized his directorship and jeopardized the ICA's funding from the Arts Council of Great Britain, as well as (indirectly) the stability of the Arts Council itself as a funding body; Little resigned from the gallery the following year ('Adults Only Art Show' 1976: 17; Ford 1999: 6.24; 'Protests at Use' 1976: 8; Tisdall 1976: 10).

In *Wreckers of Civilisation*, Ford gives an overview of the media responses to the exhibition, but falls short of any particular depth on how Tutti specifically is represented and received.¹² Interestingly, a survey of the popular press responses show that Tutti is mostly discussed – if at all – as a 'girlfriend', 'wife', 'follower', side-kick, or incidentally involved as a model in P-Orridge's 'sex show'. Moreover, her name is variously misspelt as 'Cozy', 'Fanny' and 'Tutte'. In the *Daily Express*, the crediting of Tutti as 'Orridge's [*sic*] girlfriend Cosey Fanny [*sic*] Tutti, who is featured in some of the pictures' is particularly characteristic (Clancy 1976: 2). Similarly, both the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* fail to mention the collective status of COUM entirely and focus instead on state-supported funding given to P-Orridge, as a 'porn show producer' (Peacock 1976: 3; Piler 1976: 3; Usher 1976: 6). Alongside William Feaver for the *Guardian* (who cites Tutti as COUM's 'star' seeking to 'exploit' the 'exploiters') (1976: 27), Nicholas Fairbairn, COUM's most vehement critic, appears among those giving Tutti the most credit for the work – conveniently shifting blame to the 'prostitute' woman. This demonstrates some of the ways in which Tutti's authorship is undermined, except when convenient or corollary to claims of her supposed toxicity (and is therefore an exemplary place to begin when considering how Tutti's work functions as a complex feminist intervention).

The Times reported Fairbairn's questioning of Brynmor John, the Home Office's Minister of State: 'Is the minister satisfied with the law which allows bodies such as the Arts Council or the British Council to spend taxpayers' money on sending Cosey Fanni Tutti to take a bath in polythene chips in Milan and exhibitions such as we have in London?' ('Protests at Use' 1976: 8). Fairbairn cites *Prostitution* but also a survey exhibition, which was co-sponsored by the British Council, in Milan where Tutti and P-Orridge performed *Towards Thee Crystal Bowl*, a performance involving dance-like movements, hanging chains and a sandbox 'bath' of plastic chips.¹³ As recipients of public money to travel to Europe in the past,¹⁴ Fairbairn's outrage exploded at the news that Tutti and P-Orridge had then received additional funding (reported as £496) to tour the United States:

I am writing immediately to the appropriate Government departments to stop all grants of taxpayers' money to the British Council. We're only just getting a look at the maggots in the nest. It is clear these people have been using the excuse and pretence of art to swan around the world undermining values. ('P.Orridge Sex-Show' 1976b: 9)

That the group, particularly P-Orridge, had received public funding was indeed the source of most complaints. Writing on the third day of the exhibition, journalist Shaun Usher encapsulates the aggressive mood towards experimental arts in his report that 'this is a notoriously over-taxed nation, and the joke that some of the £28 million of our money has gone into the Arts Council and been passed on to [sic] "Prostitutes," another display involved soiled nappy-liners, and three chaps who walked around East Anglia with poles on their heads, is too cruel to be funny' (Usher 1976: 6).¹⁵ As *Art Monthly's* coverage of *Prostitution* pointed out, that public funding featured as a primary complaint was particularly ironic given that the £200 given to the group by the ICA for framing the works was offset by the surge in ICA membership that the exhibition and its reporting prompted (Townsend and Wendler, 1976: 1). Questions around the concept of public funding for the arts – or specifically new practices considered to be at the limit or outside of 'art' – recur through the newspaper coverage, where discussion around the form and content of the exhibition works is remarkably absent.

Surprisingly, considering its conservatism, among the newspapers, the *Daily Mail* gives one of the fullest pictures where it reports, 'Nicholas Fairbairn fought his way through Hell's Angels and young men with multi-coloured hair, lipstick and nail varnish [...]. Among the "art" was a cage of chains and images of sadism and masochism' ('Adults Only Art Show' 1976: 17). COUM as a collective entity, the contributions of Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson and descriptions of the objects or images are all conspicuously absent, even in Caroline Tisdall's coverage for the *Guardian* – one of the few sympathetic reviews (1976: 10). *Art Monthly* reported that one element of the show, a '12-ft.-square sculpture in blue and orange wood', had been entirely overlooked in the reviews (Townsend and Wendler 1976: 1).¹⁶ Evidently, the significance and specifics of the work itself were subsumed by the enactment of scandalized reception, as critics fed off – and fed into – perceptions of the provocativeness of the exhibition as a total statement. Interestingly this occurred in a variety of guises; for example, in contrast to sensational reports, as in the *Daily Mail*, of scandal and outrage, *Studio International* described the opening party as a 'depressing evening with mediocre music', also noting 'the sad occurrence of a striptease by a rather shocked young girl' (the aforementioned Shelley), for the 'crowded and pretentious public occasion'.¹⁷ Similarly, a column in the *Sunday Times* titled 'Much Ado About Nothing' described the exhibition as 'simulated' (1976). One possible factor in producing this effect may have been that prior to the exhibition opening, following talks with the ICA and their leaseholders (The Crown Estate) a decision was made to take the *Magazine Action* images off the walls and put them into specially made 'metal boxes', with drawers that slide out ('Mall Porn Exhibition' 1976; 'MP Tears Strip' 1976: 3). Patrons were asked to 'request' a viewing from a security guard before being shown the images.¹⁸ Tutti has since commented on the irony (and, for her, pleasure) of the images being 'returned' to their original, seedy situation (Ford 1999: 6.26). By taking the works off the walls and into the monitored drawers, the ICA reinforces their categorization as risqué or possibly dangerous, as visitors view them under the watchful eyes of the guard. More recent exhibitions of the *Magazine Action* images have enjoyed a more culturally 'legitimate' status, for example, in their exhibition at the Tate Triennial (Tate Britain, 1 March–14 May 2006), where they

were displayed openly on the walls and in glass cases (as in the recent feminist group shows *WACK* and *Black Sheep Feminism* in the United States).

Given the sentiments towards public funding for the arts detailed above, it may be reasonably anticipated (if not expected) that, in 1976, an exhibition containing graphic sexual images, clinical waste, and aggressive punk and industrial music less than a kilometre away from Buckingham Palace would prompt scorn in the mainstream media. Furthermore, Tutti has since commented several times on the lack of support she received from other artists at the time: 'You start off on the fringe. They build you up and you get established. Then they slag you off' ('Tutti Frutti' 1983: 11). Perhaps most surprisingly, Tutti has faced attack on her artistic practice not only from conservative critics, but also from former collaborators. In a response published in *Art Monthly* to the Tate Triennial exhibition, which included *Magazine Actions*, she is described by fellow COUM member Genesis Breyer P-Orridge as the 'supplier' to work originally conceived of as art solely by the latter, and since 'appropriated' by Tutti in an attempt to retrospectively legitimate her unadulterated, irrelevant or artistically naïve engagement in pornographic modelling (2006: 15).¹⁹

Tutti has also represented herself as the subject of what might be called horizontal aggression by feminist arts communities (Tutti 2009: 25). Two years after *Prostitution*, art historian Lisa Tickner voiced her scepticism about 'those who claim an art form out of being "intentionally" exploited like Cosey Fanni Tutti of the COUM Group', who, Tickner argued, 'shift the meaning of the work, however serious its original or possible intentions, from parody to titillation', as the possible political statement collapses into 'ambiguity and confusion' (1987: 273). While Tickner appeared sympathetic to Tutti's 'possible intentions' of parody and critique of the sex industry, her understanding at the time was based on the assumption that Tutti's work centred on being 'intentionally' exploited. Tickner implied that Tutti had ultimately failed as her 'intent' (and by using quotation marks here Tickner signified her doubts about Tutti's intent) gave way to the reinforcement of unwitting exploitation. In Tickner's admittedly brief reading, Tutti's *Magazine Actions* were summarized in the failure to escape 'titillation', and the myriad investigations presented by the work into questions of identification, labour, culture industries and value, sex, sexuality, obscenity, shifting ontologies of space and time – some of which I'll go on to address – and other concepts were overlooked. While Tickner's analysis opened up possible avenues for enquiry into how 'titillation' (if one accepts that as the effect of the *Magazine Actions*) might be harnessed in transformative politics, the basis of the argument could also be seen as complicit with flawed logics, which persist in contemporary commentaries: that people willingly engaged in the sex industry *do not know what they are really doing*.²⁰ Mutual ambivalence, questioning or feelings of cynicism between Tutti and feminist communities continued through the 1980s; for instance, a group of feminists reportedly walked out of one of Tutti's later performances, *Opinions* (1985) at Brighton's Zap Club, which, according to a reporter, they described as 'sexist' (Shelley 1985: 49).

To understand the complex, overlapping distinctions between art and pornography in this instance, I first read Tutti's images 'straight-forwardly' as art objects. Perhaps the most iconic of the images shown in *Prostitution* is that of the poster and press release, captioned *Sexual Transgressions No. 5*.²¹ It shows Tutti, reclining on a chaise

longue in *odalisque* pose, wearing only sunglasses, a loosely laced corset, and black stockings and suspenders in hard contrast to her pale skin. With her long, slender legs relaxing apart, one knee bent and angled outwards, her pubic area and breasts are exposed, and her head is cocked towards the viewer with a knowing half-smile. Tutti's portrait echoes an immediately recognizable visual lexicon of 'the whore'. Tutti's defiant, returning gaze of the 'prostitute-as-artist's-model' has been placed in the art historical canon by some critics, such as Julia Bryan-Wilson, in relation to Édouard Manet's painting *Olympia* (1863). While I emphasize that Tutti's image actually subverts art historical conventions of the smoothed, rounded and ethereal nudes of the long-stretching canon (as I will go on to explain), *Sexual Transgressions No. 5* does prompt renewed debate around the extent to which different representations of 'prostitution' resist stable classification (e.g. along lines of class, sexual agency and gendered hierarchies of labour). As Bryan-Wilson points out, there is an established history of criticism that responds to Manet's prostitute Olympia in terms of her 'ambiguity' and 'indecipherability' (2012: 79–80). At the same time, critics have also identified ways in which Olympia and other representations of prostitution have ultimately failed to reconfigure underlying ways of seeing that are based on capitalist, patriarchal and supremacist assumptions.²²

October 19th–26th 1976



SEXUAL TRANSGRESSIONS NO. 5

PROSTITUTION

COUM Transmissions:- Founded 1969. Members (active) Oct 76 - P. Christopherson, Cosy Fanni Tutti, Genesis P-Orridge. Studio in London. Had a kind of manifesto in July/August Studio International 1976. Performed their works in Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; Galleria Borghese, Milan; A.I.N. Gallery, London; and took part in Arte Inglese Oggi, Milan survey of British Art in 1976. November/December 1976 they perform in Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art; Peson Gallery, Chicago; H.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago and in Canada. This exhibition was prompted as a comment on survival in Britain, and themselves.

2 years have passed since the above photo of Cosy in a magazine inspired this exhibition. Cosy has appeared in 40 magazines now as a deliberate policy, all of these framed from the core of this exhibition. Different ways of seeing and using Cosy with her consent, produced by people unaware of her reasons, as a woman and an artist, for participating. In that sense, pure views. In line with this all the photo documentation shown was taken, unbidden by COUM by people who decided on their own to photograph our actions. How other people saw and recorded us as information. Then there are scenes of our press cuttings, media write ups, COUM as raw material. All of them, who are they about and for? The only things here made by COUM are our objects. Things used in actions, intimate (previously private) assemblages made just for us. Everything in the show is or sale at a price, even the people. For us the party on the opening night is the key to our stance, the most important performance. We shall also do a few actions as counterpoint later in the week.

PERFORMANCES: Wed 20th 1pm - Fri 22nd 7pm

Sat 23rd 1pm - Sun 24th 7pm

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Figure 9.1 Cosy Fanni Tutti, *Prostitution* poster, 1976. Black ink on paper. Courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London.

There are, of course, a number of factors which differentiate Tutti's 'prostitute' figure from Manet's painting – perhaps beginning with the way in which eye 'contact' (deemed so central to interpretations of Manet's Olympia) of the returning gaze is frustrated by Tutti's dark sunglasses. The text underneath (boldly titled 'PROSTITUTION') candidly situates Tutti's body as a commodity 'for sale' (*everything in the show is for sale at a price, even the people*) – but, most significantly, she is for sale at her own behest as art object but also artist.²³ While the photograph appears to act as documentary evidence for working life in the sex industry, there remains an indefiniteness in one's ability to ontologically 'fix' or identify the 'limits' of the image and accompanying text. The pattern of responses from critics and the press to *Prostitution* charted in this chapter seems to ask (either explicitly or implicitly) a series of rhetorical questions; for example, is it documentation of a performance, as suggested by its positioning alongside documentation of COUM's actions? Is it 'real' porn (particularly as Ted Little had previously testified that P-Orridge, for one, was not engaged in the production of pornographic material) (Ford 1999: 6.12)? How can it be shown as 'art'? How might we establish if Tutti 'knew' she was either an artist or a porn model at the time of the photograph? It may be tempting (albeit futile) to pursue such questions in search of ontological 'resolution'. I also contend that the latter three lines of enquiry are loaded with chauvinist logics (*does she know what she is really doing?*).

As ontological 'fixing' of the image reaches a dead-end, the focus returns to what we see. The visual language of *Sexual Transgressions No. 5* is clearly informed by machinations of commercial pornography in a specific, historical location of late-twentieth-century capitalism. The organic nude is disrupted by the bondage of Tutti's black lingerie and the suggestive prurience of the dark sunglasses worn indoors (with little else); gendered roles become blurred as she performs the 'femme fatale', but perhaps also a sleazier 'peeping Tom' or other mysterious character. The concealed gaze and implied voyeurism, hidden behind the opaque sunglasses, supplement Tutti's ambiguous body language in their bending and blending of the gendered characters represented. The poster image, replicated from its original magazine venue, shows the sexual body as intertwined with industrial technologies (here I also refer to the corset, the sunglasses and the stockings) of commercial pornography, which directly inform or signify the sexiness of the image. Tutti repudiates the unitary, 'innocent' and organic nude, as well as notions of reproductive sex in favour of a sexual body produced, in part, by (technological) replication. In her image of the 'prostitute', qualities of partiality, dualism, contradiction and ironic corruption are amplified by the ontological questions prompted by the work (which are impossible to entirely resolve) about how to classify such representations. Interestingly, Tutti's work might be theorized, then, as an early precursor to later theories about how to figure an anti-essentialist body, such as cyborg feminism and Donna Haraway's notion of the 'fragmentation and reconstitution of bodies' in her 'Cyborg Manifesto' (Haraway 1991: 181). The argument at the heart of Haraway's rebuttal of notions of organic and unitary identities is that the cyborg body holds feminist potential – if harnessed strategically – for 'a powerful infidel heteroglossia' (ibid.: 149, 180), which might disrupt regulatory systems of both capitalism and patriarchy. Haraway's theorization of a body in a state of permanently unclosed construction can be aligned with Tutti's *Magazine Actions* in that both

challenge narratives of a feminism based on universalizing assumptions of natural and 'unified' identities, on the basis that those narratives may unwittingly rely on logics of marginalization, incorporation or domination – as well as unhelpful 'taxonomic identification' (ibid.: 156–7).

The idea of making visible a process of corporeal composition (whether hybrid, cyborg or another pluralistic mode of understanding identity) is also evident in Tutti's process for creating the *Magazine Actions*. Tutti has commented that the idea initially stemmed from a desire to bring her own image into the 'cut and paste' collage and mail artworks she was already creating with images of other women from commercial pornography (Tutti 2010). Rather than using other people's bodies from existing magazines, Tutti sought to make the work more 'complete' by going out into the sex industry and making the images herself, before recuperating and returning them to her collage and mail art. This approach involves the performing of a character, propelling oneself into a situation as a 'persona', and with ulterior motives unknown to those who would otherwise populate the infiltrated area. In interview Tutti herself stated, 'I was "being a model" in order to realise the end work' (interview with the author, 3 November 2014). This is echoed in the resulting reproductions of sex industry conventions, where models enact (or are ascribed) titillating alter egos; Tutti appears as characters including 'Slippery Millie: Piccadilly's Oily Lilly', 'Nanette' the 'girl next door', 'Tessa from Sunderland' and 'The Office Cleaner'.²⁴ Considered in this light, Tutti's presentation of her composite (technologically constructed) and hyper-sexualized body within a work of art presents an innovative contribution to discourses on appropriation (I will go on to explore other dimensions of appropriation), intertextuality, identity and social constructionism emerging through and beyond the 1970s.

In Tutti's re-presentation of predictable, tacky (bordering on absurd) sexual personas such as 'The Office Cleaner', it might be assumed that the artist seeks to satirize and criticize – or is merely complicit with – an industry based on uses of women's bodies as (cheap) sexual 'products'. In *The Office Cleaner*,²⁵ Tutti is perched and poised naked on the edge of an office table, with a clunky typewriter and drab reproduction of a floral still-life painting in a tiny frame on the wall in the background.

She hugs at her knee, pulling it up against her breast which is hidden, her vulva is exposed and she looks into the camera with a hint of a coy smile. Glimpses of tufts of pubic hair contrast with the smooth skin of her long, slim leg, and her foot extends elegantly downwards as the tip of her toe is poised on the horizontal plane of her other thigh – which rests on the table. Tutti's ambiguous body language invites intrigue on at least two levels: first, on the question of her supposed availability, as she is concealing while also exhibiting herself; and secondly, in that as she pulls her knee towards her breast, her slim but strong-looking bicep is pushed up against her leg. This gives an appearance of strength, but it also looks as though she hugs herself – a notable characteristic when considered within a historical context in which women asserting their sexual agency are frequently dismissed with accusations of narcissism. However, the intrigue of the image then jars with the trite, sexist text of the caption: 'Not all office cleaners are middle aged Mrs Mops. Some firms hire quite young and beautiful girls to work early evening cleaning offices out. Linda is such a girl!' The sexist caption

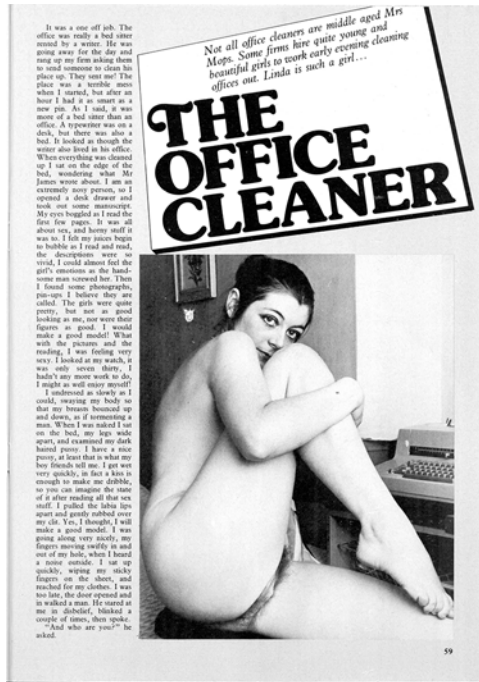


Figure 9.2 Cosey Fanni Tutti, *The Office Cleaner*, in *Supersex No. 8*, 1975–6, *Magazine Action*. Nine black and white pages adhered to cartridge paper (detail). Courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London.

and frame provided by the magazine venue fundamentally informs how one interprets Tutti's image; it represents (and judging by the reception of the work, evidently it may also elicit) a number of patriarchal and capitalist assumptions about how to classify a 'working girl' – which is problematized further when the girl is also identified as artist. In another work, Tutti appears as 'Geraldine' in a huge, camp, curly and obviously fake blonde wig and heavy blue eye-shadow extending up to her eyebrows, an almost comic fiction complemented by an elaborate backstory in the accompanying text, which includes glamorous travels around the world as a nightclub dancer. Appearing and disappearing elements of disruptive comic irony are thus experienced when reading these images at the crossroads between sexist cultures of their original commercial pornography venues and the critical space of their art exhibition. The *Magazine Actions* should therefore be considered site-specific works, which, as Tutti has recently reflected, offer a 'rich visual time capsule of the blatant 1970s sexism that [she] lived through' (Tutti 2017: 340), pointing to elements of ridiculousness and shock in the work, as well as sexual permissiveness and concerns about financial independence within damaging, capitalist markets.

One might assume that the designation of Tutti's *Magazine Action* modelling as art serves to redeem it from commercial pornography; however, Tutti actually appears

to be blasphemous to both spaces, without entirely functioning *only* to subvert them. First making herself available to be 'seen and used' (as the poster says) by unwitting participants, Tutti then undermined that 'usage' and position of vulnerability in her display of the material as art. In *Prostitution*, Tutti revealed a long-term project by which the pornographers, consumers and art patrons all became labourers of the artist's vision. When the 'product' became the creator notions of victimhood were also called into question as the all those involved in Tutti's creating the work became 'victims' themselves, in the sense that they were unwittingly embroiled in public outrage. Indeed, after *Prostitution's* wide media coverage, Tutti's 'cover was blown', and she was 'blacklisted' by various model agencies, photographers and magazine editors (Tutti 2009: 37). Tutti elaborates, 'The sex industry then was based on "using" girls and a great deal of manipulation, so for a girl to "use" them wasn't well received at all' (interview with the author, 2014). In this sense, while Tutti has at times been (unhelpfully) categorized as an outlier of '1970s feminism', the *Magazine Actions* can easily be located as part of a major drive of feminist art movements at the time to reclaim the agency of women (and as artists). As Tutti puts it:

If I hadn't put myself in that position, wanting to subsequently reclaim authorship for myself... to get it I had to let them have authorship at the beginning. So that's what interested me most of all, [...] the relinquishing of control and then the grabbing it back again at the end. Especially when they thought they had won. (Tutti 2009: 38)

Similar tactics involving the appropriation of commercially driven and predictable images or products were prevalent in works by conceptual art photographers in the UK in the mid-1970s. As feminist artist Margaret Harrison recalls, advertising was a 'dominant theme' at the time (1978), and images which commented on commerce, capital and fields of work (domestic and industrial) were central to influential London-based practices. For example, Alexis Hunter frequently appropriated visual languages of advertising, as in her photographic series *Approaches to Fear* (1975–8), in which products such as a high-heeled shoes are soiled or destroyed. Comparably, The Hackney Flashers Women's Photography Collective (which included artists such as Jo Spence) *Who's Holding the Baby?* (1978) juxtaposed images from advertisements with their 'documentary' photography, sometimes performed specifically for the camera, of women's childcare and domestic labour, overlaid with text such as 'If all women went on strike, our society would grind to a halt' (Spence n.d.; Walker 2002: 244). The Hackney Flashers' socialist and documentary sensibilities were also shared by influential men working in conceptual photography fields, such as Victor Burgin. Burgin's *UK 76* (1976) series of eleven photographic works overlaid with text ('photo-texts') draws, again, from visual languages of advertising and commercial magazines. While Burgin's acts of appropriation were acknowledged for their anti-capitalist direction (whereas Tutti's are less typically so), their critical effects were not dissimilar to Tutti's *Magazine Actions* in that they often held a position of ambivalence, with an ironic distance from commercial imagery and industry on the one hand, but also not entirely eschewing its artistic, aesthetic or subjective possibilities on the other.

As in the work of Hunter or the Hackney Flashers, Tutti's *Magazine Actions* also made a significant contribution to developments in conceptual photography, where images and aesthetics which were commercial in their origin are appropriated, framed and displayed sequentially to form narratives (they are also performances for the camera). Recently, Tutti's works have been considered by scholars and curators for their position within conceptual art frameworks; for example, Siona Wilson has related *Prostitution* more closely to Kelly's aforementioned *Post-Partum Document* than previous accounts (Wilson 2015: 136). Overall, however, Tutti's contribution to these areas remains under-acknowledged. Furthermore, as I suggested in my reading of *The Office Cleaner*, they must also be further considered in relation to working-class experiences and concerns, intersecting with – and agitating against – art institutions. Indeed, Bryan-Wilson has interpreted Tutti's works within the historical framework of sex workers and artists (generally independently, but in parallel) seeking recognition of their labour and unionization in the 1960s and 1970s, in the midst of a 'post-industrialist' shift towards gendered affective labour and associated 'precarious practices' (Bryan-Wilson 2012: 85). This interpretation reinforces the relevance of the *Magazine Actions* to histories of art engaged in critiques of capitalism, as well as socialist feminism (which would also include aforementioned theories such as Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto'). Where *Prostitution* was 'prompted as a comment on survival in Britain', Tutti suggests that the artist always 'sells' herself in the increasingly professionalized, 'incestuous institutional system that prevailed' (interview with the author, 2014) in the art world of the 1970s, as she perceives it. However, questions of whether the woman, artist or prostitute can, in fact, be bought remain (though such questions cannot be fully addressed here, they must continue to be asked).

Tutti's *Magazine Actions* can therefore be understood, as I have suggested, as sophisticated interventions of appropriation which, for example, 'reclaim' agency or embodied subjecthood by turning capitalism's own methods against itself. Considered within this critical framework the works may become fairly comprehensible as subjects of interpretation, as the reader moves towards a resolution of the difficult bind between Tutti's account of her work and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge's counterclaim of an unjustifiable 'mythology' surrounding the *Magazine Actions* (Breyer P-Orridge 2006: 15). However, Tutti never quite allows her audience to sit comfortably at this conclusion. Alongside her motivation for working towards a more 'complete' process of making art, Tutti also asserts her 'genuine curiosity for the sexual experience' gained as a sex worker (Tutti 2010). Elsewhere, Tutti has said that she moved into the sex industry more or less 'by accident, as often happens when women seem to be good objects for the male gaze [*laughs*]' (Stephens, Sprinkle and Tutti 2009: 96). Tutti's laughter here strikes me as particularly emblematic of the 'problem' of interpreting her attitude between sarcastic derision on the one hand and a knowing admission and co-option of the status quo on the other. Similarly, she wrote in the mid-1990s that 'one tends to convince oneself of all manner of things to justify ones [*sic*] participation in the acts of sex being photographed, filmed or portrayed on stage' (Tutti 1994: 2–3). Curiosity and cash were also motivations for continuing with work that was at times 'boring or even disgusting', but also entailed highly sexually charged moments and occasionally off-camera affairs (Tutti 2009: 6).

As I have established, Tutti's reasons for entering into the industry are complex and tangled – as is the case for the heterogeneous communities of sex workers generally (Brewis and Linstead 2000: 189). Tutti has never (to my knowledge) claimed that her art practice legitimized otherwise 'illegitimate' sex work; rather, she describes colleagues sharing an assertiveness and knowingness about their position and readership (Tutti 2009: 24). The knotty temporality of the work, then, is brought into sharp focus if we entertain a conception of her artwork and sex work as materially distinct (as Genesis Breyer P-Orridge suggests retrospectively). Considering the sex work as 'real' or 'genuine' (indeed, there is no reason why it shouldn't be), there is a *supposed* ontological delay in the artwork fully coming into being, inasmuch as anything can, only years later, when labelled and displayed as such. This temporally peculiar aspect to the work makes it particularly relevant for performance studies, where the images themselves are troubled as static or total objects; they are documents of an ongoing art-life project or performance, but also ontologically unfold in travelling through space-time, functioning differently in different spaces (the art gallery, the sex shop or the home). To borrow from queer theory, the strangeness of time and space at work here recalls Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn's notion that 'sex' and 'queer' could be 'fully conceived as activities and processes, rather than objects or impulses, as movements rather than identities, as lines more than locations, as motions of making rather than as forms of expression' (Grosz and Probyn 1995: x). As such, attempts, as seen in the media coverage, to re-fix Tutti's body as a 'prostitute' body, produce yet more questions about the work and propel its epistemological peripateticism.

While borrowing from queer theory here to analyse Tutti's *Magazine Actions*, it must also be said that for the most part there is nothing particularly queer – or even unusual – about the type of pornography she appears in. The images are mostly softcore depictions with Tutti still wearing clothes or underwear, but vary to include some more hardcore photographs of splayed genitalia and penetrative sex acts (which, to the reader, may be real or simulated). In many instances, the work holds consistency with regulatory representations of feminine bodies in commercial pornography (including their youth, their slimness, their whiteness, their long hair, their pert breasts and so on). While the 'characters' or the spurious fictional scenarios attached to the images change between magazines, familiar visions of implied submissiveness reverberate. We see a woman on all fours, with an arched back, her head thrown back in a routinely mundane look of 'ecstasy', breasts pushed together, labia spread apart, eyes vacantly half closed and mouth hanging open – the images lose distinctiveness in the echo of their familiar expression. This depersonalizing or potentially homogenizing aesthetic is particularly evident in relation to an example from *Playbirds* magazine, which shows images of four women modelling the same pose with slight variation together in a grid of four squares. Here, I am not arguing that there is nothing interesting or artistic about the images; rather, I am suggesting that they defy the 'autonomous' art object in pointing most profoundly to ways in which images can only be understood in relation to context: they make visible the intertextual existence of art objects. For example, the sequentiality and repetition of the *Magazine Actions* affirm their place in the context of conceptual art, while also retaining the tropes that they reveal or even parody. Indeed, these tropes are central to Tutti's intervention into conceptual art as a historically

male-focused space which more frequently actively excludes explicit representations (particularly women's representations) of sex and sexual bodies.

Tutti's exhibition of the images, then, invites readings which extend beyond their use-function as aids for masturbation or sex, for example, in foregrounding the material structure of pornography production as an economy largely based on images of young, slim, able-bodied white women appearing to happily perform their roles of available, sexually functional and energetic service-providers. This prevalent categorization of women's labour is seemingly reaffirmed to some extent by the *Magazine Actions*' images whose fictions are predicated on men's superiority in an economic hierarchy; for example, I might point to *The Office Cleaner*, or *Sexy Confessions of a Shop Assistant Vol. 1 No. 9*, in which women are tenuously grouped together as 'customer service workers'. However, in framing and exhibiting the *Magazine Actions* together, a project which investigates and produces both knowledge and power becomes more visible to the viewer. In her performances of the epistemologically divergent woman-artist-prostitute, Tutti resists the temptation to secure the readability of the images as morally or aesthetically 'bad' (or indeed 'good'). Fixing Tutti as 'prostitute' is no longer possible; her status as a sex worker fails to capture or consume her, where this assumption is often made of sex workers in other 'straight-forward' or non-art contexts. Rather, Tutti troubles familiar and totalizing narratives by disrupting the dominant unitary principles of identity, which understandably, and importantly, featured profoundly in feminist projects at that time, as women attempted to re/claim their own expression. Tutti strategically cultivates a chimerical borderline here between and of both mythic imaginaries (such as assumptions of what constitutes a 'prostitute') and social realities – and she takes pleasure in their increasingly smudged and dissolving boundaries.

The troubling and disruption of forms and genres (which in Tutti's example includes those within art as well as outside of art) has been frequently noted as a characteristic of feminist performance art in the 1970s. For example, in a 1976 interview in *Studio International*, Sally Potter described women turning to performance as 'an anti-specialist area', where 'cross references' might take place, between and outside of existing traditions which women have less 'vested interest' in preserving (Potter 1976: 33). This concept is apt for a project which, according to P-Orridge, 'began as a satire of pomposity in the art world, especially in the conceptual art world at that time', as audiences seeking to preserve an imagined binary opposition of art and porn (in not accepting the work as part of art, as the media coverage demonstrates) inescapably become complicit in creating the sleaze that they seek to refuse (Breyer P-Orridge 2006: 15). Moreover, the logic which assumes pornography and art to be 'mutually exclusive opposites' – identified and critiqued by Jennifer Doyle (2006: xvii) – is refused by the *Magazine Actions*, as they function as both art and pornography in dialectic tension in the process of Tutti's work. Doyle's argument – that art and pornography are 'overlapping representational modes, in which one is a possibility always contained within the category of the other' – shows that when art represents sex or becomes a form of sex (and vice versa) it takes on other dimensions and emphasizes the mutability of that which may become boring, obsessive, failed, powerful or critical, for instance (ibid.: xvii). In this way it seems to respond to calls made in the 1980s and 1990s by Linda Williams, Lisa Duggan

and others to acknowledge sexually explicit materials in their specificity, and – to quote Duggan again – their ‘multiple, contradictory, layered and highly contextual meanings’ (2006: 6).

The complexity and multiplicity of possible effects of the work go hand-in-hand with some of the tensions and contradictions around how artists and critics have thought about performance. COUM members had written at the time about the difficulty of explaining such forms and the possibilities of what P-Orridge and Christopherson had termed ‘subliminal performance art’ which could ‘infiltrate mass media and systems’ (1976: 46). While what little public funding COUM had achieved had always been linked to performance (Saunders 2012: 42–4),²⁶ in the past Tutti has rejected this categorization on the grounds that the term was too closely associated with theatricality and entertainment – opting instead for the term ‘action art’ (Ford 1998: 4). While Tutti now reflects on the *Magazine Actions* as differentiated from her other works by their performance qualities – including, for example, her performances of alter egos (interview with the author, 2014) – her tentativeness towards, or criticism of, ‘performance’ as an art category reflected perceptions (I would argue misconceptions) that performance was incompatible with, or at best tangential to (implicitly more ‘serious’) modes of visual art at the time.²⁷ As *Prostitution* illustrates, such problems of categorizing performance have historically aggravated shortfalls in funding and institutional representation for relevant forms such as performance art and subsequently Live Art (Johnson 2013: 16; Saunders 2012: 38). As with the heterogeneous fragments of objects, forms and events that make up *Prostitution* (which also includes documents, sculptures, the opening party, the press), efforts to resolve the contradictions and complications of the work (which may, to some extent, include formal categorization) are frustrated by sustained refusals of unitary logics, evident in both the form and content of *Prostitution*. For example, Tutti refuses to either joyfully celebrate the body and its sexual potential, as sex-positive artist-activists like Sprinkle might, or condemn exactly the field of pornographic representation in which Tutti is involved (and which reminds us of our own involvement). While Tutti has commented on deeply unpleasant aspects of working in the sex industry, she also maintains a suggestion that rather than there simply being pleasure on the one hand, and pain or discomfort on the other, there is also a third area at play in the *Magazine Actions*, where sexual pleasure and discomfort meet and exist simultaneously. This also played out in instances where Tutti used fake blood and wound imagery, as in her performance *Woman’s Roll* (A.I.R. Gallery, London, 1976), or her three-day action at the Hayward Annual (1979), in which she used crushed strawberries to create the illusion of cuts on her body. As Tutti recalls, ‘The juxtaposition of the evocative aroma of strawberries and the gashes on my body created a sense-response clash’ (interview with the author, 2014) as she moved around carefully placed arrangements of objects. This ‘clash’ might be thought of as bringing Tutti’s work uncomfortably close to historically pervasive representations of the sexualities of women in performance as dominated by death drives, from the customary slashings of bare breasts in 1970s exploitation horror, to the leading women characters doomed to madness or suicide in the plays of nineteenth-century naturalism, and beyond.

Indeed, there is no 'satisfaction' from this indefatigable, shifting and arguably technological (in the sense that it is produced from a technological mode of replication, as I argued earlier) notion of sex in the wake of exhausted 1960s 'free love'. Rather, Tutti's batting around of 'positive' and 'negative' interplays does not allow her audience to fix limits, but demands an open-ended model of interpretation for work which foregrounds the continually evolving nature of art as dialogically dependent on shifting, social experiences of space and time. Tutti's *Magazine Actions* and their exhibition in *Prostitution*, then, present a remarkably prescient investigation that models more recent theories of identification (as a more pluralistic and mobile modification of fixed 'identity'), as well as understandings of sex and power, which move beyond the binary of oppression/liberation. For instance, links can be drawn with later feminist and queer projects, such as that of Grosz and Probyn, of 'making queer all sexualities, about what is fundamentally weird and strange about all bodies, all carnalities' (1995: xi). In a queer feminist durational mode (to refer to Amelia Jones's concept; 2012: 6, 174), the *Magazine Actions* can be thought of in relation to recent feminist projects which have accounted for queer subjectivities as involving sexual practices of sexual and gender minorities, but also – crucially – broader application as political practice. As Doyle, drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, has also said, this may include heterosexual relations, but relations which refuse, intervene into, or trouble monolithic structures of the heterosexual matrix; investing instead in sites where 'meanings do not "line up tidily with each other"' (Doyle 2006: xxxi). Some recent accounts of *Prostitution* have characterized the *Magazine Actions* in terms of a queer aesthetic that deepens a disjuncture from feminism; for example, Siona Wilson argues that '[while] *Prostitution* does indeed mobilize feminist codes, it does so to stage a queer aesthetic: not homosexuality as an identity or a generalized post-1960s idea of camp, but the mutual containment of gender and genre' (2015: 95). While Wilson emphasizes a degree of separation between feminist and queer projects (characterized here as a shift away from questions of women towards questions of gender),²⁸ I argue that the conjoined queer and feminist elements work together in enhancing the efficacy of their shared intervention (the manner in which Wilson conflates queer and camp is also questionable).

As a reader looking back, making connections and forging dialogues between *Prostitution*, Tutti's *Magazine Actions* of the 1970s, and contemporary feminisms and understandings of art, identities, sex, sexualities and their histories, I am struck by how the questions Tutti poses continue to hold resonance – and challenge feminist and other readers. Tutti has commented: 'I "speak" to people in a conversational way, to create a dialogue, not to make a statement. A statement is too final, it closes down communication rather than opening it up' (interview with the author, 2014). Indeed, there is a danger in seeking certain kinds of semiotic resolution, which may have unintended consequences of diluting, sanitizing or 'legitimizing' a work, or a political sensibility. Tutti's enactment of the woman-artist-prostitute demonstrates the particular feminist potential offered by performance for an 'infidel heteroglossia' (Haraway 1991: 181).

Notes

- 1 'PROSTITUTION' exhibition publicity poster, *Prostitution* papers, TGA 955/7/7/72, ICA Collection, Tate Archive, London.
- 2 'Caprice Issue No. 35, exhibit number 26 of *Prostitution*', TGA 200825, Genesis P-Orridge Collection [uncatalogued at time of writing], Tate Archive, London.
- 3 It is difficult to determine the number of *Magazine Actions* – Tutti's website lists forty-three distinct actions (Tutti, 'Performances, Actions and Broadcasts'), whereas Tate defines them according to their appearance in over 100 pornography and glamour publications (Tate, 'Pop Life: Art in a Material World').
- 4 Like COUM Transmissions scholar Simon Ford, I refer to Cosey Fanni Tutti as 'Tutti' throughout, though there is also a precedent for using 'Cosey' in scholarship on her work; for example, see Fusco and Birkett (2012).
- 5 *Prostitution* is frequently invoked in the ICA's commemorative or official histories as a key event, for example, as part of their recent 70th anniversary events; 'The ICA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary'. Available online: <https://www.ica.org.uk/the-ICA-celebrates-its-70th-Anniversary> (accessed 8 February 2016).
- 6 While there are various definitions of 'sex work' and 'sex worker', my use of the term includes workers in all aspects of the sex industry such as those directly selling and carrying out sexual services ('prostitutes'), as well as other types of performers, models and workers engaged in creating and selling sex-related products – but particularly those whose work centres on how they use or perform with their own bodies.
- 7 'PROSTITUTION' publicity poster, *ibid.*
- 8 For clarity, Genesis P-Orridge, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge and BREYER ORRIDGE are referred to in accordance with the active identity at time of the event or writing in question throughout. For an overview of the transformations of BREYER P-ORRIDGE, see Johnson (2012d: 134–45).
- 9 P-Orridge had performed with the stick in previous COUM performances such as *Through a Tamponstick Darkly*, 1974–5 (Saunders 2012: 44; P-Orridge 2002: 14).
- 10 *Venus Mound* consists of the head and upper torso of a damaged Venus de Milo model, mounted with plaster, with two wires spreading from the shoulders like wings, from which bloodied tampons hang. It is now in Tate's collection.
- 11 *Prostitution* papers, Tate Archive, London.
- 12 However, Ford's research has focused on Tutti's practice specifically in his earlier article 'Subject and (sex) Object' (1998: 2–7).
- 13 Tutti and P-Orridge had been invited to present at *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960–1976* (Palazzo Reale, Milan, February–May 1976) by Ted Little, who curated the 'Performance Art' section of the show. Plastic chips were said to have been used as COUM were denied permission to use a bath of milk (and be naked) (Ford 1999: 6.5–8). However, Tutti's own most recent account attributes the decision to use the plastic chips as being due to a milk 'shortage' rather than denied permission (Tutti 2017: 182).
- 14 Various figures were reported but the *Guardian* gives £650.40 for Milan (Tisdall 1976: 10).
- 15 Usher refers to the (direct or indirect) public funding towards ICA exhibitions *Prostitution* and *Post-Partum Document*, and the Leeds Polytechnic fine arts graduates Ddart Performance Group (Ray Richards, Dennis de Groot, Tony

- Emerson) who spent a week walking in Norfolk attached to each other at the head by a wooden pole in February 1976; see Walker (1999: 79, 89–92).
- 16 The article is likely referring to the pyramid structure built by COUM in which Tutti and P-Orridge performed *Orange & Blue* (Manzoni Gardens, Birmingham 1974), which involved swapping roles and ‘cross dressing’ between the artists; TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection, Tate Archive, London (Tutti 2017: 202).
- 17 *Studio International*, 193.985 (January/February 1977) [clipping], TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection, Tate Archive, London. Tutti’s own account describes Shelley’s enthusiasm for her striptease, as she ended up ‘rolling on the floor naked in the spilled fake blood [...] [t]he audience loved it’ (Tutti 2017: 204).
- 18 Pamphlet ‘Prostitution, an exhibition by COUM Transmissions’, TGA 200825 Genesis P-Orridge Collection, Tate Archive, London.
- 19 P-Orridge’s claim that Tutti was ‘appalled’ that her sex work had been revealed via *Prostitution* contradicts earlier archival evidence which supports her active authorship. For example, in January 1976 P-Orridge wrote a letter to *VILE* magazine which makes reference to Tutti ‘coumtinging [*sic*] with her Prostitution Actions’ (Ford 1999: 6.4).
- 20 Groups such as The English Collective of Prostitutes and Sex Worker Open University regularly campaign for the agency of sex workers and their capacity to consent to be recognized. See ‘This is what the International Prostitutes Collective stands for’ and ‘Our Manifesto’. Available online: <http://prostitutescollective.net/1997/03/04/this-is-what-the-international-prostitutes-collective-stands-for/>; <http://www.sexworkeropenuniversity.com/our-manifesto.html> (accessed 18 May 2015).
- 21 This photograph is represented as being originally published in a magazine of the same name around 1974; however, the title ‘Prostitution’ comes from the caption of Tutti’s first *Magazine Action* publication in *Curious* magazine (Tutti 2017: 150, 198).
- 22 For example, in contrast to readings which have focused on Olympia’s ‘undecipherability’, Lorraine O’Grady and Rebecca Schneider have focused on the symbolic displacement of the black woman servant attending to Olympia in the background of Manet’s painting (O’Grady 1992; Schneider 1997: 28–9).
- 23 *Prostitution* papers, Tate Archive, London.
- 24 Images reproduced in *Cosey Complex* (Fusco and Birkett 2012: 23, 66, 138, 87).
- 25 I use *The Office Cleaner* title to make it clear which singular *Magazine Action* I refer to here; however, this work might also go by its magazine title *Supersex No. 8*. Identifying consistent titles and dates seems to be a common problem when discussing specific *Magazine Actions*.
- 26 For a list of COUM’s grants up to 1976, see ‘Awards etc.’, COUM / Throbbing Gristle archive, Harley Lond papers 1974–1980, MSL/1995/18, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 27 For example, Stuart Brisley and Leslie Haslam had argued that performance was understood as a ‘general theatrical condition’ which was ‘inappropriate’ to how they used liveness to challenge art markets (Brisley and Haslam 1976: 416).
- 28 I also note here that Tutti herself has at times described her practice as being more closely aligned with Gay Liberation movement than certain types of liberal feminism in the 1970s, due to her emphasis on questions of sexuality and sexual pluralism (Tutti 2017: 114).