

REALITY SHOW

*ANNA KRACHEY, JILL PANGALLO, CECELIA PHILLIPS,
LAURA TURNER & JAMIE WENTZ*



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

JUNE 26 - AUGUST 2, 2008

AUSTIN, TEXAS

DEAR VIEWER,

Reality Television is my current drug of choice. I'm appalled when I need it, escapist when I watch it, and embarrassed after it's all over. Trust me, I don't feel good about it, not even when it's on Bravo.¹ Nonetheless, I've been unable to stop myself from watching. So imagine what happened when I found four other female artists who shared my habit. Right off the bat we made plans to facilitate each other's habit every Wednesday night. We threw in a couple pizzas and some red wine for good measure.

Approximate Consumption Rates
(2006 – 2008)

Bottles of Red Wine: 246

Pizzas: 55

Tubs of hummus

(or related vegan dipping items): 94

Olives: 260

Bag of Chips (any kind): 81

For all the unforgivable moments reality television has brought me...putting off an important writing task for an all-day marathon of CMT's *The Ultimate Coyote Ugly Search*, breaking down into a puddle of unstoppable tears watching Destiney's [sic] terminally ill father riding motorcycles with Bret Michaels in *VH1's Rock of Love 2*, posting the angriest message to a board when my friend got hated on by Michael Bay in Fox's *On the Lot*. It's also brought me some great ones... a group trip to San Antonio to see the live *So You Think You Can Dance* tour, some really great grub (don't let the above list fool you), and countless nights of screaming and yelling at the television with my friends (therapeutic, to say the least).²

I would like to thank... everyone at Women & Their Work, particularly Katherine McQueen and Lisa Choinacky for their support and enthusiasm; Risa Puleo for her expertise and critique; Elizabeth Abrams for her technical skills and advice; Sonya Berg, Virginia Yount and the other "ladies" for occasionally rounding out our group; and, most importantly, I have to give it up to my dear friends Anna, Celia, Jamie and Laura who have traveled this two year journey of art-making and friendship and always kept it really, really real.

Jill Pangallo
Organizer, Reality Show

¹ Certain reality television viewers will tell you that the Bravo network produced shows are superior, more artistic and classier compared to other reality shows.

² SYTYCD is a Fox network show that pits semi-professional, twenty-something dancers against each other in various styles of dance – it's the *American Idol* of dance competitions.



REALITY SHOW

Five talented artists present works before you, and these works represent the artists who will still be in the running to be America's Next Top.¹ (and break to commercial...)

The stakes of this exhibition are not presented quite so dramatically (or reflexively) for Anna Krachey, Jill Pangallo, Cecelia Phillips, Laura Turner and Jamie Wentz as they are for aspiring models on *America's Next Top Model*. Shifting the term “artist” for “model” in Tyra Banks’s now – after ten cycles of ANTM – highly quotable pre-judgment speech allows us to enter into its media doublespeak to understand how televised anticipation builds semantically. But more so, what all this word-swapping allows is an exercise in mediating reality, an opportunity to frame the production of artwork through the structures of reality television, as is the aim of the artists in this exhibition. Applying a televised simulation of reality back onto reality itself allows us to view ourselves as a culture through the lens of one of our most self-indulgent forms of entertainment.

Every Wednesday for the past two years, these artists have gathered at their homes for “Ladies’ Night,” an evening of snacks, conversation and reality TV, the 21st century woman’s response to the Quilting Bee.² Popular culture in the form of celebrity magazines and reality TV is the social fabric that ties Ladies’ Night together. Live and videotaped episodes of competition-based and scripted reality programming, including Bravo’s *Top Chef* or *Project Runway* – depending on the season, ABC’s *The Bachelor*, CW’s *America's Next Top Model*, MTV’s *The Hills* and FOX’s *American Idol* and *So You Think You Can Dance* are the evening’s entertainment and the source material for this exhibition.³

Glimpses of the living room and its participants before, during and after Ladies’ Night are offered in a series of photographs by

Laura Turner. A pervasive melancholy infects Turner’s pre- and post-show images, but the space enlivened by the glow of the television and its excited community of viewers. Turner documents the perspective of the audience, in this case a group of artists – functioning as a Nielsen family of sorts – who are particularly attuned to image consuming, making and deconstructing.

Cecelia Phillips’s series of intimate, small-scaled painted portraits of contestants, hosts and judges from Ladies’ Night’s regularly scheduled programming began with a crush on Hok Konishi, a finalist on the third season of *So You Think You Can Dance* as well as a fellow artist. After a series of conversations through the social networking website, MySpace.com, Konishi and Phillips arranged to trade painted portraits of each other and meet. Alas, as the printed email conversations Phillips presents convey, Phillips’s love for Konishi remains unrequited. This interaction inspired Philips to paint other portraits of her favorite reality celebrities to examine the one-sided intimacy reality television encourages between viewer and viewed through its directness. Portraits of Tim Gunn and Heidi Klum from *Project Runway*, Tom Colicchio and Padma Lakshmi from *Top Chef* among others are arranged in the gallery salon-style like family photos on a living room wall, creating a display wall for the television family she invites into her home on a weekly basis.

Anna Krachey takes the fantasy of familiarity to another level. Krachey composites headshots of Brad Womack, the Austin native who made reality television history on the 11th season of *The Bachelor* when he rejected both finalists, with headshots of the “bachelorettes,” the contestants who vied for his marriage proposal, onto a generic baby facial structure. Forgoing digital morphing for cut-and-paste Photoshop grafting, the resulting Frankenstein-esque portraits of Womack’s offspring with various contestants

follow a highly idiosyncratic set of criteria. Krachey selects a contestant’s best or worst physical characteristics based on her interpretation of Womack’s responses to the bachelorettes. Her personal bias factors in as she also projects her desires as a viewer for a certain outcome into aesthetic decisions. Literally dissecting the physical features of these women in a way similar to how Womack is asked to pick apart potential mates to make his selections before the camera, Krachey offers the imagined offspring up for judgment.

While Phillips and Krachey examine the intersection between reality television and real life, projecting television into reality, Jamie Wentz and Jill Pangallo project themselves into the frameworks of reality television to unravel the genre and critique the medium of television itself. Wentz videotapes commercials, talk shows and clips of the infamous moments in reality television as found on Youtube.com. She digitally manipulates this hijacked footage, inserting footage of herself re-performing various roles: the wannabe singer who flops in front of *American Idol*’s panel of judges, the ugly duckling about to be transformed by full-body plastic surgery into FOX’s *The Swan*, a cheating wife and a lie detector test played out on national television. Wentz exaggerates the spectacle of failure propagated by certain television series, especially around women contestants, by capitalizing on the formal and technical elements – the bad lighting and odd angles that television producers use to exploit people – to undermine and question the realness of reality TV.

Jill Pangallo’s video *Group Crit: The Pilot* parodies “unscripted” TV series like MTV’s *8th & Ocean*, *Laguna Beach* and *The Hills*. Rather than compete against each other for jobs or accolades, as is the case with competition-based programming, unscripted programming follows a group of “friends” or “strangers” and films their day-to-day activities. The banality of daily life is edited out and certain

storylines – especially those in which petty jealousies and misunderstandings lead to overly-dramatized blow-outs – are played up, leaving the audience in suspicion of the situation's believability. For her video, Pangallo has cast the artists in the exhibition, as well as myself, into an episode of scripted reality that makes the process of organizing this exhibition semi-transparent. Relying on reality TV editing tropes that reduce interactions to sound bytes, the participants in the video are reduced to character types based on certain personality traits highlighted in the video. A series of casting shots displayed in the exhibition categorizes our relationships to each other into the functions we perform in the most digestible terms: "Hostess," "Enigma," "New Kid," "Wise Gal," "Buddy" and "Expert." In effect, Pangallo has cast us as characters in our own reality, revealing the ways in which we perform aspects of ourselves throughout our daily lives.

Reality television, like the art exhibition, is a system of display, each carrying its own sets of contrivances. In an exhibition, works selected by a curator/producer lend a certain view of an artist's practice that underscores the aims of the exhibition and are offered to a viewing audience that includes judges in the form of critics and gallerists, as well as a more general public. This exhibition is an anomaly for all the artists involved, as I'm sure a person's representation on a reality TV series is. While the exhibited work displays tendencies from all their artistic productions, the subject of reality television is far from their main concern. In fact this essay,



Jill Pangallo, 2008. Still from *Group Crit: The Pilot*, single channel video.

like unscripted reality television, was written after the show was organized. What is offered here is a highly edited account of my interaction with the work in the exhibition, the artists and the venue. To a certain degree, as one of the show's editors, I have framed this account to tell a specific story. There are many different narratives that can be told, each with equal validity. Just exactly how real this story is, you'll have to judge for yourself.

Risa Puleo is assistant curator of American and contemporary art at the Blanton Museum of Art.

¹ Tyra Banks, supermodel-host, judge and producer of the CW's *America's Next Top Model* performs a




variation of this speech during the deliberation portion of each episode of *ANTM*. New York art dealer Jeffrey Deitch produced a series called *ArtStar* in which a camera followed a group of aspiring artists around New York City. The series was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005.

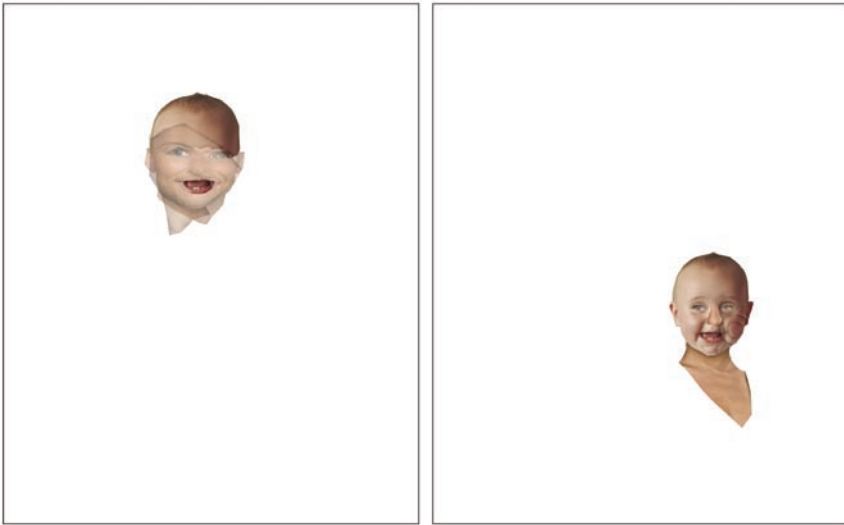
² Krachey, Pangallo, Phillips, Turner and Wentz are joined by Elizabeth Abrams, an Austin-based filmmaker who aided Pangallo on the filming of her inclusion in the exhibition, *Group Crit: The Pilot*. Together with Abrams, Ivan Lozano, Corkey Sinks, Kate Watson and Lee Webster, the artists in the exhibition form the Austin Video Bee, a multi-media video collective with aims of fostering innovative media work in Austin.

³ That reality television, a genre of television programming in which ordinary people are the main characters in various televised situations now has subgenres (see Wikipedia.com, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reality_television, for a concise listing of subgenres and examples) speaks to its pervasiveness in popular culture.

Mail Center Read Mail

💡 **Bright Idea:** [Browse the site for cool people. **Browse Now.**]

From:	 HOK <div> Block User  Delete From Friends</div> <div>myspace.com/hok</div>
Date:	20 Sep 2007, 00:48 Flag as Spam or Report Abuse [?]
Subject:	RE: participate in an art project?
Body:	<p>hello cecelia,</p> <p>first of all, thank you very much for your message and the support. second of all, i would be honest i wouldve been freaked out but after seeing the link of your paintings, i felt honored to get an message from such a fellow painter. i am interested in whatever we may be able to plan but at the same time the portrait idea sounds amazing too. what media do you use??? well, let me know:]</p> <p>hok</p> <p>----- Original Message -----</p> <p>From: cecelia</p> <p>Date: Sep 19, 2007 11:45 AM</p> <p>Hello Hok!</p>



Anna Krachey, 2008. *Deanna & Brad* (left), *Jenni & Brad* (right), digital photo collage, 5" x 7".

ANNA KRACHEY

Born in 1979 in Nashua, New Hampshire, Krachey received her BS in Studio Art from Skidmore College and a Post Baccalaureate Certificate from School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 2005. She recently received her M.F.A. from the University of Texas at Austin where she was the recipient of the William and Betty Nowlin Endowed Fellowship in Photography for 2005-2006 and the Isabell Smith Herzstein Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Art for 2007-2008. Most recently, Krachey's work was featured at the MFA thesis exhibition at the UT Visual Arts Center entitled XIII. Her work was featured in New American Talent 23 at Arthouse in Austin, Texas in June of 2008. She has also shown at the Sherman Gallery at Boston University and the Penland School of Crafts where she was awarded a work study fellowship in 2003. Krachey currently resides in Austin, Texas.

JILL PANGALLO

Jill Pangallo is a video and performance artist who has shown, screened and performed at a variety of galleries, film festivals, and venues since 1998. As one half of the performance duo, the HoHos, she performs in the long-running NYC show, *Losers Lounge* as well as at the annual Stevie Nicks drag tribute event, *Night of 1,000 Stevies*. She is the founder and creative director of the persona-based pop trio, *Hot Sausage*, in which she holds down the role of front gal, Piggy. Born in Baltimore and raised in Southern California, as a teenager, Pangallo headed to New York City and in 1993 received a BFA in Communication Design from Parsons School of Design and a BA in Psychology from Eugene Lang College. For the next 12 years, she spent her days working at a major advertising firm in New York City and her nights performing on the downtown club and cabaret circuit. In the fall of 2005, Jill relocated to Austin to pursue an MFA in studio art at the University of Texas, which she received in May of 2008. Additionally, she received the 2007 ArtsReach grant for her direction of the Texas-based art-making and camping weekend, *Nohegan*, which took place for the third time this year in May. She currently resides in Austin, Texas.

CECELIA PHILLIPS

Cecelia Phillips was born and raised in Rochester, New York. She has studied at Central St Martins, the Cleveland Institute of Art (BFA received 2005) and is currently doing her graduate work at the University of Texas at Austin (graduation expected in spring of 2009). Cecelia's interests include letter writing, storytelling, and the smell of oil paint.

LAURA TURNER

Laura Turner is a photographer currently living in Austin, Texas. In May of this year, she received her M.F.A. from the University of Texas at Austin. She is interested in exploring domestic space and our alienation from our home environments through photography. She has shown in various galleries, collective and artist-run spaces, including Art Palace, MASS gallery, and the CRL in Austin, and Art Storm in Houston.

JAMIE WENTZ

Jamie Wentz is a video and installation artist currently living in Austin, Texas. She received her BFA from the University of Texas at Austin in 2008. She is a founding member of the multimedia collective, Austin Video Bee, and has shown in galleries and alternative art spaces including The Lawndale Art Center in Houston, Texas, Gallery Lombardi and the Creative Research Laboratory in Austin, Texas. Some of Wentz's most notable awards and honors include the Permanent Collection purchase award, Dougherty Arts Center in Austin, Texas, and a Lee Lytton Smith Scholarship.



Above: Laura Turner, 2008. *Jamie*, archival inkjet print, 24" x 30".

Cover Panel: Cecelia Phillips, 2007. *Hok*, oil on panel, 10" x 8".



Jamie Wentz, 2008. *The Swan* (from the insertion series), single-channel video.

Women & Their Work

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Katelena Hernandez Cowles (President)

Stacey Abel

Sheila Buechler

Elizabeth Chapin

Colleen Fitzgerald

Rebecca Hudson

Pamela Saegert

Fern Santini

Sherry Smith

Hillary Summers

Kendra Wright

STAFF

Chris Cowden, Executive Director

Katherine McQueen, Associate Director

Lisa Choinacky, Operations Manager

Debe Bentley, Gift Shop Manager

Olivia Junell, Membership Coordinator

Molly McCommons, Projects Coordinator

Jules Buck Jones, Preparator

Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 30th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,797 artists in 253 visual art exhibitions, 111 music, dance, and theater events, 13 film festivals, 20 literary readings, and 362 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from

the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 2,500 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



women and
their work

1710 Lavaca St.
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 477-1064
info@womenandtheirwork.org
www.womenandtheirwork.org



This publication is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation. Special thanks to BAH! Design.