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As artists and as women, curators of ‘PEACHY’, Bonnie Powell and Charlotte Salt share a collective experience with the artists whose work they exhibited in the show. In a society where women are constantly subject to external judgement, this exhibition comes as a welcome relief. Forty years ago it was extremely difficult to obtain space for a women-only show, and artists who were women were hugely under-represented by mainstream galleries. Naturally, women began making art in response to this, such as the well-known posters distributed around New York by the Guerrilla Girls in the 1980s. In recent years, these works have been bought and exhibited in mainstream galleries, in an ironic turn. As described by Natalie Willis in her paper *‘Curator as Ethnographer or Tourist?’* (2013), curators and collectors have taken on the role of the tourist. Now that these artworks are ‘fashionable’, they are being bought and displayed in the very settings they were made in order to critique. For me, this is a point of interest and needs to be critically addressed. Is it good that women are being represented in these mainstream galleries? Our foremothers were fighting for representation, and it has happened. Or is it now too tainted by the fact that it has occurred through it becoming ‘fashionable’ to represent ‘minorities’, through this curator as tourist model? Charlotte and Bonnie, as women, artists and curators sidestep such models through a shared collective experience with the artists. The work not having been selected due to any conscious unifying theme is inherently tied together through this shared experience. ‘PEACHY’ is a show of art made by women, curated by other women who make art. Given that Salt+Powell are currently running Artemis House as an artist led space, the show escaped some of the exclusivity of ‘the museum’ through the inclusivity created by this.

Women are constantly subject to external judgement. The media is rife with the next ridiculous product telling women how to look, dress and act; ‘chicken-filletts’, underwear with arse implants sewn in, wigs for your eyelashes - we have come to a point where beauty routines are bordering on prosthesis. Aside from this capitalizing on women’s external appearance by creating these false ‘needs’, legal decisions

around birth control and termination are made by a House of Commons made up of 78% men. The UK is ranked 64th in the world for women holding seats in parliament, 38 places below New Zealand and 60 places below Sweden. In a nation where this is the case, it is unsurprising that external judgement is exhaustingly present in the lives of women. This is why it is so beneficial and important to have women working with and for each other, making each other and ourselves visible.

One artwork exhibited in the show by Hannah Lees featured a dress hanging on a wall adorned with pastel coloured dyes and shells. The use of clothing as material resonates with the traditions that have been built since the women's art movement began forty years ago. An article of clothing references a body - a body that is here explicitly absent. This artwork appears to echo the art historical representation of women's bodies in museums. To display an artwork that inherently references the absence of a woman's body in a non-gallery setting such as Artemis House seems to actively reject the traditions of representation of women in art. Stated by the Guerilla Girls 'Untitled', (1985-90), 5% of work in the Metropolitan Museum was made by women, but 85% of the nudes were of women. While this percentage has changed in the years since the Guerrilla Girls made these posters, the way women and women's bodies have traditionally been represented in museums remains potent in encounters of artworks, such as that exhibited by Lees. Women's bodies have become the subject of a mass of art theoretical critical debate since the 1970s, and to exhibit an artwork such as this in a context such as this inevitably references the latter. The audience encounters this dress as an empty vessel intended for a human body, able to recognize the absence of the physical body by using their own body as a point of reference. The encounter of this artwork therefore takes place between the physically present body of the audience, and body alluded to through this dress, which takes its presence through this absence. The work in this respect directly challenges and reclaims the way women have traditionally been represented in galleries. Where women have historically been represented in ways articulated by the aforementioned Guerilla Girls posters, here an artist who is a woman is reclaiming her colonized body and exhibiting this act through the very absence of said body.

