

I'D RATHER

Katherine Brewer Ball & RJ Messineo

The Petrified Phallus Collection and the Humbler sit quietly in archival display cases at the bottom of the stairs at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives. Like the sign in a public bathroom—"stand close, it's shorter than you think," which directs the standing pisser to move within humble proximity to the toilet bowl—these objects invoke the feelings, gestures and the barbed playfulness of feminist rage.

On the left, the case houses a standard grey 11x15x3 inch archival box labeled "Petrified Phallus Collection." Inside is a range of objects donated to the archives by gay activist and Los Angeles Gay Liberation Front co-founder Morris Kight—a petrified Walrus penis bone, a handful of tiny well-endowed figurines including a masturbating monkey and winged phallus, and a smattering of fossilized penis bones from various smaller dog-sized creatures, all labeled with numbers to a catalog now lost. On the other side of the display sits a small rectangular wooden block. Split in half with a hole at its center and two thin 1/4-inch ropes extending out from its corners, the block resembles a high school woodshop creation. The "Humbler" is not simply a wooden carving, but a BDSM toy that forces its wearer into a position of submission and humility. The ropes are tied between the legs and over the shoulders and, as the device holds tight to the balls, the wearer is compelled onto hands and knees to avoid the pain of standing upright.

We discovered these items in ONE Archives' "object room," hidden behind a collection of a leather jackets, chaps and biker daddy hats. Both the Petrified Phallus Collection and the Humbler serve as archival celebrations of gay male desire and relations. In the context of *Stand Close, It's Shorter Than You Think: A show on feminist rage*, they represent a cross-gender, cross-generational queer desire. Their inclusion in the show is also a playful reminder of the erasure of transgender and female-bodied queerness in many LGBTQ archives. For us the Humbler and Petrified Phallus Collection insist on the animation of the archive; they represent the breath, the auratic proximity of queer history's movement in the present. Putting together a show on feminist rage is not just about finding angry moments in queer pasts, but about invigorating archival structures and spaces through political and aesthetic projects. Our approach to this show privileges process and practice in an attempt to consider the permeability of rage—the way it is displaced, commodified, repressed and re-shaped both in the studio and in the queer community.

Stand Close brings together the products and the process of rage. boychild's performances—which employ costume, disguise and changeability—are archived in traces across the Internet, referencing in-between forms of queer cultural production and nightlife. Performing and denying a version of self in a society that demands discrete gestures or full access, boychild's instagram archive, dissonant club kid performance and mural—painted quickly from the top of a ladder with black paint—cut

BE A HAMMER

a dripping, uncalculated path across the stark white organization of the archives. RJ Messineo's body-sized paintings raise questions about authorship and legibility as they play on what it means to make a mark. Withholding, messy, beautiful and difficult, her painted screens refuse a sense of accessibility, of easy listening or feeling. Incorporating brushstrokes, readymade materials and artist reproductions, she builds her compositions out of layers of often contradicting gestures. MPA's collection of archival performance documents propose experiments in direct action, meditation and framing. Photographic and written accounts trace performances past. In these images and stories we see the archival translation of MPA's performances, the after-life of her incidents and actions as told through the eyes and words of those who she trusts to hold the feelings and memories of the performance. Her documents recall scenes of discomfort and collectivity as they weave radical histories with contemporary economic and social concerns. Guadalupe Rosales' photographs, sculptures and meticulous hand-drawn geometric shapes limn relationships between mourning and rage in the return home. Often working within the confines of a hand moving a stylus across a page, the control, speed, repetition and compression of Rosales' lines illustrate a tactile and obsessive attempt at mastery; these carefully placed and drawn borders resonate with the project of archiving itself.

Embracing the kink and ambiguity of rage, along with the show's title, we approach this theme as an attempt to float, ruminate, luxuriate and agitate on the many potentialities we see in working with the words "feminist" and "rage." Feminist rage is a response to the feelings and experiences of powerlessness. It is a political project of refusal, rejection, contemplation and process. It is a demand in the face of the homophobia, racism, misogyny and gender discrimination that is embedded in the institutions of daily life. In response to such "administrative violences" we imagine, seek and build new positions in the world from which to speak. We form political collectives; we raise consciousness; we deconstruct gender binaries; we make art; we archive. Rage is a shape shifter. It is often displaced, commodified, repressed and re-shaped. Bound to bodies, expressions of rage are not monolithic; they are not stable or fixed. Rage is as much a beginning place as it is an endpoint. From the abstract to the iconic, rage demands a multiplicity of gestures.

The essays in this catalogue were written by artists, poets, and scholars who the artists themselves chose. The writings are intended to provide a glimpse, a snapshot, an archival lens through which to view the artists work in the context of both feminist rage and the artist's own archives.

Following Pages:

Left: Petrified Phallus Collection, dates unknown, Morris Kight Collection

Right: Humbler, date unknown. Both from ONE Archives at the USC Libraries

