

FALL PREVIEW

AWOL ERIZKU

ADRIAN PIPER

JUDSON DANCE THEATER

ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 2018

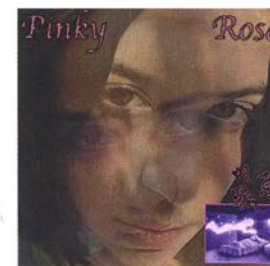
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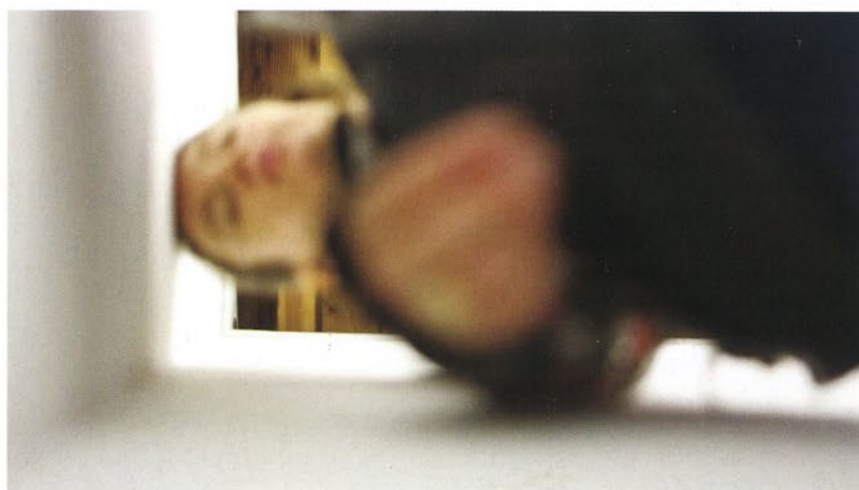
Left and below: Two stills from Odwalla1221's 2015 video *Cool Beat*, directed by Andrea Longacre-White.

Above: Cover of Pinky Rose's *Losing My Mind* (self-released, 2015).

OPENINGS

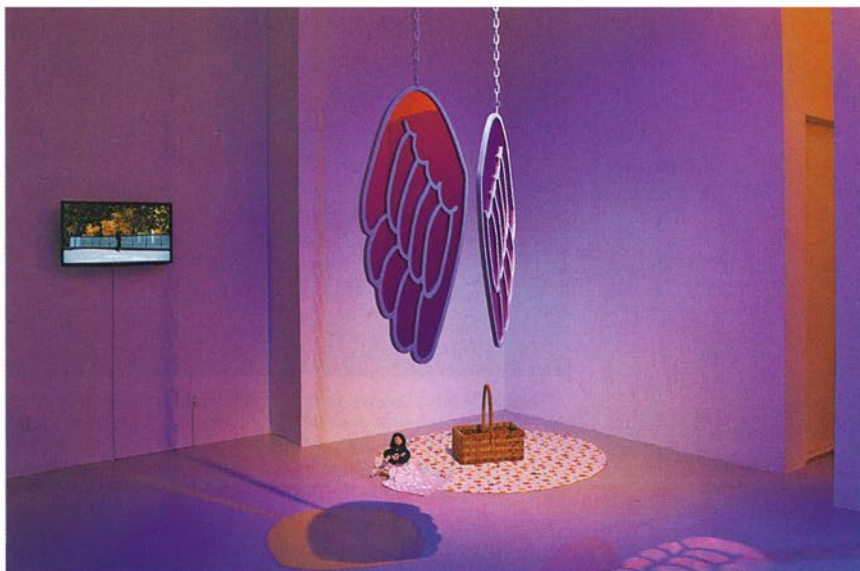
FLANNERY SILVA

PAIGE K. BRADLEY



FLANNERY SILVA MAKES COVERS. That is, she takes already-extant cultural works, whether they be songs or signifiers, and adapts these pieces of media into cover versions—music, sculptures, digital-print collages, or labyrinthine websites that bear hazy traces of a beloved original. The act of creating a cover is different from appropriation. While appropriation is a crisp or violent steal, a repurposed excision or theft from a culture, a cover can oscillate wildly. It may be the poor performance—made degraded and lossy through a translation of one personal expression into another—or a joyful burlesque. In a cover, the wrong key can become the new key, the kind of special tone that might only be hearable to the ears of the right dog. It is, in other words, an act of piling on, and love. Crucially, Silva's covers are also *literally* covers. Which is to say, they are protective; they envelop the original, swaddling the source with care.

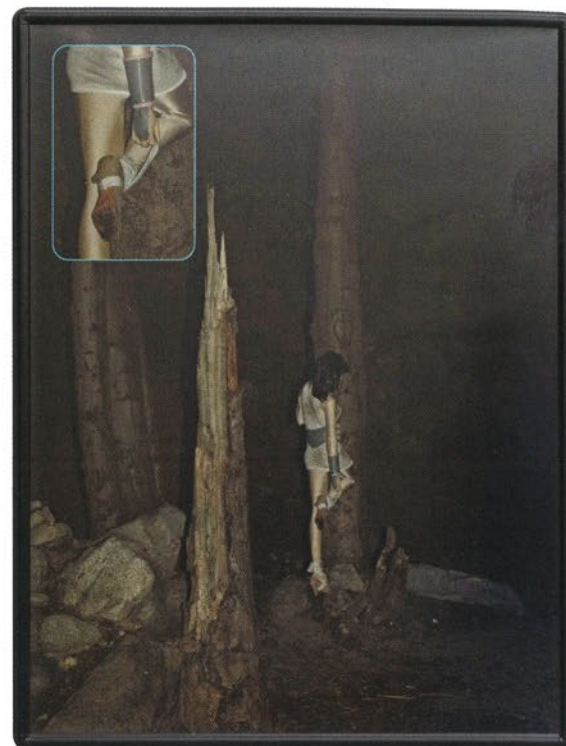
Under the moniker Pinky Rose—the name of Sissy Spacek's character from Robert Altman's 1977 film *3 Women*—Silva has released two short albums of musical covers: *Losing My Mind* (2015) and *Tear Drop Trainer* (2018). The latter, an “exhibition soundtrack” produced in collaboration with musician Chase Ceglie and artist Filip Olszewski, contains a version of country-gone-pop singer-songwriter Taylor Swift's “Dear John,” from the 2010 album *Speak Now*. Swift's song was purportedly a callout of chill icon John Mayer's caddish ways, but Silva evacuates the primary text's narrative by winsomely cutting and pasting to reorder the lyrics. The swaying, folksy strumming and lackadaisical pace of the song remain, but now these elements spiral around Silva's phrases, condensing Swift's grandstanding into sharp poetry. The star's impassioned accusations get recited like the tiresome laundry list they in fact are. In Silva's reworking of older country songs, the artist again homes in on the genre's major sincerity factor, going off-road with it. But the intervention is itself in line with a certified tradition in American folk and country music of homage and standards, the practice of updating material to suit one's own skill sets or interpretations. Silva doesn't obfuscate or plunder; instead, she appends.



Left: View of "Fawn's Leap, NY," 2015, Kimberly-Klark, New York. Wall: Jacky Connolly, *Forever Alone Calzone*, 2015. Hanging: Flannery Silva, *Angels' Den*, 2015. Floor, from left: Flannery Silva, *Chloé Doll*, 2015; Flannery Silva, *Valley Basket*, 2015.

Right: Flannery Silva, *Flesh for Frankenstein A*, 2018, ink-jet print, PVC frame, 40 x 30".

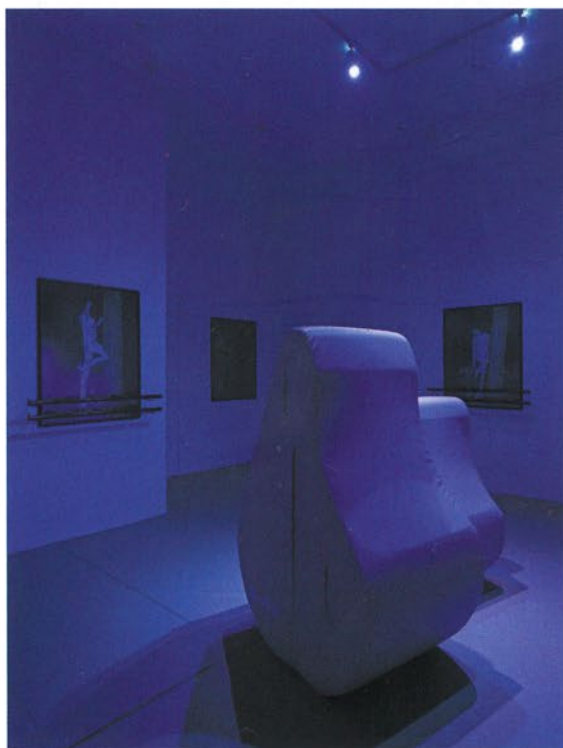
Below: View of "Flannery Silva: Tear Drop Trainer," 2018, Kimberly-Klark, New York. Floor: *Crackless Top Rapid Fold Mats*, 2018; *Tear Drop Trainer B*, 2018; *Tear Drop Trainer A*, 2018. Walls: *Flesh for Frankenstein works*, 2018.



Silva doesn't obfuscate or plunder; instead, she appends.

These acts of appending also transpire in her visual art. The gym-and-jamboree of Silva's solo show "Tear Drop Trainer" was on view this past spring at the artist-run space Kimberly-Klark. In the small gallery in Ridgewood, New York, visitors found a custom-made floor of peach-colored vinyl gym mats and tear-drop shaped pieces of high-density polyurethane foam used by gymnasts practicing back or front handsprings. Silva takes ice-skating lessons and has a background in ballet, making the gymnasium ambience something of a cover version of her own past. On the walls hung her "Flesh for Frankenstein" series, featuring a mannequin gal, based on a character from Paul Morrissey's 1974 exploitation flick *Flesh for Frankenstein*, dressed in a leather ensemble the artist made in collaboration with Alley Dennig.

Throughout the show, a set of speakers secreted behind a curtain periodically played the entire *Tear Drop Trainer* album. In addition to Silva's cover of "Dear John," visitors heard renditions of country singer-songwriter John Hiatt's 1988 song "Icy Blue Heart"; an early Liz Phair track, "Slave," from her *Girly-Sound* group of recordings; and Snow White's wistful ode "I'm Wishing," from the soundtrack for the 1937 Disney film. These tunes triggered light shows of a swoony, colored haze, recalling a junior high school dance. The artificial glow also complemented a specific natural illumination: twilight,



the same timeframe when doors tend to open. Both "Tear Drop Trainer" and 2015's "Fawn's Leap, NY"—the latter with machinima filmmaker Jacky Connolly—were open from 7 to 9 PM, and only on Sundays. These low-light hours pushed audiences toward reverie. The setting felt cozy, which was fitting, since a memory is the closest we can get to a perfect forever. (The time of day suggested another association. Trisha Donnelly's lauded 2014 exhibition at the Serpentine Galleries, London, had a three-sentence accompanying artist statement: "I like late in the day. I like the day to night transfer, I like the desaturation. It's a high speed eternity.")

Silva often works collaboratively with her friend Chloé Maratta, and together they have a band, Odwalla1221 (formerly known as Odwalla88), which the duo started shortly before graduating from Baltimore's Maryland Institute College of Art in 2013. The two mostly use samplers, preset digital loops, and a drum pad to accompany their vocals. They've released a handful of recordings, including the 2015 album *Earth Flirt* on Wendy Yao's Ooga Booga Records and the live track "Vetiver"—a bracing symphony of "ums" and pronouncements like "vetiver smells like shit"—that was featured on the soundtrack of Maggie Lee's tour-de-force 2015 film *Mommy*. The pair make their own merch, XL or XXL T-shirts screen-printed with poetry or



Above: Odwalla1221 performing in outfits by Susan Cianciolo at Bridget Donahue, New York, June 2016. Chloé Maratta and Flannery Silva.

Right: Flannery Silva, *Debut Song Case*, 2017, satin, fleece, ribbon, print on plastic suitcase, 63 × 33½ × 4".



repeated motifs such as ballet slippers; one shirt design issued last year displayed the words “en pointe i’m keeping my toes towards the future” beneath a row of stuffed-animal portraits, reminiscent of Mike Kelley’s *Ahh . . . Youth!*, 1991—a panel of doll photographs (and one self-portrait of an acne-riddled Kelley himself) first encountered by many as the album art for Sonic Youth’s 1992 album *Dirty*. In addition to styling or creating their own looks for life and performance (same difference), they’ve modeled the runway collections of their friends Amanda McGowan and Mattie Rivkah Barringer, who as a duo comprise Women’s History Museum, with Maratta also screen-printing dresses shown last year in the group’s fourth collection at the short-lived New York gallery Romeo. These duos’ shared fixation on the outfit as a durational performance and ever-mutable text recalls K8 Hardy’s precise splicing of the fashion atom for her zine *Fashionfashion* (2002–2006) and the 2016 video *Outfitumentary*.

What Silva cooks up is resolutely her own, but that doesn’t mean that what comes out of the oven is necessarily from scratch. In a 2017 exhibition at SCHLOSS, Oslo, in collaboration with Maratta, she presented a pair of fuchsia rolling suitcases for a child. Reminiscent of a Barbie-branded accessory, one of these pieces, *Debut Song Case*, 2017, was emblazoned with a photo of a doll wearing a dove-gray puffed-sleeve dress. Sans smile, the doll glowers beneath the phrase DEBUT SONG. It all looks somehow

familiar, but the references don’t add up to specific sources, and a wink without a giggle can be so ominous. The girly-ness isn’t being appropriated, nor is it a readymade, nor is it legible as personal or heartfelt; rather, Silva has presented a practiced cover version of a collective, mass-culture aesthetic—that of objects made to shore up the precious, policed identity of girlhood.

For the solo show “Sugaring Off” at Karma International in Zurich, around the same time as the exhibition in Oslo, Silva displayed highly stylized sculptures of cradles—one, the *Tiffany Blue Devotion Cradle*, 2017, was inspired by a crib from a Maurice Sendak book and painted, yes, Tiffany blue—along with reupholstered and patchwork-appliquéd doll-size strollers lit under a wash of warm pink light. An interest in taking out childish, even infantile things for a perambulation in art might seem aberrant, and rightly so: Overt references to domestic care in contemporary practice are uncommon, save for a handful of exceptions, such as Robert Gober’s meticulously handmade sculptural reconstructions of everyday objects, which are a touchstone here. His beds, sinks, dollhouses, and cradles—with eerie, surreal shifts in scale or discomfiting removals of parts—extend and enrich his references, revealing the chasm of affective significance these items can contain. An appropriation artist like Sherrie Levine, by contrast, lifts an object formerly charged with complex associations, as in her cast-bronze *The Cradle*, 2009, and transforms it into

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a weightless sign. The move is in the taking, and it dead-ends in a refusal to give back more than it took.

A cover is a template where you can modulate for more or less meaning than the original, and it runs on generosity. With curiosity plus devotion being the only really critical ingredients to going full throttle, it’s almost unavoidable that an artist might become something of a professional fan of whatever they’re representing. And representation has always been a cover of reality, anyway. There’s far too much of everything now, so the art of the future may have to be an overwriting. (Odwalla1221’s LA-based compatriots Purity, for instance, have released one album: 2016’s “Live in Los Angeles,” composed entirely of hollowed-out covers of punk and New Wave songs.) Sometimes, however, the act of overwriting is indistinguishable from invention. One track from the band’s other album from 2015, *Lilly 23*, samples a riff from the pop-punk group Paramore’s memorable 2007 single “Misery Business.” Over this bite of music, Silva and Maratta don’t sing, but rather announce a flat chorus that comes on the heels of an interruption, declaring: “Make your own trend / Make your own instrument.” Their lyrics may very well be new, but the duo’s clipped, even brusque delivery of them—as if they were just dropping a saying or aphorism—makes the words sound quoted, borrowed, or rehearsed. A real artist is someone who can make a cover their own, while poor imitators just create original forgettables. □

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Above: Flannery Silva, *Tiffany Blue Devotion Cradle*, 2017, acrylic on wood, satin quilt, thread, ostrich egg, myBaby SoundSpa, 28 3/8 x 31 1/2 x 53 3/8".

Right: View of "Chloé Maratta & Flannery Silva: *Electronic Tiger Lilly*," 2017, SCHLOSS, Oslo. Photo: Vegard Kleven.

Below: View of "Flannery Silva: *Sugaring Off*," 2017, Karma International, Zurich. Photo: Flavio Karrer.

