This exhibition is made possible in part by the Fairfield County’s Community Foundation.
In-kind sponsor Hampton Inn & Suites, Stamford, CT.
DANGER CAME SMILING
FEMINIST ART AND POPULAR MUSIC

JULY 23, 2016–JANUARY 1, 2017
CURATED BY MARIA ELENA BUSZEK

Exhibiting Artists: Damali Abrams, Alice Bag, DISBAND, Wynne Greenwood (AKA Tracy + the Plastics), Eleanor King, Ann Magnuson, Shizu Saldamando, and Xaviera Simmons.
Introduction:
Some High/Low Context in a Post-binary Landscape

Terri C Smith
Creative Director Franklin Street Works

Last spring I emailed guest curator Maria Elena Buszek, approaching her about the possibly of creating a project for Franklin Street Works. I learned about her work seeking texts on the intersection of feminism and music for a class I was teaching, prompting a mutual friend to connect us. After exploring Buszek’s work as a published author, teacher and curator, I was hooked.
I found her writing refreshing for its ability to convey rigorous thinking about pop culture, art history, and feminism, among other topics, in a conversational tone that made me feel like I was enjoying lunch or talking over a project with a wickedly smart, at times acerbically funny, friend. I couldn’t help but wonder how this attitude toward her reader would translate into an exhibition and wanted that exhibition to happen at Franklin Street Works! We agreed that mining the feminist aspects of Buszek’s current book research for *The Art of Noise*, which, according to the author, “explores the ties between contemporary activist art and popular music,” was the way to go.

In working on this exhibition, I became even more impressed with Buszek’s uncanny and refreshing ability to mix it up in the ring with contemporary art, feminism, activism and pop culture. Much of her writing and curatorial work smashes perceived walls between high and low via (as she so eloquently put it in her essay “Her Life Was Saved By Rock and Roll: Toward a Feminist Punk Ethnic/Aesthetic”) her willingness “to track … artists’ references to the street as to the studio.” Sometimes characterized as “blurring” the lines between “high” and “low,” this approach is not always met with positive feedback in the art world or academia.

One high profile case of popular culture’s negative reception when allowed into the art world springs to mind. I recall from my day as a young curator the scuttlebutt around MOMA’s 1991 survey show curated by Kirk Varnedoe, which was titled, quite straightforwardly, *High & Low*. Its aim was to draw connections between modernism and popular culture. In contemplating this introductory text, I was curious to revisit that exhibition’s reception, which I vaguely remembered as being almost universally negative. A *New Criterion* article by Hilton Kramer titled “The Varnedoe debacle: MOMA’s New ‘Low,’” is representative. In it, Kramer writes:

*There are also other, less theoretical reasons that popular culture is so dear to the hearts of the postmodernists: they like it so much more than they like real art, they are so much more at home with it, so much more at ease with its simplistic emotions and one-dimensional ideas.” It may be that an immersion in the world of popular culture induces an illusion of eternal youth in these postmodernist curators, scholars, and critics who have lately disfigured the study of modern art with the materials that are given priority in the “High & Low” show—graffiti, advertising, comic strips, et al.*
INTRODUCTION

Kramer’s words “real art” and “simplistic emotions and one-dimensional ideas” resonate with this tendency of the art world to elevate some kinds of production to high art and denigrate other endeavors such as “graffiti, advertising, comic strips, et al,” as being less sophisticated, less nuanced or not aesthetically important. There is also a palpable fear in Kramer’s text that by somehow rubbing shoulders with the masses the “study of modern art” can become “disfigured,” ruining the enterprise altogether.

In academia, Maria Elena Buszek argues in “Her Life Was Saved by Rock and Roll” that fearful attitudes like Kramer’s can also be found in the halls of universities and colleges:

Art historians’ frequent mistrust of contemporary art in general, and pop culture in particular […] speaks more broadly to the academy’s fear of the personal, the phenomenological, the physical as somehow existing in opposition to the objective, the empirical, the intellectual. Time and again, I am blindsided by the responses of my colleagues for whom the pop-cultural influences I discuss alongside contemporary feminist art – many times, work with which they are familiar – are viewed as a shocking discovery or questionable diversion.

While critics and scholars seem to be slower on the uptake, artists have a long, rich history of understanding that pop-cultural influences are not a “diversion” but an effective tool. From DADA’s nonsensical performances in the early twentieth century, to Pop Art’s 1960s soup cans and comic book paintings, to the postmodernists’ inclusionary pastiche of street, studio and commerce, artists have plowed right through this high/low division to critique, comment on and/or expand our thinking about what art should be and what it can do. Not only do they blur the lines, but they dismantle the a priori assumption that these either-or divisions even exist—ours is a “post-binary” world.

Today, so much scholarship and dialogue uses an understanding of interconnectedness as it relates to personal identities, social communities, and more, as their starting point. In feminism these interlocking phenomena are sometimes viewed through the lens of “intersectionalism.” Theories about “emergence” in the sciences explore how once a system reaches a certain level of complexity, outcomes of new influences being introduced cannot be predicted. Perhaps one of the longest practices of contemplating interconnectedness is Buddhism. So much so that contemporary peace activist, poet and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh created his own term to describe
I am so grateful to Maria Elena Buszek for bringing this fluid, irreverent and rigorous exhibition to Franklin Street Works. The show expands on our work in asking what contemporary art can be, what it can look like, what it can articulate, but most importantly how its presence can shift our thinking, challenging the status quo in an inclusionary dialogue between artists and visitors.

how there is no separation at all with his word “inter-are.”

The inter-are nature of contemporary art, pop culture, and feminism is alive and well in Danger Came Smiling. Eleanor King’s record sleeves of women’s albums become paintings, yet are displayed with a nod to retail via shelves vs. frames. Alice Bag riffs on 1960s popular music to comment on violence against women. The psychedelic sets of some children’s shows, 80s drug culture, religious conformity, and more are tackled with humor and absurdity in Ann Magnuson’s Vandemonium (and pop singer Meat Loaf plays her beau!). The connection between how the music we listen to contributes to how we view the world is indicated in the large-scale photographs where Xaviera Simmons stands in different topographies holding iconic women’s albums in front of her face. Activism, feminism and music are accompanied by a drumbeat and humorous phrases about self-exploration and protest in Wynne Greenwood’s video Libber. Damali Abram’s zine is a nod to riot grrrl’s third wave feminism and that movement’s sharing of the personal as a form of activism. And lastly, DISBAND’s core tenet that they are a band where no one plays instruments is about as punk rock as it gets!
Eleanor King
*Record Steps (to the glass ceiling), 2016*
Vinyl records
 Courtesy of Diaz Contemporary, Toronto ON

Damali Abrams
Black and White 'zine
 Courtesy of the artist
Alice Bag
*He’s So Sorry*, 2016
Video with sound
Running time: 00:04:28
Courtesy of the artist

Wynne Greenwood
*Libber*, 2004
Video with sound
Running time: 00:03:52
Courtesy of the artist
DISBAND
*DISBAND in concert at P.S. 1, October 21, 1979*
Two black and white photographs
Courtesy of DISBAND

Ann Magnuson
*Made for TV, 1984*
Digital transfer of VHS video with sound
Running time: 00:15:00
Courtesy of the artist
Xaviera Simmons
*Untitled (Nina)*, 2009
Color Photograph
Courtesy of the artist and David Castilo Gallery

Shizu Saldamando
*La Ana with Absu Tshirt*, 2015
Colored pencil on paper
Courtesy of the artist
CHECKLIST

Damali Abrams
Black and White ‘zine  
Courtesy of the artist

Alice Bag
*He’s So Sorry, 2016*  
Video with sound  
Running time: 00:04:28  
Courtesy of the artist

DISBAND with poster design by Ilona Granet
*DISBAND AT THE DUSTBOWL, 1981*  
Poster  
Courtesy of DISBAND

DISBAND
*DISBAND in concert at P.S. 1, October 21, 1979*  
Two Black and white photographs  
Courtesy of DISBAND

DISBAND
*DISBAND concert at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1981*  
Concert program  
Courtesy of DISBAND

DISBAND
*EVERY DAY, SAME OLD WAY, Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY, October 28, 1980*  
Performance by Ilona Granet, Donna Henes, Ingrid Sischy, Diane Torr, Martha Wilson  
Video with sound  
Running time: 00:01:1:53  
Courtesy of DISBAND

DISBAND
*EVERY GIRL, Austrian Cultural Forum NY, “Self-Timer Stories,” June 18, 2014*  
Video with sound  
Running time: 00:08:39  
Courtesy of DISBAND

DISBAND
*Songbook, c. 1979*  
Printed songbook  
Courtesy of DISBAND

DISBAND
*Songbook Takeaway, c. 1979/2016*  
Not editioned  
Courtesy of DISBAND and Franklin Street Works

Wynne Greenwood
*Libber, 2004*  
Video with sound  
Running time: 00:03:52  
Courtesy of the artist
Eleanor King
*Redacted Records (come up from the back),* 2016
Vinyl record sleeves, acrylic paint
Courtesy of Diaz Contemporary, Toronto ON

Eleanor King
*Record Steps (to the glass ceiling),* 2016
Vinyl records
Courtesy of Diaz Contemporary, Toronto ON

Ann Magnuson
*Made for TV,* 1984
Digital transfer of VHS video with sound
Running time: 00:15:00
Courtesy of the artist

Ann Magnuson
*Vandemonium,* 1987
Digital transfer of VHS video with sound
Running time: 00:27:21
Courtesy of the artist

Shizu Saldamando
*Alice Bag and Martin Crudo,* 2015
Silkscreen on handkerchief
Courtesy of the artist

Shizu Saldamando
*La Ana with Absu Tshirt,* 2015
Colored pencil on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Xaviera Simmons
*Untitled (Milli),* 2009
Color Photograph
Courtesy of the artist and David Castilo Gallery

Xaviera Simmons
*Untitled (Nina),* 2009
Color Photograph
Courtesy of the artist and David Castilo Gallery

Xaviera Simmons
*Untitled (Ami),* 2009
Color Photograph
Courtesy of the artist and David Castilo Gallery

Xaviera Simmons
*Warm Leatherette,* 2009
Color Photograph
Courtesy of the artist and David Castilo Gallery
In his book *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*, aesthetic philosopher Bernard Gendron has compellingly argued that rock music took over the avant-garde in the 1970s, holding “onto its ‘pop’ moorings while becoming ‘art.’” In this era, visual artists like Linder Sterling and Jean-Michel Basquiat joined bands, and musicians...
beauty confirms within its listeners the sense that this moment of listening has within it the promise of things being right, of pieces fitting together, of wholes emerging out of so much more than assembled riffs and rhythms. That affect is powerful.

For feminist and womanist thinkers coming out of the civil-rights movement, popular music was also a place of some parity. Whereas women were often denied positions of authority in their organizations, as musicians they spoke as “queens:” is it even possible to think about postwar protest movements without Odetta, Joan Baez, Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin?

Similarly, the gay rights movement—coalescing of necessity out of clandestine, more private spaces like clubs and discos—documented its own resistance in music, often through songs that spoke in coded terms about the community’s oppression and liberation. These were sung by performers whose lives and struggles—from Judy Garland to Janis Ian to Sylvester—came out of or paralleled those of the queer listeners who held them up as icons of the different, but often intersectional battles for civil and women’s rights.

Alas, for the women’s rights movement that emerged out of and alongside these other protest movements, popular music—like popular culture like DEVO and Kraftwerk treated their music as performance art, blurring the lines between popular music and visual art in ways that have profoundly affected contemporary art ever since. This seemingly effortless crossing of the era’s art/music and high/low divides, as Gendron documents, was in reality born of “aggressive struggles on the part of popular culture for cultural empowerment.” Moreover, these struggles often sprang from the era’s civil rights, feminist, and queer movements, whose influence in the ’70s began simultaneously splintering and seeping into new expressions in everyday life.

The importance of music in the American civil–rights movement is, of course, much–documented: while communities of color were kept from decision–making positions in politics, even denied representation in their voting rights, they were both visible and organized in the period’s popular music, which also provided strength and sustenance. As a result, music—blues, salsa, folk, jazz, R&B, funk—was woven into both the experience and history of the post–WWII battles for civil rights. As the music scholar Barry Shank puts it in his extraordinary book The Political Force of Musical Beauty, in this context, popular music

enacts its own force, creating shared senses of the world. The experience of musical
more broadly—was justifiably looked upon with greater suspicion. As powerfully as women were often allowed to express themselves in pop music, in order to make it past the sexist gatekeepers who controlled the performance spaces, record companies, and broadcast media, too often women were expected to make themselves conventionally attractive and compliant to men in both their looks and their sound. And, while the women’s movement of the 1960s and early ’70s held up for the cause many performers who—like the second wave of feminism itself—came out of earlier protest movements, feminists in the postwar era remained justifiably wary of the pleasures of popular culture, with its commercially-driven need to cultivate the kind of desire and dissatisfaction that lead to conformity and consumption. And, yet, wasn’t the feminist movement itself dedicated to the cultivation of desire and dissatisfaction among the masses—in its own case, leading to dissent?

It took until the late 1970s for one of their own to analyze this conundrum, when music journalist and (with Shulamith Firestone) Redstockings co-founder Ellen Willis confronted the unsatisfying conservatism of the “womyn’s” music and festivals that had grown out of her generation’s efforts. In her 1977 essay for the Village Voice “Beginning to See the Light,” (itself named after a Velvet Underground song) she deftly unwinds a yarn about her feminist resistance to the first Sex Pistols LP released that year, reviled by what she first sees as the “fascist” tendencies and “heavy overlay of misogyny” of the earliest punk bands. But her revulsion slowly gives way as this music seeps under her skin. Never Mind the Bollocks led her to return to Dylan’s Blood on the Tracks, the Stones’ Exile on Main Street, then to Bessie Smith, and then back to the piles of punk albums and singles that had been languishing, unlistened-to, at her apartment—many themselves inclusive of women, in bands like X-Ray Spex and the Rezillos. The essay builds up to a remarkable reevaluation of her second-wave feminist experiences, including the music of many of the women artists who, punk led her to realize, had “merely switched from trying to please men to trying to please other women.” Punk—what she called “the extremity of its disgust”—would become to Willis the catalyst to a soul-shaking, feminist paradox: that “music that boldly and aggressively laid out what the singer wanted, loved, hated—as good rock and roll did—challenged me to do the same, and so, even when the content was antiwoman, antisexual, in a sense antihuman, the form encouraged my struggle for liberation.”

The fact that Willis published this piece in the auspicious year of 1977 is significant. Besides this being the legendary year that punk broke into the popular consciousness with albums
like the Pistols’ debut (along with those by The Clash, Talking Heads and Suicide), it was also the summer of the New York Blackout that catalyzed both the street-party culture and the skill-development of hip-hop’s earliest DJs and MCs. And the characteristically angular, cut-and-paste, genre-bending sensibilities of punk and hip-hop music extended to the aesthetics that surrounded them: not only sounds, but also styles and media were mixing and merging, exemplified in the creative culture of New York City’s downtown scene in the years that followed. In this community, venues like the Mudd Club, Club 57, and Negril and galleries like Artists Space, Fun, and Gracie Mansion all hosted exhibitions, concerts, and DJ sets at this moment when popular music was emerging as its own radical genre of art. By the time these artists were “discovered” by the art establishment in the 1980s, they were as likely to present their work at the Danceteria as the Whitney Museum (as Ann Magnuson did her “Tribute to Muzak” in the elevators of both institutions).

From the start, queer artists and artists of color, and also women were integral to these scenes—indeed, each one of the DIY venues above were founded or run by women—many of whom either openly embraced or took for granted the feminist activism that helped fuel the egalitarian spirit of these new creative cliques at their infancy. Influential studio artists to come out of this moment, like Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger, reflected an academically-learned feminist theory in artwork shown in dedicated art galleries. But others sought wilder outlets and wider audiences by starting clubs, bands, record labels and production collectives for messier, even conflicted statements of their feminist aims in music, art, film, performance, publishing—Magnuson, Lydia Lunch, Adele Bertei, Beth B, Mary Harron—sometimes all at once, as in Lizzie Borden’s film *Born in Flames*, which used members of this community as actors in her film’s staging of a queer, feminist, class/race revolution by way of battling poet-DJs on pirate women’s radio stations. Years later, writer and Mudd Club regular Kathy Acker would advise the young feminist art student Kathleen Hanna: “If you want people to hear what you’re doing...you should be in a band.” Hanna proceeded to become a prime mover in what soon became known as the 1990s Riot Grrrl movement by way of her band Bikini Kill, and continues performing agit-pop in bands like Le Tigre and The Julie Ruin.

*Danger Came Smiling* brings together work by contemporary North American artists whose work came from or speaks to this history in their use of popular music as a medium, subject, and reference point for feminist art. The exhibition takes the title of an album by the unabashedly
feminist punk band Ludus, led by artist Linder Sterling. Emerging in the first wave of punk in the 1970s—where her Dada-inspired collage work first gained renown through her fanzines and album-cover designs for now-legendary bands like The Buzzcocks and Magazine—Sterling’s work is a pioneering example of the approaches at play in this exhibition.

*Danger Came Smiling* begins chronologically with art/music hybrids to come out of this moment, like New York post-punks DISBAND and Ann Magnuson and L.A. Chicano rocker Alice Bag, who took inspiration from earlier waves of the activist movements that preceded them, even as they used pop-music sounds, styles, and references to critique those movements’ myopia or academicism. The show then moves onto these artists’ ongoing inspiration to emerging artists today in the wake of Riot Grrrl: Damali Abrams, Wynne Greenwood (AKA Tracy + The Plastics), Eleanor King, Shizu Saldamando, and Xaviera Simmons, all of whom use music in their work as a seductive form of joyful protest that the artist and author Emily Roysdon has called “ecstatic resistance.”

***

In the words of its founder, the “all-girl conceptual art punk band” DISBAND was started in New York City by feminist artist Martha Wilson in 1978, two years after she founded the art space and archive Franklin Furnace. Its core members were Wilson and fellow artists Ilona Granet, Donna Henes and Diane Torr, and the late writer Ingrid Sischy. (Its earliest incarnations also occasionally included artists Barbara Ess, Daile Kaplan, and Barbara Kruger.) The group amicably dissolved in 1982, but reunited in 2008 for the Brooklyn Museum of Art opening of *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, and have been performing together ever since. Their songs were performed mostly acapella, with elaborate and often comical choreography, occasionally with minimalist percussive accompaniment from props and costumes. (Including, memorably, a bra with cups made of hotel call bells.) In addition to the vintage ephemera from their earliest performances on display, *Danger Came Smiling* includes vintage video of the song “Every Day, Same Old Way,” as well as a 2014 performance of “Every Girl,” which share a mantra-like repetition of lyrics meant to draw attention to the seemingly eternal cycles of women’s oppression, even as their expression serves as a prayer for change.

Ann Magnuson emerged from the same downtown scene as DISBAND, using song,
CURATOR ESSAY

performance, and comedy to celebrate women’s unsung roles in society. The video pieces *Made for TV* and *Vandemonium* both feature the kinds of kitschy pop-culture characters that Magnuson was well-known for performing at venues like Club 57, where she was also its first curator of events and exhibitions. Magnuson mined the margins of pop culture for funny, powerful, and rebellious women to bring center stage: talk-show hosts, televangelists, heavy-metal hellions, and new-age goddesses. A gifted singer and songwriter, Magnuson was a founding member of the all-female band Pulsallama (which grew out of Club 57’s “Junior League,” the Ladies Auxiliary of the Lower East Side) and half of the psych-rock duo Bongwater. As such, music factored heavily into many of her performances, both literally and as a culture with exciting feminine archetypes to reference. With *Vandemonium* Magnuson’s pop-cultural inspirations came full-circle, performing a grab-bag of characters she’d honed in clubs and performance-art spaces for over a decade in this truly “made-for-TV” special commissioned and broadcast by HBO in 1987.

At the same time as NYC’s downtown scene emerged, Los Angeles was nurturing its own feminist punk community, led by trailblazers like Chican@* Alicia Bag* (born Alicia Armendariz). Co-founder of the legendary L.A. band The Bags (with best friend Patricia Morrison, later of The Gun Club and Sisters of Mercy), Bag’s 2011 autobiography *Violence Girl* carefully and pointedly documents the relevance of women, queers, and Latin@s in building the very foundations of California punk. Even as she professionally pulled away from the scene to study philosophy and become a teacher, she continued performing in bands like Castration Squad and (with transgender feminist art-activist Vaginal Davis) Cholita!, “trying to give feminism and femininity a much-needed punk rock makeover.” She also took up painting, and began a series of portraits of many of the women featured in her online Women in L.A. Punk Archive (http://alicebag.com/women-in-la-punk/), which she began exhibiting in 2014. In *Danger Came Smiling*, the exhibition catches up with Bag in 2016 with the video for the song “He’s So Sorry,” from her recently-released eponymous solo debut. Both the look and sound of the video speak to layers of references from women’s music history. On the one hand, “He’s So Sorry” celebrates the working-class women of color in glamorous, post-WWII “girl groups” like The Ronettes, as well as their inspiration to subsequent generations of women musicians; on the other, the song’s theme of domestic violence is a reminder of the ugly, behind-the-scenes realities these women often endured breaking through in the music industry. (In the case of The Ronettes, producer Phil Spector’s well-
known, even lionized professional and personal abusiveness toward its members during their hit-making years working together.)

Artist Shizu Saldamando pays direct homage to Alice Bag in her print Alice Bag/Martin Crudo Paño, a collaboration with the Maricón Collective, which brings together artists and DJs to produce parties, performances, zines, and merch that create safe spaces and raise awareness for the queer Chican@ community in Southern California. Saldamando is perhaps most renowned for her striking, photo-realistic images of friends in and vignettes from the subcultures she grew up as part of in San Francisco and Los Angeles—at concerts, bars, and backyard parties—as seen in the drawing La Ana with Absu Tshirt. Saldamando’s meticulously-crafted portraits seek visibility for those ordinary people whose presence is often marginalized, or simply erased from the scenes they create. Bag’s autobiography, for example, came into being at a moment when—regardless of abundant evidence to the contrary—several high-profile histories and exhibitions of punk, No Wave, and post-punk rock music and art were catching the attention of the popular press, written by and centered almost exclusively on the straight, white men in these scenes. In line with this, and like all the emerging artists in Danger Came Smiling, Saldamando pays homage to often-forgotten predecessors like Bag and Los Crudos’ queer, Latin@ frontman Martin Sorrondeguy, demanding their place in punk’s pantheon.

Xaviera Simmons’ work in Danger Came Smiling similarly directs attention to women in music history, in photographs that conjure legendary African-American musicians. Simmons has long addressed the relevance of music and music history in her artwork—nowhere more directly than in her evolving installation first dubbed How To Break Your Own Heart when it debuted in 2006. In the piece’s various manifestations, Simmons exhibited floor-to-ceiling installations of album covers by black artists, which formed a salon in which communities were invited to play, practice, or simply listen to music, and Simmons DJ’ed from her own vast record collection. In the 2009 photographs exhibited here, Simmons literally takes her collection “out into the world,” with subjects who take on the cover-artists’ identities in seemingly anachronistic settings—urbane Nina Simone before a weathered, shake-shingle cabin, raunchy R&B comedienne Millie Jackson in front of rolling sand dunes—as reminders of the ways that these artists both “become us” when their music transforms our lives, and how we transform the meaning of their music as we listen to or associate them with deeply personal experiences and places. Simmons has more
recently, more directly incorporated music into her work in collaborations with musicians such as Jaleel Bunton and Kyp Bunton from TV on the Radio and Ife Mora on her *Thundersnow Road* project, whose sound pieces were compiled on a 2010 LP of the same name by Merge Records. Of late, she has begun exploring new directions in performance, collaboration, and community through happenings inspired by free jazz and Cagean chance operations.

Like Simmons’ incorporation of album covers in her installations and photographs, *Eleanor King*’s work also utilizes music recordings and how they play on our memory, to very different effect. Her art about music is abstract and evocative, even though she literally uses objects of recorded music such as LPs and CDs to make her work—stacking them unrecognizably into pillars and tubes, or tracing their forms into monumental, Spirograph-like drawings. In these works’ Minimalist-inspired forms, she is nonetheless counting on the uncanny familiarity of these mediums’ standardized dimensions that her audiences have likely intimately, if absent-mindedly handled throughout their lives. Drawing on that sensibility of her work, she has created two new works for *Danger Came Smiling* relating not just to the objects themselves—vinyl recordings and their album covers—but the women artists who recorded them. In their own different ways, *Record Steps (To the Glass Ceiling)* and *Redacted Records (Come Up From the Back)* simultaneously bring together and obscure the recordings of decades’ worth of popular female recording artists. The pieces at once document these women’s efforts and take away their identities in ways typical to the fickle pop-music landscape—a compressed experience of a trip to the used record stores and flea markets from whose mountains of now-unfashionable and obsolete recordings King derives her materials.

*Wynne Greenwood* is perhaps best known among music fans as the one-woman band Tracy + The Plastics, a project inspired by the Riot Grrrl movement’s do-it-yourself philosophy and legacy of using the punk venue as a space for consciousness-raising and discussion. The “members” of Tracy + the Plastics—slightly bossy front woman Tracy, contentious keyboardist Nikki, and spaced-out percussionist Cola, who “play all the instruments and sing” on the band’s albums—appear in performances as Greenwood performing live as Tracy onstage, interacting with Nikki and Cola as pre-recorded video projections. Greenwood has written of the band’s underlying goal: “A Tracy and the Plastics performance attempts to destroy the hierarchical dynamics of mass media’s say/see spaces by placing as much importance on the video images (the plastics) as the live performer...
(tracy)." In Greenwood’s video “Libber”—first created as part of the LTTR feminist collective’s series of zines and salons—she simplifies the slippery live-vs.-recorded sensibility of a Tracy + The Plastics performance with her use of a single “figure” (Greenwood) who accompanies a recorded song with live percussion, as her image is transformed into and accompanied by a series of different characters: animals, marching bands, Metallica’s James Hetfield, Gloria Steinem. The title of the piece relates to the popular ‘70s slang for feminists, “women’s libber,” but explores very contemporary ideas of feminist identity formation. In essence, “Libber” is a portrait of the various, even contradictory, collaged-together nature of our selves, and suggests that in the journey of discovering and trying on these different identities, we find our communities—and, ideally, recognize and respect the diversity of their make-up, even when rallying together for a common cause.

Artist D a m a l i A b r a m s was also influenced by Riot Grrrl in her 2014 zine Around the Way Girl, which combines the fanzine, the broadsheet, and the confessional in a style typical to the movement’s all-important zines—before the advent and popularization of the internet, the manner in which its participants met and communicated with one another. Riot Grrrl zines promoted bands, sold mail-order music and art, circulated think-pieces and manifestos, but were also premised on the feminist adage “the personal is the political.” As Kathleen Hanna asserted in her “Riot Grrrl Manifesto” (itself first published in her band Bikini Kill’s zine in 1991), these personal stories “help us gain the strength and sense of community that we need in order to figure out how bullshit like racism, able-bodieism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism figures in our own lives.” In Abrams’ zine, she reaches back to her own writing and diaries from the Riot Grrrl era, when she was too young to tap into that zeitgeist, but seems to recognize and analyze in her own coming-of-age writings and idols a similar sensibility that she organizes in Around the Way Girl (taking the name of a romantic L.L. Cool J rap about the ideal black woman). Bouncing across decades of musical and feminist references—in the style of her myriad, pop-culture inspired video, performance, and collage work—Abrams’ zine is a palpable reminder of how the legacies of both continue to inspire emerging artists today.