

# The Weight of Seeing

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“Male fantasies, male fantasies, is everything run by male fantasies? Up on a pedestal or down on your knees, it’s all a male fantasy: that you’re strong enough to take what they dish out, or else too weak to do anything about it. Even pretending you aren’t catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you’re unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. *You are your own voyeur.*”

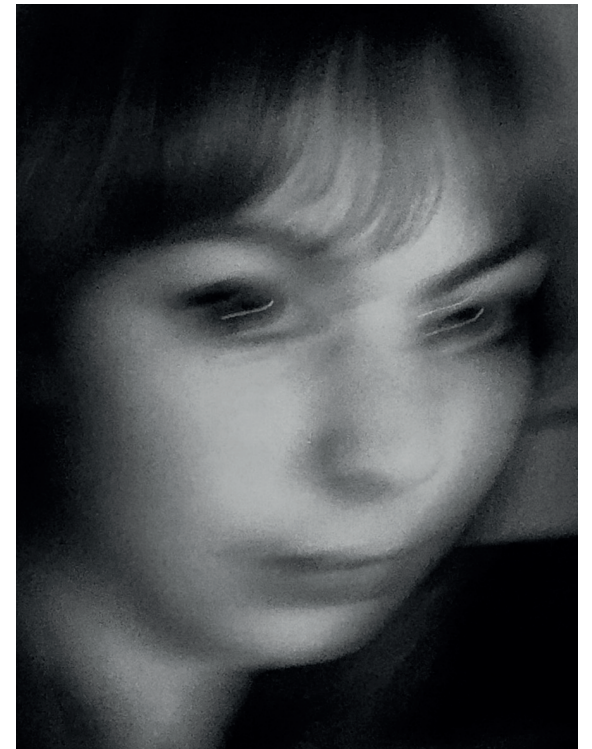
# Introduction

Not that long ago, I was standing in my room, alone, in front of the mirror. However, I wasn't looking at myself. I was looking at something, a thing. Something that was staring back at me. Something that looked like me, moved like me, but was not me. Not really. It had the same legs; the same arms; the same scar on the left palm of its hand from when it fell off its bike 15 years ago. It was staring back at me. Taking in my physical form just as I was doing to it. Obsessing over the size of its right thigh. The hair that was ever slightly too dark on its arms. The nail polish that was chipped and looked so uncared for. I saw the potential of the visual pleasure this thing could offer, but also all that was lacking for achieving such. It shocked me, looking at this thing staring back at me, the realization that all that I am so vocal about when it comes to others, or *us* as a collective, I could do to myself. I am the spectator; I am the spectacle. I am the surveyor; I am the surveyed. I don't need a man. I can do my own objectification, all by myself; all *to* myself. That's real female empowerment right there.

A term, heavily used in contemporary film studies (and visual culture), is the *male gaze* and its accompanied "counteract", the *female gaze*. They are used to describe a presentation of the world —and especially women— seen through the perspective of either (binary) genders. However, both gazes lead to binary thinking and dualism, as perhaps any gaze does. It could be argued that to gaze implies more than to look at - it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze. [1]

From the moment we come out of the womb we are spectators, observers of the world around us. And every second we spend awake we are busy gazing, looking, seeing — whether that's a conscious act or not. Therefore, it is of great importance to be critical of our own ways of seeing and to be aware of the underlying, internalized ideologies that shaped it.

[>] Selfportait as part of the final publication.



[1] *Consuming Representation: A Visual Approach to Consumer Research*, Jonathan Schroeder (1998)

# Research Questions

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<sup>01</sup> What are the complexities of the female gaze?

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<sup>02</sup> Why do we need to be more aware of the gaze in order to understand how we look at ourselves and each other?

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<sup>03</sup> How can I as a maker visualize the complexities of the gaze, especially my own?

# Summary

In my research, I will critically analyze the male gaze. Additionally, I will investigate the role of *the gaze* and (fetishized) *scopophilia*, which both lead to objectification of the “other”. I will further relate to critical ways of seeing and the process of internalization, in order to understand self-objectification.

For the project, I focus on how these ideologies have taken shape within my own way of thinking and seeing, which is heavily influenced by this notion of being my own voyeur. I visualize this internal process through a collection of visuals and texts, which are published in a book.



[^] *Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face)*, Barbara Kruger (1981)

[<] Selfportait as part of the final publication.

# A Closer Look at the Gaze

In order to understand the meaning of a female gaze and my role in self-objectification, I first relate to the male gaze and its associated theories.

## The Male Gaze

The male gaze is the act of depicting women in the visual arts and in literature from a masculine, heterosexual perspective that presents women as sexual objects for the pleasure of the heterosexual male viewer. In narrative cinema, the women as an erotic object of desire, is produced through three perspectives: that of the maker; the male protagonist of the story represented; and the spectator gazing at the image. This creates a sense of hierarchy, in which the woman is seen as a passive object for the male gaze of the active viewer, which affirms gender roles as assigned by patriarchy. However, in photography, although resulting in the same objectification, the male gaze is produced by two perspectives: that of the maker of the image; and the spectator gazing at the image. In a photograph there is no narrative, therefore the subject represented loses autonomy by lack of context. They are flat and muted, produced to be gazed upon, vulnerable to the projections of the spectator's ideologies. This includes the subconscious conditioned sexualization which occurs within the spectator. We are taught to look at women as objects of desire, as we are constantly fed content of this nature. Regardless of progress, these fundamental beliefs are hard to erase.

It is also important to address how the male gaze is an exclusionary term. It reinforces binary thinking in terms of gender, but is also very ableist, white- and heterocentric, leaving no room for intersectionality or multiplicitous differences. Additionally, the feminist theoretical context addressing the effects of the male gaze, such as the essay by Laura Mulvey, is rooted in a framework that privileges sexual differences. In her criti-

cal reaction to Mulvey’s essay, bell hooks wrote: “Despite feminist critical interventions aimed at deconstructing the category “woman” which highlight the significance of race, many feminist film critics continue to structure their discourse as though it speaks about “women” when in actuality it speaks only about white women.” [2] By actively suppressing recognition or ignoring the influences of intersecting identities, they are adding to the erasure of marginalized people in our visual culture, which have for centuries been excluded, especially in roles of power or desire. This is also reflected in the ideals of the male gaze, where the subject’s *to-be-looked-at-ness* and desirability is defined by her ability to conform to what is considered white femininity.

## The Subject and the Object

A huge part in the theory of the male gaze, as discussed by Mulvey, is *scopophilia*; the sexual pleasure of looking, as described by Sigmund Freud. He associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling gaze [3], insinuating that there is always a power imbalance when the scopic drive occurs. It is claimed to be the psychological and social mechanism that realizes the practices of Other-ing a person, to exclude them from society. The social practice of scopophilia is supposed to fix the appearance and identity of the Other, who is not the Self, by way of the gaze that objectifies and dehumanizes them as “not I” and thus “not one of us”. This distancing of Self and the looked-at Other is, furthermore, already implied with the word *gaze*. Originating from the theory of Jacques Lacan, it indicates the psychological effect upon the person subjected to the gaze, who loses the sense of autonomy upon becoming aware that they are a visible object. The effects of the gaze can be produced by an inanimate object, and thus a person’s awareness of any object can induce the self-awareness of also *being* an object. Therefore, it can be concluded that any gaze —whether male, female, black, queer, whatever— leads to objectification, and thus, dehumanization of the one subjected to it, the surveyed.

A lot can be said in favor of the innocent enjoyment of looking. That receiving pleasure from looking at another is harmless, on the contrary it’s sign of appreciation. And I agree, in the

[2] *The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectator*, bell hooks (1992)

[3] *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey (1975)



[^] Still from Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954), a classic example of the male gaze in cinema explored through the topic of voyeurism (which is directly linked with scopophilia)

“the subjects *to-be-looked-at-ness* and desirability is defined by her ability to conform to what is considered white femininity”

sense that looking can be joyful and should be, however it's the line we are crossing when mere admiration is linked with domination, a line that is easily crossed. Whether that's out of a sense of superiority, or insecurity, it establishes a power structure. Carl Jung once stated "Where the will to power is paramount, love will be lacking". In a sense, the same goes for admiration, or harmless visual pleasure. It raises the question, is the pleasure solely based on the appreciation of beauty [4] or is there an underlying notion of control or possession? Patriarchal masculinities require of boys and men not only that they see themselves as more powerful and superior to women, but that they do whatever it takes to maintain their controlling position. [5] By reducing women to objects of sight, they easily establish female inferiority. And although these fundamental beliefs are being dismantled, it's still in the root of our thinking, and therefore, also ways of seeing. We can't see separate from our beliefs, they are inherently intertwined. So wherever we go, wherever we look, we will see these power-structures, the inequality, the objectification. Still, there is a lot less light shown on the internalization of these beliefs within women. How, even though we know better, we sometimes look at ourselves as an object. A spectacle. A sight. How we also own the male gaze, how it lives inside of us.

## The Surveyor and the Surveyed

From a very young age we, women, are taught to think of ourselves as if we are perceived by men. As John Berger said in *Ways of Seeing* (1972):

"[The woman] comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another."

The surveyor of woman within herself is male, the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object — and most par-

[4] A whole different project could be about the definition and politics of beauty, but for now I chose not to go in detail about what this "beauty" entails and just read it as something visual to enjoy.

[5] *All About Love*, bell hooks (1999)



ticularly an object of vision, a sight. [6] Nevertheless, women are in no way allowed to enjoy this visual pleasure themselves without scrutiny. Berger also mentioned this hypocrisy, stating: “You paint a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand, and you call the painting Vanity, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure.” [7] Or, as Audre Lorde wrote: “On the one hand, the superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority; on the other hand, women have been made to suffer and feel both contemptible and suspect by virtue of its existence.” [8] This leads to a performance that is not necessarily pleasurable for the one performing. It’s not a true expression of self, but a version created to serve the needs of others. One that is highly curated, executed to perfection. This process of self-objectification [9], where the objectifying gaze is turned inward, occurs in various amounts, and is often a quite subconscious act. However, it has grave effects, making women, to an extent, participate in the reaffirmation of patriarchal gender roles and believes.

To make matters worse, referring back to the quote by Margaret Atwood, even pretending you aren’t catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy. There is no escaping the male gaze, as everything will be appropriated by it. Rebelling against it, only reaffirms the presence of the patriarchal societal norms, creating an unbreakable vicious circle. Deciding not to shave your armpits, because you do not want to cater to the visual pleasure of men, is still a confirmation of its powers. Pretending you’re unseen, pretending you have a life of your own [10], is still an implicit confirmation of the ideology of the status quo.

## Gazing, Looking and Seeing

There is a big difference between our ways of seeing, although there seems to be no general definition of the terms. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish these, since they establish a relationship with the person on the receiving end, whether that be the Other or the Self. Some theorists make a distinction between *the gaze* and *the look*: suggesting that the look is a perceptual mode open to all, whilst the gaze is a mode of viewing reflecting a gendered code of desire.[11] This will inevitably lead to the objectification of the gazed upon. Elizabeth Grosz argued:

[6] *Ways of Seeing*,  
John Berger (1972)

[7] *Ways of Seeing*,  
John Berger (1972)

[8] *Uses of the Erotic:  
The Erotic as Power*,  
Audre Lorde (1978)

[9] When I am talking about self-objectification, I’m talking about seeing yourself as an object of vision, not necessarily an object that can be used. The latter definition occurs more, for example, in a work environment, where workers are exploited to a point they don’t consider themselves humans, but a cog in the wheel, and —although definitely an outcome of a capitalist patriarch— is less gender bound, nor does it have the sexual implications. Furthermore, I won’t go into the psychological aspect, nor the mental health problems caused by intense self-objectification, such as eating disorders and depression. My focus lays on the effects on our ways of seeing (the Self and Other) and how this reflects in the media which we consume and produce.

[10] *A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification*,  
Anne Friedberg (1989)

[11] *The Gaze Revisited, Or Reviewing Queer Viewings*, Caroline Evans & Lorraine Gamman (1995)

“Many feminists ... have conflated the look with the gaze, mistaking a perceptual mode with a mode of desire. When they state baldly that “vision” is male, the look is masculine, or the visual is a phallogocentric mode of perception, these feminists confuse a perceptual facility open to both sexes ... with sexually coded positions of desire within visual (or any other perceptual) functions ... vision is not, cannot be, masculine ... rather, certain ways of using vision (for example, to objectify) may confirm and help produce patriarchal power relations.” [12]

A further distinction can be made between *looking* and *seeing*. Looking could be considered the conscious form of taking in the world around us through sight. Whereas seeing is our default setting, that automatically occurs when we open our eyes. Whilst describing looking versus seeing, photographer B. Ingrid Olson [A] stated:

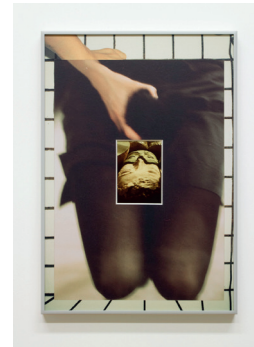
“Looking at something is a conscious act, it is directed, cognitive, and often involves some degree of explication, or evaluation of whatever is in front of you. Conversely, the sensation of sight is often subconscious, sometimes unfocused, and is an automatic experience as a sighted person with eyes open.”[13]

While the act of seeing, looking and gazing can be differently defined, the same goes for when you are the subject of this act of sight. There is a big difference between *being looked at* and *being seen*. [14] When we see another, it is not just the external of them that we’re referring to, we see the whole entirety of a person. It further implies interaction, an active involvement of both parties. But this type of seeing is not really possible without a personal connection to the subject, so to claim that we can truly see a person when photographed is very questionable, and the main downfall regarding the female gaze. There perhaps is no such thing as a *subject* in mediums so reductive as photography, solely an *object* of vision.

## The Female Gaze

Often in contemporary culture, anything made by a woman is labeled as the female gaze. She is a woman, after all, so how

[12] *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, Elizabeth Grosz (1992)



[A][^] B. Ingrid Olson makes self-portraits from her own perspective, rather than using a tripod she shoots with camera in hand looking down at herself or at her reflection. This creates a sense of intimacy, but also absurdity. By looking through her eyes, we as the spectator, feel like we’re invading her privacy, seeing a sight that is not intended for our eyes.

[13] *Why Photography: New Visions*, B. Ingrid Olson (2020)

[14] *Open Water*, Caleb Azumah Nelson (2021)

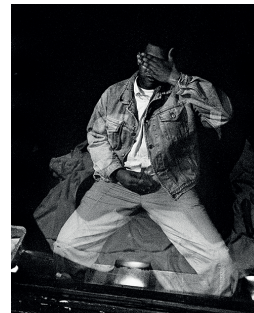
“There perhaps is no such thing as a *subject* in mediums so reductive as photography, solely an *object* of vision.”

can it be objectifying or coded for the visual pleasure of men? This label has become a marketing tool rather than an actual technique of capturing and seeing. Operating as a seemingly easy fix. But this doesn't consider the environment all women grow up in. A culture where the objectification of women is so normalized we barely even recognize it when it occurs. So how can we assume that a woman, purely because of her gender, would not be complicit or partaking in such a culture?

One of the few sources that I've found which directly addresses the internalization of the male gaze and the self-objectification that follows is Ariel Levy's *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (2005). In the book, she has sharp notes on the performativity of sexuality in our current culture, rather than the actual (female) pleasure gained through it. But instead of critiquing the underlying system (patriarchy) she is attacking individual women for displaying and benefitting from their sexuality in an often male-centered manner. However, she does not address the context that has led women to be participants in this system. But by doing so, she is fighting other women, instead of the system that we collectively suffer from. Hence, punching sideways instead of upwards, a common mistake in contemporary feminism. [15]

Going further than an individual's part in upholding the male gaze and the overall unattainability of a separate gaze, is the fact that while living in a patriarchy, regardless of the actions, it will always be beneficial for men, and men only. As photographer Cammie Toloui [B] said: "If it's still within the framework of the typical, patriarchal expectations of beauty and sexual imagery [...] it's still about pleasing men". Thus, all dominant images are basically male constructs. Furthermore, as long as there is a literal power imbalance, this will always be reflected in our ways of seeing. Recognizing this has led many to say that it is impossible to know what the "feminine" might be, outside male constructs [16], making it impossible to understand what a female gaze could be. Also adding to this lack of understanding is the erasure of anyone other than cisgender, heterosexual, white woman while describing a female gaze. You cannot speak of a universal female gaze when previous models of the gaze have produced some very one-dimensional accounts of viewing relations. [17] It is certain that gender influences any experience, and would ultimately shape the way we see, as

[15] There is also a lot of critique to be found on her writing which is considered transphobic, only adding to the problematic implications of her work.



[B][^] Cammie Toloui turned her spectators into the spectacle in her series *5 Dollars for 3 Minutes*, (consensually) photographing the watchers of her peep-show. I would consider this the direct opposite of the male gaze, not seeing the "gazed-upon", but the "gazer".

[16] *Is the Gaze Male*, E. Ann Kaplan (1983)

[17] *The Gaze Revisited, Or Reviewing Queer Viewings*, Caroline Evans & Lorraine Gamman (1995)

does any identity. Being a woman is therefore a crucial part of it, leading to a so-called female perspective. However, this can not exclude the influences of other identities. There is no singular female gaze, only parallel experiences. There can be no generalized term to describe a universal way of seeing, nor one that is solely defined by gender.

So perhaps, it shouldn't be about gaining a new gaze, or giving the female gaze more authority. It should be about being critical of our existing ways of seeing: questioning them; deconstructing them. The male gaze itself is only a small consequence originating from a larger systematic problem. It therefore cannot be countered, or undone, by simply making it "female", while remaining to uphold the current system. We need feminists critique because we need to understand how it is the world takes shape by restricting the forms in which we see... we need this critique now, if we are to learn how not to reproduce what we inherit. [18]

“There is no singular female gaze, only parallel experiences.”

[18] *Making Feminist Points*, Sara Ahmed (2013)



[C][<] Example of “female gaze photography” by Rineke Dijkstra, as represented through Google.



[D][^] Example of the “female gaze” by Petra Collins, highlighting the, what could be considered, hyper-feminine aesthetics



[E][^] Still from *La Collectionneuse*, Éric Rohmer (1967)

[19] Term as quoted from Agnes Varda: “With my cinema, I don’t offend women. I know that I won’t cut them into little pieces of desirable skin”

[20] *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey (1975)

# The Object of Vision

While most theory describes the male gaze in (narrative) cinema, I chose to focus on its presence in photography. Mainly because of the insight that in photography there is no linear narrative, the passing of time, which will inevitably lead to the objectification of the subject. While comparing the search results of the two terms —“male gaze photography” and “female gaze photography”— I noticed that the coverage was limited to articles about how female photographers are breaking into a “man’s world” and thereby countering the history of the male gaze. As documentation, I visualized the limiting media coverage in a zine [C]. While discussing my findings with peers, we concluded that, besides the gender of the photographer, there seemed to be no substantial difference in the portrayal of the female subject. We saw the same girls sitting on the bed in their white underwear with lace trimming, kindly looking into the camera, soft pink lighting gracing the edge of their face [D]. It made me question what defined a female gaze, if there even is one.

I got caught up in this vicious circle of there being no female gaze within the patriarchy, but wanting to show an alternative way of seeing— anything other than the male gaze. Only after realizing that there is no escaping the male gaze —not in the society we are currently living in— I came to the aspect of the personal effects it had on me. I’ve been growing up with this internalized objectification, seeing myself as a sight at times, rather than a person. However, because of its internal nature and since it had been such an unconscious practice before, I found it challenging to visualize.

I experimented with utilizing the techniques used by the male gaze to objectify women in film and trying to recreate these effects with collage. One of the most common techniques is fragmentation [E], cutting up the female form into little pieces of desirable skin. [19] This results in not seeing a person, but an object coded for strong visual and erotic impact. [20] In my collages I experimented with the framing and combinations of appropriated imagery found in magazines,

both past and present, to represent the history of the portrayal of women in the media. It resulted in a publication of various collages of fragmented female bodies, combined with pieces of paper symbolizing tactility and nature photography supposedly naturalizing the eroticism associated with the female form [F].

This was a good exercise in testing my influences on storytelling, turning seemingly innocent, or at least normalized, photos into more complicated imagery. However, it still lacked a sense of urgency because we are all so used to seeing women subjected to this subtle violence.

Since my goal was to tell this story through my own experiences, I decided that the best and most effective way to do so, was also by using photos of myself. Taking on the role of both the surveyor and the surveyed; the perpetrator and the perpetrated. I made a zine where I fragmented photos of myself, detaching my body from my person. [G] Zooming in on slivers of skin, a detail of my neck, a close up of my stomach, an isolated wrist which almost looks like the side of a breast. [21] Previously, the deconstructing was pretty easy to do to others, however, it grew more uncomfortable while being the subject myself.

Whilst the publications lead to interesting conversations with the people around me, they lacked sufficient context to be a stand-alone piece. To do so, I combined the visuals with handwritten texts [H], varying from anecdotes to train of thoughts, giving more insight on my experiences with the matter, inspired by the work of Coco Capitàn. Words are one of the most effective ways in the construction of one's own embodied subjectivity.[22] This creates a juxtaposition, where these texts simultaneously contradict and emphasize the implied self-objectification. The text also further positions my work in a more theoretical sphere, which was necessary since it is a direct reaction to ongoing discussions in said context.

The publications as a form of documentation proved to be a very effective medium for the message. Therefore, I decided to make a book for the final project, combining all aspects that previously worked best in the process [I]. I used the collages to represent the subconscious conditioning of patriarchal ideologies and ways of seeing; the fragmented self-portraits showing the obsessive and impersonal nature of self objectification;

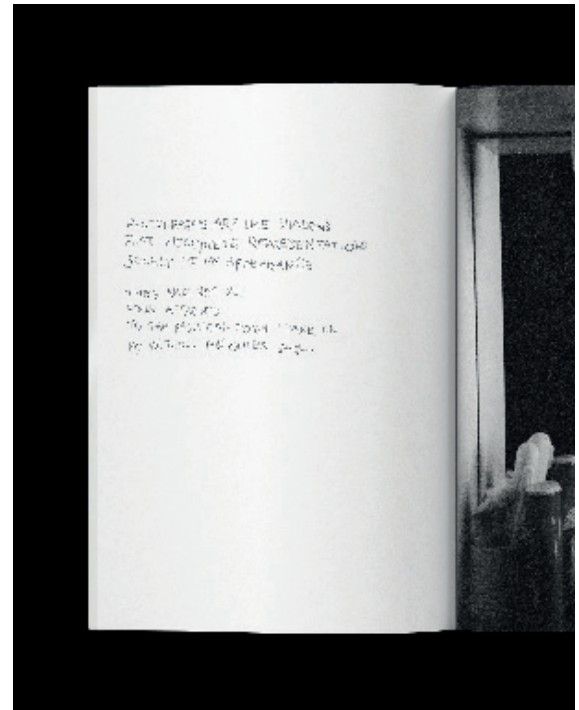
[F][>] Collage combining the technique of fragmentation and nature photography.



[21][^] While showing the zine to others, this was a comment made. She had mistaken the photo for a nude breast, rather than the wrist that was photographed. She expressed how she felt guilty for seeing it, feeling like she invaded my privacy, as if she was looking at something that wasn't meant for her.

[H][>] Page from the final publication, with the poetic text in order to give further insight to the experience of objectification.

[22] *To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice*, Alex Martinis Roe (2018)



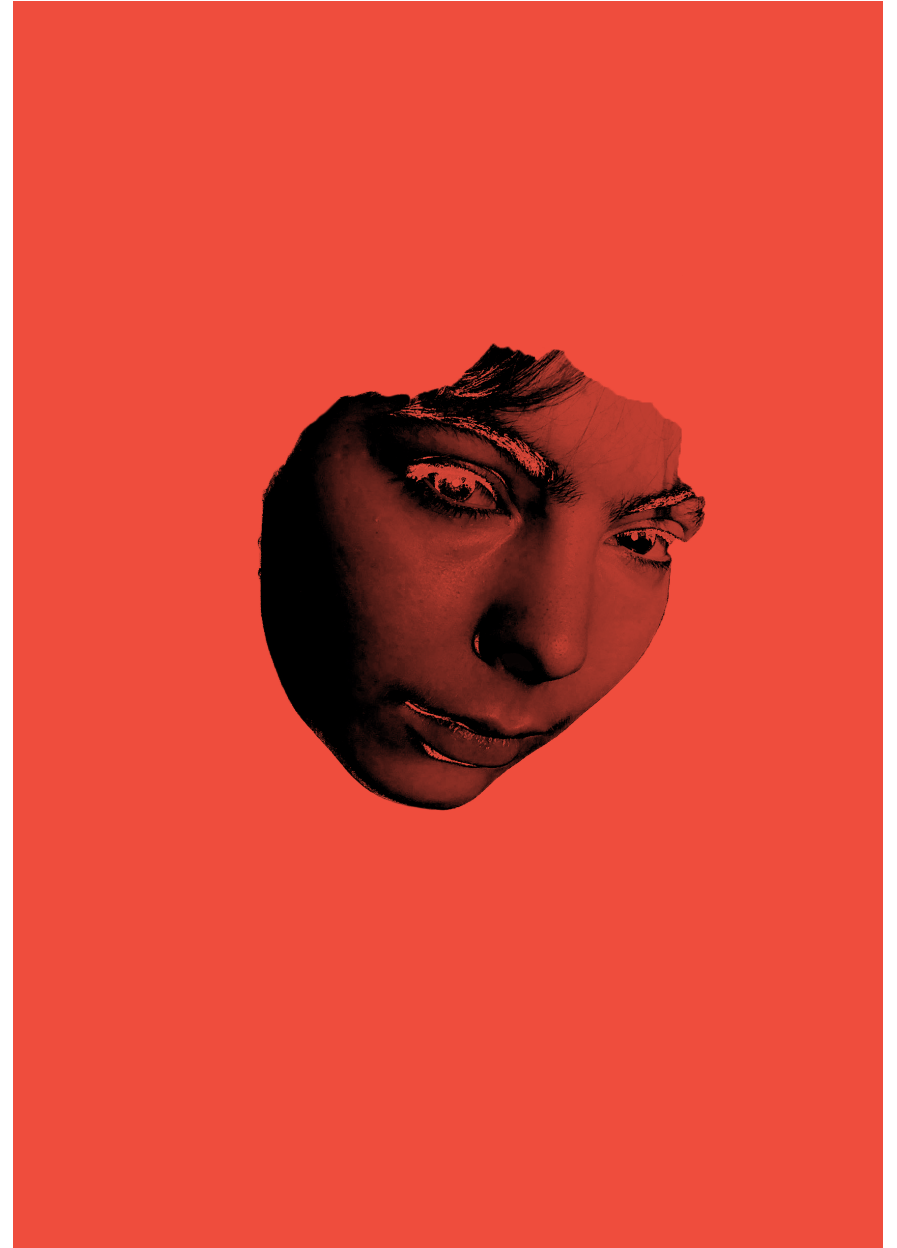
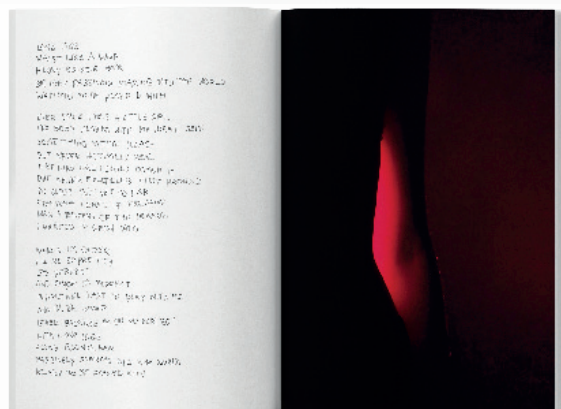


[G][<] Spread of The Thing, a publication where I fragmented photos of myself, focusing on the impersonal side of objectification

[>] Photograph inspired by the Medusa Theory.



[I][<] Spreads from the final publication combing the collages, fragmented photographs and texts.



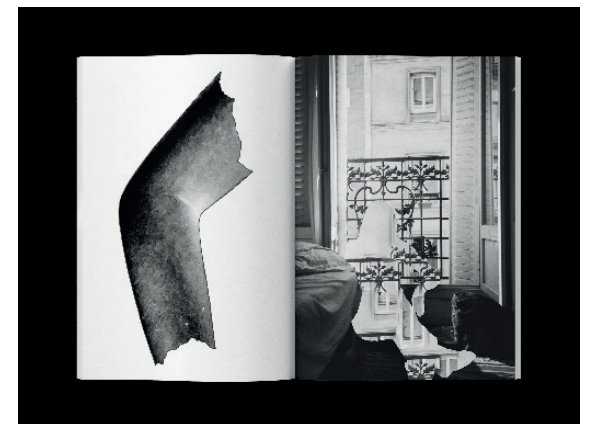
and the texts to create context and further depth. In both the collages as the portraits I enhanced the sense of abstraction to evoke the notion of surrealism, absurdity and obsession. A cut-off hand that almost looks like an ancient statue floating on the page; the contours of a person dissolving in its environment [J]; an anonymous beheaded woman[23] becoming one with a scene of branches; a detail of lips so zoomed-in it becomes a vague resemblance of the actual body-part. Uses of bright reds, associated with violence and eroticism; soft greens, resembling nature and calm; and black and white photographs flattening the portrayed, making it seem lifeless. Also adding to this notion of absurdity are the sizes; zoomed in details that are larger than life; 1:1 dismembered body parts [J]; collages swimming in a sea of empty space. By giving a very handwritten look to the text, I wanted to leave a mark of my presence, looking like it had been added later on, annotated. The shakiness and thinness, looking fragile [K]. To give further context to the work and positioning it in a feminist framework, there is a text inserted in the book, introducing the concept and its theoretical background.

At first, the confrontation with my self-objectification was difficult to deal with, causing a hyper-awareness of everything around me, and becoming extremely conscious of the gaze I laid upon myself. Gradually, as I grew more informed and familiar with the related theory, it helped to give words to feelings I've had for as long as I remember. There is no easy fix for objectification, but the realization and contextualization has made me able to address my own thoughts and correct them accordingly. While recognizing them, I take away their power over me. By acknowledging that it's the man inside of me telling me what to do, I can stand up to him, facing the fact that he is not me, and therefore has no right to control me. I might still consider myself as an object at times, but no longer am I blindly following these thoughts and impulses.

[23] [>] This was inspired by the Medusa theory, based on the Freudian believe that Medusa's decapitation "inflames the fear of castration." Therefore, by beheading her, she becomes a defenseless object of sight — silent and bodiless — her mutilated body a symbol of how men have been able to deal with women by relegating them to visual objectivity. (*Medusa: How the Literary Muse Became an Emblem for Feminism*, Beverly Tan (2020))



[J] [>] Spread with a 1:1 elbow and photograph where I am completely blending in with the background.



[K] [>] Text part of the final publication.

I AM A REAL PERSON  
I AM TRYING TO BE A REAL PERSON  
I AM PERFORMING A REAL PERSON





[<] Mockup of the final publication, which will be soft cover with section sewn binding.

“It is misleading to portray the female gaze as a “counter-act” because it is also founded on the same ideologies, which are internalized.”

# Conclusion

It has become clear that the male gaze is ingrained in all of us, that there is no escaping it within patriarchy. Hence, it is misleading to portray the female gaze as a “counter-act” because it is also founded on the same ideologies, which are internalized. It is, furthermore, a misunderstanding that any gaze can be singular, since intersecting identities influence the way we see. Nevertheless, we are all conditioned to look at women as a sight of vision. This might not be fully undone until the patriarchy is dismantled. However, its powers can be decreased by the awareness of its existence, and the uncovering of its mechanism, which can ultimately lead to the development of tools and strategies.

It’s important to be aware of how our ways of seeing are shaped and what they consists of, since it will inevitably show through our work. By being critical of my own way of seeing, I wanted to raise consciousness of these internalized mechanisms and ideologies. With a poetic approach, I evoked a sense of recognition while, simultaneously, leaving room for the viewer’s own interpretation.

The project resulted in a publication consisting of collages, photographs and texts, visualizing my role as both the perpetrator and perpetrated in my own objectification. This is done through techniques inspired by both male gaze and feminist traditions, resulting in a complicated, layered narrative. The book is not an answer, or an easy fix, to the addressed problems, but evokes self-recognition, hopefully leading to a more conscious state of seeing.

A future step for this project would be to include other voices concerning the topic of self-objectification. As is previously discovered, the experience of the male gaze is highly differential between people and intersecting identities. I am therefore highly aware that I cannot speak of a general experience, only a one-sided perspective. It is my privileged position that enables me to speak of such topics, thus also a responsibility to do so. However, it cannot be concluded as a singular truth, and therefore should be elaborated in the future.

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