



Rona Yefman, *Let it Bleed*

November 14, 2010 - January 9, 2011

Opening reception, Sunday, November 14, 2010

PARTICIPANT INC is pleased to present the first US solo exhibition of **Rona Yefman, *Let it Bleed***, curated by Manon Slome. *Let it Bleed* is a chapter from an extensive personal archive, *My Brother and I* (1996-2009). As early as 1996, her younger brother, Gil, was Yefman's first model and inspiration. She began an intimate image record of their adolescence, using the camera to invent multiple novel identities in an imaginative world they constructed for themselves. This body of work became a joint archaeological journey, chronicling two siblings' symbiotic existence as collaborative artists, and their mutual desire to live exterior to the norm. The most complex part of this project occurred between 2000-2009, during which time Yefman documented Gil's intimate process of transformation from male to a female, and her subsequent transformation back to a biological male. Rebelling against conventional gender roles as well as familial ones, this extensive body of work is the focus of the exhibition, *Let it Bleed*, which combines images of formal role-play and performative acts with snapshots and mixed videotapes that expose very real emotional situations, chronicling an experience of youth through a curve of fantasies, hopes, and desires; disappointments, confusion, conflicts, and flirtation with familial taboos.

As an artist whose work defies political, physical, and psychological constraints, Yefman questions the elements that define an authentic existence. Her subjects embody the possibility of freedom, and her work as a whole is concerned with the gap between who we are, and who we want to be. The vulnerable yet strong identities explored through her photography, video, collected texts, collages, and installations comprise long-term collaborations with individuals who have formed radical personae. While the characters that emerge are a construction of something raw and authentic, they are also drawn from relationships developed through many years of collaboration, which allows spontaneous situations and novel identity formations to occur, constituting an assertion of self for both the artist and her subjects.

Born in Israel, identity was bound by conflict and enforced by male dominant militaristic behavior. Since childhood, Yefman has envisioned the children's hero, Pippi Longstocking, as her alter ego--a rebellious character with socially subversive ideas, most of all defying conventions of feminine behavior. *Pippi at Abu Dis* (2008), Yefman's widely screened video in collaboration with performance and sound artist Tanja Schlander, transforms "the strongest girl in the world" into a contemporary female hero who attempts to move the concrete wall that separates Israel from the West Bank. In *Martha Bouk* (2002-2009), a work that documents Yefman's long-term collaboration with an 80-year-old male Holocaust survivor who has assumed a feminine persona, Martha represents another radical departure from convention. She exhibits a complex, at times contradictory persona that defies the viewer's ability to create a concrete assessment of her intentions, problematizing manifestations of Jewish trauma. The collective characters of Pippi, Martha, and Gil that emerge in Yefman's work are not only an indication of real recognition and human acceptance, but also an expression of Yefman's agency, beyond that of a documentarian, in the initiation of complex identities.

Artist **Gil Yefman** will contribute a sculptural work, created in response to the exhibition, to be included in *Let it Bleed*.

Rona Yefman received her BFA from Bezalel Academy, Jerusalem in 1999, followed by her MFA from Columbia University School of the Arts, New York in 2009.

Manon Slome is the co-founder and curator of **No Longer Empty**, a not for profit arts organization which transforms empty spaces throughout the city into site-specific exhibitions and programs.

Rona Yefman, *Let It Bleed*, is supported by Artis, Contemporary Israeli Art Fund, and the Office of Cultural Affairs, Consulate General of Israel in New York. Video works supported in part by The Cuts & Burns Artist Residency Program at Outpost Artists Resources.

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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES. Subway: F/V to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit or JMZ to Essex/Delancey.