Abstract

Being an artist requires stamina and a certain level of subterfuge. I make sculptural objects and installations from found domestic objects, the detritus of feminine material culture sourced from flea markets and second-hand shops, stuff I term “feral objects”. To be feral usually implies an escape from domestication, although it could also imply abandonment and vulnerability. In order to survive in the wild, feral animals, plants and insects—and perhaps feral objects too—must develop adaptive strategies in response to their new environment; a process that can have unforeseen consequences. Often unexpectedly productive, anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing calls this process “feral effects”, the non-designed and unplanned-for consequences of imperial and industrial infrastructure.

In 2023 I travelled to Norway with a suitcase of artworks to install in and around the island of Jeløya, including the gallery spaces and grounds of Galleri F15. This occupation of spaces and places beyond the parameters of the cultural institution was a feral intervention that took material form not entirely independent from, but as an intentional process of scavenging on the peripheries of the art world. For the three iterations of “The-Lost-and-Found” symposium that took place in Lisbon, Warsaw and Riga between December 2023 and June 2024, I travelled with artworks in my suitcase to opportunistically install feral interventions in and around the symposium venues. Understood in this context as a feminist position, feral interventions allow for evasion and unpredictability, for creative resistance to systems of control, and for the potential to undertake adaptive art-working strategies. Through analysis of the feral interventions undertaken, this article investigates how the versatility of artist and artwork might accommodate peripheral practices of exhibition and display.

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Feral Interventions: Objects and Artworks on the Periphery

Being an artist requires stamina and I have found it also requires a certain level of subterfuge. I am an artist who makes sculptural objects and installation from found domestic objects, the detritus of feminine material culture sourced from flea markets and second-hand shops, stuff I term “feral objects”. Recently, when travelling to European cities to attend symposia and other art events, I have taken artworks packed into a suitcase with which I have set up impromptu installations that I call “feral interventions”.

To be feral usually implies an escape from domestication, although it could also suggest abandonment and vulnerability. In order to survive in the wild, feral animals, plants and insects—and perhaps feral objects too—must develop adaptive strategies in response to their new environment; a process that can have unforeseen consequences. Often unexpectedly productive, this process of the non-designed and unplanned-for consequences of imperial and industrial infrastructure Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing et al. call “feral effects”.[1]

Galleries, museums and other cultural spaces, including universities, could be seen as by-products of the imperial and industrial infrastructure Lowenhaupt Tsing et al. are referring to here. These places whose intention is to support, promote and preserve artworks and objects are neither neutral nor without consequences of their own. As Daniel Buren already observed in the early 1970s, the museum/gallery gives value to what it exhibits; it preserves objects and artworks, giving them the appearance of immortality.[2] The process of collecting and the display of work as part of a collection attributes historical and psychological weight. The museum/gallery can be thought about as a refuge, where works are sheltered from the weather, from danger, and often from any kind of questioning.

As with all such institutions, there are people, artworks and objects on the margins, relegated to roaming the peripheries. What and who is inside and what is outside is a complex question, and engaging with these boundaries has been a consistent concern for many artists, including those associated with institutional critique like Buren. But sometimes there are gaps between what is inside and outside, between what is wild and what is domestic, and it is here that artists might find spaces to undertake feral strategies that also have the potential to produce unforeseen consequences.

Organised in the form of a small dictionary or glossary, with each entry being a sort of field note in itself, an observation of actions, processes and evaluative responses, here I investigate how the versatility of artist and artwork might accommodate peripheral practices of exhibition and display. Inevitably, being a text with feral intentions, none of the entries sits neatly within the boundaries of their categorisation; often there are overlaps and repetitions of ideas, as well as slippages and possible omissions. But such is the case with ferality: things jump the fence, escape through gaps and set out to take their chances elsewhere.

Artist as Nomad

Nomadism is not aimless wandering, but rather is a methodical rotation of settlements to ensure the maximum use of obtainable resources. Nomadism is a spatialised condition of flux where movement is triggered and sustained by various key material actants. Nomads, anthropologist Judith Okely argues, "have tended to use movement and invisibility for political/economic survival in the midst of a sedentarist polity. Evasion and unpredictability have hitherto been creative, productive strategies."[3] Similarly, the process of collecting, journeying, transforming, installing and documenting the feral intervention artworks *Material*

Nomads, Bad Faith and *Little Losses*, detailed and contextualised in the following sections, has been a productive strategy that was at times unpredictable and to a certain extent evasive. At the airport I did not declare that I had artwork in my suitcase, and for the original feral artist intervention, the first iteration of *Material Nomads*, in Moss, Norway, I did not ask for anyone's permission to install and document the works in any of the locations.

The nomadic artist travels from their home place to other institutional places and spaces taking advantage of resources as they present themselves. This movement is triggered by the availability of creative opportunities that may be economic, social (networking), transactional or metaphysical. To be feral is performative, where ferality operates as a peripheral "performativity of life".[4] The incremental processes of change and adaptation required when faced with the challenge of a novel or changing environment requires improvisation. Likewise, the nomadic artist is required to respond to new and often unexpected sites and situations through gestures and actions. As with other ferals (animals, plants, insects, objects), the artist as nomad is always a metaphorical stranger in a strange land, each new site of encounter having unknown potentiality. For most (humans and non-humans), borders can be crossed in more than one direction (coming in, but also going out), and this nomadic practice of travelling back and forth, between the familiar and the strange is imbued with an inherent uncertainty. Yet it is these peripheral actions of crossing boundaries or borders and arriving somewhere unknown, whether this be physical, psychological or metaphorical, that allows for the ongoing inventiveness when faced with the challenge of a novel or changing environment inherent in both nomadism and ferality.

To be nomadic or feral is often aligned to being opportunistic, and it is perhaps true that feral animals, plants and insects in particular do require opportunistic traits in order to adapt and

survive in new and challenging environments. However, the definition of opportunistic as exploitative and self-serving seems to be at odds with the improvisational skills and physical adaptability required of ferals or nomads. Feral non-humans do take advantage of situations as they are encountered, but this is very much a survival strategy. Similarly, the nomadic artist who undertakes feral interventions is also taking advantage of a range of situations that may arise as a result of their art-working practices. Travelling to conferences, symposia, exhibitions and biennials, for example, offers the potential for a kind of materialist networking, where the artist builds relations with the objects, materials and spaces encountered during these work-related experiences. In light of the subject of this article, this may include an interventionist (and opportunistic) installation of artworks, and/or the undertaking of performative works, in spaces not specifically designated for this purpose or pre-planned for the presentation of these activities.

Figure 1. *Material Nomads* at Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, 2023; image Paula Chambers

***Material Nomads* at Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon** is a body of work I created originally for Momentum 12, the Nordic Biennial 2023, which took place in Moss, Norway. I made 51 small sculptural objects that were to me a kind of object/material collaboration, each work being a developmental transformation of an object sourced at a flea market or second-hand shop in Europe. The objects underwent a series of sculptural processes, each of which removed them once step away from their original form, as a kind of material distancing. I photographed each of the objects loitering in locations around the housing estate where I live, in the kind of liminal locations favoured by feral animals, spaces not too domesticated, yet not entirely wild. The resulting images were printed A4 size and mounted on board. I used individual images of the objects to produce a series of pink chiffon squares, similar to ladies' scarves, the objects depicted off-centre and seemingly escaping from the overlocked borders of the fabric. I then took relief castings of each of the objects in paper-mâché and copper foil finished with a fluorescent pink back surface. There were 17 original objects, each resulted in 3 material outcomes, so I took with me to Norway 51 artworks packed in a standard sized suitcase. I stayed 5 days in Moss during which time I installed and documented each of the artworks in locations in and around the town and surrounding areas of Jeløya, including the gallery spaces and grounds of Galleri F15 where the Momentum 12 exhibition was primarily being hosted. *Material Nomads* occupied spaces and places beyond the parameters of the cultural institution, which made it a feral artist intervention that took material form not entirely independent from but as an intentional process of scavenging on the peripheries of the art world.

Figure 2. *Material Nomads* at Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, 2023; image Paula Chambers

For the first iteration of The Lost-and-Found symposium in Lisbon, I took with me a selection of the *Material Nomads* works and installed them in an empty gallery space in Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, where day two of the symposium was being held, and also placed some works in and around the room where the presentations were taking place. This spontaneous installation of the works in an unknown space was a feral intervention visually more akin to the recognised exhibition format, albeit installed, experienced and taken down at considerable speed. I was chancing it with the Lisbon intervention; my request to the symposium organisers to bring artworks with me was opportunistic. I had the works already, and had text that I had written originally for a small publication as an outcome of the intervention for Momentum 12. The only real unknown was the nature of the space the works would occupy and the responses of symposium delegates.

Figure 3. *Material Nomads* at Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, 2023; image Paula Chambers

***Bad Faith* at SARP, Warsaw** was the second feral intervention undertaken for "The Lost-and–Found" symposium. There was an element of anxiety in planning for and undertaking this feral intervention; after the success of installing *Material Nomads* at Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea in Lisbon, I worked towards the Warsaw iteration with focus and commitment. I produced fourteen crochet covers for the "beauty" products I had collected, working on these objects every evening after work, where I used lace bought at the Feira da Ladra flea market in Lisbon for the trim on many of these. I sourced two vintage extendable camera tripods and got one of the workshop supervisors to make small detachable top plates for these. I made and printed vinyl covers, and attached copper foil and chiffon trim to two old trays I already had in my stock of "old stuff" I've sourced over the years. All these

objects could have packed down small enough to fit in my hand luggage, but as I also needed to take clothes and toiletries, I took the work to Warsaw in a standard-size suitcase.

Figure 4. *Bad Faith* at SARP, Warsaw, 2024; image Paula Chambers

Comprised of two freestanding table-like sculptural works, each holding six or seven crochet covered beauty products and a digitally printed satin wall hanging, *Bad Faith* was conceived and produced simultaneously with the performative paper I delivered for the Warsaw iteration of "The Lost-and-Found" symposium at SARP (The Association of Polish Architects). Each complemented and supported the other. Yet the series of crochet-covered products on the two chiffon-trimmed stands seemed to me to have a certain independence; they appeared to be autonomous objects that (literally) stood apart from the symposium participants in a way I had not anticipated. Because I make all my art works in my kitchen and living room, they have a very domestic scale, and I interact with them at this particular scale/level. I am always

surprised when I take them elsewhere and they suddenly seem smaller, or more fragile, vulnerable even. They appear to become different objects once they have left the comfort of home, uncertain in their surroundings, like stray pets perhaps. The two objects that made up *Bad Faith*, perched as they were on tripod stands/legs, seemed to huddle together for emotional support, their legs intersecting. They appeared braced and ready for flight if startled, perhaps they had in some way materialised my own responsive alertness.

I installed *Bad Faith* during the lunch hour of the first day of the symposium. It only took about half an hour to set up, after which I was free to join the other delegates at a food hall across the city. I worried about leaving the work alone in this unknown space; whereas in galleries there is an accepted protocol, artworks are expected to occupy the space autonomously, in this unknown building in a city I had never visited before the sensation of leaving the work was akin to abandonment. What if someone didn't realise it was art and moved it, or worse, threw it away? I knew this wouldn't really happen, but still experienced a certain level of anxiety upon leaving the room.

During the symposium presentations and workshops that took place in the room at SARP I was ever-conscious of the quiet presence of my works, which was akin to having your small child sitting in the corner of the room, or like leaving a bag with valuable or fragile purchases in a place where people might accidently mistake it for rubbish, or trip over it or otherwise cause damage. Unlike the installation of *Material Nomads* in Moss or in Lisbon, *Bad Faith* seemed vulnerable. This work had an almost anthropomorphic presence it seemed, and as a consequence I felt responsible in a way that was oddly maternal.

***Little Losses* at Art Pavilion, Art Academy of Latvia, Riga** was, like the work *Bad Faith* that was made for Warsaw, made specifically for the Riga iteration of "The Lost-and-Found" symposium. The work was an installation comprising several elements: a large digitally printed chiffon panel, a wig of pink artificial hair with copper twigs and leaves, a glass paperweight in a knotted string bag, and a small folding stool with copper seat accompanied by an oxidised copper dish containing three rose quartz eggs. Like *Bad Faith*, this work was also a continuation of my exploration of the embodied experience of being an older woman, but unlike the installation of *Bad Faith* or *Material Nomads*, a pre-designated exhibition space at the Art Academy of Latvia had been sourced for works by the symposia delegates. Although prior to the symposium it was reassuring to know that there would be an appropriate space to install my work and that it was part of a pop-up exhibition that would be received as such by an audience. There was less ferality to this way of working, which was less of an intervention due primarily to the space being pre-prepared for the exhibition of artworks.

Figure 5. *Littles Losses* at Art Academy of Latvia, Riga, 2024; image Paula Chambers

However, the building that the works were exhibited in had many qualities of the feral to it. It was a peripheral space that was not quite part of the Art Academy, yet sat within the grounds and was very much within sight of the symposium location. The pavilion building was made of wood and had the look of temporality, much like a garden structure. When I arrived to install *Little Losses*, not much concession had been made in the pavilion building for the addition of artworks in the space, which therefore very much occupied the gaps between other display objects, as if the artworks were intruding on spaces and places rightfully belonging to other objects and images. In a space that felt and looked temporary and that was was situated on the boundary of the Art Academy, the feral nature of the artworks that briefly shared this space became even more apparent. They seemed as if they were merely taking respite, like feral animals might in inhospitable weather.

Ferality

Ferality can be thought about as a cultural category that indicates an organism's proximity to or distance from humans. Many ferals migrate opportunistically, adapting to life in human-built environments but without subordinating to human control. Although sometimes thought of as illegitimate, as aliens, pests or trespassers in human environments, ferals are in many ways similar to human inhabitants who for various reasons wish or need to live in places where they do not feel they belong, or in whose political processes they do not wish to participate.[5] Feral can be understood in this context as a feminist position, whereby sexual oppression is understood as the historical domestication of the human female, and undoing gender can therefore be thought of as a process of becoming feral. Feral theory questions who has the right to be (or to belong) here/or there, where feral objects, and by extension feral artist interventions, allow for evasion and unpredictability, for creative resistance to systems of control and for the potential to undertake opportunistic art working strategies.

The term feral is most commonly applied to animals; pets or sometimes farm animals that have escaped, been abandoned, lost or forgotten, and have had to adapt to a wild or scavenger existence. But plants can go feral too; exotic imports escape the confines of the garden and proceed to run rampant in their new habitat, often to the disadvantage of native species. Some types of insects have also unwittingly become feral; as stowaways on international transportation networks they colonise the new environments they find themselves in. This process is what Lowenhaupt Tsing et al. call "feral effects", the non-designed and unplanned for consequences of imperial and industrial infrastructure. "The concept of ferality […] requires thinkers to pay attention to both human arrangements and nonhuman response."[6] Domestication is a relationship that requires sustained effort if it is to flourish, where to become feral requires a break from this ongoing process, and sometimes things fall apart and

parties go their separate ways. If domestic animals, plants, insects or objects survive their break-up with humanity and successfully establish residency or occupancy in the wild, they are deemed to have gone feral. To become feral could perhaps be more accurately defined as a state of post-domestication.[7]

But the notion of going feral can also be applied to other forms of matter and states of being. Sara Swain offers us the idea of "feral hospitality" to articulate itinerant accommodation, a welcoming of the other without welcoming them inside. Using the example of the regular feeding of bands of feral cats, Swain proposes that feral hospitality" is "a performative mutual reception transpiring in a space of encounter that is not restricted to the interior of a house."[8] It seems to me that there is something quite radical and potentially liberating in Swain's notion of giving without giving up, and of receiving without being beholden to, obliged or subjugated by its offer.

Feral Interventions

For the three iterations of "The Lost-and-Found" symposium in Lisbon, Warsaw and Riga, I developed an art working strategy I thought of as feral interventions and travelled to these cities with artworks in my suitcase to install opportunistically in and around the symposium venues. As an art working strategy, these feral interventions are like sculptural field notes. They are a process of testing how the objects occupy space, how they relate to each other and their surroundings, and how various methods of display, including the practicalities of installation, can be negotiated in a limited time frame in a previously unknown location.

Feral interventions are a feminist art-working strategy because they are peripheral, they take place physically in spaces that are neither inside nor outside the institution, and they

materialise economically in the grey zone between work and not-work. Feral interventions trouble singular master narratives of what it means to produce and exhibit artworks, employing instead a variety of conceptual, contextual, explanatory and physical tools. Understood in this context as a feminist position, feral interventions allow for evasion and unpredictability, for creative resistance to systems of control, and for the potential to undertake adaptive art-working strategies.

Feral interventions unsettle because they are in and of themselves unsettling. To be settled implies stability and domestic contentment, to be unsettled implies precarity, and movement beyond the domestic. To be unsettling is the process of causing anxiety or a sense of unease. The feral as a state of post-domestication unsettles because it exposes the ambivalence inherent in domesticity, that for some the domestic is a site of confinement, of physical and emotional labour undertaken by necessity, or even through coercion. "The term 'feral' forces attention to what was once hidden in the gap between 'wild' and 'domestic'." [9] Feral interventions also focus attention on the potential that improvisational strategies have beyond art-working practices, on how the agentic actions of humans and non-humans may have consequences beyond their original intentions.

Feral Objects

For the past nine or ten years I have been thinking about the sculptural works that I make as feral objects. My feral objects are those sourced in the liminal consumer spaces of flea markets, second-hand shops, car boot sales and roadside collections, the objects and materials of feminine domesticity that are no longer in use for their intended purpose. The feral object is something designed, produced and manufactured for use in a domestic environment, or for domestic purpose, has been purchased and used, then discarded, or disposed of, sometimes

with consideration, sometimes in a careless manner and sometimes with blatant disregard—I'm thinking of flytipping here. And sometimes, like pets, these objects have just been abandoned, left behind when moving house for example, lost or gone astray. Feral objects are the stuff that loiters in forgotten urban spaces, on paths and in alleyways. They are things found in the liminal spaces of consumer culture; they are the types of objects that are neither fully domesticated like when in use in the home, nor fully wild as they could be thought of when relegated to landfill sites. They are neither inside the retail spaces of consumer economy as they were when new, nor outside the cycle of consumerism as they would be when recycled. Discarded, disposed of, no longer useful but not quite landfill, feral objects disrupt the life cycle of consumerism and question notions of value.

Flea Markets

I love a flea market and will take every opportunity to visit one wherever I am in the world. Flea markets are places with their own etiquette, they are transactional spaces that have very few rules while simultaneously abiding by an ethos that is not enforced through regulation or formal legislation.[10] Flea markets are marginal spaces, often found in disused car parks, abandoned building plots or industrial spaces otherwise left empty; they are informal economies playing out in the border zones of towns and cities across the world. "Often, flea markets are places in legal border zones, sometimes selling goods without clear origins, sometimes stolen ones."[11] At a flea market you can find people from all strata of society, and for people experiencing poverty, selling goods at a flea market can often be their primary source of income. Buying and selling second-hand no longer carries the social stigma it once held—at least in countries in the more affluent West—and with the rise of recycling and interest in sustainability, to buy or sell used goods now has moral integrity. Flea markets are affective and embodied spaces, they promote intensified states caused by sensations,

perceptions and feelings, often caused by the sheer presence of bodies being pushed and pulled and bumping into each other.[12] There is an intimacy at flea markets that is one of contact, with people and with objects. Flea markets employ tacit rules and skills; traders use hand gestures, make eye contact, pick up and offer goods, while potential buyers also touch and handle items, sometimes to ascertain their quality or origin, or to divert attention or buy some thinking time. And flea markets are places for storytelling, where traders create stories for the goods they are selling specific to the interested costumer. Both buyer and trader understand these tactics, where the transactions that take place at flea markets involve a high level of emotional interaction.

Flea markets are feral spaces, they exist physically on the margins of towns and cities, and they operate an informal economy that exists outside legislation. Goods for sale sometimes have dubious origins, yet there is an implicit mutual understanding between those involved in transactions that allows for a more expansive buying and selling experience. In opposition to the supermarket or chain store, flea-market traders employ informal logistics, often transporting stuff to trade by public transport, carried in large shopping bags or on a two-wheeled trolley. At a flea market there is “a sense that strange encounters could and would happen”.[13] Flea markets are spaces of chance and flow rather than prediction, planning and circulation. Flea markets are generative spaces that are agentic of a dynamic human-nonhuman relationality.[14] The possibility of finding unexpected “treasures”, of stumbling across objects that seem to be from another time or space, all contribute to the affective and embodied experience of being at a flea market as a kind of retail theatre.

The Feira da Ladra Flea Market in Lisbon is rightly famous. It offers a sprawling mix of goods from those well-organised stall holders who neatly lay their objects out on tables, to

those who pile their stuff haphazardly on blankets laid on the ground. In the couple of hours that I was there, the market expanded at the margins to encroach on side roads, pavements and traffic islands. Inevitably it was these feral traders who offered the cheapest goods, but sometimes it is at these pitches that unexpected treasures can be found. All flea markets benefit from a second pass I find, where treasures overlooked in the initial rush of excitement make themselves known as I wander past a second time. In Lisbon I bought a fantastic set of brightly coloured melamine plates, a pink fake fur stole and several small glass leaves that had originally been pendants on a chandelier.

The Bazar na Kole Flea Market in Warsaw was unexpectedly macho. Most flea markets I have visited have stalls run by people from all walks of life, but mainly those at the lower end of the economic spectrum, and mostly people middle-aged or older, but I had never noticed such an obvious gender disparity before. Not only were most of the stalls in Warsaw run by men, almost all of them were dressed in army fatigues. They were certainly not soldiers, their protruding bellies, thinning grey hair and nicotine-stained fingers told me this much. Perhaps in a former life they had been in the army, but now they seemed to be stuck in a militaristic time loop. And the goods for sale on their stalls reflected this machismo too; in addition to the generic metal hand tools found at flea markets all over the world, these men offered hunting knives, air rifles, medals, army ephemera, car and bike parts, and what one camo clad man told me was “good strong Polish wire”. I bought some and it has proved very useful.

I was warned against visiting **The Latgale Flea Market in Riga**. The sellers are all dodgy, I was told, they’re selling on stolen goods. But when I got there, I found it to be piled high with the kind of stuff that most people would consider to be genuine rubbish. Who would steal a mountain of aluminium cooking pots and enamel ware to sell at a small local flea market, I

asked myself. As with the Bazar na Kole flea market in Warsaw, a considerable number of stalls were selling Soviet medals and other army ephemera, but I had to wonder if this nostalgia for the Soviet era was more for the benefit of Western European visitors like myself; every object I picked up was Soviet so I was told. “Good quality Soviet string bag”, “strong Soviet saucepan”, “old Soviet lampshade, very nice”, and so on, it seemed improbable that all these mundane domestic objects could carry this resonance of communism within them. The people who had used these objects previously had inevitably lived through the Soviet era in Latvia, and perhaps most of these objects had in fact been manufactured prior to 1991. But did this make them Soviet objects? I don’t really know, but I bought the string bag anyway.

Figure 6. Latgale flea market, Riga, 2024; image Paula Chambers

Feminist Art Working Strategies

Angela Dimitrakaki proposes feminist art-working strategies as practices of refusal, particularly in relation to the feminisation of migratory labour and to the labour of the woman artist. “[I]n the realm of art committed to radical politics by example (by how and where

artists act), the main dilemma faced is whether to opt for situating such action in a grey zone between work and non-work—since artists receive wages from other forms of labour."[15] It is my proposition that it is in this grey zone that feral actions take place; a feral artist intervention is both work and non-work and is undertaken in spaces and places that are peripheral to, yet in the geographical location of, and partially supported by, the art gallery, museum or cultural institution. Despite the ongoing efforts of academic feminism, access to the privileged spaces of the museum and art gallery and associated critical review as a means for visibility within art history, remain out of bounds for many women artists.

A feral artist intervention such as that undertaken for Momentum 12 and for the three iterations of "The Lost-and-Found" symposium are what Dimitrakaki understands as "the projects of positive feminisation [… which] can also be seen as platforms where critical forms of visibility are pursued."[16] Writing about my feral interventions for this article is an ongoing strategy of creating critical visibility for my art-working practice, and the glossary-type format of this essay can be seen to be a gathering together of thoughts and ideas that is cohesive yet without closure. The three artworks that comprised my feral interventions, *Material Nomads, Bad Faith* and *Little Losses*, each materialised feminist concerns around ageing and embodiment, and were created from objects and materials of feminine material culture. They were transported to the symposium venues through the informal logistics of a domestic suitcase, and were installed and displayed in spaces not directly sanctioned as part of the institution. As such, these feral interventions are a feminist art-working strategy that was developed to sidestep the structure and formality of museum and gallery regulations.

Galleries and Museums (The Institution)

Artworks are usually exhibited in art galleries or other cultural spaces designed or adapted for the display of objects and images (and other art forms like film and performance). These spaces are set up and managed primarily for the benefit of the audience/viewer, but also to allow the artworks to be encountered at their most advantageous. But how do artworks get to be inside this gallery type environment? To someone not directly involved in the world of art and culture this might seem like a slightly ridiculous question, but for artists it is a dilemma fraught with hazards and uncertainty.

The cultural institution of the art gallery and museum has been (rightly) criticised by artists, art historians and curators through many practical and theoretical avenues. I'm thinking here mainly of artists and writers such as Daniel Buren and Andrea Fraser who have been identified as forming part of the institutional critique movements of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Many of these arts professionals radically challenged the dominance and influence of museums and galleries, but the dilemma for most remains that to be a successful artist whose work is exhibited at a national and/or international level, and to have that work recognised as important and as making a valuable contribution to culture by industry professionals, requires the intervention of curators, gallerists or other respected arts and culture representatives. As is recognised by most artists, this intervention has little to do with the quality and/or originality of the work produced, but instead is all about who you know, how well-connected you might be and how many "networking" events you are able to stomach. This is a system that inevitably favours some above others, and when the effort does not offer up the desired rewards it is all too easy for many to become disillusioned with the process.

Interestingly, in her discussion of institutional dilemmas, Maria Lind presents the quandary of artists wishing to exhibit their work and build a career in a tone reminiscent of the feral. If

artists work too closely with institutions this can disarm their critical potential she argues; they get contaminated. “Following the principal that you don’t bite the hand that feeds you, they end up not using their teeth anymore.”[17] Although institutional proximity can sometimes be compromising for artists, it also has the potential to stimulate a kind of exchange that allows for the system to be challenged. When this is the case, the challenge is carried out from a position that is simultaneously outside and inside, both implicated and distant. However, there are other ways to be an artist, and other ways to offer up artworks for audience engagement. The boundaries between what is inside the institution and what is outside are porous, and engaging with these boundaries has been a consistent concern for many, not just those artists associated with institutional critique. However, what is outside the institution is not necessarily uninstitutionalised, but can contribute towards generating a shift in meaning. There are many artworks that bridge the interior and exterior, and working across artistic and non-artistic sites reveals how the perception of the same material or concept can change radically depending on where it is viewed.[18] A feral art intervention is neither inside nor outside the institution, it is neither domesticated nor wild. Regardless of whether these interventions take place literally inside the building or not, the fact that they are not scheduled exhibitions or events, but are rather impromptu interventions by the artist who opportunistically installs artworks in peripheral spaces can challenge the institution in a more radical way than if these interventions were public art, transitory works, relational or even invisible.

Fraser agrees that there is of course an “outside” of the institution, but she proposes “it has no fixed, substantive characteristics. It is only what, at any given moment, does not exist as an object of artistic discourses and practices.”[19] A feral artist intervention is perhaps not quite outside in this sense, the artist being intrinsically part of the institution by default of being an

artist, but an intervention not recognised as exhibition or event hovers conceptually and materially around these boundary definitions.

In relation to the three artworks discussed in this article, many of the objects and materials that make up the works were purchased at flea markets. Objects found at flea market shift in value as they are exchanged; before purchase they might be junk, but after I buy them they become art materials. Similarly, the spaces that these artworks inhabit as feral interventions change meaning before and after I set up the work; before they may be doorways or window ledges but after they have become the site for display. The airport too shifts meaning as it becomes a space for informal logistics as I transport the artwork in a standard-size suitcase to be freighted as hold luggage along with other people's holiday luggage.

Similarly, context is key to the understanding of any work of art as art. Many found object sculptures would literally be dismissed as rubbish if encountered on a piece of industrial wasteland, or in an alleyway next to overflowing dustbins. Artists do of course create works in spaces and places outside of organised sites for the presentation of art, and sometimes these works may never cross the physical boundary of the gallery or museum, and it is these types of works perhaps that embody qualities of the feral. A feral intervention is de facto part of the institution, but does not abide by the established rules and regulations that come with a gallery exhibition; a feral intervention breaks institutional etiquette.

Subjects, Objects and Artworks on the Periphery

The artworks made for and exhibited at the three iterations of "The Lost-and-Found" symposia, including the objects and materials purchased at the flea markets in each of the three hosted cities, continue their transformation as feral objects and nomadic art-working

practices in ways that have been unexpectedly productive. Selected pieces of *Material Nomads* were included as part of a research presentation at my university; the two crochet-covered beauty product elements of *Bad Faith* were exhibited as part of "Hold the Space" at 62 Brown Street, Sheffield (June 2024), a group show themed around feminist embodiment. The wig, string bag and footstool elements of *Little Losses* made their way into my solo exhibition "Not My Voice, Not My Hair" at The Stone Space gallery in London (October–November 2024).[20] Lace bought at the Feira da Ladra flea market was incorporated into the *Bad Faith* works, the wire bought at the Bazar na Kole flea market was used to hang the wig of *Little Losses*, and a wooden rolling pin bought at the Latgale flea market has been transformed to become an integral element of a new work to be exhibited in 2025.

As an art-working strategy, the relative spontaneity of the feral interventions described produced several unintended consequences, the most profound perhaps being an understanding of myself as an artist who works well under conditions of spatial precarity, such as those aligned with nomadic practices. This understanding that it is the experience of journeying that is meaningful, while meaning-making, has been much like my coming to terms with the embodied experience of inhabiting an ageing female body.

As peripheral practices of exhibition and display, the feral interventions allowed me to take certain risks that I would not have attempted in more formal circumstances. Although I recognise and respond to where possible, the Western privilege that allows me to travel around Europe, and to cross borders and boundaries with relative ease, my female and feminised body induces certain vulnerabilities and anxieties that are often unsettling and sometimes potentially dangerous. My creative exploration into the afterlives of feminine material culture through practices of art-working, makes visible the histories, values and

social contexts of femininities beyond the domestic. The unexpected consequences identified by Lowenhaupt Tsing et al. as "feral effects", are materialised through these abandoned and repurposed objects to reveal what was once hidden in the gap between wild and domestic that defines the feral.[21]

My growing understanding of ferality, including the embodied experience through the interventions and at flea markets, has offered unexpected insights into my personal expression of middle-aged femininity. Where previously I had thought about my changing body with a certain level of alarm, when overlaid with a critical sheen of post-domestication and with the tacit skills of adaption and improvisation adopted through art-working strategies is both radical and potentially liberating.

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