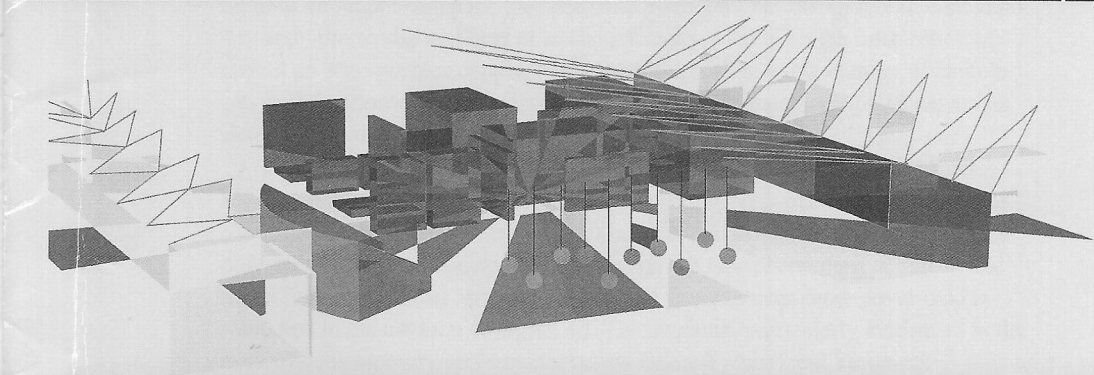


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VIRTUAL BEAUTY: ORLAN AND MORIMURA  
Peg Brand

The philosophy of art is always well-served in following the advances of artists who lead the way in defining "art," extending its conceptual parameters and challenging established theoretical claims. Art theory – provided by the artist or by others – is often used to interpret and explain complex artistic production. It can provide a useful service, elaborating the individual's and the broader cultural context for an artist's work. Philosophy, however, can offer additional – different and sometimes deeper – analyses than art theory. Philosophers often delve into the underlying assumptions that lie below the surface and investigate their role in artistic production, particularly against the backdrop of an extensive history of human artifacts we call art, i.e., objects and events generally believed to yield valuable aesthetic experiences. This is not art *history*, the assigning of time periods and styles, but rather an exploration of the history of long-standing philosophical concepts like "art," "beauty," and "aesthetic value." In contrast to recent misconceptions about philosophers, they are neither ignorant nor dismissive of contemporary art.<sup>(1)</sup> Increasing numbers of aestheticians are writing on the intersection of current art with popular culture, film, and fashion. A growing number of anthologies in the philosophy of art (aesthetics) now include statements by visual artists along with philosophical essays.<sup>(2)</sup>

I heartily endorse the current editors' project to extend aesthetics, in their words: "to investigate whether the domain of Philosophy of Art has expanded as well" [as that of visual artists], so as to include "elements from novel fields such as fashion, design, television, advertising and the new phenomena of screen and sound."<sup>(3)</sup> I contend that another new element from an even more novel field is embodied in the medium of digital art. This medium, particularly evidenced in the work of contemporary performance artists Orlan (French) and Yasumasa Morimura (Japanese), is a perfect candidate for the philosophical extension of traditional notions of "art" and "beauty." It is also an opportunity to explore the influence of the Western art historical canon upon current artistic production, the universalization of beauty norms from past eras on women and men today, and the use of self-portraiture as a template for digital re-visioning of the history of art.

This essay will offer some thoughts on these issues with the goal of extending aesthetics based on a specific type of artistic output. These two artists have already expanded the normal parameters of artistic inquiry and the philosophical course. As an aesthetician, I merely offer some elaboration and philosophical backdrop to their creative enterprise. They constitute the paradigm of the avant-garde artist *extra ordinaire* leading us into the uncharted realm of cyberspace and offering us a provocative glimpse of virtual beauty in which artistic insight complements philosophical inquiry. Motivated by their creativity, this essay will explore contrasting definitions of real and virtual beauty as well as suggest some reasons why these definitions may prove useful in stimulating discussions about art and the philosophy of art.

of such a script. We found that English situation much more inspiring. Another inspiration is that when you like someone's work in, say, Toronto, it can be immediately digitally delivered.

Let's look at some commercials for the *Ben* campaign. It used to be the case that an agency created a commercial which played on television the whole summer. Since we developed the strategy for *Ben* that it behave as a person, we needed many commercials in order to express *Ben*'s various moods, such as sad, cheerful, comical, and professional. Therefore, we designed around forty *Ben* commercials, for which we invited several film directors who all had the freedom to try out various things. So, we consider that campaign an image jukebox on television rather than a series of commercials. The audience watches time and again another commercial where the end is always the same: Joop & *Ben*, Linda & *Ben*, and so on. In the commercials, you can distinguish different styles such as art videos, commercials, and trailers.

One could say that similar to visual art, commercials try to modify the sense of reality of the viewer. - It is true that there are agencies which do that in a fake way. - In many of our campaigns, there is something the consumer has to think about. At least what we try to do is to create two-way communication and sometimes, such as in *Ben* where we directly speak to the audience, we literally hear something back in the sense of "I am *Ben*."

#### DIGITAL ART AND DEFINITIONS

A 1998 interview with the French performance artist Orlan provided an occasion to gain first-hand knowledge of the broader context of her artistic intentions.

Against the backdrop of male-defined Body Art, she created a series of alterations to her body under the category of what she labeled Carnal Art.<sup>(6)</sup> In analyzing her performances, I introduced the new and unfamiliar concept of "virtual beauty," using a definition of "virtual" from a standard up-to-date dictionary as my starting point. "Virtual" was defined as "being in essence or effect, not in fact; not actual, but equivalent, so far as effect is concerned." I suggested that virtual beauty "substitutes for, yet is not in fact, real beauty." In concentrating on *The Reincarnation of St. Orlan*, begun in 1990 and consisting of nine "aesthetic surgeries" to alter her face in conformity to past standards of feminine beauty codified in the art of "the great masters" of Western Europe, I was seeking an explanatory term for the composite computer-generated image according to which Orlan sought to complete her surgeries. The composite, or template, utilized an image of Orlan that was uniquely supplemented. Brought together in one portrait were some of Orlan's original features plus the chin of Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, the forehead of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, the lips of Gustave Moreau's *Abduction of Europa*, the eyes of Benvenuto Cellini's *Diane of Fontainebleau*, and the nose of Gerard's *First Kiss of Eros and Psyche*. I suggested the following: "A template functions as the imagined Orlan: a technologically created composite of virtual beauties. . . . The actual Orlan, photographed during and after surgery, has realized each projected change: forehead, eyes, chin, and lips. Her project appropriates past norms of feminine beauty that were codified by revered artists but critiques them as well: both the control such norms wield over women and the subordination of women's bodies in marriage, commerce, and art within patriarchal cultures. The ongoing artwork, *Reincarnation*, alters the physical body of Orlan but will also include a new name (and a legal change in identity). This is Orlan - *literally* at the cutting edge."<sup>(5)</sup>

My analysis of the template offered an explanation of Orlan's actions that involved imitating, copying, or (more aptly phrased in contemporary jargon) *appropriating* facial features from past (male) artists' work. The template functioned as the imagined Orlan, the imaginary re-presentation/reincarnation she sought to imitate and become. Why describe it as "a technologically created composite of virtual beauties" and not just "beauty"? I chose the plural because of the use of multiple features, taken from several faces, all of which originated in artworks by past "masters." Why call those images, originally created by Botticelli, da Vinci, and others, "virtual beauties" and not just "beauties"? Primarily because its mode of assemblage was highly nontraditional. First and foremost, it was a digitally created collage. It seemed quite obvious that Orlan had not literally used the actual (or real) beauty created by da Vinci and others; there was no cutting of canvas or chiseling of bronze. Nor had she cut portions of actual photographs of past artworks, placing them together on a big poster board and re-shooting the result to



contrast to female viewers who often find him beautiful): "Morimura has accomplished what women could not. Morimura receives the violent masculine gaze often aimed at women with his exposed body, then the next moment laughs it away, and finally nullifies it."<sup>9</sup>

Whether one agrees with this interpretation and endorsement of Morimura's artistic strategy by Chino and other female viewers, what is relevant for our purposes here is the claim that women (and men also, although they may not admit it) find the body of the artist, as posed in its various configurations and settings, to be beautiful. This is a case, I would contend, of a traditional sort of ascription of the term "beautiful" expressed within the routinely accepted medium of photography. In spite of the person posed — a man posing as a woman — the accolade of "beautiful" is evoked from a viewer who responds in a way not unlike the way s/he might respond to a photo of the actual Marilyn Monroe, or Vivien Leigh, or Catherine Deneuve.

The response of calling the photograph "beautiful" might be explained in various ways. First, it might be based on the mistaken identification of the beauty of the face and figure as the actual actress being impersonated, i.e., someone might call the photograph beautiful because s/he believes — at least initially and momentarily — that s/he is viewing a photo of the actual Marilyn. Second, upon learning that an impersonation is taking place, one might remark upon the beauty of the sitter (particularly since he is male) in his meticulously skillful imitation of the original. In other words, the person posed before us — whoever it may be — looks beautiful as does Marilyn Monroe, long an icon from popular American culture.

Additionally, the viewer might be impressed that the body of Morimura which looks so deceptively feminine at first and with subsequent glances, looks somewhat like that of Marilyn Monroe and has sufficient qualities of its own (smoothness, uniqueness, etc.) that invite a positive pleasurable response. Finally (though not exhaustively), a viewer might focus on the formal features of the photograph as composition: how the body is placed within the overall picture, the intense colors of flesh, the background, the costume, the boldness of the impersonation as constituting a new form of (self-) portraiture. My point here is not to belabor the various ways one might perceive and evaluate but rather to emphasize the similarities between assigning a typical judgment of beauty to a person such as Marilyn Monroe, to a traditionally accepted portrait (of Marilyn), and to Morimura's self-portrait (as Marilyn) in his *Acresses* series.

Furthermore, referring back to our definitions, it is easy to see that the definition of "virtual beauty" would not apply. First, the photograph of Morimura which constitutes the actual work of art (of course, realizing there may be multiple prints) is not information reconfigured in cyberspace; rather it is photographic emulsion on paper as is typical of the medium. Second, the image or representation of Morimura-as-Marilyn is not disembodied in the sense of computerized art; rather, an actual body — dressed up (or down, as the case may be when Morimura poses nude) — is clearly posed for the photographic image that results. There is a direct

connection between the poser and the photograph of the posed. Third, the viewer is neither invited nor allowed to digitally reconfigure the artist's photograph in any way. To do so would be to violate the integrity of the artwork, conceived as it is as the finished product of a photographic reproduction on paper. Finally, the artwork by Morimura is a case of (or at least a contender for) the ascription of "real" beauty as I have conceived it. Whatever definition one chooses to use, whatever qualities of the representation by which one determines the ascription of "beautiful," those qualities operate in the many images comprising the *Acresses* series, similar to traditional cases of portraiture and other works of art.

(Consider a second series by Morimura which enables the artist to "insert" himself into the works of artists like Manet, Van Gogh, Goya, Velasquez, and Duchamp.<sup>10</sup>) Entitled *Art History*, this series is designed to appropriate and satirize the historical tradition on various levels. Because Morimura is Japanese, he is commenting on the weight and influence of the Western history of art with its undue emphasis on the "great masters" of the European tradition. Second, and consistent with his interest in gender reversals from the *Acresses* series, he places himself within the esteemed works of art that highlight women as subject, or (again) as object of the male gaze. Thus he inserts himself in the portrait of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, in several stages: first, by replacing the original face with his own (*Mona Lisa in His Origin*, 1998); second, by picturing his face on the body of a nude and pregnant Mona Lisa (*Mona Lisa in Pregnancy*, 1998), and finally, replacing the belly of the nude Mona Lisa with an internal view of the fetus and organs, reminiscent of da Vinci's sketchbook drawings of the fetus in utero (*Mona Lisa in the Third Place*, 1998). The results are composite collages that span centuries and present a combination of portrait and self-(portrait), all the while appropriating the master works of another time and place.

In contrast to the *Acresses* series, the *Art History* series would more naturally give rise to the ascription of "virtual beauty," if beauty is to be ascribed at all. Why? For the fact that this is no ordinary (real) beauty; the artwork exhibits qualities very much like those of traditional beauty but resides in cyberspace.

Moreover, as condition (ii) stipulates, the virtual figure of the Mona Lisa with Morimura's face and an open abdomen presents us with a view of no real person at all, but rather a nonperson, a fabrication, a virtual composite. If there is beauty in the image, whether it resides in Morimura's resemblance to the face of the original Mona Lisa, or in the entire composition, or in any number of other features, it is virtual beauty and not real. In this case, it is reassuring to know there is no such person, no such composite, no such viewing available to the unaided human eye. The virtual nature of the "person" represented insures s/he is not real; similarly, the virtual beauty of the "person" represented insures her/his beauty is also not real.

A few side notes about Morimura's work might prove helpful at this point. We must remember that a printed photograph of a digitally produced artwork is not the same as the original work. Thus, in the *Art History* series, photographs

hanging in a museum or gallery are not the originals but mere by-products of the opportunities available to us by means of printing digital information (in cyberspace) on paper (in real space). Printed versions of the *Art History* series are not the same sort of imitation as those printed in the *Actresses* series. The *Art History* prints undoubtedly differ in origin. The printed version is a paper copy of the original, and of course, it bears repeating that there can be many such copies. In fact, unlike more traditional print mediums like etching, engraving, silkscreen, and woodcut, print copies of digital art can truly be infinite in number, there being no wear or tear on the original as there would be on a copper or zinc plate, a silkscreen, or a piece of wood. This adds an additional meaning to the work as disembodied; it has no body, no substance that might wear out and is in no way similar to a metal plate, piece of stretched silk, or block of wood. There is, of course, a computer, i.e., the hardware of the operation, but it bears no resemblance to the qualities of the work of art in the way that a deeply engraved line in a copper plate produces a wide, dark line of ink on the printed piece of paper. Consider the theoretical ramifications for the ongoing debate about the ontology of the art object; digital art presents philosophers with a new medium that complicates routine physical description. Surely this is an extension of aesthetics into realms unknown.

Also, let us look briefly at the multiple layers of appropriation possible to the artist via digital creation. A simple example is Morimura's appropriation of the artwork of well-known American photographer Cindy Sherman entitled *To My Little Sister: For Cindy Sherman*, 1998. (This is also part of the *Art History* series.<sup>(10)</sup>) Sherman has made a reputation for herself, beginning in the 1970s with black and white film still photos, of devising a unique genre of portraiture that always, like Morimura, involves the representation of the self. Unlike traditional self-portraiture, Sherman has consistently posed herself in various visual contexts, for example, in 1950s black and white movie stills, in color "fashion" shots, in everyday household situations that suggest multiple narratives (such as the girl in the orange plaid skirt utilized by Morimura in his tribute to Sherman), in 1980s parodies of (yet again) art historical "masters," and as the fictional female character in various landscapes: minimal and subdued or maximally grotesque. Her work has been described, to varying degrees, as appropriations of past visual icons, symbols, and representations that are re-inscribed in new, personalized, and historicized contexts. Just like Morimura's *Actresses* series, Sherman's photos are candidates for real beauty and not virtual. In them, she dresses up, poses for the camera, and takes a conventional photographic shot of herself. She is the traditional artist posing for a routinely produced photograph on paper. However, when Morimura appropriates Sherman's *Untitled #96* (from 1981), Morimura digitally scans the Sherman original into a computer to be reconfigured. Morimura is one perceiver, P, who becomes the artist, A, of the reconfiguration of the data of Sherman's photo. The reconfiguration is a candidate for the category of virtual beauty.

More complex layers of appropriation may also take place, as in Morimura's *Portrait (Futago)*, 1988-1990, which is a re-contextualized version of Manet's

*Olympia*. This is an example that has the most bearing on condition (iii) of the definition of virtual beauty, the one which suggests that the perceiver *may* reconfigure the information in cyberspace, thereby becoming a temporary artist/perceiver, most importantly: the first perceiver. If we follow the line of creation from Manet to Morimura, we can observe the keen eye of Manet appropriating the conventional image of Venus on the couch (dating from the late Venetian Renaissance, e.g., Titian's *Leonas of Urbino*, 1538), in which Manet is a perceiver of such an image who then becomes the artist who utilizes the information. Similarly Morimura appropriates Manet, creating a double level of appropriation, one in which the layers of meaning multiply in tandem with the many levels of appropriation. In Morimura's viewing of the Manet, he notes the image, composition, body placement, etc., of the original, digitally scans it into a computer and then reconfigures the information. Morimura is one perceiver, P, who becomes the artist, A, of the reconfiguration of the data of Manet's work (hence, a perceiver/artist). The complexity of these types of visual appropriations sheds new light not only on traditional philosophical discussions involving fakes and forgeries, but also more basic concepts that bear on centuries of debate about imitation, originality, and intentionality. The philosophy of art is challenged and extended by these artists forging new creative ground by means of previously unavailable technology.

As another example of virtual beauty, consider the most recent work of Orlan: an ongoing series entitled *Self/Hybridations* that makes use of the standards of beauty prevalent in ancient Olmec and Mayan cultures. In this series, Orlan is not undergoing surgery or altering actual face or flesh. Rather she is using her face as a template purely for digital reconfiguration. Her face, much like the template used for *Reincarnation*, becomes a composite digitally constructed. The difference in this series is that she does not proceed to actual surgical self-alteration. Instead she reconstructs herself as a *virtual hybrid* (or hybridation). All the work is done in cyberspace and all resulting images are disembodied to the degree that they have no real or actual counterpart. The facial deformations that Orlan appropriates reveal her new interest in non-European cultures, cultures that sought ideals of beauty that involved constricting the size and shape of a child's skull, manipulating one's line of vision resulting in crossed eyes, and the embedding of jewels in human teeth. As Orlan notes, these are standards of beauty that both males and females shared, both upper and lower classes. These are part of her ongoing world-wide (virtual) "tour" of beauty standards, having completed the European series (on herself with *Reincarnation*). Like the works in Morimura's *Art History* series, the beauty in these images – if any is to be discerned – is of the virtual sort, not the real. All the conditions of the definition are fully satisfied: (i) the beauty is causally connected to and consists of digitally reconfigured information; (ii) the multiple fictive representations of the Mayan/Olmec hybrid or the Olmec/Orlan hybrid represent no actual person or body and are thus disembodied; (iii) the information within the individual hybridations (there are dozens to date) may be re-arranged and reconfigured by a perceiver, as in the case of a museum or gallery

goer who is allowed to digitally alter the hybridation of Orhan on a computer; and (iv) given the causal origins of the image, the ascription of beauty is not a case of real beauty but rather virtual.

One particular image from *Self-Hybridations* is entitled *Orhan Pacal de Palenque* (1998). In this image, Orhan remakes her digital reconfiguration to imitate a known sculpture of Lord Pacal dating from the mid-seventh century BCE and again, we are confronted with a case of an artist appropriating an earlier work of art in which she, as perceiver of the original Mayan work, is the perceiver/artist creating a new work of art. Furthermore, the gallery viewer who perceives Orhan as Pacal and reconfigures the hybridized image even further becomes the new perceiver/artist. The replication of levels of viewing, appropriating, creating, viewing and re-creating are many, emphasizing the constant need for extension and expansion of standard philosophical notions like “art object,” “imitation,” “creativity,” and “originality.”

#### WHY IS “VIRTUAL BEAUTY” A USEFUL CONCEPT?

Elaborated above are some of the reasons I have endorsed the project of extended aesthetics, particularly as it results from the ingenuity and creativity of digital artists who are pushing the boundaries of “art” and art’s corresponding aesthetic value. Philosophers should welcome these advances and the conceptual challenges they bring to conventional terminology that bears the weight of two millennia of linguistic use. To fail in these challenges is to risk falling behind the most *avant* of the *garde*, that is, to fail to keep pace with what visual artists are creating now and what they will create in the future.

Second, virtual beauty provides a means of distinguishing a unique type of beauty within a complex realm of terms, representations, and experiences. Even students studying beauty for the first time are overwhelmingly cynical about formulating a definition of “beauty” that can capture the disparate types of examples proposed: beauty in nature, beauty in visual art, beauty in the sound of music, beauty in the reading of a poem or play, the inner beauty of a person, the beauty one feels (in Burkean terms) when one feels intense love of another person.

Encountering beauty in visual art is yet another type that defies classification, or so they – and many other theorists and philosophers – might propose. But does it? Perhaps virtual beauty, like virtual art, is more easily identifiable than real beauty and (real) art. Both are based in particular types of creations, make use of particular hardware and human input (software), and result in images and representations that are sustainable only by means of mechanical competence. The beauty in a virtual landscape is different yet similar to the beauty in an actual landscape, yet surely the difference matters. For one thing, if you are an avid hiker and enjoy an occasional walk through old growth stands of Douglas fir, a virtual hike will never suffice. For some critics of digital art (and by extension, virtual beauty), virtual versions rarely measure up to the real. But this is a matter of evaluation: a matter best left for another time.

Third, consider the utility of a concept that captures the new mode of representing women and men in fashion, health, and fitness magazines in which representations of idealized bodies and faces are digitally altered. Gone are the days when portraits of models were air-brushed; now they are digitally altered, leaving open an array of intriguing questions as to where real beauty ends and virtual beauty begins. Is a digitally altered image of actress Gwyneth Paltrow an example of real or virtual beauty? Does the extent of alteration determine the answer? (Does removing puffiness around the eyes still yield a majority of features constituting real beauty whereas enhancing the lips, narrowing the nose, and removing puffiness around the eyes irreversibly adds up to virtual beauty?) What are the social and ethical consequences of bombarding young girls with images of digitally altered bodies and faces, all of which are impossible to achieve because they represent no one in particular? If virtual beauty is our new ideal of Western (or even worldwide) beauty, have we abandoned the pursuit of real beauty?

Fourth, the notion of virtual beauty allows for the intriguing possibility of a corresponding notion of a virtual sublime. Here is when the conversation among philosophers and artists might really get interesting! Let us recall the writings of eighteenth century aestheticians like Burke and Kant where the sublime is a visual experience far superior to that of the beautiful. The sublime involved the vastness of space and the feeling of insignificance of human intervention in that space. The sublime was a feeling of terror and fear but without actual terror and fear. A J.M.W. Turner painting of an avalanche or of Hannibal’s army marching through a blinding snowstorm or a ship in a storm at sea, were all designed to convey the feeling of fear felt by one caught in a dangerous yet visually captivating situation. No real danger ever incurred; the perceiver always knew *s/he* was safe and out of harm’s way. But the magnificent landscape, the dark storm clouds, the churning water, were all meant to replicate a similar though not actual feeling of fear. It is uncanny how the definition of the sublime conveys much of the same import as the definition of virtual beauty in its insistence upon “being in essence or effect, not in fact, not actual, but equivalent, so far as effect is concerned.” Consider the provocative potential of the concept of a “virtual sublime” where the sublime, already one remove from reality and its effect upon human emotions, also bears the additional remove of being virtual, not actual, yet equivalent so far as effect is concerned. Again, these discussions are best left to artists, theorists, and philosophers eager to extend the concept of the sublime into new and uncharted realms and I conclude with one final commentary on the concept of virtual beauty and the ways it may prove useful and stimulating in future discussions.

My final observation makes reference to an essay written by Mary Flanagan entitled ‘Navigating the Narrative in Space: Gender and Spatiality in Virtual Worlds’ which cites several feminists who describe cyberspace as similar to literary space – both being a metaphorical space (“the space that isn’t ‘really’ there”) – as well as the gendering of cyberspace as female or feminine.<sup>(12)</sup> These theorists contend that just as nature has always been gendered feminine (by philosophers,

authors, artists), so too is cyberspace. Consider two brief references from the writings of William Gibson and Neil Stephenson who imagined cyberspace to be “like images of the American West,” i.e., wild, untamed, virgin, needing mastery and a manifest destiny to guide it.<sup>143</sup> Gibson, who coined the term “cybernetics” in 1948 (and from which the term “cyberspace” is derived), described cyberspace in his “seminal 1984 cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*” (these are Flanagan’s words) as “the matrix” – an uncontrollable, feminized digital frontier and global information network (matrix, from the Latin “womb”).<sup>144</sup> She adds: In Gibson’s fiction, cowboy hackers “jack in” to the feminized and potentially emasculating matrix – a matrix that is comparably categorized as its “nature” – traditionally feminine. *Neuromancer*’s main cowboy hacker, Case, experiences something akin to orgasm... Likewise, Neil Stephenson’s 1992 novel *Snow Crash* espouses the idea of cyberspace as an unruly, oozing place with its own rules... [his] protagonist Hiro equates jacking into cyberspace with heterosexual sex. Thus the myths of cyberspace as a place begins by being depicted as a permeable, “feminine place” that must be categorized, controlled, and conquered.<sup>145</sup>

How might an extension of this discussion about the gendering of cyberspace in tandem with the definitions proposed in this essay delve more deeply into the gendered aspects of real beauty, virtual beauty, and the realms (real or virtual) that they inhabit? What might result from future wanderings around and among the cyberspace of virtual beauty, not to mention the virtual sublime, in the works of Orlan and Morimura as well as future digital artists? Is the attribution of virtual beauty to the works of Orlan an extension of the attribution of the philosophically gendered feminine concept of beauty, or does the gendering become nullified because the virtual is only “being in essence or effect, not in fact; not actual, but equivalent, so far as effect is concerned?”<sup>146</sup> Is there some sort of natural fit – a gender matching of sorts – between the ascription of virtual beauty (as feminized) to the artwork of Orlan (a female) that is discomfited by the same ascription to the work of Morimura (a male)? If so, how do we characterize the ascription of a traditionally gendered feminine concept to images of Morimura, particularly as he appropriates iconic images of female movie stars, traditionally lauded for their (real) beauty? And what about the gendering of cyberspace itself as feminine, to be “colonized” by male and female artists alike; when Orlan reconfigures information in cyberspace, is she doing anything distinctly different from Morimura? For the viewer who is invited to further reconfigure Orlan’s *Self-Hybridations*, is s/he being enticed into a feminine space that necessarily invites masculine categorization, control, and conquest, or is there some gender-neutral safe zone one might inhabit (much like the standard viewpoint of “objectivity” philosophers once prescribed)?

Needless to say, the list of questions grows longer as the imagination grows bolder. It is almost unfathomable that we are only at the beginning of extensive exploration of cyberspace by computer programmers and digital artists alike. The concept of “virtual beauty” can function as needed vocabulary for virtual artists as

well as a fruitful extension of terminology for theorists and philosophers. The future is now and virtual museums are the wave of the future.<sup>147</sup> With computer equipment and technical know-how, every artist can now exhibit her work on a web for millions of viewers to see, each perceiving its (virtual) qualities and attributing (or withholding) accolades accordingly.

What is the future of the representation of beauty and the extended aesthetics of virtual beauty? As more and more digital works are created by female artists, perhaps cyberspace will become less describable in terms of antiquated masculine rhetoric about colonization, control and conquest. Whatever the outcome, philosophers need to stay abreast of the advances made by the *avant garde* in the digital realm. The “navigating” in Flanagan’s title, “Navigating the narrative in [cyber]space,” may require philosophers to create a whole new set of skills, particularly if the navigated space continues to be conceived in pervasively feminine terms. The virtual beauty of Orlan’s extended aesthetics invites us in for a maiden voyage: Relax, sit back, and enjoy the trip.

#### Notes

1. I am thinking here of contemporary art critics and theorists dismissive of philosophy and philosophers, such as Peter Schjeldahl, Dave Hickey, Beckley and Shapiro, among others. See my introduction to *Beauty Matters* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp.6-8.
2. The work of Susan Bordo, Arthur Danto, David Carrier, Dawn Perlmutter, Paul C. Taylor, Noel Carroll, Cynthia Freeland, Tom Kuhn, and Mary Devereaux provide a small sampling of authors. Two examples of anthologies include *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics*, edited by Peg Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1995) that includes artists Adrian Piper and Trinh T. Minh-ha and the forthcoming *Differential Aesthetics* edited by Penny Florence and Nicole Foster (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001) that features many visual artists.

3. This wording is provided by co-editors Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager in their initial Call for Papers through the Dutch Society of Aesthetics, *IAA/AIE Newsletter* no.17, Autumn 1999, p.3.

4. Orlan calls her work Carnal Art in contrast to the male-defined tradition of body art. See the interview “Bound to Beauty: An Interview with Orlan,” in *Beauty Matters*, pp.289-313. For images of Orlan, see [http://www.cicry.fr/cr-ation\\_artistique/online/orlan/operation/surgery.html](http://www.cicry.fr/cr-ation_artistique/online/orlan/operation/surgery.html) and [http://www.cicry.fr/cr-ation\\_artistique/online/orlan/omnipresence/omni\\_1.html](http://www.cicry.fr/cr-ation_artistique/online/orlan/omnipresence/omni_1.html), although the only small image (no details visible) of the composite/template of Orlan’s face can be found at [http://www.cicry.fr/cr-ation\\_artistique/online/orlan/cinema/20ans.html](http://www.cicry.fr/cr-ation_artistique/online/orlan/cinema/20ans.html).

5. *Beauty Matters*, p.290. At the time of this writing, Orlan has realized all the imagined facial changes except the change to her nose.

6. See Maard Lavijn, *Cut With the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of*



Hannah Höch (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

7. See [http://www.mep-fr.org/orlan/hybridation/page\\_1.html](http://www.mep-fr.org/orlan/hybridation/page_1.html) or *Orlan Self-Hybridations*, text by Pierre Bourgoade and Orlan (Romainville: Editions Al Dante, 1999).
8. Kaori Chino, "A Man Pretending to Be a Woman: On Yasunasa Morimura's 'Actresses'" in *Beauty Matters*, p.252. Also, <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/vis-arts/globe/issue4/morimura.htm>.
9. *Ibid.*, p.264.
10. See <http://www.telefonica.es/fatcatayasu/yasumas01.html> for an announcement for the June-July 2000 exhibition of Art History in Spain, complete with several comments from curator Pilar Gonzalo excerpts from the book catalogue text by Roberto Velazquez and Gonzalo. Twenty-five images are featured on the site, including the three images from the Mona Lisa series, the Cindy Sherman tribute, and the appropriation of Manet's Olympia. Another option, although more limited is [www.assemblylanguage.com/images/Morimura.html](http://www.assemblylanguage.com/images/Morimura.html).
11. For a larger version of this image, see <http://www.telefonica.es/fatcatayasu/img25.jpg>. For additional information on Cindy Sherman, see *Cindy Sherman* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1982) in which she states regarding the image of the girl in the orange plaid skirt lying on the tiles, "... I was thinking of a young girl who may have been cleaning the kitchen for her mother and who ripped something out of the newspaper, something asking 'Are you lonely?' or 'Do you want to be friends?' or 'Do you want to go on a vacation?' She's cleaning the floor, she tips this out, and she's thinking about it" (p.11)
12. Flanagan's essay can be found in *Art Journal* (Fall 2000), p.75-85.
13. *Ibid.*, p.77
14. *Ibid.*
15. Such website will be able to offer unprecedented opportunities such as the display of digital artworks that are interactive in nature, participation in "conversations" between artists, collectors and critics, and viewing experiences "not possible in 'real public space'". See Douglas Davis, "The Virtual Museum, Imperfect but Promising," *The New York Times*, Sunday September 24, 2000, Section 2, pp.1, p.32.