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Harriet Curtis and Martin Hargreaves, ed.

Kira O'Reilly: Untitled (Bodies)

Bristol; Intellect, 2018. 320 p. £25.00.

ISBN: 978-1-78320-832-6.

Through performance, writing, image-making, and biotechnical experimentation, Kira O'Reilly is committed to exploring what it means to have/be (with) a body. Troubling the boundaries between bodies, both human and not, she works at/with these sites of periphery to produce complex sociopolitically engaged art. The first substantial publication dedicated to her interdisciplinary practices, this book documents and critically discusses key pieces from 1998 onwards, surveying two decades' worth of work by a still practising artist.

This major body of writing about O'Reilly includes essays, interviews, creative responses, and personal reflections by scholars (artist and non-artist), collaborators, audience members, and curators. These are collated alongside sumptuous colour photographs in this richly illustrated volume. Tracey Warr ruminates on biology's messy technologies, Shannon Bell philosophizes on anxiety affect, Patrick Duggan contemplates traumatic memory, and Doran George contributes a fascinating personally inflected essay on methodology, choreography, and failure. These theoretical writings demonstrate how O'Reilly's work invites multi-perspectival engagement and inspires deep thinking on the dialogue between bodies and the (architectural, social) structures in/against which they perform.

A select sample from the artist's own vast array of performative writings is also included, offering insight into how the enmeshment of body and language catalyzes O'Reilly's art making, and manifests in her practice. Towards the book's end, a further reading index provides a useful resource for practitioners, researchers, and students seeking additional critical engagements with O'Reilly's practice across the various subject areas of fine art, performance, bioart, feminism, and body politics.

In many ways, *Untitled (Bodies)* has thus been thoughtfully designed to evoke the nature, aesthetics, and themes of O'Reilly's work. Not conforming to chronological narrative, and with a contents page set out like a mind-map, the arrangement breaks purposefully with linearity, echoing the wilfully unstable nature of O'Reilly's own cross-disciplinary practice. Referencing *Succour* (2001–02) – a performance in which the artist gridded out her naked body using surgical tape before incising a diagonal mark on each square of skin with a scalpel – its cover is serially-marked, scarred with raised diagonals. This tactility evokes a concept that is key to O'Reilly's

work and unpicked by contributors repeatedly throughout the book – the notion of performative power, of kinaesthetic experience; the acknowledgment of one's own bodily experiences recognized or empathetically felt through the body of an/other.

Traversing the breadth of one artist's sustained and profound explorations of body politics and aesthetics, this important, beautifully designed study will be of interest to those who have already experienced O'Reilly's work (whether viscerally or vicariously, through text), as well as those encountering it for the first time. Simultaneously archival and celebratory, *Untitled (Bodies)* is a vital and compelling read.

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Penny Farfan

Performing Queer Modernism

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 138 p.

£22.99.

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Performing Queer Modernism is a timely book that collects together, adapts, and extends some of Penny Farfan's previous work connecting queer theory, performance, and the modernist period. Focusing on a range of performances – Mrs Patrick Campbell in *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*; Lois Fuller in *Fire Dance*, and Noël Coward and Gertrude Lawrence in *Private Lives*, among others – Farfan brings together explorations of the 'formally innovative as well as more conventional works' of modernity. Here she contextualizes performance through connecting queer theory and analyses of existing tropes of modernist practice.

Farfan suggests performance was 'a particularly vital forum for queer subversions and the activation of queer significations, experiences, feelings, desires, and communities', although at times she appears almost surprised at her own assertion that 'queer modernist performance could pass as light entertainment in the theatrical mainstream'. Her surprise comes perhaps from the stranglehold of narrow definitions of literary modernism – a narrowness Farfan is attempting to open out. Much 'mainstream' performance flirted with what we would now interpret as queer modes of being, during the modernist period: the interrelationship between the 'mainstream' and the modernist was more fluid than Farfan's overall framework might allow.

However, the volume includes an eclectic series of case studies that, when combined, enable Farfan to offer an insightful overview of the development and interaction of queer representations and performance over the period as a