

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, September 2012  
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*I see you on the subway,  
legs spread wide apart  
I see you on the subway,  
hat slightly askew  
I see you on the subway,  
taking up room for two  
Fuck island, fuck island,  
I wanna go to fuck island  
Fuck island, fuck island,  
I wanna go to fuck island  
Fuck island, fuck island,  
But just not with you*

Opening reception, Sunday, September 9, 7-9pm  
With a one-song performance by  
The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black

PARTICIPANT INC is proud to open the season with *Fuck Island*, a major solo exhibition of new work by Kembra Pfahler. "Fuck Island" is a protest anthem, love song, and manifesto written for her band, The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black. As Pfahler describes this song-as-exhibition: "It's the first annual Karen Black cock festival. But it's really more like a happy funeral. We are celebrating the death of the patriarch, and you are all party to this secret."

In her life's work, exclusively characterized by interpretations of feminine archetypes, Pfahler is well-known for announcing that the vagina is "closed" by sewing hers shut, or by constructing physical "Walls of Vagina" that cannot be permeated. *Fuck Island* debuts a new vernacular of 'future feminism' that follows in a long yet contested tradition of feminist appropriation of the phallus. From Yayoi Kusama's environments of flaccid dicks, to Lynda Benglis sporting a double dildo on the pages of *Artforum*, Pfahler extends this lineage of women's endeavor to reclaim and subvert phallic imagery - inaugurating a shift with a "morbid interdisciplinary fine art surprise party." Contesting apologist theorizing, she accentuates the 'privileged signifier' - here subsumed within the all-female imagery of Karen Black. As in the lyrics of the song, this repeating motif, Pfahler notes, "exists here as a way to manage the terror of imminent domain that underlies life in NYC - that size obfuscates and rules, destructively and illogically."

In her own writings on this project, *REBEL WITHOUT A COCK*, Pfahler further describes the exhibition as: "a collection of new drawings and sculpted things based on a song written for my band. This is the first time I have ever concentrated on anything specifically male. It is a mundane and mercurial investigation that doesn't obey my own decorative traditions. All of the props, illustrations, and lyrics make up a self-invented manual of action. Each image is like a piece of a puzzle or an ever-growing totem pole. This part being: the cock. This phallus seems not to be behaving itself. Its lurid, overrated, power-based trajectory seems to stop here, invaded by dolls, kittens, and household appliances."

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Pfahler has constructed a sophisticated worldview out of discarded cultural remnants, which she refers to as "Availabism." As with previous work, low-tech art supplies and making the best use of what is available is the preferred methodology. Much like cursive writing, preserving the perhaps self-obsolcescing practice of drawing is inherent to the exhibition, which features new works on paper, repurposed objects, and a limited edition LP. Pfahler concludes: "If the first stage in revolution is to be revolted, then I can say that I am revolted enough to make a show that wants to change the world and redecorate it with female tenants. You are seeing evidence of an anti-natural thought process manifested in *Fuck Island*."

Kembra Pfahler formed **The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black** with Samoa in New York in 1990, a theatrical rock group that links a monster aesthetic to a dark feminine archetype. Named in honor of cult horror film heroine Karen Black, Pfahler's band performs amid elaborate hand-constructed sets, in which she acts out transgressive physical feats. Her stage persona destroys conventional notions of female beauty – wearing a number of teased black wigs with blacked-out teeth, black stiletto boots, her body painted blue, pink, red, or yellow, Pfahler heads a team of "Girls of Karen Black," similarly styled. The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black records include: *A National Healthcare*, Triple X Records, 1990; *The Anti-Naturalist*, Cleopatra Records, 1995; *Black Date*, Cleopatra Records, 1998; and the forthcoming limited edition vinyl LP, *Fuck Island*.

Kembra Pfahler lives and works in New York City. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Giverny: E.V. Day & Kembra Pfahler in Monet's Garden*, The Hole, New York, NY, 2012; *Heaven & Hell*, Deitch Projects at Bas Fisher Invitational, Miami, FL, 2007; *File Under 'V'*, Rove Gallery, London, UK, 2005; and *Availabism and Anti-naturalism: A Feminine Experiment*, American Fine Arts Company, 2002. Selected group exhibitions include: *New York Minute*, Garage Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow and MACRO Museum, Rome, 2011; *Dead Flowers*, Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA and Participant Inc, New York, NY, 2010; *2008 Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 2008; *It's Not Only Rock 'N' Roll, Baby!* Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 2008; *Georg Gatsas: The Process VI*, Swiss Institute, New York, 2007; *Womanizer*, Deitch Projects, New York, NY, 2007 (also curated by the artist); and *The Extremism Show*, ABC NoRio, New York, NY, 1983 (also curated by the artist). Pfahler's work has appeared in publications such as *Dead Flowers* (Vox Populi and Participant Press, 2010); *Disinformation: The Interviews* (New York: The Disinformation Company, 2002); *Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007); and *Deathtripping: An Illustrated History of the Cinema of Transgression* (CreationCinema Collection, Washington D.C., Creation Books, 1999).

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