

***(Prologue) New Feminism/New Europe - Review by Dany Louise***

Cornerhouse, Manchester 29<sup>th</sup> July – 18<sup>th</sup> September

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When the Spice Girls, with cheerful vacuity, advocated girl power as the new feminism, you knew beyond doubt that the women's movement was in big trouble. Such has been the prolonged backlash against feminism, you could be forgiven for wondering if seventies consciousness-raising actually happened.

*Prologue* is an international network of intellectuals, artists and curators formed to put feminism back on the agenda. They aim to "examine the social, political and economic position of women" in an enlarged EU, and this exhibition is one piece of that project.

These are all-encompassing themes, and Cornerhouse can present only a tantalising taste of what new feminism might be. Inevitably, this involves diverse perspectives, but with twenty-one artists from seventeen countries, these women's voices might have greater coherence within a tighter curatorial brief. But the artworks are bold, varied and full of vitality - having assimilated their mother's feminist principles, these artists have looked outside themselves at the world around them, utilising film, new media, installation and live-art.

"Madonnas" by Katarzyna Gorna is a quietly discomfiting photo-triptych updating the traditional 'mother and child' of religious iconography. "Portes Oranges" by Senam Okudzeto is a lyrical celebration of Ghanaian orange-sellers. Oranges displayed on home-made stands and scattered in sensuous piles, their scent filling the room, leads visitors on to the next, resolutely first world work, "Table for Three" by Frances Goodman. Restaurant tables invite you to sit down and listen to the stories of three women. Disappointingly, they rerun tired arguments about love and marriage.

Unmissable is Hito Steyerl's film "November", based on the life of her friend Andrea Wolf, assassinated as a suspected Kurdish terrorist in 1998. A haunting, sober and compelling narrative deconstructs the motivations of the revolutionary, analysing the journey made from private citizen to that of dead terrorist-hero. Given the events of the last month in London and Leeds, you will struggle to find an artwork more directly relevant to current British experience than this.