This is the published version

Duckett, Victoria 2000, Beyond the body: Orlan and the material morph, in Metamorphing: visual transformation and the culture of quick-change, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn., pp.209-223.

Available from Deakin Research Online

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30062490

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner

Copyright: 2000, University of Minnesota Press
The French performance artist Orlan and her performance *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan, or Images—New Images* give fresh impetus to the question of the “morph.” Involving a series of operations begun in 1990 in which she surgically remolds her face after a computer-synthesized “ideal” based on features taken from women in famous artworks (Botticelli’s Venus, da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, Boucher’s Europa, Gerôme’s Psyche, and a School of Fontainebleau Diana), this performance graphically details the conflicts unleashed and the issues raised by the notion of “morphing” as both an inscription and transformation of bodies—women’s bodies in particular. It is these acts of inscription and transformation, rather than the fashionable hermeneutic through which they might be discussed, which is of compelling importance to the contemporary viewer. As Willibald Sauerländer, in his article “From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion” reminds us, “Style . . . detaches from . . . statues and images what may have been their original message and function and above all their inherent conflicts, the stamp of superstition and cruelty, the token of suffering or the signs of revolt, reducing them to patterns, samples, to the aesthetic irreality of the labeled mirror image.”

The most crucial aspect of Orlan’s performance is a foregrounding of the “cruelties” and “revolts” otherwise elided by the smooth seduction and “aesthetic irreality” of the computer-generated morph. Hence we learn that the unveiling of Orlan’s “new” face, completed after the seventh
operation (in the performance *Omnipresence*, New York, 21 November 1993), was canceled because "problems with the first operation had necessitated another," and that "she fielded audience questions, her speech slowed by stitches." Embodied revolts against transformation are, of course, hardly unique to Orlan, and in this essay I should like to cast her work as both material counterpoint to the digital morph and critical counterpoint to the cosmetic morph. Indeed, the disjunction between her "operationalized" material performance and the imagination of the computer-realized cosmetic morph is highlighted through this very issue of contingent bodily response. Whereas the unpredictability of Orlan's bodily responses to her operations are integrated into her performance, these same contingent bodily responses are a major subject of concern for the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons. Hence the emergence of a disclaimer—the "Electronic Imaging Disclaimer"—provided for physicians who use computerized images in preoperative consultations; the disclaimer requires the client to read and sign the following statement: "I understand that because of the significant difficulties in how living tissue heals, there may be no relationship between the electronic images and my final surgical result." What this disclaimer marks is an awareness of the seductive qualities of digital transformation and, more importantly, an attempt to litigate—an attempt to control instigated precisely because we cannot control—the material recalcitrance of the lived body.

This very distinctiveness and recalcitrance of the material body is brought to the fore in Orlan's performances. Rather than present her transformation as a fluid, seamless, and scarless transition between two disparate images (a transition popularized in the press through their reliance on sequential "before" and "after" shots), Orlan inserts the camera into the operating "theater" to document precisely those signs of suffering and conflict otherwise absent from the (cosmetic) morph's "special effect." Forced to witness Orlan's surgery while she is conscious, while she is reading from texts and directing the action, but otherwise appearing as what she calls a "cadaver under autopsy," the audience is given access to something that is usually hidden and, indeed, doubly celebrated for its invisibility—that is, both for its invisibility of process and its invisibility of result. Here, instead, the labor and cruelty are made explicit—they are in your (her) face. As one viewer, watching the seventh operation in New York, described: "The surgical moment arrived: Orlan, lying down, is injected by a long needle under her scalp. (Camera zooms in.) But this is no simulacrum of an operation, it's the real thing. Soon, the surgeon is sawing away, methodically scraping out flesh from below the hairline. The gallery empties of a third of its audience."

The difficulty experienced in watching such a performance translates into a difficulty not only in watching a mortification of real flesh but also in watching labor articulated—difficulty in watching the construction of the product rather than its fetishistic display. As Laura Mulvey tells us: "The fetish necessarily wants history to be overlooked. That is its function." Orlan's surveillance camera works against this fetishistic oversight, forcing a return to temporal reference and an acknowledgment of the marks of labor. This foregrounds the "embodied" history otherwise obfuscated by cosmetic surgery and the digital morph that encourages it. A television news "special interest" spot on KACTV (Los Angeles) in late February 1996 illustrated this computergraphic encouragement of cosmetic surgery by presenting a "thinning specialist"—one Randy Rose—whose job it was to digitally "downsize" computer images of overweight people. Working for a company called Slim Photo, Ms. Rose "chipped away those unwanted pounds" in Photoshop, making her subjects "thinner without simply shrinking the body." Using a photograph of a Slim Photo client—Susan Chase—and showing the results of the computergraphic transition between an overweight "before" and a slim "after" image, the difficult and laborious physical process of transformation is elided. Although the service emphasizes that it is designed to function merely as "motivator" to bodily change, the process of this change and what it might actually entail is itself absent. Hence Ms. Chase smiles and—obviously pleased with her new" image—says, "Wow, who's that fox? ... So this is what I really look like under all this!" What she fails to recognize is that the process of "chipping" away those unwanted pounds can also be literalized; that the transition so smoothly and effortlessly presented on the computer monitor can itself be applied to and experienced by the material body, albeit hardly so smoothly and effortlessly. Indeed, it is precisely the literalization of this process that is being promoted—even if not explicitly—by Ms. Rose and the digital Slim Photo process.

The preoperative desire to obfuscate the fact of labor extends into the later desire to obfuscate even a trace of labor once cosmetic surgery has been completed. Thus a chart in the January–February 1996 issue of *Mirabella* listed, among other information about such surgery, the expected length of absence from work—that is, the expected time it would take for the body to cover over marks of surgical intervention. In a similar vein,
an article that appeared in a January 1997 issue of *Star* asked, “How do celebrities manage to have plastic surgery yet never get caught with black eyes and bandages?” and went on to explain how “the aptly named Hidden Garden in Beverly Hills is a favorite with plastic-surgery patients. It sneaks celebrities into a plush Bentley or Rolls-Royce that delivers them—via a private garage—to a door that leads directly to their room where they hide out in pampered luxury until the swelling subsides.” This notion of the “hidden” body is accentuated through the photographs that accompany the text: the camera that has entered this forbidden “garden” of recovery has caught only images of a veiled and anonymous female figure. Accordingly, only the recovered and smiling faces of a postoperative Ivana Trump and Jacqueline Onassis are shown and identified. This elision of the fact of physical labor and pain is again noted, although in a different context, in a related article entitled “Knifestyles of the Rich and Famous”: “When actors receive awards and thank everyone from their kindergarten acting teacher to their latest agent, there’s one person they are usually leaving out—their plastic surgeon.”

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this absence is the fashion in which it becomes inscribed as a performance, as something that is enacted outside an individual’s “lived” reality. As Nola Rocco, the owner of Hidden Garden, explains: “If you want to come as Dick Tracy or Marilyn Monroe, that’s fine. Sometimes we have four Dick Tracys and four Marilyn Monroes.” This use of an assumed name as shield to a lived identity, this morph into some desired other, reinscribes the notion of plastic surgery as performance. In contrast to Orlan, however, this “performance” is shielded from the public gaze, and there is no audience. Hidden, the surgery is absented into a name (Marilyn Monroe) that is, interestingly, itself a “screen” to someone else (Norma Jean Mortenson). This use of an assumed name as shield to a lived identity was, of course, given antecedent through soap-opera actress Jeanne Cooper’s actual on-the-air facelift in her role as Katherine Chancellor on *The Young and the Restless* ten years ago. The body bearing signs of surgical intervention is thereby presented to the public gaze only when it is incorporated into the story line as a necessary fiction. Those in the real world who have cosmetic surgery usually choose to hide the surgical intervention and recuperate hidden from public view. In either case, this “absence” becomes, however, a “presence” of sorts through the attention paid to the person’s absence from work, or to the “before” and “after” shots of celebrities displayed in the popular press. The “task” for the watching public thus becomes an almost gamelike matter of “filling in the blanks.” Hence, beside forty-nine shots of celebrities, the *Star* explains that “sex goddess Raquel Welch would like us to think that exercise alone has kept her flesh firm, but cosmetic surgeons say she’s had a facelift, a brow lift, an eyelid-lift, and some nasal resculpturing”; “Just before Donald dumped Ivana for Marla, the first Mrs. Trump erased 10 years with a facelift, a nose reshape, and having wrinkle removed. Ivana attributed the transformation to a new hairstyle and lighter makeup”; and “Former Playmate of the Year Anna Nicole Smith says her breasts ballooned when she was pregnant with her son. Almost everyone else believes her big bosom is the result of implants.”

In its spectacularization of the operating “theater”—the very foregrounding of the choreography applied to each operation—Orlan’s performance stands in contradistinction to the implied “magic” of cosmetic surgery. Correspondingly, one sees a macabre reversal of the cosmetic morph’s status and power as special effect. In this way, Orlan has at once refused and conceded to her own moment of illusionistic grandeur: on the one hand, there is no fetishistic elimination of her suffering and labor, yet on the other there is a certain accommodation to the morph’s theatrical construction as special performance, to its status as visual and marked effect to be watched and marveled at in its moment of unfolding and revelation. This attention paid to performance works literally to inscribe the operating room as theater, as a space in which to watch events unfold as spectacle. Orlan’s *Operation One* included, for example, an African male striptease dancer and gowns designed by Paco Rabanne, and *Operation Seven* was beamed live around the world via satellite and featured Orlan interacting on the telephone or responding to faxes sent to her from places as far afield as Montreal, Tokyo, and Latvia (“Does it hurt?” asked someone from Moscow).

Although these operations were indeed performative, there must, however, also be an acknowledgment of the centrality ascribed by them to narrative; that is, the emphasis Orlan gives the “theatrical story.” It is in this realm that the distinctions between the digital and material morph are best detailed: whereas the computergraphic morph represents a pause in narrative continuity or signifies in itself a “distracting” micro-narrative and is tied, inevitably, to a reemergent cinema of attractions, Orlan’s “biological morph” represents a certain narrative continuity whereby each of her operations becomes a climax to a story that is in the process of unfolding. In this way, her operations can be regarded both as a concession to the “performative” nature of the morph and also as a
moment in a narrative trajectory. Accordingly, the moment of transformation is staged—it foregrounds its own "special effects"—while Orlan's character is developed narratively through her interactions with a watching audience and through the texts she chooses to read to them. Hence, just as Tom Gunning explains that the cinema of attractions "is an exhibitionist cinema ... a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator," so too might it be argued that Orlan ruptures the fiction of this visibility, foregrounding narrative as a tool with which to critique today's "Spiebelg-Lucas-Coppola cinema of effects."17

Given that Orlan must be administered a dangerous spinal injection—an epidural block—to retain consciousness during the operations, these narrative insertions involve a very "real" life-and-death scenario. In this way, they stand as narrative "climaxes" within the unfolding narrative that is Orlan. They also point, somewhat more metonymically, to the questions that plague Orlan's narrative teleology: when all the operations are completed, and the time comes for her to reapply for citizenship, will the Public Prosecutor accept her new identity with her new face? Will Orlan, in effect (in special effect), be allowed this complete change of identity, or will it be denied, so that she remains forever suspended in a stalled process of narrative denouement? This issue of "public" acceptance is significant because it again articulates a fact often elided: it takes public acceptance—and, more generally, public recognition—for the material morph to "fix itself."

This process of explicitly narrativizing what is generally mystified as hidden spectacle (cosmetic surgery) or as special effect (computergraphic morph) is further emphasized through Orlan's use of kitsch, Hollywood-style billboards in which she appears, divalike, surrounded by cast and production credits. Publicly documenting her process of "becoming," these stand as episodic vignettes, as literal signposts of the story's unfolding. They also join other images of Orlan. As Barbara Rose comments: "Her features and limbs are endlessly photographed; in France she appears in mass-media magazines and on television talk shows. Each time she is seen she looks different."19 In this regard, correlations might be drawn between Orlan and her critique of the special effect and Laura Mulvey and her critique of the fetishization of the female in Hollywood cinema. Indeed, Mulvey's recognition of the way in which "the presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation" has been both conceded and challenged by Orlan's development of narrative.20 In the same way, Mulvey's statement that "psychoanalytic theory provided the investigative gaze (in the early 1970s) with the ability to see through the surface of cultural phenomena as though with intellectual X-Ray eyes" has met its contemporary equivalent.21 The difference, of course, is that for Orlan, "investigation" is "intervention," which translates from the French, quite literally, into "surgical operation." Hence, Mulvey's fetishistic scopophilia, inserted as a "pause" within the sadistic voyeurism of Hollywood narrative (i.e., a close-up of the face of Garbo), is transcribed into Orlan's billboards, which stand, in their turn, as contemplative tableaux amid a like exercise in narrative demystification. Related to this mise en abyme of contradiction is the fact that "Orlan" has been deliberately evasive about her past, refusing specific autobiographical detail in order to maintain the mystifying "star quality" necessary for her narrative unfolding.22

This inscription of the biological morph as a vehicle for narrative denouement is reiterated through Orlan's use of the Renaissance painting as model to her morph. Orlan asks that the audience "not be fooled by the images but to keep on thinking about what is behind them." She tells them:

I am sorry to make you suffer, but remember, I am not suffering, except like you, when I look at the images. Only a few kinds of images force you to shut your eyes: death, suffering, the opening of the body, some aspects of pornography for some people, and for others, giving birth.... In showing you these images, I propose an exercise which you probably enact when you watch the news on TV: do not be fooled by the images but to keep on thinking about what is behind them.23

This demand—that the audience "read" the image—again emphasizes Orlan's focus on "story." Relevant here is that the paintings on which her operations are based were chosen for their narrative content and not for their "inherent" aesthetic "appeal." As Orlan explains:

I chose [the goddesses from Greek mythology] not for the canons of beauty they are supposed to represent (seen from afar), but rather on account of the stories associated with them. Diana was chosen because she refuses to submit to the gods or to men, she is active and even aggressive, she directs a group; Mona Lisa was chosen as a beacon figure in
the history of art, a key reference, not because she is beautiful according
to contemporary criteria of beauty, since beneath this woman there is a
man, who we know is Leonardo da Vinci, a self-portrait hiding in
the image of the "Mona Lisa" (which brings us back to the question of iden-
tity). ... These representations of female figures act as part of my inspira-
tion and underlie it in a symbolic manner. Their images, in relation to
their stories, may re-emerge in later works.

Within such a context, Orlan's face becomes representative of a "ma-
terialized" Web page in which each section asks that you point to it, click
on it, and follow it through its archaeology of references. The reliance on
language within this "archaeology" is further accentuated by the fact that
Orlan quite literally frames the flesh removed during her operations in
language, in shatterproof glass sheets on which are engraved, in various
languages, an extract by Michel Serres:

What can he do to us now, the tattooed running monster, an ambi-
dextrous, hermaphrodite, mixed race monster? Yes, blood and flesh. Science
speaks of organs, of functions, of cells and molecules, finally admitting
that it is high time that we stop speaking about life in laboratories, but it
never speaks about the flesh, which only just indicates the mixed, in a
given part of the body, here and now of muscles and blood, of skin and
hair, of bones, of nerves, and of diverse functions, which therefore mixes
together that which relevant knowledge analyzes.

Orlan's flesh will continue to be contained within and by this "language"
until the exhaustion of her body, until she has no more flesh to be
"preserved."

This attention paid to the preservation of "the fragment" and its con-
tainment in language transcribes, again quite literally, the poetic glorifica-
tion of the anatomical fragment found in that Renaissance form of poetry,
the blason anatomique. Such an analogy is itself alluded to in Orlan's
work through the fact that the surgery that she has been undergoing since
1990 is based on sections of Renaissance paintings. Hence she will acquire
the forehead of the Mona Lisa, the eyes of Diana, the lips of Europa, and
the chin of Venus. The two (the paintings and the poems) were themselves
connected to a broader "preoccupation with the structure of the human
body, which led to the formulation of the theory of proportions and the
articulation of the scientific system of anatomy." Such a system, based on
the part as the measure for the whole and on the whole as a measure of the

correspondences between these parts, grounds Orlan's work within a his-
torical continuum that she herself locates, recalling that the ancient Greek
artist Zeuxis chose the "best" parts from different female models and
combined them to produce the ideal woman. This emphasis on the cor-
respondence of parts is, we must note, still an impetus to plastic surgery
today: as a plastic surgeon advises his colleagues in an article entitled "Art
for Head and Neck Surgeons," familiarity with classical art theory will
allow them better to "judge human form in three dimensions, evaluate all
aspects of the deformity, visualize the finished product, and plan the ap-
proach that will produce the optimal result." In such a context, it is hard-
ly surprising that this art historical and sculptural "ideal" also emerged on
the pages of the Star with explicit reference made, for example, to "Chis-
elled Stone." Under a banner asking "Is This the Perfect Woman?" a two-
page spread of a computergraphic morph was presented and explained
thus:

Many women long for Jane Seymour's to-die-for chestnut tresses. Liz
Taylor's violet eyes hypnotize. Bo Derek's chiseled cheekbones rate a 10.
Those in the know admire Sharon Stone's delicate nose. Kim Basinger's
pouty lips are poetry. Uma Thurman's dainty chin is in. Claudia Schif-
ner's great gams make men go weak in the knees. And Cindy Crawford's
breasts are best. Put them all together and what do you get? With a little
computer magic, we combined these highly prized, celebrity features
and came up with this amazingly striking creature.

This creation of the composite image also finds antecedent in the prac-
tices employed in the making of scientific images at the turn of the centu-
ry. As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison explain in their article "The
Image of Objectivity," Johannes Sabotta, one of the great German anatomic-
ists of the period, amalgamated fractional parts of different individuals
as the basis from which drawings would be made in his 1907 Atlas and
Textbook of Human Anatomy. Although Sabotta's attention was devoted to
the question of scientific reproduction and the "means of squelching the
subjectivity of (the draughtsman's) interpretation," it is interesting to note
the fashion in which this mosaic of body parts was presented as a clear
image, as a tool for the comprehension of data. Unlike the computer-
generated morph, which positions the mosaic of parts as an uninterrupted
and opaque interlude between two disparate images, Sabotta's practice
might be paralleled to the act of arresting the morph in its moment of de-
 noument. In this regard, Orlan herself can be seen as a hiatus of sorts: she
is devolving into her computer-generated composite model and, as such, represents the arrested "moment" in which one image devolves into fragments of the next. Hence she graphically details the computer-generated morph's unfolding. Perhaps more important, however, Orlan also foregrounds the way in which mechanical precision—here cast in terms of computer software, but for Sabotta represented by the photograph—is less a movement toward the separation of man and machine than it is a movement toward the embodiment of one into the other. Accordingly, Orlan refers to herself as a "replicant" and regards her body—her work—as "it."532

Somewhat paradoxically, Orlan's very process of "objectifying" her lived body ("it") exemplifies the critical issues involved in fashioning the body after a computer-generated composite. Indeed, Orlan at once details and refuses the remodeling of the female body according to the mathematicalization of form. Relevant here is Francette Pacteau's discussion of the way in which "behind the woman there is, always, the image to which the question of her beauty must be referred. As beautiful as . . . Hence desire reaches beyond mere flesh to painted perfection, which, impressibly, it wills to become flesh.533 Orlan uses the Renaissance painting and the computergraphic morph as generative model to her surgical operations and is therefore complicit in this process of mathematicalizing the female form. However, Orlan's refusal to order her face along a grid of measurements—her very asymmetry—serves to critique this technologically generated mathematicalization of form. Hence, two implants, usually used to emphasize cheekbones, have been placed on the temples on either side of her forehead, and in her next operation, she will be given the biggest nose technically possible in relation to her anatomy. In this way, she states, her work "is not intended to be against plastic surgery, but rather against the norms of beauty and the dictates of the dominant ideology which is becoming more and more deeply embedded in female . . . flesh."534 Here it is interesting to note that Orlan has had to enlist the services of a "feminist surgeon" (Doctor Marjorie Cramer) for her more recent operations—the seventh, eighth, and ninth—since she "was not able to obtain from male surgeons what she was able to achieve with a female surgeon for they (the male surgeons) wanted to keep her 'cute.'"535

It is telling, then, that Nancy Etcoff, a psychologist from MIT, observes that a supermodel's face is "geometrically normalized" or, rather, "unusually average." As Evan Schwartz explains in a recent Discover Magazine article entitled "Such a Lovely Face":

Etcoff, a psychologist from MIT who's now on staff at Massachusetts General Hospital, has long been interested in notions of facial beauty. These days she regularly visits Sandy Pentland's shop at the MIT Media Lab to study the "averaged" faces that his software yields. She has found that they bear a striking resemblance to those of supermodels such as Kate Moss, one of the most celebrated faces of the 1990s. Moss, in Etcoff's opinion, looks like an androgynous 18-year-old with few distinguishing features.56

This mapping of a topography that disrupts the notion of the "beautiful whole" does, of course, present Orlan as counterpoint not only to Michael Jackson but also to Cindy Jackson, a woman who has been described as "the ultimate Barbie performance artist" and who has had more than twenty operations and spent $50,000 to turn herself into a living doll.57 The attention Cindy pays to the "metrical mean" is illustrated in the following report by M. G. Lord of a meeting with her: "She wanted a fat transplant in her cheeks. 'I have dents here which need filling in,' she explained. 'See my cheek here is flat—but I have dents underneath.' But I can't see them,' I said. 'But they're there,' she assured [me]."578 This attention paid to the detail—the detail that cannot be "seen" but might be computed—and its relation to the "whole" once more reiterates the currency that the Renaissance system of anatomy has in the contemporary period. One Dr. Bookstein, quoted in an article entitled "The Statistics of Shape: A Mathematician Uses Morphometrics to Analyze the Brains of Schizophrenics," notes that morphometrics "began with the Renaissance painter Dürer . . . [who] put grids on faces and then distorted the grids and the lines drawn within them. He used this method to explore what happened to faces as the proportions of various features changed—where an ear belongs on a long face, for instance."59 Orlan's insistent asymmetry suggests, interestingly, that she will forever remain in a skewed grid, in an unfixed moment of "becoming," suspended in an asymmetrical tribute to the morph's unfolding.

Related to this denial of stasis is Orlan's use of the fixed photograph as document to her "recovery" from her seventh operation. She presented forty-one consecutive diptychs corresponding to her forty days of "healing" and added a final "concluding" image. At the bottom of each diptych was an image of her face digitally morphed with the portraits of her art historical reference figures. Each day, the image of the day was placed alongside these reference figures with magnets. Like Marey's nine-century chronophotography, these are (surgical) still frames that show the
differential between successive images and reveal a "mechanism of movement". "First of all, a face with bandages, then one with colors, from blue to yellow through red... On the last day the installation is complete." Orlan's specification—and literalization—of her skin color, her shape, and her form stands, of course, in contradistinction to Marye's reduction of the human form to a gait mapped against a black background. What is interesting here is that Marye "was interested in establishing a record of the norm" and erased "any distinguishing details of the man performing for him," whereas Orlan's still frames chart a movement that marks her specificity and her deviance from the "norm." Not only is her movement generally kept hidden from the social sphere, but each successive image reinforces the fact that it is a human figure who is propelling "the action."

This representation of duration through a series of static frames is, as Lisa Cartwright reminds us, "about physical transformation." Contrasting Marye's study of human physiology to photographer Mathew Brady's compendium of body types designated as likely to be inclined toward criminal behavior, she states:

> Between Brady and Marye we see a shift from the observed and analogically classified body to the experimented upon and the digitally ordered body. With the transition from the analogic to the digital and from observation to experimentation, we also see a shift in modes of social regulation. The body once rendered innately deviant is now open to "corrective" physiological regulation and transformation.

Evidently, Orlan's surgery—and cosmetic surgery more generally—is implicated in this correction of "deviance." Perhaps more interesting, however, are the very correlations that might be drawn between the physiological "cinema" at the turn of the century and the computer morph as it functions today: the two deal with bodily transformation, ask that lines be drawn on the human form to chart this transformation, and exchange depth and form for duration and process. Popular cinema at the turn of the century might also be integrated into a discussion of the computer-generated morph today. Relevant here is Cartwright's comment that "the success of the popular cinema would depend, in part, on the spectator's reason of viewing a continuous moving image and the masking of the technology that produced this illusion." What is being noted here is a coincidence of spectatorial effect whereby the "continuous moving image" (the popular cinema) today finds its equivalence in the instantaneous simultaneity of the special effect. In other words, through the computer-generated morph, we are again witness to what Scott Bukatman calls "the boundless and infinite stuff of sublime experience... a transcendence of...human limits."

We have, through this transcendence, once more returned to Sauerländer's "aesthetic irreality of the labeled mirror image." This irreality explains, in part, the name "Elastic Reality" given to the popular morphing software. Sliding easily between two images, this reality is indeed elastic, reversible. It is also a reality that hides its computations in a smooth matematization of form. In contradistinction to this, the material biological morph produces forms of matematization that are not, of course, reversible. The crucial difference between the computergraphic cosmetic morph and Orlan's fleshy morph lies precisely here—in the distinctions that can be drawn between forms of matematization and forms of the body. Whereas the computergraphic cosmetic morph hides the process that puts the Renaissance grid into "place," Orlan draws attention to this process. She disrupts the grid's standard assignments and, in doing so, disrupts the grid's assignment of value. Through this disruption, she foregrounds the bodily processes by which we materially (trans)form. Rather than give us a smooth ellipsis, Orlan "faces us" with a body cut open, a bruised body, a body that (even when healed) refuses mathematical standardization: the forehead of the Mona Lisa, the eyes of Diana, the lips of Europa, the chin of Venus. Following her lead, we would therefore do well to remember to "not be fooled by the images but to keep on thinking about what is behind them."

Notes

1. Willibald Sauerländer, "From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion," *Art History* 6, no. 3 (September 1983): 254.
4. In "I Do Not Want to Look Like... Orlan on Becoming-Orlan," *Women's Art* 64 (May–June 1995), Orlan writes of herself as "an image of a cadaver under autopsys which keeps on speaking, as if its words were detached from its body" (8).
5. Lovelace, 13.
Sherman," New Left Review 188 (July–August 1991): 150. She continues: "The fetish is also a symptom, and as such has a history which may be deciphered."


9. Ibid., 37.

10. Ibid., 32.


13. Ibid., 44.


16. Ibid., 57.

17. Ibid., 61.

18. "When the operations are finished, I will employ an advertising agency to find me a first and second name and an artist's name, then I will get a lawyer to appeal to the Public Prosecutor to accept my new identity with my new face. This is a performance inscribed with the social fabric, a performance which goes as far as the law... as far as a complete change of identity" (Orlan, 10).


21. Ibid., xiv.

22. "'Orlan' was [a name] taken on during her teens; until recently, when the New York Times revealed her name to be Mireille Porter, she refused to state what it was" (Love lace, 15).

23. Orlan, 6.

24. Orlan, 8; see also Rose, who notes, in relation to this process of disassembling the female form, how "the fetishization of the body parts imposed on women by men since antiquity did not hold true for images of the masculine ideal. For male images, ancient artists might improve on nature, but the masculine ideal did not require fragmentation" (84).

25. Orlan, 10.


27. Rose, 84.


30. Ibid., 46–47.


32. Mark Dery, in "Against Nature," 21C 4 (1995), writes: "Orlan, who refers to herself as a replicant and who declares—'I think the body is obsolete'—conceals a not-so-secret dream to be the world's first cyborg celebrity... 'Orlan's body is it,' her work" (29–30).


34. Orlan, 9.

35. Ibid.


38. Ibid., 246.


40. Orlan, 9.

41. Lisa Cartwright, Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Cartwright notes: "In Marey's study of human physiology... the specific form and appearance of the head and body, physical proportion, and physiognomic form... are rendered invisible. Any distinguishing details of the man performing for Marey, save his gait, are erased from the picture. We can know neither the skin color nor the shape and form of the features of the man whose movements are tracked in the image. Indeed, the color black, present in the black cloth that covers his skin, renders the body invisible rather than functioning as a visual indicator of racial identity" (36).

42. Ibid.


44. Cartwright, 38; italics mine.


46. Orlan, 6.