Title
Stand Your Ground

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Pavilion’s 2007 Commissions Programme included a panel discussion addressing the phenomenon of the ‘emerging artist’ at Photofusion. The panel was made up of artists and curators and the audience consisted mostly of artists. We talked about the term ‘emerging’ as a label, as an important stage in an artists’ career, and more broadly about emerging trends within the contemporary art field. We talked also about an apparent contemporary privileging of the ‘emerging’ across culture: of the novel, of the experimental and unproven, as opposed to the established.

The art market has come to favour and devour the novel and emergent in contemporary art, because it has an insatiable demand for new product. At the same time, the one-time structure of value judgement (albeit inevitably flawed) in art and culture, a key figure of which was the critic, is increasingly giving way to the market’s raw consumerism, and Postmodern preference for subjectivity. This creates a professional and cultural context that, whilst dynamic, can be an immensely disorientating one in which to exist, and make art.

This fickle context is a real challenge for artists ‘emerging’ onto the international scene and market to respond to. The Pavilion Commissions offer such emerging artists the opportunity to reflect and collaborate with Pavilion, to realise a challenging new body of work. In fact, Tess Hurrell and Peter Ainsworth have in 2008, each produced a body of work that oppositely takes a position within this contextual dialectic.

Tess Hurrell’s new body of work Drawing light harks back to the origins of photography and beyond, to the lighting of the dark through flashes, and shinings of light. Hurrell’s experiments with light are arrested by the camera: ephemeral and intangible light is made solid and tactile. The work has a sublime beauty, a materiality and a sense of triumph. It achieves a firm ontological status, the fact of which has a profound resonance in our contemporary context.

Peter Ainsworth asserts the possible role of art as an alternative order. Using ‘edge spaces’ (disused post-
industrial spaces outside the usual urban order or regulation) as a stage, Ainsworth worked with participants to perform actions within the sites: cultivation, re-enactment and craftwork included. The photographing of these performed actions becomes a metaphor for the activity, through its framing and the articulation of space and content. The work Summer and Spring, Angel Road (A406) proposes a radical and alternative reconnection with the ‘wasteland’ that it uses. Concurrently, Ainsworth’s restaging of proverbs, mimetic of Pieter Bruegel’s Nederlandish Proverbs and depictions of the seasons points to man’s timeless relation to nature, human nature and the cycle of creation and destruction.

This year, Pavilion has been fortunate to work with five emerging artists to produce new bodies of work, each of which has come to an important and accomplished culmination. The art presented here, accompanied by newly commissioned critical texts is a product of the endeavours of those five artists, in collaboration with Pavilion. Pavilion Programme Manager Ruth Haycock has been the lynchpin of the programme. In addition, the contributions of advisors Greg Hobson and Max Kandhola have also been invaluable.

As a not-for-profit, Pavilion is in the fortunate position of being able, to an extent, to engage with the extraordinary contemporary art and culture market on its own terms, and therefore to elect to focus on urgent new lines of enquiry within contemporary art, always couched within broader driving forces: to make sense of the world; imagine new ways of living; develop and change understanding and perceptions; ask what it is to be human.

Anna Reid
Pavilion Artistic Director
Moira Lovell captures the Doncaster Rovers Belles standing next to their manager not in a pose, but in a stance.

In this juxtaposition we see something of their difference — gender, surely, but also age, authority, and the tug of war as each work for the other’s respect.

The Belles do not meet the camera with the obligatory disarming smile asked of women athletes on those anomalous days when the media takes interest. Nor are these traditional team photos presenting the united front arranged in tidy rows on the pitch, embodying forth the team’s identity.

Lovell’s portraits tap into two veins: The complexity of photographing women athletes, and the complexity of the relationship between managers (overwhelmingly male) and women players.

Still in their training kits and in the changing room, part of them hasn’t left the pitch. When you take athletes out of the game, they can look out of place. When Marta accepted the 2007 FIFA Female Footballer of the Year Award, for example, she wore a dark skirt and matching jacket. She looked stiff and awkward. She was dressed not in the garb of a female public icon (floor length gown), but of a Corporate Executive. She was, in fact, wearing the female equivalent of what male footballers wear when they take that sort of stage — a suit. She looked no more comfortable in it than those guys do. You know she’d rather be in her kit. I know that when I picture her in my mind’s eye, she’s in her Sweden Umea strip—bad-ass black and gold.

The team uniform is loaded with even more meaning for women. As much as the game is ‘marked’ as a working-class sport, it is even more deeply coded as masculine, thanks largely to the FA’s forty-year prohibition of women from its pitches. Because of this, one’s kit feels like a black leather motorcycle jacket. Even as it signifies membership in a team, a collective identity, it also signals a form of rebellion.
Looking at these images, I am reminded of how important the game is to the women who play it. Football rewires our bodies, re-choreographs our movement through space. As much as women are taught to have a strategic relationship to their looks (or that they should), they aren't always encouraged to develop physical self-awareness—the self-awareness that is paradoxically won when self-consciousness is lost. But the spaces in which that self-awareness looks and feels 'natural' are somewhere else. Not here, in an antiseptic locker room.

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze once wrote of the athletic gesture, "it is not I who attempt to escape from my body, it is the body that attempts to escape from itself" (Deleuze, 15). If, on the pitch, you tried to escape your body, your body would betray you. You must work through and with your body. The athletic body has a highly developed vocabulary and practical intelligence. You do not 'transcend' the body in sport. The body 'transforms' itself into action—it crashes through the stories that dictate how to experience it, how to look at it,
what to do with it. The whole body seems to be concentrated in the extension of a foot, in a swerve and dip of the shoulder to the left, in a leaping twist and turn of the head.

If this is true of men, it is doubly so for women. Even within feminism, as philosopher Iris Marion Young points out, there is a tendency to talk about a woman's anatomy and physiology as such, as if it were a burden, and in our way (Young, 139). 'Properly' feminised women therefore have a fragmented relationship to their bodies. If they throw a ball, they only use their arms. If they pick up a box, it's the same. A woman's motion tends not to reach, extend, lean, stretch, and follow through in the direction of intention (Young, 43). In the worst cases, a woman experiences her body as something that she drags through restricted space.

Women athletes make letting all that baggage go look not just possible, but in fact, like it's the easiest thing in the world. When a woman makes a perfect, logic-defying tackle—sliding across the grass to push the ball out from under her opponent's feet—it's like she is traveling on even greater distance than the ground she covers. When she leaps into the air, she climbs more than vertical space because the ties that bind the body to the ground are so much more intricate, and limiting. When we watch her move with total freedom and clarity of intention, we feel a certain sense of release.

I know this sounds romantic, idealistic. And, on one level, it is. On another, though, it's the most grounded thing there is. It is brought into being by the hard physical work of developing one's talent. This is what the manager is for — his job is to wrestle that out of each woman on the roster, to help her manifest her intentions as an athlete, and realise the club's ambition for the team.

You can't capture 'this' process in a photo of women playing, in which they might simply look heroic. This story belongs rather to the space of transformation—the process of getting from here, to there, and back again.

We can treat the details of these images as tea leaves forecasting the relationship of player to manager: the almost-smile of one, the steely determination of another, the space between them, his expression, hers, the angling of their bodies, or a stance that addresses the photographer as if she held not a camera, but a ball. That sort of scrutiny neatly mirrors the interpretive overdrive that shapes a player's relationship to her manager when she is trying to win a place on the starting line up, or is afraid of losing it.

Lovell has tapped into a deeper vein than that. When the FA banned women from its pitches, it also banned male FA Members from supporting the women's game as referees, linesmen, etc. The ban wasn't just an attempt to regulate women footballers out of existence. It was an attempt to ban the re-wiring of men and women's relationship to each other, something that women's football inevitably brings about.

That, Lovell reminds us, is as big a game as it gets.


Young, Iris Marion. 1980. *Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Compartment, Mobility and Spatiality*. Human Studies 3, 137–156.
MOIRA LOVELL: SOPHIE & JOHN
SOPHIE HOPPER (26)
CENTRE/RIGHT MIDFIELD
1.5 YEARS WITH THE DONCASTER ROVERS BELLES