

## **Egg Stock**

*Single-channel video*

*Also available as a single-channel video installation with performance objects*

8 min, 2014

### *Synopsis:*

In *Egg Stock* a business woman holds court on a driving range and a golf course, respectively. She caddies golf bag, briefcase and two giant ovaries constructed out of canvas clothing bags that are covered in felt and lined with four hundred red velvet pockets<sup>1</sup>. Each pocket holds one of her eggs (raw chicken eggs) which she systematically depletes by date-stamping, tenderly placing them onto a tee and then swinging at them with an iron fist. The escalating mess chronicles the passing of each month of her paradoxical existence—business tycoon, earth mother, fashion icon. At once visceral and absurd, the work probes notions of gender and sexuality while revealing tropes and challenging the societal expectations placed upon women.

*Egg Stock* originally consisted of a live performance and a performance-for-video created for “This Could be the Place” a co-production between *Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area (CAFKA)* and the *University of Waterloo Art Gallery (UWAG)* 2014.

### *Extended Statement:*

In considering *This Could be the Place*'s themes of labour, place, and misdirection/confusion from a perspective of subversion, I decided that a space of leisure—used for a respite from labour—was a suitable setting. Wanting to work with a traditionally gendered location, the gentleman's club, or golf course, seemed a logical choice.

The golf green is a paradoxical beast: it is an environmentally questionable enterprise moonlighting as Nature dressed in a heavily manicured and image-conscious exterior. Rather than being an escape from the workplace, golf seems to subscribe to many of the linear, competitive and highly structured strategies of the corporate world. When playing the game there is little potential for deviating from the set course of the clearly numbered greens. Groups of golfers follow one another in a steady stream of motorized vehicles meandering on a single winding path; players stick to the high and narrow and avoid the pit falls at all costs. Golfers practise a studied form in stance and swing, wear a specific uniform and follow proper etiquette. The shoes they walk in are generally white. High heels are not a good choice as the heels sink into the grass causing balance and weight distribution issues. It was thus

1. Women are born with approximately one to two million follicles. Of these around three to four hundred will reach maturity and be ovulated as eggs. (Columbia Health, “Go Ask Alice”, *The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York*, Feb. 04, 2000 (reviewed Jan. 19, 2007), <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/women-and-their-eggs-how-many-and-how-long>.)

important that the heroine of *Egg Stock* be dressed to be on her game in open-for-business attire, wedges firmly planted.

The game of golf personifies an almost nihilistic existentialism in the absurdity of attempting to hit a tiny ball into a distant tiny hole while being confronted with one's physical and psychological 'discoordination' with every swing. The game is less an escape from and more an entrapment in the everyday grind. Golf is thus an ironic symbol of what affluence, privilege and the subsequent leisure time afford. Despite my many grievances with the problematic signification embedded in the sport, it is its many contradictory elements that also make golf a particularly conceptually rich and appealing muse.

While having a clear beginning and end, the game of golf simultaneously embodies cyclical time. Curiously, one plays rounds and could (money permitting) continue playing into eternity. This is unlike the female cycle which has a definitive end. Once I substituted all the balls for eggs, in *Egg Stock* this cyclical drive seemed comically appropriate.

There are a number of things that happen when you play a round of golf with a raw egg. It becomes nearly impossible to get it into the hole and it gets rather messy. The futility, but also the pleasure, of the game is accentuated in the slimy residue of each egg explosion; sexual innuendos are not lost here. As opposed to the traditional "hole-in-one" the only way of reaching your goal, playing with an egg, is through lightly tapping or pushing it through the grass. The egg is not engineered to roll in a straight line and control is difficult. A large supply is thus warranted.

Production and expenditure and the questions surrounding the ownership of the female reproductive potential became a central issue in the live performance of *Egg Stock*. The public was given the opportunity to smash some of the eggs with a selection of irons on the University of Waterloo campus performance site, creating an interesting and awkward interplay between the performer and participant. Power, violation, intimacy, abundance and waste all became topics for discussion.

Although a public gesture, the work is also a personal confrontation with my own life/work choices. The challenges of pursuing *both* a family and art career were clearly laid out to me early on in my art education by several of my female professors. These conversations have been omnipresent in my mind over the past twenty years. The negotiation—and my choice not to start a family up to this point—is boiling close to the surface now that I am slowly edging closer to the end of my own egg supply. The direct physical engagement with this reality during the performance allowed me to take symbolic ownership of what is often seen as the societally entropic loss of reproductive potential (and thus sexual desirability) of the aging female. The sheer physical labour and exertion of hitting four hundred eggs in close

succession over the course of two hours is a physical testament to the agency, rather than the passivity, of women in the bedroom as well as in the labour force. This was both cathartic and empowering.

The challenges in filming the performance-for-video were much different in nature from the live performance and the themes of the work came full circle as they were self-consciously played-out in real time. Although work on film allows for a certain amount of manipulation of time and space through the editing and the compositing process, the filming of several of the scenes meant that I was confronted with actual golfers on the golf course rather than by a public passing through a designated performance space. Along with other levels of physical discomfiture, I put up with comments by some elderly gentlemen who claimed that I was “the best thing to look at on the golf course they had seen in ages”. Suffice it to say that their vociferous bemusement quickly became a baffled and discomfited silence when I amiably answered their query of what was in the large bags hanging off the back of the golf cart—“my eggs”.