

Ellen Angus

Four/Four

Cater 2 U

Opening 11.06.21 4-8pm

Continues 12.06.21 - 10.07.21

Fridays & Saturdays 12-6pm

& By Appointment

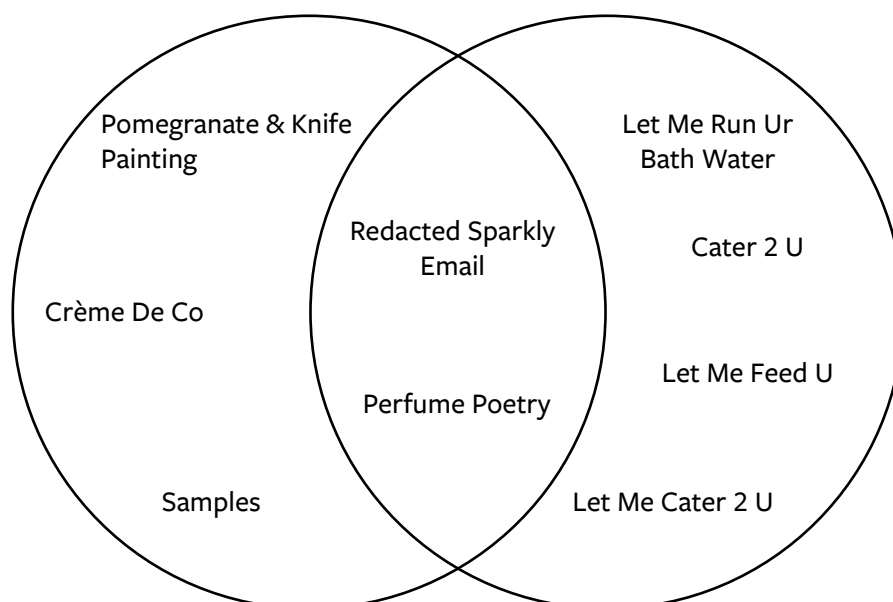
Performance 03.07.21

Four/Four is proud to present 'Cater 2 U', a show by Ellen Angus, revolving around two spheres of her practice: Her work 'Crème De Co' (2013), and the much-loved Destiny's Child song from which the exhibition takes its name.

Instigated in part as a response to Angus being made redundant in her job as a support worker, due to the explicit content of 'Crème De Co', the exhibition also presents new work and documented performance created alongside Angus' sister, Claudia Cumberbatch Chedzoy. These use this job loss, and the 2005 hit, as a focal point from which expands an exploration upon themes of shame as a regulatory tool, submission, control, and self objectification and feminist narcissism which underline Angus' earlier work.

'Crème De Co' itself is described as an experiment in 'slapstick' stem-cell technology, exploring societal taboos around self-objectification, bodily matter and its commodification, through the suggestion that the stem cell sector is now experimenting with menstrual blood in the creation of luxury, regenerative facial creams. Alongside this 'Cater 2 U' takes popular source material and begins to unravel it through processes of enlargement and repetition. Servitude, submission and normative femininity are subject to an exaggeration which renders them 'creepy and excessive', as Angus reflects upon the learned hegemony of the early 2000's.

Ellen Angus studied at Chelsea College of Art (2013) where she worked collaboratively with Ellie Bradford and Shali Lui under the guise of LEAK. In 2015 she began her MFA at Umeå Academy of Fine Art, being awarded the Kungl. Skytteanska Samfundet Prize and the Verkligheten Prize upon graduation. Solo shows include: 'A Brexit/No I Mean a Break Up', Växjö Konsthall, 2019 and 'Darling You Will Always Win', Galleri Verkligheten, Umeå, 2018. During her time in Scandinavia, she travelled to the Arctic (Abisko Scientific Research Centre) for the project 'Meetings Between Art and Science' with The Royal Academy of Art Stockholm. Most recently she has been appointed as Co-Director of One Thoresby Street, an artists studios and gallery in Nottingham.



Room 1
Clockwise
from left

Cater 2 U
Video Documentation of Performance
4'16"

Let Me Run Ur Bath Water
Screenprint on Sparkly Vinyl, Chain

Let Me Cater 2 U
Screenprint on Sparkly Vinyl, Chain

Let Me Feed U
Screenprint on Sparkly Vinyl, Chain

Redacted Sparkly Email
Screenprint on Sparkly Vinyl, Board

Room 2
Clockwise
from left

Perfume Poetry
Screenprint on Sparkly Vinyl, Zip Pull
Lights, Board

Samples
Glass Vials, Organic Ingredients

Crème De Co
Moving Image
4'41"

Pomegranate & Knife Painting
Oil Paint on Sparkly Vinyl, Zip Pull Lights,
Board

In some ways this exhibition has absolutely nothing to do with Beyoncé and everything to do with Beyoncé. It's me harking back to a time when songs written and produced by Destiny's Child, such as 'Cater 2 U', were part of and infused the cultural zeitgeist of the time.

I remember loving the song 'Cater 2 U' back in 2005 but finding the lyrics odd even as a very femmed-up, naïve, non-feminist, cis gender-conforming 18yr old with hair extensions, deep fake tan and fake eyelashes. I was emulating an artificial Americanness which was fed by a diluted appropriation of African-American culture. Every Friday evening, our club was Hockley Lounge, which was situated above a kebab shop and played early 00's RnB. A lad I was supposed to be friends with nicked my Nokia 3210 in there, I continued to be nice to him at school and pretended that he hadn't stolen my phone. I had not yet found feminism and neither had Destiny's Child.

Now Beyoncé's musical output couldn't be further away from 'Cater 2 U'. Even Bell Hooks was won over when she dropped Lemonade after previously calling her an anti-feminist and a terrorist in 2014. 'What makes this commodification different in Lemonade is intent; its purpose is to seduce, celebrate and delight – to challenge the ongoing present-day devaluation and dehumanization of the black female body.'(2016).

Perhaps it's unconstructive for me to dwell in 2005 when there has been such a shift in visual culture but I'm still interested in the structural, societal and cultural trends that impacted how people navigated their identity back then. In a weird way this is me paying homage to a confused 18yr old who went on to make terrible relationship choices, had eating disorders and who spent way too much time catering and pandering to a created image or illusion of themselves.

This resurrection of the cultural values of the early 2000's led me to consider the way that 'Cater 2 U' in particular encourages women to possess what Patricia Hill Collin's (1991) describes as the four cardinal virtues: "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" in her study on western ideals of beauty. The lyrics in this song specifically speak about submission. I wanted to lift out aspects of this cultural product and conflate them, enlarge them, repeat them so that their form became completely something other. In this sense, the lyrics sound more like an order, or a demand. Linguistically, for me LET ME is reminiscent of the - LET ME IN YOUR WINDOW and the OOHOO LET ME HAVE IT, LET ME GRAB YOUR SOUL AWAY of Kate bush's 1978 Wuthering Heights. Anything with the word 'Let' as opposed to 'allow' tends to fill me with unease. 'Let' can also be for allowing the release of fluid e.g. to let blood.

Bloodletting, brings me back to the themes of Crème De Co and the way in which the cosmetically finished surfaces of the body can conceal our abject matter and performative, illusive, normative femininity. The video explores the nutritional content of bodily matter, in particular the commodification and sacred potential of human menstrual blood; stem cell technology is now utilising menstrual blood for it's pluripotent stem cell content, which I propose could be used to construct luxury facial creams. Most importantly, the video explores the body's expressiveness and our collective shame for the leaky body, as a structural feature of being in the world and a central regulatory tool in the production and policing of the body and sexuality. I was interested in how we might be able to alter the experience of shame – and disclosure of self – when the 'act of being shamed' is instead an act of self-shaming or an embrace of a shamed position, and thus perhaps a route to pleasurable self-disclosure, sexual self-narration and even self-transformation?

'Cater 2 U', the dance/movement aspect of the exhibition I co-created with my sister Claudia. There is something particularly special about the process of working with a family member to create a piece of work because as children both Claudia and I both watched pop stars on the television and copied them. Together we got to play, copy, and unravel some of that performative femininity that was so prevalent in the late 90s and early 2000's. Claudia, who is primarily a movement-based artist but whose work spans a multitude of disciplines such as sculpture, film and sound. Their work is fed by their ancestry and their place within the Guyanese and Dominican diasporas in order to explore the ways in which the body collects and digests information and gestural language.

Collaboratively, we wanted to come up with something that nodded to the compliance that is present in the lyrics of the song 'Cater 2 U' but which also became odd and more unhinged. The 'unhinged woman'- who takes her servitude too far. This is reflected in some of the crawling aspects of the dance- the gobbling down of the mint, and the slightly stranger moves against the wall where Claudia does a crab-like stance. The 'unhinged woman' is a figurative expression I come back to time and time again within my work- I think this can be an interesting 'device' but it is also because I am her. I both have a personal resonance as well as a deep critical interest in the trope of the 'crazy woman' which stretches from Plato to Plath to popular culture. As I wonder if madness-as-womaness could actually be the "sheer fact of women talking, being, paradoxical, inexplicable, flip, self-destructive but above all else public" – (Kraus 1997) and therefore the most revolutionary thing in the world.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/322498145.pdf>

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/may/11/capitalism-of-beyonce-lemonade-album>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/12/beyonce-bell-hooks-slave-terrorist>

<https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1124&context=taboo>

Kraus, C., 1997. I Love Dick. 1st ed.

Collins, P. C. 1991. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk-4lXLM34g&ab_channel=KateBushMusic

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