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M.O.B. and Perform: An Analysis of Mail Order Brides/M.O.B.'s "Divide//Conquer"

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in

Asian American Studies

by

Christina Marie Ayson

2017

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

M.O.B. and Perform: An Analysis of Mail Order Brides/M.O.B.'s "Divide//Conquer"

by

Christina Marie Ayson

Master of Art in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Lucy M. Burns, Chair

Just as technology corporations in the San Francisco Bay Area use the rhetoric of progress and diversity in their hiring practices and mission statement, so have the global art museums who are a part of a history of development that displaces communities of color. Hiring practices, community involvement, and the culture of work show that these initiatives affirm particular gendered racialized subjects in order to continue accruing power and capital. The artists Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. show the relationship between the creation of a culture of work and the sanitization of community by neoliberal corporations in the Bay Area. Their mixed-media performance series *Manananggoogle* uses the visual devices of camp and the grotesque to simultaneously recuperate female sexuality and transgress neoliberal capitalist structures. I focus on "Divide//Conquer," a performance event of the series. By using the manananggal, the Filipino folkloric witch, M.O.B. shows that the true monstrosities of these

corporations are the structures of oppression. As a result, M.O.B. shows that representation of artists of color in museums affirms the neoliberal structure. As a performance that utilizes visitor participation, M.O.B. calls upon the audience/participants to enact the inverted gendered lines of corporations. In doing so, the visitors perform the possibilities of a visual complex not implicated in these past and current violences.

The thesis of Christina Marie Ayson is approved.

Saloni Mathur

Valerie Matsumoto

Grace Kyungwon Hong

Lucy M. Burns, Committee Chair

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Introduction

“Sometimes your pieces are worth more than the sum of your whole” - Reanne Estrada

“Mananangoogle’s mission is to organize the world and make it universally accessible and useful” - Mananangoogle

The journalist project “A Changing Mission,” published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* by Carolyn Said and Joe Garofoli in 2015, traces the stories of residents of the Mission District in San Francisco, California. The voices of these residents range from long-time Latino families to the new employees of technology corporations. Many residents of color, who shaped the neighborhoods, struggle to keep their long-term homes as the cost of living increases. They voice their sorrow and anger over losing their homes and livelihoods.

On the other hand, many stories by new occupiers rave about the multicultural edginess that evicted residents created. A Silicon Valley techie wrote that change is inevitable, healthy, and should be embraced.¹ For new residents of the San Francisco Bay area, these neighborhoods epitomize multiculturalism, progressivism, and modernism. This rhetoric is like the mission and vision of the global companies that employ them, including Google, Apple, and Twitter. Despite what they present as a new progressive frontier, these companies and people have systematically pushed out the communities of color erasing years of struggle, perseverance, and joy.

The displacement of Filipino communities is part of a long history of gentrification of Bay Area neighborhoods. For example, the demolition in 1981 of the International Hotel (I-Hotel), which housed the first wave of Filipino immigrants or *manongs*, is a part of the various

¹ Joe Garofoli and Carolyn Said, “A Changing Mission,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2015, accessed November 5, 2016. <http://www.sfchronicle.com/the-mission/a-changing-mission/>

waves of development that first began after World War II. These state-sponsored projects were intended to transform San Francisco into a metropolitan financial district. Banks and cultural institutions comprised the first wave of development. Although the I-Hotel fell much later, the businesses, homes, and communities in the neighborhood experienced years of pressure to move out. The erasure of Filipino communities did not begin with technology corporations. The gentrification of Manilatown and the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhoods echo the turmoil many long-term residents of the Mission face. The communities of SoMa trace this struggle with the rise of the Yerba Buena Gardens.² This institution marked the beginning of corporate development including the Moscone Convention Center, Sony Metreon, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA).

The impetus to build these museums was to convey San Francisco as an international destination for capital. The institutions exhibited canonical artists and art to draw in visitors. These cultural institutions are the physical manifestation of a selective diversity they want to convey to their visitors. The exhibitions serve to communicate and normalize this disavowal. The Yerba Buena Center of Arts (YBCA), an arts institution recognized globally, sponsored the first Filipino American Arts Exhibition and continues to hold this event annually. During the summer of 2016, the YBCA also exhibited the show, “Take This Hammer: Art + Media Activism From the Bay Area,” which displayed works of art by activists who traced the radical organizing by people of color in the Bay Area.³ Next to the YBCA is the recently re-opened SFMoMa. Their

² Nerissa Fernandez, “United Pilipino Organizing Network: The Voice of the Filipino Community,” in *SoMa Pilipinas: Studies 2000 (In Two Languages)*, ed. MC Canlas (San Francisco: Arkipelago Books Publishing, 2002), 48.

³ “Take This Hammer,” last modified 2016, <https://ybca.org/whats-on/take-this-hammer>.

mission is to challenge New York museums by showcasing their famous collection of prized works of art. SFMoMA wants to highlight not only their global presence but also the San Francisco Bay Area.⁴ As a result, the neighborhood is known as Yerba Buena, the premier arts neighborhood in San Francisco. Meanwhile, local Filipino artists have been pushed out of their homes.

Technology corporations featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle* are like the cultural corporations that infiltrated the SoMa district. They use the rhetoric of diversity and progress to mask and justify the displacement of Filipino communities. Instead of using the rhetoric of modernity through their technology products, however, museums use art and representation to mask their direct influence on these communities. Both affirm a diversity through these initiatives to hide the violence inflicted on people of color. This neoliberal agenda simultaneously aggrandizes benevolent institutions; however, they also change the local landscape. Exhibiting artwork from internationally and nationally celebrated artists is a way to hide the local artists whom the institution has systematically erased. These institutions then use these accepted art forms and artists to purport being a diverse and accepting institution. These tactics are how institutions sanitize culture.

Both technology and art institutions are global corporations that operate simultaneously and in parallel with each other to oppress Filipino communities in the SoMa district. They achieve this through the rhetoric of representation and progress. These institutions capitalize on the labor of people of color to accrue power, and, in doing so, erase and hide their voices and bodies. They create a work culture that supports the sterilization of communities of color because

⁴ Jori Finkel, "New SFMoMA," *The New York Times*, 2016, accessed November 5, 2016.

they believe their labor and company operates for the greater good of the world.

It is under these complicated conditions where affirmed dominant culture continues the violence unto minorities that Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. have navigated their art practice. Reanne Estrada, Eliza Barrios, and Jenifer Wofford (the artists who comprise the art group) have witnessed firsthand the simultaneous growth of technology corporations and the erasure of community galleries by global art museums like SFMoMA. As a result, they saw the communities of color that created a lively artistic neighborhood disappear. Instead a homogenous, sterile arts district emerged that valued Western practices and artists while capitalizing on people of color. In witnessing and experiencing this change, M.O.B. created the on-going performance and mixed media series *Manananggoogle*.

The project *Manananggoogle* utilizes performance, photography, and digital media to investigate the effects of capitalism in the various sites they stage their performance. In the series, the artists perform as corporate executives of their imagined company Manananggoogle. The iterations of this project serve as events for the company including onboardings, corporate launches, and community functions. These events are held in various locations, and as a result, each recognizes the particularities of the geographic location.

This thesis analyzes the relationship of the culture of work in technology corporations and global museums through a performative event of the M.O.B. series: “Divide//Conquer.” The event was held in 2013 at the Global Fund for Women in San Francisco, California. As the onboarding event for the company, the corporate executives invited their “new hires” or art patrons to participate in corporate training. Throughout the evening, visitors were inscribed into the imagined corporation through various tasks. Unlike other corporations, however, M.O.B.

inverts gendered hierarchies. During these training exercises, female-identified new hires perform in managerial positions, taking up space and delegating tasks. On the other hand, male-identified new hires are told to act submissive. As a result, the performance is a satire of corporations and gendered dynamics in the Bay Area. M.O.B's satire of Google makes central the maintenance of gender hierarchies within the representational regime of neoliberalism.

The name of the imagined company and art series speaks to a critique that is central to the site of the performance. In centering the San Francisco Bay Area and the corporate space, M.O.B. satirizes Google and other technology corporations that are transforming local communities. Through hiring practices contingent on gendered hierarchy, they create a culture that normalizes patriarchy as a progressive practice. As a result, they not only reaffirm racial gendered structures, but also create a culture that imposes these structural inequalities onto the community. In looking at the way institutions like Google sanitize the local community, but also utilize the rhetoric of progress to justify these occurrences, their critique is not confined to Google or technology corporations, but also the art museums of the SoMa district. Through Google, they mock neoliberal corporations that affect Filipino communities. Grace Hong defines neoliberalism as:

“...the epistemological structure of disavowal, a means of claiming that racial and gendered violences are things of the past. It does so by affirming certain modes of racialized, gendered, and sexualized life, particularly through invitation into reproductive respectability, so as to disavow its exacerbated production of premature death.”⁵

In my analysis of Mananangoogle's critique of neoliberal corporate practices I find that these structures of disavowal manifests in the culture of work which I define as the creation of

⁵ Grace Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 7.

racialized and gendered divides in labor through hiring practices.⁶ Through their diversity initiatives, museums and technology corporations attempt to reconcile the disparity between their predominantly white male employees and the demographic of the local community they enter; however they do so by hiring women and people of color into subordinate heteronormative roles. They affirm a gendered and racialized notion of diversity, thereby creating a culture of work that set cultural values of inclusion and diversity that is replicated in the ways these laborers and corporations navigate the community.

However, the name of the M.O.B. company also incorporates a ghoulish Filipino figure. The creation of sanitized culture by neoliberal corporations is reminiscent of the Filipino figure that the artists use in their namesake. Merged with Google is the manananggal, a frightening female vampire witch in diasporic Filipino folklore. The artists make an explicit relationship between Google and the manananggal to discuss hierarchical gendered notions in corporations. I use Herminia Menez's theories of the creation of the manananggal as a tactic in Spanish colonization to make sense of how M.O.B. assigns significance to this figure. In merging Google with the manananggal, M.O.B. issues a transnational and temporal critique of global initiatives for power and capital. The manifestation of the manananggal in this performance pivots the viewer and participant to engage in these interconnected critiques.

In the performance, the manananggal is articulated through a grotesque camp aesthetic, embodying what Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns terms *puro arte*.⁷ The bodies of the female

⁶ Henry Giroux, *Beyond the Corporate University: Culture and Pedagogy in the New Millennium* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 429.

⁷ Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

corporate executive and manananggal are abject bodies, ostracized from society and racialized gendered notions of normalcy. Through the visual, M.O.B. queers the spaces these bodies inhabit. First, camp subverts the realities of heteropatriarchal corporate structures made to seem natural. By using the visual device of excess in both space and action, M.O.B. plays with the corporate office. Camp manifests in their grandiose acting, glamorous costumes, and participatory nature of the performance. M.O.B. transgresses the corporate structures that (re)create perceptions of gendered roles. Furthermore, the manananggal is a literal and excessive embodiment of women, making her the ultimate camp subject. The grotesque, on the other hand, serves to reclaim how corporate spaces affect notions of femininity. The use of the grotesque through the manananggal mutates the female body. This act recuperates and reclaims female sexuality and power, epitomized by the vampire figure. Through the excessive displays of blood and gore, M.O.B. glorifies the manananggal. Their performance is twofold: a critique and a reclamation.

By using these aesthetics, M.O.B. critiques neoliberal corporations and the way they produce a culture of work to justify and institute the sanitization of local culture. Despite these gendered and racialized divisions, corporations use neoliberal initiatives that purportedly embrace diversity and progress to mask the dominance of pre-existing heteronormative notions. They make explicit these racialized and gendered divisions through the visual. In flipping this hierarchy, M.O.B. reclaims and glorifies female sexuality and power that these global initiatives attempt to change through the creation of work culture. These changes are also imposed upon local culture because of the increased capital that these corporations accrue through their neoliberal posturing.

Through abundance, glamor, and bodily disfigurement, M.O.B. reclaims the folkloric figure of the manananggal. By reclaiming the vampire witch, M.O.B. traces a lineage of global oppression of Filipinas, which manifests today through the work culture of capitalism.⁸ Global corporations ostracize female corporate executives in work culture, which sterilizes female power and sexuality. M.O.B. recuperates female sexuality and power by inverting gendered hierarchical labors in their imagined corporation. In inverting and glorifying the manananggal, however, the artists show that simply giving women executive titles does not rectify neoliberalism. Moving beyond representational politics, M.O.B. does not work to alleviate the representation of artists of color in the museum, but rather to distort the reality of diversity and modernity that these corporations tout.

My analysis of the performance draws on from video footage of the performance, which was filmed in the perspective of the participants. Before each chapter I offer a “visual walkthrough” of the performance. Writing in first person, I interpret the feelings experienced by the visitors as a response to camp and the grotesque aspects of the performance. This is not to say that watching footage usurps physically participating in the performance at that time. However, the same emotional reactions I have towards the objects and responses captured through the video, I ascertain, are a part of the performance as well. The video is an object and relic of the performance, and, as a result, offers a similar affective response. By conducting oral histories with the artists, visitors, and curators, I corroborate and expand on my visual analysis. In addition, data analysis of the diversity reports issued by Google is utilized to ascertain the workplace culture.

⁸ Herminia Menez, *Explorations in Philippine Folklore* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1996).

The first chapter defines the grotesque and camp as the aesthetics used in the performance. I argue that the visual are devices to move the visitors to react and feel in relation to these objects. Just as the relationship between created objects and spaces elicits a performance between the object and viewer, the grotesque and camp can also be enacted. As such, the grotesque and camp can be felt and employed by the viewers, inscribing them into the aesthetic realities. M.O.B. employs this to convince the viewers of their critiques, but also to have them perform the possibilities of systemic change. In recognizing that the majority of those who performed are admirers of the artists' work, M.O.B. calls upon them to understand these critiques, but also to act against the dialectics of culture and capital in the museum. Through excess and horror, the manananggal embodies these aesthetics. For the artists, this figure is a method to make the viewers feel disgusted and amused by heteropatriarchal structures.

Chapter two analyzes the reasons why M.O.B. attempts to move beyond the museum complex. This section elaborates on why M.O.B. uses the manananggal as a figure to subvert and recuperate. Using Neferti Tadiar's theory of capital and culture, I show how the use of the manananggal makes visible how global initiatives, like colonization and neoliberal capitalism, have created an economy constitutive of gender lines. In locating the San Francisco Bay area in the performance, this dialectic is seen particularly through the perceived notions of gender in neoliberal corporations. This creates a sanitized culture upon which companies like Google and the YBCA can capitalize. This manifest primarily in the culture of work as well as the local community. M.O.B's deployment of the manananggal in the performance critiques how these corporations divide along gendered lines to attain capital.

Returning to the specificity of the San Francisco Bay Area, the final chapter compares

technology corporations to museums. Turning to the manifestation of the performance on the Internet, I argue that the artists show how tentative representation is in these respective spaces. M.O.B. helps theorize a way to construct an art viewing apparatus that does not simply represent artists of color. M.O.B. shows the possibilities of making explicit the ugly and horrific histories of systemic oppression. By reading the performance in this way, I hope to conceptualize the ways a visual apparatus can be constructed. This is an attempt to think beyond the walls of the museum.

The Onboarding Part 1

On mounted television screens at the front of the conference room is the bloody red font of the Manananggoogle logo. There is a large wooden table in the middle of the room with perfectly arranged, deep-red-colored binders, staplers, books, and coffee mugs. Sitting around the table are new hires, gossiping and laughing with anticipation for the arrival of the corporate executives. The two male employees at the corners of the room on the other hand are less enthusiastic. They shuffle, stir, and fold their hands endlessly as they wait. The sound of heels against the hardwood floors cuts into the room and we all fall silent.

Three women strut into the room with their heads high. They are immaculately over-dressed: buttoned-up shirts with a large bow tied around their necks, tightly cinched blazers, black pencil skirts, and nude tights and heels. Their hair is teased and tall, complementing their exaggerated make-up. Their eyebrows are heavily drawn and arch with scrutiny. Deep purple eye shadow adorns their piercing eyes and their red lips purse with disapproval. Bright red blush contours the white foundation of their faces. In their red-manicured hands are paddles they slap against their palms. The executives stare and silence the giggling new hires. They strut towards the front of the room and loom over the table. The woman in the middle sneers, “I hope you all realize how lucky you all are today.”

They introduce themselves as the corporate executives: R. Immaculata Estrada, J. Baby Wofford, and E. Neneng Barrios. Wofford addresses one of the men standing in the corner as “Renfield 1” and commands him to begin the onboarding video. He instantly shuffles to the television screens and the lights turn off. Sitting in the darkness, our onboarding experience begins as the television screens transition to the onboarding videos.

The first onboarding video is a series of rapid images and sounds that puncture our senses. The quick succession of pictures engulfs the room in light only to dissolve into darkness; it is blinding. The sounds of trains, heavy rain, sirens, and screaming men rattle the room. The logo flashes between images of red staplers, flowcharts, famous female corporate executives, organs, raw meat, and blood. The video is a mixture of horror, torture, and propaganda. The most alarming of these images are of the executives.

Shown in succession, the first image is of the three executives poised at the conference table. The composition is dark and their faces are covered in shadows, disfiguring their eyes and faces. Despite this shadow, however, the white face of the performers is striking against the length of their brown necks. They are mysterious and sexy.

Bathed in contrasting, saturated blue and yellow light against stark shadows, the executives are seen in the same composition. In this image, however, the corporate executives are feasting on a plate of raw organs. As they gorge, they wear ludicrous plastic bat wings, like packaged Halloween costumes. They are ravenous and humorous, but remain picture perfect: their hair coiffed, make-up flawless, and claws manicured. The executives play-up the wings and pose with their feet propped on the desk showing the length of their legs and fabulous patent leather heels. The length of Barrios's leg is exaggerated and prominent. It seems as if she could step outside of the television screen.

Howling with their faces turned to the sky, the next picture is of the executives with their bodies contorted. On the floor, Wofford claws at her oozing organs that spill out of her abdomen. Barrios and Estrada loom over her as organs burst out of their own blouses. Despite the gore and guts, there is so much glory in their over-exaggerated facial expressions of despair and pain.

In the final image, they are only recognizable by their pencil skirts because their upper bodies are missing. Their long legs are firmly planted on the ground and from their waists organs spill out. Meanwhile, their missing upper-halves are away, enacting their ghoulish corporate vision.

The video ends and the room is dark and silent. Not only are the corporate executives the physical manifestation of grotesque camp, but also, they create the space to experience the feelings and motions of these two visual aesthetics.

Chapter 1: Glamour, Gore, and Ghouls: Grotesque Camp as Political

The set for the “Divide//Conquer” performance of the series *Mananggoogle* is overtly pristine and hyper-stylized. Aesthetic choices such as the color red and 1990s corporate paraphernalia are abundantly replicated in the performance. The artists’ costumes are dated business clothing from the 1990s; they seem out of place with the new business equipment in the office. To complement their costumes, their eyebrows are severely arched and blush a red shade too dark. These traits are also translated into the ways they navigate the constructed environment. The artists stomp and shout their commands enthusiastically. They walk around the office with whips in their hands and slap them against the palms of their hands as they talk down the new hires. The conflicting and contradictory motifs and actions are humorous and attractive. The way the artists interact with the visitors, their outdated appearance, and recurring motifs are traits of camp.

Along with the camp aesthetic, M.O.B. uses blood and bodily distortion in the way they perform and create space. M.O.B. threatens their new hires with whips in their hands, proudly taking in the fear they were inducing by smiling and cackling. In the videos, they show as a part of the onboarding process, they display images of viscera and blood. Sounds of screaming and howling accompany the gory visuals in the onboarding video. They shout at the new hires to divide their bodies to conquer. The new hires also (re)act in a terrified and terrifying manner, often retracting, sneering, shouting, and whimpering. Bodily mutation, gore, and playful horror are aesthetic motifs of the grotesque.

M.O.B. use these aesthetic markers to create a space which allows the visitors to feel repelled, attracted, amused, stimulated, and horrified. In this chapter, I define and locate camp

and the grotesque in their performance of “Divide//Conquer.” The artists create the structure of the performance using a grotesque camp environment. They act through these aesthetics, directing the visitors to interact similarly. They become inducted into the grotesque camp.

In this chapter, I define camp as the use of excess to derive laughter and pleasure. This is done to disrupt the heteronormative environments M.O.B. appropriates and subverts. In situating camp as a queer device to transgress dominant heteropatriarchal corporate structures, I show that M.O.B. uses camp to transgress the corporate environment that they construct and play in. To understand the particularities of how M.O.B. uses camp as an aesthetic device, I begin with an analysis of my stay at the Madonna Inn, a site of camp inspiration for the artists. M.O.B. frequently visits the site, located in San Luis Obispo, California, to plan for their upcoming performances and to create art. They use the various rooms as ready-made sets due to the highly-stylized décor. Through this experience, I show how space is created and then activated through performance.

Alongside camp, M.O.B. uses the aesthetics of the grotesque, which I identify as the glorification of dismemberment, gore, and blood. I situate the grotesque in this work as a feminist device to undermine the surveillance of the female body and pleasure. By grossly disfiguring sexist perceptions of the ideal woman, M.O.B. reclaims pleasure. In understanding the socio-political history of the manananggal figure, I show how the grotesque is used in the performance as a Filipina aesthetic.

In the last section of this chapter, I return to the manananggal to show how M.O.B. combines these two aesthetic devices. I argue that M.O.B. recuperates abject bodies that structures of heteronormativity marginalize in corporate culture. In doing so, M.O.B. elucidates

the tenuous relationship of the Filipina to corporate spaces, which is discussed in Chapter 2. This critique of the culture of work in corporations is made by the construction of an overabundant, horrific space and the performance of laughter and sexuality.

Camp

Camp is an aesthetic that can be constructed visually and performed. “Divide//Conquer” exemplifies these two aspects of camp through the way M.O.B. creates the physical space and actors of the performance as well as how they interact with visitors and objects within that area. The repeated motifs of red, corporate paraphernalia, and grandiose objects make obvious a corporate reality was made to incur capital at the expense of women of color. They show the seams of the creation of reality through the laughter that ensues because of this excess. The performance is exemplified by over-acting, an enthusiasm that is overabundant.

The quality of the space and acting allows visitors to interact with the camp performance. Whether it is awe from the visual assault or the laughter that ensues due to the grandiose antics, camp illicitly a response from the audience. This affective quality of camp is what transgresses the reality of the corporate space. In this section, I define and identify camp as an aesthetic tool. I show the ways this performance shifts and subverts the gaze thereby dismantling heteronormative structures. Through the performance of “Divide//Conquer” I argue that M.O.B. uses camp as a device to engage, attract, and dizzy visitors.

Queering Camp: Theorizing Camp

My definition of camp is not limited to visual motifs, but also the labors of camp. I engage Susan Sontag’s and Moe Meyer’s definitions of camp to comprehend how M.O.B. uses camp in their performance. By utilizing both Sontag and Meyer, I argue that M.O.B. defines and

uses camp aesthetically and affectively.

Susan Sontag defines camp through a variety of aesthetic and material markers in “Notes on Camp.” This includes extravagance, the fantastic, and passionate deployed to subvert normative ways of looking at the world. For Sontag, subverting normative views is achieved by creating new meanings in seemingly mundane objects: “Thus, the camp sensibility is one that is alive to a double sense in which some things can be taken. But this is not the familiar split – level construction of a literal meaning, on the one hand, and a symbolic meaning, on the other – It is the thing as meaning something, anything, and the thing as pure artifice.”⁹ In other words, Sontag states that through the deployment of the fantastic, the viewer can ascribe other meanings to an object outside of its physical nature. This means that objects can also be camp including Tiffany lamps, a fur rug, or a couch in the shape of high heeled shoes. Since these items take on new meanings that are often extravagant and fantastical, a sense of joy can arise as a part of the object’s new meaning. Sontag also states that the deployment of these aesthetics is not rooted in political tactics or a queer agenda, but rather to finding new standards.

On the other hand, Moe Meyer explicitly states in his chapter “Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp” in the book *An Archaeology of Posing and Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality* that camp is a political and queer tool for cultural critique. Instead of camp as a set of aesthetics deployed, Meyer states that it is a process to achieve gay visibility through transgressive tactics against normalized gender roles.¹⁰ This process is what he defines as camp as critique: “Camp appears, on the one hand, to offer a transgressive vehicle yet, on the other, simultaneously

⁹ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), 281.

¹⁰ Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing*, (USA: Macater Press, 2010), 40.

invokes the specter of dominant ideology with its practice, appearing, in many instances, to actually reinforce the dominant order.”¹¹ Through the transformation of conformity as a tool of opposition, camp performance is a parody of the dominant order that suppresses gay bodies. In other words, the aesthetic subversion is a critique of heteronormative structures that hides object bodies by making this subversion hyper-visible or excessive. For Meyer, the aesthetic does more than change the meaning of objects. Through the viewer’s interaction with these objects, these new meanings affect how viewers respond to issues of gender and sexuality; there is a performance between the viewer and object.

The aesthetic is a device to engage the visitor to perform with the objects and change meanings for the visitor. Camp is utilized to disorient and destabilize to find new meanings within objects and structures. Through the visual assault of overabundance, camp subverts realities to create unrest through joy. They reveal that structures, such as institutions and social constructs, are created and unnatural. By revealing and playing with reality, camp makes tentative the boundaries institutions create to oppress people.

To understand how M.O.B. uses camp in their performance, I turn to a historic site of inspiration for the artist coalition. They frequently cite in interviews the Madonna Inn, a hotel in San Luis Obispo, California, as a main source of inspiration for their use of camp.¹² In analyzing the Madonna Inn as a constructed space of camp that provides the sensations of camp, I show the use of this aesthetic as a device.

Camp and the Madonna Inn

¹¹ Ibid., 43.

¹² Reanne Estrada in discussion with the author, March 2016.

The Madonna Inn is a historic site for M.O.B. Not only has it functioned as a meeting spot in between Los Angeles and San Francisco, but also as a ready-made set for their photography shoots. The photographic series *Honeymoon Sweet Nothings* features the three artists in their signature highly stylized make-up posing in various rooms throughout the Madonna Inn.¹³ The photographs show the artists adopting the designs and flourishes of the room not only in their garb but also their actions. The Madonna Inn and M.O.B. are the perfect camp pairing, and Jeniffer Wofford explained:

The Madonna Inn is a pilgrimage for the imagination, a mental Mecca for California artist and retirees alike. Its opulent wonders suggest that our immediate realities are tentative, at best: between the walls of each compartmentalized theme room, fantasy and reality reconcile and cease to exist as contradictory states. For this reason, M.O.B. holds their annual strategic planning meetings here.¹⁴

Alex and Phyllis Madonna built the hotel in 1958 in San Luis Obispo with the goal of providing an experience unlike that of most hotels. Alex Madonna was a businessman in construction and built many highways, including the 101 in California; he was the main architect of the hotel. The extravagant and bombastic rooms, however, were managed by Phyllis Madonna, who acted as the interior designer of the hotel. Each room was decorated with a different theme ranging from “Country Gentleman” to “Irish Hills.” To amplify the theme, however, Phyllis Madonna employed camp in her design aesthetic. Overabundance, contrasting

¹³The photographic series *Honeymoon Sweet Nothings I and II* details the various trips to the Madonna Inn by M.O.B. The various photos show the artists using the Madonna Inn as a ready-made set. The photos seem playful and experimental, however all touch upon the common theme of femininity. The photos were exhibited in “This/That” at the San Jose Museum of Art in 2013. During this exhibition M.O.B. exhibited a mini-retrospective curated by Monica Ramirez-Montagut. It was during this exhibition that M.O.B. first debuted as the *Manananggoogle* corporate executives. The lineage between the Madonna Inn and the project *Manananggoogle* was established during this exhibition.

¹⁴ Jenifer Wofford. “Honeymoon Sweet Nothings I.” WoffleHouse. January 17, 2015. Accessed December 23, 2015. <http://wofflehouse.com/portfolio/honeymoon-sweet-nothings-i/>.

colors, exaggerated objects, extreme light and shadow, and moving objects exemplify this style. Each room was outfitted with specialty items and custom-made furniture to immerse the visitor in the theme. This immersive quality subverts the realities of San Luis Obispo to transform the space and “suggest that our immediate realities are tentative.”¹⁵ The “Madonna Suite” at the hotel exemplifies this notion and was used by the artists in their performances.

Named after the designer, the “Madonna Suite” is the room that best exemplifies the mission and vision of the Madonna Inn.¹⁶ During a visit to the Madonna Inn, I stayed at the Madonna Suite to best experience their version of camp. The room encompasses mysterious and passionate romance through the grandiose objects and designs. This includes multiple Cupid lamps and chandeliers, large blooming flowers, waterfalls, and a rock fireplace. The walls are lined with the same rock formations which puncture the room, creating grooves and niches further amplifying the sharp contrast between light and shadow. More so, the rock-lined walls trick visitors into believing that they are not even in a room, but rather a new reality. Alongside this sleek hard texture are velvets and furs creating a multi-textured experience. It is as if Cupid had decorated a cave to be his personal love shack. However, the room is also gaudy; adorning the Pepto-Bismol pink walls, carpet, and furnishings are large flowers and a fake metallic gold veneer. The new reality Phyllis Madonna crafted is endearing, engulfing, and amusing.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Madonna Suite, Cal., Madonna Inn Postcard Collection, Madonna Inn, San Luis Obispo, CA.



Figure 1 Ayson, Christina. "The Madonna Suite"; Image of a couch and fixtures at the Madonna Suite in the Madonna Inn decorated by Phyllis Madonna., 2016

The Madonna Inn exemplifies camp through the use of overabundance. As Sontag states, the space and the objects were ascribed new meanings beyond their physical reality. The couches in the Madonna Suite were not just seats, but rather love boats within Cupid's cave. However, the objects in the room and the space itself were affective. As I walked through the room and saw the couch, I was joyous and surprised. Although I was aware that it is just a highly-decorated couch, within that room I was convinced of the couches new meaning and therefore the realities of the room. This attractive quality ruptured reality and became a gateway for me to enter the world of the Madonna Suite. As Meyer states, it was not just a space or an object but more so how these objects affected me to move and react. The relationship between the room, the objects, and myself became a performance.

I walked around the grounds and various public spaces of the Madonna Inn experiencing the same awe, amusement, and joy that the Madonna Suite inspired. However, each public area and room were immaculately decorated in a different theme and world. I realized that I was walking through various constructed realities. The alternative hotel Phyllis Madonna constructed is an experience where reality is tested, as visitors walk through a multitude of other realities in the rooms. The hotel shows that reality is constructed producing a sense of unsettlement and awe that is appealing and exciting.

These qualities of camp that the Madonna Inn utilizes are the heart of M.O.B.'s performance. They have articulated that the visual is a gateway to perform and be affected. Through over-abundance, in both space and action, M.O.B. ruptures reality to transgress oppressive boundaries. The artists utilize the emotions derived from camp to show and disrupt the realities of the corporate space as it relates to women.

Seeing in Red: Camp in "Divide//Conquer"

The Madonna Inn shows what Susan Sontag theorized as camp: the use of overabundance in design of objects to produce sensations of awe, giddiness, attraction, and surprise. These feelings produce new meanings for the object and a relationship between the object and person. Camp is not just the space and aesthetic, but also the feelings and relations that arise because of this construction. M.O.B. provides new meanings to the corporate space they construct.

M.O.B. set the stage for "Divide//Conquer" in a large conference room in a corporate building. They embellish this space through the materials they produce. They make the imagined company, Manananggoogle, by displaying office supplies in their signature red tone including staplers, pens, binders, folders, and books. Their printed materials feature information about

Manananggoogle including their logo, vision, and mission. They construct onboarding videos and interactive materials for the company as well. Their costumes are made to fit into their new corporate world, and they demand the new hires do so as well. The executives' attire an exaggeration of 1990s business wear, emphasized by their excessively curly, bouncy, and overly gelled hair. Excess, the main attribute of camp, is seen in the ways they over-emphasize the corporate theme in their performance. The artists chose to perform in a corporate building instead of a museum or gallery; they change the meaning of the corporate building in its function. The office transforms to be Manananggoogle's corporate headquarters by emphasizing their logo through various paraphernalia. The functions of the building, office space, and conference room change because of the objects and people in the performance.

More so, M.O.B. acts in a camp aesthetic in this space to provide new meanings to the business. As they navigate the conference room they over-emphasize their power as corporate executives often shouting or barking commands. Likewise, the actors in the room react in an extremely submissive and meek fashion. The Renfelds are ready to obey the commands of the executives and respond fearfully. The executives' actions are so grandiose that many of the visitors laugh at the acting. The visitors to the performance as new hires to the company are forced to act similarly. When the corporate executives address them, they respond with "Yes Ma'am." When they giggle, the corporate executives bark at them to pay attention, which would make them laugh harder. The various tasks and activities of the onboarding experience is analyzed in a later chapter. The various actors of the performance (executives, Renfelds and new hires) act with excess amid the already overabundant objects in the room.

M.O.B. utilizes these two forms of camp to disrupt structures and realities of

corporations. Although Sontag views camp merely as an aesthetic, Meyer states that due to the effect of camp to disorient viewers through the overabundance and excess of aesthetics, it can subvert structures. Meyer stipulates that society prescribes to heteronormative values that oppress communities who do not ascribe or fit within these preconceived notions. This disorientation of realities through camp, Meyer argues, queers these realities. By using camp, M.O.B. queers the corporate space they infiltrate and create.

This is not to dismiss Susan Sontag's theorizations, but rather to comprehend and complicate the politics behind the performance. In situating camp as a queer political tool, M.O.B. shows that the affective response to disorient realities is a methodology to resist and refuse the coherence and stability of the capitalist realities M.O.B. make. Martin F. Manalansan IV states that

...a queer approach is necessary to maintain a healthy suspicion of political ends. This 'suspicion' standpoint coupled with a fervent aspirational attitude toward such temporal (im)possibilities is much needed in order to continue unraveling and exfoliating layers of ideological obfuscation and intersecting strands of institutional practices that mask various forms of violent abjections and unjust marginalization.¹⁷

M.O.B. therefore uses a queer approach, camp, to destabilize the institutions and structures that mask the oppression of female business owners; the labor of camp is transgressive. To further mock these institutions, they use camp to disrupt the female bodies that capitalist structures criticize. This queer analysis is most apparent in the way M.O.B. utilizes the grotesque. Through the combination of the grotesque and camp, M.O.B. mocks by glorifying guts, blood, and the color red.

The Grotesque

¹⁷ Martin F. Manalansan IV, "Queer" in *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, ed. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials et al. (New York: NUY Press, 2015).

Alongside their camp aesthetic, M.O.B. deploys the use of viscera and body mutations in their performance. By deploying camp and the mutation of the female body the artists target the subversion of heteronormative gender roles. In utilizing the grotesque alongside camp, M.O.B. deploys queer political tactics to criticize the gender roles ascribed to women in corporate spaces. The specific gendered notions of labor and the culture of work are analyzed in Chapter 2.

In this section, I define the grotesque and how M.O.B. uses this aesthetic as a device. Through the Filipino folkloric witch, the *manananggal*, I argue that M.O.B. makes excessive the ugly and fearful women who have been ostracized in society for not conforming to gendered standards. In valorizing their frightening qualities, they recuperate the power and sexuality attributed to Filipinas before Spanish colonization. In doing so, I analyze the use of the grotesque alongside camp in the performance of *Manananggoogle*.

Visualizing Viscera: Theorizing the Grotesque

Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* provides a thematic observation of the grotesque and ways in which it manifests in history. He concludes with a comprehensive definition of the grotesque as the abjection of the subject from reality into an "estranged world."¹⁸ This movement from reality to the unknown is made possible through a systematic process with tools to achieve an objective: to change the perspective of the viewer. These tools are the aesthetic values of the grotesque like strange forms and actions that elicit disgust, horror, and fascination. Kayser states that these responses serve to allow the viewer to be "... so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world, which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we could be unable to live in this changed world. The grotesque instills fear of life

¹⁸ Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 184.

rather than fear of death. Structurally, it presupposes that the categories which apply to our world become inapplicable.”¹⁹ Kayser suggests that the grotesque as a structure allows for a different way of looking at the world through the subverting of a subject within a naturalized world. By looking at the grotesque events and subjects of that world, the viewer thinks of their own and the ways it can change. These characteristics, affective responses, aesthetics, and objectives define the grotesque as a structure.

Grotesque realism is the term Mikhail Bakhtin uses in his book *Rabelais and His World* to define the grotesque. His definition is deeply rooted in carnival practices in Medieval Europe. Derived from marketplace culture, the carnival was a large celebration that involved every citizen of a town despite class standing. The central features of this celebration were the bawdy performances of comedic bodily disfigurement. The resulting laughter degraded and materialized the feudal hierarchies during the carnival: “They were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance.”²⁰ The political implications of these performances are what Bakhtin terms grotesque realism, and can be used in literature and art to also destabilize normative structures. For Bakhtin, laughter and the materiality of these oppressive structures lower the structures of the powerful and ideal to the human, incomplete, and every day. However, he makes clear that these tactics are used within the system itself, equally and simultaneously reifying and critiquing structures.²¹ Destabilization is not direct action against hierarchies of oppression, but rather a way to live within the system

¹⁹ Ibid., 185.

²⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, (Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), 9.

²¹ Ibid.

with hope: “This carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to center a completely new order of things.”²² Bakhtin utilizes the disfigured human body to underline the faults and presence of normative, hierarchal systems.

Like camp, the grotesque critiques normative hierarchical systems, however through bodily mutations thereby showing the mortality of the systems themselves. For M.O.B. the mutation of their female bodies shows a gendered, queer critique. By simultaneously using camp and the grotesque, M.O.B. critiques heteronormative perceptions of the female body.

Camping Female Gore

In the “Female Grotesque: Carnival and Theory” Mary Russo argues the grotesque as a feminist critique as it is perpetuating gender roles. Since the female body as a site of danger and simultaneously dangerous in patriarchal societies, she perceives the mutation of the body is a critique of these structures. As a site of struggle for women, the grotesque allows for an insurgency amidst patriarchy.

Erica McWilliam asserts that the female body is a material site for mobilizing relations of power. By tracing the historical surveillance of the female body in relation to the mind, McWilliam argues that the grotesque body incites deviance and control. McWilliam critiques the control that has been placed upon the female body and pleasure.

As I have noted above, camp moves viewers to feel a sense of pleasure and laughter through parody, visual stimuli, and performance. In combining camp with theories of the grotesque, the mutilation of the female body parodies the ways in which pleasure is regulated by

²² Ibid., 34.

patriarchal structures. By over-saturating the visual with images and actions of bodily distortion, the grotesque glorifies those that are made abject by society. In using Kayser's structural theory alongside Bakhtin's theorization of the affective qualities of the grotesque, this aesthetic device recuperates the figures the system makes terrifying. Through laughing, these figures become accepted by the viewers and actors despite the systemic inequalities they will continue to face. The ways that M.O.B. disfigures their bodies in "Divide//Conquer" recuperates Filipina power and sexuality as queer bodies. For M.O.B. grotesque camp performance is a critique of male patriarchal structures that remove the experience of pleasure for women; laughter is therefore an act of pleasure and the refusal of masochistic subordination.²³

This is best exemplified in the ways in which M.O.B. mutilates their own bodies. In using the figure of a Philippine folkloric tale of a viscera-eating vampire-like figure, M.O.B. reclaims both female sexuality and power.

Manananggal: Power and Sex Recuperated

²³ Erica McWilliam, "The Grotesque Body as a Feminist Aesthetic?" *Counterpoints* 168 (2003): 217.



Figure 2 Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. 2013. Feeding. WaffleHouse and San Jose Museum of Art.

The image of the bat-like figure eating organs and the torso-less female in the photographs in the “Divide//Conquer” performance pays homage to the folkloric figure the manananggal. Even the name of the fictional company and performance series is a hybrid of the manananggal and Google. The artists turned corporate executives are a combination of the female corporate executive and the horrific witch. In this section, I discuss the importance of the manananggal figure to diasporic Filipinos and how this manifests in their performance through the grotesque camp. M.O.B. uses this figure to epitomize and carry out the transgressive and recuperative labors of the grotesque camp to articulate a critique of the corporate space as it marginalizes women of color, particularly Filipinas.

During a trip to the Philippines, Reanne Estrada and Jenifer Wofford watched *Ang Pamana: The Inheritance*, directed by Romeo Candido. The movie is about a Canadian Filipino family who travels back to the Philippines to attend the funeral of their grandmother. The grandson experiences flashbacks of his grandmother who taught him supernatural beliefs. They reside at her old estate where he, his sister, and cousin relearn their roots to fight off the manananggal who lives on the property. The movie detail many stories Filipinos hear from family members across the diaspora. Through looking at the history of this figure, the work of M.O.B. to recuperate this figure in relation to the grotesque and camp is rooted in the acceptance of the power and sexuality that makes this figure monstrous. For the artists, the manananggal is a figure to discipline and teach gendered social boundaries.

The tale of the manananggal is passed down orally in the Filipino folklore tradition. Also known as the wakwak and aswang, many dialects are known to have similar versions of the same figure. The manananggal, as this figure is known in Tagalog, is a beautiful woman during the day with long hair and fair skin. She lives in villages, cities, and ports usually with similarly looking sisters or by herself. However, she usually is a closeted figure with very little interaction with members of society, imbuing her with mystery and aloofness. Moments of her interacting with society mainly stem from stories of her luring men with her feminine wiles and bountiful food. These pleasantries are meant to mask her true demonic intentions, which are to hunt down fetuses or men who impose gendered notions of reproduction on women.

After locating her prey, her true colors emerge at midnight, which is when she oils her body in a ritual to remove her torso from her bottom half. As her lower body remains rooted to the Earth with intestines and organs spilling, her top half flies into the night sky towards her

victim. Tales vary from her devouring her prey with a long beak-like sucker with fangs, which sucks fetuses directly from female bodies to her tearing the bodies of men violently. The vampire-like figure is vanquished either by removing its beak-like fangs or tampering with the lower half of the body by sprinkling ashes or salt on the corpse. When the manananggal returns to reconnect with her lower half, the substances prohibit the body parts from rejoining.²⁴

The story of the manananggal is a popular tale that warns families and children of a vengeful horrific creature using female wiles to attack her prey. Herminia Menez argues that the creation of the manananggal was a colonizing tactic to spread Catholicism and gender roles to native Filipinos. She asserts that the Spaniards popularized the figure of the manananggal as a disciplinary tool of colonization. Before this menacing female figure was popularized as female identified, the indigenous traditions of the Philippines located the woman as an important figure in society. The role of a woman in many indigenous traditions was as a healer or shaman, revered positions in society. She held various roles in society: leader in military excursions, healer, mid-wife, and priestess. More so, she was known to be sexually free of patriarchal conceptions of modesty and privacy. Herminia Menez remarks that the Spaniards challenged these perceptions of femininity through tales such as the manananggal:

This gruesome image [manananggal] is the most spectacular reversal of the role of the baylan [shaman] and midwife. The opposition between life taking and life giving, between killing and birthing, is understood by the self-segmenting process in which the reproductive half is left behind while the upper half is engaged in its death-dealing activity.²⁵

²⁴ These accounts have been taken from a variety of sources that provide translated version of recorded accounts. This includes the work by Damiana G. Eugenio, Maximo D. Ramos, and Herminia Meñez.

²⁵ Herminia Meñez, *Explorations in Philippine Folklore*. (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998).

Herminia Menez makes the argument that the manananggal is the malevolent counter-figure of the shaman. Catholic values of family are subverted by the manananggal through her violence against childrearing and kinship. By popularizing this tale, Spanish colonizers sought to suppress female power and sexuality by fear mongering. The manananggal is a creature used to enforce colonialist perceptions of femininity to reaffirm gender roles that oppress women of color.

M.O.B. takes this theory of the manananggal to make their critiques on structures of sexism.

The Manananggal Corporate Executive: M.O.B.'s Intervention in Grotesque Camp

For M.O.B. the manananggal is an abject queer figure due to her aversion to society – she lives on the outskirts of life. She abhors children and childbearing symbolizing nonreproduction. It is the creation of her as a monstrosity that makes her abject, according to Manalansan's theorization of society queering people of color. It is the manananggal as a queer figure that M.O.B. recuperates through grotesque camp.

For these artists the witch figure is a reminder of how the process and system of colonization harms Filipinas. By recuperating the manananggal, M.O.B. not only highlights the historical lineage of oppression, but also reclaims the power and sexuality that Filipinas were told to suppress. More so, it is through the manananggal that M.O.B. shows the power that Filipinas held before global expansion; it is a critique of these expansionist projects. Through the grotesque camp, the artists recuperate the manananggal and transgress the structures that presented her as a monstrosity. By combining the grotesque and camp, M.O.B.'s performance serves to move and change perceptions on Filipinanness in relation to structures of colonization and capitalism. They target this historical lineage by combining the manananggal and the corporate executive.

Like the manananggal, female corporate executives are antithetical to many conceptions of femininity: powerful, outspoken, and career-minded. In combining the corporate executive with the manananggal figure in a camp grotesque aesthetic, M.O.B. mocks, sexualizes, and distorts the literal and figurative body of femininity. More so, M.O.B. mocks the structures that create these normative perceptions such as corporate power and colonial histories. Through combining these as abject figures, M.O.B. draws a transnational, and modern critique. By adopting these figures, M.O.B. recuperates these women that have been perceived and created to define notions of femininity. In relating this to the personal lives of the M.O.B. artists, Reanne Estrada notes that *Manananggaloogle* was developed as a reaction to approaching their middle ages and choosing not to have children. *Manananggaloogle* is about the normative structures that define femininity in relation to reproduction, powerlessness, passivity, and sexuality. M.O.B. shows that gender non-conformity, power, and sex are fundamentally queer.

The bodies of the female corporate executive and manananggal are abject bodies, and through their camp grotesque aesthetic, M.O.B. queers the spaces these bodies inhabit. First, camp subverts the realities of structures made to seem natural. By using the visual device of excess in both space and action, M.O.B. plays with structures. Camp manifests in their grandiose acting, glamorous costumes, and participatory nature of the performance in their constructed spaces. Through these aesthetics made into actions by camp, M.O.B. transgresses the structures that oppress female power and sexuality. More so, their iteration of the manananggal is a literal and excessive embodiment of women, making her the ultimate camp subject. The grotesque, on the other hand, serves to reclaim how those structures affect notions of Filipinanness. The use of the grotesque through the mutation of the female body by adopting the manananggal constitutes

an act of recuperating and claiming female sexuality and power. They do this by using the visual device of mutation and the act of terror. Their performance through these aesthetic visual markers is twofold: a critique and reclamation.

The structures that M.O.B. critiques are the technology corporations. Functioning as capitalist institutions, as noted by M.O.B., they create and reinforce patriarchal conceptions by attacking the female body. For M.O.B., it is not just the technology corporations that stigmatize female bodies, but also the culture of work that regulates female bodies.

The Onboarding Part 2

Just outside the conference room is a spacious main office where we mill, waiting for the next portion of our onboarding experience. We stir and shuffle on the beige carpet in front of a large white wall where a red tapestry hangs. Standing before it with their legs shoulder-width apart and their hands on their hips, the corporate executives lead us through the next portion of the experience: the onboarding exercises.

“Men are grossly misrepresented in administrative support staff positions,” Wofford barks, signaling the Renfelds to separate and lead the men through the first exercise titled, “Gender Gap.” Packed like a can of sardines, they crowd against a far wall of the room, taking up very little space. They face the Renfelds who stand hunched, their heads down and their hands behind their backs. The new male hires follow their orders through hushed whispers. At first they giggle uncontrollably, until Estrada barks at them to be silent.

Standing in the center of the room, the executives lead us, the women, through our own “Gender Gap” exercise. Estrada gazes at us admiringly as she smacks her whip against the palm of her hand. She commands us to follow her movements into a “power pose.” Placing her feet shoulder width apart and her back pert, she barks, “Take up space!”

With my head high and my hands firmly placed on my hips, I scan the room at the other women. We smile passionately and voraciously at each other. My gaze lands on the men in the corner of the room and I feel my back grow taller and stronger. My stance widens, mimicking the powerful women before me.

Estrada raises her hands from her hips straight to the sky. She screams at us, “Think about all the power that emanates from your vagina! Spread up to the heavens. Take it! It’s

Yours! Own it! Flap those wings and fly! Fly! Fly! You're awesome. You're fabulous. No one is going to fuck with you!" Like a swarm of bats, we raise our hands to the sky. We flap our wings as we smile and laugh maniacally. Across the room, the male hires gaze at us wide eyed and scared, encouraging us to fly faster and harder. Smiling with their wicked eyes, the executives bark at the Renfelds to transition the men to the next exercise as we descend breathlessly from our flights.

The men disappear and the corporate executives usher us into another room with rows of cubicles. They tell us to stand next to the walkway. We are told that the men will be going through an exercise where their administrative skills will be put to the test, also known as the "Competitive Relay Race." They encourage us to judge, command, and yell at the men to help them learn the proper ways to be administrative assistants.

The race begins as the first leg runs to their next team member, holding a tray full of coffee. As they daintily, but quickly, rush their coffee to their team members, I look at the women beside me who yell at the men to quicken their pace. Delivering cold coffee, after all, would be shameful. After approaching their next team member the second leg of the race collates paper in the order of a rainbow. We laugh at the men who stumble through remembering the correct order. Placing the stack of papers in a folder, the third leg rushes to the last team member. Carefully, he places the folder between the last member's thighs. Precariously balancing the folder, the men race to the finish line, waddling like penguins. We point and yell at the men to go faster. We laugh as the men stumble and trip along the course. As the winner approaches the finish line, we scream joyously, amused and only slightly impressed by the men. A team manages to succeed but not without judgment.

Chapter 2: The Manananggal Corporate Executive: Neoliberal Local and Corporate Work Culture

Manananggoogle's mission statement prioritizes diversity, access, and production. In addressing these goals, the corporate executives implement etiquette and protocol, creating their workplace culture. Their onboarding activities, described above, separate the women and men. They teach them to perform specific roles: women are told to inhabit space and claim power, whereas the men are regulated into administrative roles. Their antics, hallmarks of M.O.B.'s grotesque camp aesthetic, move the performance beyond playful activities and towards a critique of severe power inequalities in corporations. They subvert the roles of men and women so excessively that the participants laugh and play around with the Manananggoogle corporate reality, which mimics corporations like Google.

M.O.B.'s critique of Google's corporate culture is through the grotesque camp performance where visitors are asked to participate and play with this created space. By mocking Google's namesake and replicating their corporate headquarters through their aesthetic, M.O.B. critiques Google's global business model, particularly their mission to diversity. M.O.B. and their participants play with gender lines in the corporate space, showing how this model is tentative and hypocritical.

However, M.O.B.'s placing of the manananggal figure into the corporate figures complicates their version of the workplace culture. Although their critique of Google is in Silicon Valley's neoliberalism, the artists include the manananggal as a way to recall a moment in history where folklore changed due to global forces. In changing the mythos once again to incorporate the corporate executive, M.O.B. traces a lineage of female oppression from colonization to neoliberal capitalism. They create a temporal and transnational critique, bridging

time and space to show that these globalized initiatives sanitize culture and Filipinanness. They show the relationship between colonization and capitalism, exposing how these two forces work in concert to oppress Filipinas by creating a new retelling of the manananggal figure.

In creating a new mythology of the manananggal by merging her with the corporate executive, M.O.B. reverses the power inequality Google exemplifies. They do this by creating a culture of work that centers women. However, through playing with corporate space, M.O.B. shows that inverting this gender line does not rectify neoliberal structures. The artists make obvious the corporate culture of benevolence: a veneer of equality through their inclusion of women and the creation of queer-friendly and playful settings. This new normative culture of work erases the violence they enact unto women of color while also perpetuating existing inequalities. Not only does M.O.B. question representation, but also how it is rendered in neoliberal global capitalism.

In this chapter I argue that M.O.B. critiques the dialectic between capital and culture, which places Filipinas in perceived labors. Within this neoliberal moment, M.O.B. targets how corporations like Google attempt to hide the harm they cause to the local community for the sake of accruing capital. In recognizing that this structure restricts women to particular jobs, M.O.B. employs the reversal of representation and places women at the top of the corporate ladder. Through grotesque camp, M.O.B. illuminates that it is not just a question of diversity, as neoliberal tenets state, but rather the global capitalist system itself is fundamentally created to marginalize Filipinas through the creation of these cultures. These aesthetics make literal the violence of Silicon Valley's neoliberal culture.

I use Neferti Tadiar's conceptions of the dialectic between culture and capital in relation

to M.O.B's manananggal. I apply this to the figure of the mail order bride and show how M.O.B. subverts that figure through their grotesque camp aesthetic. By doing so, I make tangible the role of Filipinas within this system. These devices are applied M.O.B.'s critique of Google and their creation of both local and corporate culture. I show that Google's neoliberal capitalist culture affects the local San Francisco community through their employee transportation system. Not only do they inflict harm on the local Filipino community, but also create a culture of work that is seemingly diverse but still stratified. Going back to their performance, I analyze M.O.B.'s performance in relation to these structures. In targeting Google, M.O.B. makes visible the violent affects to Filipino communities in the Bay Area today. They mock Google's mission in diversity and progress to show that these tenets and cultural values are tentative for women of color who work for and live near these institutions. They reverse gender lines in their performance, recuperating female sexuality, to show that the corporate culture of work marginalizes women. However, through this reversal, and the maintenance of the horrors of neoliberalism, M.O.B. shows that despite these new diversity initiatives inequities persist.

Capital, Culture, and Filipinas: The Dialectic between Capital and Culture

According to Menez, the mythos of the manananggal during Spanish colonization changed to exact harm to women in Filipino society, restructuring their society to ensure Spanish rule. M.O.B. utilizes this mythos and includes the corporate woman to change the folklore for the present neoliberal moment. In doing so, M.O.B. shows that Google participates in changing local and corporate culture. As a result, M.O.B. reclaims the sexual power neoliberal capitalism regulates. Both Spanish colonization and Google's enterprise are instances of expansion when power is sought and enforced. These moments are linked by a larger network and history of

globalization for capital at the expense of people of color, specifically women. Neferti Tadiar states that this is the logic of global capitalism, and the Filipina, as well as the ways Filipinas are rendered, continue this dialectical relationship between culture and capital. I analyze the relationship of capital and culture by looking at the manananggal.

In her *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization*, Neferti Tadiar uses a literary approach to show Filipina authors are attempting to catalyze change by situating literature in the socio-political temperament characters are rendered.

²⁶ Tadiar supplements a Marxist understanding of capital by adding a gender lens and states: “capital uses cultural meanings and practices of gender and sexuality to create new forms of production; cultural meanings and practices of gender and sexuality are in turn transformed by these new forms of production of capital.”²⁷ Tadiar shows that capital in a globalized economy is perceived to be masculine whereas physical labor is feminine. To use the body as the means to exchange labor is the most inferior way to obtain capital because it does not create a surplus of capital; the body has natural limitations. Labors that most acutely use the body such as prostitution are devalued. However, these labors are also most typically ascribed to women because of heteropatriarchal structures thereby regulating women into these roles and further encouraging these perceptions of the devaluation of their labor and body. However, this conception does not acknowledge the cultural production, or capital, that is created by these labors further stimulating these dialectics resulting in the marginalization of Filipinas.

²⁶ Other authors who have written on this subject include Rhacel Salazar Parrenas in *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, and Grace Hong *Death Beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference*

²⁷ Neferti Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

This follows the logic of the artists' interpretation of the manananggal through Menez's conceptions of Spanish colonization. The regulation of gender norms through the manananggal figure is a part of the structures of global capitalism in the Philippines. Spanish colonizers demonized women as hypersexual killers and sadists to vilify a prominent sector of the pre-colonial Philippine society. They removed them from prominent roles in society. As a result, women were relegated to the home participating in household labor, which was deemed unimportant. Men were placed in government positions, which were perceived as important and visible. In doing so, colonizers uprooted the community, ensuring that a stratified system was in place that regulated these bodies for specific labors. By delimiting their power and importance to society and implementing notions of gender roles, the colonizers changed the labors of women. They effectively created a system that renders the Filipina a peripheral member of society and deserving of the subordinate roles they were assigned.

The labor delegated to Filipinas in capitalist structures ensures the maintenance of power for colonizers. The continuation of this system of inequality manifests in the creation of a culture of perceived norms. This system capitalizes on these norms through the maintenance of this dialectic. However, these stereotypes are not natural but created realities to regulate power, which also enforces perceptions of assigned labor. The movement of female brown bodies and the circulation of these cultures can be analyzed through M.O.B.'s namesake. Similar to Filipina prostitutes and nurses, the movement of mail order brides can be analyzed through the structures of global capitalism. M.O.B. makes visible the creation of norms for increased capital through the similarities between the manananggal and their conceptions of mail order brides.

Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. and mail order brides

M.O.B. makes grotesque a stereotype of Filipinas: the mail order bride. They transform a Filipina stereotype into an acronym that embodies the opposite of the mail order bride. In using their aesthetic device, they morph the name into a terrifying unified unit. M.O.B. critiques perceptions of these abject figures. Rather mail order brides are a part of a larger system of gendered stereotypes and their position is much more complicated than reified notions.

In 2015 NBC purchased the show “Mail Order Family,” a television series about a Filipina mail-order bride/stepmother. After announcing the show, the network received heavy backlash and cancelled it within three days. The backlash stemmed from the insensitivity to human trafficking. In an article published by the Huffington Post, Michelle Clark, director of the trafficking nonprofit The Protection Project, states: “Similar to the trafficking in persons industry, husbands tend to come from wealthy, stable economies, while brides originate from economically unstable or vulnerable environments...Once the brides arrive to the new country, they are left dependent on husbands economically, culturally and legally.”²⁸ The representation of Filipinas in the television series normalizes perceptions of Filipinas as sexual, domestic, and complacent objects. However, the response by Clark to the television also participates in a harmful representation of Filipinas solely through the lens of capitalism, foregoing their human experience for complete vulnerability. Clark renders these women as compliant subjects with no choice or negotiation. She excludes the human particularity of these women, which precludes any site of living as resistance. In doing so, Clark also normalizes perceptions of complacency

²⁸ Sarah Ruiz-Grossman, “NBC Comedy about Mail-Order Bride Canceled After Twitter Backlash,” *Huffington Post*, October 3, 2016, accessed January 16, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/mail-order-family-show-cancelled-nbc-after-twitter-backlash_us_57f299bae4b082aad9bc78ab.

ascribed to mail order brides and the Philippines.²⁹

These two types of representations of Filipinas are reflective of Tadiar's conception of the circuit of capitalism at the expense of Filipinas. Global capitalism marginalizes communities of color and creates notions of gendered labor; however it is the re/creation of a heteropatriarchal culture that perpetuates and hides these circuits, further normalizing these stereotypes.³⁰ The dialectic is disrupted when human particularities and choice are taken into consideration. M.O.B. refutes heteronormative culture as attempting to reify stereotypes. Instead, they make visible the power and sexuality that Filipinas have within this system despite the historical and contemporary moments they live through by transforming into the manananggal.

The artists make excessively glamorous and horrifying these abject figures by transfiguring the phrase "mail order bride" into the acronym "M.O.B." The transformation of their name can also be seen as a merging with the manananggal. This recuperation of mail order brides through the manananggal shows that despite their position within these systems, they still complicate these realities by maintaining diasporic families, seeking romance, and living their lives. They are active participants in these flows that both support and maintain structural inequality. By living and embodying this difference, they mutilate the ideal capitalist Filipina.³¹ The manananggal figure creates a temporal critique of globalization and capitalism. The

²⁹ Gina Velasco also talks about the complicated relationship between capital and mail order brides. She deconstructs these perceptions of these figures as solely at the expense of capitalism.

³⁰ Gina Velasco, "Performing the Filipina 'mail-order bride': Queer neoliberalism, affective labor, and homonationalism," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 23:3 (2013) 350-372, DOI: 10.1080/0740770X.2013.849064

³¹ Grace Kyungwon Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference*, Difference Incorporated (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

transformation into the manananggal for the new hires recalls power inherent to Filipinas before a globalized capitalist system. They are not just women as defined by capitalism but otherworldly monsters.

The breadth of M.O.B.'s work consistently seeks to dispel these stereotypes and recuperate this abject figure.³² Performances such as "Mail Order Bride of Frankenstein" and "Always a Bridesmaid" utilize the same aesthetic to rupture the ways capitalism and the work culture operate to oppress Filipinas. "Divide//Conquer" does the same; however it specifically targets technology companies and their role in global capitalism. The performance "Divide//Conquer" does this particularly for Filipinas in the Silicon Valley who are implicated in this system by Google.

Google and Corporate Culture: Diversity in the Silicon Valley and the Workplace

M.O.B. creates a critique of Google by merging the manananggal figure with the name of the corporation itself. By changing the folklore using a grotesque camp aesthetic, M.O.B. reclaims the Filipina that globalized systems have regulated. The artists integrate the manananggal with the corporate executive to reverse the gendered notions of power that institutions like Google simultaneously reify and create. However, in making the performance horrific and playful, the artists make obvious the atrocities that are the result of the dialectic. They make this visible to target Google's attempts to hide the way they reproduce heteropatriarchal culture. This concealment is indicative of the neoliberal policies by corporations that support the increase of capital by changing culture. In mutilating the name

³² From projects such as "Bride of Frankenstein" to "Homesweet Nothings" M.O.B.'s work discusses the Filipina and the various stereotypes ascribed into this figure. These stereotypes range from a packaged bride, mother, and wife. Due to the way these figures are rendered, the Filipina is an abject body from economic, governmental, and gendered forces.

Google, they elucidate a need to disorient the perception of the company.

This concealment of violence can be best ascertained by analyzing Google's mission statement: "Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."³³ In the introduction I detail the influence of technology corporations on the San Francisco Bay Area Filipino community. Despite the violence produced by the company, the employees' perception of their work is positive. Their rhetoric is neoliberal: the progression of diversity and universality for productivity. These advancements in diversity and accessibility are a mask to obfuscate a drive to increase capital at all costs.³⁴ This relationship is the hallmark of neoliberalism and capitalism, but also of the cultures of capitalism for global technology corporations like Google. Their mission speaks to their colonial desires for world domination. However, their mission is hypocritical; they seek to be accessible for diverse communities, but eradicate and appropriate the culture of the people they state they serve. This culture of promoting "diversity" while prioritizing capital at the expense of equity is the culture of Google's workplace as well as the type of culture they purport to the local community. Their services and employment opportunities can only be accessed by an elite few, however the company is marketed as inclusive.

It is this false reality that M.O.B. seeks to disrupt and make visible through their grotesque camp performance. M.O.B. suggests that Google perpetuates a culture that utilizes liberal tenets to mask the harm done to communities of color. As they displace the people from these localities, they appropriate a particular diversity for the benefit of the company, thereby

³³ "About," Google, last accessed 2017, <https://www.google.com/about/company/>.

³⁴ Grace Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal : The Impossible Politics of Difference*.

creating a false local culture and community. Through their grotesque camp aesthetic, M.O.B. mocks the culture that implicates and relies on women of color and as a result sterilizes local and workplace culture. This is best exemplified by the employee transportation system developed by technology corporations in the Bay Area.

Google and the Community: The Affect of Global Capitalism to the Local Culture

In a 2014 interview as a part of the Khosla Ventures CEO Summit, Google CEO Larry Page stated that it was wrong to blame technology corporations for gentrification occurring in the San Francisco Bay Area. He said, “You also have a lot of people who are rent controlled, so they don’t participate in the economic increase in housing prices. It actually hurts them. It doesn’t help them. I think those problems are more structural and very serious problems.”³⁵ Page’s comment on gentrification fails to acknowledge Google’s participation in a system of inequity and instead blames the low-income community. He blames low-income families for staying in rent-controlled housing units and not participating in an economy that excludes these families. In fact, the increase in costs of living in the Bay Area was a direct result of companies like Google. He also does not recognize the power that Google has to overpower and sanitize these cultures, such as their environmental initiatives. This interview took place in the same year technology corporation commuter shuttles were evaluated by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA).

Before 2014, technology corporations such as Google, Apple and Twitter were using privately operated commuter shuttle systems with no city monitoring, often causing traffic

³⁵ *Fireside chat with Google co-founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin and Vinod Kholsa*, Youtube, Kholsa Ventures (2014; San Francisco: 2014), Online video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wdnp_7atZ0M.

difficulties. In 2014, SFMTA began monitoring these technology corporations with the hopes of restricting parking hours, reducing greenhouse emissions, and creating safety measures.³⁶

SFMTA made the shuttle system official in February 2016 based on the guidelines proposed. The report states that the shuttles removed nearly 4.3 million vehicle miles traveled from the region's streets each month. Also, the system provides services to 8,500 people round trip every day. These statistics and reformations show progress in addressing environmental, safety, and transportation concerns. However, like Page's statement regarding gentrification of the San Francisco Bay Area, the program fails to look beyond maximizing efficiency and disregards its affect on the communities who have lived there for decades.

The shuttle service acknowledges the poor public transportation system from the Peninsula to San Francisco proper. However, instead of looking for community-based solutions to alleviate gentrification, these corporations circumnavigate these issues and create an exclusive system for the elite few. The shuttle perpetuates class inequalities and demarcates a class of people who can be eco-friendly. These private conveniences do not target gentrification and in fact continue to perpetuate the structural inequalities: "So, when San Francisco workers are forced to move out to cheap suburbs without mass transit, they become reluctant urban drivers – by some standards, more eco-evil than Google. The burden and the blame for urban pollution then often falls on the poor, who can't afford the well-funded environmental measures of Google and Genentech."³⁷ Those who have access to these systems benefit, unlike the local

³⁶ San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, *Commuter Shuttle Pilot Program: Evaluation Report* (San Francisco, CA, 2015), 4-36, <https://www.sfmta.com/sites/default/files/projects/2015/Evaluation%20Report%20-%20Oct%205%202015.pdf>.

³⁷ Susie Cagle, "The truth inside the Google bus lawsuit: gentrification hurts the environment" *The*

laborers who cannot afford to live in their neighborhoods, which was a result of these corporations increasing the cost of living. Not working with community-based solutions sanitizes the local culture for the elite, changing the local landscape. Instead of focusing on these rippling repercussions, the dialogue focuses on the environmental progress these corporations stimulate and the fault of the local community for not being as progressive. The blame is placed upon the community, rather than the corporate structures, thus perpetuating stereotypes and further justifying capitalism. They fail to discuss the creation of an elite society.

As Tadiar states, global capitalism makes the conditions of oppression for communities of color and then utilizes their vulnerabilities to continue the cycle. Using the vulnerabilities of the low-income community of color, Google blames them for not being eco-friendly, perpetuating the filthy uneducated tropes to justify the need to have these transportation programs. These buses are equipped with Internet access allowing workers to begin their workday earlier. They capitalize on the time spent commuting. The employees spend more time working, however, this is masked by the neoliberal rhetoric of progress. The creation of Google's culture is most evident in their neoliberal tenets. M.O.B. de-stabilizes this perceived progressive reality constructed by Google that changes the landscape of the community into a corporate neoliberal local culture. Through this analysis of Google and the harm technology corporations exact onto communities of color through cultural sanitation, we can ascertain M.O.B. critiques of corporate culture.

The employees of the technology corporations however are also inculcated with these

Guardian, May 2014, accessed January 16, 2017,
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/09/google-bus-lawsuit-gentrification-environment>

neoliberal beliefs. The perceived benefits of diversity and progress are constructed in the internal culture of these corporations. By employing a neoliberal form of diversity through representation, Google creates an internal culture of work that depends upon gendered notions of labor to uphold a patriarchal structure.

Google and the Corporation: The Affect of Global Capitalism to the Corporate Culture

Google's mission to promote diversity and equality is hypocritical due to their lack of investment in community-based solutions against gentrification. Instead they sanitize the communities around them and invest in a society that is wealthy. This sanitation of culture to accrue capital through preconceived notions is also mirrored in their work place culture, particularly in their hiring practices. The demographic make-up of particular positions in Google shows a diversity that is still gendered and racist. The 2016 diversity report shows consistent inequalities despite grandiose initiatives and posturing.

Google hoped to publicly address their homogenous culture by initiating their Google-in-Residence program, a partnership with Historically Black Colleges and Universities where Google software engineers teach introductory classes.³⁸ They also introduced a series of internship opportunities in the hopes of creating a pipeline of employees. Their diversity initiative also included creating and maintaining diversity networks for various ethnic groups. Their benefits are LGBTQ friendly acknowledging the range of needs among their diverse employees. They also created Women Techmakers, a global initiative to provide visibility, community, and resources for women in technology.³⁹ Despite these initiatives, diversity within

³⁸ "Google In Residence" last accessed January 16, 2017, <https://careers.google.com/stories/google-in-residence/>.

³⁹ "Women Tech Makers," last accessed January 16, 2017, <https://www.womentechmakers.com/>.

the workplace has remained largely the same from 2014 to 2016. Google best exemplifies the hypocrisy of the cultures produced by neoliberal corporations. I detail the information and data rendered from the report alongside my analysis of M.O.B.'s onboarding activities. In doing so, I hope to make explicit the artists' critique of the structural inequities under neoliberal global capitalism.

In the previous section, where I describe the two onboarding activities, M.O.B. mutilates and exaggerates the labors men and women are delegated in the cultures of capitalism. They target the neoliberal rhetoric that companies like Google, Apple, and Twitter purport and show that their reported progress is humorous. These reports include an increase in hiring for Hispanic men (34%) and women (37%), which was the largest growth in population over the entire fields Google tested. Overall, there was a 27% increase in Google's hiring of men of color and a 28% increase for women of color at Google in the United States. However, analyses of the types of labor for which people of color were hired in comparison to white men complicate Google's initial testaments of improvement.

In separating men and women in the performance, M.O.B. calls to attention the gendered and racial divides in corporation. They separate men and women to mimic the divide in Google. For example, white men constitute 41% of the entire workforce at Google. And although 21% of the service worker population is white men, .32% of the total white male force are service workers, unlike black men whose total population is only 1% of Google but they make up 5% of service workers. In other words, more black men are service workers even though they are a small population at Google. 70% of white men were reported as professionals, inhabiting 43% of that workforce. Black women were reported as .6% of that population, the lowest of all fields in

the professional population. It is through the severe and abundant reversal of these roles that M.O.B. critiques Google.



Figure 3 Mail Order Brides/M.O.B., “Divide//Conquer,” performed by Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. (2013; San Francisco: Southern Exposure, 2016), video file. Photographer Catherine McElhone

The divide in labor is made apparent in administrative support positions. 49% of the population of administrative support is white women and the total percentage of total women as administrative support is 83%. In the most severe reversal and critique of these statistics, M.O.B. places men in administrative support staff positions. In Figure 3, the men in the performance are seen practicing their submissive, administrative positions. They alter the rhetoric of global capitalism, which genders labor to hide the capital accrued by these affective labors, further implicating women of color.⁴⁰ They reverse the narrative on the gender divide in administrative

⁴⁰ Neferti Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization*

roles from saying that women are over-represented to, “Men are grossly misrepresented in administrative support staff positions.”⁴¹ They not only flip the roles of identifying men and women but also redefine the roles.



Figure 4 Mail Order Brides/M.O.B., “Divide//Conquer,” performed by Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. (2013; San Francisco: Southern Exposure, 2016), video file. Photographer Catherine McElhone

M.O.B. construct executive positions as inherently female by imploring women to find their innate sexuality and power. The Google report shows that 64% of executives are white men, 12% are white women, 3% are black men, and none are black women, Hispanic men, or Hispanic women. As an act that directly combats this heteropatriarchal structure, M.O.B. does not

(Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

⁴¹ Mail Order Brides/M.O.B., “Divide//Conquer,” performed by Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. (2013; San Francisco: Southern Exposure, 2016), video file.

ask their female participants to be more “masculine” for these positions. Rather, they are urged to look within themselves to tap into their female potential. M.O.B. creates a new reality in which gendered labor is redefined for women. By turning into the manananggal, the female corporate executives have successfully found their innate power. This ultimate power is wholly feminine, erotic, and terrifying. By contrast, male support staff undergoes a series of humiliating tasks to show the degradation to which corporate power subjects women who fill these support staff positions. M.O.B. constructs a reality where this behavior towards men is “justified” through their “natural” characteristics. M.O.B. redefines these terms and structures.

Global technology corporations have significantly affected Filipino communities in San Francisco. Google participates in the gentrification of these communities but presents itself as a purveyor of diversity, success, progress, and modernity, showing the hypocrisy of their enterprise. These facts, along with their initiatives like Google Bus, show they prioritize production and capital while utilizing neoliberal rhetoric to be perceived as the epitome of modernity. In fact, Google replicates the system of capitalism by creating the structures of oppression (gentrification) and utilizing white patriarchy to ensure women remain in their position. This inherent contradiction is the relationship of neoliberalism and capitalism that implicate local and workplace culture.

M.O.B.’s critique of normative gender values in corporate culture manifests through the replication of this hierarchical structure. The artists make the viewer aware of the severe power inequalities and stereotypes of women by reversing the gendered figuration of power, placing women at the top. However, it is through glorification and mutilation that M.O.B. also shows that representation of women in the company is not enough, as indicated in the critique of

Google's neoliberal agenda. Rather, through playing with culture, M.O.B. shows that the structure itself is oppressive.

This transnational critique of globalization is rooted in the labors of the Silicon Valley and the harm that Google does to this community. However, in situating San Francisco in the center of this analysis, the neoliberal global capitalist enterprise that enacts harm unto the local community is not specific to technology companies. In fact, the waves of gentrification and erasure are also symptomatic of the neoliberal rhetoric of global art museums in San Francisco.

The Onboarding Part 3



Figure 5 Manananggoogle “Divide and Conquer.” <http://manananggoogle.com/>

The knowledge acquired from the onboarding experience on the workplace culture of the company is detailed in their website. For those interested in the company and the onboarding experience, Manananggoogle’s website is the perfect place to begin understanding what it means to be a manananggoogler. On the home page, the Manananggoogle logo fills up the entire space. Moving from left to right, the logo is a color gradient from its iconic deep red color to black. The “L” of the company’s name divides the words “Divide” and “Conquer” set above the name of the corporation. It is a reminder of their global endeavors.

Most the space under the header “About Manananggoogle” is filled with an image of a charcoal black sphere, possibly the world, against an even deeper black void. The image is indiscernible due to its many dark features. Rays in shades of bright red, magenta, and orange shoot out from the sphere. Under that image is company’s mission statement:

“Manananggoogle’s mission is to organize the world and make it universally accessible and useful.” Under this are two hyperlinks, one of which leads to information regarding the company.

The “Company” link features information about the corporation. It states that they were founded and incorporated in 1898.⁴² Their headquarters are based in 1600 Amputheatre Parkway in Mountain View, California. In the middle of the page is a photo of the three founders and CEOs dressed and styled exactly as they are during the onboarding experience. Estrada stands before the conference table with red binders. Her head is cocked to the right but her gaze stares directly at the web surfer. Wofford sits to her left and Barrios is on her right. Their elbows are on the table and their red manicured hands press together.

The “Management” page of the website provides information on the CEOs. The website emphasizes the size and breadth of the company. Estrada’s section emphasizes how her wide range of skills including midwifery, culinary arts, and public administration. She received a doctoral degree in 1898 at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, a Bachelor’s degree from Harvard University, and a Master’s from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. In 2002 she was honored with the Phyllis Madonna Prize. Aside from managing the daily operations of the corporation, Barrios also oversees many special projects and serves as president of technology. Also displaying her unique skills, she has a background in mathematics and computer science from University of Bueno Aires and is a recipient of a National Science Foundation Kinbaku Fellowship. Wofford has nearly 60 years of experience in financial operations and is the interim executive vice president of planning and performance management for AdobOracle. She is also a partner at McArthur & Company.

The last page on the website is titled “Jobs.” Displayed is a picture of the Manananggoogle work environment: a pristine dungeon. Scrawled on the wall in deep red is the

⁴² The year 1898 marks the beginning of the Philippine American War where the United States colonized the Philippines after defeating Spain and acquiring the colonized land of the Spaniards.

company's logo. The walls shine as if they are dripping with water. In the middle of the lobby is a pool of blood. Right below the photo is another motto of the corporation: "Do cruel things that matter." Underneath this hiring motto is their statement on employment: "At Manananggoogle, we don't just accept difference – we celebrate it, we support it, and we thrive on it for the benefit of our employees, our products and our community. Manananggoogle is proud to be an equal opportunity workplace and is an affirmative action employer." Manananggoogle exemplifies the underlying cruelty of diversity that makes the company successful through their creative euphemisms.

Chapter 3: Make the Museum Ugly: The Art Museum as a Neoliberal Corporation

The website reflects many tenets of the culture of work for neoliberal capitalist institutions. Like Google's culture of work, the website shows that Mananangoogle prioritizes diversity and progress in spite of the harm inflicted on local and global communities. Both companies attempt to address an issue of representation in the workplace. Unlike Google, Mananangoogle is blatant in addressing the harms done to the community through their initiatives. They state that their labors are cruel but essential.

The website was first used during the "Divide//Conquer" performance as a part of the onboarding experience. Both Jenifer Wofford and Eliza Barrios, stated that the onboarding was unlike any other exhibition or gallery opening.⁴³ There was a palpable synergy of visitors playfully enjoying themselves during the two-hour performance. The response to the grotesque camp performance, one where the visitors are subverting the ways they are looking at the culture of work, is also a response to the normative museum or gallery opening.

Johanna Poethig, curator for the *Mananangoogle* performance "Limo Lecture," believes that the scrutiny of the museum arises through the dynamics of re-inscription of systemic hegemonies and mocking through laughter as seen in the "Divide//Conquer" performance. She recognized that the exhibition reversed the hierarchy of power by placing women at the top and men at the bottom. However, it is how this reversal occurs in the performance that she states creates a critique. M.O.B. uses the grotesque camp to alert visitors to the relationship between capital and culture that inherently marginalizes Filipinas.⁴⁴ M.O.B. critiques representation by

⁴³ Jenifer Wofford in discussion with the author, March 2016.

⁴⁴ Neferti Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

instituting the same hierarchies in the performance, but by laughing and playing with the system they also show possibilities.

This performance goes against many of Poethig's experiences in gallery functions such as opening and closing parties, which were often sterile spaces. The museum and gallery socialize visitors to be silent and reserved, remnants of Kantian perspectives on art and beauty.⁴⁵ These spaces monitor people through security guards, stanchions, and directories. The creation of a culture to view art regulates the ways visitors can interact with art and visitors. Furthermore, she states that those spaces are corporate spectacles where artists, curators, and buyers attend to be seen and network to advance their personal and professional agendas.

Unlike that space of corporate spectacle, the performance by M.O.B. was the "Spirit of people giddily enjoying themselves."⁴⁶ The performance is not a business transaction, but rather a participatory experience of grotesque camp. Through collective joy and laughter, M.O.B. critiques the ideological and physical structures of art history that regulate the viewer through notions of diversity, thereby homogenizing and sterilizing the arts in the San Francisco Bay Area and globally. By redirecting viewers to participate, play, and have fun, M.O.B. redirects participants to model the possibilities of museum interaction; they train visitors. The curators and visitors of the performance state that *Manananggoogle* not only mocks global institutions but also subverts the museum space itself. I argue that there is another layer of critique that M.O.B. elucidates: a critique of the art institution.

In this section, I relate Google's neoliberal culture in capitalism as it manifests in the

⁴⁵ Karen Lang, "The Dialectics of Decay: Rereading the Kantian Subject," *The Art bulletin*. 79, no. 3 (1997).

⁴⁶ Johanna Poethig (curator) in discussion with the author, February 2016.

local and corporate culture to the global museums that inhabit San Francisco. By paralleling these corporations, I show that museums participate in the sanitization of culture and dehumanizing of people, which are hidden by their neoliberal rhetoric. Claims of diversity and progress are an attempt to hide and normalize the erasure of people of color to continue their enterprise. M.O.B. critiques how museums participate in these global endeavors by mocking Google's website. By using the online space as the product of Google's labors, M.O.B. shows the relationship between technology corporations and museums.

San Francisco and Museums: The Influence on the Local Community

In an interview with artist Eliza Barrios about the performance "Divide//Conquer", she mentioned SFMoMA located in SoMa. She expressed her frustration and disappointment over the failure of the museum to live up to a vision to exhibit the diversity and arts of San Francisco for the global audience. Displayed were works of art typically shown in art history textbooks and museums like the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The use of this canonical narrative prioritizes white modernist artists who already have a reputation due to the continual display of their work. Biased art historians also corroborate these perceptions. Also displayed were international artists of color. However, this inclusion and representation of artists is particular to international artists rather than the local artists of color. SFMoMA was replicating a narrow definition of diversity and representation that centers white New York modernists and international art superstars. She states, "They had a chance to do something, but it is the same bullshit."⁴⁷ Barrios expresses her resentment of museums to replicate the same gendered hierarchical museum practices. SFMoMA created a narrow definition of diversity, replicating the

⁴⁷ Eliza Barrios in discussion with the author, October 2016.

problem of modernism in prioritizing form and content rather than the artists and the local. Eliza Barrios does not say that international artists should not exhibit work, but rather museums need to be more attentive to the local; the call for local is nonexclusive. SFMoMA, and other institutions in the SoMa neighborhood continue to sterilize the neighborhood, like companies like Google, and making clear the parallels among museums, corporations, and capitalism.

M.O.B. critiques the way neoliberal capitalist corporations marginalize the local Filipino community by simultaneously removing Filipino residents from the area and changing the artistic landscape. However, technology corporations were not the only capitalist entity to participate in these projects. Through M.O.B.'s critique, I show the similarities to how global cultural and art institutions of the San Francisco Bay Area also participate in the sanitization of local culture.

Brian J. Godfrey in "Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco" outlines the history of urban development and redevelopment of the SoMa district. SoMa's development from the 1950s to the 1980s was marked by a need to meet the demands of a post-World War II globalized economy.⁴⁸ The mayor and electorate created pressure to transform downtown San Francisco into the "Wall Street of the West."⁴⁹ By expanding business in the West Coast, businessmen aimed/hoped to reach new markets in the Pacific. The development projects in San Francisco were coordinated attempts throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area to achieve economic progress.⁵⁰ This new demand was targeted with plans to build the YBCA, a multi-use

⁴⁸ Brian J. Godfrey, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco" *American Geographical Society* 87 (1997).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Chester Hartman, *Yerba Buena: Land Grab and Community Resistance in San Francisco* (San

building for business, tourism, and cultur.

To increase capital, the San Francisco city government knowingly began a project that would remove the Filipino community. Development stretched into the SoMa district, uprooting low-income immigrants and single households; many were longtime Filipino residents. Accompanying the onslaught of banks and businesses was the developments of the Moscone Center, which opened its doors in 1981. After experiencing an influx of economic growth from tourism and business, another series of development occurred to meet the demands of housing as well as tourism. Plans to build the YBCA and SFMoMA in the SoMa district further displaced the Filipino community. Filipino residents vehemently contested both periods of development, which eventually led to new subsidized housing. However, the displacement by the Yerba Buena Project caused endless problems:

Ironically, the very emergence of Sixth Street as a social problem – characterized by dilapidated SRO [single-room occupancy] housing, transient populations, prostitution, and drug dealing – stemmed largely from the displacement effects of the Yerba Buena Project. The demolition of SROs in the vicinity of Third Street displaced thousands of low-income residents, many of whom migrated to the SROs around Sixth Street. The completion of the TODCO's (Tenants and Owners Development Corporation) Knox SRO provided a model of low-income housing in an area still much in need of renovation. Just how badly the SROs needed upgrading was underscored by the traffic fire at the Delta Hotel on 12 August 1997, which displaced more than 200 residents, many of them elderly Filipino veterans of World War II.⁵¹

As tourism and commerce expanded, many visitors and new residents were attracted to the cultural capital of the area. Housing development for the long-term residents could not keep up with the demands from the new invading elite. It was simultaneously the development of

Francisco: Glide Publications, 1974), 30.

⁵¹ Brian J. Godfrey, "Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco" *American Geographical Society* 87 (1997): 326-327.

businesses and museums that changed the geography of SoMa, adversely affecting the Filipino communities and culture.

M.O.B.'s critique of diversity and community oriented programming by technology companies is also a critique of art institutions. Despite the various museums that resulted from redevelopment, the art institutions, artwork, and artists taking residency in SoMa belie the previously flourishing Filipino artist community residing in these neighborhoods. The government and developers uprooted the SoMa Filipino artists to create a type of artistic diversity that could provide more cultural and monetary capital. Through perceived notions of high art, the government insurrected buildings incurring capital through development. As a result, San Francisco, is known as an artistic community, however through these selected art forms and artists. For the previous residents, their artwork is invalidated and their careers jeopardized. M.O.B. shows that this creativity and diversity is fraught. The city of San Francisco is a benevolent institution incapable of supporting their community.

This can be seen particularly through the Yerba Buena project. The YBCA, as previously mentioned, has made attempts to address the multicultural community by curating exhibitions that bring in local activists and artists. This is a part of their vision: "A community that thrives on inspiration. It will take the creativity and imagination of all of us to create a more hopeful and equitable future. Before we can create that future, we must be inspired to envision it."⁵² The YBCA's civic engagement mission targets this by working with local schools with large immigrant populations and encouraging cultural memory to fight gentrification through food

⁵² "About Us" Yerba Buena Center of Art, last accessed January 16, 2017, <https://www.ybca.org/about-us>.

justice programs.⁵³ Their vision also influences their curatorial initiatives. For example, the exhibitions “Take this Hammer” and “Dissident Futures” sought to address how artists envision progressive futures that target oppression and injustice.⁵⁴ Addressing the need to work with the community, the exhibition partnered with technology corporations, including Google. Techies participated in the exhibition by contributing theories and objects to be exhibited. In these exhibitions, the forms of art making merge with technology corporations to create an illusion of community engagement.

However, like the redevelopment projects, both Google and the YBCA changed the landscape of their community through gentrification and erasure. The technology corporations that inhabit the Silicon Valley are settlers who have displaced the community. YBCA’s initiatives and exhibitions that attempt to work with the “community” through Google are fraught. More egregiously, these tactics can also be a ruse to cover up YBCA’s history in the participation in the removal of people of color.

Google and the YBCA (and the other art institutions in the SoMa area that were developed during this time period with including the Moscone Center) are strikingly similar, from the ways they envision their labors to the effects these corporations have on the local community. Equivalently, the YBCA and Google use ideas of progress and diversity to make claims to the community; however they never recognize the past and current removal of Filipino communities. As a neoliberal institution, YBCA insidiously valorizes the history of removal on

⁵³ “Civic Engagement” Yerba Buena Center of Art, last accessed January 16, 2017, <https://www.ybca.org/about-us>, <https://www.ybca.org/civic-engagement>.

⁵⁴ Betti Sue Hertz, *Dissident Futures*, Youtube, Yerba Buena Art Center (2013; San Francisco: 2013), Online video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrOQcaqepwY>.

the institution's "Civic Engagement" page. At the top of the webpage, the YBCA celebrates the passing of Prop S, which would return hotel tax fund allocations to local arts organizations. Jonathan Moscone, the Chief of Civic Engagement for YBCA and son of Mayor George Moscone, who campaigned for SoMa redevelopment during the 1970s, lobbied heavily for the proposition which eventually passed. Under Prop. S, up to half of this tax revenue would be funneled to the Moscone Center, continuing the financial support of the main force of gentrification in the area.⁵⁵ The histories of past oppression remain ever present as these companies continue to receive support to hide brown bodies and oppression. Through M.O.B.'s critiques of global companies like Google, SFMoMA, and the YBCA, I argue that this is not just a San Francisco occurrence.

When Eliza Barrios states that SFMoMA fails to live up to expectations and in fact, "...it is the same bullshit," she does not just reference the propensity of San Francisco Bay Area museums to replicate gendered inequalities. She comments on the neoliberal representation of artists by museums globally. The performance event is not just a commentary on neoliberal technology corporations, but rather a broader critique of representation by capitalist businesses who utilize diversity to disavow their violences.

Museums and The Culture of Work

There are similarities between the justifications of Google's enterprise, development of art centers in San Francisco, and the expansion of global museums. Exemplifying this are the projects in Abu Dhabi, which include the expansion of the Guggenheim and Louvre. In his essay,

⁵⁵ Sam Whiting, "Prop. S would return hotel tax fund allocations to the arts" *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2016, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.sfchronicle.com/art/article/Prop-S-would-return-hotel-tax-fund-allocations-9982261.php>.

“Museum Expansion in the Twenty-First Century: Abu Dhabi,” Andrew McClellan argues that the expansion of museums on Saadiyat Island create a homogenizing art experience under the guise of cultural expansion and universality. Phrases such as “premier cultural assets,” “destination for international students and tourists,” and “promote dialogue between peoples in a spirit of openness, tolerance, and respect,” illustrate a marketing campaign that uses the rhetoric of diversity and universality. However, the Louvre, one of five museums to be built on the man-made island, will exclusively exhibit works by “masters” of painting, primarily European white men. McClellan analyzes the impetus to place museums in this location: “To avoid a post-oil decline, they are adapting the example of post-industrial western cities that have turned to cultural infrastructure for economic survival and re-birth.”⁵⁶ Like M.O.B’s critique of Google, these museums create a homogenizing space for economic gains. In using the language of progress and modernity, these institutions disavow the harm they are inducing while providing capital to the institution and state. In doing so, these they sterilize the arts community by exhibiting a specific and limited type of diversity.

In her 1971 essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” Linda Nochlin questions how diversity is thought of in the arts.⁵⁷ Instead of answering this question, she asks why such a question is rendered when there have been great female artists. Instead she questions institutional knowledge by galleries, museums, and art history. She states that institutions choose to acknowledge white male artists and subsumes artwork by female identifying artists. She secondly states that gaining access itself is harder for women. Nochlin claims institutional bias

⁵⁶ Andrew McClellan, “Museum Expansion in the Twenty-First Century: Abu Dhabi” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 1 (2012): 272 and 279.

⁵⁷ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *Heresies* 7, no. 2 (1992).

utilizes and perpetuates gender biases. Instead of blaming the system, these institutions essentialize women as inferior. This logic is very similar to that of technology corporations, and Nochlin's critique mirrors M.O.B's analysis of structural gender inequalities. Unfortunately, this structural inequality remains present in the largest and most lucrative museums.

The data on female artists who work in museums and galleries mirrors Google's diversity reports. In 2013, the Association of Art Museum Directors, an organization that primarily includes members from museums in the United States, Canada and Mexico, conducted a survey titled "The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships" which analyzed the gender disparities in their membership pool.⁵⁸ Their findings show that of the 211 members who responded, 42.6% were female directors. They also found that in museums with budgets under fifteen million, 48% of their directors were women. However, for museums with budgets over fifteen million, 24% of the directors were women. Overall, female art museum directors earn seventy-nine cents to every dollar earned by male directors. Moreover, the top three museums in the world (The British Museum, the Louvre, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art) have never had female directors.⁵⁹

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation produced a report titled "Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey" in 2015 on diversity in museums.⁶⁰ The data represented 181 museums primarily in the United States. Overall, 72% of museum staff is white. Executive and leadership

⁵⁸ Data analysis of diversity was derived from the 2013 The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directors report conducted by the Association of Art museum Directors. Association of Art Museum Directors, "2013 The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directors" Association of Art Museum Directors, 2013.

⁵⁹ "National Museum of Women in the Arts | Home Page," <https://nmwa.org/>.

⁶⁰ Data analysis of diversity was derived from the 2015 "Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey" report conducted by the Ithaca S+R. "Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey" The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 2015.

positions such as curators, conservators, educators and directors are 84% white. These statistics remarkably mirror the diversity data of global corporations such as Google.

Reflecting the data on female art museum directors, female artists are also sparsely represented in these institutions. Maura Reilly of *ArtNews* reported that from 2007 to 2015, 29% of the solo exhibitions at the Whitney Museum went to women artists. At the Centre Pompidou, 16% of the solo exhibitions featured female artists. And in 2012, 4% of the artists on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art were women.⁶¹ Gallery shows like “Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women” at Hauser Wirth and Schimmel in 2016 aim to change the representation of women in art history.⁶² However, many successful galleries predominantly exhibit male artists. As the feminist artist group Guerrilla Girls states, “Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art sections are women but 85% of the nudes are females.”⁶³ Women are positioned in roles to be mute placeholders and not decision makers of their own representation as curators or artists.

Although M.O.B. makes direct reference to the gentrification occurring in the Bay Area, the stakes of their performance rise in expanding their argument from San Francisco to global institutions like Google and the Louvre. Reading M.O.B.’s work as a critique of gentrification, Anuradha Vikram of museum Southern Exposure states:

Despite such clear objections from artists to the ongoing development of our cities at any

⁶¹ "Taking the Measure of Sexism: Facts, Figures, and Fixes | Artnews," <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/26/taking-the-measure-of-sexism-facts-figures-and-fixes/>.

⁶² "Exhibitions À” Revolution in the Making:," <https://www.hauserwirth.com/exhibitions/2712/revolution-in-the-making-br-abstract-sculpture-by-women-1947-y-2016/view/>.

⁶³ “Do Women Still Have to Be Naked to Get Into the MET. Museum?” Guerrilla Girls, last accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.guerrillagirls.com/naked-through-the-ages>.

cost, it is by no means certain that contemporary art as a culture industry is opposed to gentrification. Property development is the order of the day for any museum wishing to establish itself as worthy of national and international attention. Many boards of art institutions are manned by developers and captains of industry, while affluent and homogenous urban populations are more likely to share the nineteenth-century world views of many high-profile curators.⁶⁴

Corporations, both technological and artistic, thrive on the removal of people of color in order to derive more capital; however, in doing so they create a particular sterilized culture. As international corporations, art institutions continue to do the same to other localities and cultures. Relying on hierarchies of art making purported by traditional and canonical art history, art institutions continue to profit and expand, further promoting elite distinctions in art making. In the process, art and culture become sterilized.

By mocking and playing with Google's culture of work during the onboarding performance, M.O.B. critiques the ways neoliberal capitalist entities create and enforce sterile culture. The corresponding website of the "Divide//Conquer" performance draws the connections between the way institutions of art and technology corporations participate in this dialectic. By using the Internet to be both the work of art and site of display, M.O.B. shows that these two sites participate in the same harm to people of color. As a canvas, the Internet becomes the medium to create art – blatantly using this gentrifying tool to show that art making is inherently participating and implicated in these structures. As the space to view their art, M.O.B. shows that the site in which visitors view art is also fraught. By mocking Google through this website, M.O.B. critiques the art institution as a neoliberal capitalist corporation.

The Internet as Canvas and Display: Mananangoogle Website

⁶⁴ Anuradha Vikram, "#Hashtag: Divide//Conquer: Artists Confront the Gentrification of Urban Space" *Southern Exposure* (2013): 3.

M.O.B. makes grotesque and excessive the parallels between museums and technology corporations as neoliberal capitalist corporations. These two types of institutions influence the local San Francisco culture by sterilizing the community and arts. Furthermore, both institutions hide this harm through benevolent neoliberal tactics that manifest in the culture of work. By mocking Google’s product, the Internet, M.O.B. connects these two seemingly separate corporate entities. M.O.B. not only transgresses the work culture of Google through their performance, but also by mocking their website. The artists replicate the website, but subvert images and the mission through their grotesque aesthetic. The play on words seen throughout the M.O.B. website is derivative of camp. The grotesque camp manifests in their performance space and also through the space of the World Wide Web.

Using the same font as Google’s 2013 logo, M.O.B. plays on the infamous Google logo. Visually, they change the joyful color scheme of the logo and make it grotesque. The corporation’s logo is in their infamous red tone, which transforms into a black or deep red tone. The act of changing the logo into a signifier of danger is not only reflective of the manananggal, but also an attempt to make extremely obvious the underlying dangers of Google.

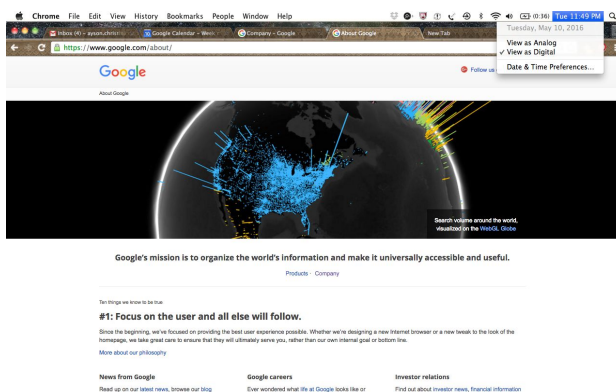


Figure 6 Google Website

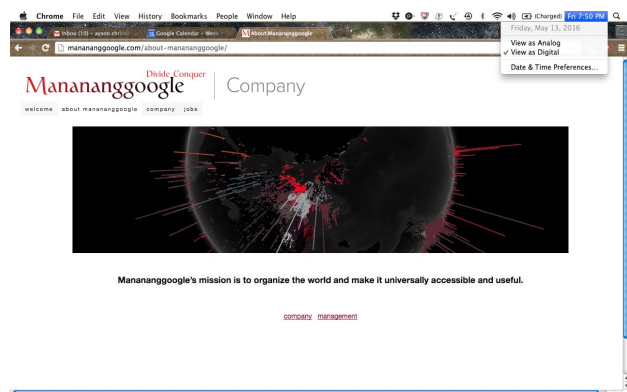


Figure 7 Manananggoogle “Divide and Conquer.”
<http://manananggoogle.com/>

The grotesque also manifests in the “About Manananggoogle” page. For the Google website, the mission statement, which M.O.B. copies nearly verbatim, is located under a similar image, however the continents are recognizable with rays of bright blue and yellow light, which emanate from the world. The globe is oriented so the entirety of the United States continent is centered and glowing. In comparing the two stark images of the world, *Manananggoogle* questions the ideas of diversity they champion.

The general “Company” page on the Manananggoogle website is a campy jab at Google. The webpage states that the company was founded in 1898, also the beginning of the Philippine American War. The location of the corporation is the actual location of the Googleplex in Mountain View, California. However, through the combination of humor and gore, M.O.B. plays with “Ampitheatre,” the street on which Google is located, and instead transforms it to “Amputheatre.” Alluding to the nefarious acts of the manananggal, the artists insert the words amputee, theatre, and eat. They claim the physical space of Google for the three corporate executives in a humorous manner; they make Google campy, thereby critiquing the physical structures of capitalism. This also alludes to their criticism of the way neoliberal capitalist corporations create culture in their workplace.

This humor continues into the profiles of the executives on the “Management” page. The conscientious illogical timeline of Estrada’s credentials reflects the overabundant quality of camp. The corporation was founded in 1898 and she received her doctorate in the same year. However, her profile states that she received a Master’s and Bachelor degree from Harvard, which operated as an all men’s university before 1898. The corporate executives are also born before 1898, however their costumes and makeup are youthful. Not only is their immortality a

play on the manananggal, but also the ways the culture of work ostracizes older women. This overabundant illogical timeline is a way for the artists to continue making fun of the personas of corporate executives. This is also made clear in the fabricated award to the person who inspired their camp aesthetic: Phyllis Madonna. They continue to make fun of the need to show an international diverse corporate leadership by the international credentials of Barrios. She is also awarded a scientific fellowship named after a type of bondage, kinbaku; this is the perfect melding of corporate professionalism and deviousness. Wofford also flexes her mastery in the field as a partner of McArthur & Company, a company dedicated to the American five-star general and field marshal of the Philippine Army, Douglas MacArthur. The mention of the American general by the artists is a commentary of the continual imperial relations by the United States to post-independence Philippines.

The “Our Culture” section of Google’s website explains (and self aggrandizes) the work place culture of diversity, fun, care, and intelligence exemplified by the employees who move the company forward. The website mentions that “Although Googlers share common goals and visions for the company, we hail from all walks of life and speak dozens of languages, reflecting the global audience that we serve. And when not at work, Googlers pursue interests ranging from cycling to bookkeeping, from Frisbee to foxtrot.”⁶⁵ The people and space Google define are democratic, universal and diverse, paying particular attention to the humanity of the company. Below the text is a series of photos of the various offices around the world, which highlight a sense of merriment and comfort.

⁶⁵ Google, “Our Culture.” Google. Last accessed May 2016.

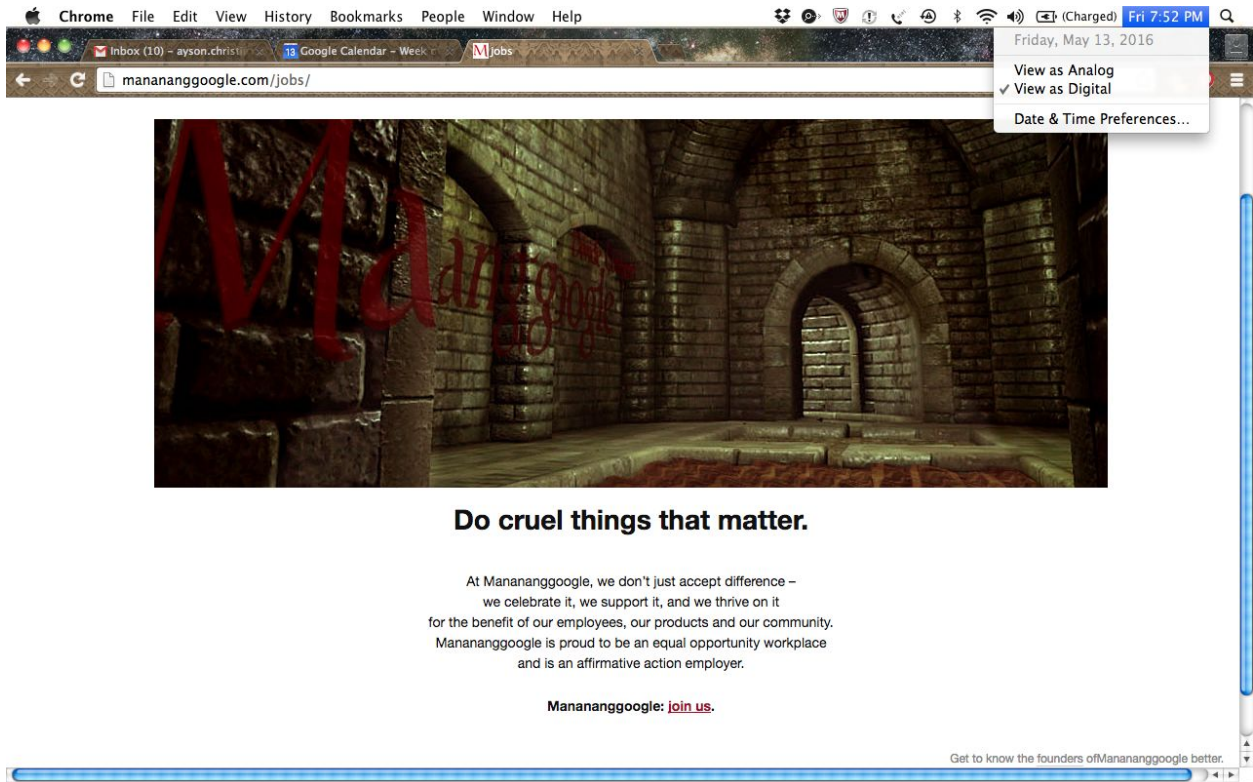


Figure 8 Manananggoogle “Divide and Conquer.” <http://manananggoogle.com/>

The *Manananggoogle* website uses the same language in defining their culture: “At Manananggoogle, we don’t just accept difference – we celebrate it, we support it, and we thrive on it for the benefit of our employees, our products and our community. Manananggoogle is proud to be an equal opportunity workplace and is an affirmative action employer.”⁶⁶ Although the rhetoric is the same, the image of their office is a bloody kink dungeon. The company’s logo is perfectly stenciled onto the walls of their fortress. In the image, there is no escape for the employees, but a labyrinth of jail cells. The image however, is not scary but playful and mocking. The dungeon walls glisten with a fake veneer from a light source that seems out of place for what should be a fortress. The grim aesthetics is composed jovially, the perfect combination of camp and the grotesque. In juxtaposition to Google’s webpage, M.O.B. questions

⁶⁶ "Jobs," <http://manananggoogle.com/jobs/>.

the hidden violence of the company which employees become inscribed to, despite the veneer of humanism in the work place. M.O.B. asks viewers to question how a company could be progressive, despite the contradictions of violence to the cities they infiltrate. The jail cells question the role of the employees in subscribing to these acts.

The decision to create a website to accompanying the performance speaks to a critique of space. The performance implicates the corporate space in relation to capitalism and culture, due to the creation and setting of the office. However, the Internet is an integral component to the performance rather than merely a detail. In thinking of this targeted space, I turn back to San Francisco and the local products of the Silicon Valley.

As Google expands its headquarters, creating transportation and housing solely for their employees, this neoliberal agenda affects the workers' perception of their own jobs. As employees seemingly benefit from luxury offices, healthier eating options, and other amenities, they are told to be more productive and work harder. These benefits are incentives to keep workers within the confines of the rules made by their employers. They become less aware of the amount of labor they perform.

The prioritizing of product over the labor, particularly the ways in which labors are forgotten and hidden through neoliberalism, are a part of Marx's conception of the commodity fetish.⁶⁷ Employees of Google become inscribed to dialectic of culture and capital, believing that the goods they are producing will benefit the greater good. They become convinced by their workplace culture that the harm to communities of color is justified. Likewise, this workplace culture continues to use gendered and racist notions to create divisions in labor. Neoliberal

⁶⁷ Neferti Tadiar, *Things Fall Away : Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

tactics subsume these atrocities further perpetuating the production of goods that support these perceived cultural norms. All the while, production continues at a faster rate as workers subscribe to neoliberal benefits.

By mocking the website, M.O.B. directly critiques a need to centralize the product and the culture that is created to continue this production. The Silicon Valley transforms corporate and local cultures to benefit the production of the Internet. The multiple technology corporations located in the Silicon Valley have created a perceived culture of progressivism and modernity in the workplace. Like Google, museums have also participated in creating this perception while hiding the harm they have done to the local community. To continually hide the museum's acts against the community, they have chosen to acknowledge corporations as a part of the Bay Area without specifically showing the influence both businesses have on people of color.

Their art represents the structures of neoliberal capitalist violence and, as a result, they show the museums' disavowal of racialized and gendered artists for particular affirmed diversities. For the M.O.B. artists, this is an iteration of their grotesque camp aesthetic: the website as art is only made visible because of these structures of normalized violence. The website is the ultimate culmination of sanitized culture.

Museums and tech corporations work together as neoliberal capitalist institutions. M.O.B. shows the intricacies of neoliberal capitalist institutions and the impact they have on local communities and workplace culture. The act of making art on the Internet shows the hypocrisy of these art museums. Using the Internet as their medium and canvas, as well as their form of display shows the relationship between these two kinds of corporations. In fact, using the Internet means they are supporting the same structures of culture and capitalism that allow

Google to continue to function under their neoliberal guise. It is this partnership that they make most apparent. Through perceived diversity and representation, museums continue to operate as businesses and hide the violence they enact to artists of color. However, in the same way M.O.B. shows that representation is not enough in technology corporations, museums must move beyond the representation of artists of color and women to think of new ways to work with artists.

The Onboarding Part 4

Walking back to the same conference room after the relay race, the men line the perimeter of the room, while we take our spots around the large wooden conference table.

Standing at the head of the table, the corporate executives lead us in our last exercise. Positioning our hands at the edge of the table, we are told to lean in, bend our arms, and push up. We flex our muscles and do push-ups at the table. With the last grunt, we stand proud and strong.

We are served drink glasses filled with a red libation. The onboarding experience ends as we transform into the fierce manananggal employee. Standing at the head of the table, the three corporate executives raise their glasses in a toast. Unanimously we scream, “Divide, conquer!”

Conclusion

In the last moments of the performance, the visitors celebrate their successful transformation into the ideal businesswoman: the *manananggal*. They toast to the gendered divide in their work culture. The corporate executives successfully create a work environment that positions women as strong and powerful and men as submissive and meek. The celebration is a moment when their perceptions of equity and diversity are exalted. The new hires become initiated into the dialectics of culture and capital. As a result, they promote the neoliberal rhetoric that obscures the oppression that affects their bodies, spaces, and communities.

Mail Order Brides/M.O.B.'s multimedia performance event, "Divide//Conquer" for the series *Manananggoogle* centralizes Filipinas within neoliberal global capitalism. The maintenance of gendered labor, and the violence that ensues unto women and the community, is central to global capitalism. The figures of the prostitute and mail order bride show how the Philippines and Filipinas have been constructed as feminine to justify colonization and global expansion.

Neoliberal corporations use the rhetoric of diversity to hide the harm they perpetuate. The artists locate San Francisco as their site of critique as residents of the SoMa neighborhood. By replicating Google in their performance, they illuminate the violence this technology corporation has enacted and justified to the Filipino community. They show that their initiatives to diversity and representation in the company perpetuate the sanitization of culture. By reversing the gendered hierarchies of labor in these corporations, the artists show that representation and diversity cannot amend the systemic violences of neoliberal capitalism.

As Filipina artists who worked and lived in San Francisco, these artists show that the

gentrification to neighborhoods did not start or end with technology corporations. They connect their critiques of neoliberal capitalism to the museums in the San Francisco Bay Area. In analyzing the similarities in diversity initiatives, I show that museums also change local culture and induce harm unto women of color by using notions of gendered labor.

These structural inequalities become apparent due to the decision to make the performance extreme, overabundant, shocking, satirical, and playful. They use the aesthetics of camp and the grotesque to make their critiques of neoliberal global capitalism. By adopting theories of the manananggal as a tool of Spanish colonization, the artists transform the folkloric figure into a corporate executive, the ultimate female monstrosity. The camp and grotesque manananggal reclaim female sexuality and critique heteronormative inequalities.

In tracing the manananggal in the performance, I first articulate how the artists construct this figure as the embodiment of camp and the grotesque to enact their labors of recuperating and critiquing. In positioning the folklore in theories of Spanish colonization, the artists create a lineage between historical moments of Filipina oppression to their recuperation of the figure. They focus on the current neoliberal moment by merging her with Google. They use her to satirize Google by inverting power in their corporations. As a result, they relate technology corporations to museums as neoliberal structures of disavowal. These Bay Area museums hide their initiatives of violence unto Filipino communities, while claiming themselves to be diverse and progressive. This sanitization of culture culminates in their website as a work of art. The website becomes the embodiment of the sanitation of art and culture that occurs in neoliberal capitalism. The artists show that the true monstrosity is not the manananggal, but rather the structures of violence.

By transforming the space and performing in a grotesque camp aesthetic, they complicate the realities imposed by institutions and nations. The unease that emerges from the event allows performers and participants to enact new realities. They are “onboarded” to perform a new radical work culture. Through performance, the artists show the possibility of critique to not only show the regimes of neoliberalism but also to reimagine a culture of work that does not implicate women of color.

However, these critiques and calls for change is only made possible because M.O.B. themselves have the privilege of being represented in galleries and museums. The three artists are known and respected in the San Francisco art community, but are also asked to represent San Francisco in other national and international venues. Due to this, their interpellation into neoliberalism is the way they can publicly produce this multi layered series. Just as those who also participated in the event, “Divide//Conquer” calls upon those who already reap the benefits of being affirmed bodies in the museum to constantly think and act against the dialectics of culture and capital.

The manananggal is a method to critique art museums. By making the contemporary museum horrific, M.O.B. acknowledges a need to represent women of color in museums, galleries, and executive positions. However, they also make clear that inverting the hierarchy still invests in this dialectical system. Museums need to make more transparent how they have inherited an ugly colonial past and present. They also need to think critically about their community. Building a visual infrastructure with the community could be a way to move beyond historical erasure. It may even be a way to move beyond the museum space.

Coda

Many artists and institutions turn to the Internet to display their work. This turn in curating and display often proclaims the Internet to be a democratic and accessible space. However, just as neoliberal capitalist corporations justify their violence as missions and initiatives of diversity, I question how truly accessible and democratic is a space like the World Wide Web.

The Internet, just as other technologies, was initially forged as a colonizing tool by the military. The name itself harkens a militaristic need to create one central world under the control of particular individuals. As the space for exhibiting artwork, it also affirms particular artists and art works that can access these technologies. It demarcates and affirms the upwardly mobile as true artists, further perpetuating binary notions of art. I implore these institutions who turn to the Internet to wrestle with these histories and realities of art making.

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