Identities

This itinerary offers a journey through the exhibition that cuts across different themes, drawing on a selection of works that explore questions of gender and the construction of identity throughout the 20th century.

The IVAM collection brings together a significant group of works which, drawn from a wide range of contexts and languages, offer insight into key debates in feminist art history and gender studies. This itinerary also acknowledges existing gaps, particularly regarding the presence of certain women artists and historically excluded subjectivities, as part of an art history shaped by structural imbalances. In this sense, the museum is actively working to review and expand its narratives through new acquisitions, research, projects and critical rereadings of the collection.

Throughout the itinerary, the selected works enter into dialogue with different theoretical frameworks and key texts in feminist criticism, queer studies and contemporary thought on representation. In some cases, artistic practices anticipate issues later developed in theory, while in others they reflect the direct influence of these discourses on the cultural production of their time. This dialogue allows us to understand art not only as a reflection of a given historical context but also as an active space for the construction, questioning and transformation of gender identities.

ROOM 1

Masquerade and the construction of identity

Throughout the 20th century, the image became a central space for constructing, regulating and questioning identity. Against a visual tradition that tended to fix the subject within stable, recognisable categories, certain photography-related practices introduced a more unstable, fragmentary and process-based sense of the self. In this context, representation was no longer seen as a neutral reflection of reality but as an active means of symbolic production.

Within the framework of the historical avant-gardes and particularly Surrealism, the image became linked to the exploration of the unconscious, desire and non-rational experience. Devices such as self-portraiture, disguise, the mask and doubling made it possible to question the idea of a single identity, as well as the direct link between body, gender and subjectivity. Representation thus became a field of experimentation in which the subject could be multiplied, transformed or dissolved, revealing identity as something constructed.

In her essay *Womanliness as a Masquerade* (1999), Joan Riviere argues that femininity is not an original essence but a performance shaped by the demands of the social order. From this perspective, there is no feminine identity prior to its representation, but rather a set of operations, gestures, codes and mechanisms that produce it and make it legible.

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The work of **Claude Cahun** sits within this framework, exploring identity as an unstable process shaped by transformation, duplication and staging. Her images, made in collaboration with Marcel Moore (Suzanne Malherbe), move between portrait, self-portrait and performance in an ambiguous space where the subject is not revealed but constructed through masks, disguises and fragmentation. At the intersection of portrait, self-portrait and performance, Cahun's photographs do not seek to reveal an authentic identity but to show how identity is continually made through representation.

This process reaches a particularly complex form in *Aveux non avenus* (1930), where text and image work together to dismantle the self. Through fragmentary writing and photomontages in which the subject

appears split and multiplied, the work challenges any notion of stable identity. The mask does not conceal an inner truth but shows that identity does not exist outside its representation.

Published in 1930, *Aveux non avenus* is a hybrid work between autobiography, essay, aphorism, fiction and visual poetry. Rather than a confession, it functions as a radical critique of the autobiographical genre itself, dismantling the idea of a coherent subject capable of narrating itself from a stable position. The writing moves through interruptions, contradictions and shifts that turn subjectivity into an ongoing process of transformation.

The photomontages created with Marcel Moore intensify this process through the superimposition of self-portraits, symbols and allegorical figures. The mirror, the mask, the double and androgyny recur as motifs that dissolve the boundaries between masculine and feminine, inner and outer, reality and fiction. Rather than representing an alternative identity, these images question the very framework through which identity is defined.

Cahun's insistence on a multiple, shifting subject places her in an exceptional position within Surrealism. In contrast to the traditional construction of women as muse or object of male desore, her work turns identity into a space of critical experimentation, anticipating later ideas of gender performativity and the social construction of the subject.

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From the mid-20th century onwards, this questioning shifts into mass visual culture. **Grete Stern**'s *Sueños* series (1948–1951), published in the Argentine magazine *Idilio*, forms part of a media device aimed at a female readership where psychological, pedagogical and normative discourses intersect. For the section "Psychoanalysis will help you", readers sent in their dreams, which were interpreted and accompanied by photomontages by Stern.

Rather than simply illustrating individual narratives, these images turn private experiences into representations of collective tensions. Through photomontage and an aesthetic rooted in the dreamlike and the surreal, Stern constructs scenes in which the female figure appears diminished, observed, enclosed or reduced to an object. Motifs such as the watchful eye, the mirror, falling or repetitive domestic tasks point to forms of social and psychological control that restrict women's autonomy.

The Argentine post-war context is key to the series. While female suffrage had recently been recognised and modernisation was opening up certain social horizons, patriarchal models linking women to the home,

motherhood and a moral role within the social order remained dominant. Women's magazines helped circulate a standardised image of femininity, responsible for family wellbeing and presented as the guarantor of stability.

In response, Stern constructs a counter-image. Her photomontages reveal the latent strangeness of seemingly everyday scenes and make visible the tensions between desire, autonomy and social expectation. In this sense, her work can be read alongside Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949), where woman is defined as a historical construction positioned in relation to otherness.

Both Beauvoir and Stern question the limits of female freedom in societies structured by patriarchal frameworks. Where the philosopher analyses the historical production of woman as "the Other" in conceptual terms, Stern translates this condition into visual form through images in which identity is caught between adaptation and resistance. In this way, the image becomes a space of experimentation and critique, anticipating later debates on gender as a socially constructed condition.

ROOM 2

The image as a tool for shaping society

If, in mass visual culture, the image exposed tensions between identity and norm, in the Soviet context of the 1920s and 1930s it became an active force in building a new social order. Visual production was embedded in a political project that placed the transformation of gender relations at the heart of the revolutionary process.

In this context, the figure of the "new woman", as formulated by Alexandra Kollontai, serves as an ideological horizon. Women's emancipation is tied to economic independence, entry into productive labour and the dismantling of traditional family structures. Following the 1917 Revolution, legislative reforms brought changes to marriage, divorce and access to paid work, while bodies such as the Zhenotdel sought to incorporate women's specific demands into the socialist project. However, in Kollontai's writings, emancipation could not be achieved through legal reform alone but required a profound shift in the economic and emotional structures underpinning women's subordination.

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The visual practices of the period – especially Constructivist photomontage – played a key role in circulating these new imaginaries. In *Pro eto* (*About This*) (1923), by **Aleksandr Rodchenko**, the image becomes a fragmented space where the intimate and the political meet. Developed in collaboration between Rodchenko and Vladimir Mayakovsky, the book builds a dense visual world through magazine cut-outs and photographs of its protagonists, bringing together telephones, bridges, animals, skyscrapers and aeroplanes in compositions where reality and fantasy intertwine. The figure of Lily Brik occupies an ambivalent position: muse, collaborator and symbol of a new femininity linked to Soviet modernity, she appears both as subject and projection of male desire.

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This development takes on a more explicitly political dimension in propaganda graphics. In posters such as *Women Shockworkers, Fortify Your Shock Brigades* (1931) by **Valentina Kulagina** or *Women Workers, Women of the Collective Farms* (1932) by **Natalia Pinus**, the woman appears as an active subject of the socialist project. These works form part of the so-called Shock Brigade group of USSR photomontage artists, including Gustav Klucis, Valentina Kulagina and Natalia Pinus, whose aim was to turn the image into a tool for collective mobilisation around industrialisation and collectivisation promoted by the state.

The visual language is striking: a dominance of red and black, diagonal compositions, repeated figures, fan-like arrangements of bodies, shifts in scale and the integration of text as a compositional element. These devices construct a dynamic visual field in which the woman is embedded in flows of labour and collective structures. In Pinus's posters, colour also carries symbolic weight, with red standing for revolution, green for agricultural production and blue for industry.

However, the promotion of female empowerment was paradoxically led by women artists who were representing an emancipation that, in many cases, did not translate into real equality. Although women's participation in the workforce increased during the Five-Year Plans, it remained uneven, with a strong concentration in lower-skilled and lower-paid sectors. From a materialist feminist perspective, this gap between image and lived experience shows how emancipation could be expressed visually long before it materially reshaped living conditions.

In this sense, Soviet visual culture shifts the question of gender away from subjectivity towards its embedding in economic and ideological structures. The woman occupies a strategic position: a symbol of modernisation and

progress, but also a figure shaped and constrained by the very system that renders her visible. The image thus ceases to be merely a space of representation and becomes an active tool in the production of the social.

ROOM 3

The image as visual documentation of the desire for change

The participation of women in the militias during the early months of the Spanish Civil War cannot be understood as an isolated episode, but as the result of intersecting political and social discourses across different spheres, which called for women's participation in public life and in processes of social transformation.

In this context, organisations such as Mujeres Libres played a key role in calling for the full emancipation of women, understood as economic, intellectual and political autonomy. Through their publications and activist practices, they challenged the historical confinement of women to the domestic sphere and advocated for their active participation in the social revolution. For figures such as Lucía Sánchez Saornil, this emancipation could not be reduced to access to work or legal equality: it required a transformation of the material, educational, emotional and cultural conditions that sustained women's subordination. Revolution, therefore, also had to entail a transformation of gender relations.

Within the context of war, this demand led to the legitimisation of women's presence at the front, as part of a broader project of social reconfiguration. In the gallery sequence, this issue is introduced through *Voluntarios* by **Agustí Centelles**, and continues in an **anonymous photograph** displayed on the opposite wall. In both images, the figure of the miliciana marks a clear break in the representation of the female body. Armed, active and placed within the space of conflict, this body disrupts traditional models that associated women with passivity, care or domesticity.

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These images function both as historical documents and as symbolic projections of a political possibility. They do not simply record the presence of women in the war, but also make visible a desire for broader transformation: the emergence of new forms of female subjectivity associated with

action, autonomy and collective participation. The body of the miliciana thus becomes a sign of social change, but also a site of tension where emancipation and cultural resistance meet.

However, this emergence proves deeply unstable. Just a few months after the outbreak of war, women were gradually withdrawn from the front, revealing the tension between ideals of equality promoted by revolutionary discourse and the persistence of social structures that limited the scope of that emancipation. Women's participation was redirected towards auxiliary roles, partially reproducing traditional divisions between public and private spheres.

In this way, images of milicianas not only document a specific form of participation in the conflict, but also raise questions about the mechanisms through which certain female experiences are made visible while others are excluded from historical narratives. Representation thus becomes a site of memory and debate, where interpretations of the past also shape how the future is imagined.

ROOM 4

Power relations

In the context of Abstract Expressionism, painting has often been understood as an autonomous, universal language, seemingly detached from external conditions. However, this assumed neutrality has been challenged by feminist theory, which has shown how artistic production is shaped by material, social and institutional conditions that shape both its development and its recognition. In this line of thought, Griselda Pollock, in *Vision and Difference* (1988), argues that the languages of modernity, including abstraction, cannot be considered universal, but are practices embedded in specific historical structures and relations of power.

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The work *Abstract No. 2* (1946–1948), by **Lee Krasner**, sits at the intersection of formal language and conditions of production. Linked to the *Little Images* series, the painting is built from a dense web of marks and rhythms that run across the surface in a continuous field. In contrast to the monumentality and expansive gesture associated with other Abstract Expressionist artists, Krasner develops a language based on repetition, accumulation and a concentrated gesture.

Krasner's trajectory is particularly significant within American Abstract Expressionism. Trained by Hans Hofmann, she came into contact early on with the European avant-gardes and played an important role in the New York art scene, taking part in the early development of American Abstract Artists, a key organisation in the consolidation of abstraction in the United States. However, for decades her recognition was shaped by interpretations that placed her in a secondary position to her male contemporaries and, in particular, Jackson Pollock.

This question can be linked to Virginia Woolf's argument in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) on the need for such a space as a condition for artistic creation. After her marriage to Pollock and her move to Long Island, Krasner worked within restricted spatial conditions in the shared home, while Pollock occupied the main studio. In this context, she began developing the *Little Images* series, working on small-scale canvases suited to confined spaces. These circumstances shaped both the format of her work and her working process, revealing how material conditions shape artistic language.

Krasner's trajectory also exposes the structures that have governed women's visibility in art. As Linda Nochlin argued in *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* (1971), the absence of recognition is not due to a lack of production, but to institutional and discursive frameworks that have historically limited its legitimation. In Krasner's case, this tension is particularly evident: despite her role in shaping Abstract Expressionism and introducing Pollock to certain New York art circles, her work remained overshadowed for a long time by his.

After Pollock's death in 1956, Krasner continued to develop a body of work that became increasingly ambitious in scale and complexity, while also taking on the preservation of his legacy. This dual role – creating and safeguarding his legacy – highlights the inequalities that have historically structured women's cultural production.

From this perspective, abstraction emerges as a field shaped by relations of power, where conditions of production are essential to understanding both the works themselves and their place in art history. Krasner's practice shifts attention away from the idea of the individual genius towards a broader understanding of the material, affective and institutional contexts that shape artistic creation and how it is positioned within historical narratives.

ROOM *5*

The other and the norm

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Throughout the itinerary, the image has appeared as a space from which to question identity, its forms of representation and the relations of power that run through it. At this point, the work of **Diane Arbus** shifts attention towards the gaze as a device that determines which bodies, gestures or appearances are perceived as familiar and which are placed in the realm of difference.

In Arbus's photography, identity does not appear as a fixed category, but as something shaped by social conventions, visual codes and relations of power. Her work focuses on bodies and subjectivities absent from official iconography, which has traditionally favoured normative models of beauty, behaviour and social recognition.

In *Two boys smoking in Central Park, N.Y.C. 1963* (1963), two boys are depicted smoking in a recognisable public setting. The scene is unsettling because it introduces gestures and objects associated with adulthood into childhood, destabilising the idea of childhood innocence. The act of smoking, their posture and their direct engagement with the camera evoke codes associated with adult masculinity: toughness, autonomy, confidence or defiance. The image thus presents identity as something in the making, not as something innate but as something learned and socially constructed.

Although the photograph predates the publication of *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992) by bell hooks and *Female Masculinity* (1998) by Judith/Jack Halberstam, both texts offer a way of rereading Arbus's work today through key debates in feminism and the critique of representation. From this perspective, the image invites reflection on how gender is visually constructed, how masculinity is learned and how the social gaze interprets bodies differently according to race, class or age.

ROOM 6

Mass circulation of identity norms and their questioning

If, in earlier contexts, the image functioned as a space for subjective experimentation or ideological construction, with the rise of Pop Art and mass visual culture it became central to the circulation of visual models. The expansion of the media, advertising, cinema and consumer culture placed the image at the heart of everyday life, strengthening its capacity to produce, reproduce and normalise identities.

In 1963, in *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan examined the role of mass culture in shaping a normative model of femininity linked to domestic life and consumerism, highlighting the malaise produced by the gap between these representations and lived experience. In this context, images not only reflect these models but also reinforce them, making them visible as they circulate.

Pop Art practices and artistic approaches associated with appropriation directly incorporated these visual languages through imagery drawn from magazines, cinema and advertising. The female figure appears mediated by systems of reproduction that turn it into an object of visual consumption: stylised, fragmented and subject to processes of idealisation that reinforce its artificiality. In advertising imagery, the body becomes a visual commodity, comparable to other consumer goods and embedded within market logics. Femininity thus takes shape as a set of coded, reproducible and collectively recognisable signs.

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This section of the itinerary begins with *the Serie Nueva York* (c. 1960) by **Amparo Segarra** and continues with *The American Way of Life* (1949–76) series by **Josep Renau**. Through different strategies, both works draw on images from mass visual culture and advertising, appropriating their codes in order to challenge their apparent naturalness. In Segarra's collages, bodies, objects and scenes are cut, displaced and rearranged, creating compositions in which the female body emerges as a site of conflict shaped by desire, social control and symbolic violence. In Renau's work, American advertising imagery is subjected to an ideological critique that reveals how the female figure can function as a commercial strategy, stylised, eroticised and plasticised in ways comparable to consumer goods.

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Visage en bleu (1963) by **Martial Raysse** extends this reflection through the imagery of European Pop Art. The artist takes a female advertising image and subjects it to a process of colouring that heightens its artificiality. The woman's face appears as an emblem of beauty and desire, transformed into a visual surface characteristic of consumer society.

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Finally, *Composición* (1974) by **Ángela García** and *Surgery* (*Cirugía*, from the series *The Woman / La mujer*, 1971) by **Isabel Oliver** shift this reading towards a more direct critique of the ways representation organises bodies, roles and identities. In García's work, the image is presented as a visual construction that reveals the coded nature of representation itself. In Oliver's work, the female body is linked to the social discourses that observe, transform and regulate it, pointing to the pressures placed on women by ideals of beauty, medicine, advertising and consumer culture. Both works question the apparent naturalness of a femininity constructed through visual codes, social expectations and mechanisms of control.

Taken together, these works show how mass visual culture turned femininity into a repertoire of coded signs. They also show how these visual languages could be appropriated, manipulated and redirected critically, turning the image into a site of contestation where identity itself could be questioned and reshaped.

ROOM 8

The construction of the gaze

If, in the context of mass visual culture, the image became a central device in the production and circulation of gendered models, from the 1970s and 1980s onwards it was increasingly questioned from within the very systems of representation themselves. Photography, video, performance and body-based practices thus became key tools for examining how images are constructed and the positions they assign to those who look and those who are looked at.

This approach can be linked to Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), where she analyses how classical cinema organises representation through a masculine gaze that positions women as objects of vision and desire. From this perspective, the image does not simply represent but also distributes relations of power: it determines which bodies occupy positions of visual authority and which are subjected to observation, desire or control.

15 The room opens with a first group of works that critically engage with the visual codes of cinema, television, advertising and mass culture. **Cindy Sherman**'s work is central to this discussion. In *Untitled*, *Film Still* (1978), the artist appropriates cinematic and advertising codes without reproducing a specific scene. Through disguise, pose and photographic construction, Sherman inhabits recognisable female stereotypes while also unsettling them. Her body does not function as self-portrait but as a critical device for questioning representations of women in patriarchal culture.

16 In a related context, **Dara Birnbaum** works with images drawn from television and mass audiovisual culture. In her videos, repetition, fragmented editing and narrative interruption are used to dismantle the visual and symbolic structures of the media. By appropriating television figures such as Wonder Woman, Birnbaum exposes the contradiction between an apparent image of female empowerment and its embedding in eroticised and normative visual codes. In a similar vein, **Richard Prince**'s *Untitled (Cowboys)* presents masculinity as equally constructed through media imagery, tied to the advertising myth of the American cowboy and to a codified idea of virility.

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18 19 The works of **Sanja Iveković** and **Eugènia Balcells** further explore how visual culture produces and naturalises models of femininity and masculinity. In *Make up – Make down* (1978), Iveković focuses on the everyday act of applying make-up, obscuring the face and shifting attention to the manipulation of cosmetics. In doing so, she subverts advertising clichés that link femininity, beauty and visual availability. In *Boy Meets Girl*, Balcells analyses gender stereotypes through the repetition and juxtaposition of images drawn from popular culture. Her work shows how masculine and feminine identities are produced through repeated visual codes that come to be perceived as natural, despite being grounded in deeply embedded cultural conventions.

20 Other works shift the critique from the image to the body understood as a political space. In *Acciones corporales* (2013), **Esther Ferrer**, placed at the centre of the room, uses her own naked body as a site of measurement, highlighting processes of objectification and systems of control

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that have historically shaped the female body. **Gina Pane**, meanwhile, explores the body in relation to pain, injury and vulnerability. In *Azione Sentimentale* (1973), she uses bodily action to explore the physical and emotional limits of the body, bringing into view forms of suffering usually excluded from idealised representations of femininity. The wound thus becomes a site of political and affective meaning.

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Finally, the works of **VALIE EXPORT** and **Michel Journiac** radicalise this reflection on body, representation and the construction of gender roles. In *EROS/ION I-IV* (1971), EXPORT confronts eroticism, violence and representation, turning the female body into a site of tension between desire, control and symbolic aggression. Her actions directly challenge traditional ways of representing women and expose the violence embedded in visual and social structures.

Michel Journiac, in *24 heures dans la vie d'une femme ordinaire* (1974), also uses disguise and the performance of everyday roles to question the supposed naturalness of gender identity. Through the repetition of gestures conventionally associated with femininity, the work reveals the learned, performative and socially constructed nature of gender roles in everyday life.

Taken together, the works in this room show how image and body become sites of critical inquiry, through which the construction of the gaze, the naturalisation of gender roles and the forms of power shaping representation are brought into question.

ROOM 9

Identity as a performative construct

During the 1990s, artistic practices concerned with gender and identity intensified in a context shaped by profound social, political and cultural change. The expansion of the media, the impact of the AIDS crisis and the consolidation of debates around identity fostered approaches that challenged normative models of representation and opened up new ways of thinking about the subject.

This framework can be linked to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), where gender is no longer understood as a stable essence but as a performative construction, produced through the repeated performance of acts, gestures and social norms. From this perspective, it is not a fixed or natural reality, but something continually made and remade.

24 The transition from the previous room is marked by *Carrying I* (1992), by **Pepe Espaliú**, a work that shifts reflection on the body as a political space towards an understanding of identity as a vulnerable, relational experience shaped by care. The iron sculpture takes the form of a closed structure evoking a container or transport device, yet it remains inaccessible. This tension between protection and enclosure becomes especially resonant when read alongside the action *Carrying*, performed the same year, in which the artist was carried by friends and collaborators in a chain of linked arms. In contrast to the isolation suggested by the sculpture, the action opens up a collective dimension based on support, empathy and care.

25 Next, *Juguemos a prisioneras* (1993–1996), by **Azucena Vieites**, shifts the focus to the circulation of images, feminist and queer imaginaries, and forms of collective production. Vieites uses drawing, reproduction and a DIY aesthetic to build a fragmented archive of references from the 1990s. The deliberately fragile materials and the reproducibility of the images challenge the idea of the unique artwork and move artistic practice towards more open, accessible and shared forms. In her work, the image becomes a space of memory, experimentation and critical engagement with dominant models of representation.

26 Finally, identity as construction is also addressed in *Olia* (1993), by **Gillian Wearing**. In this photograph, the artist represents herself through a mask and an artificial torso that allow her to assume the appearance of another person. The image thus occupies an ambiguous space between self-portrait and the representation of another individual. Wearing uses the mask as a metaphor for the roles we perform in everyday life, revealing that the self is not a stable unity but a layered structure made up of visible surfaces and zones of opacity.

Taken together, the practices in this room place body and identity at the centre of contemporary artistic reflection. Through a range of strategies, these works show that identity is not a fixed or essential category, but a process in constant transformation, shaped by social, political, affective and cultural relations.

ROOM 10

The construction of identity in the contemporary context

In the 21st century, artistic practices concerned with gender unfold within a context shaped by diversity, complexity and a critical reappraisal of inherited models. The works gathered in this room invite us to think of identity as an open-ended process shaped by social, cultural, political and historical factors. Rather than a fixed reality, identity appears here as a field in transformation, where body, memory, desire, displacement and representation intersect.

26 The itinerary begins with *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg* (2001), by **Sanja Iveković**, in which the artist reinterprets the Luxembourg monument *Gëlle Fra* by introducing a pregnant female figure and linking it to Rosa Luxemburg. The inscriptions on the pedestal expose the contradictory stereotypes that have historically shaped representations of women in public space.

28 The critical re-examination of these models of femininity also extends into the domestic sphere in *The Instant Decorator (Pink and Green Bedroom / Slumber Party, Really Crowded)* (2004), by **Laurie Simmons**. Through dolls, miniatures and staged interiors recalling dollhouses and American visual culture, the artist reveals the artificial nature of spaces and roles traditionally assigned to women.

29 This reflection on bodies, spaces and meanings associated with femininity takes on a more intimate, bodily dimension in *La chambre des utérus* (2017), by **Annette Messager**. Through the repetition of forms linked to the uterus, the artist addresses sexuality, menstruation, desire and bodily autonomy – traditionally hidden, relegated to the private sphere or culturally silenced. The accumulation and fragmentation of images create an immersive space that turns the intimate into a site of public reflection.

30 Moving towards the central area of the room, reflection on identity opens onto experiences shaped by transit, diaspora, racialisation and contemporary forms of visibility. The video installation *Lost in Transition_un poema performativo* (2016), by **Cabello/Carceller**, presents identity as a process of transformation and displacement. Conceived for Gallery 6 at IVAM, the work uses the staircase as a metaphor for transition. It brings together

trans, drag, genderqueer, genderfluid and other non-normative individuals living in Valencia, whose bodies, gestures and forms of self-presentation challenge the binary division between male and female.

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The photographs *Eastern LGBT International no. 15* and *no. 17* (2004–2006), by **Ahlam Shibli**, extend this reflection through the experiences of gay, lesbian and trans people from Arab and Islamic countries living in diaspora. The artist shows spaces of sociability and forms of self-affirmation, but also the persistence of social and religious norms that continue to regulate bodies and sexualities even far from their place of origin. The work thus raises questions of visibility, belonging and conditional freedom.

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Finally, the photographs of **Zanele Muholi**, from the ongoing series *Somnyama Ngonyama* (2012–present), place self-portraiture within the field of visual activism. Through the performative transformation of their own body, Muholi reflects on race, gender, colonial history and representation, asserting the dignity and visibility of Black LGBTQ+ communities. Their images challenge visual traditions that have historically marginalised these bodies and propose new forms of presence, resistance and self-affirmation.

Taken together, the works in this exhibition itinerary extend the debate on identity into contemporary global contexts. Rather than offering fixed answers, these practices invite us to question inherited categories and imagine other forms of relation, visibility and existence.