Abstract:

Greer Lankton’s glamorous visage appears frequently in photographs by artists involved in the East Village scene of the 1980s, most famously Nan Goldin’s series *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. Lankton is less well-known as an artist in her own right; her practice centered on the creation of handmade dolls in the likeness of queer icons, celebrities, and herself, which she used to explore issues related to beauty, body image, and transgender identity. The dolls appeared “in-person” as part of installations at gritty downtown galleries and in the windows of high-end department stores like Barney’s New York. However, a key aspect of Lankton’s practice was her use of photography to create striking images of the dolls posed in various settings and costumes. This paper compares Lankton’s depiction in the photography of other artists, especially Nan Goldin, to her own use of the medium. I focus on a photographic spread that ran in *Art in America* and elsewhere to advertise Lankton’s 1984 solo exhibition at the Civilian Warfare Gallery. In it, she stretches nude alongside two life-sized nude dolls, the makeup, lighting, and composition blurring divisions between artist and artwork, subject and object. I will argue that in works like the *Art in America* advertisement, Lankton juxtaposes her body with the dolls in order to stage an ontological confusion that challenges gender normativity and opens up possibilities not present in photographic narratives constructed by others.