



**External
Space**



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Marissa Sean Cruz,

I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS

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There is a tendency to think of the Internet as an infinite flow of data that transcends the limits of our individual control. However digital reproduction is always topologically determined. We track our Amazon shipping and Domino's pizza orders with only the partial seamlessness that the machines tracking all of our online content and product consumption can provide. This cyclical interaction between trackable collective desires and algorithm-based provision of consumer choices informs the video work *I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS* by Marissa Sean Cruz.

I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS is a compilation of videos which examines how identity can be shaped by consumer trends in the post-internet age. The work's main subject is a pizza-obsessed young woman, aptly referred to as "Pizza Girl" and played by the artist herself. She is characterized by pepperoni-coloured hair and a longing to consume and embody Domino's pizza. Comprised of prop-comedy performances and multi-layered collage of readily available online footage, *I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS* is a four-part episodic cybernetic reality based on the subconscious of a fictitious identity.

The first episode of the video stages Pizza Girl surfing the web. She watches in awe as the different types of online content related to pizza is screened: people eating it, making it, reviewing it, advertising it, as well as products like bed sheets and eye masks

adorned with its cheesy pepperoni aesthetics. Cruz collages video performance with a remix of found images, Youtube footage and pop music to deliver Pizza Girl's narrative in a manner similar to the way we click hyperlinks, open tabs or switch between windows. By presenting web surfing in this way, Cruz reminds us that digital networks are realities that take up space; properties of connectedness and compactness exist, manifesting in widespread subcultures (in this case, the cult of pizza) and Americanized ubiquity in the form of memes, ultimately driven by machine observations of hyper-individualized consumer patterns.

The artist's fascination with popular culture and online trends stems from the idea that popular things (the biggest movies, TV shows and digital media) are, to a certain extent, a reflection of what we want to see, and through this reflection, we can read insights about our desires and aversions. The universality of pizza as an enticing and accessible American food product has transformed its dimensions as a commodity, popularizing its imagery in media and fashion. In *I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS*, this is used to analyze the excessive, streamlined and instantaneous forms of desire that online consumer culture has made possible, and that identities have become aligned to. Moreover, Cruz utilizes humour not only to draw attention to certain absurdities of online subcultures, but also to present performance art in a more accessible manner while entertaining the average viewer.

In the second and third episodes things take an even stranger turn. Pizza Girl begins to attempt embodying a pizza. We see her deep in thought wearing various pizza costumes as the Domino's jingle plays in the background, she is shaving her legs with marinara sauce, and applying lipstick before using her face to roll out dough and assemble toppings. In her practice, Cruz often mixes typically assumed feminine performance with seemingly random and absurd elements like deli meats, or in this case, pizza. She does this to satirize the representation of fixed identity like gender, race and ethnicity — a recurring theme that is informed by her own experience of cultural fluidity. As a mixed race Filipino woman, much of her work acts as an investigation into the complex intersections and formations of identity as well as a reconciliation of the sexual and social absurdities of feminine rituals.

The title *I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS* refers to a common longing among young women to separate oneself from femininity due to internalized spite and assumptions of being female. In the case of Pizza Girl, she is “not like other girls” because eating junk food is seen as rebellious and unfeminine. However, *I AM NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS* blends femininity into the varieties and vulgarities of pizza-themed online content, actualizing what it means to be a product of a cultural product. From found footage of women eating junk food to performing with makeup and shaving one’s body, we watch Pizza Girl attempt to make sense of her own self-obsessive online presence, illustrating the idea of exaggerated self-identification in the age of specific digital desires and affiliation.

- Karina Iskandarsjah