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Zoe Buckman: The Multimedia Artist Discusses Hip Hop and Feminism

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May 5, 2016

The multimedia artist discusses hip hop and feminism

In the summer of 2013 Robin Thicke and Pharrell's problematic hit "Blurred Lines" played on every radio station, in every bar, club, cafe, skating rink, and bowling alley in America. It didn't feel like a time of innocence, but in the three years following Thicke and Pharrell will be sued (successfully) by the estate of Marvin Gaye, and Emily Ratajkowski will call her appearance in the accompanying music video "the bane of my existence."



What is the right course of action when you are a feminist who loves to dance and you have to admit that "Blurred Lines" is catchy as hell? What do you do when you love the music but hate the message? These questions and others are raised by Zoe Buckman's most recent exhibition *Every Curve*, at Papillon Gallery in Los Angeles. The series includes 92 pieces of vintage lingerie with lyrics from old school hip-hop songs hand-embroidered on them. "If we choose to get up on our couch and start dancing to a Biggie track, then that's our decision, and we're owning it," Buckman says.

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If 2013 was innocent then 1996 was a time of Arthurian legend. Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur dominated the hip-hop scene, and in London, Zoe Buckman—at 11 years old—listened attentively. Buckman's parents—her mother was a member of the Communist party and her father insisted that Zoe take her mother's surname—instilled progressive ideals in her from an early age. Buckman frequently cites hip-hop and feminism as her two earliest influences and a love of the genre has stuck with the multimedia artist since those tween years.



Educated at the International Center for Photography in New York Buckman always knew she wanted to break out from behind the camera. In her earliest exhibitions she started etching on the glass framing her photos, “I was trying to find a way to move beyond straight photography,” she says. Inclusiveness is a large part of her practice, “For me, I never want to isolate people with my work. [It] is designed for the guy that installs my work to get as much meaning out of it as a museum director.”

So where does Buckman stand on the less inclusive elements—the overt sexism—in popular music? Buckman insists, “You shouldn’t have to shun something that’s complicated and difficult. The fact is, the beats are amazing and the lyrics are really skilled. We shouldn’t have to never listen to Biggie because we’re feminists.”

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