



# Silent REFLECTIONS

**WT** Theatre Program  
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

## Abstract/Concept

"Silent Reflections: A clown-noir Cabaret" was the result of a collaboration between three diverse and dynamic American female performing artists who met in Arezzo, Italy. Women from Mars (WFM) Theatre was founded by Francesca Chilcote, Dory Sibley and Echo Sibley, who came together in 2013 to share the stories of women. Inspired by feminist theory and heavily influenced by women's issues including, but not limited to, a woman's right to autonomy over her body, sexual assault, body dysmorphia, masculine identity, pregnancy, menstruation and suffering under the male gaze, WFM experimented with the forms of clown, silent film and object work to complete their storytelling.

This culminated in the deeply personal, yet universal show Silent Reflections: A Clown Noir Cabaret, which premiered in 2014 at The Crisis Arts Festival in Arezzo, Italy, and toured Italy in Fall 2014 and the US in 2016. The aesthetic of the show is gray scale with pops of red, which reflect disruptions that begin to break the archetype away from their habitual actions and controlled forms.

The objectives of this project were to bring the artists of The Women from Mars Theatre Company to WT for a 2-week residency. During this residency they would work with student employees/designers to research, develop and create new technical and performative aspects, including three new scenes for the show, "Silent Reflections," culminating in a premiere performance. They would also teach a 5-hour clowning workshop, presented a panel discussion with Gender Studies and have a talk back after the performance.

## Show Synopsis

A girl, a lover and a mother are trapped in a world without voice or color. In this clown-noir piece, they are forced to confront their insecurities as well as the expectations and boundaries society places on all things feminine.

Silent Reflections is a "clown-noir cabaret" that explores women's insecurities and societal pressures through the medium of silent film. The piece attacks the portrayal of women in media and the role women play in supporting these highly sexualized, and many times, demeaning and powerless stereotypes. The show aims to funnel these dark themes through the imagination of three different female clowns, striving for a fresh, farcical, and sometimes grotesque look at what society has done to the way women view themselves, where they locate their power, and as a result, how they treat themselves and each other.

The performers employ physical theatre techniques, animation, projections, comedy, modern dance, music and drama to reflect upon and expose the inherent struggles in three stages of womanhood.

## Audience Testimonials

"The inclusivity of multiple femininity elements really opened my eyes and helped me realize that I am not alone in what can be a very unforgiving world. This production has helped me heal and be able to talk about multiple issues that were covered. If given the chance to see this production again, I would be more than happy to experience it again."

"I connected to not only the performers on stage but also the audience members around me. It felt like we were all going through this experience together. I think I experienced every emotion throughout the show in the best way possible."

"A beautiful experience of what it's like to be a woman, or really just a person, in today's age. The insecurities being shown on stage was something everyone could relate to."

"This was a show unlike any other because it wasn't a show - it was an experience with beautiful imagery that'll stick with me for a lifetime. "

## Results



## History of Research

In August of 2022, The Women from Mars Theatre Company came to WT for a 2-week residency. During this residency they worked with 4 student employees/designers and were able to develop 5 new scenes instead of the 3 they had originally intended. They also taught a 5-hour clowning workshop, which had 18 participants, including 2 professors and students ranging from Freshman to Seniors. They had a very successful panel discussion with Gender Studies and Professor Amy Von Lintel, which included theatre, art and gender studies students, as well as others. In addition, they had a large turnout for the performance, around 85 community members, Professors and students, who along with the hour-long performance, stayed for the talk back.

The research, which inspired the new scenes, was heavily influenced by women's issues including, but not limited to, a woman's right to autonomy over her body, sexual assault, body dysmorphia, masculine identity, pregnancy, menstruation and suffering under the male gaze. They used these topics to create the 5 new scenes in the show. "A Gentleman's Interlude," "The Choice," "No Choice," "The Balloon" and "The Word Orchestra," which was an old scene that was completely reimagined. The result was a joyful clown piece that was able to explore these sometimes confusing, polarizing, complicated and dark themes with laughter, wonder and an openness to interpretation.

They received nothing but positive feedback from the show and based on the comments from the audience, they were able to create a universal, accessible show that anyone can relate to in some way, as well as enjoy. They were also able to mentor and collaborate with student designers, providing them the opportunity to work with a professional theatre company whose members are based around the country. With these students they generated new material, heightened and elevated the original show by adding significant contemporary cultural storylines that centered around women's rights and the experiences of those who identify as women into the piece and therefore into the conversations generated because of it. As well as positive feedback, they received enthusiasm from the WT professors and students who participated in the development, the workshop, the panel discussion, the show and the talk back. One professor said, "This is exactly what our department needed." Another said that it was, "Very important work." One student thanked them for coming here and presenting the show, because "It changed their perception of what women live through."

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