

A QUEER LITTLE HISTORY OF ART

ALEX PILCHER



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Front cover: Tee A. Corinne *Untitled* 1976,
published 1977. See pp.90–1

Back cover: Alexej von Jawlensky *Portrait
of the Dancer Alexander Sakharoff* 1909.
See pp.24–5

Frontispiece: Gerda Wegener *Lili With a
Feather Fan* 1920. See pp.40–1

Measurements of artworks are given
in centimetres, height before width



FOREVER HER FIST: I THREADED MYSELF THROUGH HER HOLE
(SO TIGHTLY)-- BEFORE THE SKY PIERCED ME WITH HER ARROWS
OR AFTER THE SLIP OF HER TONGUE ON MY TELL-TALE HEART?



MOTHER IN
ANOTHER
LANGUAGE

Chitra Ganesh

b.1975 USA

Forever Her Fist

2006

Digital print on paper

pasted on board

48.3 x 58.4

Private collection

Forever Her Fist; with three small words, Chitra Ganesh catapults us into a higher plane of unbridled queer desires. If we let that paean to feminine penetration sink in, we may well find ourselves floating in the company of her triple-armed sky goddess. Those limbs of hers, however, are deceptive. What looked for a moment like one of several hairy armpits begins to suggest a divine groin, where one of this being's many digits is firmly lodged. It's a demonstration of superhuman self-pleasuring.

Forget any glancing echoes of 1960s pop art; Ganesh is playing a very different game with her appropriated vintage comic book material.⁶⁰ Think back to the subversive photomontage creations of Hannah Höch (pp.52–3) and you'll be on the right track. The incongruous collision of body parts resembles examples of exquisite corpse: the surrealists' favourite drawing game, in which players take turns adding parts to an unseen body. Ganesh uses another tactic beloved of the surrealists, automatic writing, to compose wording unconstrained by everyday narrative logic. Here, those free-flowing words press against keenly felt erogenous zones, while conveying disturbing hints of violence. Being pierced by arrows may be an age-old metaphor for erotic surrender, but one that threatens to kill. The 'slip of her tongue on my tell-tale heart' may set pulses a-flutter, but invokes a macabre story by Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49). Look below and you'll notice the regal central figure is rising from a seething bath of her own blood, gushing from a long wound in one of her three arms. By unseating normative expectations of anatomy, gravity, pain and pleasure, Ganesh invites us to rethink our own physical and sexual boundaries.