

Wilson, Michael, "Lynda Benglis/Robert Morris: 1973–1974", TIME OUT NEW YORK, 8 July 2009.



"I object to the ad for its flabby opportunism, its ready acceptance of the vernacular of apathy, and also on account of its gratuitous insult to those who think art is more than the person who made it." Critic Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe's indignant 1974 letter to *Artforum* represents one side of a furious debate ignited by the magazine's decision to publish a photograph of artist Lynda Benglis nude, wearing shades and grasping a huge dildo between her legs. It wasn't only the magazine's readers who took umbrage at the shot, however: The project sparked an internal revolt at the art-world bible that saw associate editors Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson quit to establish *October*, a more explicitly political rival.

The extracted broadsides anchor a tightly focused and necessarily text-heavy exhibition that also employs artwork and ephemera to illuminate the context of Benglis's divisive provocation. Far from being a one-off, the show reveals, the now-iconic ad is both part of a series and a calculated response to an earlier poster (also on display) picturing sculptor Robert Morris clad in S&M gear. The two artists' conversation (which was not only visual but sometimes, as Benglis's video *Mumble* from 1972 and Morris's *Exchange* from 1973 reveal, also verbal) was ultimately taken up and spun in multiple directions by supporters and detractors alike. That their teasing play on sexual identity is now canonical speaks to the ongoing resonance of this fascinating cultural tipping point.—
Michael Wilson