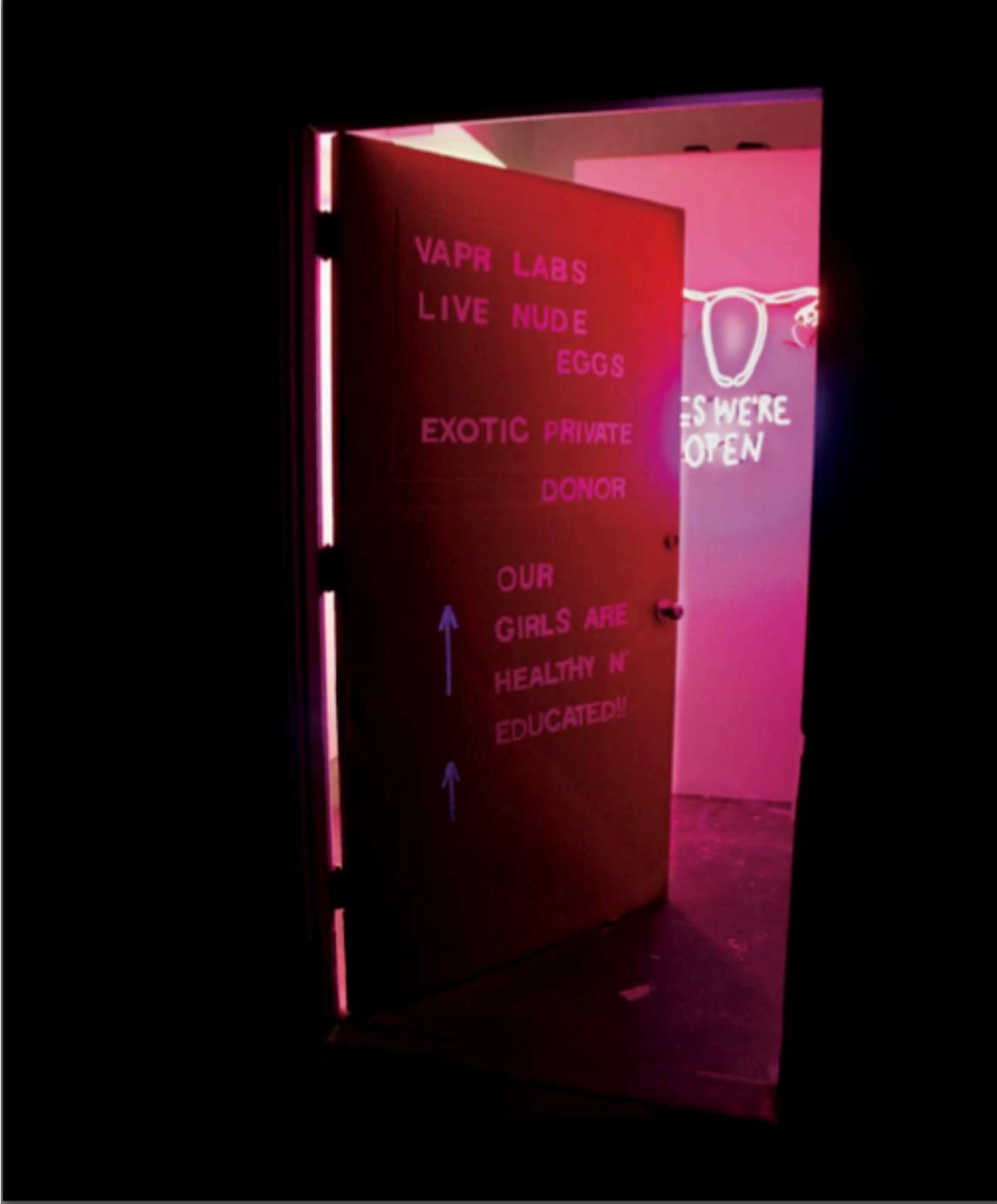




YES WE'RE
OPEN





BREAST MILK 10

ON TAP: SARAH (VIRGINIA)

WHITE RUSSIAN 15

VODKA COFFEE LIQUOR, BREAST MILK OF A WHITE RUSSIAN

OVARY MARTINI 15

LYCHEE, VODKA

COFFEE 10

ON TAP: VERVE DUROMINA (ETHIOPIA) WITH YOUR CHOICE OF BREAST MILK

RAQUEL'S EGGS 10K

U.S. RAISED PANAMA BORN HAPA EGGS

HAIR 5K

BLOOD 200

ORGANS SQ

By Dana Andrews
Photography by Dustin Hammon

Since the early 80's, when the first embryo transferred baby was born, the egg donor industry has grown increasingly popular as an alternative form of conception. In fact, it's been booming like mad - in NYC, at the Center for Human Reproduction, one of the leading infertility treatment centers in the world, the egg donation cycles close to tripled in 2010 alone. But, the question still remains: where are all these egg donors and why don't we know any of them? Why haven't we heard their stories? It's as if this population of women is allocated to faraway lands after they give up those beloved eggs!

Whispers concerning donors and how much money they make gifting their precious jewels rumor amongst young college graduates yearning to travel, dominant lesbians with no desire to bear children, or moms on the grind looking for some hard cash to support the children they already struggle to care for. And then there is Raquel Cool, a woman who was in search of other donor's stories when she herself considered donating, seeking comfort in knowing that other women had gone before her, but found no such solace. A woman who fits the mold in that she strives for experiences that she couldn't otherwise have, but with another, more radical motive - to artfully voice what has not yet been revealed: the truth behind the business of the egg donor industry. Cool sat down to tell me about her personal

experience documenting the process, as well as how she ended up spending the money she made toward her eyebrow raising exhibition, *Live Nude Eggs*.

S+D: Tell me a little bit about what you're doing in your exhibition:

RQ: In *Live Nude Eggs* I play with two aesthetics - the strip club and the medical clinic. Half of the pieces have a very red light district feel (think of the waiting room basked in neon lights). There is one autobiographical neon piece - representative of my ovaries as a storefront, showing the business side of the fertility industry.

See, there are two myths surrounding the egg donor - one being the voiceless, biological resource, and commercial vendor, while the other is this beautiful, altruist, desirable, giving, baby lover. The two provide very different narratives, but there is one representation that no one has spoken of - that of the egg donor as an active part in a multi-billion dollar business.

Live Nude Eggs takes ownership of that role in which you walk into a storefront and see a menu. I do a performance standing in front of a menu listing the prices of parts I'm willing to part with, including eggs, blood, hair, and organs. The menu is an extension of that "givenness." I've appropriated a business that is hidden and obscured because money inevitably convolutes the intention of the altruist/nurturer.

I'm playing with the lack of transparency in the industry. I'm playing out some of the absurdities I experienced as an egg donor.

S+D: What prompted this art project on egg donation? Was there a socio-political motive behind donating your eggs and voicing the process?:

RQ: From the beginning I knew it would be a public one. In research, I didn't see anything that donors were doing, so I got a photographer off Craigslist to come with me to medical appointments. He was really good. He helped me capture the whole thing. The whole idea of exhibition developed later when I wanted to explore the commercial aspects of it.

S+D: Were there personal yearnings behind donating your eggs? For money? For political change?:

RQ: The use of the money is actually shown in one of the pieces I have. I have a medical diagram of an egg, but instead of pointing out the anatomy of the egg, I break it down into currency. I broke down how much each egg is worth. So I "donated" 30 eggs for \$7000, which makes each egg worth \$233 dollars a piece. I used them for experiences I wouldn't have otherwise been able to have, such as a trip to Chicago, but it was important for me not to do this out of necessity. I did it because I wanted to, not because I had to. The decision to donate is very cultural and contextual. Often times people speak for egg donors without knowing their personal story and the donor's voice is never heard. That really bothered me. While in contrast, some places offer great benefits for egg donors.

S+D: What influences do you have for this particular work?:

RQ: Bioethicists and provocateurs. I'm really inspired by Marina Abramovic. She's like the godmother of performance art. And Tracy Emin for being accessibly autobiographical. And also a book called, *The Baby Business*, written by a Harvard professor, Deborah Spar.

S+D: Tell me more about the porn booth and the bar! Those sound sexy:

RQ: With contraceptives, we know that we can take conception out of sex. My exhibit takes sex out of conception. It turns from a strip club to a sterilized clinic. Even the medical illustrations take the sexuality out of the equation, even though I'm completely nude! It's about the

interaction that takes place between donor and recipient.

In Santa Clara I went into a shop to get some lychees for these cocktails we make. And I noticed this porn booth, which has this dark, seedy feeling about it with a porno playing inside it. I wanted to recreate this feeling of privacy tinged with shame. The one thing about my booth, although it has a red velvet curtain and its dark, as usual, instead of a porno video, it's playing my egg donor video and I'm being interviewed. And I hate that video, I just hate it. It's just not quite me - it's me doing this song and dance, promoting myself. There's a sense of voyeurism because these people [recipients] can view these videos from their own home. They don't want the truth from the donor; they want the optimist.

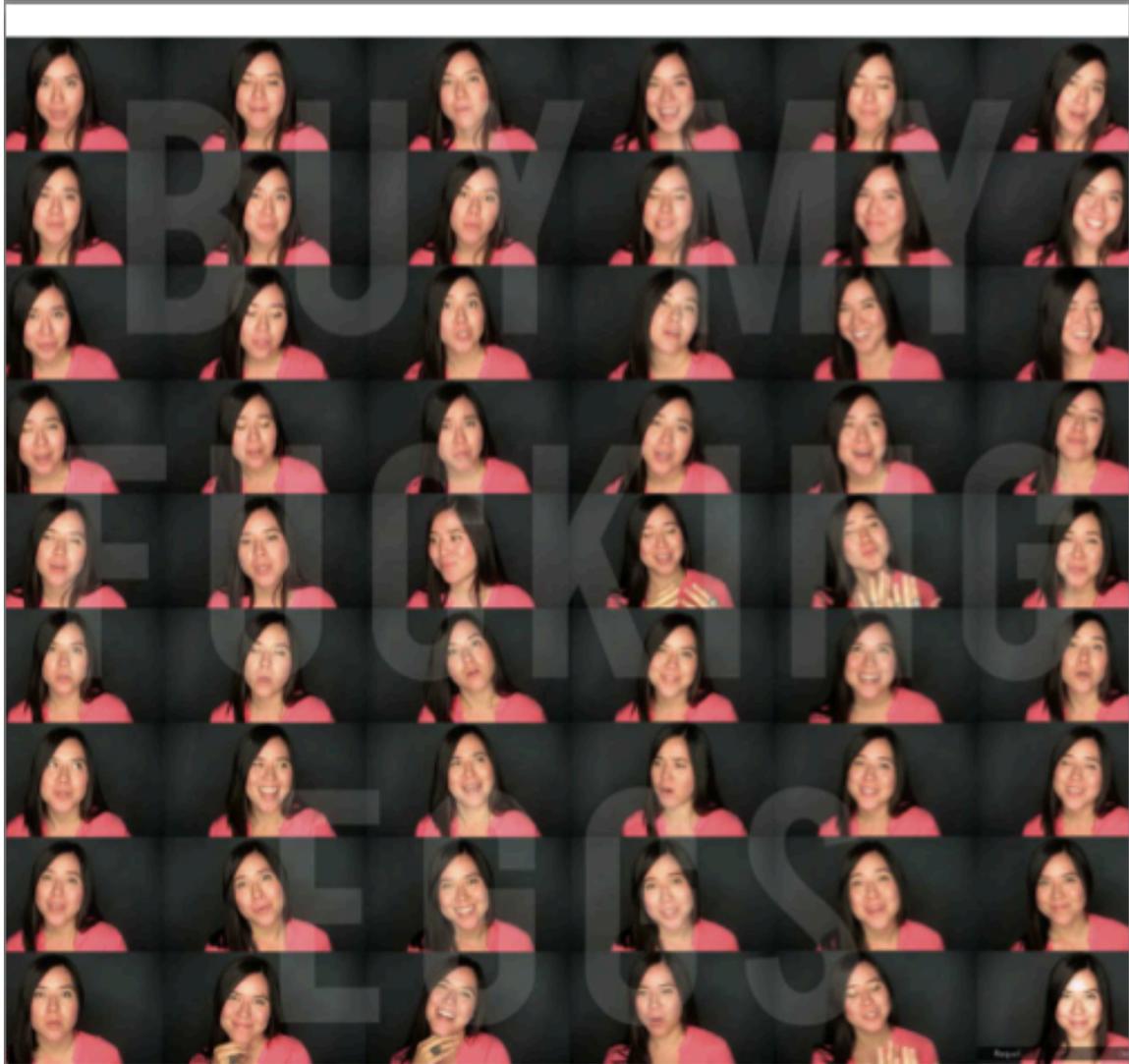
So people put on the headphones, listen to my video, and then come out and have a cocktail.

With "Donor Bar" I am offering the menu with suggested prices, and as "Donor Bartender," I never sold anything for the product itself, but I had to get paid for my time and effort (just like real egg donors). They are not allowed to get paid for the eggs themselves, just for their time and efforts.

One of the most powerful things about the exhibition was that the performance was prescribing an experience. The objects in the show were limited, but it was crazy how transformative it was for some people! The bar was a confessional. People would tell me intimate details about lactating in the shower, gushing milk! It was interesting how people opened up at this bar. I guess it really created an intimate space for people to share their personal experience.

S+D: What's in the drinks?:

RQ: I love that question! Breast milk was one in which I offered a flight of tastings. We walked through the flavor composition, added the breast milk donor's favorite food, etc. We served it that way or mixed as a traditional White Russian with vodka and kahlua, the breast milk serving as the cream. We also had the Ovary Martini, but no ovaries were harmed! Lychee served skewers were made to look like ovaries in a California style martini with vodka. I would explain that the skewered lychee represents the surgical



My exhibit takes sex out of conception.

process of the aspirating needle that suctions out the eggs as it enters your vagina by puncturing through the vaginal wall into the ovary. From that point it's inseminated.

S+D: Wow. That sounds painful:

RQ: Yeah, it's pretty invasive. We also served coffee with your choice of breastmilk! And right under the cocktails is the body parts I have for sale, of course.

S+D: So how many eggs have you sold?

RQ: Thirty. Twice the norm. It's not considered safe to give so many eggs, but they have a hard time retrieving the number exactly, which is one of the dangerous elements. Your health is at risk to create this pregnancy for another person. The real patient is the recipient, while the donor is more of the vendor.

S+D: Was your pricing based at all off these desirable traits? Such as physical traits, race/ethnicity, level of education, humor, "sexiness, etc.:

RQ: Part of my research has affected my willingness to negotiate. I decided on my own price of \$7000. Some agencies will tell you they won't allow you to go over \$10,000. They say they don't want to impose that on the recipients, while others are using it as a negotiation tactic. The fact is you take real risks in doing this. Donors should be empowered in setting their own rates. It's the bait and switch method - you see all these advertisements "If you're Asian your eggs are worth more!" And then they abandon that by saying it's asking too much from the recipient. If everyone is profiting from this process, why shouldn't the donor?

S+D: What would your desirable traits be? What genes would you want to pass on?:

RQ: This question has to do with anonymity, as most programs do not allow for much communication between the donor and the recipient. Do you think the donor deserves better rights in terms of financial freedom of choice, having more control and choice as to who receives their eggs, and in communicating openly with the recipient and the future life of their egg? After all, they are the one's enduring a majority of the radical bodily changes, such as fertility drugs, frequent medical exams/tests, and surgery to remove the eggs.:

The donor does have the option as to whether or not she is willing to do it openly or anonymously. Most brokers aren't open about the fact that they want it to be anonymous. It's a business. They want it to be streamlined. Most egg donors don't know that they're not truly patients, they're vendors. They're a third party supply of a business. They have one medical exam following the actual transfer of their eggs out. No one cares about their well being following. As of now, brokers can push the safety message based on research, but they never admit it's because there is no research being done. Women should have access to information that does not come from people who commercially benefit from her.

I've signed up with 4 brokers in total. They all have different processes, and they can ask whatever the fuck they want. No regulations. One agency can publish how many people you've had sex with next to your profile picture! One broker asks the most ridiculous questions like "Do you wish upon stars?" or "When strangers message you, do you answer?" "Do you sleep with a teddy bear?" It's such a shitshow, such a circus. At one point, how much is this medically relevant? One brokerage categorically rejects you if you're a lesbian or African American. I definitely sense that bias.

Because I'm half Chinese, I'm a rarer case. The agency I'm going forward with in this next cycle mostly has donors that average \$10,000 per cycle. And some are as high as \$50,000 because they're Ivy leaguers, well educated, deemed as beautiful, and the like. They're advertised similar to strippers in a strip club!

S+D: Would you like to know the life that is created as a result of your egg donation?:

RQ: That's the first thing I asked myself: would I be okay with this person knocking on my door in 20 years? Absolutely. I wouldn't donate my eggs unless I fully accepted the possibility that this person may or may not want to connect later on. I'm also aware that they may never know they were conceived with donor gametes in a petri dish.

ECONOMIES OF THE FEMALE ANATOMY



Mammary Glands
A mammary gland is an organ in female mammals that produces milk. Breast milk can be pumped and sold, or spread thick in peering customers. Adults and adults alike. It cost more or more \$1,000 per month. The high market value of human milk, shipped frozen, is \$1.00 - \$1.50 per ounce.

The Ovary
The ovary is an ovum producing reproductive organ, often found in pairs as part of the female reproductive system. Egg donors are compensated by the recipient which includes not administered to female recipients. Eggs are harvested surgically. Donors are generally compensated between \$4,000 to \$15,000. However, surrogate gametes for paid beyond \$10,000 for their eggs in a free longer education, ADHD, and/or.

Uterus Rental
Surrogacy is an arrangement in which a woman carries and delivers a fetus for another person. This contract, the surrogate mother, may be the child's genetic mother called "traditional surrogacy" or she may be genetically unrelated to the child called "gestational surrogacy". The market value for a rental uterus ranges from \$27,000 to \$70,000 per term.