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Unless you've caught her late at night, understanding her art with a bucket of white paste alongside a hundred club flyers, you've never seen her. You know the hun-dred or so words she has for her, but you don't know her name. You don't know for her sake's, she is, since sometime she's a he-Duchkin, Deviant. Reliable. Prince Charmin-ger. If you know her name, it's she's the green-eyed monster.

"I don't know if I'm a good girl or a bad girl, because I'm both. And if I want to be a really effective person in the world, I have to own both." Since April 1992, Pam Butler has been claiming ownership on city walls and street lefts, posterizing lower Manhattan with simple drawings of women with perfect lips, flipped-back hair, long eyelashes, and a multitude of words. Can too. Hopeful. Ugly. Sensuous. A bea-ty amid the copyright-fragments of most graffit, her Good Girl project has become perhaps the most sighted and cited street art since Keith Haring painted the city with murals and dogs.

Yet while publicizing their noms de plume in the prime motivation of New York's other most notorious contemporary public artists, Revs and Cost, one of the truths about Butler's posters is their ano-nymity, their elision of artistic ego. The way—unimagined? probably not any girl or boy. The way you construct your own meaning from their enigmatic and of-ten ill-lit, off-hand, off-the-cuff, and off-the-record connotations of text and image. Butler tells her name to anyone who writes to her at the P.O. box she posts among her artwork, and is willing to be interviewed, but you see her name of her for others. I wanted an element of, "Where does this come from?" she says, sipping tea in the Prince Street apartment that doubles as her studio. "People have talked about the posters in ways that I didn't see them, which has enhanced my understanding of what I was trying to do and the project's about.

She's been vocal about how she wanted to re-contextualize the project for her: an idealization of the real-woman feel like a salve. My own conception of Butler's art shifted after I met her: I imagined a strong feminine boldly attacking linguistic power, but she is surprisingly shy. She sees her work as the product of a painful personal struggle and describes it mostly in psychological, rather than ideological, terms. We're both right. Publicly confronting the way her own life has been shaped by letters passed on from Claire L. Goodman to her, Butler confronts ev-ery viewer personally. And the time is right for uncovering the mystery of the "Good Girl" project. After 28 months Butler is moving on, preparing for her own gallery show and the public art projects to follow.

Butler grew up a professor's daughter in Brooklyn, performed in the "New World Puppets," 14, and although the 38-year-old artist de-fends her actions ("it was 1969, a lot of new things were happening"), she also con-fesses, "I was a very bad kid." Butler sees the Good Girl project as addressing the pressures she rebelled against as a teen, and then herself consumed by again later. "One thing I feel is that I couldn't have done these posters in my twenties." "I didn't know this stuff was my twenties."

Working with black Magic Marker and sheets of white paper, Butler began drawing crude pictures that tapped into childhood memories of women in fashion mags. She named the series after the first drawing that came to mind: Good Girl. "I began drawing a woman with the words Good Girl floating above her head. The image seemed so re-sonant, I kept using it over again." Butler painted canvases with designs from paper towels and other house-hold objects. "A lot of the Pop Art stuff, one thing they never touch on is a very feminine, diminutive imagery."

Butler got her GED and studied art in college, finally getting a master's degree from the School of Visual Arts in 1990. By that time she was already interested in how figure images shape artistic visions, and vice versa. From childhood, her influences were largely pop culture, and it was those images that inspired me to do both projects was knowing a lot of women writing about dealing with their sexuality, but what was missing was this sort of romanceuable view of sex, that more feminine view of sex," she says. "It was as if romance-novel stuff was wrong, something was missing, something un-acknowledged or owned. And I felt that I couldn't own my own sexuality completely, that I could never really feel complete in my own sexuality, without acknowledging this huge romantic tendency."

Butler isn't abandoning street art. "There's very little space for women's voices on the New York guerrilla art done by women, so I wanted to do it, and it did as a woman," she says. "It's like the street art on the streets by guys. Some of it was all right. It was just tagging. But it all seemed to be very male-generated."

There are as practical as philosophical reasons that street art is a place for a male terrain. Postering is illegal, and women more men are raised to respect and fear authority. It's as economic as well. Any street artist faces the fear of exp-ension. Good Girl is where Butler's started. As the project continued, the little income (some of her posters and T-shirts are for sale at Marushan Lehderman Gallery and Art Market) and copying costs add up. "I think if I knew what I was going to do it in the first place, I would have never done it," she says. Furthermore, going onto city streets late at night and graffiti the city with your personal vis- ion is not something good girls do. "I think part of it is I was putting it out at night, or women thinking that they should be afraid of the streets at night. It is a social-ization question. I've battled with a lot of that: still to a certain extent feel appali-ant that I put my work all over the city."

The search for ownership comes up re-peatedly in Butler's conversation; it is per-haps the central theme of the Good Girl project has satisfied her. "One of the things that was really interesting when I started doing the project was to see who read me," she says. "I realized that I would sometimes catch people who work to used to work, and I don't know if I would have been there otherwise. It was that taking that personal voice and pushing it up to that particular job. You do claim space."

That satisfaction will probably lead her to another public art project when the Good Girl show opens. While good Girls has ideas for future work. "You get a lot of media impessions all over the place, and you get a lot of advertising stuff coming at you, a constant barrage of pre-packaged im-age, and I don't know if I would be able to play with it. And looking at it from that conscious, this has only ever been the start of possibilities. This is just the little piece of what can be played with."