

### Artist Statement: Wit(h)nessing Eyes Close(d)

"Art then grooves the enactment of erotic aerials of the psyche conducting and transmitting and assembling joint gazes..." (Bracha Ettinger, 1999)

To wit(h)ness one must cross a threshold into intimacy-- an intimacy that embodies both close encounter(s) and distant or aerial point(s) of view. Through entering altered state(s) I wit(h)ness with close(d) eyes what is within and beyond my grasp. Within my art practice I access altered state(s) through the practice of trance (an awake dream that I speak out loud) and through vocal soundings, both of which I digitally record.

Trance is the genesis of the artworkings in this series. Drawing from historical images of myself, collected from photo shoots over the past fifteen years, the practice of re-wit(h)nessing and re/producing images of my trans/per/forming woman(s) body through time and space is filtered and enlivened through the before/beside/beyond sensorial aesthetic journey of the trance. In the unbound large hanging canvases the female body is traditionally drawn and represented, with/in/on a disrupted enviro/scape. The co-emerging of the figure and ground causes the viewer to move beyond attempts to restore the body to singular completeness and to fully see it in co-relationship, distinct yet a/part in the matrixial ground.

Through co-encounters in the space/time of trance the raveling, unraveling and re-raveling of what artist/theorist/psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger theorizes as the matrixial, is expressed. The art of this series offers auditory and visual working awareness(es) of matrixial borderspace(s), where the female body/voice is released from the paranoid gaze of hegemonic phallic cultural norms that have dis/placed all that is feminine into the location of the other. The matrixial gaze resists such hegemony and provides viewers and listeners opportunity to be transported beside, before, below and beyond the phallic gaze.

Ettinger's post-Lacanian theorizing radically extends postmodern thought to include a matrixial subjectivity that begins in the womb. Matrixial subjectivity is understood as relational encounter, the feminine moving towards a co-subjectivity that is not based on castration theories and the individual versus the other model (Pollock, 2004). Ettinger's art and theory offer an aesthetic and ethical feminine-based relational language to articulate my art practice, within which I have worked collaboratively with others and their bodies, since 1991.

The womb borderspace of the matrixial is further co-encountered in the video projection piece entitled, Wit(h)nessing Eyes Close(d). The originating collaborative performance ritual this artworking responds to and extends, is present through the recording of the original sound track and trace images of the Gestare Art Collective (of which I am a member). In the originating co-performance ritual which took place at the edge of a lake, the collective re-joined through resistance and wit(h)nessing with/in several placentas made from felted wool by one of the members, Nané Ariadne Jordan. Through co-performing we psychically encounter a re-co-birth and a co-transfusion of matrixial blood. I returned to the site of the original co-performance ritual as an individual and vocalized sounds while listening to a recording of the collective's sounds from the original performance ritual. Through the re-co-encounter of past/present/future in this responsive artworking a differentiation in jointness occurs. What appears as a solo performance ritual in the video projection onto collaged and stained canvas is co-joined with the collective through reverberations and co-presencing of sound and visual memory traces from the originary collective performance ritual.

To create a co-encounter of matrixial praxis (theory + art practice) in the exhibition site, a youtube lecture with artist, theorist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger, is present in the gallery in the form of a looping video. In this 9 minute video excerpt Ettinger poetically winds and unravels matrixial theory for her audience of listeners, positing that "art is a channel for seduction into life and can provide us with the occasion for wit(h)nessing in an era of resistance." Ettinger's disorienting and reorienting matrixial orientation is elaborated as a co-performance itself with the art, thus co-enacting a combination of virtualities and possibilities of realities to co-emerge for the audience in the exhibition encounter.

An in-process book entitled *Metramorphosis* invites those that desire to cross thread/strings/touch/memories into a threshold that is a co-becoming storybook. Gallery visitors are invited to pick up needle and thread to sew into the book. The book's origins are a large canvas drawing cut into smaller pages then reconstructed into book form. The book holds the silent memory of the trance and includes explanations of matrixial concepts. It invites co-encounter events between artist and audience through artmaking in the gallery.

The gallery installation encounter event becomes a triadic co-mingling between the audience, the sound of the artist(s) voices, with the visual artworkings. The audio, visual and tactile experiences mediate an inside/outside resonant chamber that invites a restorative aesthetic co-encounter of co-subjectivity with/in the matrixial sphere. Within the matrixial borderspace(s) encountered in this installation, the prevalent cultural aesthetic of the voyeuristic phallic gaze that devours human subjectivity as objectified other is interrupted, and the potentiality of transmitting and assembling joint gazes based on co-response-ability and vulnerable co-compassion for/with self and other is offered.

#### References

- Ettinger, Bracha (1999). Traumatic Wit(h)ness-Thing and Matrixial Co-in-habit(u)ating. *Parallax*, 5(1), 89 – 98.
- Ettinger, Bracha (2009). New knowledge with Bracha L. Ettinger and Clementine Deliss. Feb. 10. Retrieved from <http://www.theoldbrandnew.nl/knowledge.html>
- Pollock, Griselda (2004). Thinking the feminine: Aesthetic practice as introduction to Bracha Ettinger and the concepts of matrix and metramorphosis. *Theory Culture Society*, 21(1), 5 – 6.