

Bracha L. Ettinger, *Paralyse*, n.36, 1998-2001 | Ria Verhaeghe, *Zonder Woorden*, 1994

# Alma Matrix

Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe

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The Fundació Antoni Tàpies presents the work of Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe, two artists from different parts of the world whose artistic practice often shares a common aesthetic and ethic meaning. This project, curated by Catherine de Zegher, shows how the forms of representation chosen by both these artists generate a common space of concern for others, possible connections and shared realities. Ettinger and Verhaeghe use images of anonymous persons found in newspapers, and archive material, which they then articulate in a process of recuperation through methods of compilation and related techniques of copying, erasing, drawing and painting. Verhaeghe collects, combines and binds her images with the use of computers, or with the type of soft, protecting materials, such as latex or wadding, found in her sculptures.

As an artist and psychoanalyst, Ettinger (Israel, France) incorporates both these practices in her work in order to develop an innovative approach to applied psychoanalysis, half-way between the artistic and therapeutic practices. In her work on paper, Ettinger imprints marks linked to memory and trauma, exile and history, while reflecting on representation, the gaze and the trace. The exchange of experiences and the desire to express a common and shared unconscious manifest themselves in her drawings and paintings through the absence of fixation and a tendency to ambiguity, permutation and that which is compound, flexible and ephemeral. Through a near-endless succession of manipulated documents (family photographs, documents from the Holocaust, among others), blurred by the mechanical process of photocopying, with its residual vestiges of ink fused with newly-drawn lines, Ettinger recreates her series of drawings and paintings such as *Matrix-Family Album*, 1988–89, *Woman-Other-Thing*, 1990–93, or *Eurydice series*, 1994–96. In the same manner, Ettinger gathers her experiences as a psychoanalyst and artist in a series of notebooks, which she uses as a space for reflection during her sessions of therapeutic work, and on whose margins she doodles. In order to share these intimate annotations, the artist creates her 'scannographs', manipulated scans of the pages in her notebooks left open to different readings by the public (having previously deleted her patients' confidential information).

In an attempt to show the anonymous, Ria Verhaeghe (Belgium) experiments with the infinity of images that are available nowadays, showing only that which disappears, or is rejected or lost. In her archive *Provisoria*, 1996–2009 – a space organised as a matrix –, the artist gathers images found in newspapers, which she then reconnects and repositions through a special treatment. Her visual superimpositions interweave and lead to new connections until they create a space of recognition and acceptance of the other. In her work, Verhaeghe unveils the reality that hides and fluctuates among press images, establishing associative correlations, which she then uses as material for her series of collages (*Z.T.*, 1992, *Glenden*, 1994), paintings (*Prentenkabinet*, 1994, *Vertical*, 2004), and notebooks. These correlations, assembled together with sanitary materials, such as cotton wool and latex, that refer to her experiences as a nurse are also present in her sculptures (*Knuffels*, 1997–2008 and *Pattern 3*, 1996) and in her installation with piles of newspapers (*Ingepakte kranten*, 2002). Equally, in her video *Connect*, 2007–8, the artist relates these found newspaper images to coloured lines or cables coming out of canvasses, as in the series *Commitments*, 2008.

In their creative processes, both these artists refer to the 'matrixial' as a model for confluence, reconnection and reception of the common. The 'matrix' or 'matrixial' is a concept developed by Bracha Ettinger from the connection between her psychoanalytic and artistic practices. In the meeting of patient and therapist, it goes beyond the traditional concepts of relation between the two figures, and creates a space for empathy, both conscious and unconscious, that contains that which is common to both and which belongs to the collective memory. In the process of artistic creation, it implies the activation of this space for empathy, generated by the encounter with the collective memory, and the establishing of new meanings and connections. This 'matrixial' approach makes it possible to perceive and to theorise – from a feminist perspective – the ethical links that connect the artist and his/her work to the audience.

Coinciding with the exhibitions *Eva Hesse. Studiowork* and *Alma Matrix. Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe*, the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, in collaboration with the Càtedra d'Art i Cultura Contemporània, Universitat de Girona, has organised a seminar about the role played, in art history, by the spaces generated in artistic production by processual or relational works, or works in transformation. It is a vision of art history that includes themes such as relation, absence, the ephemeral, grieving, prints or process, and that goes beyond the concept of art centred around the object.



## Art as Link.

### Introduction to *From Notes to Nets*, by Catherine de Zegher

Laurence Rassel

From her first exhibitions<sup>1</sup> to her programme for The Drawing Center, New York (1999–2006), Catherine de Zegher has always placed at the core of her curatorial project an interest in the relational space that exists between the works and the viewers at the heart of the exhibition. A relational space that is particularly active in the case of drawing. Drawing as trace, note, thread, gesture, the comings and goings between the inside and the outside, between oneself and the other, between thought, gesture, the body that marks and is marked, leaving its own trace and then shifting away.

In her introductory text to the exhibition *Inside the Visible*,<sup>2</sup> de Zegher reminds us that art as a cultural product reflects social change while expressing the artist's own thoughts. Faced with the uncertainties and brutalities of our time, the representations of alterity, of difference, of the frontiers that divide bodies and identities, have often been, and will continue to be, the subject of many artists' work outside the normative and lineal discourses of art history. In many of her exhibitions, de Zegher's purpose has been to unfold lines and to complicate the norms through the juxtaposition of artists who do not share the same geographical position, or the same aesthetic and technical formats. Her interest lies in the work process, enabling the existence of other realities and the construction of other interpretations to emerge from the experiences that the work provokes in the viewers and the authors.

In the same way, de Zegher often links art to the kind of healing power that can treat personal existentialist pain, usually related to the migrations caused by economic and/or political wars in today's world. In the following text, de Zegher presents the works of Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe who use, among other elements, images found in newspapers that they perceive and collect as the 'traces of lost souls'<sup>3</sup> in need of company of care. For both these artists, art is a trace, a gesture, a transitional space between oneself and the others.

A space where the body is the actor in the drawing, in the work, while integrating, at the same time, the body of the viewer at the heart of art, and confronting it with art. According to a feminist reading of artistic practice, de Zegher asks us to take into account, and to make visible in our narrations as cultural producers, the conditions of work and existence of those bodies and the conditions of the construction of the artistic identities of the authors. And ultimately, to remember the interaction between the theoretical, aesthetic and familiar environments, and the socio-political conditions of geographical situations.

The concept of care, of 'healing power', linked to works of art is far from being considered a foreign body in the context of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies' programme, since it is in line with previous exhibitions such as those of Ana Mendieta and Lygia Clark (1997), among others, and with Antoni Tàpies' numerous declarations about his wish to create works capable of affecting the body and the soul, and of offering a space for care and contemplation.<sup>4</sup>

Art as link, art as care: de Zegher associates this to the work of women who, due to their

definition and the social obligations forced upon them, have remained on the margins of art history and its institutions, as have all of those who do not conform to the dominant norms. Therefore, all those men and women have developed free practices and techniques that are consequently ambiguous, fluctuating, unassailable and transgressor for a vocabulary that seeks to fix, frame, control and ordain all artistic practice. What can be expected from artists who weave, comb, saw, grind, cut, scratch and keep going back to the same motive, the same gesture...?

Will this great number of female artists and artistic practices be granted entry into the history of the West in the twentieth century? Will it change art history as we know it? 'No, it won't – not if the only things taken into account are the sex and origin of the artists. Or if their presence does not bring a new terminology and a new grammar into the 'way art has been narrated. The following 'text includes words such as empathy, co-emergence, care, web, interchange, spirituality, generosity, flux, matritial, transformation... and many other words, many other links, 'that will allow us to include those practices and to approximate them, coming often from 'subterranean art history'.<sup>5</sup>

### 'From Studiowork to Webwork'.

Catherine de Zegher

(You enter the exhibition *Alma Matrix*. Bracha L. Ettinger Et Ria Verhaeghe through the exhibition *Eva Hesse. Studiowork*. Catherine de Zegher invites you to follow her.)

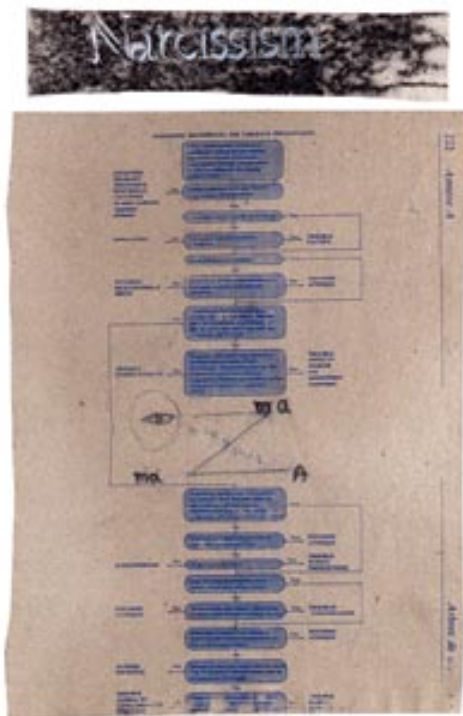
In her studioworks, Eva Hesse used eccentric and visceral materials, which, mucous and fluid, escape control, stasis and order – mate-

rials also of which the sight, smell and touch remind us of circumstances of caring and convalescence, in short, of (m)other. Leftovers of studio detritus, Hesse's small trial-and-error test pieces could easily have turned into relics, were it not for the continued reflections they engender in contemporary thinking and art practice, such as that of Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe. This trans-generational connection allows for an in-depth reading of art, whereby the present informs past practice as much as the past informing present practice, and ultimately testifies to the endless state of becoming not only of Hesse's work but also of the work of both contemporary artists.

Since the demise of strict formalism, a new critical language has begun to evolve, and it took women artists such as Eva Hesse, who courageously defied and refused artistic, academic and avant-garde orthodoxies, to imperceptibly change our perception with far-reaching consequences for aesthetics and ethics in society at large. Because the emphasis of Hesse's art is on interstitial space, addressing the viewer as a psychic subject, and, through its exploration of borderlines, broaching fundamental questions of subjectivity, it sheds light on connective and curative capacities in the space of empathic relation and, as such, challenges the minimalist model of human situations and processes by beginning, as other artists were, to argue for a different model – a model of trans-subjectivity.

## From Notes to Nets

Catherine de Zegher



Belonging to the postwar generation, both Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe have parents who migrated as a result of the world wars. Driven to leave their relatives and friends, neighbourhood and land – in other words, their familiar networks – by forces beyond their control to settle in a foreign country, they inevitably had to deal with loss, rejection and separation. In the past, through family stories, affectionate attachment and shared experiences, through traditions and rituals, these networks had provided them with some support and continuity. As migrants, to overcome the grief of displacement and the ensuing discontinuity, the distance from all they had known, they necessarily developed complex loyalties of migration to recover and reinvent a sense of continuity and to integrate in a new socio-cultural environment. Traumatic as these events were, they left indelible traces on both artists' families.

Following the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, most of Ettinger's relatives died in the Lodz Ghetto or in the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Of Polish Jewish origin, her parents, Bluma and Uziel Lichtenberg (both born in 1916), narrowly escaped the Holocaust by crossing over several times into Slovakia and Hungary. They finally settled in Palestine in 1944, where Bracha L. Ettinger was born in 1948.<sup>6</sup> During her youth, by means of scribbled journals, Ettinger turned the negative, wounding



experience of a despondent mother into stories, and later on, into a groundbreaking theory related to her artistic practice of capturing traces of traces. Having for years collected archival images of camp prisoners together with old family photographs from Poland, Ettinger has taken them as a reflective resource for understanding her past in relation to the present and for creating her work. Inspired by her father's research as an engineer, she has also used ancient German aerial maps of Palestine.

As a child refugee from poverty stricken Hungary, Juliska Hegëdus (Ujpest, 1920-1992), the mother of Verhaeghe travelled to Belgium in 1926 for a six-month holiday supported by a humanitarian project. During the interwar period, thousands of Hungarian children came to Belgium and other Western European countries for these curative holidays. Although it was intended that the children return to Hungary after their vacation, some stayed indefinitely with their new Belgian families. Since her mother was widowed, Hegëdus was to return several times between 1928-30 to Belgium before settling in 1932 with her foster

parents in Bruges. With the outbreak of the Second World War, she tried to visit her birth family but was not able to reach Budapest. In 1949, she married with a Belgian, Camiel Verhaeghe (1915-1997), and had six children, of whom Ria, born in 1950, was the oldest. The artist to this day remembers her mother as 'sewn together'. It was as though through childhood migration and transnational adoption, through a life of separations, Hegëdus had had to construct and reconstruct a life of vulnerability – a patchwork of love, attachment and detachment, affection and loyalty, commitments to both her birth family and her foster family.<sup>7</sup>

Though emerging from different social and cultural backgrounds, the art practices of Ettinger and Verhaeghe show striking and significant aesthetic and ethical convergences. In the juxtaposition of their work, covering a period of two decades (1989 to 2009), a shared sense of compassion for the Other is apparent – reflected in the attention to discarded pictures of unnamed people in newspapers and archival documents – an attention articulated in their very similar processes of recovery, their methods of compiling, and often common techniques of marking and erasing in their drawings and paintings. At the core of these translations are multiple and various notebooks, which each artist has filled over many years, and very importantly, the use of the matrix<sup>8</sup> as a model of confluence and mutuality.

Bracha L. Ettinger's notebooks contain fleeting lines and spirals, like comets across the page, resonating sound waves, webs, stricken words, stretched sentences criss-crossing the plane,



object stains, embryonic shapes, sharp-witted remarks, scholia added in the margins, sensitive scribbles, drawn marks, a few female faces, etched with question marks, more doodles, arrows, instant memos, strings and knots, all in multi-coloured inks in between annotations in Hebrew, interspersed here and there with French and English. Day after day, the white pages capture her inscriptive gestures as a vital relation – ‘relation as storytelling and connecting’.<sup>9</sup> Small in their physical scale and large, or rather compulsive, in their number, the manuscripted books form a container, a receptacle as it were, of scattered sensations and thoughts, in Ettinger’s idiosyncratic practice both as artist and psychoanalyst.

Throughout her oeuvre, the sensorial exploration and mental exercise contained in the notebooks find expression in her ongoing series of drawings (*Case History and Analysis*, 1985–91, and *Symptoms under the Will’s Control*, 1989–91), paintings (*Matrix-Family Album*, 1988–89; *Woman-Other-Things*, 1990–93; *Mamalangué*, 2001; and *Eurydice Series*, 1994–2009) and writings. Since the mid-1980s, Ettinger has created affecting paintings by incorporating found pictures of barely discernible figures and faces behind purple and reddish streaks of oil paint. Using a photocopy machine that she stops mid-run, the artist removes the image as it is still appearing from the process and works paint into the residue of the dusty ink of the copy. The textured images, often of old family photographs from the Lodz ghetto and newspaper photographs of Holocaust victims, copied repeatedly to lose detail, give an impression of a past that is haunting the present—traces of lost souls. These images, together with German aerial photographs and maps of Palestine from the First World War era, mounted on canvas, never seem to settle, to find resolution, always transforming as she unhooks them from the studio wall, one by one, to rework each in a continuous reiteration, over and again.

During psychoanalytical sessions with her patients, Ettinger always used to take notes and doodle in her journals. By 2000, however, she had come to carry through the creative process in her painting while she listened to the patients and drew out their stories. In layers of mark upon mark, she actually traces the moment of thought being shared, as it belongs neither to the one nor to the other alone. From this encounter, traces are carried over

into the conversation, traces not always from the trauma of the one that is in front of the analyst, but traces transmitted from the trauma of another in the psyche of the patient, from an invisible web of transconnected others. Consequently, the way she works is then not specific to a particular encounter; it goes beyond trying to express thoughts or feelings. And, in some cases, different traces from different encounters slowly accumulate over the years on the same sheet of paper. In a way, she is securing the exchange and giving it a visual voice – a voice among other voices.

Lately, it seems, by working with the Physicians for Human Rights-Israel,<sup>10</sup> Ettinger has taken the creative process even further by sharing her notebooks with Palestinian and Israeli patients. During the sessions, men, women and children at times draw and inscribe the pages together with her while telling stories of love and loss, of grief and wonder. Though it happens rarely, in that case, she tears the page out and gives it to the person. It is in the correlation of someone who listens to her patients, while she draws out the stories of wounded people, draws out their traces in togetherness (this in fact also with the viewer/reader), paints and writes, that Ettinger has come to carry through a process of recognition of this ‘self-otherness’ – a process of art... a process of mutual healing too, of the other as well as of oneself. The artist becomes here doctor and patient.<sup>11</sup> As Ettinger further outlines her psychoanalytical theorisation with the ‘matrixial’ at its core, using the image of co-emergence between mother and unborn child, she continues, each day, to put her pen to paper in tracing and writing her notebooks, and it results in a new approach of drawing-out as

caring within sharing (*communi-care*). According to Ettinger: ‘Matrixial co-emergence doesn’t enter the phallic framework of identities, and it cannot be recuperated by any existing political system.’<sup>12</sup> Matrixial art and the matrixial sphere within therapy stand for a new kind of resistance.’ The healer’s primary adherence is to the larger earthly web of relations in which a community is rooted. This manifests itself in the latest development of her work, as Ettinger scans pages of her notebooks to create what she names ‘scannographs’. Here the earlier lens of the Xerox machine meets the lens of the scanner. The artist considers the scanning as a process that allows her to share intimate notes with a larger community – to connect the private and the public – transforming the notebook pages with light while erasing and veiling personal information about individuals so that the threads of the stories can continue to weave new stories with each viewer/reader... Art is congruent with our acting in the world: art draws from life as much as life draws from



art. It allows for attention to what surrounds us and for some understanding of our life.

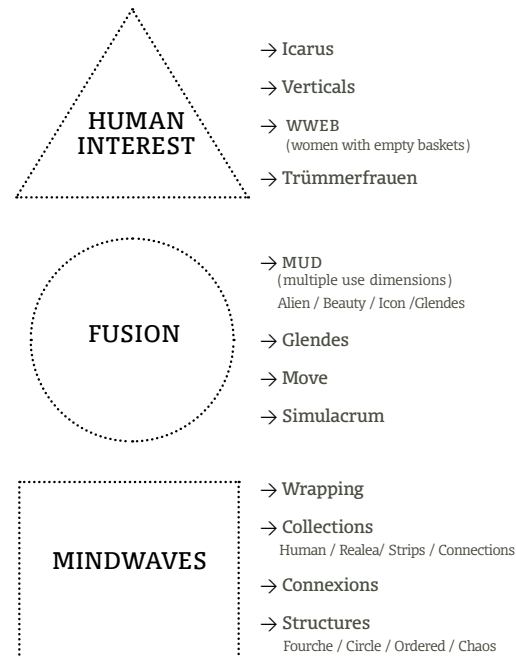
Living in a culture dominated by imagery, every day we seem to be overwhelmed by hundreds of images. Just as these images sometimes linger in our minds, Ria Verhaeghe has been filing them since the early 1990s in her media image archive that has been classified on shelves extending to more than ten metres. From the collected national and international newspapers and weekly magazines, she continues to select and cut out press photos to be glued in self-made booklets, the covers of which are also from newspaper pages featuring the daily stock exchange rates. Verhaeghe, however, works selectively. Only images that need attention, that show links, or lead to new connections are archived. They create and, in creating, reveal a reality that lies in between images and fluctuates between meanings born of their juxtaposition, so that new meanings, new narratives become possible – narratives finding their resource within our imagination, our understanding. Verhaeghe shares this recovery process with others in workshops since 1994 in an attempt to restore the unnamed and to reinstate the potential of continuity.<sup>13</sup>

In her work, Verhaeghe tries to recognise the other, in the sense, not of identifying but of acknowledging the other. Here recognition is conceived as a part of understanding, the point of becoming between things being strange and familiar in which new meanings are intensely generated. From this perspective, she is open to the unknown in the world and as an artist points out the different, the not-immediately-visible, the in-between that is seldom recognised



in our reality – what lies between two images, between two captions or 'legends', on both sides of a newspaper sheet. The series of *Glenden*, a dyslectic configuration of 'legends', consists of such a remarkable group of newspaper images overlapping each other on the front and back of a page, when held against the light, creating through their contingencies new meanings. Within this recuperation act, the artist saves what vanishes between the folds of existence, rehabilitating what is lost, what is overlooked, set aside – an unrecognised present.

In the abundance of imagery of advertisement and actuality, Verhaeghe cares for the unnamed. Press images of armed conflicts, disasters, and manifestations, with suffering and dying people, cannot be thrown into the waste



bin but receive a place in her *Provisoria* – a temporary place organised as a matrix. For her, the matrix is a mathematical grid with numbers and words arranged in horizontal rows (x) and vertical columns (y). The numbers and keywords in the matrix are called its entries and can be accessed by the viewer as a digital archive organised by colour-codes. The naming of the keywords in this unorthodox typology of images is based on associative relations and formal connections that link the found materials: *Icarus*, *WWEB* (*Woman With Empty Baskets*), *Icons*, *Glenden*, *Verticals* and *Wrapping*. At once hermetic and open, lucid and absurd, her graphic classification urges us to look differently at the world of events, of stories, and to question the rationalisation of our society based on apparently scientific criteria and sta-

tistics. In a way, it becomes an alternative and abstracted storytelling, the sheer prolixity and repetition of certain found images (c. 25,000 in total) pointing to different realities behind the visible, inside the visible. Indeed, according to Inge Henneman, 'Verhaeghe's comparative view on similar and contrasting images mainly turns into decoding the underlying visual codes, intrinsic to press images and tracing repetitions and patterns in the construction of an ever-changing "portrait of an era". Her bookkeeping displays the irrational stock exchange rate of the portions of newspaper pictures, quickly consumed by us every day. Of course, her classifications lead only to more chaos, further subdivisions and potential relations.'

From the material of mass media, Verhaeghe creates a different perspective on the present as well as another collective memory, a kind of 'Mnemosyne-Archive' like Aby M. Warburg's 'Bilderatlas Mnemosyne' of 1924-29, whose ordering similarly could be described as researching visual clusters not so much by visual similarity, but rather through relationships caused by an 'affinity for one another' and the principle of 'good company' – an archive as transitional space where nothing is definite, but where everything contributes to the creation of meaning, a meaning always becoming new meaning, never fixed. Verhaeghe finds the finite and fixed positioning of a picture or a word dreadful, since the possibility for further development, for a further connection, is taken away. Her urge therefore is to reconnect these loose hanging threads with each other in the confluence of the x-y axes in the matrix and therefore interactively with the computer in the hands of the visitor. As much public as



private in their access, Verhaeghe's *Provisoria* are used as an archive as well as a scrapbook for the artist's own work. What has fallen to the ground, lying discarded as paper detritus on the floor, is picked up by the artist, reconnected and repositioned, in short, given new place – often realigned from the horizontal into the vertical – given new meaning. This reifying shift is most evident in her series of small golden paintings drawn from the *Verticals* in her archive. Here she alters the prone position of the dead from the passive rest of the horizontal into the active vibrancy of the vertical, and in this simple gesture transforming victims into 'movers and shakers' of the world, as it were... A coming to life in our new attention, the *Verticals* appear as dancers in movement.

From the obsessive collecting and repositioning of images, the artist creates her paintings, collages and videos. To realise the work with the cut-out newspaper images from her archive, Verhaeghe uses media as varied as carbon paper, the photocopy machine, and now the computer and scanner. Her materials range from papier-mâché, pencil, paint, glue and latex to goldleaf. In her videowork *Connect*, Verhaeghe has digitally linked press images with multi-coloured lines like the ones used in her archive's colour coding as well as in telephone wiring. Significantly, the materials in her work refer to connecting, also in the sense of caring within conversation (*communi-care*). This curative aspect is mainly apparent in the works from the 1990s made of latex and cotton mesh: the *Knuffels*, *Mille-feuilles* and *Patterns*. In particular, the organic and skin-like latex is much linked to the body and convalescence, often being used as protection for mattresses and for



medical gloves and suits, but also serving in sculptural moulding as the negative that will give birth to the positive. Its smell and sight always remind Verhaeghe of her mother when she was a child, and later on, of her time as a nurse. Lately, in her canvases (*Commitments*, 2008) the connective and multi-coloured wires have been replaced by threads hand-spun from variously coloured strips of newspaper with latex.

In this sphere of compassion, aesthetics is linked to ethics in an artistic process of caring and healing. Through, and in, empathic affinity, one withdraws from oneself and allows attention for the other. Ettinger's and Verhaeghe's oeuvres in this sense contribute to the cultivation of a relational ethics of becoming. In other words, their work always carries within itself the affirmation of the potential for a transformative, creative process of becoming. Affirmative aesthetics and ethics celebrate the generative power of life and allow us to go beyond pain and grief. By extending their attention to many others and taking them inside a matrixial web, both artists take the 'being other' into an affirmative flow of narrative, consequently enabling the resistance to the negative. As people seemingly 'disappear', the artists make them 'reappear'. Their vital and relational webwork is part of a creative, creating power that generates and brings to life possible futures. Their work does not take the individual as a central reference point but the relation itself. This implies openness towards the other – in the positive sense of mutual affection, of possible connections in mutually shared realities.

Speaking from her psychoanalytical experience combined with a feminist anxiety about the

unacknowledged elements of the feminine specificity in that discourse, Ettinger has argued for reciprocity by introducing a new symbol. As the feminine and the masculine reciprocally define each other in the symbolic level. She proposes as a shift of the dominance of the 'phallus':<sup>4</sup> the 'matrix' or womb, as she draws on the image of the intra-uterine meeting in the late stages of pregnancy as a model for human situations and processes in which the *non-I* is not an intruder but a partner in difference. To quote Ettinger: 'The matrix is an unconscious space of simultaneous emergence







and fading of the *I* and the unknown *non-I*; it is a shared borderspace in which *differentiation-in-co-emergence* and *distance-in-proximity* are continuously reorganised.' Following Ettinger's work, Griselda Pollock has argued that modalities based on the phallic rejection/assimilation (self/other, love/hate, aggression/identification) paradigm apply to how paintings are viewed as much as to how societies treat strangers and migrants. 'What is not us, strange and unknown, be that woman for man, the other for the white European, the painting for the viewer is positioned under this phallic logic as either one of the two terms: to be assimilated and if that is not possible to be cast off as completely other.' The concept of the matrixial as a model of trans-subjectivity can provide a different understanding of some art practices and another reading of art works.

At the roots of each artist's psyche may be the traces of traces of souls, traces of complete loss of self in the face of displacement lived by loved ones. At the same time, the lack of familiar networks and the decentred status of dislocation and migration may be seen as linking borders and opposing nationalist attempts to isolate and promote a collective identity. Though the shifting nature of the physical experience of crossing borders can be considered in relation to the mental blurring of boundaries between the self and the other, it always brings with it parting. In their work, Ettinger and Verhaeghe are focusing on the connective, on the 'in-between' as the space of co-emergence, relational and fluid. Imbued with emphatic relation, their art practices of reinventing networks become vehicles of hopeful resistance against the devastating



experience of new forms of migration as separation and the continual advancement of the deracinating effects of communications technology – a paradox it may seem...

In the passage from the artists' 'notes to nets', the idea of drawing out what is eclipsed and sharing stories reflects what can be understood to be the core morality of the new generation. It is within this sympathy of kindness, of generosity, of love that art in its manifestation in these works exists. Through stories, affectionate attachment and shared experiences, differently created networks provide support and continuity. In the reciprocity that is art, the artist shares with the other and the other with the artist. Defining the self in terms of responsibility for the other is the core of ethics. In modernist culture, this idea has been increasingly abandoned. Because we live in a time of deficit of empathy, and as we continue to fail, the ideal of living *for* the other must be reaffirmed in the language of each age. Following Emmanuel Levinas, who spoke about 'I being *for* the Other, I bearing responsibility for the Other', Arthur Frank states: 'Living for the

other is, however, not an act of exemplary goodness. Persons live *for* others because their own lives as humans require living that way. The self is understood as coming to be human in relation to others, and the self can only continue to be human by living *for* the Other.'<sup>15</sup>

If modernism introduced notions of the anti-narrative, negativity, separation and rupture as artistic strategies of change, the twenty-first century opens to notions of inclusion, storytelling, networks of connection, caring and healing. In this slow evolution, the work of both Bracha Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe can be seen to play a crucial role. Together they draw out the very webwork of the world. Using the matrix, each in their own way, they record the experience of reconnection by blurring the boundaries between the self and the other and ultimately contribute to what Craigie Horsfield has described as 'the translation of souls'.<sup>16</sup> Their work shows a compassionate wit(h)nessing of the life and suffering of the other, a form of empathically shared presence, a lasting interdependency, and is therefore important in the shaping of our thinking in our times.

## Notes

1. *Inside the Visible. Begin the Beguine in Flanders*, Kortrijk: The Kanaal Art foundation, 1995.
2. Catherine de Zegher, *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of Twentieth-Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine*, Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art, Kortrijk: The Kanaal Art Foundation, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1996.
3. Catherine de Zegher, 'From Studiowork to Web-work', essay for the gallery guide to the exhibition *Alma Matrix. Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe*, Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2010.
4. Manuel J. Borja Vilel, 'Conversa amb Antoni Tàpies (1985-1991)', *Comunicació sobre el mur*, Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Valencia: IVAM Centre Julio González, p. 53.
5. *The Prinzhorn Collection: Traces upon the Wunderblock*, New York: The Drawing Art Center, 2000; Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2000; Barcelona, MACBA: *La Col·lecció Prinzhorn*, 2001.
6. Because Bluma moved from Lodz to Warsaw in November 1939, she was able to escape from Warsaw to Slovakia in 1941. Uziel was drafted into the Polish army in February 1938 and was captured by the Germans. As a war prisoner he became a forced laborer at Stalag II-A in New Brandenburg. He was sent to a camp of 're-education' in Lublin in February 1940 but from there he escaped to Warsaw. In 1941, Bluma and Uziel had arrived, individually, in Slovakia, from where they escaped to Budapest, but were jailed because of illegal political action, working in the underground (later known as the Central Committee for rescue of Jewish victims). After a few months, they were transferred to an army jail in Pest (Budapest) and from there driven to Slovakia. They illegally crossed the borders between Slovakia and Hungary several times, until they were finally jailed again in Budapest. In October 1942, Uziel was drafted for forced labor in Pest. In February 1943, Bluma obtained a visa for Palestine, and Uziel was sent to a 'political' concentration camp (Garany), from where he was transported after a few weeks to a refugee camp and liberated

in October 1943. He remained in Pest to work for the Central Committee until February 1944. Uziel arrived in Palestine in March 1944.

7. Vera Hajto, 'The "wanted" children. Experiences of Hungarian children living with Belgian foster families during the interwar period', in *The History of the Family 14* (2009), pp. 203-16. Child migration and transnational adoption are often regarded as recent phenomena, yet there is a long history of children travelling without their families and settling in a foreign environment. In adoption, the original attachment to the birth parents is broken off and children must reattach themselves to the new caretakers. Moreover, researchers specialised in adoption agree that transnationally adopted children, compared to children who are adopted in their home country, have additional challenges to overcome, which are connected with their adoption and with the construction of their identities. In the process of attachment and re-attachment, loyalty plays an important role. Loyalty that involves trust, reliability, dutiful commitment, faithfulness and steadfast devotion. Iván Böszörményi-Nagy defined two types of loyalty commitments in his psychotherapeutic work on contextual therapy and relational ethics, which bind individuals in relationship systems. The biological family relationships are empowered by the fact that members are connected by birth. This involves 'vertical loyalty commitments', which bind the generations vertically to one another. 'Horizontal loyalty commitments' are those that are created during a later phase of development and connect mates, siblings or adopted children to their foster family.
8. Following Bracha Ettinger, *La Matrix conceptualise, dans le domaine symbolique, le fait de ne pas être un, les expériences prénatales du Moi et Non-Moi qui coexistent sans s'absorber ou se repousser. (Borderline, Palais des Beaux-Arts: Bruxelles, 2000)*.
9. Craigie Horsfield, *Relation, Jeu de Paume: Paris, exh. cat.*, 2006. See also the Conversation between Craigie Horsfield and Bracha L. Ettinger.
10. Physicians For Human Rights-Israel was founded in 1988 with the goal of struggling for human rights,

in particular the right to health, in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Their activities integrate advocacy and action aimed at changing harmful policies and provision of healthcare in situations where medical ethics and human rights are challenged.

11. Bracha L. Ettinger, 'Trans-Subjective Transferential Borderspace', in Marketta Seppala (ed.), *Doctor and Patient*. Pori Art Museum Publications: Ylojarvi, 1997. On this topic, see also Gilles Deleuze.
12. We could use also other Ettinger's words: '...I have termed the matrixial stratum of subjectivisation, proposing a matrixial subjectivity-as-encounter as a beyond-the-phallus feminine field related (in both men and women) to plural, partial and shared unconscious... A matrixial encounter engenders shared traces, traumas, pictograms and fantasies in several partners conjointly but differently... The matrix is the locus of a process of multidirectional change and exchange on the borderlines of perceptibility.' Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, p. 64-65
13. Long before I told Ria Verhaeghe about the 'Bilderatlas' (*Mnemosyne: Bilderreihen zu einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Betrachtung antikisierender Ausdrucksprägung / Mnemosyne, A Picture Series Examining the Function of Preconditioned Antiquity-Related Expressive Values for the Presentation of Eventful Life in the Art of the European Renaissance*), she had been compiling and combining images in a similar way, led like Aby Warburg by the desire to search for a universal memory in pictures of different origin and for common primary gestures and signs in their recurrences in the present. The 'Bilderatlas' was fundamentally an attempt to combine the philosophical with the image-historical approach. Attached on wooden boards covered with black cloth were photographs of images, reproductions from books and visual materials from newspapers and/or daily life, which Warburg arranged in such a way that they illustrate one or several thematic areas. Warburg would use his 'Bilderatlas' like a storyboard during lectures to present relations and interconnections that he drew out with lines and colours, though never within a linear logic. Taking into account world events as well as personal achieve-

ments, Verhaeghe shares Warburg's liberty to make associations across conventional borders and categories – a dynamic work-in-progress aiming at ever widening our understanding of civilisation.

Interestingly, Verhaeghe's matrix with entries of horizontals and verticals seems to relate in some way to the above mentioned 'horizontal' and 'vertical' loyalty commitments in transnational adoption.

14. 'On the scope of the *real*, the matrix relates to the female bodily specificity, also, it is linked to the feminine difference in the Imaginary, but as a concept and as a subjacent symbolic dimension, the matrix is at the service of both sexes. It should not be reduced to the womb, just as the phallus should not be reduced to the penis even though it is linked to the male in the Real and to the masculine in the masculine in the Imaginary. The Matrix is oriented towards the feminine in men and women, towards Woman not as other but as a different kind of relations between the I and the non-I.' See B. L. Ettinger, 'The Feminine/Prenatal Issue in Subjectivity as Encounter', (1993), in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. Routledge: New York, 1995.
15. Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller. Body, Illness, and Ethics*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1995-97, pp. 14-15.
16. Craigie Horsfield, 'The Translation of Souls', lecture at symposium *Performance, Art and Anthropology*, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, March 2009. According to Horsfield, the soul, existing across time and space, is conceived as the anima, at once unique immaterial being and the part of being that exists as relation. Translation here is both to explain, interpret or convey meaning, and to carry into another being. His portraits, for example, may be conceived as being a part of the translation of souls insofar as they bring about a recognition in the viewer that exceeds the material aesthetic representation so that the viewer may apprehend the person depicted as taking place, as being, that is, particular and in present relation.

## Related Activities

### Exhibition Space

In the area *Combined Arts (A Place for Education, Exhibition and Research)*, visitors will be able to consult documents and material related to the exhibitions *Eva Hesse. Studiowork* and *Alma Matrix. Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe*, as well as educational resources.

14 May – 1 August

### Seminar

#### Processual Art and the Object: Repetition, the Ephemeral

Coinciding with the exhibitions *Eva Hesse. Studiowork* and *Alma Matrix. Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe*, the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, in collaboration with the Càtedra d'Art i Cultura Contemporanis, Universitat de Girona, has organised a seminar about the role played, in art history, by the spaces generated in artistic production by processual or relational works, or works in transformation. It is a vision of art history that includes themes such as relation, absence, the ephemeral, grieving, prints or process, and that goes beyond the concept of art centred around the object.

### Programme

#### Friday 14 May 2010

##### Morning

**10.30 h.** Guided visit to the exhibition *Eva Hesse. Studiowork* by Briony Fer. Conversation in the exhibition space of *Alma Matrix. Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe* between Catherine de Zegher, Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe. Activities in English.

**13.00 h.** *Lightpainting and Com-pass(ion)*, lecture by Bracha L. Ettinger.

Place: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Auditorium.

#### Tuesday 25 May 2010

##### Morning

**11.00 h.** Presentation by Laurence Rassel, Director of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, and Maria-Josep Balsach, Director of the Càtedra d'Art i Cultura Contemporanis, Universitat de Girona.

**11.30 to 12.15 h.** *Sub-objects and Studiowork*, lecture by Briony Fer.

**12.30 to 13.15 h.** *From Studiowork to Webwork*, lecture by Catherine de Zegher.

Place: Càtedra d'Art i Cultura Contemporanis, Sala de Graus, Facultat de Lletres, Universitat de Girona.

##### Afternoon

**19.00 to 19.45 h.** *Finished and Unfinished, from Studio Work to Art Criticism*, lecture by Elisabeth Lebovici.

**19.45 to 20.30 h.** *Out-takes, Snippets, and Goings-On: The Moving Image in the Studio*, lecture by Michael Newman.

Place: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Auditorium.

#### Wednesday 26 May 2010

##### Afternoon

**18.00 to 18.45 h.** *L'éphémère et le nouveau statut de l'art* (The ephemeral and the new status of art), lecture by Christine Buci-Glucksmann.

**19.00 to 19.45 h.** *Coser con un hilo invisible. Correspondencias de/entre Bracha L. Ettinger*,

*Eva Hesse y Ria Verhaeghe con algunas artistas españolas* (To sew with an invisible thread. Correspondences between Bracha L. Ettinger, Eva Hesse and Ria Verhaeghe and some Spanish artists), lecture by Patricia Mayayo.

**19.45 to 20.30 h.** *La imatge ferida* (The wounded image), lecture by Maria-Josep Balsach.

**20.30 h.** Debate and closure of the seminar.

Place: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Auditorium.

Organised by: Fundació Antoni Tàpies  
and Càtedra d'Art i Cultura Contemporanis,  
Universitat de Girona

In collaboration with: Master in Communication  
and Art Criticism of the Universitat de Girona,  
and the Research Project 'Archive Politics and  
New Tendencies in Contemporary Artistic  
Practice'. (Ministry of Science and Innovation)

All lectures will take place at the Fundació  
Antoni Tàpies, c/ Aragó, 255,  
08007 Barcelona (t) +34 934 870 315,  
[www.fundaciotapies.org](http://www.fundaciotapies.org),  
and at the Sala de graus, Facultat de Lletres,  
Universitat de Girona, Plaça Ferrater Mora, 1,  
17071 Girona (t) + 972 418 211,  
[www.udg.edu/catedres/ArtiCulturaContemporanis](http://www.udg.edu/catedres/ArtiCulturaContemporanis).

All lectures at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies will  
offer simultaneous translation.

Seminar fee: 5 € (limited places)  
Inscriptions: [repcio@ftapies.com](mailto:repcio@ftapies.com)  
(t) +34 934 870 315

## Education Department Activities

### Workshop with Ria Verhaeghe

This activity will take place at the Centre de  
Cultura de Dones Francesca Bonnemaison  
c/ Sant Pere més Baix, 7, Barcelona  
For more information: [www.bonnemaison-ccd.org](http://www.bonnemaison-ccd.org)  
Friday 14 May, 17.00 to 21.00 h

### Visit for teachers

Visit to the exhibitions **Eva Hesse.**  
**Studiowork and Alma Matrix.** Bracha  
**L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe**  
Saturday 15 May 2010 at 11.00 h  
Free activity for teachers.

### Guided visit to the Fundació Antoni Tàpies' exhibitions

**Eva Hesse. Studiowork and Alma Matrix.**  
**Bracha L. Ettinger and Ria Verhaeghe**  
Saturday 5 June, 18.00 h  
Booking fee (including access to the museum):  
adults, 5 euros; students and pensioners, 3  
euros; Friends of the Fundació  
Antoni Tàpies, free.

### Activity for the Friends of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies

Guided visit to the exhibition  
**Alma Matrix.** Bracha L. Ettinger  
and Ria Verhaeghe, by Laurence Rassel,  
Director of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies,  
and Noemí Cohen, projects coordinator  
at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies.  
Tuesday 1 June, 18.30 h