

OBSERVATIONS

FERTILITY

GUEST EDITOR:

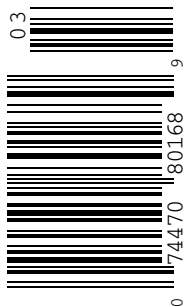
Erika Knerr



Suzanne McClelland
Sarah Schwartz
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Richard Milazzo
Colette
Jessica Higgins
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Berta Sichel
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Teresa Serrano
Vulto
Christina Svane
Elena Berriolo
Eva Mantell
Senga Nengudi
Faith Wilding
Reynolds
Sandro Chia
Barbara Stork
Shelley Marlow

Chris Hammerlein
John Hatfield
Lars Chellberg
Mary Judge
Ann Messner
Elana Herzog
Peggy Cyphers
Erika Knerr
Les Ayre
Thomas McEvilley
Fabian Cereijido



FERTILITY

GUEST EDITOR: *Erika Knerr*

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Erika Knerr

FERTILITY AND THE
GROWTH OF
CONSCIOUSNESS
OR
AN ATMOSPHERE
SURROUNDING
GROWTH

By perspective (or any other conventional means...) the lines, the drawing are “strained.” and lose the nearly of the “always possible,, with moreover the irony to have chosen the body or original object which inevitably becomes according to this perspective (or other convention)

Marcel Duchamp

I hope. And the hope that is in me is from the soul is for the soul. Not present, actual, superficial life, but the real solid world of images. I hope that the real solid world of images will prevail.

Whisper to my soul. It is so temporary, life, and the ideas that form it are spirit, not flesh, and the images that outlast it are spirit not flesh. The best of me is not my body.

Jeanette Winterson, Art & Lies, 1994

The creative act is inherently individual. Because of this, the subject matter of this issue at times becomes intensely personal. For me fertility was immediately connected into the idea of creation and consciousness. It is an evolutionary process that leads to an awakening. When is the moment that the soul enters the body? When does the soul enter humanity and our times in a cultural sense? Is this period we exist in particularly fertile or infertile? The decade so far has felt hollow with sex and bodily functions often overstated and sensationalized. The brewing nature of the nineties has us taking account of a century behind us, while gazing ahead and trying to grasp the speed of a new technological age in the next.

It is born as boughs on this arbor-type. Boughs frosted in nickel and platinum. As it gradually leaves the arbor, this blossoming is the image of a motor car climbing a slope in low gear. (the car wants more and more to reach the top, and while slowly accelerating, as if exhausted by hope, the motor of the car turns over faster and faster, until it roars triumphantly.

Marcel Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors Even, 1923

It rained for twelve days in a row this spring of 1998, an appropriately abundant season to prepare an issue on fertility. There is a saying where I grew up in Lancaster county Pennsylvania, “Knee high on the Fourth of July” which is the average height for the corn crops to reach by July 4. This Fourth of July the corn was chest high.

Fertility as a theme for an issue, entered my consciousness two years ago, but I believe it was brewing much earlier. I grew up looking at my father’s medical journals and asking curious questions about the practice of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the dinner table. I remember the fascination of finding out that a baby was born with hair or a tooth. My father told me that he chose his profession because he thought it might take him closer to learning about creation; by being closely involved with the birth process he could watch the beginnings of life.

I’m interested in connecting prerecorded time as we know/don’t know it, beginning with the

Venus of Willendorf, to today’s brink of a new century. “Because there are no written records to assist the archeologist (in studying prehistoric objects like the Venus), he must rely, to some extent, upon cautious study of those primitive tribes of today among whom art has a religious or magical basis.”¹ The Venus of Willendorf cast into a bar of glycerine soap, by Sarah Schwartz, is a provocative use of a powerful symbol. While still in art school, I remember seeing this object for the first time in Vienna in 1982 displayed in its glass box. The scale of the real object was remarkable. To be able to hold in my hands this soap form of the oldest known fertility goddess revived that experience. The fact that my bar of soap will dissolve away as it touches water, as Ms. Schwartz hints, in a ritual encouraging procreation, also suggests life’s impermanence and fragility and continuous change.

In 1995 I worked in Israel for two weeks in Construction in Process V. The Show, entitled “Coexistence,” was presented in the desert of Mitzpeh Ramon. The experience of working in the “fertile crescent” was an intense precedent to this project; working in an arid landscape of layered histories. The more conscious I become of my subject matter, the more complicated it is to deal with that which has potential for deep mystery and serious contemplation without sounding naive. I have attempted to include the broadest variety of approaches to this topic, and in trying to be inclusive in my ideas, I hope I have not made the topic seem too wide. It is my goal to acknowledge its full complexity.

This issue of *New Observations* brings together literal identifications with fertility, for example, an autobiographical writing by Eva Mantell, an historical piece by Mary Judge, and a ritualistic performance by Senga Nengudi. More importantly though, it takes a look at the particular time in which we live. I began to think of fertility as a cultural issue; to think about this moment in time.

Initially when I saw Jessica Higgins perform “Braille” at the Anthology Film Archive in New York in 1996, I saw creation imagery. Eve carving the mythological apple... and moving the audience into an uneasy self awareness.

There are those who look at the theme in terms of pure potential like Abraham David Christian or Fabian Cereijido.

Richard Milazzo became involved in this project right before leaving for a trip last summer to Spain and Morocco. His enthusiasm and support were critical to its completion.

Berta Sichel looked to the media and the internet to discover how closely linked fertility is to infertility.

Faith Wilding discusses “the new reproductive and flesh biotechnologies” and presents an installation based on this subject matter.

Elana Herzog is interested in growth, germination and regeneration. She is known for work that is deeply visceral yet layered with rich association. The piece in this issue was presented at art OMI. It is an outdoor, site specific work, essen-

tially barren with a touch of growth. Trees wrapped in fabric, the landscape is barren, photographed in the winter where the piece has existed since its insemination in June about six months earlier.

Call the rain. Drops of mercy that revive the burnt earth. Forgiveness that refills the drought stream. The rain, in opaque sheets, falls at right-angles to the sea. Let me lean on the wall of rain, my legs at sea. It is giddy, this fluid geometry, the points, solids, surfaces and lines that must undergo change. I will not be what I was.

The rain transforms the water.

Jeanette Winterson, Art & Lies, 1994

I was introduced to Ann Messner’s “Amniotic Sea” installed in front of the courthouse in Foley Square in downtown Manhattan while on my way to fight parking tickets one afternoon. Its placement created a strong dichotomy. A personal, organically internal sculpture sited in a public and political space where one would expect to see a bronze statue of a war hero, struck me as the most perfect combination. When I spoke to Ann on the phone some time after, we talked about the danger of working with fertility as subject matter. The problem of being pigeon-holed into a stereotype or cliché and how difficult it is to present it in a broad yet meaningful way without reiterating 1970’s feminism, or getting connected to new age religion. It is a challenge to be contemporary with an infinitely old subject.

Les Ayre and Christopher Hammerlein use ancient symbols of fertility found through travel, to Egypt for the former and to India for the later.

In gathering the material for this issue I began to notice that many of the artists and writers I was approaching are looking outside of their regular surroundings in search of the seeds to cultivate the work. Travel and the influence of other cultures is something that many of the artists share

in common. As Thomas McEvilley so poignantly points out, “new and exciting crops are spouting up faraway.”

“Waiting for life to begin. Waiting...”²

1. Albert E. Elsen, “Art as a Matter of Life and Death,” *Purposes of Art*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., pg. 22.
2. Faith Wilding, “Waiting,” 1971. First performed by Faith Wilding at Womanhouse, Los Angeles, 1972.

LES AYRE *Leaf*, 1997. Oil on Calvin Klein underwear and metal, 4 1/2” x 2 1/2” (this page)
SUZANNE McCLELLAND *Molly*, 1997-8. Cut potatoes, plate and handwritten text on napkin (next page)



"IT until he lives with IT for
the smell the sound the
smile the hair eyes walk
voice test scores wit will
he love it for its humor
For the mirror tells him
its all OK mirror
mirror
makeup for what she
didn't get give what she
didn't get get get
have one
when he possessesses
the notion it is so
clean
when it comes...
the mess
the smells the mirror is
so clean
breed greed breed greed
re
production to look like you
apparent similarity
where did THAT come
from?
Science will make her a
baby to look like him
she helps if along
is a dish
what a dish
that's from her side of
the FAMILY
NOT his
blood
will he love IT because of
the blood
line
what a line

no weeds grow in there
perfectly tended garden
yes yes yes Molly watch
out here it
comes
sprout spit
split
push pull eat the
young ones with the dirt
still in his teeth
does she think she can
mold
think he knows what he
thinks when he pre-
dicts (eye sees)
the similarity of the
face skin hair hands
try surprise start over
over over over spit sprout
push pull cook eat.
bury the possessions
come
back later
what a dish
serve it up
plan the seed
breed
buy the mirror
it will be a sponge
it will not obey it will
be sweet he and her
unaware of his mirror
or
it comes watch
out Molly's sprout
spit
split
push pull

Sarah Schwartz

PROVERBIAL, INC.



SARAH SCHWARTZ, *Venus of Willendorf Soap*, 1998. Glycerine, 4¹/₂" x 1³/₄"

Who is the Venus of Willendorf?

The Venus of Willendorf, dated 30,000 BC, is presumed to be the oldest fertility goddess. She is a Paleolithic stone carving, found outside what is now Vienna. I was lucky enough to obtain a cast directly from the original in the late 70's. I am now casting the Venus of Willendorf into a 3 oz. bar of glycerine soap; my soaps are her direct descendants. In the 70's, she was visiting America, I believe she was at the Natural History Museum, in New York. I began casting her in copper. These I would give away to friends to inspire pregnancy. In this sense she is the ultimate love token. I am curious and eager to discover the results of a soap goddess.

Bathing with the goddess, should be done responsibly and at your own risk.

For myself the experience of holding this form in my hands changed my idea of sculpture forever. This was sculpture. (I began my art career as a sculptor.) The Venus is very special. This form in the hand, in its original size and shape, is very profound...no...is profundity!

Abraham David Christian

DIRT UNDER THE SMALLEST GOD'S FINGERNAILS

Stand on the corner in any city in the world and wait.
The world will come to you.

The world is fertile with possibilities; freedom abounds, but you must take risks, and the risks do not come in the forms you might expect. Nor does the freedom. The waiting, this active or impatient waiting or state of readiness, these untoward risks, this unrecognizable freedom, and the world that comes to you, may have nothing to do with your expectations. They defy your will, your sense of freedom and adventure, and what you may expect from the world.

You get up, take a shower, have a coffee, make a phone call. You have another cigarette, and you walk up and down Canal Street. Then you come back and work. You step back, you look at the work, and you let it go. It's creating its own reality. This is true in Katmandu, Tokyo, and East New York.

You are not passive, but your hands are not a blur on the ladder. You are moving, traveling, working, looking; you are taking steps, but you are not a machine. You are free. You are in the world, like a seed in the ground. You are emphatically in the world, but your life is creating its own reality.

You cannot simulate breathing in and out. Either you're in the street or the street is in you. You know you have arrived when you can smell the semen and the bleach, and they become indistinguishable from each other. This is my memory of 42nd Street and Shinjuku Station, but also of Ankor Wat, where you can smell the cold stone, the incense and the innocent girls. You feel happy but unsatisfied which makes you go on.

But there is no life in the temple if there is no life in the condos of Tribeca or the white cubes of Chelsea. Canal Street is prime for a museum show but the white cube would kill the street and its smell. There is a difference between being in Laos and arriving there. In one of Livingston's African expeditions, the guides at a certain point stopped walking. When asked why, they replied that they were waiting for their souls to catch up with them.

The white cubes with their half-educated people, the museum directors with their institutional chips on their

shoulders, the critics with their pre-paid souls, the dealers with no eyes, ears, or sense, and the well-behaved artists who do only what they are told, describe the world of assimilation. You are trying to join, to become part of something, to arrive at a certain place, and enter. This is the Donald Trump world — the world of the greatest address and the architecture that accompanies it is of little or no consequence.

But if you are an artist, you have probably built nothing, and, in a sense, nothing can be built. If you are lucky, you or your work are merely seed in the ground, and you are nothing but a step in the wrong direction. There is assimilation and then there is assimilation. If you are lucky, you are the least of the devil's children, you are the dirt under the smallest god's fingernails; you are the shit, the merde, that confirms and makes fertile the nothingness beneath each step you take. If you want to be assimilated, then let your publishers and editors rewrite your books; let the dealers add here and there a little color to your work; and take an apartment in Donald Trump's latest greatest address in the world. You have earned it.

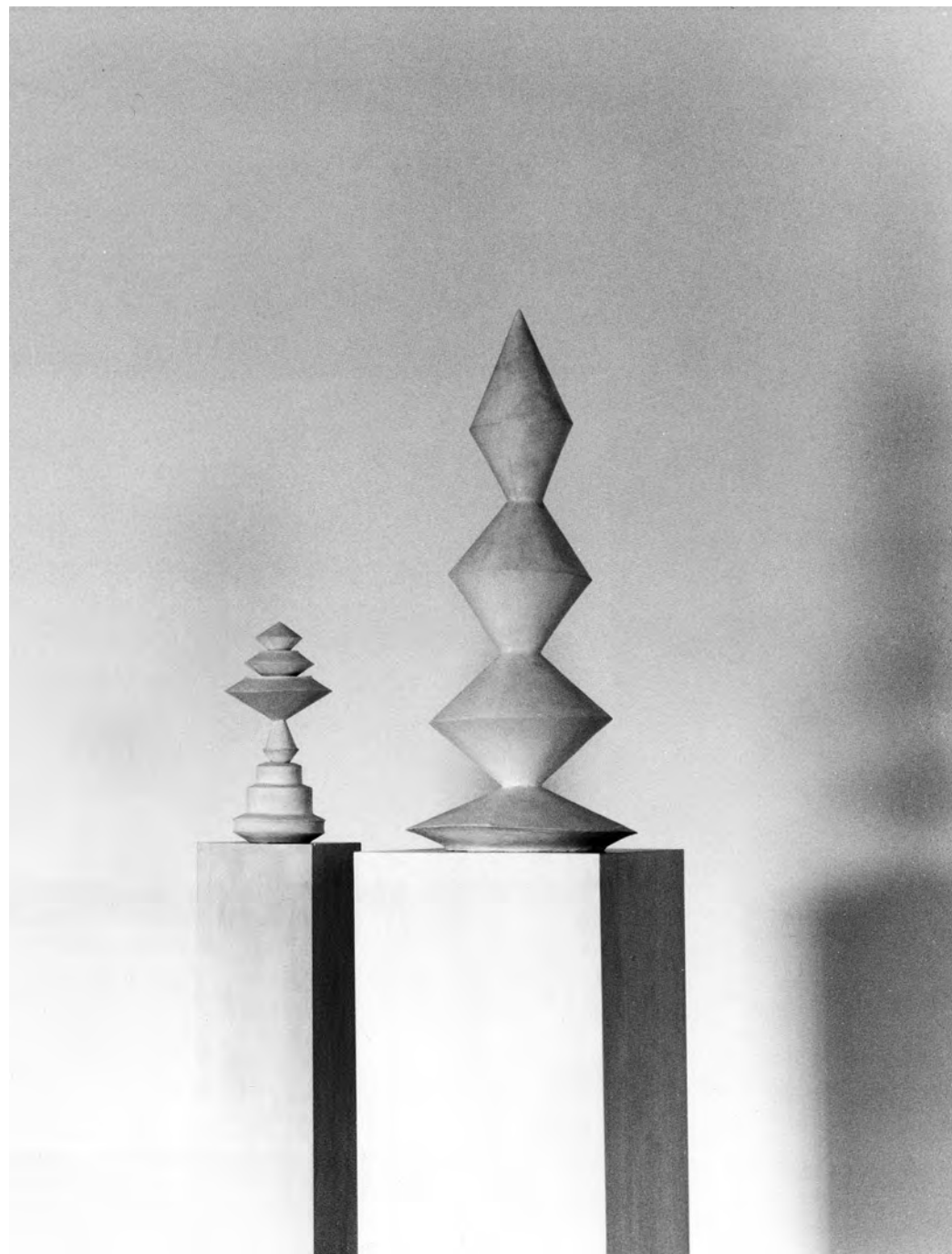
But if you live in a world of no addresses and travel in unknown lanes where no one else has gone before, and where morality is not determined by stop and go signs, you might never arrive and greatness will be defined in other ways. Indeed, you might fail but always on a higher level. In this world, there are no strategies, no lunches or dinners with the right people, no a priori rules. Your imagination is either fertile with life and death, with the trembling experience of living and dying, or you are existing next to life like a marker by the side of the road.

If you want to look at art, go out and buy a chair. You put it at a respectful distance in front of the work, and sit down. The work, like the world, might come to you. If it doesn't, you might return the next day, and look again. If, in the end, it does not, then it was not meant for you.

Art is a quest for a decent life.

EXCERPTS FROM

THE UNDIFFERENTIATED TRUTH OF ART



ABRAHAM DAVID CHRISTIAN, *Two Sculptures*, left 1985, right 1984. Paper and paint, dimensions unavailable. Gatodo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

I am sitting in what has turned out to be my favorite saloon in Madrid, the Cerveceria Alemaña, on Plaza Santa Ana, still trying to figure out why the topic of fertility and consciousness should have struck such a deep chord in me. Walking down certain streets — Cuesta Claudio Moyano or Carreta de San Jeronimo — or sitting at certain other saloons, cafés and terraces — Gijón or El Espejo on the paseo de Recoletos or the nondescript one on the triangle just off the Paseo del Prado, where Calle de las Huertes meets Calle de Moratín — might have dug a hole in my soul just as deeply. Until you actually try to anticipate the more sensate physiological impulses and where they might lead, you might assume that it is harder to track the so-called more attenuated or insensate refinements of consciousness. But perhaps it is actually consciousness that is the interloper upon the song of the place or plaza or the petit or grand socco. Or is it the juice of the fruit which we are drinking at this very table that is intervening upon the liquid stone of consciousness? [...]

Before this digression I was wondering out loud why the topic about which I had been asked to write had affected me so much. Perhaps it was because the terms ‘fertility’ and ‘consciousness’ seemed so diametrically opposed to each other. Or maybe it was because they had simply grown apart — like old lovers sick from familiarity or the ancient body/mind division in philosophy which had been preceded by more unified models in pre-Classical Western thought or in non-Western philosophies, in general. Or perhaps it was because I was just about to leave for Spain and Morocco when I received the invitation to write about the relation between the two, and New York (where I have lived most of my life) seemed so steeped in consciousness (albeit raw or one-dimensional) whereas Spain and Morocco seemed so immediately to suggest themselves (perhaps stereotypically) as symbols of fertility. Maybe it appeared this way to me because I had never been to either place, and therefore, logically enough, they seemed so obviously fertile or fecund with possibilities. But I think it went deeper than merely not knowing what to expect, and it was for this reason that my mind leapfrogged this way and that, almost out of control with excitement, as if it (and I) were about to go on some kind of metaphysical as well as literal journey.

I think for all of these reasons the terms — especially fertility — appealed to me more as metaphors than as binding categories, that might apply more to a cultural state than to an explicitly philosophical, sexual or biological condition.

And it certainly seemed to have no mythic appeal or reality. As a people, as a civilization, we seem quite cut off from any practical or working myths of fertility. And consciousness, as a state of being, which seemed to be faring slightly better, also appeared to be retreating — into self-consciousness, not only in relation to the individual but collectively.[...]

For now we are ‘only’ dealing with the reflexive axis of cultural representation. The unreflexive axis would speak to the abstract or more allegorical valences of metaphor as it applies to culture and where it does not necessarily submit to its anecdotal teleologies. New York, especially a certain part of the art-world part of it, had clearly become, at least to me, a rampant symbol of infertility and a *cul de sac* of consciousness. For example, the senseless argument against painting — as a privileged, male, white, bourgeois institution — has been a major passive-aggressive factor throughout the 1990’s. Despite the cyclical nature of this phenomenon, embodying a possible alternating myth or current of sterility and infertility (sic), we should never overlook the ideological specificity of this negation nor the passion that fuels its vengeance. To me it seemed that painting was in actuality anything but dead — especially if you looked at the work of Michel Frère, Julian Trigo, Alessandro Twombly, Bill Rice and Malcolm Morley — and that it was certain other developments which smacked of a combination of novelty and nostalgia, i.e., fashion, and therefore, death. If it was dead in the hands of some of its more mediocre practitioners (here there is not enough space to mention all the names, and so I will mention none), then it deserved to die, and this death should merely confirm its dysgenic nature — that the life of painting, and of culture in general, like life itself, is not permanent but provisional.

While painting has not generally flourished in the 1990’s, it has always seemed to me, at least in my experience and in relation to the artists who have and who continue to interest me, to be a veritable fertility goddess, luxuriating like a heathen especially during its so-called periods of death. Its death throes always seem to produce a particularly exquisite outcome. It is only when this goddess (whose name is also photography and sculpture and all forms of art, known and unknown) comes up against consciousness, or a certain kind of consciousness — which is overly self-reflexive, ironic, and cynical — that it becomes recalcitrant or withdraws into itself, and appears to die. As such, it may even appear to become ‘conceptual,’ but not in the same way that the best abstract painting of the 1980’s — executed by Ross Bleckner,



Photo: Richard Milazzo

The steps to the Café Marocain (frequented and painted by Henri Matisse) in the medina just below the gate to the Casbah. Tangier, Morocco, July 1997.

Peter Halley, Jonathan Lasker, Philip Taaffe, and Annette Lemieux — became conceptual. It is only in a psychically deracinated sense in which concept is cut off from its more expressive, subliminal roots that painting can now take refuge in the conceptual domain. Such self-conscious painting (and art) verges upon being academic — mannered to a fault. It is not merely studied in appearance, it is desiccated in substance.

And it is not from intimidation — either in relation to its history or the world or its sociological moment — that painting suffers but from sheer inertia. How many stimulants can she take, how many tricks can she perform, before we have prostituted this goddess to our own lack of imagination and to our own inability to enter, to experience the world? Is it any wonder that she looks like a surgically-abandoned body-part forced into a dysfunctional prosthetic device or a half-dead insect pinned and wriggling against the wall. The hyper-plasticity of painting, which makes her look today like

the test-tube child of Pop Art, merely masks its inflexibility, its inability to break through the double constraints of vacuous gestures or expressionisms on the one hand, and over-intellectualized, mannered conceptualisms on the other. Painting has internalized its manacles — or rather, her manicurist.

But the signs that have replaced the marks in abstract painting today, the conceptual conceits and academic strategies that have replaced the deep conceptions and indigenous psychical processes of art, the ideological impulse that has usurped the ideational component, cannot compete with the superficial, public persona of Pop Art. They are ineffective and ultimately counterproductive. No matter how self-conscious and plastic (strategic or shrewd) the painting, no matter how dominant or categorical the installation, no matter how ‘conceptual’ (subtle or repressed) the ‘object’ becomes, you cannot deny what is monstrous (no matter how sublimated) in the psyche or in the heart, in the human



Photo: Richard Milazzo

Portal to the Casbah, Tangier, Morocco, July 1997.

being, and therefore, in art. You cannot defend against what is overwhelming in it or in the Sublime (no matter how abstract); you cannot suppress its realities (no matter how dream-like); you cannot repress its dreams (not matter how unrealistic); you cannot contradict its truths (no matter how relative); you cannot forever go against the facts as well as the visions and desires of the imagination. You cannot theorize about the “Body” in art in relation to gender politics and so-called correct ideologies and still hope not to turn what is inexplicable in erotic life into a morgue of dissociated body-parts that stimulate neither pleasure nor pain. Unaroused, painting (but also sculpture and photography) — the sleek, seductive muck of pigment and oil, of her ‘body’ — languishes.

Painting is a fertility rite — no matter how deviant, disconsolate or ludicrous — which contains within itself the right to overwhelm the death-of-painting argument. When deprived of the profound truth of its inchoate soul, art dies. And it can only live when death consummates its *ethos*. When it masks or

hides from shame, its groundlessness, its darker realities, its void, when it is not alert to the seemingly formless exchange between life and death, it cannot thrive. Art becomes a hollow excuse for sociology, politics, and ego, and ideas and ideology become a substitute for art. Art is a fertility rite — no matter how promiscuous, derelict or absurd — which contains within its deepest shadows the overarching right to overwhelm the death-of-art argument. Look at the sculpture as well as the paintings of Michel Frère and Alessandro Twombly; look at the photographs of Elliot Schwartz; look at the sculptures of Abraham David Christian and Saint Clair Cemin; look at the paintings of an artist as young as Julian Trigo or as masterful as Malcolm Morley; look at Sal Scarpitta’s sleds and cars hurling themselves head-first into the void, into the unknown; look at the *bababad* series of paintings by the quintessential non-painter and consummate Classic conceptualist, William Anastasi, and see if the corpse of art has a chance against the undifferentiated truth of art.

If there is, as I have attempted to delineate above, a prevailing consciousness that would bring to bear upon the fertility ‘rite’ of painting and art, even as merely an hypothesis or a cultural metaphor, the exorcism of negation, then how else might consciousness intervene upon this rite or drive — what other gift might it bear? Perhaps a consciousness that does not bring differentiation to existence as its exclusive domain. I believe there is a consciousness — observable, in this instance, through the current material vectors of art — that does not restrict itself to the process of differentiation. What it receives or brings to existence, or to the very hypostatic muck of existence, namely painting, and art in general, is wider than this process, or, in some way, eludes it. The negation is sublated — it becomes liquid with possibilities, and finally dissolves. Within the horizon of these possibilities, the parameters of painting and art become fertile again, or undifferentiated. Precisely because the sender of the message is necessarily connected or influenced by the receiver — even if the ‘receivership’ is pigment and oil, or earth and water — the parameters of consciousness themselves become undifferentiated, unhinged by the groundlessness which subtends the steps we take, the meta-process we utilize to differentiate the world. The process of differentiation is not immune, indeed, it is subject to the groundlessness of consciousness which it must itself negotiate as a receiver as well as a sender of messages.

Fertility, in this context, means simply that consciousness has not been allowed to overdetermine the very conditions of life that prompt it into being — no matter how threatening they become. I do not understand how we can be interested in any art form at this time that is not devoted to finding a way to articulate or actualize these threats. I am personally only interested in what threatens consciousness, and nothing can threaten consciousness more than life itself. I am interested in forms of art that can overwhelm consciousness, that have found a way to let life overwhelm the subject as well as the object — with its possibilities and voids, its risks and dangers, its sense of smell as well as its sense of sight, its raw, soiled or shattered mirrors, its groundlessness, its unreflexive myths, its monsters. This art would undifferentiate the world as we know it.

But because such forms (of art and life) cannot overthrow consciousness without overthrowing a vital part of itself, it must sublate consciousness as such. An undifferentiated consciousness must withstand ever-increasing acceptable quotients of law and order in society much as it must defend against the cynicism and irony that fuel self-reflexivity in art. Such a consciousness must undercut a consciousness that becomes infatuated with the nuances of its own mirror image. In art, at this very moment, this means that we must break the spell of the self-reflexive mirror of history, particularly in abstract painting. Specifically, we must disrupt, if not totally negate, the formulae that are currently being utilized to reduce the seminal figure/ground relationship in abstraction to a dispassionate, technological exchange of signs. The

self-conscious differentiation of figure and ground has been pushed (like a drug) to such an extreme, and the marks and gestures of abstract painting have been reduced to such an extent, that both the vocabulary and syntax of abstract painting have now reached the critical mass of an absolute vacuum. The technology of abstract painting vies for the inhumane plasticity of self-reflexive signs and vacuous and historical systems on the one hand and the plastic inhumanity of a pure consciousness devoid of experience on the other. They constitute two sides of the same flag posted in the flatlands of an aesthetic absolute that can seemingly accommodate the ecstasy of a formal consciousness but cannot vitally engage the voids of form which subtend that consciousness. Painting is posting and flying the flag of this super-consciousness in a territory that had previously been a source for the exploration of the heights and depths of humanity and has now become merely a resource to comfortably recapitulate its own history. Transcendental experience has become the coinage of a super-differentiated consciousness.

This is quite a letdown. And the ‘return,’ as we have seen in the 1990’s, on the interface between kitsch and abstraction in the name of a ‘low’ aesthetic has merely bred a kind of formal plastic void — a hole within a hole that feeds upon its own cocoon of self-perpetuating cynical differentiations. The irony of ironic abstraction is that when it truly tests the limits of its own differential — as it does, let us say, in the works of Saint Clair Cemin and Vik Muniz — it must threaten to cross a hypothetical unreflexive threshold of representation, and therefore it winds up transcending (against its own will) as well as subverting the culture it intends to spoof. But this scenario has almost become an aberration in the art world. What obtains now as a rule is submission to a dominant reflexive model of consciousness that thrives upon the plastic differentiations of abstract figure/ground representations or signic givens.

If there is any way out of this super-differentiated painting, super-conscious art, and super-plastic experience, then this blur or smeared vector must lie at the limits of consciousness and experience — if not at the very limits of conscious experience and at the meta-limits that guard the experience of consciousness itself. These are the regions of humanity, world, and nature that Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, and Louise Bourgeois took as vital zones of exploration in their work. Together the thresholds that lie at the boundaries of such vectors describe the undifferentiation of consciousness as such and the most fertile limits of an undifferentiated consciousness *per se*.

The excerpts above are from an essay on Spain and Morocco, a work in progress. The author lives and works in New York City.

Michel Frère makes sculpture from oil paint and Vik Muniz sometimes incorporates materials such as chocolate and dirt into the photographic process.



COLETTE, *Conceptual Mother*, 1981. Colette (as Justine) in the “Beautiful Dreamer” costume. Modified photo 72” x 48”.
Courtesy of Stefan Stux Gallery

Jessica Higgins

FERTILITY

We are always producing even in decomposition. Life is fertility. Our bodies will produce and change even in our small deaths. To work with this life force and bear it consciously would benefit everyone.

As a society we struggle with our individual and group fertility. As we evolve the earth collaborates in our production. The way we choose to do this and the intentions behind it are reflected back to us.

We're not aware of the ways we spend our energy to produce our lives. As a society we find ourselves up against a wall of unknown fertility because of our lack of conscious energy. This energy penetrates into everything.

Souls are always being born and brought into fullness. As the new millennium draws closer, we can sense this fertility we're all a part of. In connecting to each other, we empower and produce something much bigger than ourselves.

We grow in destructive and constructive ways. Energy is present in everything both in myth and science; it's the form that changes. There is not life without fertility. How we expend our energy is what creates our lives. Fertility is what gives life its art. Within fertility there are endless mysteries to be discovered. Fertility is the force that dances between life and death.



JESSICA HIGGINS, *Braille*, 1996. Performance at Anthology Film Archive

Jessica Higgins

BRAILLE



[Action:]

Lights out, light candle, play cassette, eat an apple using a knife.

[Sound:]

If you want to know what this performance is about, its meaning can be found in the hand of the person to your right.

If you want to know why the meaning is found there, you will need to offer that person your right hand.

Please lift your right hand now and offer it to the person to your right... Now lift your left hand and find the hand of the person next to you... Next, grasp hands both to the right and to the left.

This piece is performed in the hand of the person to your right. If you are unable to make this connection, please grasp your own right hand with your left hand.

Notice that hands fit together like inverted gloves, the four fingers and thumb fit as comfortably as an old shoe. One hand is larger and the fingers grow from the palm passing by the knuckles to the tips where the nails grow.

How short are the fingernails? Do they remind you of a wild creature living in the border regions between jungle and dessert who now taps character strings on a plastic keyboard decorated with an apple?

Does the surface of the palm suggest survey maps which foretell of old factories embedded in pavement built by hands shifting matter in time?

Is this hand dressed or is it naked like an ancient animal exposed and trapped in the canyon of a soul. Its howl echoing from the point of a metal tower?

Observe the webbing between each finger, the curved membrane a vestigial sign of a moment when hands formed in fluid began reshaping continents of soil. Feel the fingerprints embedded in the skin the rhythm of the hand leaving prints on the shores of many beaches, patterns reclaimed and flattened by the maternal sea.

The bones — indestructible truth — this xray is the original bible from which all tongues have expressed their personal handwritings and collective rites. The history these hands hold clasped in their paws imply the future patterns of construction and change — matter in motion — the eventual loss of pinky and the gain of telepathy.

There are many worlds in our hands. "Listen."

Blow out candle, lights up, say "Thank you."

Joslin Stevens

PEACHES

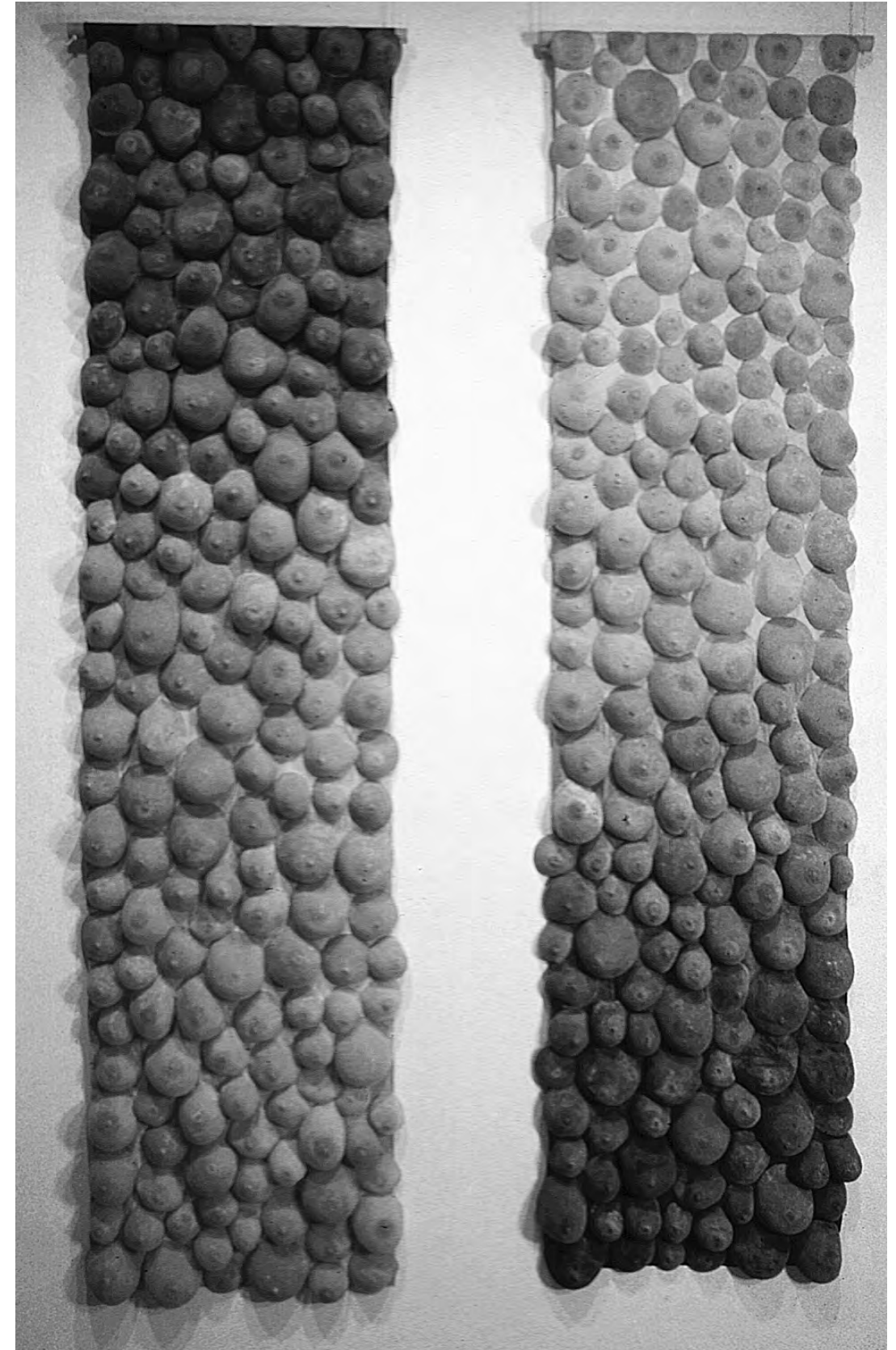
I was born and raised in the lush hill of the Pennsylvania Bible Belt where silence and repression are passed down, generation to generation, like guarded family jewels. As an undergraduate, I attended a conservative Christian college and immersed myself in evangelicalism while painting mutilated faces on splintered pieces of luan.

What I retain from my history is the illusion of opposites blurred by the appearance of wholeness. I see the infertility of soul and the fertility of soil and find that they balance one another. What I respond to is not the fundamentalism of my past or my disdain for it, but the sweet nectar of fresh peaches plucked fresh and warm from the tree. The sources of my work are visceral. I feel the ideas and the work deep inside my body and this is where I begin.

I explore the interior spaces of a woman's body. When I carve a dildo, I am acutely aware of how it might feel inside of me or my partner or another woman. I choose beautiful and sensuous woods and alabasters because a woman's body is a sanctuary, yoni, sacred space through which one can access the soul.

Bodies intrigue me. I have never found even one pair of nipples to be alike. I make molds of nipples, breasts, vulvas and tongues. I expose parts of the body that are often unseen, not for shock value but more for anti-shock value. I cast them in beautiful skin-like latex creating patterns and grids.

I envision a room, a womb of breasts filled with warm, pinkish light; the body of a woman or many women symbolically representative of the universe. I find enlightenment in the hidden. In the body I find the sacred. In the work, I embrace the feminine nature of God.



JOSLIN STEVENS, *Ambrosia I and II*, 1998. Latex, pigment and cloth, 26" x 104" x 6"



JOHN ROLOFF, *Slump (Orchard) II*, 1998. B&W photographs, 14' x 18', installed Lance Fung Gallery 1998

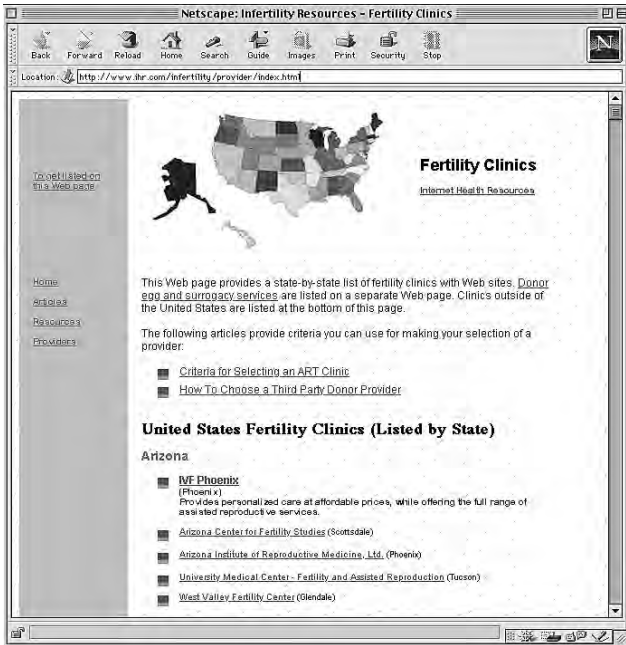
Berta Sichel

HOW TO TAKE A BABY HOME

Are we talking about fertility or infertility? Lately, these two words that still have opposite meanings in the dictionary have become interchangeable. Their embryos must have been mutually transferred. On the Internet and in the media, a cloned co-word was created (*in*)fertility. Combined their power increases con-

veying not only their original and antagonistic meanings but also their mutual definition. In reality, it is irrelevant if web sites are entitled “Infertility Resources” or “Fertility Weekly” or if an article in the *New York Times* reads “Infertile Foreign: See Opportunity in US,” you know that they are talking about the same stuff: How to take home a baby.

(continued on pg. 22)



INTERNET HEALTH RESOURCES July 16, 1998

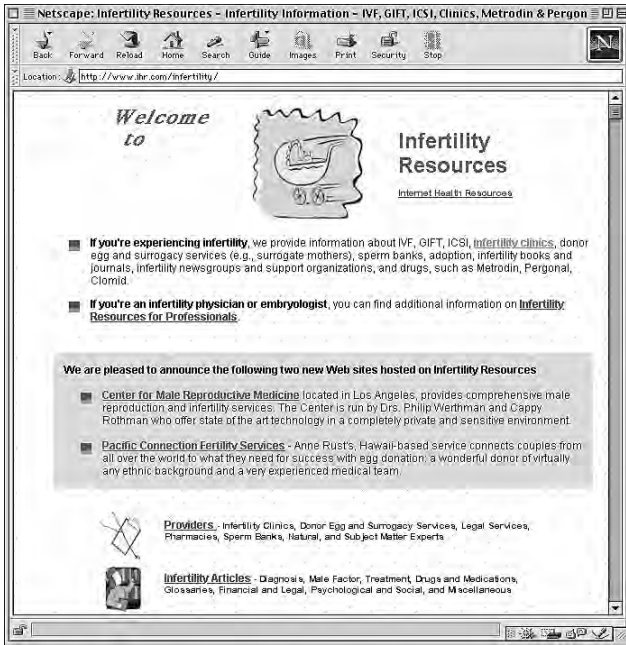


Photo: Kyle Brooks

ELENA DEL RIVERO, *Letter to the Mother*, 1994. Collage on paper, 9" x 6.5"

(continued from pg. 20)

We all know the value of eggs, sperm, uterus and assisted reproductive technologies have in our commodity-saturated times. Eager consumers, the *NY Times* tells us, are willing to pay more than \$100 for a semen sample and as much as \$5,000 for eggs. Over the last decade, according to the American Society of Reproductive Medicine, more than 6,000 women in the United States gave birth in this fashion. A contemporary branch of science, Reproductive Medicine, is concerned with abnormal pregnancy, fertilization, sperm protein and retrieval, ovulation induction, genetics and reproductive technologies such as: in vitro fertilization, embryo transfer and artificial insemination.

Some of the would-be parents want babies with an American look... The most wanted male donor: is 6 feet tall, with a medium build, brown or blonde hair, blue or green eyes and dimples.
(*NY Times*, 1/4/98)

The United States, in fact, has become a Mecca for infertile foreigners who want donated sperm or eggs so they can try to have children. Women from Austria, Japan and Switzerland come here for eggs. Single women and infertile couples from Taiwan and Guatemala order frozen American sperm. the United States has almost 300 in-fertility clinics. only one, Cryobank of California, sends sperm abroad, 500 vials annually. The company says that many clients are Americans living elsewhere, but others like the “wide variety of sperm donors” in their catalog. Cryobank has shipped frozen American sperm to 45 countries. Is this the beginning of a new race?

Epilogue: Cloning

Who is the eccentric physicist named Seed who wants to start a clinic in Chicago to clone humans?
(*Newsweek*, 1/19/98)

For now it is forbidden, but the technology exists. Probably in need of refinement, but Dolly, the first clone of an adult mammal, is living happily. It is true that Dolly was a difficult pregnancy. They tried 277 times until Dolly was finally produced. But, as everything in life, the second time around will be much easier.

The most recent successful cloning experience occurred last fall at the University of Hawaii. In their lab, Culumina, a black mouse was born on October 3rd. The scientists there developed a quick and easy way to clone. It is so fast they say they don't know exactly how it works. This summer, using this high-speed method (in 24 hours the genes are already differentiated) and after fully implanting by this mass-production cloning procedure, 50 mice were cloned at once. Just think of someone baking a tray full of chocolate chip cookies. These toffee-colored mice that became the darling pets of the media for a short-lived time are clones of the clones; copies of the copies, of the copies. This tells us that the genetic photocopy machine was invented.

This new breed not only makes everything much easier, but provides a long sought after confirmation that Dolly was a genuine clone and not a fluke, as it was thought when she was born. According to scientists, the cloned mice may become a new model for research on embryology and genetics, which will bring a bright future for the business of (in)fertility.

From Dolly to Culumina — are people next? Ask *Newsweek*. This setting does not provide a background for a good science fiction book, because the transparency of the media has left no room for mystery. The spectacle of science will continue to produce new questions that will require new rules, laws and new ways of dealing with past prejudices.

Can you imagine going to Kinkos to make a live photocopy of the creature of your predilection and even having the option of a little genetic manipulation?



TERESA SERRANO *Goddess of Fertility*, 1993. Steel and tibü glass cloth, 1.8m



VULTO, *Akhnuchik*, 1998. Smoked silk, smoked cotton, smoked fish

SECONDARY NOTES ON FERTILITY

Fertility is about beginnings, or changes that appear to be beginnings, and though I'm very interested in the whole idea, I'm finding it hard to know where to begin. Perhaps that is because fertility is also a topic full of circles, and circles do not have beginnings.

Maybe I should start with what I wanted to end with: the ecstatic presence of sculptor Elena Berriolo's monumental brocade standing orbs, which I call her Big Mamas. The material sings like a choir and refers to heaven, the form presses into space like pregnancy and refers to earth. Their simplicity echoes the absolute, their size makes us children again. Like us, they are skin and skeleton, and filled with air. Their persona is equal parts planet and mother, non-specific fertility goddesses, standing wombs without faces or limbs. To be near them is a comfort, and a discovery. The power they hold is a revelation of some cosmic law, like the devastating elegance of $E=MC^2$. What is the revelation? What is the law?

I will venture a guess, based on what their impact has been on me, not only in their presence, but after, in thought. I felt I recognized these sculptures almost like beings. I mean to say, quietly, that I almost felt they remembered me, too. It was easy to ascribe consciousness to them. Perhaps this is part of what they reveal. They spoke in their own language of the difficult — perhaps the most difficult of all to accept — mystical truth that everything is conscious. That, one could say, the creator is equally present in every particle of creation. No more so in the invisible than the visible, in the spirit than the body, in heaven than on earth.

And no more so in the serious than the humorous. They can also make you laugh, and say, 'Big Mama is watching you.' And She is.

Have I strayed from the topic of fertility? How can you stray on the surface of a sphere? How can you ever be lost, when every inch of the space you traverse is home?

Home, these objects brought me home! How can this be? That sense of recognition, that the artist had plucked something out of my psyche and placed it before my eyes,



ELENA BERRIOLO, *Easy Chair*, 1994. Textile, wood and plexiglass
73" x 27" x 30"

and asked, "Have you ever seen this before?" This is the moment when the artist — or we could just say the art — penetrates the rational barrier, slides in and gains access to one's consciousness. And then? A moment of ecstasy. Of knowing, as Krishnamurti put it, 'The observer is the observed.' The mirror faces a mirror, and the infinite multiplying begins.

The cosmic law Berriolo's sculptures rest on, it seems to me, is what, in Sanskrit, is called, 'Mahamudra', 'Maha' meaning Great, and 'Mudra' meaning symbol. It says when you recognize the nature of mind, you will see its unlimited

potentiality represented in all phenomena. Thus the world becomes the great symbol of your real nature. They say it is easy to glimpse this state but hard to sustain it. This is my measure of greatness in art. How many milliseconds of practice it gives me. I know great unfoldings can be triggered by very small things. Like a single spermatozoa.

So where do I need to return to, now that I've begun with what was going to be the end? Ah, yes, I remember: the sticky part. The three requirements for a fertile environment. As a performer, I can vouch for these being just as relevant in an audience as in a field, a body, or a soul. The first is fluidity, rather than rigidity. Water as a means of transmission whether it's moving minerals into the root of a sprouting bean or experience into the consciousness of a watching human. The second is warmth, be it compassion and open heartedness, or 98.6° F. in the mother's body; without it, growth stops. The third is the yes, the green light, the desire to find out what one is, even if it means changing beyond recognition. The maiden dies to become the mother. The caterpillar dies to become the butterfly. The creation dies to become the creator. To be ready for what art or any other part of the Great Symbol has to show us, then, we could say we should stay wet, warm, and willing. Or, more politely, open-minded, compassionate, and positive.

BALLOONING

The ballooning of the body. The ripening of the tree about to bear fruit. The American female body so obsessed with implants. An implicit understanding, misguided in practice, that to enlarge the breasts from within, with salt water even, sewn into little sacs, would produce an image of fertility, of wealth, of resources, of milk.

The pregnant belly. Women want to rub your belly like it's a genie's lamp. "Ooh are you carrying beautifully," one woman said to me in my 8th month. At least she let me go in front of her in line for the bathroom.

And then the breasts. It's a wonder people don't feel they have the right to touch them too. The pregnant woman's breasts swell over nine months and then are ready for some serious sucking action by the time the baby is born. I personally was amazed by my breasts! I came to know them jointly as the Breastaraunt, which was, of course, Open 24 hours a day, All you can eat. Nursing a child is a lovely thing to be able to do. It's also fun to try to offend people who find the whole thing a little too hippie-ish.

Another thing about these breasts is that they are like computers. They figure out how much they need to produce and at what time. It's not the kind of thing you'd want to test too rigorously, but very close to the minute, it seems to me, they are programmable to produce the perfect portion.

God forbid you should try to sneak off to the movies when the little one is ready for a snack, because your breasts and the little one are synchronized! Too bad for you. An alarm will go off and your breasts will stretch tight as drums, hard as cement, yearning for the little snapper to suck them empty and slack and relieved again. Home with babysitter and bottle, your baby will laugh at you for thinking you could go out without her. Nice try Mom. Next time just take me with you. Love, cutie pie.

Backtracking a little bit, there are some women who can wear heels when they are pregnant. They dine out constantly, looking sleek, toned, sporty. They have the finest maternity wear, in microfibers and black-on-black stripes. These people are well-educated and know how to apply make-up. There are some who can be found at the gym looking unhappy, maniacally running on treadmills at all hours of the day like rats in a test maze. They are running, apparently, from a big piece of fat that wants to come and kill them.

There are others who can be found in the pregnant ladies' yoga class, squatting on the floor like fat grasshoppers in preparation for the big day. I used to go to yoga class at 11 a.m. and then race as fast as I could to the pizza place around the corner for lunch. When the class ran late due to extra innings of chanting or visualizing one's beautiful unborn child, I was usually seeing my beautiful unborn child next to a hot slice with extra cheese and garlic.

Fertility was always the subject of my art. Fertility, that is, of my brain, in that I could always come up with ideas, lots and lots of them. My identity as an artist was so important to me. And an artist without ideas is just a — regular person. Insisting on my identity as an artist now, though it got me through my twenties so well, is kind of beside the point. Funny how things change. Having a baby, wrenching open the cervix to bring a new person into the world, is like pushing through a wall of fire. I was seared. On the other side I was changed. And there crying wet newborn cries was our baby girl. Life started for her when she was born, as it did for all of us in the same way at our own births. Sounding Darwinian for a moment, I wouldn't rule out that my art was giving me a message all these years: do like the birds and the beasts and reproduce yourself.

My life has changed. If I'm lucky, I fit my art into this life, somewhere around the edges of sleep. Sometimes I do wish I were the guy and some chick could have my babies for me while I pursued Art with the proper focus and insanity we all know it needs. Lots of days go by where I don't work as an artist. I hardly even think as an artist.

I do think mothers walk around feeling like idiots a lot of the time. It's all the love and affection that makes for a woozy, unintellectual way to go through the day. Though motherhood is an extremely focused and emotionally alert state of mind, sometimes the giggling and tickling just get to you and you feel you are not quite the serious person you ought to be.

One result of fertility then is bringing the childlike along with the child into adulthood, or what was really just a mental idea of adulthood anyway. The result of all this is a very great quantity of life soup. You may attempt to drink from this all-purpose soup, to nourish yourself with it, to bathe in it, of course, to drown in it, perhaps to float in it.



EVA MANTELL, *balloon series*, 1996-8. Photo collage. 5 1/4" x 7 1/2"

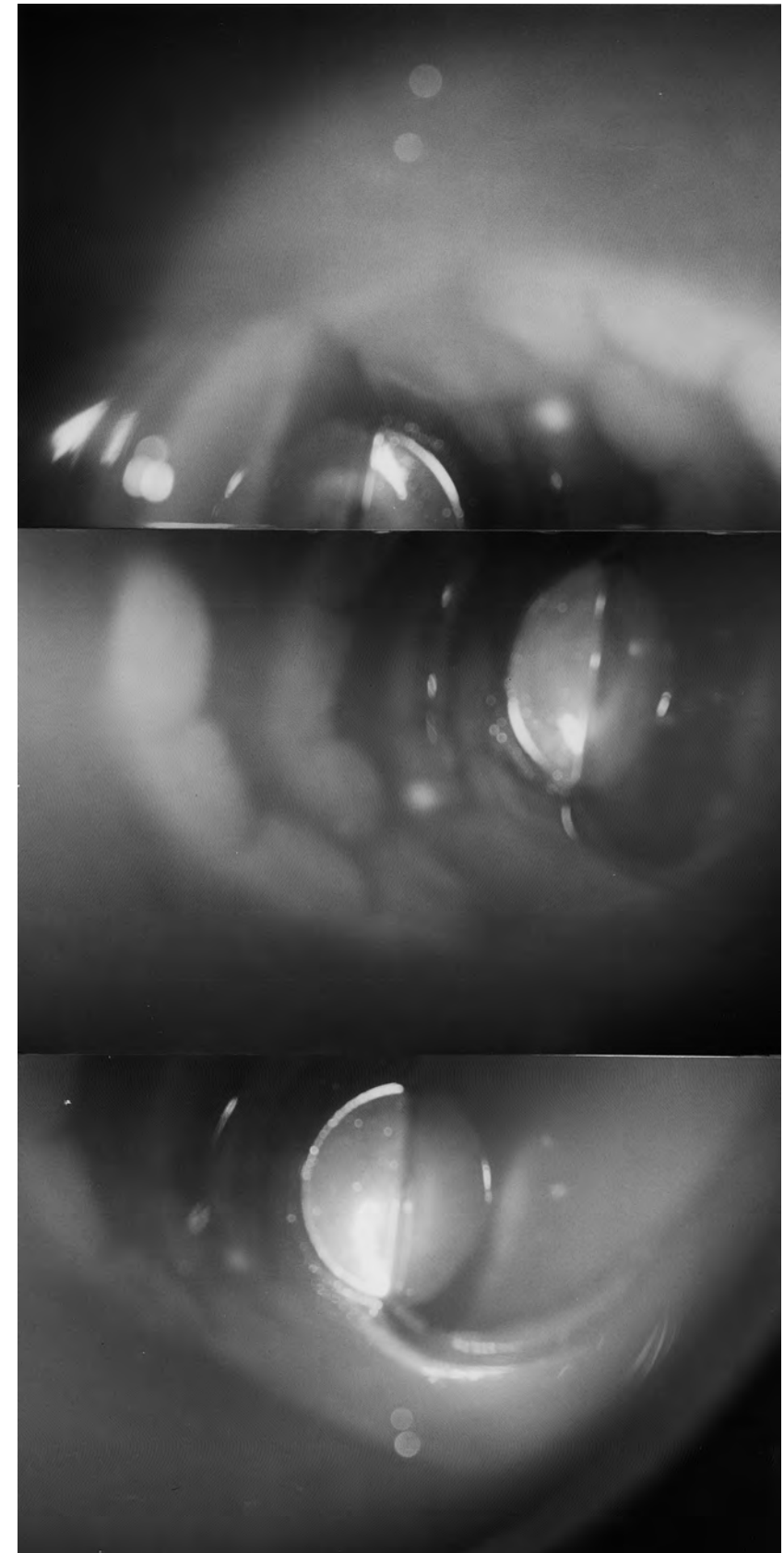
EVA MANTELL, *balloon series*, 1996-8. Photo collage, 5 1/2" x 6"

Senga Nengudi

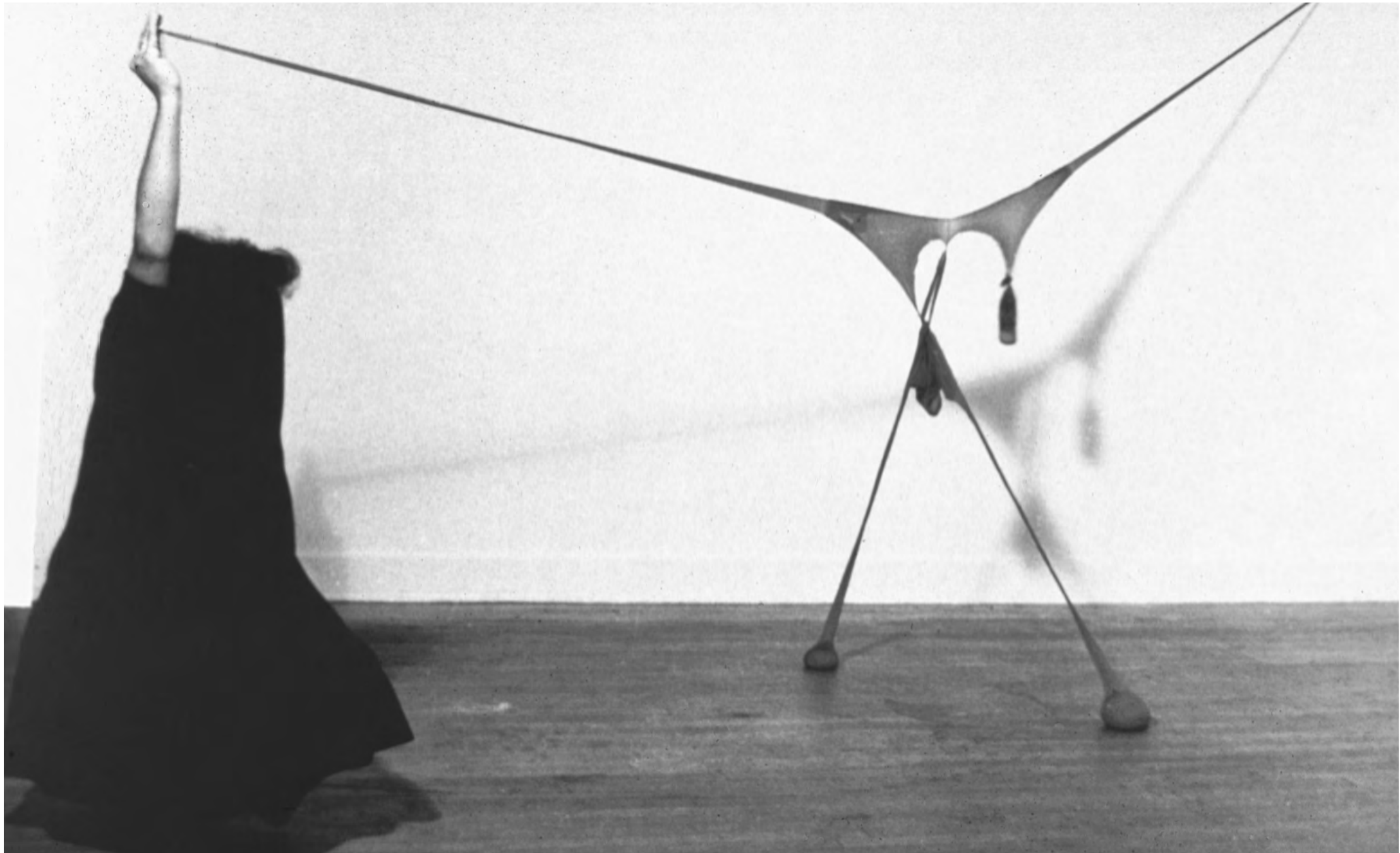
THOSE DOING RITUAL
HAVE THE ASSURANCE
OF TIME. INDIVIDUAL
ACTS OF ART DO NOT
HAVE TO DEPEND ON
PERMANENCE OF THE
MATERIALS ONLY THE
PERMANENCE OF THE
SOUL.

(WORLD/SOUL WITHOUT
IN)

I CREATE A PEACE/
PIECE
I WIPE IT OUT WITH
MY HANDS, MY FEET,
MY BODY. IT REMAINS
IN THE FABRIC OF
TIME THREADING
THROUGH THE
MILLENNIUMS
REMEMBERED AND
FORGOTTEN A THOUSAND
TIMES OVER. YET
THERE. SEEN-NOT
SEEN-EXPERIENCED AS
PART OF THE AIR.



SENGA NENGUDI, *Formulating Oz*, 1998. Fun (disposable) camera



SENGA NENGUDI, *Studio Performance with RSVP* 1976. Slauson Boulevard, L.A. (later known as Studio Z). Nylon mesh (pantyhose), sand, dried rose petals, and full length wool skirt, 15' x 6' x 3'



SENGA NENGUDI, *R.S.V.P. III*, winter 1976. Pantyhose, sand & pillow, 24" x 22" x 7"

I wanted to be a hidden image. I pulled the skirt over my head and squatted so that all that was visible was the top of my head and one arm and hand which I used to manipulate the nylon mesh sculpture in a restrictive manner. This performance dealt with the manipulative passive/aggressive nature of some relationships. I used the nylon mesh (pantyhose) as a conceptual manifestation of the changes a body/form can endure and how much elasticity is left after the pulling and tension cease. The body can only stand so much push and pull until it gives way, never to resume its original shape. After giving birth to my own son, I thought of black wet-nurses suckling child after child — their own as well as those of others, until their breasts rested on their knees, their energies drained.

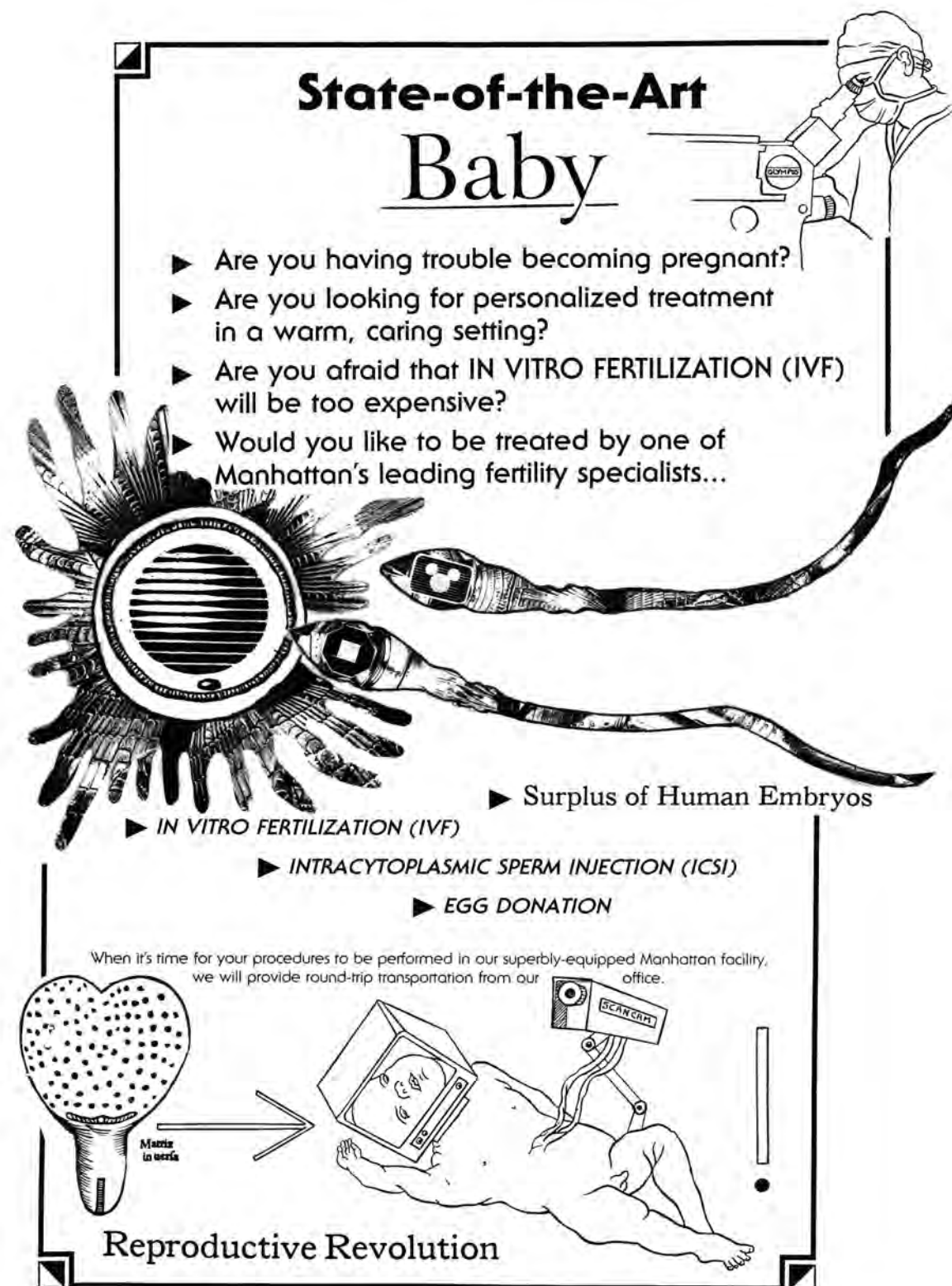
My works are abstracted reflections of used bodies — visual images that serve my aesthetic decisions as well as my ideas.

EMBRYOWORLD:

METAFERTILITY AND RESISTANT SOMATICS



FAITH WILDING, *Embryoworld*, 1997. Installation



FAITH WILDING, *Detourned Advertisement for Fertility Clinic*, 1998

Believing is Seeing

Early Western depictions of the human reproductive organs already demonstrate fixed ideas of gender in their renderings of the body. The earliest extant manuscript illustration of the womb shows it as an upside down jar or vessel — echoing the *New Testament* description of Mary as the pure vessel into which God poured his divine semiological seed to create Christ's mortal flesh. The image of the womb as vessel or container also illustrates the classical Aristotelian notion that the woman contributes only the passive receptacle — the uterine space — for the nourishment of man's generative seed. According to this reproductive model, women have no souls, no divinity or eternal parts, they are pure(ly) matter.

Yet without this spatial matter — this mattered space — new life could not come into being. Thus attention had to be paid to this mother matter, this cytoplasm; its territory, qualities, and characteristics had to be charted, mapped, visualized, named, explained, and ultimately conquered. As Sander Gilman and others have pointed out, the history of early medical illustrations of the human reproductive system, reflects attitudes and beliefs about male and female roles in conception and generation, and ultimately creates ideologies of gender which are still in place in contemporary reproductive technologies today.

Reproduction was a fraught business in an uncertain world full of deadly diseases and plagues, famines, and bloody wars. It became a central concern in the growing body of scientific and medical knowledge. During the Enlightenment, tools invented for the scanning of the heavens and cosmic events were adapted to visualizing the interior of the body, and no part of the body came under the scrutiny of the microscope more closely than did the generative cells and organs. For the first time far more "accurate" diagrams of both male and female reproductive systems could be made. While most of the gender myths lingered on, it was hard to ignore the microscopic evidence of egg and sperm cells, and a more rationalized, enlightened narrative of the mechanisms of reproduction was formulated.

Perfectibility: The Making of RepTech Babies

With the discovery of DNA and the genetic code, reproductive representations take another giant step. Ever more complex imaging and visualization technologies make new conception technologies (technologically assisted reproduction — RepTech) possible. Medical diagrams now show eggs being harvested from superstimulated ovaries; sperm suctioned from ductless testicles; the carefully surveilled In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) of fit eggs with fit sperm in petri dishes. This imagery creates a new teleology — that of the eugenic



FAITH WILDING, *Body and Soul*, 1997. Two chemistry vessels, red and green ink and silk on shelf

perfectibility of humans. The magical new technologies make microsurgery and direct intervention in the reproductive processes possible.

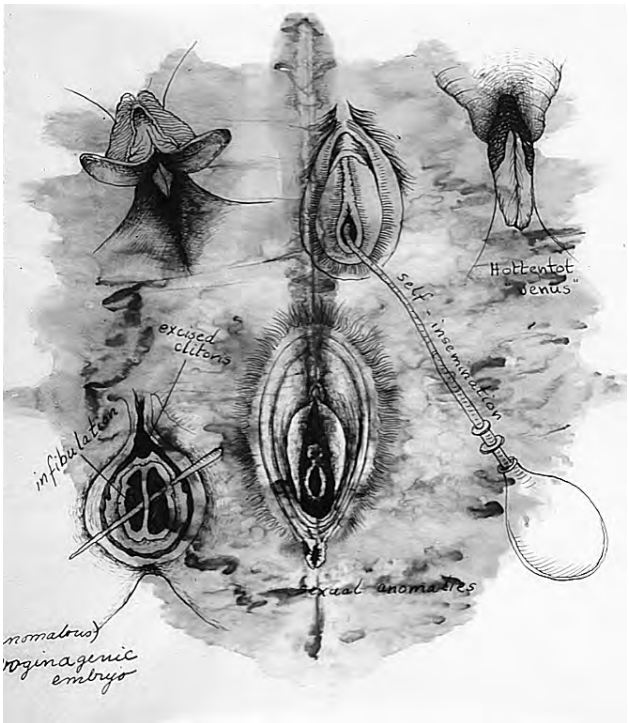
The representational language of “assisted reproduction” follows a humanist Christian model which masks the hard scientific fact. Potential donors of eggs and sperm are urged in advertisements to consider giving “the gift of life.” This hyperbolic language hides the fact that the “gift of life” does not come cheaply. For example, one cycle of GIFT or ZIFT treatment can cost as much as \$25,000 and couples usually have to undergo several cycles before conception actually occurs. In this model you can have as much “new life” as you can pay for, and “life” becomes a technologically perfectible consumer product. This industry is largely fueled by the desire for a blood tie between parents and offspring: Some part of parental matter, be it egg cell, sperm cell, or hosting uterus, must be present in the making of the new baby. Clearly this seemingly “natural” desire is reinforced, and taken advantage of, by the new biotechnologies, and it is reproduced by them over and over again in each magical baby born to infertile parents

While RepTech would appear to be a perfect post-modern example of a liberating interface of bodies and machines, it is in fact regressive in its practices and narratives. Prospective parents who need egg or sperm donation are encouraged to be extremely selective and choose donors who are most like themselves, and who have desirable looks, habits, and family histories. Profiles of donors to one of New York’s most reputable sperm banks list body type, ethnicity, age, race, eye, hair and skin color, and occupation. Such a pedigree list implies that all these characteristics can be passed to offspring genetically, without distinguishing between those which are genetically governed and those which are socially and culturally constructed. Only the “best possible” eggs and sperms ever get the chance to be used. Women are routinely implanted with multiple embryos, and given the option to “selectively reduce” multiple conceptions. Selective reduction is touted as humane and ethically justifiable because it gives the remaining embryo(s) the best possible chance at “success.” Parents make the choice which embryos to terminate after only four weeks’ gestation, usually solely on the basis of sex and testable genetic characteristics.

Metafertility and Regeneration

Postmodern babies are made, not born. A ideal individual for RepTech would be a replicator who does not need male and female germ cells but uses a generic genetic code which can be endlessly reproduced without mutations, and which lasts for many generations so that the product is predictable and reliable — cloning would give an even more reliable result.

Parthenogenesis (asexual reproduction) could be a creative metaphor for regeneration which stands outside of Christian salvation history and transcends the male/female reproductive binary. Meta-parthenogenesis is not about reproducing whole, biological bodies; instead it offers a model of autonomous ecstasy, of productive self-regeneration. It could be seen as a moment of intense self-love and self-duplication — the beloved self in amorous communion with itself. Ecstatic experience extends human biology — it is excessive and useless; it surpasses the instrumental world of production and reproduction by manifesting itself in the transubstantiation of matter as a kind of resistant somatics. This excessiveness counters the instrumentality of perfect repetitive function which produces sameness, in order to allow for multiplicity, randomness, mutation, possibility. Perhaps the excess of nature ensures that random chance will create radically new possibilities — even those which defy survival and rationality. And perhaps the convulsive beauty of matter’s excess is that quality which we call “fertility.”



FAITH WILDING, *Genital Mutation Embryo*, 1997. Watercolor and ink on vellum, 8” x 8”

Embryoworld

“Embryoworld”* a three part installation, takes the new reproductive and flesh biotechnologies discussed above as its subject matter. In this work I use various visual strategies to probe the deeper cultural and spiritual meanings inherent in the creation of new flesh, and the re-generation of the body in the cybercosmos. The cultural, political, and social implications of the new flesh-technologies are vast, and artists have only just begun to explore them. I am interested in looking at how these new technologies are represented (imaged) in current scientific, medical, and popular (media) languages, and how these contemporary representations connect to historical representations — for example, in anatomical, medical, and scientific illustrations and diagrams; medieval cosmology pictures; alchemical images, and the like. In the installation, the thirty-two “embryos” (watercolor and ink on vellum) arranged in cell-like groupings, combine this history of representation into ink drawings superimposed on Rorschach prints. A “pedigree wall” consists of framed, certificate-like detourned drawings and commentary made on actual donor profiles and sperm donor fitness tests obtained from fertility clinics. The “Body and Soul” sculpture was based on a common cemetery image of urns with drapery flowing from them which signifies the soul leaving the



FAITH WILDING, *Selective Reduction Embryo*, 1997. Watercolor and ink on vellum, 8” x 8”

body. Two chemistry flasks, one filled with red ink the other with green ink, rest on a shelf. A diaphanous white cloth connects them, each end dipped into one of the flasks. Over time, the ink seeps slowly into the cloth through capillary action, creating unpredictable organic stains which turns the cloth into a beautiful stain-painting — a metaphorical image of fertility and life’s constant movement.

*A version of “Embryoworld” was exhibited in the Terra Firma show, curated by Terry Gips, The Art Gallery, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 January-March, 1997.



REYNOLDS, *Puki Temptress*, 1995. Watercolor, 12"x9"



REYNOLDS, *Ancestral Puki*, 1997. Watercolor, 12" x 9"

POST-APOCALYPSE EXPERIENCE

Today it seems we are living in a latex culture. It is a super-culture, which is over-protective, anti-conception in conception, and unconnected in vital ways. The message is wrapped in such a way that between the sender and receiver there is no physical connection. The whole history of technology has been dedicated to creating the finest materials that would allow this copulation to occur without any physical contact. Even the television screen is becoming flatter and flatter or ‘thinner’ and thinner like a condom over the world so that it does not have to be affected by the world or you can now dive into the ocean in a latex suit and not be touched by the water at all. You can now interact with the world but never meet anyone in it and remain perfectly alone, and you may do all of this from the most intimate, inner sanctum of your bedroom. Given the role that fashion now plays in the art world and in culture in general, the proverbial Armani suit has become like still another condom or protective skin over the art. We do not want under any circumstances to penetrate beneath the surface of things. Virtual reality has taken hold with a vengeance.

Art is under the glove of the museum or recognized gallery, and especially the famous collector. Before the guarantee was quality; now it is that the work be innocuous or safe. You have to be inoculated against art as well as life. Even, or rather especially, where you have art about the body, you have the body separated from itself. Like Duchamp’s unmarried machines. And where you have the process of fertilization, as in the Large Glass, it is mechanized. The Large Glass is a condom. It celebrates the mechanization of fertilization — quite in advance of our age. Because it is frozen under glass, it generates nothing but a waiting — a time gap between pleasure and proliferation.

In Deleuze you have the body without organs, fragmented, devoid of any sentiment or feeling, and subject only to sensation. The body is not only separated from pleasure, but the parts themselves have been subdivided into other parts, reduced to a zero-degree infinity. This makes me think of a picture that depicts an old Chinese torture which divides the body into a few thousand parts without bringing the victim death. He is left just enough alertness to remain alive. He is

not allowed to faint. He must remain sufficiently sentient to experience the loss of his parts, and he must be conscious enough to experience the remains he has become. Today we are in the process of doing the same thing to our own bodies and the ‘Body’ of art.

If the art of the 1980’s and its whole support system functioned like the AIDS virus attacking the ‘Body,’ the whole immunology system, the very spirit of art, then what happened to art in the 1990’s functioned like a simulated cure. The virus, of course, is still running rampant, but we have convinced ourselves that the desiccated symbolic ‘body’ of art which has barely survived into the 1990’s — with its moralistic chip on its shoulder, with its mortuary aesthetics, and with its reactionary, pseudo-left-wing politics — was a kind of just punishment for the excesses and sins of the 1980’s. But what you have to remember is that the ‘Body’ that the 1980’s art world had found was already remaindered. It was already a body with no organs, which had endured the frozen trauma of Viet Nam and the cold war, and which was in denial, isolated, wrapped in the condom-promises of a new period of false prosperity and the imminent new age of the computer revolution.

The 1980’s were ripe for the Reagan Era — where everything was seemingly possible, all body parts and roles were interchangeable: the stock market investor became a collector, the collector became a dealer, the museums became like galleries, the artist with their careers became portfolio investors, and the critics became glorified ad men. It is not that today we are paying a price for all of this but that we are merely continuing the legacy of a plastic culture — of a falsely conscious, falsely living, falsely dying world. If we have turned in our existential bodies, it is in order to don the latest and most fashionable of prosthetic devices: the end-of-the-millennium nostalgia for a ‘Body’ which was never ours to begin with — a post-apocalypse experience.

Practically speaking, what we are left with today, what we have been left with since the beginning of the cold war, is the Body with no parts or the parts with no body — with a desire but no locution or location for this desire. We have desire without an object. We have a theory, a virtuality, a hypothesis for art, equipped with an ideology, but no application, no reality or deep reality, no art. We have a body in the shadows that is indistinguishable from the cold contours of a corpse. As a culture, as a civilization, we have become infer-

tile. The consummation of our desires are disallowed, unless their very ‘object’ becomes the thwarting of that desire. The very preconception of desire has become a danger which must be eliminated, negated, dislocated or incorporated through a socially sanctioned ‘Body’ — the corporation. Corporate America has effected the institutionalization of the Body through the conversion or transformation of its ‘substance’ into privileged information — the mere transmission of this information among the few for the sake of the few constitutes its new substance, its virtual substance.

Microsoft and Exxon really produce no product. They vehiculate [sic] or fuel the aforementioned transformations and transmissions. They stimulate desires but fulfill no needs. They instigate a perpetual overflowing of static relations which generates mergers but nothing beyond the space which they cover voraciously and superficially on the surface of things. The geographical boundaries are all smeared — which creates a kind of gray or grayish world where all sexual and ethnic differences dissolve into each other. What is analytical or divisive in the corporate Body ultimately pushes toward an all-consuming synthetic whole. The Greeks were analytical without losing the intensity of the parts; but now the intensity is not valued, only the effort to reach a zero-degree is prized, where all differences are made to disappear, where all the parts become indistinguishable one from the other, and the whole has the latex flexibility to consume every other whole which is smaller than itself.

At the beginning of the 20th century, it is Duchamp, recognizing the schism between Art and Science originally set in motion during the Renaissance, who identifies and articulates the problem best. He is the most important reflection of this dynamic struggle between the Old and New chaoses, between the split and this perverse resynthesizing of these polar terms. Perhaps it is for this reason that much of Duchamp looks like a prosthetic device or machine. His appropriation of the Mona Lisa, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, in collaboration with Picabia, however, does not have that look. It has

the self-compromised look of something that was originally done in the spirit of a rationalization, but which in the end constitutes itself as the perfect conjunction of scientific machinery and metaphysical desire, mechanical ‘reproduction’ and erotic superfluence. Duchamp’s Mona Lisa expresses the ultimate ambiguity, the one between male and female, which combines science and art! The mustache is the corrupting link. It makes the absolute relative. It generally prostitutes the absolutes of sciences, and specifically shows that the only way to relate to the absolute is through sacrilege. That is, the only way to create this link between science and art, irony and faith, is through this negative religion of sacrilege.

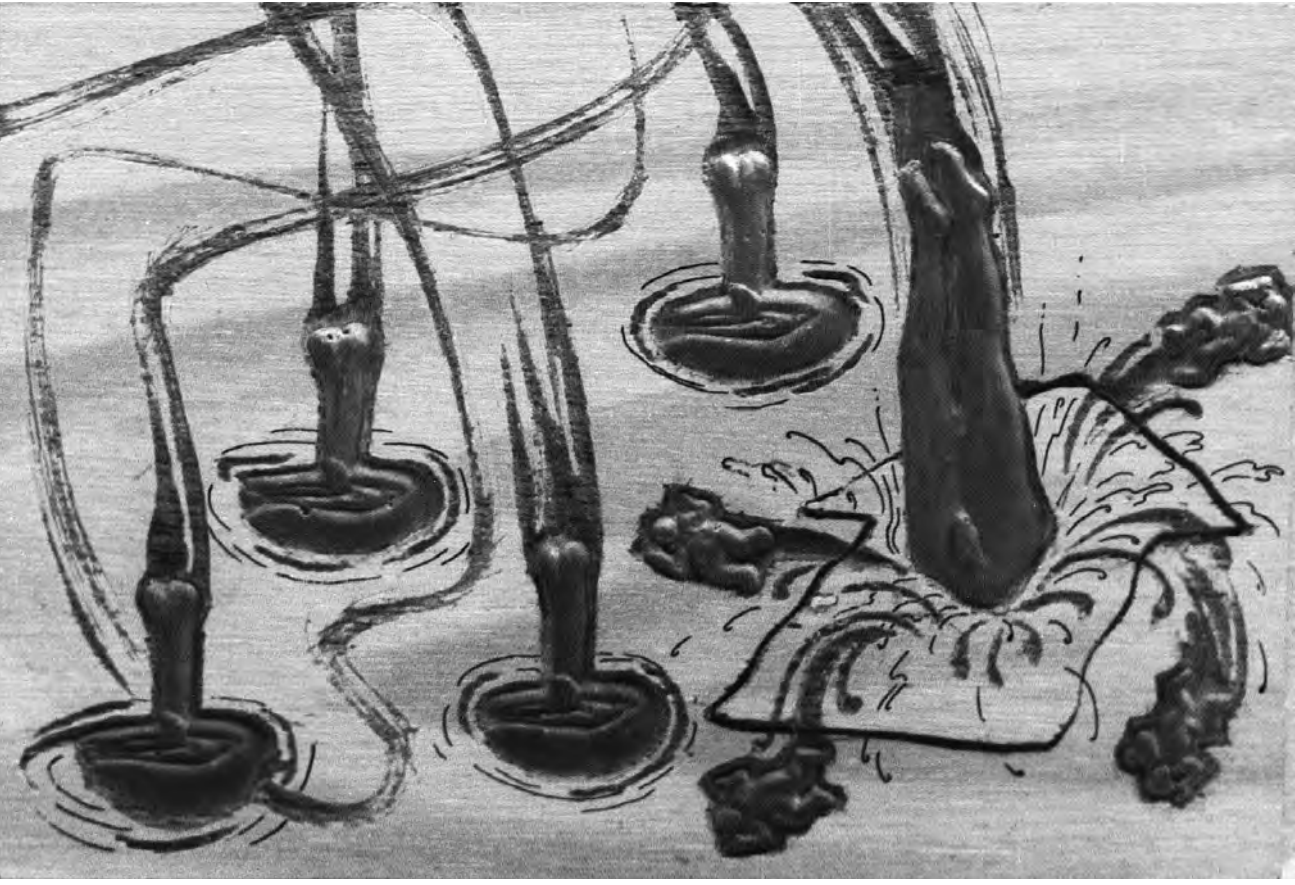
Today we still have the problem of relating to the absolute. The only difference is that the relative term must be made safe and protective toward the ‘object’ in question. The relative term must function like a sheet of latex thrown over the dictating terms of the absolute. It must ultimately extend absolutism to it. The consequences must be accounted for before hand; indeed, they must become part of the plan. They must become incorporated. If the minatour and the bull are to copulate, they must do so discreetly and in such a way as to offend no one — least of all, the museum, the dealer, the collector and the critic. The absolute must be held harmless against the relative.

We are trying to dream, but we want to avoid all the monsters.

We are, more precisely, in a post-chaotic moment that allows us to have an infinite number of copulations with no consequences. And without the technology of latex, you have death. Literally and metaphorically. Now you can have a show of paintings without any risk, and even show them in a conceptual gallery, because the paintings would be conceptualized at a distance, as if they were protected from themselves, from the artist and from the world by latex. The irony is that it is within the context of this post-chaotic moment that the most antiseptic, invisible terrorisms are being born. Even latex cannot protect us — our bodies or our minds — from the new post-chaotic frontiers of biological terrorism. Why should the art of our times exhibit any more courage against this fate than our incorporated souls. Why should our monsters dream beyond our latex souls?



BARBARA STORK, *Fertility Requires Shelter*, 1998. Ink and Bondo on paneling, Diptych 4.75" x 7"



BARBARA STORK, *Fertility Requires Shelter*, 1998. Ink and Bondo on paneling, Diptych 4.75" x 7"

Shelley Marlow

EXCERPT FROM
SWANN IN LOVE AGAIN
THE LESBIAN ARABIAN NIGHTS

Another night, Swann was humming the song “Billyjo was seen dropping something off the Talahachi Bridge” and downstairs. Rose was drinking from a bottle of beer when she saw Swann and gingerly said Hello Sailor!

Swann replied: Hullo. How’d you know I’ve been writing about this photo of a sailor and a male prostitute. What’s your plans tonight?

Rose: I have to go to the Mark Twain’s cave for a secret meeting.

Swann: I hope to spend time with you soon.

Rose: Well Hun, you could come with me. It’s a bit of a challenge. Can you swim underwater in the dark alright?

Swann: Swim? Cool. I’ll change my clothes!

Rose smiled and said out loud to no one in particular: Let’s go visit the Hindu statue.

They drove to the Mark Twain Cave entrance, which looked closed and all dark.

Another car arrived and a group got out. Everyone was introduced, they all seemed friendly and stable to Swann.

Everyone got their maglites out as they walked through the giftshop to the cave. Like a funhouse at a carnival, or a NY 80’s theme disco with names such as Area, the cave was lit up with colored lights, accentuating the hand sculpted look of the walls. Swann noticed How fake the walls were, with small brass plaques that said: Mark Twain played house here or hide and seek or had tea parties with Becky here. Swann visiting the cave this second time realized it was a fictional construct made just for tourism. The tour guide brought everyone to a door disguised as a cave wall. They walked through the door to the real cave. The real cave has slanted floors and unperceptively high ceilings which has a disorienting effect . The group was led along a skinny one foot edge. Swann clutched the wall to her left as to her right the drop was 100 feet.

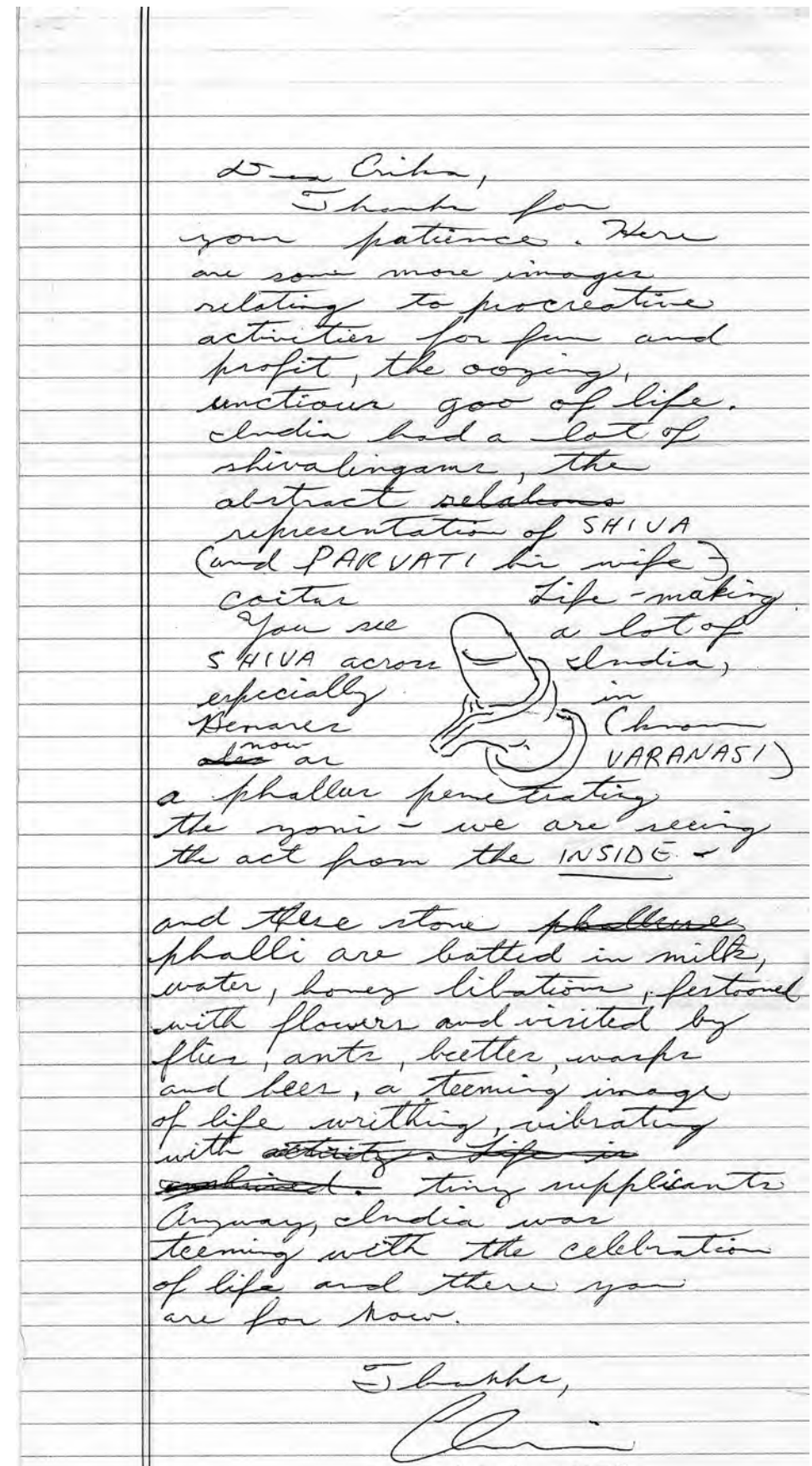
Inside the cave they stayed behind the flashlight to find their way in the dark to the innermost pool of water. They reached the water’s edge. Swann was slightly terrified in the utterly black darkness, in order to feel a little better she shut her eyes. Rose put her hand in Swann’s. Swann clutched Rose’s hand until her fear subsided. The group sat by the water’s edge and got undressed down to their underwear. Modesty was not an issue with such darkness. Everyone was kind of in a hush, with the knowledge that they must remain focused in order to do the next step safely.

The tour guide with the flashlight had a rope that was attached to the light. She would take the first group through the water and then swim back. The first group slid under the water with the guide at the tail shining the light forward. Swann waited to go in the second group with Rose. It seemed like a long time before the guide came back. Swann started to feel anxious again, but tried to relax as the guide said, “You have to swim under water for all together a minute. Here’s the hole in the cavewall that you have to travel through.”

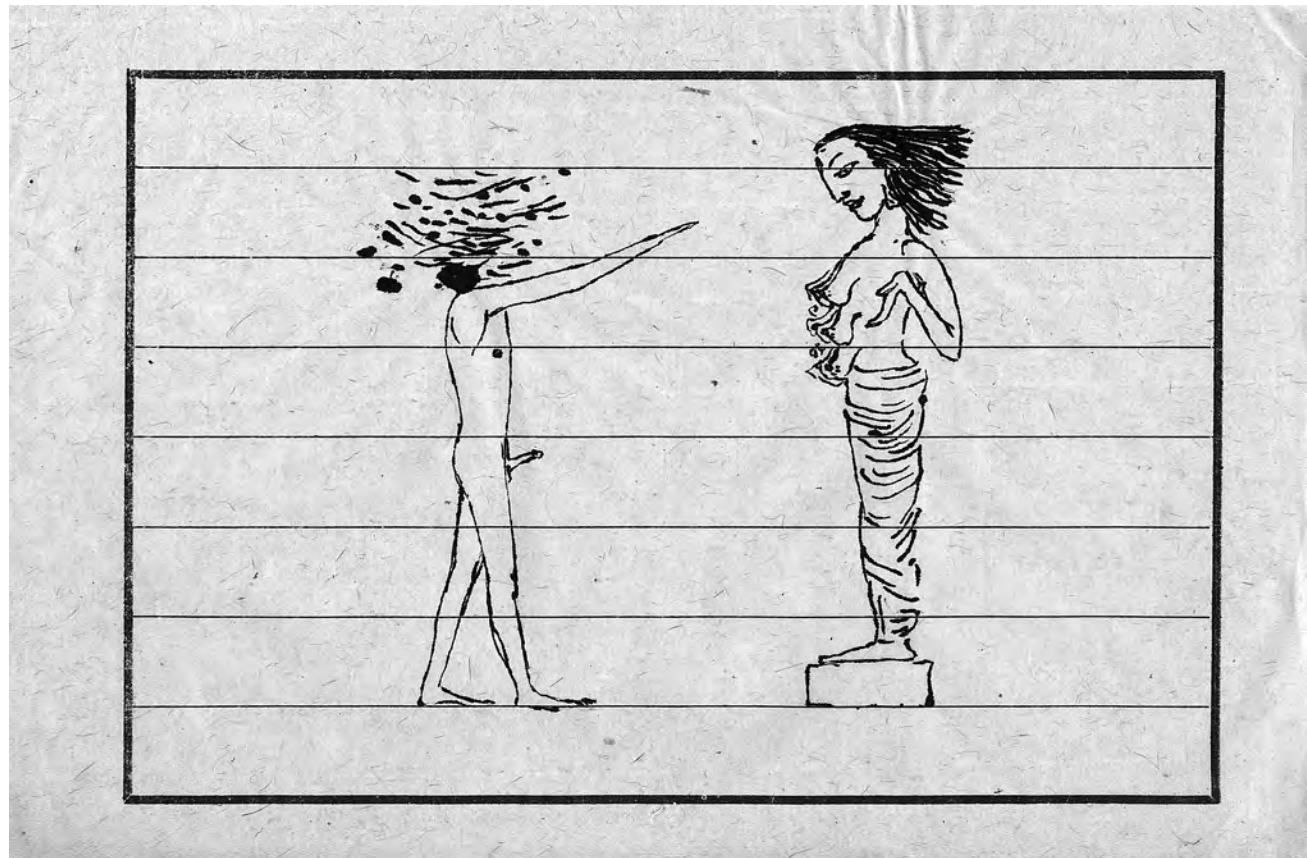
The flashlight was cast inside the water. The illuminated hole looked about the size of a basketball and about a hundred feet down and away from the water’s edge. The water was lit up like a grey post sunset sky.

The last four people put on the goggles that the last group sent back with the guide. The guide said to each one, “Are you ready?” Everyone said, “Yes.” They figured out an order to swim through the hole in. The guide would swim first and flash the light on the hole then the others would climb through. Swann dove into the water which was surprisingly warm. She felt great pushing through the water until she remembered she had to open her eyes. Suddenly she felt terror and claustrophobia in the dark water, she had to turn her head slightly to see the others climbing through the hole now backlit. She glided to that spot, being the last one to exit. The tour guide took her hand as they swam up to the water’s surface. Swann made a large sound when she opened her mouth to the warm air inside the cave chamber. The others called from the ground to guide them back. The flashlight revealed the roof of the cave was three stories high, a curvy roof with spikes floating down thirty feet that were suspended above their heads.

Here is the statue! The guide pointed the special underwater flashlight at a face made of stone, then showed the rest of the statue which was of a primitive seated goddess Nepalese in style and the size of a small movie screen. The group approached the statue. Swann could hardly believe it was there in the Mark Twain caves and how old was it? The statue had a live water spring flowing right from between her legs, sacred water. Rose cupped the water in her hands to drink. Swann just put her face in the little spring to drink, in between the statue’s stone thighs that were smooth and cool to her touch. Everyone said a prayer for each swallow of water, what they wanted for themselves and prayers for others. Swann thought of her Aunt Violet, the lawyer who was struggling with her own mental health.



CHRIS HAMMERLEIN Letter, 1998



CHRIS HAMMERLEIN *Untitled*, 1998. Ink and crayon on paper, 7" x 11"

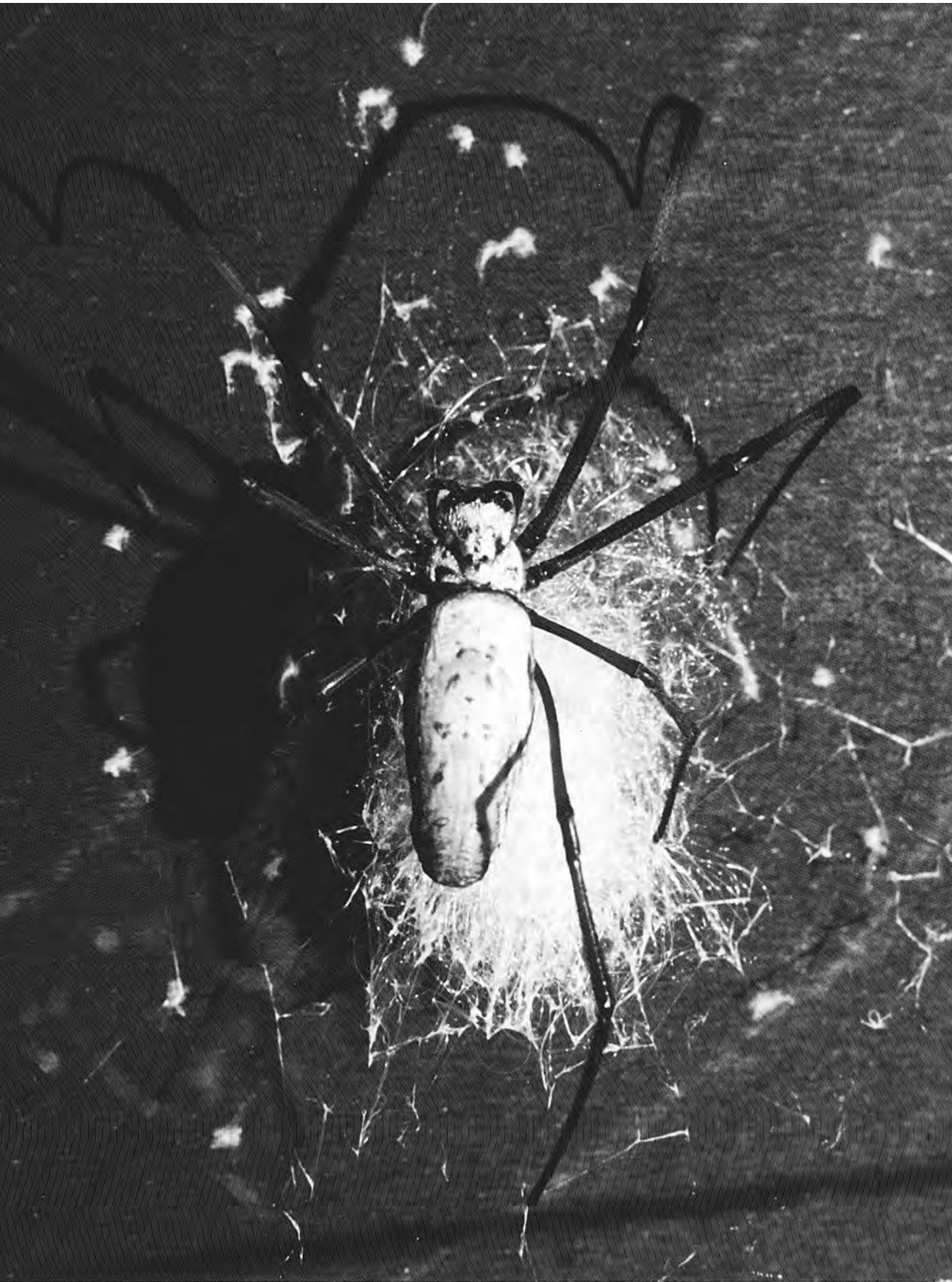


CHRIS HAMMERLEIN, *Untitled*, 1998. Ink and crayon on paper, 7" x 9 3/4"



JOHN HATFIELD, *Aphrodisiacs (Still Lifes)*, 1997. Published by Otis Editions, Etched glass, wax, string, aluminum bracket, 12 aphrodisiacs, 8” x 30” x 4”, Edition of 24.

APHRODISIAC	DIRECTIONS AND NOTES:
Vitamin E	Take one tablet daily
Chartruese	Pour one shot of liquor per person or as needed until desired effect is achieved Warning: Large quantities may lead to reverse effects
Zinc	500mg. daily enhances sexual hormone growth
Pornography	Read alone or with partner
Love Potion	1 oz. each of crushed cinnamon and rose petals, 1 tsp. powdered cloves, 2 lbs. sugar, 1 qt. red wine. Combine all ingredients in a clay pot, cover for three days in cool dark place. Strain mixture through nightshirt or bedding of the one you desire.
Sea horse	Place 3 cups boiling water, reduce heat and simmer for 1 hr., remove sea horse and serve as soup
Saffron	Use as spice especially for delicate or subtle dishes
Damiana leaves	Steep in hot water, serve as tea. Has regulatory effect on the pituitary gland. Warning: May be psychoactive
Orris Root	One pinch in beverage
Genseng root	Slice thinly and eat raw
Money	Known to be most effective in large amounts
Chocolate	Can be eaten plain or heated as a sauce. Contains phenylethylamine, a chemical present in the brain during arousal Warning: May cause acne and/or hyperactivity



LARS CHELLBERG, *Nephlia Web #3 (detail) Dolores Constructing Egg Sac*, 1998. Wood, string, nephlia madagascarus, spider silk, 22” x 30” x 4”

FERTILITY: THE MOMENT OF BECOMING

Feelings awakened in the experience of art become part of it.
Ideas awakened in the experience of art become incarnate in it.

In thinking about fertility and its relationship to my own work, I thought first of its relationship to my studio practice. What follows here are some ideas from notes made in my journal and extracts of related ideas from a text by Hånak Lövgren in his book entitled “Eisenstein’s Labrynth. Aspects of a Cinematic Synthesis of the Arts,” Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm 1996, which I read concurrent with writing this essay.

Otto Rank considered the moment of conception as the “supreme symbol” and the first trauma when contradictory principles of male and female are united into a new being. He saw creative activity as an attempt to achieve immortality in the face of the finitude of the second trauma, that of birth. For Rank, to be born means to understand the connection between birth and death: mythology, religion and art represent non-neurotic efforts to alleviate the anxiety of the severed relationship. Within these forms Rank detected the desire to reconnect with the womb and our preconscious state.

Sergei Eisenstein studied the writings of Otto Rank. His fascination with prenatal existence and birth led him to identify the subconscious desire to return to the womb as the state of “Nirvana.”* He saw “pathos,” for him found in all true works of art, a moment when all the elements are in a state of ecstasy, as an example of this return. He believed this state to be a function of specific spatial features related to the embryonic state and to the “moment of illumination” when creation occurs. He became fascinated with womb symbols as structure and symbol, studying the design of the Gothic Cathedral, labyrinths, the detective genre and the formulas of the escape artist Harry Houdini. For him the labyrinth was a metaphor for the “predicament” or desire to return to the womb. He uses this metaphor in sets for his films and pointed to the legend of the Minotaur as it related to Rank’s concepts: Theseus, who slew the Minotaur needed the “clue” (from the Anglo Saxon cliwen, or ball of thread) to solve the mystery of the labyrinth and break the “knot that binds.”

In my work I seek to unite old and new forms. I judge the



LEONARDO DA VINCI, *The Female Viscera*, 1509.
Recto: pen & ink over black chalk, with ochre wash, picked for transfer; traces of charcoal around pin pricks, folded marks.
Verso: blank; fold marks, pin pricks, 18 1/8" x 13 1/8"

success of work on its ability to qualify on a number of levels including beauty. Beauty is the result of the unity I seek....for me beauty resides not only in the harmony of proportions but also in the elemental, primal forms that connect the work of art with both the intellect and the senses on a profound level: in psychological terms, the desire to return to the prelogical state.

In the Japanese language, “utsukushii” encompasses a similar idea, signifying a concept of beauty felt in the heart, embodied by dark, simple things that have a sublime, moving quality. The “Sabi” of Wabi-Sabi aesthetic signifies the beauty of imperfection found in antiquity or primitiveness, a rustic unpretentiousness, simplicity or effortlessness: something rich in historical associations. These are constructs that can be found in nature, and are very different from a Western concept of beauty with its superimposed “ideal.” In Zen teaching, beauty is reality; it reveals itself when subject and object merge to form the “essential self.”

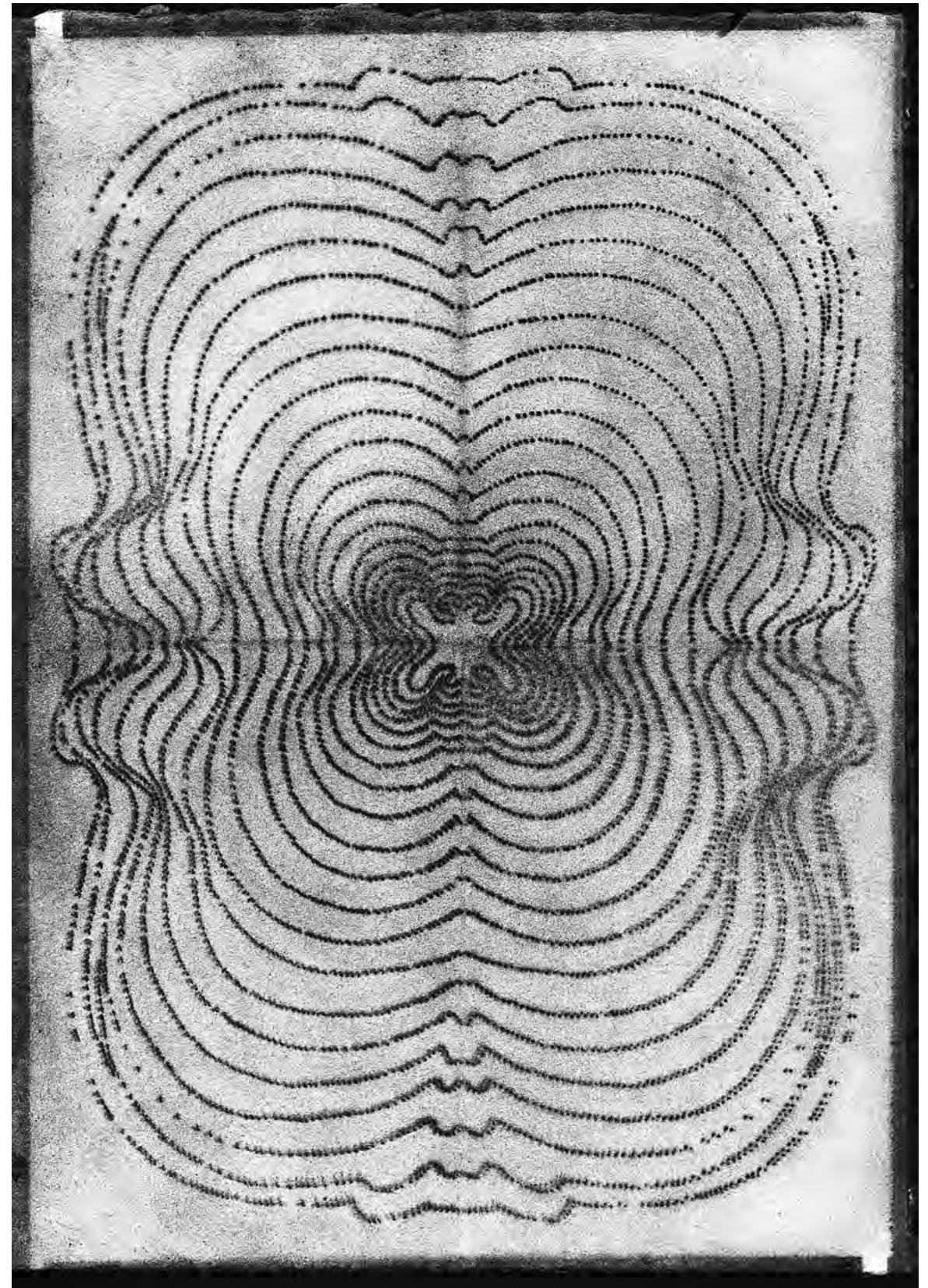
The concept of “fertility” is connected in various ways with working structures I employ such as the use of a specific structural system as “key”; the transformation through repetition of elements (resulting in “ecstatic forms”); the use of the point as the essential unit and beginning from which things unfold or collapse; the use of a “fold” as a means to generate and regenerate a “chain” of related images. These progressive structures initiate a chain that is a birth or bursting out, an unfolding that is a moment of (sensual) awakening. These approaches reflect a common-sense rather than theoretical approach and reveal my interest in working directly with the process and material of Drawing itself.

(Point+fold opened = repetition, reflection = transformation
conception+birth, opening = regeneration, transformation)

Art is the creation of form, the transformation of matter.

Fertility is the moment of “becoming” when quantity turns into quality.

* Nirvana is defined as the extinction or destruction of thirst or desire; the goal of Buddhism consisting of the escape from the chain of births and deaths and the liberation from all effects of Karma; the real world as opposed to the illusory world.



MARY JUDGE, *Untitled Spokero Drawing*, 1997. Powdered pigment on paper, 10" x 7". Courtesy of the artist and Betsy Senior Gallery, NYC



ANN MESSNER, *Amniotic Sea*, 1997-8. Installation at Foley Square, NY. Polyester resin and steel



ANN MESSNER, *Amniotic Sea (Detail)*, 1997-8. Installation at Foley Square, NY. Polyester resin and steel



ANN MESSNER, *Amniotic Sea (Detail)*, 1997-8. Installation at Foley Square, NY. Polyester resin and steel

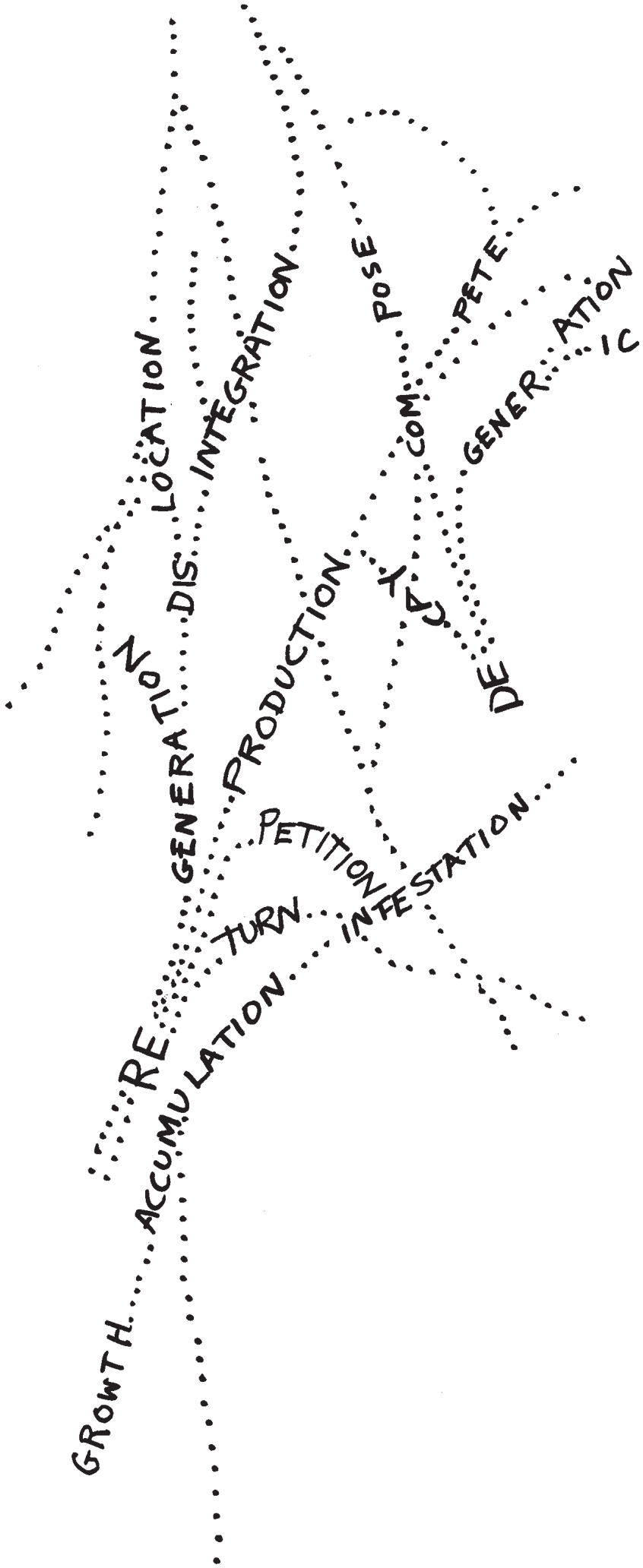
Ann Messner

AMNIOTIC SEA

The provisional siting of “Amniotic Sea” at Foley Square with its suggestive form, material and name attached the idea of embryonic development to the site. Embryonic, alluding to the internal, the unseen, giving evidence of mysteriously contained, raw, unformed potential. Potential, which however undefined, is essentially creative. Consequently, within this undeveloped state a notion of fertility as catalytic, becomes essential.

In its enigmatic condition, that of being empty (the vessel split, the drain dry), something unseen is implied. The only evidence of fluid, of a state of immersion to be found is in documentary form in the newspaper in the vending machine adjacent to the site: generic images of sea, mass produced and distributed for a nominal fee.

Is this evidence of time past to time future or is this in fact alluding to events now, to an experience of cognitive swell within the moment, to an internal fertile fluid state, immense, boundless ... terrifying? And if so, does this not propose a radical potential in consciousness: ungendered, nonhierarchical and democratic?



ELANA HERZOG, *ART OMI Project*, 1996. Partial view, Fabric, dimensions variable

The OMI Project, 1996/97. This piece was composed entirely of striped fabrics, which are arranged throughout a small grove of trees in upstate New York, using branches as an armature. Inspired partially by the webs created by tent caterpillars, it was in fact colonized by them within hours of its installation. the piece bore witness to the change of seasons in this locale for one year. Referencing both growth and decay, form and its dissolution, the work also plays with the ambiguities involved in our perception of the “natural” and the “cultural.”

TRAVEL NOTES — FERTILITY



PEGGY CYPHERS *Future Byzantium - with Pansy*, 1998. Acrylic, sand, silkscreen on canvas, 30" x 26"

May 10, 1998 Mother's Day and Mothering

Newness — so important — fertility. The sixty tulip bulbs I planted last fall gave hope for a spring of great newness. Fertility — the mind set of creation and erotic structure of evolution. Meanwhile my neighbor and friend is going through her fourth envitro, spending every last cent on the dream of holding a child. They have her drugged — a guinea pig for science and love.

Walking down the street — longing for a baby. Is it a longing to love the self or to re-experience childhood? "Old adulthood" as a construct gets boring by forty, that is, unless we re-invent the program. Childhood is the last frontier because it's really a place, a mind set of the garden of paradise. It's not about "filling up the earth" but about "filling up hearts." Today is Mother's Day. I took my son Darwin to watch the small children crown the blue and white robed Statue of Mary in the church. It reminded me of when

my sister, with golden tresses and radiant face was crowned "Queen of the May" many years ago. A wonderfully pagan ritual that celebrates renewal. I have a shrine to the mother goddess. It's a painting with silkscreened images of flowers and a woman's face from a 70's LIFE magazine ad. I meditate on the mother force — to keep my path in the garden and to allow flower petals to reveal faces of people I'm crazy about who make a Life of days otherwise lifeless.

June 2, 1998 Rethinking Menopause

I remember being delighted to read how Native American cultures hold special value for a women's life after she has passed through the childbearing years. These "Wise Women" were and are integral to governmental decision making. For a woman to face her own infertility is to face her own death. Women artists have feared their fertility because of broad cultural stigmatas — now they seek out mates with brushes in hand at the 11th hour.

June 8, 1998 Darwin's Birthday

I'm approaching this subject of fertility from a personal perspective since I am a painter, a mother, and a teacher. After all the men in my biological family died (three generations), the future stood bleak before me without this nuclei of significant people. Then I decided to test my biological fertility and have a child. My luck shifted at that point for the better. I'm forever thankful for this opportunity (at the 11th hour) to co-create a unique being to inhabit this sometimes paradise. (Right now life feels like paradise as sun streams onto my deck in Brooklyn rimmed in purple petunias and smiling pansies.) Making art fills many hours that interlace with the creative relationship between myself and Darwin. I have created a primary "Love Garden," which I invest or fertilize with time every day along with the other spaces on my "Life Gameboard." I like knowing that a young mind is growing alongside my artistic production. Like a gardener, I make painterly visions of the complex phenomena of beauty.



LES AYRE *Fertility Symbol*, 1996. Rubber nipple, lead and wood, 29" x 29"

FERTILITY: TIME TO ROTATE THE CROPS?



LES AYRE *Walking Women*, 1997. Oil on linen, 13" x 12"

Fertility in agriculture used to depend on things like rotating the crops and letting the fields lie fallow for a while.

Does cultural fertility work the same way?

Around 1980 in the American and Western European art world we entered a period of great fertility. Modernism had ended in the 1960's and had been replaced by a period of anti-Modernism which relentlessly inverted Modernism's hierarchies and turned its values inside-out in such new crops as Conceptual Art. The traditional media of painting and sculpture lay fallow for a while.

Then around 1980 a new generation of artists began to emerge who were no longer puritanically afraid of the traditional media but practiced them in a new way that involved incorporating some of the principles of Conceptual Art into what had earlier been a purely aesthetic-formalist practice. This was post-Modernism proper, a conflation of Modernism and anti-Modernism like the third step in an Hegelian syllogism. The deck of cards had been thrown into the air and, before they came down, there was an openness, an opportunity for new artists to introduce new modes of cultivation and new crops.

By 1990 or shortly thereafter the transformation was complete. A new canon was coming into place composed of everyone who had gotten rich and famous in the tumultuous 80's, from Julian Schnabel to Cindy Sherman. By 1997 this canon was firmly in place and had taken over the power base of conservative institutions like the Museum of Modern Art, which in 1997 paid a reported one million dollars for a set of black-and-white prints of Sherman's "Film Stills." With the support of the very institutions that the post-Modernism crop-rotation had attempted to supplant, this new canon became a new mafia. It was too late to do anything about it. We wanted new artists, we chose them, and now we are stuck with them. They will defend their turf as pitilessly and for as long as any mafia does. It will be a while — probably at least a decade — before anything new and interesting happens in our contemporary art world. Till then, we will watch the new mafia do their thing over and over and over again, "ad nauseam," as the old mafia did. The soil they grew from has been overcultivated and is exhausted. Meanwhile in the rest of the world, where the fields of art have been lying fallow for a long time, new and exciting crops are sprouting up faraway.

Without more preamble I will reproduce two passages from recent writings of mine. First, some lines from an essay on Marina Abramovic for a forthcoming Charta book on that artist that was occasioned by a show at the Kunstmuseum in Bern.

"Yesterday I got in the mail an announcement and catalogue for an exhibition in which a certain artist had produced really clever inwardly contradictory combinations of certain motifs from Duchamp with certain other more decoratively oriented Modernist motifs; my first response was to be pleased by the cleverness of the work, which was precise and effective; but only an instant later I found myself wondering about the tininess of it, wondering how this could possibly be of any major value in the world, how such precious exercises in post-Modernist pastiche can even justify the time and IQ points that are spent on them. The miniaturization of the concerns of art that was like a disease in high Modernism with its miniscule aesthetic nuances seems to have re-established itself in post-Modernism with its minuscule cognitive nuances. It is true that in the rest of the world — the world previously excluded from our art history — more muscular and fundamental developments are taking place. The question is whether we want to lose contact with them again in an hermetic athanor of Eurocentrism, this time post-Modernist."

And second, from an article on contemporary Indian art forthcoming in *Art in America*.

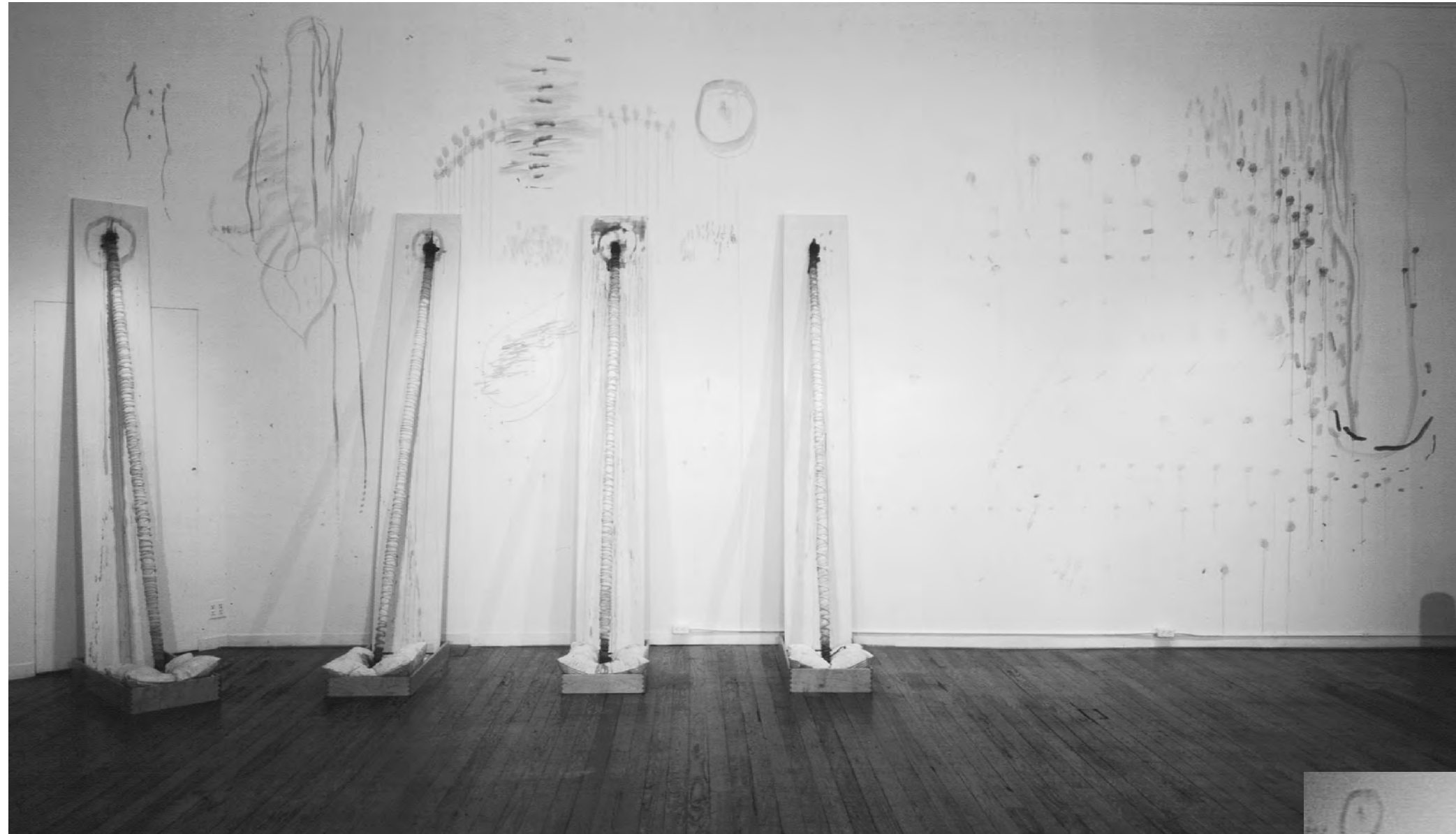
"When the art market was booming in the yen-drunk 1980's it seemed to have an appetite big enough for everything — even things that it couldn't quite identify. The moment for multiculturalism seemed to have dawned. But in less than a decade the yen has fallen, the market has dried up, and the multicultural tendency seems to be petering out. After the pivotal 1989 exhibition "Magiciens de la terre," Cheri Samba's paintings were briefly everywhere; do you recall seeing one lately? Once the market crashed, the brief burst of "Magiciens"-inspired tokenism abated. Western markets returned to protecting their own.

"Still, the fact remains that many of the most interesting developments in contemporary art are happening outside of Western Europe and the United States, in what would be regarded by traditional Modernist criteria as off the beaten track. Last year, for example, the Asia Society sponsored a show of contemporary art from five Asian nations, "Traditions/Tensions," curated by Apinan Poshyananda, which was surely as interesting as any other big show in New York that year. But New York "artworld" professionals by-and-large either did not hear of it or, hearing of it in a peripheral and careless way, did not bother to seek it out. It may have made a bit of a stir when it went on to Thailand and Indonesia — but New York hasn't really heard about it yet. One of these days we may wake up to find that the art history of our time was happening elsewhere and we didn't notice."

Erika Knerr

Abidjan Dream Tools explores a powerful dream experience which occurred while I was working in West Africa. It consists of four feather pillows in four drawers on the floor. Each drawer houses a nine foot wooden pole covered with muslin and bound with cotton clothesline rope. The feeling of constraint and release is apparent in these drawing tools: bound energy holding the potential for creation. They rest on the pillows and are propped against nine foot tall narrow canvases that sit in the drawers on stretched fabric, printed in Cote d'Ivoire. The pillows serve as vessels into which dark green dye is poured. These are the four rotating implements used to create the large wall drawing, which was reactivated each day over a two week period.

While working for a newspaper covering the African Development Banking summit in the spring of 1997, in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, I dreamt of being in a crowded local restaurant. I noticed a towering African women on the other side of the room. She emanated an explosive, powerful energy and floated about two feet off the ground. The moment she saw me looking at her she came quickly toward me. I was suddenly laying flat on the ground and she touched my forehead for what seemed to be a few minutes. When I woke up in the middle of the night, I felt the pressure on my forehead so intensely that it felt as if she was just there. Whether it was a result of the Larium pills I was taking to prevent Malaria or not, it stayed with me for a long time. This piece explores the transference of energy between the dreamer and the dream.



ERIKA KNERR *Abidjan Dream Tools*, 1998. Dark green dye, wooden drawers, pillows, wooden poles, muslin, clothesline rope, fabric, white marble pigment, canvas. Dimensions variable



Fabian Cereiido

FERTILITY 2000

Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice. There is a benevolent imminence to the word fertility. Now there is no big project to pledge your allegiance to (or to abandon yourself to) Now the preceding nothing is not the metaphysical nothingness of modernism. Personal relationships are suddenly more specific. These associations overflow the big neutralities (the market, the signifier, democracy). Now that your identity is not anymore an ethically approved sociological coordinate but this stare and these new minutes, hey, I am about to kiss you. Otherness is transcending the role that it was given — instant provider of mystical depth, social ethics and unconventional spice — and it is looking back at us from a familiar spot, time is flowing again.

Millions of one-on-one relationships where crisp thresholds splinter assess the specificity of duration, crossing slowly the 1999 even if the aerial view doesn't disclose a masterplan. Minutes are pouring out of mouths and eyes saturating and overflowing the tautology of identity. No big narrative is claiming the 2000, so time is only passing in your house. Nobody is watching, we can eat the 2000. I think of the poets who walk immensities, the ones who make big itineraries touching everything, listing — Whitman's inventories, Borges's Aleph. I think of you and your dog that watches TV next to you in the couch. A nugget of infinity that lets itself be caressed.

In the intimate realm the weight and delight of our will is a little more difficult to disavow than our willful participation in history. Around the house, in your lovemaking sessions and behind the pages of your books, you can find all these little tabulae rasae that somehow survived Ideology and sociology. All these domestic minutes are new. They are not steps towards transcendence and they are not semantic byproducts. They are not petri dishes for sociological specimen. Each second as soon as it passes turns back, looks at you and gives you a taste of infinity. Each second grows out of the one you love like a tree protruding out of his/her forehead.

Freedom did her work of hyperventilating ideology and overwhelming reduction. But in its name the disengaging goo of semanticism and Identity have clogged the thought of time. You invest more when you imagine the offspring of fertility than when you imagine the offspring of freedom. Fertility is the announcement of an active force, freedom is a permit. Fertility is not the absence of a restrictive power, it is the announcement of a moving energy that will procreate. Come paint with me.

LES AYRE *is an artist who has traveled extensively. She lives in New York, works in Newark and shows in Los Angeles.*

ELENA BERRIOLO *is an artist living and working in NY.*

FABIAN CEREIJIDO *is an Argentinian Artist and video maker living in New York. He just published "Just because nobody claims to be able to bring the future it doesn't mean it's not coming..." in the May/June issue of FlashArt.*

LARS CHELLBERG *is an artist living in New York. He is currently represented by Lance Fung Gallery.*

SANDRO CHIA *is an artist who lives and works in New York and Florence, Italy.*

ABRAHAM DAVID CHRISTIAN *is an artist who lives and works in Düsseldorf, New York and Hayama, Japan.*

COLETTE *is an artist living in New York City. She has shown and performed extensively in the U.S. and abroad. She explores the role the artist plays in our life, the female persona in art, and the line between fine and commercial art and fashion.*

PEGGY CYPHERS *is a painter living in New York City. She teaches at Pratt Institute.*

ELENA DEL RIVERO *was born in Valencia, Spain. She is an artist living and working in New York City.*

CHRIS HAMMERLEIN *is an artist living in NYC.*

JOHN HATFIELD *is an artist living and working in NYC.*

ELANA HERZOG *is a sculptor and installation artist who lives and works in New York City. She recently had a solo exhibition at P.P.O.W in New York City.*

JESSICA HIGGINS, *an artist working with intermedia, performance and process, lives and works in New York. A child of the Fluxus movement, her work focuses on the world's relationship to the motion of an individual human body. Her most recent solo exhibition "Riddles" was at Lance Fung Gallery, New York City.*

MARY JUDGE *is an artist who lives and works in New York.*

ERIKA KNERR *is an artist who lives and works in New York City. She recently had her first solo exhibition at Lance Fung Gallery in New York.*

EVA MANTELL *recently presented her shadow play "baboons of Central Jersey" at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. She has shown sculpture, video as well as performance art in a variety of places in NY including P.S.1/The Clocktower, Artists' Space and LaMama Experimental Theater Company.*

SHELLEY MARLOW *is a visual artist, writer, and palm reader.*

SUZANNE McCLELLAND *is an artist living and working in New York. She is currently represented by Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York City.*

THOMAS McEVILLEY *has written hundreds of books and articles on contemporary art and culture. He is organizing a conference at the Mobile Parish Centre for the Visual Arts in Mumbai and in conjunction with it an exhibition dealing with Greek and Indian antiquities and contemporary parallelisms for the Menil Collection in Houston.*

ANN MESSNER *is a visual artist who lives in New York.*

RICHARD MILAZZO *lives and works in New York City.*

SENGA NENGUDI *is a visual and performance artist presently living in Colorado and currently featured in the Los Angeles MOCA travelling exhibit "Out of Actions-between performance and the object, 1949-1979."*

REYNOLDS *is an artist and mother living and working in Brooklyn. She has had one person shows in Hawaii, Vienna, Berlin and New York.*

JOHN ROLOFF *is an artist who lives in California, teaches sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute and has recently had a one-person exhibition, "Dialogues with Nature," at the Lance Fung Gallery in New York.*

SARAH SCHWARTZ *is a conceptual artist living in NY.*

TERESA SERRANO *is a Mexican artist living in New York.*

BERTA SICHEL *is an art writer and curator living and working in New York. She is a recent recipient of the 1998-99 Guggenheim Fellowship.*

JOSLIN STEVENS *is an artist who currently resides in Pelham, MA. She has recently exhibited at EXIT ART/The First World.*

BARBARA STORK *is an artist living in Jersey City. She is working toward her first New York solo exhibition at Trans Hudson Gallery this Spring 1999.*

CHRISTINA SVANE *is a writer, singer and dancer who lives and works in Sebastopol, California.*

VULTO (1959, The Netherlands) *has lived in New York since 1990. For more than a dozen years, smoke has been his primary material. The essential nature of smoke is that it preserves. Vulto began by smoking fish and other organic material and then moved on to buildings. He has smoked buildings in Belgium, Holland, Norway, and Israel. He hopes in the not too distant future to be able to smoke a building in the U.S. Currently he is interested in preserving human states of being.*

FAITH WILDING *is a multidisciplinary artist and writer whose work addresses aspects of the somatic, psychic, and sociopolitical history of the body. Recently she has collaborated with Critical Art Ensemble on the Flesh machine project which can be seen on the CAE web site >[<http://mailer.fsu.edu/~sbarnes](http://mailer.fsu.edu/~sbarnes)<*

UPDATE

Opportunities

Hallwalls Visual Arts Program

Open: all media, installation, video/performance, multimedia. Ongoing deadline. Send SASE for prospectus: Sara Kellner, Visual Arts Director, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Ctr., 2495 Main St., Ste 425, Buffalo, NY 14214. (716) 835-7362. <hallwall@tmn.com>

Eastman Gallery

Seeks emerging artists working in new media, computer, book arts, for group and solo shows. 40% commission. Send slides with description and SASE to Carrie Eastman, Eastman Gallery, 54 Schurman Rd., Castleton, NY 12033 (518) 477-4959.

16th Annual Juried Exhibition

Juror: Ivan Karp. Open: all media. Send SASE for prospectus: Pleiades Gallery, 591 Broadway, 2nd floor, Ste A, New York, NY 10012 (212) 274-8825.

E.A.T. Artist's Residency, Experiments in Art and Technology

P.O. Box 356, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922-0356 seeks entries for a residency. One artist will be granted unlimited 24-hour access to Avid MCXpress video editing facility for one week. Send VHS cassette tape clearly labeled with name, address and telephone number and cued to 10 minute segment which best represents your work. Tapes will not be returned. Deadline Sept. 15, 1998.

Art on the Web

Hyperbole Studios seeks artwork for on-line gallery. Theme: Storytelling Through Visual Images. Ongoing deadline. Send SASE for prospectus to: Hyperbole Studios, C. Blackmore, 2225 4th Ave., 2nd floor, Seattle, WA 98121.

West Bend Friends of Sculpture

Seeks 3-5 year loans for riverfront parkway. \$500 stipend. Application & site location: Graff & Assoc., P.O. Box 441, Hartford, WI 53107 (414) 644-9915.

Change, Inc.

Emergency fund grants \$100-500 to artists for medical, living or other expenses. Write for application to: Change, Inc., Box 705, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276 (212) 473-3742.

Art Papers

Seeking interns for nonprofit arts publication. Administrative and editorial internships available fall, spring, summer. Send current resume, letter of intent, writing sample, and references to: Larisa Gray, Exec. Director, Art Papers, P.O. Box 5748, Atlanta, GA 31107.

Sharadin Art Gallery

Seeking proposals for exhibitions of fine arts, crafts and communication design, featuring new technologies or innovative approaches to traditional media and content. Open: individual or group exhibits (3-6 participants). No fee. Send brief written description, 40-35mm slides max (include dimensions, title, and media), resumes of participants, related support materials, SASE to: Sharadin Art Gallery, Kutztown University, P.O. Box 730, Kutztown, PA 19530. Contact: Dan Talley (610) 683-4546 <talley@kutztown.edu>

The Hambridge Center

offers private cottages to house artists working in all media for 2-6 week residencies Mar.-Dec. Send SASE for application to: The Hambridge Center, P.O. Box 339, Rabun Gap, GA 30568. (706) 746-5718.

Visual, Media, Literary and Performing Arts Residencies

Application: Headlands Center for the Arts, 944 Fort Barry, Sausalito, CA 94965 (415) 331-2787.

Wurlitzer Foundation

offers three to six month residencies to writers, painters, composers, choreographers, Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, P. O. Box 545, Taos, NM 87571. (505) 758-2413.

Chicago Public Art Program

Send SASE: Public Art Program, Dept. of Cultural Affairs, 78 E. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602.

Transaxis

Rotating outdoor exhibition program. Send slides of pre-existing large scale sculpture to: Transaxis, Evanston Arts Council, 927 Noyes St., Evanston, IL 60201.

Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grants \$10,000.

Open: 30 years and under; representational painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture; international entries accepted. Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation, 1814 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal, QC Canada H3H 1E4.

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