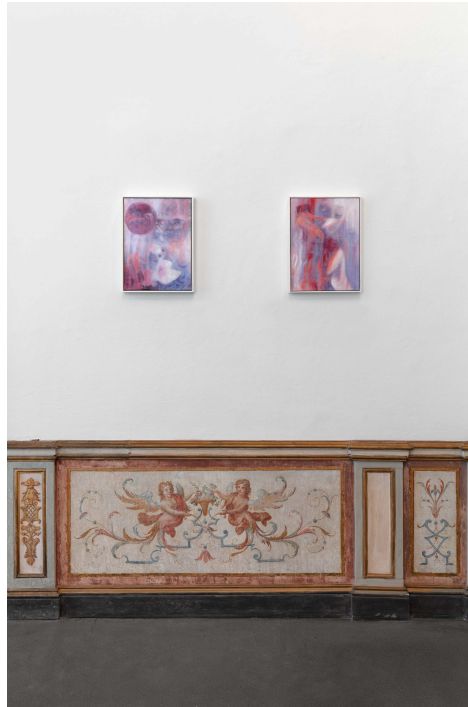


Residing in the Residue: Bracha L. Ettinger at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin by Ory Dessau

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Bracha L. Ettinger, *Bracha's Notebooks* installation view at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino 2021-22. Courtesy: Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

Bracha's Notebooks, Bracha L. Ettinger's current exhibition at the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin, sheds light on a relatively discreet yet conceptually meaningful aspect of the artist's work: notebooks. A growing collection of volumes marked by an unsorted flow of decades-long day-to-day drawings and written fragments (in English, French, and Hebrew), Ettinger's notebooks juxtapose personal records and practical lists with theoretical reflections, idiosyncratic poetic verses, and painted imagery. Presented in the exhibition in an encased display of fifty-nine spreads across two adjacent rooms, the notebooks provide a contextual-experiential key to the different branches of Ettinger's practice as a painter, psychoanalyst, and philosopher, and at the same time stand out as an independent body of work.

In the first room, two groups of notebooks are displayed inside two cabinets—a chest of open drawers and an *escritoire*—surrounded by a selection of five oil paintings from different periods and series, including *Eurydice* (started in 1994), *Medusa* (started in 2006), and *Eros Pieta* (started in 2015). The joint display equates the accumulation of time signified by the notebooks with the long periods of time demanded in and by the paintings, which Ettinger makes over the course of years. The joint display allows us to understand Ettinger's artistic project as a mechanism that retrieves its own residues, as an exchange between exclusion and inclusion, disclosure and concealment, within which the left over is not left out. It illuminates her oeuvre as a universe in which all elements circulate through one another, as well as through themselves.

The core of the display takes place in the second room, the Sala dei Putti Dormienti (Room of the Sleeping Putti), which consists of a single vitrine made by the artist occupying the center of the space, conceived in response to the vaulted canopy-like ceiling. This display amounts to a site-specific installation in which the vitrine and the architecture are mutually reflected. This choice incorporates the notebooks into the structural material of the room, lending them a sense of place and belonging by which they defy their ephemeral nature.

Inside the vitrines, the artist decided to show the cloth covers and laces that wrap and tie the notebooks when closed. With them, the sight of the open spreads becomes a scenario of unfolding, of emergence and exposure, turning the presentation into an image of revelation, a discovery. By suggesting a constant movement between incubation and emergence, Ettinger's installation exploits not only the architecture of the room but also its original function and history. The Sala dei Putti Dormienti was designed as the king's bedroom, but according to the legend, this was where King Vittorio Amedeo II (1666–1732) was held prisoner by his son Carlo Emanuele III (1701–1777) in the years prior his death. Ettinger's installation of unleashed notebooks transcends the dichotomies between dreaming and wakefulness, inward and outward, latency and recommencement, historically imbued in the Sala dei Putti Dormienti, integrating them into the experimental universe of her practice, where oppositions and definitiveness are abandoned in favor of dialogue and negotiation.

Titled *Eros Pieta n.1* and *Eros Pieta n.2* (both 2015–19), two of the five paintings on view in the first room process photographs recorded on October 14, 1942, in Mizocz, Ukraine, depicting naked Jewish women and children standing in line in the moments preceding their execution by the Ukrainian Auxiliary and the German Nazi police. Processed and transformed by different photomechanical and manual procedures, these photocopied "diffracted traces" (a term coined by the artist that was later picked up by Jean-François Lyotard in his book on her work)¹ are buried under strata of layered oil painting from which they momentarily emerge like holograms, oscillating between appearance and disappearance. Their involuntary unfolding corresponds to the fact that these images haunt the artist, and as with trauma, they can be neither fully grasped nor fully repressed. The overlap of figuration and abstraction, representability and illegibility, is no longer a matter of pure aesthetic but of ethics and cognition, posing the question regarding the possibility or impossibility of visualizing trauma, in particular the trauma of World War II.

As stated by Nicolas Bourriaud in a 2015 publication released on the occasion of Ettinger's participation in the 14th Istanbul Biennial, Ettinger dilutes the historical document "to the point of conferring upon it the faint consistency of a phantom, of a memorial specter. Her forms seem to be captured in a ferocious battle against oblivion or even foreclosure."² At this point Ettinger's proposition distinguishes itself from the painterly practice of a canonical artist like Gerhard Richter. While Richter's usage of historical photographs from the period re-creates the image of the past as ambiguous yet discernible, Ettinger's painting internalizes it as an enduring conflictual entity one can never fully overcome or control. Whereas Richter's painting after photography can be described in terms of series of onetime executions, Ettinger's should be explained in terms of slow-processed, life-consuming evocations. Each of her paintings and notebooks radiates its field of unconsciousness, referred to by the artist as matrixial, to bring us in touch with the feminine vulnerability of the human being and the transformations of personal and inherited traces of the trauma of war.

Bracha L. Ettinger (b. 1948, Tel Aviv) lives and works between Paris and Tel Aviv. Solo exhibitions have been presented in numerous international institutions, including the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (2019); UB Anderson Gallery, University

at Buffalo (2018); Silesian Museum (Muzeum Śląskie), Katowice, Poland (2017); the 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015); the Museum of the City of St. Petersburg (2013); Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Angers, France (2011); Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2010); the Freud Museum, London (2009); the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki (2006); and the Drawing Center, New York (2001). Her work has been presented in numerous group museum exhibitions, as at Villa Tamaris, La Seyne-sur-Mer, France; Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin; Museion, Bolzano, Italy; Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin; Bonnier Konsthall, Stockholm; MAS/KMSKA Museums, Antwerp; National Center for Contemporary Arts, Moscow; the Museum of Modern Art, Moscow; the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; Whitechapel Gallery, London; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Ettinger is the author of numerous articles and books on art, psychoanalysis, aesthetics, and ethics, including *Regard et Espace-de-bord matrixial (La lettre volée, 1999)*; *The Matrixial Borderspace (Essays from 1994–1999)* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006); *And My Heart Wound-Space* (Istanbul Biennial, 2015); *Matrixial Subjectivity, Aesthetics, Ethics, vol. 1, 1990–2000*, edited by Griselda Pollock (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); and *Matrixial Subjectivity, Aesthetics, Ethics, vol. 2, 2000–2010*, edited by Griselda Pollock (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). Her writings have been translated into French, German, Hebrew, Polish, and Spanish. Ettinger is the Marcel Duchamp Chair and Professor of Psychoanalysis and Art at the European Graduate School / EGS. Her solo show at Radicants, Paris, is currently on view.

Ory Dessau is a curator and critic born in Tel Aviv and now based in Ghent.

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until September 25, 2022