

ANTENNAE

Issue 15 – Winter 2010

ISSN 1756-9575



Meet Animal Meat

*Bastien Desfriches Doria Mammal Thoughts Courtney Lee Weida Flash-Pots and Clay Bodies Cara Judea Alhadeff
Meat: Digesting the Stranger Within Simone Racheli The Biomechanics of Objects Gunter von Hagen
The Problematic Exposure of Flesh Ron Broglio Meat Matters*

ANTENNAE

The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture

Editor in Chief
Giovanni Aloï

Academic Board
Steve Baker
Ron Broglio
Matthew Brower
Eric Brown
Donna Haraway
Linda Kalof
Rosemarie McGoldrick
Rachel Poliquin
Annie Potts
Ken Rinaldo
Jessica Ullrich
Carol Gigliotti
Susan McHugh

Advisory Board
Bergit Arends
Rod Bennison
Claude d'Anthenaise
Lisa Brown
Rikke Hansen
Petra Lange-Berndt
Chris Hunter
Karen Knorr
Susan Nance
Andrea Roe
David Rothenberg
Nigel Rothfels
Angela Singer
Mark Wilson & Bryndís Snaebjörnsdóttir
Helen Bullard

Global Contributors
Sonja Britz
Tim Chamberlain
Lucy Davies
Amy Fletcher
Carolina Parra
Zoe Peled
Julien Salaud
Paul Thomas
Sabrina Tonutti
Johanna Willenfelt
Dina Popova
Amir Fahim
Christine Marran
Conception Cortes

Copy Editor
Lisa Brown

Junior Copy Editor
Maia Wentrup

EDITORIAL

ANTENNAE ISSUE 15

In 2002, Zhang Huan's contribution to the Whitney Biennial, titled *My New York*, involved wearing a suit made of fresh-cuts of meat stitched together which the artist wore down Fifth Avenue, whilst releasing doves from a cage, a Buddhist gesture of compassion. The work was a response to September the 11th and sprung from the artist's experience of the city as a visitor. "Many things looked strong" recalls Huan, "but were extremely fragile. In New York, I saw men exercise beyond what their hearts could handle and take all kinds of vitamins and supplements to pump up their bodies. In this performance, I invited immigrants to participate and used doves. My assistants designed an outfit of beef for me. It took five tailors one day and one night to stitch all the beef onto a diving suit. The beef outfit was very heavy, maybe about fifty kilograms, and hard to walk in. What would take a bodybuilder more than ten years to achieve only took me one night!"

As a performative act, *My New York* is charged with the presence of rich signifiers, the flesh, the doves, and not lastly, the presence of an artist from Beijing in New York. Some have hinted, the work could be read as a metaphor of America's role in the contemporary socio-political world-scene. Others have distanced themselves from such readings. The flesh we see Zhang Huan wearing is that of animals, not his own, however as the artist claims, it was symbolizing his own flesh, simultaneously capturing a sense of powerful strength, in the bulky and full forms of an alluded body-building anatomy and in the immense frailty rendered by the nakedness of the flesh which appears here at its most vulnerable as skinned. This ambiguity, a multi-signifying agency of meat is explored in this issue of *Antennae*; our second installment on the subject. Ron Broglio captures this most effectively in the opening paragraph of his essay, 'Meat Matters' an extract from his forthcoming book titled *On the Surface: Thinking with Animals and Art*.

"In meat" says Broglio, "there is a transformation from living to dead, from hidden to revealed, and from indigestible to edible. As the marker of this change, meat has a visceral materiality. The material form of dead animal flesh is haunted by the trace of a life transformed into an object through the violence of death. The willful life of an animal becomes an object that shows little ability to resist human understanding, manipulation, and consumption".

The artists' work featured in this issue, directly explore all this. The photographic images of Bastien Desfriches Doria and Cara Judea Alhadeff question meat and the subject of identity through the genre of portraiture and self-portraiture. Courtney Lee Weida explores the themes of flesh and consumption through the surprising versatility of ceramics, whilst the work of Italian artist Simone Racheli brings us to reflect on the agency of meat as implicated in the relationship of everyday objects. This issue also features an exclusive interview with highly controversial artist Gunter von Hagen, the inventor of the *Body Worlds* exhibitions which mercilessly expose flesh in ways and contexts that many find problematic, but that other fully appreciate as science or art.

Giovanni Aloï

Editor in Chief of Antennae Project

Zhang Huan was interviewed by Antennae in May 2010

MEAT: DIGESTING THE STRANGER WITHIN

Meat becomes the reference through which I weave these fragmented body parts together into literal and allusive connective tissue. I celebrate the return of my menstrual cycle by photographing my bloody menstrual pads juxtaposed to other allusions to skinned detritus—metal, rubber, mirror.

Text by **Cara Judea Alhadeff**



Cara Judea Alhadeff

Tahbi's Causin, A., c-print 1990 © Cara Judea Alhadeff

1989. Just months before the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, I join La Commune du Monde, Wilderdorp, the commune of the world. Servicing a tiny, lavishly wealthy village near Ghent, Belgium. This macrobiotic commune is a sanctuary for itinerant poets/story-tellers, philosophers, recovering drug-addicts, sexual freedom fighters. No animal flesh or by-products of any kind are permitted on the macrobiotic commune—except during the Tunisian festival for *les mechouis* in which a sheep is slaughtered. As her throat is ceremoniously slit, her expression is placid—the knife glides through layers of wool, layers of muscle. There is a profusion of blood. I cannot forget the quiet.

I leave the commune to travel to Tunisia and photograph the only literal image of meat that I will ever shoot. Every image hereafter is allusion—allusion to that moment in the early morning sunlight when a Tunisian butcher held in his hands the serenity of death—that moment when Thanatos is born from Night and Darkness. Witnessing such strength in vulnerability, my camera and I begin to play. We explore the possibilities of the grotesque in the everyday—the fertility of ambiguous relationships. Dialogue between life and death, decay and resurrection, leads me to the subject of my photography.

I begin choreographing my photographs in the forests of Westchester where I find tree trunks full of cicada exoskeletons. I incorporate these symbols of transformation, along with bats' heads, glass laboratory vials, latex gloves, preserved pigs' ears, molding gourds, hair wax strips, my fingernail clippings, bird claws and skulls, patinaed metal, bloody menstrual pads, whole moles, unbroken birds, an endless stream of road-kill, and multiple mirrors magnifying the crawling into and emerging out of my models' orifices.

As a vegan, I lost my menstrual cycle for three years. Immersed in my photography, human, animal, vegetable, insect, mineral become unrecognizable as they border cross. As they surge with the fluidity of the uncanny into each other's zones of recognition, each element destabilizes definitive categories. Meat becomes the reference through which I weave these fragmented body parts together into literal and allusive connective tissue. I celebrate the return of my menstrual cycle by photographing my bloody menstrual pads juxtaposed to other allusions to skinned detritus—metal, rubber, mirror. Ironically, synthetic objects so often appear more organic, sumptuous and alive than flesh itself. I am again reminded that there is no solid ground—no clear-cut or absolute answer—only tension, suspension,

anticipation, interpretation. Tension animates connective tissue, the web that binds us together, while distinguishing us as autonomous. My photographs are rooted in an acute awareness of these contingent encounters—psychic, imagined, palpable, and projected. When I photograph my bloody pads stuffed into patinaed, rusting copper cylinders, covered by earthworms, compressed under plate glass on bright green carpet, or when I balance a found decapitated mouse's head between the interweave of the encrusted pad and metal gridded glass, I am celebrating this tension—the dialogue between life and death.

1991. Road-kill enters the picture, but not as a simple representation of horror. Similarly, photographing my bloody pads was not about shock, but about relationship: the relational tension between road-kill, my camera and body/bodily processes, and other intuitively chosen objects. Choreographing those relationships is a conscious process of Re-animation. The crushed skull of a road kill possum mid-screach, like the ash-atrophied figures from the eruption of Vesuvius in Pompeii, in relation to my fist wrapped tightly in a green latex glove gripping a Japanese embroidered puppet with long nostril hair, awakens the uncanny tension between anxiety and beauty. My images illuminate a call and response between anxiety and beauty. Anxiety manifests in the moment of recognizing the familiar within the unfamiliar, feeling a connection with the other, yet clinging to a separate identification. Beauty emerges in the moment of responsiveness to our undeniable connectedness. Through my work, I explore this web as a process of multi-layered storytelling in which ambiguity is not a lack of clarity, but rather a multiplicity of clarities. Meat triggers the pliability of perception. Because of its optical allusive quality, meat inhabits this fertility of ambiguity—a bridge between life and death.

Both animals and human friends bring me gifts of dead animals as props for my photos. One such gift is a dead oriole, bright yellow and still intact. Post-mortem, the oriole's body endures being saturated in milk, dissolving her brilliantly colored feathers into human cheeks, necks, knees, gradually deteriorating, over numerous photo shoots. I stretch and compress and adhere my dead oriole until her accommodating body can no longer yield—from death, back to life, to perhaps a more complete death.

1993. The Seattle Science Museum. A docent is dissecting a cow eyeball to demonstrate to children how similar the cow is to the human. I ask



Cara Judea Alhadeff

Mirrormappings from the Self-Portraits Series, Raw #1 © Cara Judea Alhadeff

if I can keep the post-dissected eyeball for my photographs. For the next three months, I store the cow eyeball in a Snoopy thermos—alternately freezing and thawing it between my photo shoots. Eventually, the cow's eye disintegrates into unrecognizable meat. Strands of membrane are now barely capable of holding the eyeball together—dissolving under the heat of the lamp focused on the dyed turquoise bristle of my model's head; her ear reddens under my pressure as the eyeball continues to melt into her scalp. How would Bataille have (de) constructed this

version of *The Story of the Eye*?

Barthes "rejects a thematic or 'extraplastic' reading of Bataille's 1926 pornographic novel *L'Histoire de l'Oeil* (*The Story of the Eye*), no matter how filled the book might be with the precipitates of perverse fantasy and unleashed sexual imagination, to insist instead on a specifically structuralist account



Cara Judea Alhadeff

Mirrormappings from the Self-Portraits Series, Raw #2, 1995 © Cara Judea Alhadeff

of the book. The story, Barthes declares, is not that of a set of characters and their exploits, but of an object—the eye—whose characteristics yield the *combinatoire* from which the textual fabric is woven, both at the level of its language and in the dimension of its events” (Krauss and Bois, 154).

L'Histoire de l'Oeil offers infinite permutations. This *combinatoire* reminds me of Hans Bellmer's “physical unconscious”—a living prosthetic. [1] The eye is meat—by nature, in constant transformation.

“In terms of sources, one wonders...whether Bellmer's 'physical unconscious' was in any way a response to Walter Benjamin's notion of an 'optical unconscious,' introduced in the latter's “Small History of Photography” in 1931. ‘It is through photography,’ wrote Benjamin, ‘that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis’”(quoted in Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* [Cambridge, Mass., 1993], 178).

The eye is a wound which suggests incalculable perigrinations. [2] These erotic conjunctions, like Bellmer's dolls and the surrealist arrangement of a peculiar incident, provide a framework for perceiving the world through possibility rather than prescription:

"Freud's model of the mobility of the libido provided the basis for Bellmer's theorizing about erotic feeling...Freud observed that 'sexual impulse-excitations are exceptionally plastic,' and continued: 'One of them can step in place of another; if satisfaction of one is denied in reality, satisfaction of another can offer full recompense. They are related to one another like a network of intercommunicating channels filled with fluid, and this is in spite of their subordination to the primacy of the genitals—a state of affairs that is not at all easily combined in a single picture'"(Sue Taylor. "Hans Bellmer in The Art Institute of Chicago: The Wandering Libido and the Hysterical Body," 12).

This *combinatoire* of what I am exploring here as erotic politics, opens up a space for a poetics of relation. [3] Similarly, my images explore Julia Kristeva's discussions of the fertile intersections that the abject produce[4]—meat as montage. The abject quality of our contradictory relationships to our bodies as meat links the sacred and the "horrific powers of impurity" (Krauss, 237).

1994. I see Eisenstein's 1925 *Battleship Potemkin* for the first time. The rotten meat scene continues to seduce and haunt me. Eisenstein conveys to his audience that the meat is contaminated with maggots by superimposing magnifying-like lenses onto the film image. We get to see the writhing larva—ravenous grubs whose presence will contribute to the sailors' starvation. (Of course, the sailors should have devoured the protein-rich maggots!) Both Didi-Huberman and Barthes have explored the "Eisenstein-Bataille connection...between the often 'fetishistic' use of close-ups in Eisenstein's films and Bataille's text on the big toe" (Krauss, 73). During the period I shot my bloody menstrual pads with decapitated mice, bat's heads, earthworms, and my own body parts, I photographed the big toe: melting enormous icicles, grabbing a tongue, poised in

relation to a bird skeleton and my leg hair wax strips. With an awareness of Eisenstein as a Jew in post-revolutionary Russia, I can't help but associate his magnified maggots with the host-parasite history of Jews within their adopted countries. Since Biblical times, Jews have inhabited a space of alterity—an uncanny zone of the stranger within. As with any irreducible irritant, the host interrogates, "What do you do with that which cannot be assimilated?" Fear of the ambiguous nature of interpretation has been institutionalized across both time and space. We are taught to resist the gap between negation and affirmation, the spectral, the uncanny, the stranger within. When we believe that our everyday world rotates around a static central root of a unambiguous neutrality, we feed directly into our addiction to being right, our comfort with only the familiar, and the machine of self-censorship and its accompanying acceptable social behavior. We cannibalize our imaginations.

1994. My first experience with censorship. It becomes absurdly clear to me how people can become more threatened by their own imaginations than by reality. I am less concerned with overt moral crusades that have dictated our behavior and cultural norms over past centuries, and am much more wary of the insidious explicit and implicit ways in which we have internalized phallic norms and fear of our own bodies. I realize that my photographs serve as a tabula rasa—onto which viewers can project their potentially worst fears: sexual abuse, mutilation, physical manifestations of misogyny. My viewers tell me I am accountable for their personal and social projections onto my work—how they reframe my images. Where I see mutation as celebration, they see mutilation as obscenity—as pornographic and irreducibly offensive. Where I see a lust for life, they see imposed death.

During my lecture at the Contemporary Museum of Art in Lyon, France, one of the curators from the Lyon Biennial told me how compelling he found my photo of an old woman. I responded by telling him that "the old woman" is actually a young man. What is of particular interest to me is not the curator's interpretation of the age or gender of the character in the photograph, but more importantly, I ask: how does he react when he discovers that his taken-for-granted interpretation is actually completely inverted? Another example of how mystified and commodified hegemonic practices distort our self-perceptions and how difference is institutionally denied is when my photographs were censored in San Francisco's City Hall. Even



Cara Judea Alhadeff

Mirrormappings from the Self-Portraits Series, Period #1, 1992 © Cara Judea Alhadeff

as I was hanging my solo-exhibition that was supposed to run 3 months, one of the city supervisors warned me that Mayor Willie Brown cannot be expected to walk past a vagina everyday on the way to his office. The “vagina” actually was a close-up of my armpit with chicken claws.

Since the early 90's, my photographs have been publicly defended by Freedom of Speech organizations such as *artsave/People for the American Way* and the ACLU. By witnessing first hand people's reactionary tendencies and unconscious addiction to standardization, these experiences with censorship have helped me

clarify my role as an activist, writer, and visual artist. Through my images and collaborative performances, I want the body to continually defy the assumption that it can be easily categorized by blurring its own constructed boundaries of difference/sameness, pleasure/pain, expectation/unfamiliarity.

Perhaps because I am a child of a holocaust survivor, multiple, contradictory perspectives feel inherent to the way I function both personally and politically. Instead of automatically defining difference as threatening, I hope to construct environments in which we can discover how we are connected to what we think



Cara Judea Alhadeff

Mirrormappings from the Self-Portraits Series, Period #2, 1992 © Cara Judea Alhadeff

is unfamiliar. In the eyes of the threatened viewer, squeezed plums, gliding over my model's collar bones, become blood; burst open guava between my mirrored blistered feet becomes raw ground beef; refractions in my grandfather's shaving mirror become fragmented, dissected misogynous representations; in the viewer's imaginations, women's bodies are cut up. In reality, in my images, skin is pulled, pushed, spread, compressed and bunched up. I do not deny the violence, the flesh violation, intrusion. But, it is my own body that is craving and demanding these relationships; my own body as

continual becoming, as inhabiting and reviving the tension between life and death, between Eros and Thanatos. My own body as meat.

In a similar vein, "Bellmer depicted the body as an amalgamation of the organic and inorganic, [the living and the dead], transgressing its normative limits to incorporate aspects of its environment. He fantasized the body as a series of shifting, interchangeable

erogenous zones, subject to the forces of psychic repression in what he termed "the physical unconscious" (Taylor, 11).

Since my body and those of my models are the only living meat in my photographs, I quote some of my models in order to illustrate this continual becoming:

Astraea: *It wasn't a hostile degrading experience—it tempted the tension between play and pain—now when I look at the photograph of my nipple pulled through a sharp metal disc, what I remember is play. It was an image Cara and I created in my room when we were first getting to know each other—a very warm space. I was propped up against the wall and using rusty heavy pliers, I pulled my recalcitrant nipple through the metal, a corrugated, convoluted disc, which Cara refers to as her dinosaur diaphragm. And my nipple which at times became just as convoluted. There was a lot of tenderness. We were trying to figure out how to make it stay hard so the photograph would show the visual metaphor between my vulnerable flesh and this supposedly hard object. This metal object looked like it had once moved like a fluid—his object that could have been the hardened skin of an animal. The process was one of play—of attention to my body—and while trying to get it to do a very specific thing—the recognition that it had its own responses—the resistance of a nipple.*

Don: *I felt I was part of a landscape, a collage, fitting in there with so many other things that are coming together to make a whole—a construction similar to the montage of forms that make up a separate reality, separate from me, like Salvador Dali's "Apparition and Fruit Bowl". I felt like I was becoming part of something else...Cicadas on my lips, rotting berries in my mouth, saliva dripping down my chin, my tongue being grabbed by rubber sheathed toes. My saliva and to some degree, my viscera became joined into this collection of forms that make up a different whole. I felt literally frozen in time—holding the pose—I am becoming the photograph.*

Julia: *One reason I enjoy modeling for Cara is that she puts me into situations and positions that test and question my own physical experience; a reaching out and past the boundaries my culture and I, myself have set up. One time while Cara balanced a very smelly dried octopus on my*

face, I had to control my breathing to limit my nasal intake of air so that I could reduce the nausea swelling inside me. It was an illuminating experience of finding my limitations and reaching around them to feel what's on the impregnable other side. Every session we do together, a little more about my body is revealed to my mind. Another time, Cara inserted very large dead insects in and around my ears. Beautiful and horrifying creatures, which allowed such intimate contact only because they were dead...helped to reduce my irrational fear of "bugs." It was exhilarating and so sensual: feeling the delicate prickly legs and raspy crisp wings and the fuzziness of the abdomens on my own skin sent chills through my body...It is ironic that the tension I feel while we are taking photographs does not always come through in the final print. Perhaps we do not want to see the scars, the adipose flesh, the blood, the pressure of organs, the blemishes...Those who are afraid of their bodies, I believe, are afraid of life itself and so limit or try to disregard this living tension.

The sanctity of normalcy constitutes a hegemony of representation that colonizes our relationships with our own bodies, in particular, women's bodies. Institutionalized constructions of vulnerability bind the psychological to the physical. According to Bataille and his narrator, "To others, the universe seems decent because decent people have gelded eyes. That is why they fear lewdness. They are never frightened by the crowing of a rooster [which strikes Bataille's narrator with an overwhelming nausea] or when strolling under a starry heaven. In general, people savor the 'pleasures of the flesh' only on condition that they be insipid." [5]

Late 1994. I am photographing three friends (one of whom recently had radical knee surgery and whose entire leg looks battered with purple, green, and deep yellow bruises) in the bathroom of philosopher, anthropologist Alphonso Lingus. His bathroom, our photo site, is all chrome reflection—floor, ceiling, walls of mirrors. The rest of his home is lined, floor to ceiling, with fertility gods and goddesses that Lingus has retrieved from around the world. I am again taken by the ironic play between violence and creation. [6]

Mid 1960's. Temple Grandin invents the "squeeze machine": a more humane way of slaughtering animals, particularly cows, destined for agribusiness production and consumption. As I learn more about Grandin's autism, I get a clearer sense of how my own corporeality and visual work slip between eroticism and death. I



Cara Judea Alhadeff

Mirrormappings from the Self-Portraits Series, Hand Claw #3, 1994 © Cara Judea Alhadeff

experience meat, flesh, vulnerability as a raw craving, a bridge between the two—Eros and Thanatos.

“...The struggle between eros and death, between chance as the unbridled upsurge of endless possibility and chance as the ultimate version of determination and control (what Aristotle would speak of as one form of causality, namely, the automaton), can be seen figured here in the very objects to which this name—

corpse—was applied” (Krauss, 64). Grandin sees the corpse of both human and animal as unequivocal meat while devoting her life to making the bridge between life and death as respectful and responsible as possible.

Grandin's squeeze machine, the deep pressure device designed to relieve anxiety, is used not just for industrial farm animals walking the plank, but to help ease human beings diagnosed with autism. Because my nervous system is so intimately connected with my erotic sensibilities, the squeeze machine becomes a reference point that forces me to consider my own sexual desires within the context of death. Reconciling

my sex-drive/death-drive feels like Grandin's animals going to slaughter: a Butoh-like surrender without fear. Only when I consider how physical pressure arouses me, only then do I allow myself to settle uncomfortably into the exquisite tension between Eros and Thanatos.

I have resisted this pairing for so long. But, my body as meat forces me to recognize what Bataille insisted on in his *Tears of Eros*:

"...the end of reason, which exceeds reason is not opposed to the overcoming of reason. In the violence of the overcoming, in the disorder of my laughter and my sobbing, in the excess of raptures that shatter me, I seize on the similarity between a horror and a voluptuousness that goes beyond me, between an ultimate pain and an unbearable joy!" (Bataille, 20).

Similarly, Thomas Mann's "the voluptuousness of doom" invokes the physical and psychological uncertainty of the universe—a co-mingling of Eros and Thanatos. For me, this relationship lies in the entangled density of meat—of what it means to be meat, to cannibalize meat, to lust after, penetrate and be penetrated by meat.

Still, I resist the slippage between eroticism and death, so common in French philosophy and psychoanalysis ("Pleasure is so close to ruinous waste that we refer to the moment of climax as a 'little death,'" Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, 170). Instead, I cling to experiencing the erotic within the context of living life as fully as possible. This erotic politics disrupts and reorients our cultural constructs of pleasure and vulnerability, and ultimately who has power and control over our bodies—setting the groundwork for a citizenship that embraces the fertility of the uncanny—the unfamiliar and its accompanying relational tensions. But then, because of the complexities inherent in meat, I am thrown once again into another contradictory position. This incongruity resonates with Kathy Acker's investigation of her own body: the ways in which her meat/muscle developed within her bodybuilding practice. We tear our muscles and they fill in the imposed gaps with new muscle fiber, new life. Destruction of muscles leads to rebirth of muscle tissue. Shiva[7], the Hindu God of Destruction and Creation, personifies how the disintegration of individual and social bodies may become vital integration.

In my photographs, I arrange the space,

objects, and bodies (including my own) in such a way that blurs the lines that separate them. This luminescent excess inhabits both the domestic and the animal. The characters become hybrids of machine and animal that populate dream-like worlds. The quotidian in relation to the sensual spectacle sets up a ritualistic narrative—a collision of strewn bodies and space is simultaneously purposeful and haphazard. Through a carnal visual language, these polymorphic bodies are engaged in ambiguous ceremonies.

2004. During the opening for my solo exhibition in Hamburg, Germany, a musicologist shared his interpretation of one my photographs. He apologized, expressing his shame: he saw a combination of the train scene in "Some Like It Hot" and a concentration camp. I loved his interpretation. Recognizing the perversity of those co-existing realities—different variations of absurd hysteria—is integral to how I see myself in relation to the world around me. My photographs explore the body as a membrane between sensuality and restraint, surrender and resistance. My intention is to disrupt the distinction between the interior and exterior of both psychological and physical experiences—to fully inhabit the potential of being meat and living amongst meat. Bataille demands: "If I want to realize totality in my consciousness, I have to relate myself to an immense, ludicrous and painful convulsion of all of humanity." This erotic politics reminds us that everything we need is already here, it reminds us of the beauty and horror of our interconnectedness.

Similarly, Nietzsche's excess of life suffering and pleasure in sublime ecstasy and over-fullness (overflowing, abundance, awe, wonder, wonder as creative principles) as a love of the world (a body both separate and within) has been tremendously reassuring to me. If we are truly conscious of ourselves in relation to ourselves and to others, we inhabit the excess of uncanny: "[It] is a figure and experience of what is at once inside and added on, always already at home yet an outsider, constitutive yet supplementary...The uncanny overflows" (Royle, 19).

1980. I found home the first time I visited *Le Musee Picasso* in Paris. As a nine year old overwhelmingly seduced by Picasso's contorted bodies, the world suddenly made sense. I recognized that this is how we, people, really are. This is Integrity. Clarity. Honesty. Picasso's grotesquely beautiful heads integrated into monstrous forms, helped me feel at ease in my own body—dissonant and rich with life-affirming

energy and sensual and political potential. Bataille's characters' plurality of impulses mirror Picasso's figures. Their "brutal frenzy" and surrender to the "lewd" confirms who I am, who I have always been. Bellmer's displaced body parts "as materialization of hysterical conversion symptoms"(18) formed his commitment to mind-body relations. The lush, precise excesses and the fertility of chaos in Bellmer, Picasso, and Bataille spawn an economy of over-abundance, an erotics of the uncanny, digesting the stranger within.

Soon after I first visited *Le Musee Picasso*, I saw my first Japanese Butoh dance performance. I understood the outrageousness of Butoh, like the erotic, as a key to examine the unconscious mind by plunging into our carnal nature that is often prohibited and suppressed under both Western and Eastern social norms. Butoh asks, "What does it mean to be incarnate on earth?" Butoh is not only performance, but also the embodiment of one of the most precise critical political actions in the history of consciousness of the body.

"The dance evokes images of decay, of fear and desparation, images of eroticism, ecstasy and stillness...the essence of butoh lies in the mechanism through which the dancers stops being himself and becomes someone or something else...Perhaps this enables us to bring our bodies back to their original state and reconcile us with ourselves and with the world around us. The more you adhere to the details of the body, the more they expand to a cosmological scale. When you continue that process, the purity of the body is incredibly refined" (Ashikawa Yôko quoted in Kurihara 1997, 159).

Immediately following my first photo session in the woods with the cicadas and my naked pokeberry juice covered friend, my skin erupts with some kind of itchy, pusy, peculiar allergic reaction. The more I look like I have been infested with flesh-eating parasites, the more I cannot resist photographing my body's newly acquired monstrosities. My initial skin affliction includes an enormous amber pustule, the size of a 50-cent piece, which grew in the middle of my left shin. As it continues to swell, I feel the infection eating

into my tibia; my aching leg bone awakens me in the middle of the night. I am becoming rotten flesh. Although I am convinced I have gangrene, I feel compelled to photograph my own decay. The more the inside oozes to the outside, the better the photographs. This collaboration between my mind and body has served as a perverse, demanding gift, provoking me to photograph myself. For the past 20 years, my body has supplied me with inexplicable skin afflictions that have become central to my photographic material. I am both horrified and thrilled.

Wounds (not self-inflicted, that would be much too easy!—again, I must emphasize the inexplicable, the ineffable, the undecidable, the unknowable) are a direct passage between the concealed and the revealed, a dynamic tension between the public and the private. Wounds ooze the uncanny (ultimate uncertainty). I construct my images as I imagine Kafka must have lived his writing: an inherent openness to others, a "wound beauty," a vulnerability that allows space for the capacity of being wounded—of being receptive, fully alive. The wound is both/and. It inhabits the dream-logic of the monstrous, the abject. Wounds produce intersections of possibility (Kristeva's *carrefours* [8]). They embody erotic politics—*flechten*: an interweaving of everything within everything. Wounds convey a circumlocution, a radical metaphoricity, a Gordian knot. Wounds, like animals, exist in a language that is not clear-cut, not comprehensible, containable—they seep, they demand attention. In Kafka's writing, wounding is wholly different from cutting. Wounding enlivens, it bursts forth, re-vivifying—reminding us that life is in constant flux, always gaping, incomplete; while cutting lives in the prison of conceptual language. It simplifies, categorizes, judges, reduces, arrives at a decision along a predetermined path. On the other hand, "The writer is a wound that wounds"(Fred Ulfers on Kafka, NYU, 2008). When we de-cide, when we uphold the tyrannical standards of a language of conceptual understanding, the illusion of truth. Inherently leading to judgment, we cut off other possibilities, we shut down the fertile liminal zone of undecidability.

Undecidability, like artifactuality [9], inhabits the potential life-affirming shift from "seriousness to play." J. G. Ballard conjures the writer as an active dreamer, what I see as a playful prosthetic donor: "The fiction is already here, and the role of the writer is to invent the reality." The wound embodies the art of the allusive. The writings of Brazilian Jewish novelist Clarice Lispector exemplify

the transformative power of this art: "I am alive like a wound, a flower in the flesh." Similarly, Heraclitus, known as the Greek Taoist, focused on the ambiguous relationships of the one to the many—autonomous yet interconnected. His description of this enigma is a metaphoric thrust in which there is always more room for interpretation—always more room for life.

Notes

[1] Like Bataille and Bellmer, Kristeva seeks to dissolve homogeneous normative hierarchies that inhibit the meatiness of our bodies: "...Kristeva, anxious to forge a connection between the somatic and the psychic (and thus ultimately, the symbolic), sees the pulsatile beat of the drives as the bridge between the body's flexion—the spasmodic movement of the glottal or anal sphincters, for example—and the repetition necessary to languages's fundamental spacing, or articulation. It is from this beat that Kristeva sets up what she calls a 'chora': "The *chora*, as rupture and articulations (rhythm) precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality" (Krauss, 221).

[2] As a Sephardic Jewish photographer, the construction of sight and the History of the Gaze are critical to my understanding of my work. My future research includes Spinoza's background as a lens grinder. This particular occupation has come up numerous times in ironic and exciting contexts, such as E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Sand-Man's* ambiguous itinerant Italian optician, Giuseppe Coppola (coppo=eye-socket), (Freud, pp. 137, 159). The violence and beauty, the grotesque exaggerations, in Bataille's *L'Histoire de L'Oeil* offer obvious connections.

[3] Poet-philosopher Edouard Glissant conjures a collective "desire to go against the [monolingual] root...The root is not important. Movement is. Center and periphery are equivalent...[This relationship involves] revelatory wanderings: spiral retelling; dialectics of rerouting, asserting...political strength but, simultaneously, the rhizome of a multiple relationship with the Other and basing every community's reason for existence on a modern form of the sacred, which would be, all in all, Poetics of Relation" (Glissant, 16).

[4] "Kristeva's theorization of the abject had a very different starting point from Bataille's, one that was not primarily social—for all its chapters based on the anthropology of Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*—but part philosophical and part psychoanalytic" (Krauss, 237).

[5] The more discussions I have with viewers about my work, the more I witness the infinite complexities of how pleasure and difference are regulated—in particular,

rigid gender distinctions and the ways in which we are all so entrenched in the invisibility of sexism. I have found that fear of human meatiness, our grotesque primal possibilities, actually feeds sexism. A few years ago, I was invited to participate in an exhibition sponsored by San Francisco's apparently not so radical fetish scene—Women-of-Color BDSM. Among the four participating photographers, I was the only woman. After several months of logistical preparation, my photography entries were abruptly censored by the curator because of our conflicting interpretations of the concept of fetish. She expressed disgust at what she interpreted as placenta coming out of a "man's" crotch, and at a woman with hair on her toes. This was an unexpected and an ironically fascinating gender reversal. Her bottom-line was that the bodies in the images needed to be unambiguously beautiful, i.e., hairless, well-groomed, and Gender-Specific: "I believe I stated that there can be nudity, however, it should be tasteful, fetish-style sexy, artistic and in keeping with the 2257 [code] i.e.,: No sexual stimulation, no intercourse, no erect penises, no fingers in vaginas, no spread eagled legs for the women, no spread butt anus shots, fisting, pornographic inspired. The images we would like to present will give a flavor of the various fetishes. However, many aspects of fetish are about the sexy clothes, shoes, props, play toys, hair and makeup..." When one of the most underground queer sub-cultures in the most "experimental" city in the US is so deeply rooted in hetero normative patriarchal conventional notions of the real: i.e., assimilationist consumerism, sanitized beauty, and psychological comfort, then, as social exiles, where can we go?

Apparently, not across the Bay Bridge to Oakland. One of my images that was censored in San Francisco's City Hall for sexualized interpretations: I was told (and read in my comment book) the reflected head was seen either as testicles or as hairy breasts, was censored in the Oakland Federal Building for racialized interpretations: it happened to be Black History Month—the head in my photograph was seen as a head, as opposed to testicles and breasts, but a head of enslaved bodies. Also, the justification for removing this particular image included comments about the monks who had been recently burned in Tibet, and also references to the Oklahoma Federal Building Bombing—as if I was depicting and even celebrating the mutilated, fragmented bodies of subjugated ethnic others.

[6] One interpretation of a Hindu creation myth is when Brahma creates Sarasvati, the earth. He wants to have sex with her, but she tries to evade him by continually transforming herself into another creature. With each transformation, Brahma tracks her down: "She became a cow, but he found her and became a bull. He made love with her [i.e., raped] and cattle were born. Then she became a mare and he a stallion, she a ewe and he a ram. So the continued creating all the creatures" (Priya Hemenway, *Hindu Gods: the spirit of the divine*. 2003. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 27).

[7] "Shiva is the link between lives (death) and between moments (eternity). He is known as the fathomless abyss" (Hemenway, 32).

[8] "The object would thus be this intermediary position—neither subject nor object—for which the psychiatric term 'borderline' would prove to be extremely useful...In this, Kristeva's conception of the object is curiously congruent with Sartre's characterization of the visqueux (slimy), a condition of matter that is neither liquid nor solid, but somewhere midway between the two" (Krauss, 237, 238).

[9] Artifactuality, the reference is to Bernard Stiegler and Jacques Derrida, in the book "Echographie de la télévision" [Polity Press].

Bibliography

Bataille, George, *The Story of the Eye*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1967.

Bataille, Georges. *The Tears of Eros*, trans. Peter Conner San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989.

Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Bhabha, Homi K. "Beyond the Pale: Art in the Age of Multicultural Translation," *Kunst and Museum Journal* 5:4 (1994), pp. 15-23.

Bois, Yve-Alain and Krauss, Rosalind. *Formless: A User's Guide*. New York: Zone Books, 1997.

Broude, Norma and Mary D. Garrard, Eds., *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970's, History and Impact*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1994.

Derrida, Jacques. *Glas*. Paris: Galilee, 1974.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. 1972. *Anti-Oedipus*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. London and New York: Continuum, Vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2004.

1980. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, Vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2004.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Penguin Classic Series. 1919.

Gagnon, Monika. "A Convergence of Stakes: Photography, Feminism, and AIDS," *Fluid Exchanges: Artists and Critics in the AIDS Crisis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Genet, Jean. *Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et foutu aux chiotte*. Hanuman Books, 1988.

Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Giroux, Henry A. "Pedagogy and the Critical Practice of Photography," *Afterimage*. November, 1992.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Indianapolis: Indiana Press, 1995.

Gusfield, Joseph R. "Nature's Body and the Metaphors of Food," *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier, Eds., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Haraway, Donna, "Cyborg Manifesto" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Linda J. Nicholson, Ed., New York: Routledge, 1990.

Hemenway, Priya, *Hindu Gods: the spirit of the divine*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003.

Hollibaugh, Amber, "Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure," *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, Carole Vance, Ed., Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge, 1981.

Jentsch, Ernest. *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*. 1906.

Lacquer, Thomas, "Clio Looks at Corporal Politics," *Corporal Politics*. Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 1993.

Lacy, Suzanne, "Introduction: Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys," *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, Suzanne Lacy, Ed., Seattle: Seattle Bay State Press, 1995, pp. 19-47.

Lippard, Lucy. *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multi-Cultural America*. The New Press, 2000.

Lotringer, Sylvere. *Overexposed: Treating Sexual Perversion in America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Mulgan, Geoff. "Uncertainty, Reversibility, and Variety" in *New Times The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990's*. Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques. Eds., New York: Verso, 1989 pp. 379-394.

Ronell, Avital, *Angry Women*, Andrea Juno Ed., San Francisco: Re/Search, 1991.

Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

Sachs, Wolfgang Ed., *The Development Dictionary*. London: Zed, 1991.

Schirmacher, Wolfgang, Lectures including Bataille, European Graduate Studies Program, June, 2008.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Simon, Roger I. "Forms of Insurgency in the Production of Popular Memories: The Columbus Quincentenary and the Pedagogy of Countercommemoration," *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren Eds., New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 127-144.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Smith, Kiki. Amsterdam: ICA, 1990.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniture, the Gigantic, the*

Souvenir, the Collection. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984.

Taussig, Michael T. *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Taylor, Sue. "Hans Bellmer in The Art Institute of Chicago: The Wandering Libido and the Hysterical Body." Mary Louise Reynolds Collection, The University of Chicago.

Turner, Bryan S. *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

Weber, Sam. Lectures on The Uncanny, European Graduate Studies Program, June, 2008.

Ulfers, Fred. Lectures on Nietzsche, European Graduate Studies Program, June, 2008.

Zizek, Slavoj. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Other Related Dates*. London: Verso, 2002.

Zizek, S. Lectures at NYU in Avital Ronell's Antigone and Hegel class, October, 2009.

Cara Judea Alhadeff, born in Boulder, Colorado, has had numerous solo and group exhibitions in the US, Europe, and Asia; receiving awards in surrealist, erotic photography and interdisciplinary art. Her writing and photographs have been published in European art journals and television programs. She recently exhibited her large-format color photographs at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and continues to be part of their permanent collection. Cara Judea's work has been exhibited and reviewed with Cindy Sherman, Joel-Peter Witkin, Sally Mann, Alfredo Jarr, John Coplans, and Dieter Appelt. Because her images have been subject to censorship on both US coasts, Freedom of Speech organizations such as artsave/People for the American Way have publicly defended her photographs. Currently, she is exhibiting in galleries, museums, and international art fairs in Germany, Portugal, Zurich and Belgium.