

Rachel Kneebone
Etel Adnan

Leonor Serrano Rivas
Susan Aldworth

There,
where

we
promenade

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This Porous Space

Catriona Whiteford

We never know ourselves as truly as we do at the moment caught between dreaming and waking – adrift – somewhere on the right side of chaos.

fissures
within words

where thought

enters

a border
zone

instinct

obtunded,
powerful
in
immaterial surrender

Sleep and rest are surrender. In October 2019 Ama Josephine Budge and Lise Grønvold convened the conference *The Art Of Not Doing: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Rest, Resistance and Pleasure Activism*. Centring unproductivity as an activist practice through resting, suspending, pausing and breaking, the programme supported political acts of reclamation by and for everyone – particularly those marginalised by the racial and gender inequalities of neo-liberal capitalism. These modes of entry into respite and dreaming refreshingly eclipse most art-historical narratives of sleep drawn from the early Surrealist movement and fostered by historical psychoanalytic study. Instead, the panel of speakers gave space to our right to pause, to rest, to sleep and importantly, to dream.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that, 'sleep lingers all our lifetime about our eyes'¹, a remark that feels politically relevant in a cultural climate where sleep and rest are gravely starved. If our bodies have the ability to remind us of the importance of sleep through simplistic physical manifestation, how then do we measure the importance of dreaming, and where is the vernacular that situates sleep and dreaming as the gatekeepers to life through our eyes in our lifetime? To do this we must find a common language to describe the porous space where rest, resistance and stillness can be radical.

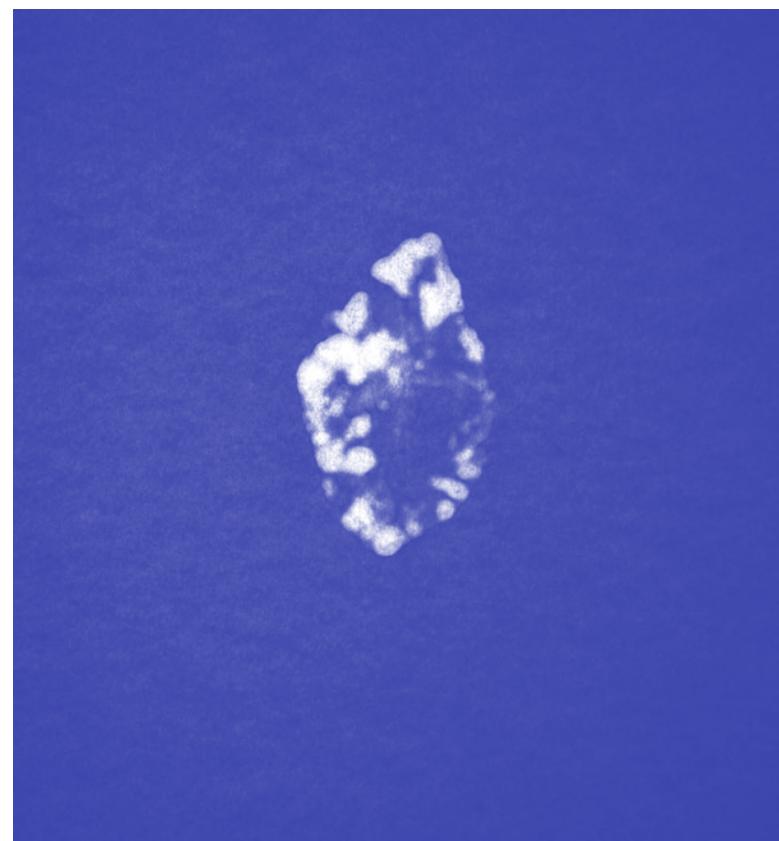
In the first pages of Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation* she discusses the Western consciousness of art, and the reflection upon it, as mimesis or representation. Sontag recounts that, 'the most celebrated and influential modern doctrines, those of Marx and Freud, actually amount to elaborate systems of hermeneutics, aggressive and impious theories of interpretation. All observable phenomena are bracketed, in Freud's phrase, as manifest content. This manifest content must be probed and pushed aside to find the true meaning – the latent content beneath.'²

Drawn from the poetic, the psychological and the physical, the exhibition title and concept, *There, where we promenade*, takes reference from artist, philosopher and poet, Etel Adnan's book *Night*, where memory, consciousness and sleep place night at their centre to unearth memories sheltered in the body. Rooted in the notion of sleep's importance in memory formation, the exhibition looks at unconscious dream states and modes of knowledge negotiated through art, science and the imagination to form fractured narratives that feel familiar – a collective memory, impression or experience – as if trying to verbalise a dream.

This latent content – the hidden meaning of the dream, which can be discovered through analysis – is foregrounded within the psychoanalytic theorem that every dream happens in accordance with its interpretation as a chamber or channel opens into another. And so, what

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays & Lectures*, The Library of America, 1983, p.471.
2. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966, p.4.

happens when sleeping states produce porous interplays between dreaming and archiving? How do our personal value systems select and edit parasitic memories and how does consciousness decide between undecidable alternatives?



'In each person's past there are elements of different value which determine the psychic "constellation."³ In 1924 German researchers John Jenkins and Karl Dallenbach devised a research experiment to compare the rate of forgetting during

3. Carl Gustav Jung, *Dreams*, trans. RFC Hull, Routledge Classics, 2002, p.4.

sleep and waking.⁴ They were interested, not in tracing the absolute curves of forgetting in sleep and waking, but in comparing the two rates of forgetting. Time spent asleep helped cement the newly-learned chunks of information, preventing them from fading away. In contrast, an equivalent time spent awake was deeply hazardous to recently-acquired memories, resulting in an accelerated trajectory of forgetting.

Reminiscent of a 'salience network', a large-scale network in the brain where the integration of emotional and sensory stimuli confidently modulate between internal and external cognition, the exhibition brings together four female artists – Etel Adnan, Leonor Serrano Rivas, Susan Aldworth and Rachel Kneebone – who share the gallery space in an individual and collective cerebral slippage, producing work that reflects on time and place, caught, somewhere between states, both through use of material and personal exploration of interior and exterior geographies. With works at the intersection of the liminal and lucid, the exhibition forms a space at the far edge of consciousness and becomes a meeting place for audience and artwork, coalesced into one sensorial experience where sleep allows for the consolidation of memory, expertly measuring vulnerability and experience to make room for learning.

Each artist produces work that exists beyond the formal constraints of language, and it is here that all four women contrast reason and unreasoned experience, function and memory, then collapse them into each other and plunge us into the unknown. The works reclaim space where memory, dreamscapes and cognition slowly oscillate. Sourced in the irrational and the instinctive, upon crossing the threshold of the gallery, each work is a gateway of reverie and point of transition between two realities slowly revealing itself to the viewer.

In Le Corbusier's narrative of the 'promenade' and 'threshold' he describes a grouping of

4. In 1983 Francis Crick created the term 'parasitic memories': a theory based on REM-sleep dreaming function as a method for the removal of unwanted or overlapping copies of information in the brain.

JG Jenkins and KM Dallenbach, 'Obliviscence during sleep and waking,' *American Journal of Psychology*, 35 ,1924, pp.605–12.

experiences traversing along "the route from light to dark", where architecture acts as a form of initiation of unfolding views, tangible boundaries of inner and outer worlds and a blurring, synchronisation of the senses.⁵ It is here, beyond the glass frontage and the threshold of Frelands Foundation that Etel Adnan's leporellos – accordian-folded books – weave the concrete with the metaphorical.



Adnan was born in 1925 in Beirut and lives and works in Paris. She is regarded as one of the most central cultural representatives of the Arab diaspora, and an initiator of the progression of female liberation. Her interest in visual art was established during the years of the Algerian war of independence, when writing in French had political implications that she refused to embrace. Adnan's leporellos, painted from memory and folded with concertina-style pages are complex yet simultaneously simplistic, releasing poetic narratives from memory.

Key Signs (2017) groups swabs of watercolour alongside inky pictographic scripts, bridging

5. Flora Samuel, *Le Corbusier and the Architectural Promenade*, Birkhauser, Basel, 2010, p.66.

the textual and the visual. This practice has particular significance in the Arab context where writing and art often come together. Here, the leporello becomes a vehicle that bridges a multiplicity of forms and aesthetics to create narratives produced from memory. It exists in an undefined space somewhere between the real and the imagined. For Adnan the leporellos are cinematic. This 'rich phenomenological data about inner experience,¹⁶ the linguistic aspect of mind wandering used to examine the relationship between language, experience and attention in poetry is no truer than in the pages of *Night* or in the markings of the leporello.

Language and experience are further pursued within the work of artist Leonor Serrano Rivas in her 2018 film *Estrella* which ruptures from the skin of the gallery walls to submerge the viewer in a nocturnal combination of hypnagogic images and sound. It is here, within the image that we begin our journey into night, where liquid flows and time has no sense of self. Unique to a state of consciousness where time and place overlap without distinction, suspended between wakefulness and slumber, 'sometimes the dreamer feels himself in the very skin of his nocturnal double, perceiving with his double's eyes, or touching with his hands the other characters in the dream. Sometimes he watches this reflection of himself developing among the others, watching – with horror or perhaps even indifference – his gestures which are being performed outside of himself, as if they were being shown on a screen or happening on the other side of a mirror.'¹⁷

These fluid conversions of dreamscapes into artworks are, in this instance, bound within the architectural framing of a large, curved, mirrored arc installed within the gallery. Interested in exploring how architecture is able to register inner or subconscious information, Serrano Rivas' work uses a theatrical staging that cultivates a dreamlike state in which the audience can participate. Constructed from a fictional journey into the past where Serrano Rivas looks back at the

6. *The Restless Compendium: Interdisciplinary Investigations of Rest and Its Opposites*, Felicity Callard, Kimberley Staines and James Wilkes (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p.4.
7. Roger Caillois, *The Dream Adventure*, Orion Press, 1963, p.xiii.

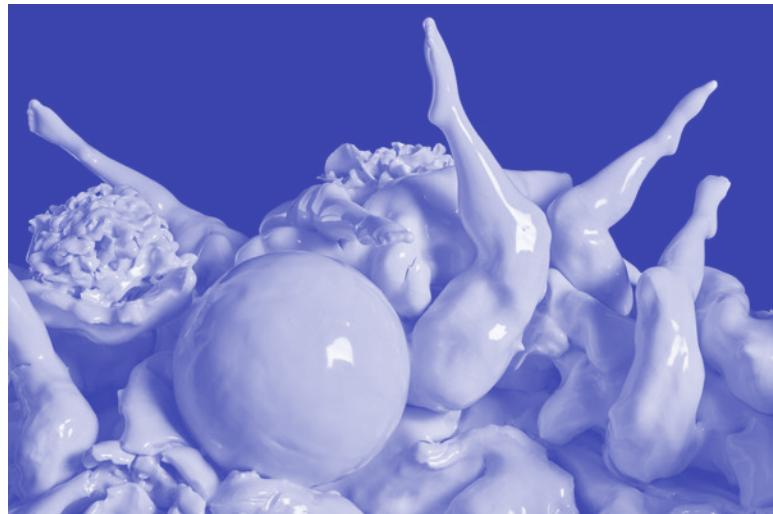


poet and theatre director, Gregorio Martínez Sierra's El Teatro de Arte and early twentieth century Spanish theatre, we find ourselves captivated by her dripping visuals and submerged in sound echoing throughout the gallery.

Alongside Serrano Rivas' installation sit the sculptural works of Rachel Kneebone where undulating forms address and question the human condition through the exploration of flesh, bone, internalised experience, and physical and emotional restoration. Kneebone's sculptures operate in a near-subliminal space, blurring the boundaries between the conscious and the subconscious, the real and the imagined.

Far from shrinking, our sensory perception faculty broadens its field of operations in every respect when we are asleep. It often loses

in energy and tension what it gains in extension, for it rarely brings us anything other than vague impressions. In each of Kneebone's works, fragments of the human body multiply, merge and cascade in a broad fluidity between states that is reflective of the wide range of historical and literary sources that inform the artist's practice.



Each of the four artists, linked by their literary, philosophical and cerebral investigations call us to consider the ways in which we live outside ourselves before sleep brings us back. Pushing out from within the delicate porcelain skin of each work, Kneebone's sculptures successfully play with physical form to produce something unrecognisable yet familiar. This physical abstraction is continued within the work of artist Susan Aldworth who produces imagery at an interplay between somatic, mental and social states. Her works *Passing Thoughts 3* and *Passing Thoughts 4* translate the physicality of the brain into artworks that reveal a consciousness at work.

Aldworth has developed unique printmaking methodologies and has worked with two of the most renowned printmakers in the UK – Stanley Jones and Nigel Oxley – to be the first practitioners in history to create a series of prints etching directly from human

brain tissue. In partnership with the Parkinson's Brain Bank at Hammersmith Hospital, they developed a technique that allowed them to successfully capture the intricate marks of the brain onto an etching plate. Aldworth combines digital photography and medical imagery to explore the depths of consciousness and the transience of self. The digital prints of the brain in this work, *Passing Thoughts*, were serendipitous – they captured a transient image that existed momentarily and then disappeared like a thought.

Each of the four artists produce work that is rich in memory (real and imagined) where undercurrents of emotion slowly oscillate. Together these works make us pause, question and explore what it means to be.

It is here, standing in the gallery space and free from the confines of our minds' architecture, that we dance across the threshold into a space where language no longer has a region, sleep no longer stays in the static, dreams mirror reality and bodies pursue the promise of the promenade.

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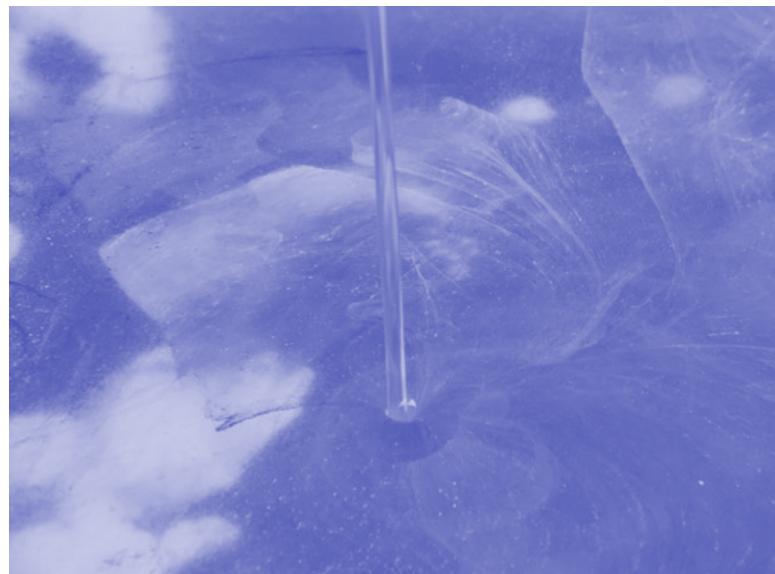
- p.5: Susan Aldworth, *Passing Thoughts 2*, 2013. Courtesy the artist
p.7: Etel Adnan, *Key Signs*, 2017. Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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p.9: Leonor Serrano Rivas, *Mockup for an Endless Theatre*, 2019
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p.10: Rachel Kneebone, *The Area on Whose Brink Silence Begins*, 2015. Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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History between dreaming and waking: Leonor Serrano Rivas' *Estrella*

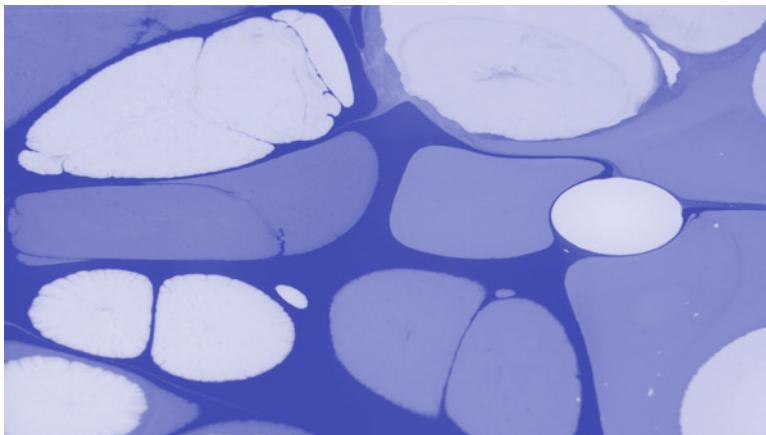
Lotte Johnson

A pockmarked sky, studded with stars and littered with the dust of the Milky Way. Music swells as two planetary bodies glide towards each other. The opening scene of Leonor Serrano Rivas' film *Estrella* (2018) appears to take its cue from its Spanish title, meaning 'star' – also a popular woman's name. A floating cosmos sets the scene; we inhabit a space 'above eye level', where, according to Portuguese poet Gonçalo M Tavares, we find 'the person who hopes that divine elements, | chance and destiny, resolve that which psychology | and instruments are unable to perceive.'¹ Tavares is a frequent reference point for Serrano Rivas and her work often occupies this space 'above eye level', a space she defines as that of the unconscious. In *Estrella*, we find ourselves in the realm of the nocturnal, of the unknowable, of dreams. The second scene cuts to a side view of a tank of water, illuminated in the darkness, like an empty stage that lies still with anticipation before a performance begins. Perhaps that opening sky was in fact the water's surface, its murky membrane offering up an aqueous plane for action to play out. All is not as it seems in *Estrella*'s world, where one thing quickly becomes another.

1. Gonçalo M. Tavares, *A Voyage to India*, trans. Rhett McNeil, Dalkey Archive Press, 2016, p.38



The first character enters the stage of the tank; a sculptural form is gently lowered into the water by a human hand to the sound of glitching music that swirls as if tracing intergalactic movements. We are back in the world of the cosmos. The form settles on the floor of the tank, as if landing on a planet's surface. Is this creature Estrella herself? The frame switches back to the astrology of the water, now covered by a film of deep blue, red and yellow pigments. White spheres bloom and mutate there. A pulsing rhythm, like a heartbeat, signals a living presence – Estrella again? The following scene returns to the side view of the tank, where a second sculptural form arrives, and then a third. The hand carefully places them in formation, as if arranging three protagonists on stage. In this amorphous, aquatic environment, the fleshy hand seems out of place; it takes on the role of silent puppeteer, a god-like dramatist setting the stage. The three sculptures are almost anthropomorphic; strange creatures with angular, flat planes for bodies and protruding hoops like limbs. Their structural shapes nod towards a playground of architectural forms or stage designs.



Serrano Rivas conceived these peculiar sculptures when researching in the archive of the Teatro Eslava in Madrid, a famed site for avant-garde theatre in the early twentieth century in Spain, particularly during the period in which director Gregorio Martínez Sierra was at

its helm, staging plays by experimental figures including Federico García Lorca, Rafael P Barradas and Salvador Dalí. Martínez Sierra's book *Un Teatro de Arte en España (1917–1925)* was a primary source for the artist in creating the film *Estrella*. Serrano Rivas sets out to recompose and re-enact the scenography of the theatre; with sculptures taking the role of fictional versions of set designs found in the Teatro Eslava archive. In this act, the water tank becomes a subconscious stage for the history of the Teatro Eslava, harbouring reimagined memories of the plays that took place there. The water offers up a liminal space for the theatrical imagination, a space where histories are blurred.

Finally, we hear Estrella speak. The water vibrates as a woman's voice whispers, only just audible:

Se dice sin palabras, [...] que es el lenguaje perfecto. Se dice también con la música...
(It is said without words, [...] that is the perfect language. It is said with music...)²

Estrella haunts the water. Her body appears to be absent; her whisper is her only audible presence. Her voice holds history, as does her watery stage. Perhaps she is the body of the water. After all, Estrella is fluid – at once fictional and real. Serrano Rivas encountered her in the archive of the Teatro Eslava; her name derives from that of the publishing house founded by Martínez Sierra – Estrella. In addition, she is a character from a poem by Federico García Lorca, *Madrigal de verano (Summer Madrigal)* (1920). However, the first whispered phrases that we hear are not this particular character's own words; instead they are lifted by Serrano Rivas from another text by Lorca – his first play *El Maleficio de la Mariposa (The Butterfly's Evil Spell)* (1920), first also performed at the Teatro Eslava. This symbolist work incorporated music and ballet and only lasted four performances before being cancelled. The script includes frequent references to 'estrellas (stars)'.

Through Serrano Rivas' deft manipulation, Estrella becomes an amalgamated being, offering

² Federico García Lorca, 'El Maleficio de la Mariposa', *Obras Completas*, vol.II, trans. Leonor Serrano Rivas, Aguilar, 1977, p.5.

a channel for several of the lost voices from the fated theatre. She is of the past, yet occupies the present. She exists in a dream state, a blurred space between fantasy and reality. Serrano Rivas' interest in dreams pervades her work; her sources range from Tavares to French sociologist Roger Caillois, whose book *The Dream Adventure* (1963) is a key influence for the artist. Like Serrano Rivas, Caillois is no Freudian; they are both sceptical of the didactic reading of dreams. Caillois critiques the formulaic nature of dream guides, which he charts from as early as ancient Egypt in the Twelfth Dynasty. As a counterpoint, he posits the possibility of entering and exploring the dreamscape itself, describing how 'the dreamer feels himself in the very skin of his nocturnal double, perceiving with his double's eyes, or touching with his hands the other characters in the dream'.³ In Serrano Rivas' film, Estrella is our double. As we enter the sensory dream world of the film, we are submerged in her aqueous space and her voice and heartbeat become ours. Yet she is also the double of specific voices from the Teatro Eslava, drawing them from a historical reality – one which has become obfuscated over time – into a fictional space, where she might also function as the double for a litany of lost women from history. Today, Teatro Eslava is known as Joy Eslava Disco; it has been converted from theatre to nightclub. It seems apt that it is a space for nocturnal doubling, a place of escape. The nightclub offers a stage for dream-like, hallucinatory experiences, just like the body of water in Estrella.

Another scene change and we return to the water's surface, its skin now populated with coloured pigments, their forms swelling and contracting as they interact with each other. It becomes apparent that the sequence is being played in reverse, droplets of colour disappearing and being sucked upwards by some invisible force. Time is skewed in Estrella's world, with no clear linear trajectory. Serrano Rivas studied the craft of marbling paper using water and coloured ink on a residency in Tokyo, using the traditional technique in which ink floats for a few seconds on the surface and then drops. She learned that each coloured ink has a different density, dropping at different speeds and weights; just like memories, which ebb and flow from us. Here, there

3. Roger Caillois, *The Dream Adventure*, Orion Press, 1963, p.xiii.

is no paper, no tangible surface to receive the swirling patterns. This formless, subconscious world does not demand reality. The drops of coloured ink quickly evaporate from the surface, revealing a dark blue pool that disappears in turn to reveal a milky way of pastel colours in the depths of the water below.

Estrella's voice returns in an excited whisper, enunciating 'la la la la la' with an articulated flourish that marks the next scene change. A drop of ink hits the surface of the water tank, its clear liquid housing the stage of sculptural forms below. The ink begins its descent; as it passes beyond the threshold of the water's surface it transforms into billowing plumes of radiant blue. The form briefly resembles a fantastical aquatic creature, which soon dissolves, the blue pigment spreading like smoke. Estrella is everywhere. The rhythmic delivery of her voice is like an incantation. 'La la la la la'. The phrase is repeated, fading as Estrella's blue presence disperses. Clouds of indigo pigment obfuscate the clear water as it seeps across the stage and around the sculptural forms. It is like the spirit of Estrella has been released into this landscape. Her voice can be heard again:

Estrella, Estrella, Estrella piensa beber
aire, y subir como un globo hasta donde
llega la niebla, y dejarse caer desde allí
(Estrella, Estrella, Estrella aims to drink
air, and rise as a balloon to where the fog
comes, and let herself fall from there)⁴

This self-address is another quote from the archive of Martínez Sierra – this time by Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, who lived in Madrid and whose work was performed at the Teatro Esclava. Embodying Darío's words, Estrella rises into the air like the ink droplets on the water's surface, then falls back to the surface and into the body of the water, spreading like fog through its depths. The tank of water is a stage for Estrella as protagonist, and as she falls she becomes the body of water itself.

4. Rubén Darío, 'Prólogo' in Gregorio Martínez Sierra, *Teatro de Ensueño: Melancólica Sinfonía de Rubén Darío*, trans. Leonor Serrano Rivas, Renacimiento, 1911, pp.11–14.

In her text 'Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water', writer Astrida Neimanis asserts that, 'We are all bodies of water'.⁵ Water connects nature and culture; it is the element that entwines and entangles the human and the natural world. She writes: 'As watery, we experience ourselves less as isolated entities, and more as oceanic eddies: *I am a singular, dynamic whorl dissolving in a complex, fluid circulation*'.⁶ Neimanis' description seems fitting for Estrella, this amorphous female character who is at once singular and complex, occupying a specific historical moment while existing fluidly across time. Neimanis argues for a more expansive idea of feminism, which she calls 'hydrofeminism', pushing at the borders of feminist theory and striving to expand it beyond the binaries of sexual difference.⁷

She states: 'We are both materially and semiotically entwined with other bodies of water in a gestating, differentiating and interpermeating relation'.⁸ Neimanis' words are especially resonant at a time in which our planet's waters have been catastrophically polluted and exploited; they also offer a model for thinking about water as a metaphor for fluid notions of time and history. Bodies of water have long held a diversity of histories and stories, from birthing the very earliest life on earth, to hosting mythical cities like Atlantis, to preserving shipwrecks, to engulfing the lost lives of those using bodies of water to flee oppressive regimes. Like the dream adventure proposed by Caillois, water can offer us a space for entanglement and expansion rather than restriction. In Estrella, water acts as a body that holds and complicates memory, that gives life to the entwined voices of women.

As Serrano Rivas' film comes to an end, Estrella's voice gains clarity and volume, as if rising to the surface of the unconscious. She resumes her earlier refrain, extending it:

5. Astrida Neimanis, 'Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water', *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*, Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni and Fanny Söderbäck (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.85.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p.96.

8. Astrida Neimanis. 'Bodies of Water, Human Rights, and the Hydrocommons', *Topia*, vol.21, spring 2009, p.161.

Se dice sin palabras, [...] que es el lenguaje perfecto. Se dice también con la música, 'que es el ritmo con el que se mueven los Astros.' [...] el habla de lo Desconocido. (It is said without words, [...] that is the perfect language. It is said with music, 'that is the rhythm that moves the stars.' [...] It is the speech of the Unknown.)

Simultaneously, the patterns on the water's murky surface gain clarity as the final stage of the marbling process is revealed on screen. A sheet of paper rolls into the frame, bearing the psychedelic patterns that it has lifted from the pigments waiting on the water's surface. As the paper is peeled back again, it reveals the body of water, its depths permeated with entangled pigments.

In *Estrella*, Serrano Rivas creates an underwater theatre of memories. The tank is unable to contain this aquatic theatre, this aqueous world. Liquid pigments spill onto paper, dissolve into air, seep out of the frame of the camera. Like memories, water morphs, shifts and flows – it is slippery, difficult to grasp and yet always present. In this fluid environment, history is a liquid terrain. A body of water offers an expanded space in which time refuses to move at its regular pace, existing between the real and fictional, the past and present. In *Estrella*, Serrano Rivas generates a space of imagination in which history, lying somewhere between dreaming and waking, is coaxed out of hiding.

Image Credits

- p. 13: Leonor Serrano Rivas,
Estrella, 2018 © the artist and CA2M
p. 14: Leonor Serrano Rivas,
Estrella, 2018 © the artist and CA2M

Transience and Passing Thoughts

Susan Aldworth and Jill Sheridan

Jill Sheridan: The works shown in this exhibition are representative of twenty years of research and experimentation, pushing the boundaries of printmaking. Your work before this time was far more decorative and autobiographical, but could you describe how you have arrived at this latest body of work?

was a revelation. Where was the 'me' in the physical matter of the brain

JS: So having had this revelation, how did you begin this journey?

SA: I approached the Consultant who carried out the scan and he agreed that I could observe him at work. Every Tuesday morning for the next two years, I would go to the hospital and draw. Drawing has always been my way into a new subject matter. I sat behind a screen looking inside the brains of patients. I soon learnt that a brain is as individual as a face. It became apparent to me that these cerebral landscapes were a form of portraiture. In the past you could only see the brain via the dissection of a cadaver. Here I was looking straight

Susan Aldworth: Over the last two decades, alongside my exploration into print techniques, I have spent a great deal of time researching the relationship between the physical brain and the self. In 1999 I had a diagnostic brain scan during which I was able to see inside my brain, real time, on a monitor. The scan

into living, working brains. What was the relationship between this physical organ and my sense of self and consciousness?

JS: You talk about seeing this early work as a form of portraiture – can you explain what you meant by this? The subjects of your portraits were anonymous – you observed their medical procedures, but you never formally met them and they didn't sit for you in a conventional way. So how did you interpret the word *portrait* at that stage?

(2006). The brain is inexorably linked to personal identity. So, if I use drawings from an individual's brain scan then it has to be some sort of portrait of them. I was fascinated by the ambiguity of brain scans: the gap between what they do show (the physical structure of the brain) and what they don't – consciousness and a sense the self.

JS: You said you were interested in the anatomy of the brain and you were awarded a Wellcome Trust grant to be Artist in Residence at the Gordon

SA: My portraits have developed from my explorations into 'What is a self?' These were initially inspired by drawings of the cerebral landscapes of the thirty people I observed and I developed them into a suite of etchings called *Brainscapes*

SA: The experiences of looking at the dissected cadavers and body parts in jars as opposed

Museum of Pathology. What impact did this have on your work?

Watching the dissections was difficult but significant. It led me to think about the brain as a physical object.

JS: You developed a project – *Reassembling the Self* (2015) – which investigated schizophrenia. You told me that you made portraits of schizophrenia itself. What did you mean by this?

SA: I was invited to work with the legendary lithographer Stanley Jones at the Curwen Studio to work on the *Reassembling the Self* lithographs. We reassembled the body into impossible anatomies to question the relationship between the physical body and the self. We used plate lithography to merge drawn marks with digital photography and ancient anatomical illustrations. The reassembled anatomy became a metaphor for the pain and difficulty of having schizophrenia when the self is under attack from within. I wanted to portray a body out of kilter with its sense of self.

JS: It was at this time that the curator, Paul Moorhouse, from the National Portrait Gallery

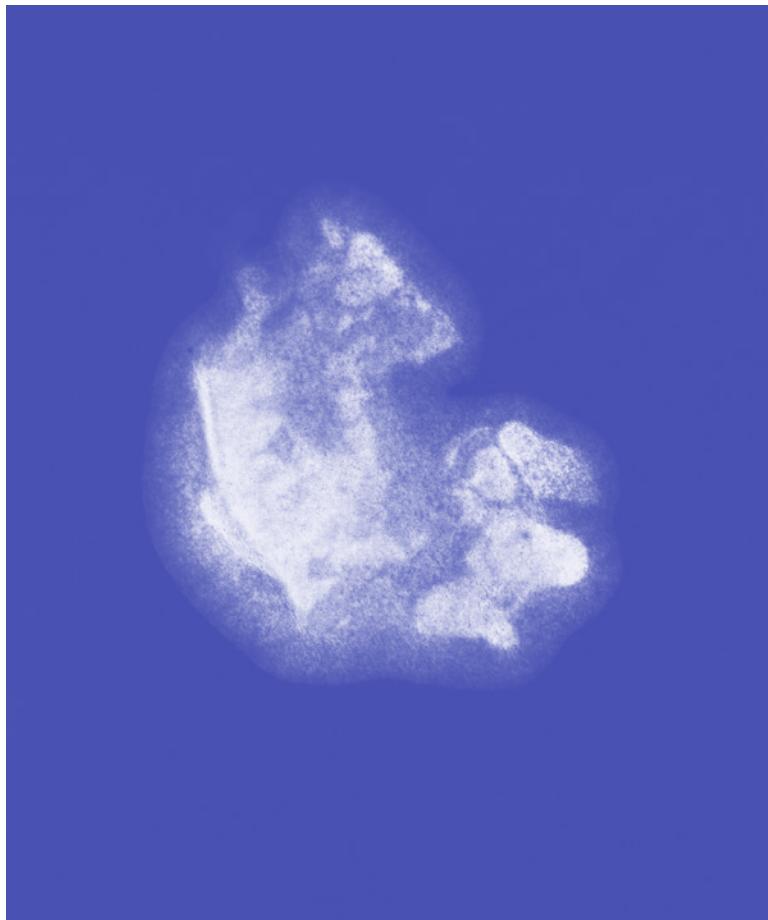
to the disembodied, digitalised scans of a living body was very important to my ideas.

SA: No, Paul was interested in the philosophical theories of mind, and we spoke

in London came to your studio. Was it obvious to him that your work at this stage was about portraiture?

about how notions of human identity were being challenged by the materialism of current neuroscience.

We discussed how these ideas might radicalise my work when making portraits. There are many narratives that make up



a person. There is the external surface, the anatomical structure of the body, neuroscientific explanation of what is going on in the brain, a medicalised account and, finally, there is the personal account – what it feels like to be you. I developed a visual language which allowed these different narratives to emerge in my work. Paul's visit was a catalyst. The result was the National Portrait Gallery display *Susan Aldworth: The Portrait Anatomised* (2013), three large-scale portraits of people with epilepsy, each made up of nine individual monotypes. They are complex works merging the philosophical, personal and medical narratives.

JS: How did you make the leap from these huge multi-image portraits to this current body of work? Not only are they a change of focus but the scale has reduced dramatically.

SA: I was invited to observe a brain dissection at the Parkinson's UK Brain Bank at Hammersmith Hospital. Before the dissection began I asked if I could hold the brain as a tribute to Helen Chadwick's 1991 *Self Portrait* where she impossibly holds her brain in her hands. What I hadn't expected was that the brain would feel so strange, so heavy and so very cold.

I watched the dissection but I couldn't forget the sensation of holding the brain.

I began to wonder if it would be possible to print from the brain itself? It would be a definitive portrait of someone – an image of the self, composed solely from the marks of the brain itself. The scale of the work changed because of the size of the human brain.

JS: What made you think about etching from the brain?

are arranged in a very formal way on a metal tray which made me think of the tray as an etching plate. What marks would I get from the brain slices? Would it be ethical to use a human brain to print from? This work would be the culmination of more than a decade of research and experimentation. These prints would reflect my obsession with the dependence of the Self on the physical brain. They would push the boundaries of what a portrait could be; an imprint of the person.

I was given ethical approval to make a suite of etchings printed directly from human brain tissue, by the Parkinson's UK Brain Bank at Hammersmith Hospital. We would work under strict supervision and with clear guidelines.

SA: During the dissection of a brain, the slices

JS: Did you have any expectations of what the results might be when printing from a human brain?

SA: Not really. I wanted to see what was possible and initially it was pure experimentation. I worked with master printer Nigel Oxley on this project and at the beginning we determined that there would not be any drawn marks on the plates and hoped that the form of the brain would emerge from the etching process.

The first experiment we made in the studio for *Transience* (2013) was to print from a lamb's brain, sourced from Smithfield Market. The consistency and texture of a fresh brain is surprisingly soft, fluid and greasy. Once it has been in formaldehyde, the flesh hardens and goes smooth. What we learned from this first experiment is that technically we could get the authentic shape we wanted without any drawn marks at all. A brain is mainly made from fat, so we used the fatty surface of the brain to make greasy marks on the zinc etching plate. This worked well and, where the big arteries emerged from the brain, there were some beautiful slightly raised marks etched onto the plate. We rejected these first etchings for the exhibition, but they do have a unique quality.

Transience, however, is about the human brain, and although these early experiments were useful, the preserved slices of human

brain had a completely different texture. We wondered if we would get any surface texture off them as the surface of the slices appeared completely smooth.

JS: You told me that you only had the human brain slices for two days. Was this long enough to get the results you hoped to achieve?

The brain slices were of different shapes and sizes – some half sections shaped like conch shells, others clearly showing the two halves of the brain. Etching is a convoluted and tricky series of processes. However much you plan, you are still at the mercy of the unpredictable – room temperature, strength of acid, the way the paper has absorbed the water and the way the ink sits on the plate. But serendipity is part of the process which is why artists love it. The most technical part for me is making the plates and each plate offered a different result. Compositinally, the brain slices seemed to find their right place on the plates. The surfaces of the slices unexpectedly proved to be very textural and full of secret marks which we only discovered through the etching process.

SA: The two days of platemaking were imbued with a series of happy accidents. The experiment proved to be more successful than we had dared hope.

Working with a human brain was a transformative and emotional experience. The images revealed themselves gradually through this very ancient process, and the prints, although taken from a dead cross-section, seemed to expose a consciousness at work. We produced five good plates during the short time that we were allowed to work with this material.

JS: Making the etching plates is just the first part of the process. Could you tell from the plates that the prints would be interesting and good enough to exhibit?

SA: They looked promising – but the proof of a plate is in the print. We experimented with colour and tone as well as technique until the images worked individually. The first small prints needed colour to come alive but the three larger etchings worked well simply printed black. The contrast between the black and the white of the paper was dynamic, suggesting a visual equivalent of a consciousness. It was as if we had captured something more than flesh. They have a three-dimensional and a somewhat spiritual quality. In a sense, they are the complete opposite of a scan which is a digitalised version of a brain. They are quite simply astonishing portraits.

JS: You have produced a suite of digital photographic prints called *Passing Thoughts* as well as the *Transience* etchings? How did they evolve?

SA: Something happened in the studio that made me realise that I could make a different type of print from the etchings whilst still printing directly from the brain slice. The result is the fifteen digital photographic prints which make up the *Passing Thoughts* suite (2013).

The transformation in these prints from the flat brain slice to mysterious object was thrilling. *Passing Thoughts 3 and 4* appear to be translucent shells held in a heavily textured background. I don't think people will know what they are looking at. I hope that they will remain mysterious. They are unaltered photographs – authentic, strange and beautiful pictures of a human brain.

JS: You describe the prints as fleeting, could you explain this further?

SA: They seem to capture a moment – and this we caught on camera in the studio when we were working with the brain slices. The images revealed themselves and then disappeared in seconds. They were transient and disappeared like a thought. We did not own that brain, it was lent to us. It made its mark and then it went.

JS: So the body of work in *Transience* is the result of an experiment?

SA: Yes. The prints are unique and we will never be able to get those marks again. They are important to me in that they bridge my interest in both the philosophy of mind and the physical human brain. Originally my intention was to just look at the brain as object. But the brain, in a funny way, turned from object to subject as we were making the work. So, they are not just anatomical works, they are about the transience of self.

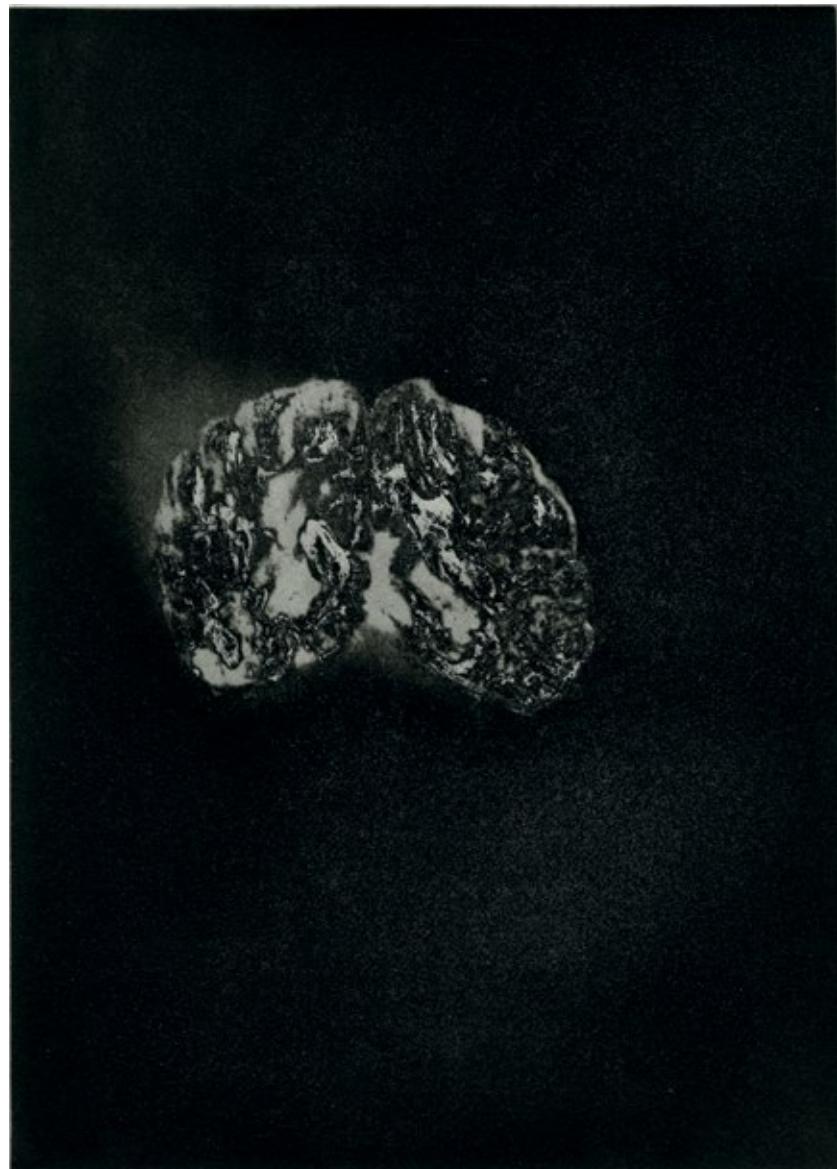
A conversation held between Susan Aldworth and Jill Sheridan in 2013 for the catalogue published to accompany the solo exhibition *Transience* at GV Art, London, 6 June – 20 July 2013.

Image Credits

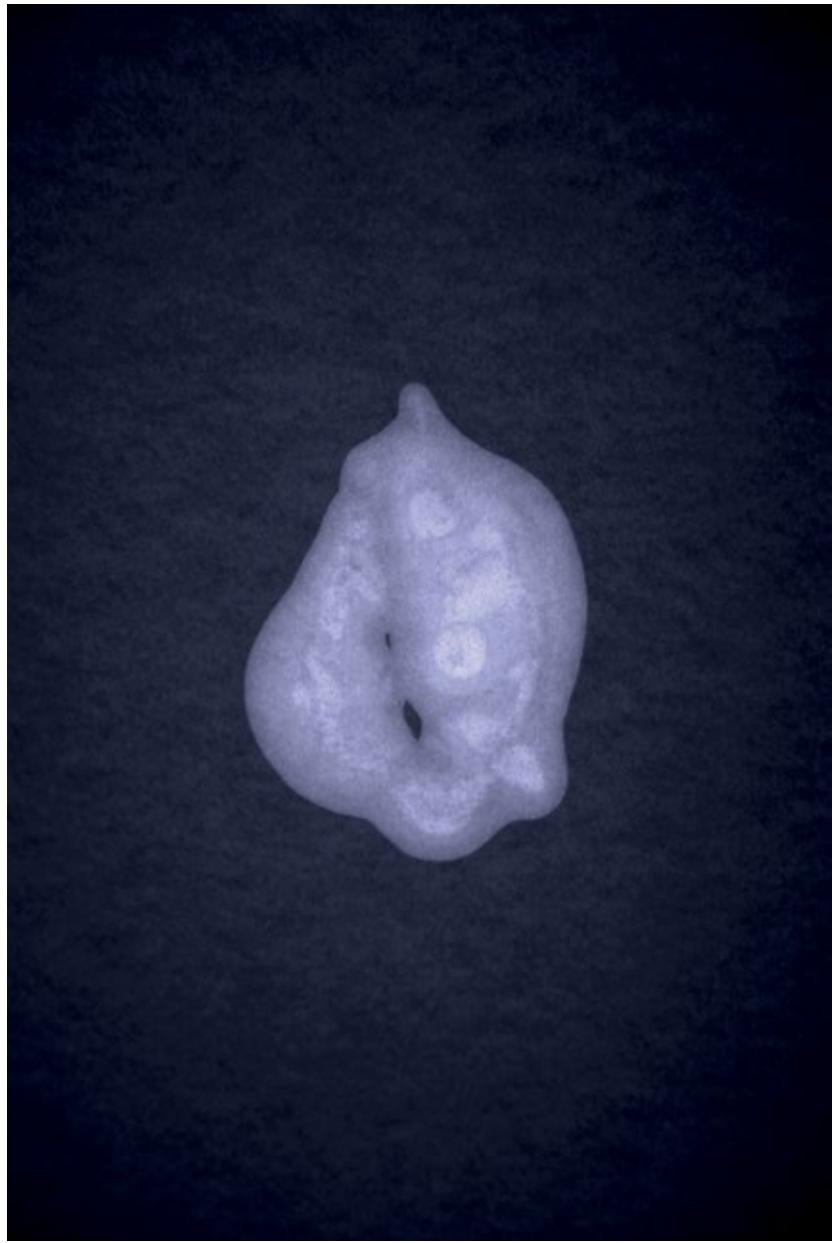
p.24: Susan Aldworth,
Passing Thoughts 1, 2013.
Courtesy the artist

Holding the brain was a moment of total connection with the brain as object... the cold rounded intestine-feeling outer edge of the brain feels etched in the memory of my hands. But it was not just an object – I cradled it like a baby, protective, respectful of holding ‘someone’ – someone very vulnerable in this disembodied state. The object momentarily became the person in my hands.

Susan Aldworth, November 2012



Susan Aldworth, *Transience 6*, 2013.
Courtesy the artist

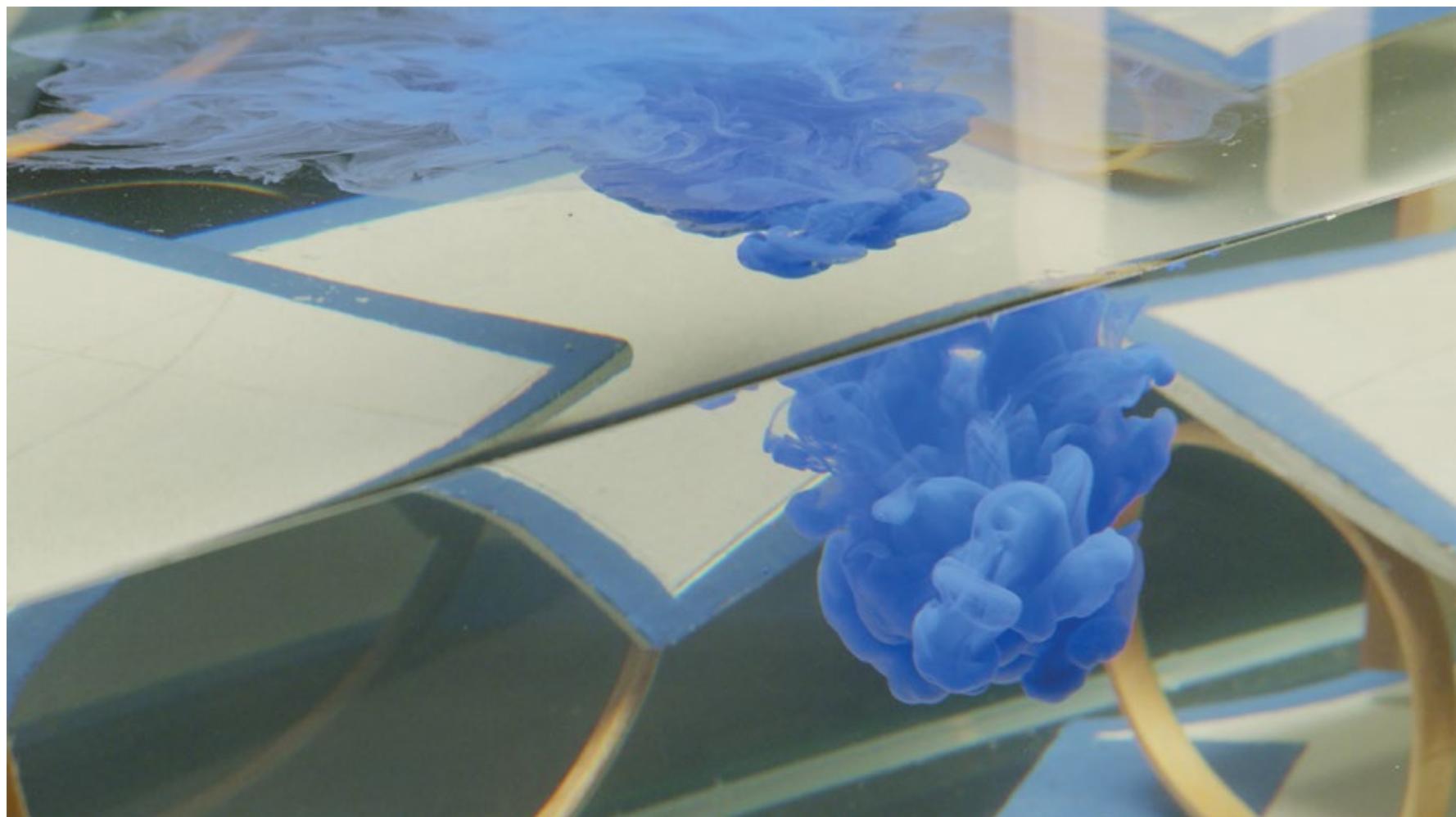


Left: Susan Aldworth,
Passing Thoughts 14, 2013.
Courtesy the artist
Above: Susan Aldworth,
Passing Thoughts 4, 2013.
Courtesy the artist



Above: Susan Aldworth,
Passing Thoughts 3, 2013.
Courtesy the artist
Right: Leonor Serrano Rivas,
Mockup for an Endless Theatre, 2019.
© the artist and Arcade Gallery





Leonor Serrano Rivas, *Estrella*, 2018.
© the artist and CA2M



Above: Leonor Serrano Rivas, *Estrella*,
2018 © the artist and CA2M
Right: Rachel Kneebone, *The Area on
Whose Brink Silence Begins*, 2015.
Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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p42–43: Rachel Kneebone,
Act II, 2016. Courtesy the artist
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Etel Adnan, *Key Signs*, 2017.
Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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Rachel Kneebone, *Act III*, 2016.
Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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Etel Adnan, *Key Signs*, 2017.
Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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Etel Adnan, *Key Signs*, 2017.
Courtesy the artist and White Cube
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On Perception

Etel Adnan's Visual Art

Simone Fattal

The first time I saw Etel Adnan's visual work was in a series of long Japanese folding books in which she had handwritten poetry with accompanying visual equivalents. Through this form Adnan had quietly effected a revolution in Arabic Calligraphy. She had written out poems by the major contemporary Arab poets, each in a unique way using her own handwriting, not trying to conform to the canons of calligraphy, and had accompanied them with drawings, watercolours, ink and pen work. The books unfolded in front of my eyes as 'readings' of poetry taking place in the parallel world of colour and sensory perception. The poems were brought to life more rapidly than if one followed the words alone. The tenderness of her line brought an immense emotion and empathy to the text and to its reading, so that the moment of this reading became intensely present in the imagination. The drawings and watercolours added a dimension of poignancy and urgency to the text, which was seen by Adnan twice, once as a text and once as an image. The reader was thus given three interpretations: that of the poet, the transcriber, and the painter.

Adnan is a colourist. '*Les coloristes sont des poètes épiques*' (colourists are epic poets) said Baudelaire. Who better than Adnan to be in that position, as she is already an epic poet in words? She has a need to see colour, and not at all to use the crayon as pen: 'I started using oil pastels on their side, as bands of colour, surfaces of colour.'

Colour contains its own mystery.

The cosmic in her work started when the Apollo programme took men on the moon and opened this new dimension to the earth-bound mankind, so that the moon lost its status of unattainable good, and the universe became somewhere one could go to. Adnan immediately produced a large series of brushworks entitled *The Apollo Series*. For this series she devised her own colours, making yellows and greens with onions skins and pomegranates, adding these dyes to the commercial watercolours and ink. These home colours, she still produces on her table and uses in her leporellos.

We think in metaphors, for when the body is asleep, the mind works in images. It tells us in images what few people understand and know how to decipher.

I always thought that dreaming was the honor of the human species. The logic of dreams is superior to the one we exercise while awake. In dreams the mind finds at last its courage: it dares what we do not dare. It also creates... and it perceives reality beyond our fuzzy interpretations.

Adnan has developed, with years, a mastery brushwork that some equate to the Japanese and Chinese masters. During her frequent visits to New York she stayed in an apartment on the 33rd floor overlooking the East River from whose windows she could see six or more bridges. There ensued a whole series of thick black ink drawings of the New York bridges, with barges passing under them or anchored on their pylons. They are on Japanese papers so thin that they are transparent. The contrast between the

strong lines of the subject matter and the fragility of the material on which they stand makes one wonder about the materiality of the world.

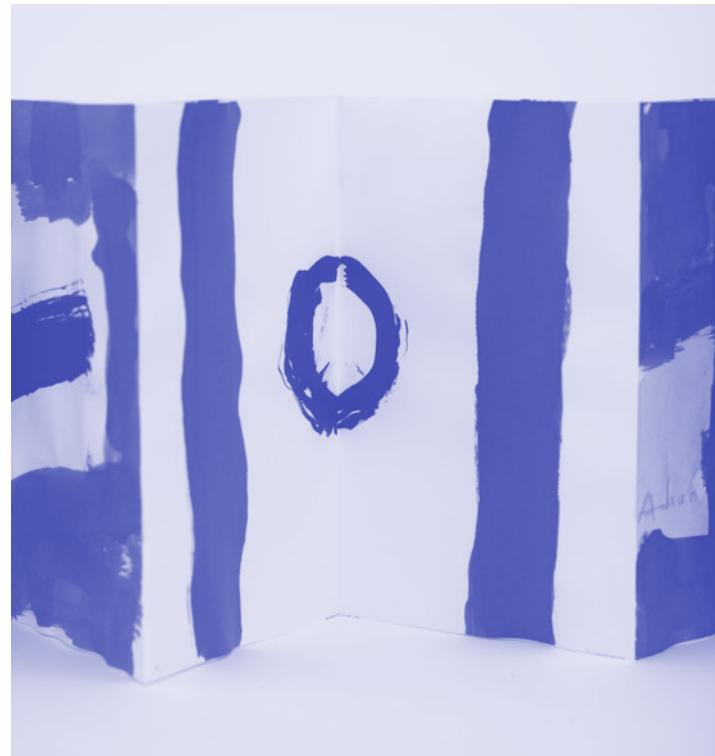
In the Japanese folding books colour comes back, also writing.



The Japanese folding books were given to her by an artist who used to sit in San Francisco and draw the faces of the people around him for days on end. She met him in one of these cafés, The Buena Vista, and after a few encounters he gave her one book that he had started and told her: 'this is yours to continue.'

Unlike a drawing which one sees all at once on a page in one glance, these leporellos, as they are also called, were closer to being read, slowly. The fact that they unfold page after page led her to think that

they had to be read in this way, page after page, that they were closer to traditional writing than drawing. In fact, she was discovering all along what the Chinese tradition knew all along that writing is drawing. They were also very cinematic in their essence. One can see one image after another, there is a development, a narrative and for her who had loved the movies passionately ever since her childhood, for she was one of the few children to be taken to the movies in Beirut, to see the great Greta Garbo films that stayed forever in her imagination. Film was one of the arts she included in her teaching at Dominican College,



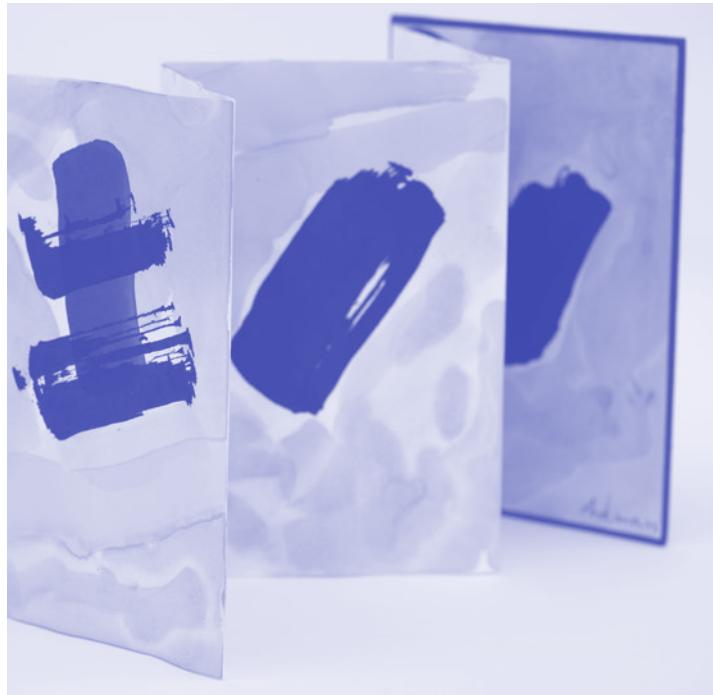
taking her students to Berkeley to see the legendary Pauline Kael's movie sessions in an underground garage in the 1960s.

With the leporello in hand, she immediately thought of poetry. She missed Beirut and the Arab World; also the Algerian War of independence was raging. She embarked on the project of putting the great contemporary Arab poets into drawings. It was for her an artistic discovery and a political statement.

Using her own handwriting, she wrote each poem in a very legible way, giving it a visual equivalent, each time, evoking a totally different feeling, using watercolours, crayons, inks, pen, pencil, and brush. Sometimes the poem was accompanied by the landscape in which it had been read, other times, by signs, numbers, and geometrical symbols. Each book is unique. She showed the greatest invention in this innovative endeavour. These manuscripts are an anthology of contemporary poetry. She first started with Arab poets, – Badr Shaker El Sayyab, Yussuf El Khal, Adonis, Mahmoud Darwich, Buland El Haidari, Fadel El Azzawi, Georges Shehadé, Thérèse Awad, Samia Tutungi to name only a few; sometimes she worked on her own poetry. Later she added American and French poets, among those Anne-Marie-Albiach, Claude Royet-Journoud, Guillevic, Barbara Guest, Lyn Hejinian, Wendell Berry, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Duncan McNaughton, and many others.

She never made a manuscript of an ancient poet's work. She never wanted to just make a beautiful book. These manuscripts are political in the sense that they

represent poets who are alive, working today, in the here and now. Most of the time she gave the 'book' to the poet, wanting him or her to see himself or herself read in this special way. These are responses to a living text. She was a translator of a score. She saw the manuscript as a collaborative work.



Again, I repeat, these books are also a way of entering the element of time in a painting. One unfolds the scroll as one sees the landscape or the poem, bit by bit, and it is therefore closer to the real way these things happen to one in real life. You look at a landscape page after page, you look again and the colour has changed, the clouds have moved,

the boat has left the harbour. The whole remains in your mind in a composite image; the scroll keeps the different moments alive and allows you to read the composite images in their different stages, or in a totally different combination. You open the scroll on page one. You follow the sequence on page two. But if you open the page one and put it face to face with page seven, they are also a perfect sequence. Is it a chance happening? It cannot be, for it never fails: in all of these books the pages work together in every combination possible. It just tells us how the inner clock of Etel Adnan combines and absorbs the perfect unity of all the elements.

These books are monumental works; they unfold to become, at times, several feet long, and yet can be transported in one's pocket. They are wonderfully modern in this way. This is the particular genius of Asia: These books are minimalist and grandiose at the same time. They are also intimate and unobtrusive. They do not sit on your walls forever until they lose the impact of their beauty. They can be placed in a drawer and looked at only when the time is right for this particular contemplation. These books are her greatest contributions to the contemporary visual arts. They are in many collections and institutions, notably the British Museum. They are the ones to have been noticed first by curators in England, which led the Institut du monde arabe to acquire the big *Zikr* (1998) before the Institut had even opened its doors. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France included them in their beautiful exhibit in 2003, choosing her work to go on the *tirés à part*, the brochures, announcing and publicising the event.

We have to cite here a beautiful exhibition, which came as a surprise to her in 1979. A fellow poet asked Etel to lend one of her leperellos for an exhibit. She did, asking no questions. Then came the invitation to the opening, which took place in a beautiful castle in Burgundy, France. When she arrived in the castle of Ancy-le-Franc, happy was the surprise to find herself in the most unexpected company. Here with Etel's drawings were the works of Victor Hugo, George Sand, Rimbaud, Proust, and many other luminaries. The catalogue of this wonderful exhibit *Dessins d'Ecrivains* should still be available. Attending the opening was Roberte for whom Pierre Klossowski wrote *Roberte, Ce Soir!*

Lately, she has been using them more for black ink and pen work depicting gardens, parks, (notably the beautiful park in Kassel) which she did while in residence there. She actually had started way before drawing her own park in Point Reyes California where she set up her studio after the completion of the Mount Tamalpais period, and where she painted new hills and rivers, with a whole different palette.

In these landscapes she no longer used compact, tense, masses of colour, but recognisable hills and rivers. The landscape was nearer to what we expect to find on a canvas entitled *Landscape* (2014). It was still made of stretches of colour, but the point of view had become nearer to the subject.

These shapes are more like an imagination left to itself, to express feelings and thoughts. Although I could say at the same time that her perception of things real

has augmented. I do not see any contradiction there. Some paintings have the precision of a photograph. One could give the time of the day, I would say for instance that one is in front of a moment where she tells you that it has been raining and that the hills at that moment are under the sun which has shone again to illuminate them with accrued light, before sunset. It is already rare to have paintings depicting the night, but even more when you can tell the exact moment of the day, or the afternoon. This enormous care and



attention to things happening around her increases all the time, as her love for things are forever greater. She is linked to her environment in all its dimensions.

She shares an intimacy with the cosmos the way she shares an intimacy with her pen and brush. She inhabits the climate, not a house. It is as she says what envelops us. She is also in the here and now.

For Etel her personal history is not to be dissociated from the general wellbeing. The cosmos and her are one. In its social history as well. She is linked to the political, visual and social elements in a same movement. A few days ago, she was wakened by a nightmare, or by a dream she took for a nightmare. She said she had seen a bomb turning a huge building in Beirut upside down all over her. Then she went to the café only to see the replay of the real event on television. She had lived that event in her being as surely from a few thousand kilometres away as surely as if she had been right there. This kind of belonging to the world and living it all the time is the way she lives and holds the world in her heart.

'Colours exist for me,' she said in an interview with Professor Fedwa Multi-Douglas, 'as entities in themselves, as metaphysical beings, like the attributes of God exist as metaphysical entities.'

Etel Adnan's art is as innovative as her poetry and writing. And like these, it has had a recognised and wide influence on contemporary Arab art and beyond.

An earlier version of this essay was originally published in *Etel Adnan, Critical Essays on the Arab-American Writer and Artist*, edited by Lisa Suhair Majaj and Amal Amireh. All rights reserved, copyright Lisa Suhair Majaj and Amal Amireh, 2002.

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Experiencing The Human Condition 'In-Between'

Rachel Kneebone, Richard Bright
and Simeon Nelson

An interview with Rachel Kneebone, Richard Bright (*Interalia Magazine*) and Simeon Nelson (Professor of Sculpture, University of Hertfordshire)

Richard Bright and Simeon Nelson: You have said, speaking of your working process, that 'it's war'. What do you mean by this and how does it relate to the finished work? What are the capabilities and restrictions of working with porcelain?

Rachel Kneebone: Porcelain is a definite material to work with; initially it is malleable and plastic, easily manipulated and formed by hand, but the longer you are working – exposing the material to air – the more the malleability and plasticity decreases. This gives a timeframe or pace to working. You can employ technics to slow this down but as a general rule, the moment you start the more rigid the material becomes, and ultimately tools have to be used to replace the hand. The material dictates this. It is a form of conflict, working into what becomes increasingly 'un-workable'.

Porcelain is also definite or perhaps has a rigidity in terms of what it will or will not 'willingly' do, there can be battle there.

My practice is a response. During the making process things are thrown up that demand resolution, including how the work is feeling, its visceral temperature. Sometimes I follow a given path, sometimes I fight to contradict the

direction the work wants to go in. It's a process of working with and against what is 'unfolding'.

During the period of making, the days or weeks, the work is unrelenting. I don't 'switch off' from it. There is a kind of haunting that occurs, whereby both true and false memory, thought and doubt, is left wrapped, waiting for the next attack. It is a state of relentless flux, a mercurial process, until the work is made.



I accept there is a violence attached to saying 'it's war' (which it isn't always), but I think I described it that way as a means to communicate the physicality of it, an active state. Neither the material nor the making process is passive.

I am frequently told that my practise is 'therapeutic', and I think this is me taking arms against that sentiment.

RB and SN: Metamorphosis of the human form is primary to your work, creating a sense of constant flux. You also reference both art historical and 'classical' literary sources. Can you say something about the role of literature and metamorphosis in your approach to addressing and questioning the human condition?

belong in this realm of ambiguity, outside of definite classification to decode our experience of living. As Lacan said, 'thought is an enterprise of enslavement'. Life is freer than this, sometimes beyond 'reason or reasoning', and the pursuit to lock it down is inadequate, lacking, and in a sense, futile.

Metamorphoses as a term as well as its meaning goes some way to narrating the 'in-between', when something is no longer that but not yet that either. The cracks or ruptures within my work are intrinsic to integrating the gaps and voids in 'meaning' that are present but don't exist in language, can't be spoken

RK: My interest in addressing the human condition is generally centred on the body – how it feels to be alive. It is the visceral experience of living while acknowledging the 'failure of language' to 'universally' narrate what it is to be alive and all that comes with it, that I question. Metamorphoses, to me,

with words. Metamorphoses speaks more of the narration of the unknown, and the process of living. To quote Bataille, 'life is movement, nothing within it is proof against it'.

My answer to your question goes somewhat in showing the role of literature around my work. It's a sort of on going collage of other peoples thought and words in order to try and create a sense of what is felt.

So whilst I am saying language is inadequate, my use of literature also indicates that I am as subject to it as everyone else. Reading is part of the enquiry. I read alongside the always making, not just philosophical and classical texts, all stories are equally important. It's the shared challenge, no matter what material is used, of how to address how to explain 'it'? How to exist other than in silence? Anais Nin wrote, 'the language of the senses is yet to be explored'. I read this as the language of the body, which creates a thoughtless space and I work from there.

RB and SN: In many ways our human brains interpret information through pattern recognition and re-arranging pattern, which is an evolving dynamic process. What importance does pattern play in your work?

RK: I am going to interpret pattern to mean repetition. Repetition of movement, in making the work, not only the physical pattern but also repetition in terms of forms or

the 'vocabulary' I use, for example, plinth, ball, body, limbs, matter, vines and roses.



I feel that having this restriction or the regularity of form within my works and within its making, creates a pattern. This I think creates the movement, from one to the other, from geometric to organic, and the recurring use creates a sense of time and distance within the works. Simply put, the pattern of moving from one limb to the next limb. Pattern is also evident in fracture, fracturing of form, an abstraction that articulates the sense of building, collapsing and re-building, or forming another body. I think it is impossible to abstract without knowledge of the whole being part of

that abstraction. Pattern is inclusive of this. For example, the modelled limb repeated creates a sense of movement through its occurrence and reoccurrence. The placement of limb, abstracted from the 'whole body' brings the whole body with it. Through pattern and prior knowledge we can build a whole or complete for ourselves, to form the whole.



How emergence and destruction, form and formlessness can coexist within one work. This simultaneous exchange within each work would not be possible without the structure, the reinforcement through repetition of any given motif, that pattern provides. It is to be familiar, known and alien and strange at the same time. In this sense it is pattern that creates movement (metaphorically) throughout static, vitrified porcelain.

This interview was first published by *Interalia Magazine*, interaliamag.org, February 2017.

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- p.64: Rachel Kneebone, *The Area on Whose Brink Silence Begins*, 2015.
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Night



When facing a mirror, a head resembles a lit planet.
I wonder: can one spend time within a flower?
Imagination moves in circles, as a sole piece of
luggage on the tarmac.

With each bird flying, time is passing.

Night is an exhalation rising from a darkness foreign
to it: a long eclipse.

I entered once someone's memory, I say through
his brain, the seat of his illuminations. The place
was planted with olive trees, and mathematical
equations. On one of the trees was hanging a
Van Gogh painting. The ground of that house of
memory had been once the bed of a river that had
run through still another person's brain. All this
constitutes my spirit.

In its will to protect the living from the maddening
effect of a constant present, nature created memory.
An escape. A rest. Everything I do is memory. Even
everything I am.

Knowledge doesn't kill as surely as love. We spoke
at lunch of a guy who had driven three women to
suicide. He was smaller in size than any of them,
and perverse enough to boast about his deeds.

Etel Adnan

Our mind has a border line with the universe, there, where we promenade, and where tragedy resides.

Within bits of time volcanic eruptions sprout, and fall. Of all the energies we breathe, it's best to follow the ones that spring out of dreams. This season is cold, as cold as my soul.

Memory, and time, both immaterial, are rivers with no banks, and constantly merging. Both escape our will, though we depend on them. Measured, but measured by whom or by what? The one is inside, the other, outside, or so it seems, but is that true? Time seems also buried deep in us, but where? Memory is right here, in the head, but it can exit, abandon that head, leave it behind, disappear. Memory, a sanctuary of infinite patience.

Is memory produced by us, or is it us? Our identity is very likely whatever our memory decides to retain. But let's not presume that memory is a storage room. It's not a tool for being able to think, it's thinking, before thinking. It also makes an (apparently) simple thing like crossing the room, possible. It's impossible to separate it from what it remembers.

We can admit that memory resurrects the dead, but these remain within their world, not ours'. The universe as one: although immaterial, it makes being possible, it is being. If an idea didn't remember to think, it wouldn't be. If a chair wasn't there, it wouldn't be tomorrow. If I didn't remember that I am, I won't be. We can also say that the universe is itself

the glue that keeps it going, therefore it is memory in action and in essence, in becoming and in being. Because it remembers itself, it exists. Because it exists, it remembers.

To see something is to remember it; otherwise there's no seeing.

Memory is intelligent. It's a knowledge seated neither in the senses, nor in the spirit, but in collective memory. It is communal, though deeply personal. Involved with the self, though autonomous. At war with death.

It helps us rampage through the old self, hang on the certitude that it has to be.

But what about the ocean's intensity that echoes our own, the fever in cold weather, the soul's descent? What about the weight of the angel's wings?



My skin is my frontier. Things happen under it that I call feelings and ideas, and whose place of origin I will never find ways to visit.

I find redemption in desire; no interruption, in Nature. As mirrors duplicate space, we can multiply the universe by using reflectors. It has been clear to me, today, that it's better to follow the trails of a canyon than run after one's life.

Horses impregnated my father's genes during the last days of a vanishing empire. I hear their hooves on the dust road that leads to my door.

Between the "I" and the "me" a rain of poisonous lilacs, and your body next to mine as a distant and forbidden sunken sun.

These were velvety times as you had returned from a long journey that had taken you into the mystery of your flesh. The hours were raining like autumn leaves.

The light had been snuffed off your days.

You were sleeping as if still on Earth.



Last night, a stormy night, Hegel visited my sleep, and I heard him say, with a rhythmic voice, that "man is this night, this empty nothingness: a wealth of infinite representations, images, none of which meant to be present to his spirit, or to be absent. It's night that exists here, (he continued), the intimacy of nature, the Self in all its purity". He insisted in saying that "night forms just a circle around man's imaginary representations: here a bloody head surging forth, there a white face, always disappearing brutally. That's the night that we see (he told me) when we look a man in the eyes; we sink then in a night of terror, the night of the world is then facing us."

He left, and I was still sleeping. Then he returned, wearing a long and dark coat, and only his face was lit. He went on telling me that "the power to pull out of this night images, or to leave them fall back, is the very act of asserting oneself, of stating the consciousness of the inner self, of action, division... It is into that night, (he said), that Being withdrew, but it is also in that night that the movement of this power has equally been stated."

Yes, life is spirit.

This text is an excerpt of *Night*, by Etel Adnan, originally published by Nightboat Books, 2016. Copyright Etel Adnan.

Biography

Leonor Serrano Rivas

Leonor Serrano Rivas (b.1986, Málaga, Spain) makes work that is formed from diverse media, including performance, installation, video, sculpture or drawing, in an attempt to subvert traditional structures anchored in art and architecture, theatre and movement. Taking 'source texts' – from archival, documentary, theoretical or historical material – as a starting point, Serrano Rivas undertakes a creative re-reading process based on the logic of the imaginary, where dreams and fiction are treated as legitimate modes of knowledge.

Serrano Rivas' work has been supported and recognised by the Cervezas Alhambra 2019 Awards, CA2M, Madrid (2018), Botin Foundation International Visual Arts Grant (2016), ARCO Fair & Solán de Cabras Emergent Artist Award (2016), New Contemporaries, ICA, London (2014), Generación Grant (2014) and Swiss Church, London, in partnership with Arts Council of England Grants for the Arts (2014). Her first live performance took place in 2014 at the Serpentine Galleries Summer Pavilion, London.

She has exhibited internationally in spaces including Chisenhale Studios, London (2016), Arcade Galley, London (2019) and CA2M, Madrid (2018). In 2019 she had two major, solo shows: *Dream Adventure* in C3A, Córdoba and *Endless Theatre* at Matadero, Madrid.

Biography

Rachel Kneebone

Rachel Kneebone (b.1973, Oxfordshire, UK) is a sculptor whose intricate works in porcelain address and question the human condition, exploring themes of renewal, transformation, life cycles and the experience of inhabiting the body. Kneebone's sculptures operate in a near-subliminal space, oscillating and blurring the boundaries between the conscious and the subconscious, the real and the imagined, everything and nothing. The novelist Ali Smith has written of the artist, that in her work, 'Michelangelo meets Angela Carter, the renaissance meets the contemporary, while the future simultaneously meets, melts, alters and fuses with the renaissance.'

She has had solo exhibitions at galleries including Touchstones, Rochdale (2018), Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2017), White Cube at Glyndebourne, Lewes (2017), The Foundling Museum, London (2017) and Brooklyn Museum, New York (2012). Group exhibitions include Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (2018), *Sculpture in the Close*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge (2017), Maison Particulière, Brussels (2016), York Art Gallery, York (2016), Galleri Anderson Sandstrom, Stockholm (2015) and Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2015). In 2005, Kneebone was nominated for the Max Mara Art Prize. A forthcoming solo exhibition at Serlachius Museum, Mänttä, Finland opens in October 2020 until April 2021.

Biography

Susan Aldworth

Susan Aldworth (b.1955, Surrey, UK) is an associate lecturer on the MA Art & Science at Central Saint Martin's, London. Her practice investigates the workings of the human mind, consciousness and our sense of self. Her experimental work in print, time-based media and installation includes ground-breaking etchings printed directly from human brain tissue.

She has collaborated with scientists and philosophers in her explorations into what it means to be human. She is currently Artist in Residence at the Institute of Neuroscience at Newcastle University. Her new installation *Out of the Blue*, featuring 100 items of embroidered Victorian underwear, will preview at the Hatton Gallery, Newcastle in January 2020. Aldworth has exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally, including *The Portrait Anatomised* at The National Portrait Gallery, London (2013), *Realisation* at The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (2017) and *The Dark Self* at York St Mary's (2017). Other significant exhibitions include *Mapping the Imagination*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2007), *Brains: the mind as matter*, Wellcome Collection, London (2012), *Sleuthing the Mind*, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York (2014) *Mind Maps: Stories from Psychology*, Science Museum, London (2014), *Images of the Mind*, Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden and Moravian Gallery, Brno (2011) and *Landscapes of the Mind*, Williams College Museum of Contemporary Art, Massachusetts (2010). Her work is held in public and private collections in the UK including the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum and Williams College Museum of Contemporary Art, Massachusetts. Aldworth is a regular presenter for BBC Radio.

Biography

Etel Adnan

Etel Adnan (b.1925, Beirut, Lebanon) is a writer and artist who began painting in the early 1960s. Widely known for her poetry, novels and plays, she moves fluidly between the disciplines of writing and art and is a leading voice of contemporary Arab-American culture. A multi-linguist who has had a nomadic existence, Adnan makes work that traverses cultures and disciplines, drawing its inspiration from a deep engagement with the world.

After studying philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris, Adnan moved to America in 1955, where she attended UC Berkeley and Harvard, and then taught Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics at Dominican College in San Rafael, California. Between 1972–76 she worked as a cultural editor for two daily newspapers in Beirut. Her novel about the Lebanese Civil War, *Sitt Marie-Rose*, was first published in 1977, won the France-Pays Arabes Award, and has since been published in more than ten languages,

In 1977 Adnan settled in Sausalito, California and began to make paintings, a move that was prompted, in part, by her decision to stop writing in French following the Algerian War. She now lives and works in Paris,

Her work has been presented in solo exhibitions at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2018), Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (2018), Institut de Monde Arabe, Paris (2016) and was included in the Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah (2015), the Whitney Biennial, New York (2014) and *Documenta 13*, Kassel (2013). Adnan has received numerous awards for her contribution to culture, including, in 2014, France's highest cultural honour, the Ordre de Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres.

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