

To be a subject without turning the other and the Cosmos into an object — that is the question.

Brache L Ettinger

EX / IT : LIFT

Two words. Telegraphic in structure, this title contains both message and methodology: a symbol conveying information from a proto symbolic realm. The central colon is a musical pause for breath, a natural poetic break or in a psychoanalytic sense, a growth point or caesura (1). A generative breathturn that allows us entry towards more expansive realms within our astonishing psychic ancestry.

EX / IT is an imperative, a hopeful riposte to the capitalist and psychoanalytic *Huis Clos*. Does LIFT, in response, emphasise the way towards our existential emergence?

Wo es war soll ich werden

Here the exit is complicated, divided by the diagonal to become asymmetrical, partialized; separated to expose other registers and oblique meanings but not entirely cut. We are made aware that ex holds the Latin meaning, 'out of' and so EX / IT or *Out of it* reads as a formula, resonating with Freud's equally minimal, enigmatic and insistent, '*wo es war soll ich werden*'.

For Lacan, Freud's maxim becomes, out of the *id*, the subject emerges: to assume responsibility for their unconscious. Abbas' EX / IT enables us to leave the depths in search of new ways of being, more optimistic, more humane and more vital than the allegedly inevitable death drive or primary hate of our western psychoanalytic inheritance.

What help then might we hope to glean from our unconscious (which Freud suggests we are ethically obliged to uncover) in order to come into being? EX / IT : LIFT helps us reimagine our subjectivity via sonic means. Artworks are constructed as invitations to sound through co-created effort, positioned to take us into an aesthetic realm of embodied exploration. We are invited less to observe than to engage and experiment.

In the centre of the gallery, Abbas sets circular horns, which sound when bodies lift the structure in unison. Sound through effort, orchestrated through bodies working together, sound existing for as long as we choose to maintain it and vulnerable to collapse. We need to keep our senses open, to remain present, open to connections, open even to the non-human - to machinic-joint-articulations where new possibilities emerge. This is not sonic immersion but sonic co-emergence. New threads of sense-experience occur. generated by an artwork that requires us to make something of ourselves and each other via sound. Sound becomes an embodied realm of co-poesis (2).

The gallery in this way becomes what Bracha L Ettinger calls, a matrixial space (3) enabling us to explore in real time and in relation to each other, the proto-ethical realm of aesthetic experience, inherent to art making and also to the subject. This offer, to engage in co-creation as a means for subjective and ethical reflection as well as co-emergence, has been part of Abbas Zahedi's practice in various forms for many years. A practice that he expands upon in his writing and performance events, exploring themes of trauma, loss, memory and communal mourning as well as collective art making. Abbas shares in this way, a viable alternative to alienating dualistic isolationism and unacknowledged contemporary disconnect.

Out of it

EX / IT : meaning *Out of it*, can imply that the senses are deranged: disconnected or dissociated from the self, from memories, emotions and experience of the world and yet *Dissociative Realism* (4) is a term used by the artist to reclaim dissociation as a shared practice of inquiry, perhaps even a co-created possibility for transformation. Liminal sound environments are created together in relation to the more than human, as a means to come in touch with collective connections, actively through shared endeavour. Yet this art working is vulnerable, troubled by audible turbulence. We become vigilant. This state is not stupor. As we become more alert to proprioceptive attention and multi sensory and cross sensory phenomena, we engage less with our conscious mind and more attune to our bodies, as situated in the collective (5).

The work challenges inaccurate, cartesian notions of stable separate selves, remaining at a distance, solipsistically dislocated, the state to which we have been conditioned. We transition towards a liminal place of multiple relation, which Bracha Ettinger calls borderlinking. Augmented by audible ambiguity, we enter the altered states of the aesthetic, communing to reconnect with lost cultures of subjectivity rediscovering that we are all primordially trans-connected.

There are few sanctioned spaces where dissociation is seen as valuable in the west. The use of 'evenly suspended attention', in which the psychoanalyst is open to communication, by paying less attention to conscious material, is voluntarily dissociative. It makes use of the complexity of communication between bodies. It's use is sharply delineated in keeping with a psychoanalytic phallic structure. Intentional dissociation however might be nurtured as an art, as means for an expanded communication and knowledge between us.

In EX / IT : LIFT, unexpected encounters create fragile states of sustained or discontinued audible tension. The matrixial realm is fragile and does not yield to a penetrating inspection that demands an account without compassion (6). We need to look awry or perhaps better, sense by other means. By noticing the conditions for auditory collapse and the consequences of this, Abbas invites us to experience the possibilities and impossibilities between the I and the non-I. We need to relinquish what we think we know as we explore more sensorial approximations and conjectures; never certain if sounds are considered an achievement or a byproduct. We come to question how we hear and what it means to hear in communication with others. How does co-poiesis emerge from sonic liminality? (7)

As we listen to the same transmission we do not know who the sound belongs to - each partial subject absorbs the sound which relates to its own field of resonance. As the gallery becomes a *matrixial borderpspace*, a place to experience the trans-connections between us, we may sense the irregular sounds of our mother's gut and her rhythmic heart beat - the sonic conductors of our early trans-subjectivity. In EX / IT : LIFT, we sense the acoustic reverberations of the space, and begin to understand how a space and the people within it affects sound. The gallery becomes the means to explore how we come into being in relation to sound, co-responding to the other in this way, within an embodied vibrational resonant realm.

In what Abbas calls the Palliative Threshold (8) we become temporarily disconcerted, beside ourselves and perhaps in this way, more alongside each other, in the shared interstitial space of the aesthetic encounter. From this place it becomes more possible to give up a certain kind of power in the presence of the other in order to re situate ourselves in relation to vulnerability as a means of communication of our own and our inherited trauma. This is what Ettinger calls 'self-fragilisation' (9). It is part of the process of becoming ethical through the aesthetic, which for Ettinger is integral to art making. A deliberate voyage towards vulnerability. We co-emerge through an expanded recognition of what it means to be a subject,

aware of the threads and strings with which we have been weaved within the matrixial web of the womb space. We have been carried. We have been wit(h)nesed and it is from this place of originary experience, that we recognise the impossibility of separating the other's burden from our own. There is pain in becoming a subject. Self fragilisation resonates with trauma and enables transformation through this. We are not made abject by vulnerability but instead fully human.

We are carrying, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, enormous traumatic weight, and aesthetic wit(h)nessing in art brings it to culture's surface

After the catastrophe. The humane must reappear — in wit(h)nessing.

Bracha L Ettinger

We can no longer observe the pain of others from a detached distance, from a position of supposed separateness. We are now having to face the consequences of a culture that sees the other including the world as entirely separate. EX / IT provides an idiosyncratic experiment to counter this: direct experience, sound and proprioception, purposed for imaginal possibilities.

Exiting Stage Left

The small inter-coordinated movements towards collective sound making alert us to a need for meaningful presence-sensing rather than seeing. Like the kinesthetic com-passion that formed our earliest threads within the matrixial web. The installation requires us to shift position in response to sound, incremental movements, limbs-intentional. Do we move poetically as we perceive the sound we make? More likely, clumsy and faltering, we will play out like Beckettian characters, we hesitate, give up, sigh, ruminate upon the sonic impasse. Abbas' title playfully riffs on the most undramatic of stage directions and suggests that we can quietly retreat from two thousand years of phallogocentric western thought, regrouping behind the scenes, collaborating on imaginative *dei ex machina*. There is a playful element to the show and the humour also comes from optimism, we become more vitally ourselves when we carry each other.

LIFT and *Carriance* - proto ethics

The world is gone. I will carry you.

Paul Celan

This line of Celan's poetry (10) reads like a haiku-synopsis of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and has also helped Ettinger to articulate *carriance* (11). Perhaps it is no surprise that a writer who recalled memories of being trapped in the womb (12) should write so pertinently of our need to bear the pain of the others. Beckett's precise use of silence and the sonic as well as the ritual like movements of bodies in space, created theatre which continues to resonate with those in extremis. Traces of Samuel Beckett work their way into the matrixial web of EX / IT : LIFT but this is not Beckett, "the high priest of failure", whose work has been appropriated to augment a sense of impasse and malaise, serving the status quo via misappropriated hopeless narratives, instead it is the consistently if unconventional political Beckett, whose outspoken and active resistance to fascism was insistent and sustained (13).

Like Beckett's frantic monologue of Mouth, in Not-I, Zahedi's use of the voice of Bushra Mustafa Dunne, a writer of Irish-Iraqi descent, which sounds over an LRAD (an acoustic device used aggressively as crowd

control, capable of causing pain and hearing loss as well as a terrifyingly penetrating voice), is a work intended to *'work on the nerves of the audience, not its intellect'* (14).

This work can be understood matrixially. Through the disembodied sound we resonate severally within a space that registers traces of trauma (15), dislocated over time and space. The fragmented subject occupies an ambivalent position. It is *'the anti-representational subject'*, which like Beckett's characters, *'transforms the concept of trauma itself', testing it at the 'intersection of material, bodily, psychic, cultural, historical and structural concerns'* (16). However the piece also functions like a psychomagic object (17) - the destructive LRAD is transformed, no longer used to silence but to amplify those voices who must be heard. It is as if through dissociation we can learn to re-associate, choosing to exit the master's house (18) of control and domination towards emancipatory practices of co-creativity and carriage.

Art as a practice is aesthetics-in-action that produces protoethical moments as well as theory, by which the ethical sphere can, but not of necessity, be changed.

Bracha L Ettinger

Coda: Finally the Colon : EX / IT : LEFT as sigil

Exit the scopic phallic gaze of mastery through sonic self-fragilisation and trans subjectivity, co-created by working in sound: the interstitial means of mutual resonance. Empowered in this way, within the matrixial, we experience our originary state, before despair and yet alive to the threads of trauma that unite us all through embodied aesthetics, the gallery becomes a site activated for the co-emergence of new ethical possibilities.

The colon becomes the breath-turn, a generative silence and the colon is the resonant borborymic remembering of the womb space, in which we were all carried and the colon is the turbulent gut brain axis, the inheritance of trauma.

Brache Ettinger's matrixial opens up concepts that help articulate the sonic *fascinace* (19) of EX / IT : LIFT and EX / IT : LIFT is an initiation into the matrixial space - created by Abbas Zahedi, a realm of co-poises, reminding us that to carry each other through art working is the liberatory potential inherent in the human.

1 Freud's use of the word caesura for the trauma of birth and its emotional consequences, was later expanded by Wilfred Bion to describe the birth pangs of thought-from-feeling, the coming into being of the subject and the tumult of an embodied mind. Making use of both art and psychoanalytic practice, Brache Ettinger goes beyond the first breath. She does not see separation as integral to subjectivity and questions the validity of concepts which make it easier to objectify the other and the world. Ettinger goes beyond phallicentric psychoanalysis, without rejecting it, seeking out the prior and radical realm of creative trans-connectivity and trans-subjectivity that occurs within the womb space, which she calls the matrixial borderspace, an originary realm in which we relate in multiple and resonant ways.

Before the anxiety of birth it is the place of com-compassion. Primary compassion links the non-strangeness-in- anonymous- intimacy of the other and the Cosmos to the subject.

(Fragilisation and Resistance, Ettinger).

2 For Ettinger, co-poiesis involves the generative and ethical process of co-creation that occurs within a shared, in-between borderlinking space within the matrixial. Processes of sensitive attunement and re-attunement occur. We begin to share a resonance field, creating continuity between the I and the non I. Transformation becomes possible as we come into contact with memory traces via (as Ettinger calls the inefable, vibrating trans connections that exist between us) *psychic strings*, and *threads*. Co-poiesis is the engine behind '*metramorphosis*', a term Ettinger uses for the process of joint transformation.

3 The matrixial is a concept that Brache L Ettinger has developed over 40 years through her psychoanalytic and artistic practice creating concepts, which help us to explore art making and subjectivity. Ettinger draws our attention to the fact that if we have been born, then we have all had the experience of being carried as a sentient and responsive being within the womb space of a female body. Fundamental to being human is the experience of being carried during pregnancy. Ettinger is interested in the final weeks of pregnancy, when we are capable of independent life. We begin to relate to the mother and the maternal body in multiple ways. In a process which is mutual if asymmetrical.

4 The term was first articulated in 2021 by Arsalan Isa in his essay of the same title.

5 Liminal states have previously been an ordinary part of western culture, as places to receive wisdom from the more-than-human realms, to be shared within the community. Trance states remain valued aspects of cultural creation globally. These states are however less valued in cultures where relentless productivity must be consistently extracted to maximise economic 'growth'.

6 The matrixial space allows "trans-subjective" encounters, where psychic traces, including those of historical and personal trauma, can pass between individuals. The matrixial remains throughout life but it is fragile, it collapses and is vulnerable under duress. It is an inherently precarious process in a different register to defensive structures or fixed identity. Ettinger explores this aspect of the matrixial via the myth of Eurydice (a mythological figure who is banished to the underworld in the moment her lover, Orpheus, turns to gaze upon her, defying the instructions of the gods).

7 Using sound to explore the matrixial goes beyond metaphor. The matrixial is based in the corpo-real of the feminine womb space and the resonance of these vibrating trans-connections that occur between us.

Ettinger uses two conches, spiralic sea shells placed side by side to convey the topological model of this trans-connecting within the matrixial. The resonance of one shell, when placed next to each other, will pass through and resonate with the other. Following the shell's spiralling surfaces, aids understanding that the shells are not unconnected - they trans-connect.

8 Palliative Threshold is a concept created by Abbas Zahedi, which (in part) describes how the gallery gives us the necessary space in which to process complex experiences, a space which is largely unavailable in day to day life. *Palliative Threshold* resonates with Ettinger's concept of art as *The Transport Station of Trauma*, where hidden traces of trauma can emerge and be transformed. This is not representation but a compassionate encounter with the "non-I" (the other's pain or historical atrocity), enabling a 'wit(h)nessing' that creates understanding, turning aesthetic experiences into potentially ethical acts. Before guilt, before shame, before abjection and disgust, we find a place where vulnerability and co-emergence is inherent. This resonates with Abbas Zahedi's work. We are held in a soundscape within which we attune and re-attune to our needs and to the needs of others, finding our way together, towards resonant discovery and rediscovery of partial subjectivity.

9 Self fragilisation involves using our direct originary experience of having been carried, to open ourselves in vulnerability to the pain of others without objectifying them.

10 Ettinger finds within the poetry of Celan, a rich seam of associations to explore her concept of carriage. Celan as a poet writing after the holocaust, in which his parents were murdered, carries his mother in the reconceived language of his sparse but powerful poetry, in which her presence becomes a central force (Of relevance to the exhibition, Celan uses a musical term "vibrato," to describe how truth can emerge from the 'abyss through resonance').

11 Ettinger's concept of *carriage*, a term that she uses to capture the profound ethical and relational nuances of the universal primal experience of having been carried during pregnancy. This creates a deep resonance of support and compassion within human subjectivity and an ethical duty to care for the other.

Carriage occurs in the corpo-Subreal and the corpo-Real. It occurs in social reality also - as an ethical principle — it can orient a political thought.

12 *'I have a clear memory of my own foetal existence. It was an existence where no voice, no possible movement could free me from the agony and darkness I was subjected to'*

Beckett's experience was one of suffering and of being trapped. His body of work, easily lends itself to the matrixial and has had a profoundly transformative impact on those suffering across the globe in abysmal circumstances, including the current genocide in contemporary Palestine.

13 Beckett's characters in their distress and refusal are inherently resistant to the forces of fascism. Emile Moran in her book, *Beckett's Political Imagination* describes how in his life too, Beckett maintained an active political engagement, particularly in relation to colonialism and censorship. This extended well beyond his recognised role in the French Resistance.

14 Beckett was describing Not I to the actress Jessica Tandy.

15 Each encounter and art working carries the possibilities of potential trauma as well as potential transformation. This is the risk we take with art. We can learn to re-trust within an art space that offers the possibility to wit(h)ness each other, something more embodied and present than testimony.

A shock might freeze and paralyze...Art-shocking unfreezes, it en-acts and opens ethical paths from the trauma. And from ethics thus borne, a possible passage to politics might be opened.

Bracha L Ettinger

16 Trish McTighe reviews *Beckett and Trauma*, ed. Mariko Hori Tanaka, Yoshiki Tajiri, and Michiko Tsushima, *Journal of Beckett Studies* 2021.

17 Quoted from Audre Lourde,

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

18 The concept of psychomagic was developed by filmmaker and artist Alejandro Jodorowsky - combining psychotherapy with shamanic rituals, creating "poetic acts" that communicate directly with the unconscious to help liberate the mind from personal suffering.

19 Unlike Lacan's fascinum, Ettinger's fascinace is a positive, non-castrative and non-traumatic mode of engagement.

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