
undercurrent

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Vaida Tamoševičiūtė /*BODY OF MOTHER* 12.03–12.19/21

Opening Reception: December 3, 6–9 pm
Gallery Hours: Thur–Sun, 1–7 pm

*Everything I do is an attempt to find my own reality, says Vaida Tamoševičiūtė and perhaps this best reflects the artist's relationship with her work, which is live and constantly revised. Organized by Undercurrent and Meno Parkas Gallery *Body of Mother*, is an exhibition of performance videos on motherhood.*

A letter to the artists from Joseph Morgan Schofield, a UK artist, writer, and curator.
(Dear Vaida)

When I watch a performance, I understand that I never see it in its entirety. My witnessing is fragmentary, but within that fragment is a whole world. My memory is imperfect, and grows more so with the passage of time. I remember the first time I saw you perform. There was a public ritual by the beach and, later, a private moment before the waves. I remember your stillness and your focus, it was as though you became a statue, or an altar, calling forth so many Sacred Mothers. Something holy was taking place, but something awful also.

Recently, I heard a colleague of ours say: *as a mother, for the first six months, you have to sit there. The world goes past and you can't take part. You're not a human anymore, because you have to feed feed feed.*

The Sacred Mother.
The Quiet Woman.

When I wrote about that work, *In Memoriam*, I tried to work through the way you were calling on these histories and my own complicity in assigning these roles to you. Poetics are not outside politics. These monuments are made by history and power and upheld by the conditioned inheritance of belief.

It need not be so. The magic of this work was the insistence on your humanity, your subjectivity, your partiality, for within the performance the statue would glitch, and beneath the face of History was love, grief, loneliness and hope. Within a fragment you can find a whole world.

Sitting with *Body of Mother*, I sit with fragments, with details. In many of these works you curate our field of vision, and so you organise our witness. I appreciate this in part because it speaks to that experience of partiality. Many of the signifiers of You are absent - Vaida is anonymised but, crucially, not universalised for the specificities of your body, your feeling, your gender, remain in play.

In *Mom*, a tattooist etches the word *MAMA* into your chest without using ink. The buzz of the tattoo machine is so loud. It takes around 20 minutes. Blood seeps from the tiny cuts, the material interiority of your body made visible. I wonder how your skin has healed, whether the scars are still visible or if they have sunk back into the body? In any event, the body is marked forever.

I am sitting with your blood.

In a pregnancy - that which comes to term, that which is miscarried, that which is aborted - the makeup of the body is changed. The process of biological exchange flows not just from (m)other to foetus, but from foetus to (m)other too. On a biological level, the body is terraformed by pregnancy. The DNA of the (m)other now contains the DNA of the offspring, and so the blood which seeps across your chest in this work contains both you and your child. I wonder how else they have changed you? I wonder about my own mother, how she changed her mother, and how I changed her. I sit, swimming in memory and imagination, struck by the complexity of these collaborations.

I return, feeling the vibration of the tattoo machine on my chest too and I wonder about its energetic imprint. This action seems to make visible the ways in which our bodies are archives of our experience. We are marked, indelibly, by everything that happens to us. Every encounter, every relationship, every process is written into the body. To my mind, the deepest and most visible marks are left by our kin - biological or otherwise (for biology is not the only way of building a world). I think about the relationships which have had this terraforming effect on me, those which have shifted my heart, my politics and my spirit. I imagine a performance where you tattoo a word - a name, a role, a mode of relation, a memory - on everyone who comes to see this exhibition. I wonder whom we would each choose?



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