

***POINTURE: POINTING, PUNCTURING WEAVING AND LACING* IN ART PRACTICE AND TEXTUAL DISCOURSE**

A colloquium convened by the Research Centre, *Visual Identities in Art and Design* (VIAD),
Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg,
in association with the curators of the accompanying exhibition, titled *Pointure*,
Ann-Marie Tully and Jennifer Kopping.



8 – 29 AUGUST 2012: *Pointure* exhibition at the University of Johannesburg Gallery
6 –14 AUGUST 2012: Exhibition of work by Artist Prof. Bracha L. Ettinger, Gehard
Sekoto Gallery, Alliance Française, Parkview, Johannesburg

14 AUGUST 2012: 2 – 5 pm: the colloquium will open with a presentation/discussion led by the exhibition curators, Ann-Marie Tully and Jennifer Kopping on the curatorial strategies applied in the selection of artists and artworks for the *Pointure* exhibition. The *Pointure* exhibition, which takes place at the University of Johannesburg Gallery from 8 to 29 August 2012, draws together a broad range of thematic and material works that metaphorically express, in the inherent use of media, and in the process of making, notions relating to *pointure* (lace, trap and ghost). The exhibition represents the work of a range of established and emerging artists, working in a broad range of media.

Please consult the following blog for further information concerning the exhibition:
<http://ann-marietully.blogspot.com/2011/08/pointure-curated-exhibition-about.html>

15 AUGUST 2012: 8.30 registration; 9 – 5pm: The colloquium will be held at the School of Tourism and Hospitality, Bunting Road Campus, University of Johannesburg.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

ARTIST PROF. BRACHA L. ETTINGER

She is weaving. She is being woven. ... It takes a special kind of weaving to create the feminine relation from/on the side of the woman. It takes borderswerving and borderlinking. ... She exhibits an intersection of knots in a trans-psychic web. 'Woman' is therefore not a radical Other but a border-other that can be encountered if we follow up on her threads in the texture and the textile of the web. ... She is weaving and being woven. She bears witness in the woven textile and texture of psychic trans-subjectivity. Wit(h) nessing makes an-other sense – sense of the nameless Thing, the immemorial, the originarily repressed – if taken as Event-Encounter-Thing. She is becoming in-ter-with the Other, she is an impue becoming-between in jointness, weaving the Event-Encounter-Thing with-in a texture, inviting another Other to follow its threads so that the immemorial will filter into with-in-visibility...

Bracha L. Ettinger. 2004. Weaving a woman artist with-in the matrixial encounter-event.
Theory, Culture and Society 21 (1):69-94.

Bracha L. Ettinger is a prominent Israeli/French (and British) international visual artist who divides her time between Paris and Tel Aviv. Primarily a painter, she works in an interdisciplinary manner, incorporating oil-painting, drawing, photography, artist's books, conversation, lecturing-performances, encounter-events, and writing. Two books dedicated to her art: *Art as compassion. Bracha L. Ettinger* (eds. Catherine de Zegher & Griselda Pollock) and *Le cabinet de Bracha* (ed. Patrick le Nouene) were published in 2011. Her exhibitions include Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1996), Kiasma, Helsinki (2006), Centre G. Pompidou, Paris (*Face a L'Histoire*, 1996, elles@pompidoucentre, 2010). Recent solo exhibitions include Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Angers (2011), Alma Matrix (dual ex.) at Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2010), Freud Museum, London (2009), Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki (2009) and Drawing Center, New York (2001). Recent performance / installation and lecturing 'encounter-events' include ICI, Berlin (2010), Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przykaciół Nauk, Poznań (2011) and Arts Nova Museum, Turku (2011). Her figural-abstract paintings, artist's notebooks' produced over 30 years, and other prolific artistic practices have had a major influence on global art, art criticism and art history since the end of the twentieth-century.

Ettinger is also a practicing psychoanalyst (member of NLS, WAP and TAICP) whose theoretical writing on the Matrix; on coemergence and differentiation -in-jointness; on the feminine-maternal-matrixial Eros of borderlinking and borderspacing; on prematernity-prenatality and pregnancy as borderspace and bordertime of jointness; on the primordality of affects of compassion and awe and on the aesthetic affect of fascinace; on the weaving of psychic strings and threads; on transsubjectivity and transjectivity in severality (not a unique self, not an endlessly fragmented self) have influenced the psychoanalytical and

philosophical fields since the early 1990's. Ettinger is associated with contemporary French psychoanalytical feminism. She is author of numerous articles and books on Psychoanalysis, Aesthetics and Ethics, including *The matrixial borderspace* (collected essays from 1994-1999, Univ. of Minnesota 2006). In her recent theoretical writing Ettinger goes beyond the (Freudian) uncanny anxiety to elaborate the aesthetic and proto-ethical notions of compassion, uncanny compassion and uncanny awe, self-fragilisation and resistance – concepts that carry heavy ethical and political implications.

PROF. JANE TAYLOR

Jane Taylor is a writer, scholar and curator from South Africa. For the past several decades she has been involved in cultural critique and public scholarship as well as creative writing. In 1987 she and David Bunn co-edited *From South Africa* (TriQuarterly Magazine and University of Chicago Press). In 1996 she designed and curated *FAULT LINES*, a series of cultural responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that followed the end of apartheid in South Africa. As part of this programme, she wrote the playtext, *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, for South African artist/director William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company. In 2000 she wrote the libretto for a new opera for Kentridge, *The Confessions of Zeno*, a work that was performed at the Lincoln Centre in New York as well as at the MCA in Chicago. She has two published novels, *Of wild dogs* (which won the prestigious Olive Schreiner Prize for new fiction in South Africa) and *The transplant men* (a work of fiction that is grounded in the first heart transplant, an event that took place in South Africa). In 2009 she edited *Handspring Puppet Company*, a substantial study of the celebrated performance company from South Africa. She is currently of the Board of Advisors for *Dokumenta 2012*.

Taylor is currently writing a book on the artist William Kentridge, as well as a scholarly work on the history and theory of Sincerity in the early modern era in the west. She wrote and directed a new work of puppetry theatre for *Out The Box 2011*. The work, titled *After Cardenio*, arises from a commission from Renaissance Scholar Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard University, to write a version of the so-called 'missing Shakespeare play', *The History of Cardenio*. From 2000 to 2009 Taylor held the Skye Chair of Dramatic Art at the University of the Witwatersrand. She has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Johannesburg, and is currently a Mellon Senior Research Advisor at the University of the Western Cape. Taylor has been a Visiting Fellow at Oxford and at Cambridge Universities in the United Kingdom; and has been recipient of Mellon and Rockefeller Fellowships. In Fall 2011 she was writer-in residence at Northwestern University.

Taylor is currently Dramaturge for Handspring Trust, and Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago.



CALL FOR PAPERS

POSITIONING STATEMENT

In *Restitutions of the truth in pointing (Pointure)* (2009[1978]), Jacques Derrida explores his prevailing discursive theme of the inside and the outside of a text in relation to Martin Heidegger's *Origin of the work of art* (1935): a philosophical exploration of etymological themes of presence in application to Vincent van Gogh's painting, *Oude Schòenen (Old Shoes)* (1886), (Payne 1993:220, 221). *Restitutions* takes the form of a polylogue of self-reflexive voices, including those of Heidegger and Meyer Shapiro, who later wrote a reflective piece on Heidegger's theses, entitled 'The still life as personal object: a note on Heidegger and Van Gogh' (1968) (Payne 1993:224). In this divisive manner, *Restitutions* operates through a set of metaphors: *Pointure* is a key metaphor relating to printing in terms of the "small iron blade with a point, used to fix the page to be printed on to the tympan" as well as "the hole which it makes in the paper" (Payne 1993:228). The work of shoemaking, Derrida (cited by Payne 1993:228) notes, is also a practice synonymous with the term *Pointure*, referring to the stitching of the shoe. Derrida ties this term to both texts and the represented shoes in Vincent van Gogh's painting; and in so doing, 'cobbles' together a complex critique and discussion of the act of reading paintings. He further connects the act of painting (and, by extension, visual representation and visual culture) to his textual mode of pointing at and through a text – in the sense that the painting 'punctures' and 'penetrates' the canvas with meaning. Derrida draws on van Gogh's assertion that, "truth is so dear to me, and so is the *seeking to make true*, that indeed I believe ... I would rather be a cobbler ... than a musician with colours" (Derrida's citation of van Gogh, cited by Payne 1993:228, italics in Derrida). Van Gogh's *Old Shoes* lingers as a potent image and thread in this multivalent discourse.

In his reading of Derrida's notion of *pointure*, Michael Payne (1993:229) notes that, "language in its search for truth punctures the painting, not as one might take a knife to a canvas but as one might lace a shoe". In this sense the humble shoelace becomes a related dimension of the master metaphor, *pointure* – pointing to the further dimensions of this action: 'relation' and 'restitution' of things otherwise separate (painting and language, cutting and sewing disparate elements together). In addition to these two poignant metaphors, Derrida (2009) points to a further meaning in the word 'lace'. The French word for lace, *le lacet*, can also mean 'trap' or 'snare' (Payne 1993:229). In this sense, van Gogh's empty shoes with open laces represent an empty trap, a vacuum of presence to delve into –

where only ghosts can be found. 'Ghost' is the last metaphor in Derrida's *Restitutions*. For Heidegger, the empty shoes resonate with the ghost of a peasant woman, and in their 'unfilled' presence point to the ontology of all beings – non-being, while for Shapiro the same shoes remain an indexical portrait of van Gogh (Payne 1993:230). In a sense, Derrida's (2009) textual voices embody these present and past ghosts connected (laced) to van Gogh's shoes, as well as more recent spirits.

Further to the narrative dimension of *pointure* are the notions of women's work, fabrication and fable; folded and unfurling palimpsests of narrative and memory; tapestries (inter)laced with threads that bind. Intertex(tile) is another neologism to consider: of intertextuality and reading between warp and weft; tufts and bunches dyed in sameness and otherness; alchemic metamorphosis; traditions put to the test; of (re)patterning and serial repetition; chirosofphy (hand-wisdom) and mechanical reproduction; moulded conversations; seamless, seamstress, sea(mistress).

Pointure has been framed here as a less reductive way to discuss complexes of visual culture involving mediums and approaches, too often oversimplified in terms of art/craft binaries. That said, it can also be argued that *pointure* has limitations in terms of addressing a field of visual practice strongly allied with notions of 'women's work' and 'femininity'. Being that the conception of *pointure* emerges out of the responses (set apart by time) of three male scholars of literary theory, metaphysics and art history, this concept may be understood as an idea more aligned with the figure of masculinity and western hegemonic conceptions of philosophy and aesthetics. Nevertheless, *pointure* must be considered in close association with a further theoretical model, namely, Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's 'matrixial' theory. Ettinger has applied her conception of matrixial theory, which stems from the feminist critique of psychoanalysis and the deconstructive impulse to revision academic discourse, to her art practice. In this leaning towards aesthetic application and revisionist thinking, matrixial theory and Derridian *pointure* share a common *zeitgeist*.

Ettinger's far reaching practice (an interstitial relationship between artmaking and academic writing) challenges the phallic structure of the symbolic realm of western aesthetics and the male gaze (Giffney, Mulhall & O'Rourke 2009:1). Her conception of matrixial theory addresses the taboo 'maternal-feminine' in frank and startling clarity. Notions of 'femininity' and especially that of 'maternal-femininity' have, to a large extent, been relegated to the undesirable outside of gender politics and discourse (Pollock 2009:10). Considering the physiological conceits of early twentieth-century thinking about mental illness, such as Charcot's theory of hysteria which proposed abnormal psychopathologies derived from the womb, it is not difficult to imagine why the 'maternal feminine' has been an absent figure of discomfort in gender theory. Ettinger's term 'matrix', derived from the Latin word for womb, is a play on the dark phallic, symbolic and hysteric past of the phenomenon womb. Griselda Pollock (2009:13) points out that Ettinger employs the idea of the womb in a non-anatomical manner – *notionally, intellectually and metaphorically*. In Ettinger's theses the womb is mobilised as an intellectual potential.

Ettinger's 'matrix' is a prenatal, 'maternal-feminine' model for human experience, "psychically, imaginatively and symbolically built upon a primordial, ethical/aesthetical situation of human becoming" (Pollock 2009:5). Matrixial theory is also a "transsubjective" notion, resisting gender specificity in the logic that both male and female subjects have once shared in this borderline 'becoming-human' experience of pre-natality (Pollock 2009:8, 9). Pollock (2009:13) proposes that matrixial theory in its intrauterine web of subtle and fragile relations, presents a structure to 're-think' social interaction, aesthetics and ethics, without avoiding or disavowing feminine, histories, presence or relations (Pollock 2009:28). In terms of revising the articulation of '*pointure*-type' visual practices, often associated with 'women's work', matrixial theory offers significant possibilities, as it is not premised on the disavowal of the feminine, and allows for a complex 'weave' of subjectivities within visual representation: art-maker, woman, man, infant, mother, viewer, histories and futures of the medium; as well as the further ethical and social significance of the feminine in contemporary visual culture.

The colloquium extends upon these theoretical frameworks and invites papers that reflect on the above notions within the following thematic groupings:

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

1. Critical reflections are invited on the poststructural notion of *pointure* and/or the psychoanalytic aesthetic Ettingerian notion of matrixial weaving as a conceptual direction for reconsidering 'stitching-type' practices in visual practice:
 - *Pointure* and matrixial theory can be viewed as potential intellectual frameworks for redressing the binary limitations of art/craft and art/design discourses. This claim could be considered in terms of specific practice examples.
 - In its revisionist/deconstructionist approach to existing texts and positions, *pointure* can be employed to critically reframe historically denigrating conceptions of 'stitching-type' practices as 'woman's work' and 'craft'. Matrixial theory has a particular strength in this domain. In the positive revision of the maternal, the denigration of 'femininity' and by extension, practices directly related to the feminine are debunked. Ettingerian notions of weaving complex and unresolved matrixes of subjectivity can become figuratively understood in relation to aesthetic '*pointure*-type' practice: *how subjectivity is embedded in warp and weft*.
 - '*Pointure*-type' practices in contemporary South African visual culture exhibit a tendency for rhetorical irony, often repurposing 'craft' mediums to address ideological marginalities and conceits (a global phenomenon). This tendency can be discussed in deconstructionist and/or matrixial terms (or other), pointing to the dislocation of enlightenment logic in the Derridean approach; and the displacement of phallogocentric logic in the manner of Ettinger's writing and visual practice.

- *Pointure* can also be discussed in terms of mark-making and the related generation of meaning and metaphor in examples of visual practice. In this sense, mark making is synonymous with written and theoretical approaches that deviate from accepted patterns of reason and style for ideological reasons.
2. We invite papers that reflect upon modes of ‘writing the image’ in current visual culture, as well as in writing on visual representation and art historical practices in South Africa, with a view to the notion of *pointure* as a textual device:
- Heidegger (2009:293) posited the importance of his observations on the ontological nature of the artwork in the image itself. In pedagogical fashion, Shapiro (2009:296) critiques Heidegger’s lack of specific image observation, pointing out that Heidegger never specifies which of van Gogh’s images of shoes he is referring to in his discussion. Also somewhat at cross purposes, Shapiro (2009:298) debunks the subjectivity of Heidegger’s reading of van Gogh’s shoes as peasant shoes, pointing to a more biographical reading of them as the artist’s shoes. This perhaps aging dialogue is still relevant to how the artwork is ‘written’. To what extent should biographical observation ‘puncture’ the image and be used to ‘lace’ together reception and object? Many artists and art writers resist these biographical readings, preferring a ‘death of the author’ approach, exemplified in Heidegger’s subjective reading (all be it unwittingly). There is a further dimension to this mutability of authorship. In the South African context, no act of writing the image is free of the biographic, racial and sexual identity of both the artist and art writer. How is this negotiated and what challenges and opportunities are opened up by these complex scenarios of identity and longstanding positions of authorship and interpretation?
 - Derrida’s mode of *écriture* (writing), a notable influence on the *écriture féminine* of the French feminists, is a deliberate form of ‘writing in circles’ (a mode of resisting the tyranny of reason). There is a pointing (*pointure*) gesture that can be observed in this style, more concerned with suggesting notions in detail, while avoiding unpacking them in sequential logic. Derrida’s preoccupation with deconstructing texts and theorists (poking through their premises and opening up ruptures in their arguments), suggests ways in which authorship in South African visual culture can move towards an *écriture* of marginal identities. This theme is particularly suited to a revision of South African writing on visual culture writing and for writers who consider images in, and through, other literary disciplines such as poetry, prose, and so on.
 - Giffney, Mulhall and O’Rourke (2009:2) astutely note that Ettinger’s written style is “a neologistic machine”. Pollock (2009:10) in turn links Ettinger’s writing to Cixous’s *écriture féminine*, and explains that matrixial articulation in its “tortured” formation of logos confronts the comfortable phallic domination of language. In her notebooks she regularly combines, French, English, and Hebrew in hybrid formations (Giffney, Mulhall & O’Rourke 2009:2). Ettinger’s work also involves what Rifkin (cited by Giffney, Mulhall & O’Rourke 2009:2) describes as a textuality of “text and textile, slow writing and slow

painting”, meaning that there is an inextricable connection between practice and theory. Gone are the days of measured distance and ontological observation. What Pollock (cited in Giffney, Mulhall and O’Rourke 2009:3) calls “*matrixial écriture*” is writing as ‘spun-together’ interrelations between, text and art-making, exterior histories and futures, and interior uterine states of quiet, murmuring and introspection (which mingle at the edges without manifest crossing). Ettinger’s matrixial writing and creative neologisms wrought in borderline proximity to practice, suggest combined and articulated art-making, theoretical and writing practice directions for contemporary South African arts practitioners who are also writers/theorists.

- The artist’s book is of particular relevance to the notion of *pointure*, as it often combines image and text in a manner that unhinges literary structure, deconstructing and reconstructing pages, incising, cutting, stitching, drawing over and punching through the logic of the page. Ettinger’s matrixial theory and closely related visual practice, which frequently takes the form of artist’s books, which she calls “note-drawing books” (Giffney, Mulhall & O’Rourke 2009:4), is also of relevance here.
3. Derrida’s (cited by Payne 1993:229, 230) rhetorical styling of *pointure*, in particular his trinity of ‘lace’, ‘trap’ and ‘ghost’, lends this methodology to discussions of cultural idioms as they are manifest in visual culture:
- The ‘lace’ metaphor pertaining to the humble shoe lace that draws together that which would otherwise gape (Payne 1993:229) is redolent with notions of entanglement, posthuman and cyborg sensibilities. In the further understanding of the word lace as the ‘frilly’ and ‘holey’ material, notions of transparency and fragility can be extracted.
 - The ‘trap’ metaphor, a play on the French word for lace, which can also refer to a trap or snare (Payne 1993:229), addresses phenomenological discourses of imperial and colonial disenfranchisement, experiences of anxiety, alienation, entrapment and paralysis.
 - The ‘ghost’ metaphor refers to the absent vacuum that Derrida perceives in van Gogh’s images of empty shoes (Payne 1993:230). It can be further suggested that every act of *pointure*, be it in the prick, cut or incision, opens up this ghostly dimension. This idea conjures up nostalgia, longing and dread for the past and the figures of past times; a sense of loss and dispossession haunts this term. ‘Ghosts’ could also be understood as present and not past. The ‘ghost’ metaphor can also be read in the sense of a palimpsest of identity.

The following string of words and thoughts evoke further associations with the notion of *pointure*: prick; sting; stitch; suture; tear; rupture; cut; embroider; point; appliqué; graft; weave; emboss; adorn; bedeck; gild; skin; skinned; blister; singed; scorched; the bodily (medical) and symbolic character of textile, paper, metal, and painterly and ceramic media.

Please note that papers are strictly limited to the maximum of 20 minute presentations (not more than 2600 words).

Abstracts of no more than 350 words should be submitted by Friday 6 April 2012 to:

Ann-Marie Tully, VIAD Research Associate annmart76@yahoo.com and
Leora Farber, Director: VIAD, leora@uj.ac.za.

Please note that neither late submissions nor abstracts of more than 350 words will be considered. Abstracts must please be accompanied by a list of sources cited/references in the text. Abstracts should be in word format (not PDF), with the following information, in this order:

- a. author(s)
- b. affiliation
- c. email address
- d. title of abstract
- e. body of abstract

Selected papers may be submitted as full-length articles to the organisers after the conference, for possible inclusion in a special edition of the Department of Higher Education and Training accredited journal *Image & Text*. As such they would be subject to double-blind peer-review.

Sources cited

Derrida, J. 2009 [1978]. Restitutions of the truth in pointing (*Pointure*), in *The art of art history: a critical anthology*, edited by D Preziosi. New York: Oxford University Press:301-315.

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Giffney, N, Mulhall, A & O'Rourke, M. 2009. Seduction into reading: Bracha L. Ettinger's The matrixial borderspace. *Studies in the Maternal* 1(2):1-15.

Heidegger, M. 2009 [1935]. The origin of the work of art, in *The art of art history: a critical anthology*, edited by D Preziosi. New York: Oxford University Press:284-295.

Payne, M. 1993. *Reading paintings. Reading theory: an introduction to Lacan, Derrida and Kristeva*. Oxford: Blackwell:212-233.

Pollock, G. 2009. Mother trouble: the maternal-feminine in phallic and feminist theory in relation to Bracha Ettinger's elaboration of matrixial ethics/aesthetics. *Studies in the maternal* 1(1):1-31.

Schapiro, M. 2009 [1968]. The still life as a personal object – a note on Heidegger and van Gogh, in *The art of art history: a critical anthology*, edited by D Preziosi. New York: Oxford University Press:296-300.

Further reading on Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial theory:

Ettinger, BL. 2004. Weaving a woman artist with-in the matrixial encounter-event. *Theory, Culture and Society* 21(1):69-94.

Ettinger, BL. 1997. The feminine/prenatal weaving in the matrixial subjectivity-as-encounter. *Psychoanalytic dialogues* VII(3):363-405.

Ettinger, BL. 2002. Weaving trans-subjective texture or the matrixial sinthome, in *Re-inventing the symptom*, edited by L Thurston. New York: The Other Press:83-109.

2006. From proto-ethical compassion to responsibility: besidedness, and the three primal mother-phantasies of not-enoughness, devouring and abandonment. *Philosophical Studies* 2. Vilnius: Versus:100-135. E-Journal version: [O]. Available at: Athena: filosofijos studijos, issue: 2/2007 — From Proto-Etnical ...

Vandenbroeck, P. 2000. *Azeta*. Paris: Flammarion.

Ettinger, BL. 2006. Fascinance. The woman-to-woman (girl-to-m/other) matrixial feminine difference, in *Psychoanalysis and the image*, edited by G Pollock. Oxford: Blackwell:60-93.