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**ADICAL PEACE:**

Closing the Empathy  
Gap.



# Introductions

\*This booklet is a survival guide, no an instructional zine, no a guidebook, a book situated as a guide that assembles. Contrary to a virtual assembly, this book is a document. Proof that we happened. "We," "Us," happened.

Us as the Other, the M/Other. This assembly attempts to break structures, of course it will fail and we will fail to do so, we aren't there yet. Our structural disability can only begin after our words are burning.

So so it goes.

# Art at a Divide

How to pull the Gaze out of Postmodern Ruins  
Vanessa Gravenor

The connection between art and psychoanalysis is usually fraught with a divide. Such division between the two fields only continues when one expands to politics: for art, feminism, politics, and psychoanalysis, are perhaps only recently beginning their entanglements. This assembly, *Radical Peace: Closing the Empathy Gap*, attempts to forge such a temporary territory by assembling different thinkers and practitioners together to discuss strategies of what Griselda Pollock calls “art-working.”

Left in the aftermath of a post-modernist political thought, where the gaze was proclaimed to be in ruins and affective responsibility in decay, hashtags such as #wecantsaywedidn'tknow persist in their circulation, though rarely provoking any change. In the field of art that primarily, but of course not exclusively, deals with the gaze and attempting to reach the viewer through the visual field, there seems to be a persistent question for the artist on how to make work when the gaze is in decline. It seems only fitting to turn to the site of the woman, specifically in psychoanalysis.

Quoting Lacan, Bracha Ettinger explains how within historical discourses, “the woman does not exist and signifies nothing. She is the other/thing-as-absence” (Ettinger, 2006). In opposition to these statements, Bracha Ettinger’s project attempts to revise the concept of woman as a site of negativity, placing this space of negativity,

her womb, as a site where linking can occur. She refers to this site as the *Matrixial Borderspace*, in which she explains: “The matrix refers, first, to a traumatic jouissance and its associated phantasies of unprohibited pre-birth incest between the subject-to-be and what I call the archaic-becoming-m/Other-to-be” (Ettinger, 2006).

The matrix is essential for thematizing the space of conflict resolution or activist labor that begins with the female. In the preliminary research for Mathilde ter Heijne’s *Blood Sweat and Tears*, an art project that researches female peace activism transcontinentally and locally, I came across several women who enter into these “zones,” who are forced to enter into marginal territory to come to a negotiation. For instance, Luz Mendez, a peace negotiator in Guatemala, told the story of attending peace negotiations and having to shake the hand of the oppositional party who massacred her friends and family members. Simply looking into the eyes of this opposition and meeting the gaze threatened to break apart solid identity states. But perhaps simply looking can constitute an act of defiance. Contrary to post-modern thought when one thinks about the queer or female gaze, which doesn’t destruct but links separate identities.

Of course, as Ewa Majewska, reminds us, not all resistance need to be active, but can also take upon weak stances, using the female and queer subject as a site for movements to occur.

The assembly in Körnerpark, though mostly in the form of discourse and language, strives to make a turn in art discourse against questioning the role of the gaze, and its destructive absence in states of conflict, and towards visualizing peaceful oppositions and the assemblages of these oppositions which we can occupy.



**seminary**

(Latin: seminarium, from semen "seed")

1. A theological school for the training of rabbis, priests, or ministers.

2. A private residential school for girls.

3. A piece of ground where seed is sown for producing plants for transplantation.



# Assembling Radical Peace.

Zofia Nierodzinska

The assembly at the Gallery Körnerpark takes as its point of departure the theory of the Matrixial Gaze described by the Israeli artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger in her book: *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Ettinger, 2006).

From the Matrixial Borderspace perspective war is an abstraction, since it is based on a stabilized binary logic of a “cut”, which is annihilating for the Matrix. In the Matrixial Sphere the I is not separated from the Other, but borderconnected and entangled, like in the word *M/Other*, which stresses the hybridic and dynamic nature of an I-identity. The mother Other/body is an assemblage shaped by and actively (re)shaping the symbolic. The representation here is not separated from the bodily experience, as it is the case in the classical psychoanalysis of its male fathers like Freud or Lacan. The Matrix is a threshold, the inside of a visible screen, a movement between the appearance of an image and its dissolution into severalty. Matrix as a screen does not only reflect representations, like a plain mirror surface, but leads the gaze behind the visible stratum, it splits it, showing its rhizomatic features. The Matrixial Gaze is a touching gaze, is an experience, which connects the I with the Other, instead of tearing them apart. The logic based on binary oppositions disconnects language and its human users from the world. Matrixial becoming towards peace is not an *u-topos* (no place), but the real situated experience of being part of the world in its relational becomings.



In what way exactly the matrixial theory inform political actions?  
How could one use it as a site of resistance? How could an  
autonomy be structured, when the theorem of the “cut” has lost its  
relevance?

With these questions in mind we will try to assemble our politicized  
thinking bodies around terms such as: Assemblage, Assembly,  
Autonomy, FeMale HipHop, Feminism, Matrixial Borderspace,  
Matrixial Gaze, Peace, Politics of Bearing, Post-Peace and Weak  
Resistance.





# Words in Context

## ASSEMBLAGE

An assemblage is NOT a territory, it is an interaction between parts, in other words a community made out of heterogeneous entities. Assemblage is a term developed by Deleuze and Guattari in respect to rhizomatic structures, that could be found in nature.

It refers to root clusters and social structures that resembles them.

Manuel

Delanda, a contemporary, “Deleuzian philosopher” develops the assemblage theory further. He describes an assemblage as an example of a non-hierarchical, less authoritarian and inclusive way of organizing.

## ASSEMBLY

An assembly is a group of people, entities, technical devices and objects. These agents have influence on each other and gather together in a network.

2. Assembly in the Old English was also called a ding (thing), which could mean that thing’s etymology definition is embedded in severalty, that things as well as subjects are any consistent entities. 3. Assembling is a material practice of bringing together or gathering into one place, body, or whole. A speaking body is an assemblage, which consists of words and codes of a (un)specific social milieu, as well as of matter shaped by and actively shaping the social sphere.

## Autonomy

Autonomy proposes some type of critical distance or ability of judgment. The question relevant to our discussion is if the autonomy is possible in an assemblage, if yes, what kind of? What the notion of “self” would mean in an assemblage? Is an assemblage an extension of or rather a departure from an individual human subject?

## Feminism

As a movement, feminism has since the beginning of the 20th Century been associated with pacifism. One example of this association is delivered by the International Congress of Women organized at The Hague in April 1915. Its participants demanded women's rights and more democracy in politics as a precondition for peace. Congress members founded the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, which became the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919. The congress participants demonstrated their conviction that durable peace was only possible if women had a political influence. They combined ideas about well-accepted social norms of motherhood with radical political demands.

## FeMale HipHop

Hip hop is a subcultural movement started in the early 1970's by African-American and Puerto Rican youths in the South Bronx. FeMale HipHop already introduces a contradiction to the roots of the word. Can hip hop be used in domestic spaces as opposed to the streets? What is the relation of women and queer subjects relation to this street music that sometimes is a place for exclusion?

## Matrixial Borderspace

is a term developed by Bracha Ettinger to account for marginal spaces, the sides of the "other." In her theory, all human beings cross into this marginal or Borderspace when they are carried into the world by the mother inside her uterus. Borderspace expands the historical psychoanalytic discourse, which situates „woman“ within the negative. The concept of Borderspace makes her thinkable.

## Matrixial Gaze

is a term from the theory of Bracha L. Ettinger, an Israeli artist and psychoanalyst. She uses the matrix not exactly to counter the Lacan's phallic gaze, but to widen the established discourse. The matrix is a metaphorical reference to the uterus in order to stress relationality instead of the phallic „cut“. The concept of the Matrixial Gaze could be used as an example for a radical peace, where no dialectical relations are possible. It is based on processes of becomings and unexpected encounters, which questions the autonomy of an individual, like in the word M/Other.

## Peace

There can be top-down peace and a peace that develops from below. Within the symposium, we are interested in the peace that develops from below, by and for the people. In this case, peace can be akin to conflict resolution, in that it is a conversational, gestural activity that involves a process of discursive negotiation. It is necessary as well to contextualize peace in different conflict situations, as it changes meanings depending on the dominant political structure and stratum. Peace is not only an absence of war, but a real activity directed towards more affirmative ways of structuring our being together.

## Post-Peace

It is about peace and its highly problematic meaning and status. It is a screen that makes the reality of war inaccessible and invisible. Post-Peace is the name of our times of new and often confusing conflicts.

## Politics of Bearing

is a way of imagining a body that thinks. The body performs the unfamiliar, via diffraction, during pregnancy, as well as during the process of delivering the child. The politics of bearing reminds us, that the bodies are not only formed by social and political discourses, but that they are actively shaping them.

## Weak Resistance

An anti-heroic performative practice utilizing feminist and queer discourses to position the body horizontally with respect to power, biopolitics, institutional structure, domestic space, friendships, working, and encounters. The Weak Resistance shows how the logic of patriarchal exclusion of the M/Other brings up resistance of the excluded, and a transformation of our understanding of politics.







**ABSTRACTS:**



# Thinking the Matrix, Performing the Unfamiliar

Recently, I've been wondering on what premises a bodily thinking, as put into words by Michel Serres, can become political nowadays. This is how Serres describes his knowing subject: "The knowing subject occupies the entire body – the luxurious headquarters of broad and complete knowledge– founded and based on the sweetness and competence of the senses, knowledge attuned to its limbs and to the world, toned-down and pacified, ready to agree, delivered from resentment, consenting, a luminous, transparent, vibrant, spiritual, flexible, quick, lively subject body– a body that thinks."

In this statement I would like to discuss the materiality of the matrix, as put forward by Bracha Ettinger, and its potential to imagine and politicize a body that thinks. The matrix enables us not just to engage with the unfamiliar– the foreign grain, the child to be–. As Ettinger puts it, the matrix can do more: it lets us perform the unfamiliar, via diffraction, during pregnancy, as well as during the process of delivering the child. In so doing the matrix "attenuates us into connected particles that participate in a drama wider than that of our individual selves" (Ettinger).

It's obvious that making present things that are unfamiliar within a certain cultural context – which (voluntarily or involuntarily) take place in secret hand are radically singular and subjective– has the potential to subvert, recompose, and sometimes even destroy dominant structures. One of the most efficient methods of envisioning those things– if not the only one– is making art,

understood as a continuous singular working and thinking through rather than a depiction or illustration of our problems. What exactly can the matrix show us here? And what else is the matrix informing us about?

Ettinger first tries to make intrauterine pregnancy processes productive as a feminist deconstruction of Lacanian psychoanalysis as well as for her own painterly practice. I would like to supplement this perspective and ask how the process of a– speaking with Serres– knowing, consenting, luminous childbirth, delivered from resentment, can be made productive as a deconstruction of current neoliberal practices– via art and live performance. I will start by having a look at the book *Genesis* where– as is well known– women were damned to give birth with painful labour, and I will end by discussing current neoliberal discourses on labour and birth processes.

Olga Lewicka

# Post-Peace

I will speak about two recent projects of mine: *Women Commentators (Russia and Ukraine)* (Krolikarnia, Warsaw, 2014) and *Post-Peace* (Akbank Sanat, Istanbul, 2015—ongoing). I will show some of the art works and will focus on obstacles, which inherently surround cultural projects, that touch upon the subject of peace, or war. The question of historical and emotional distance, sensitivity, political correctness and censorship will be central in this talk.

*Women Commentators (Russia and Ukraine)* was organized by Katarzyna Kozyra Foundation at the moment when in many spheres of life a dialogue between Russia and Ukraine didn't seem possible. There was an urgency to build a platform for a dialogue between Ukrainian and Russian cultural activists and researchers and hear their testimonies of the war. This festival was a way to create another dimension for intellectual collaboration, which differed from boycotting.

*Post-Peace* as a concept and an exhibition was inspired by the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2015. Differing from a number of exhibitions engaged with contemporary politics, *Post-Peace* is not directly about war, and does not aim to show images of victims or documentaries filled with blood and horror: it does not wish to add to the many representations of violence already circulating in the media. It is rather about peace, and its highly problematic meaning and status, how it is spoken about in contemporary terms and how it all too often functions as a screen that makes the reality of war inaccessible and invisible. *Post-Peace* is the name of our era of new and often confusing conflicts. A whole new vocabulary has sprung up to describe the nature of the new warfare: preemptive, hybrid, unconventional, asymmetric. Moreover, wars tend to be located in places that are nearly impossible to access by reliable eyewitnesses and media. Reality is obfuscated behind contradictory reports and calculated lies. Undeclared terror, a multiplicity of realities, the proliferation

of conspiracy theories, events that avoid their real names, victims of remote wars, states of fear and disorientation—all of these are symptoms of the Post-Peace.

Katia Krupennikova

## Weak Resistance

Peace does not make history, war does. The weak do not make history, heroes do. Let's see, shall we?

In 1981 and 1980 two peaceful protests started, in Greenham Common and in Gdansk, in which heroism was replaced by the resistance of the weak, and violence contradicted. The Feminist Protest Camp against nuclear weapons and the solidarity movement in Poland were exceptional strategically and politically, and they both started as a refusal of power - the military power of the nuclear weapons in the military complex of the West and a refusal of accepting the alienated management of the state communism of the East. They both were contextualized heterotopias rather, than abstracted utopias, however, they both managed to stop time and bring radical change. They both have shown how the logic of patriarchal exclusion of the M/Other brings up resistance of the excluded, and a transformation of our understanding of politics.

Ewa Majewska

# FeMale HipHop

In her lecture FeMale HipHop, Realness, Roots und Rap Models Michaela Wünsch discusses the terms Realness, the Political and Feminsim in the hiphop genre. Hip hop seems to carry the burden of a political claim more than any other music genre. This political claim is connected to the demand that hiphop's representatives, African-Americans, have to use music to articulate "their" political issues, reduced to a ghetto lifestyle and poverty. Female artists are supposed to address sexism within the genre under the claims of what is one might call a white feminism. But queer and female hiphop artists have developed different strategies.

Michaela Wünsch

# Lady Liberty Re-mix: Pour la Paix

Inspired by Bracha Ettinger's notions from The Matrixial Gaze, the idea of navigating becomes a gospel and spoken word anthem in the name of feminist values such as liberty, solidarity, equality and those unnamable trans-subjective spaces in-between.

Why are you ridin' what are you ridin' for?

Nina Prader

# Kamar

Over the last eight years it was the music that created the love. We started playing oud together in 2008 in Damascus as a Kamar band. Unfortunately, the war separated us. Now and after two years of separation, Berlin gives us a chance to meet again like a family and a band.

Nabīl Arbain



# BIOGRAPHIES

Olga Lewicka (born 1975) is a visual artist. Polish born, she lives and works in Berlin. Her practice focuses on painting, but it also encompasses installation, collage, performance, text and artist book.

Olga Lewicka studied at the Art Academy in Wrocław. In 2005 she won the Eugeniusz-Geppert-Competition and was awarded the prize for young Polish painting. In 2007 she was nominated for Views – The Deutsche Bank Foundation Award for the most interesting young artists on the Polish art scene. In 2010 she was awarded the Młoda Polska Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage scholarship for young artists. Between 1997 and 2002 she also studied philosophy and literature at Wrocław University, New York University and Europa-Universität Viadrina.

In her work Olga Lewicka deals with the status of the image and the artwork in contemporary society. In research and project based works she mostly deals with painting, examining its possibilities and understanding it as a political argument rather than representation or illustration.

Dr. Ewa Majewska is a feminist philosopher of culture. She studied philosophy, French literature and gender studies at the University of Warsaw, Poland. Since 2003 she has lectured in the department of Gender Studies at the University of Warsaw, after receiving her PhD she was a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley (BBRG), working on theories of subjectivity and translation; in fall 2010 – she was a fellow at the University of Örebro, Sweden, working on the feminist theories of love; in the years 2011 - 2013 she was the Adjunct Professor in the Institute of Culture at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland. In 2013/14 she was a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna, Austria. She was a fellow at the ICI Berlin, with a two years project, Chasing Europe, or on the Semi-Peripheral Publics, which she will soon publish as a book. Nomadism is her life practice, together with political activism. She is an author of two monographs, one on feminism as social philosophy : *Feminizm jako filozofia społeczna* and one about art and censorship, *Sztuka jako pozór? Cenzura i inne formy upolitycznienia kultury* and co-editor of two volumes on neoliberalism and politics: *Zniwolony umysł II. Neoliberalizm i jego krytycy* and *Futuryzm miast przemysłowych*. She published in: *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *e-flux*, *Nowa Krytyka*, *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy*, *Kultura Współczesna*, *Le Monde Diplomatique (PL)* and several collected volumes, including A. Jonasdottir, A. Ferguson (eds), *Love. A question for feminists?* (Routledge, 2013). She currently lives in Warsaw, Poland.



Katia Krupennikova (1982, Moscow) is an independent curator based in Amsterdam. In her curatorial practice Krupennikova has been investigating how artists comment on pertinent social and political contexts. Krupennikova currently collaborates as an invited curator with Nest Ruimte, den Haag, Framer Framed, Amsterdam and Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart. In 2015 she co-founded Stichting No Land's Men, initiated and curated its first series of events InsideOut. Her ongoing project Post-Peace is a winner of Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition 2015. Krupennikova's other recent exhibitions include There is Absolutely No Cause for Alarm, within a special program of Unseen Festival (De Punt and Kepler Studio Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 2015), Women Commentators: Russia and Ukraine (Krolkarnia Department of the National Museum, Warsaw, 2014). In 2013/14 Katia has collaborated with the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw as a curator for Video Room and Performance Day programs as well as executed a role of an assistant curator for large scale international projects. As an art critic Krupennikova has contributed to various cultural resources internationally including colta.ru (Russia) and Metropolis M (Netherlands). She studied Information Technology in the Moscow State University for Steel and Alloys and later graduated from Art History department of the Russian State University for Humanities. In 2012 she graduated from De Appel Curatorial Programme, Amsterdam.

Nabil Arbaain is a Syrian composer and oud player from Damascus. He co-founded and played with several bands in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and most recently Germany, with musicians from different countries and music styles. He has always been interested in the mix of traditional Arabic-Oriental music with different musical styles such as Jazz, Flamenco and Classical music. Since coming to Germany in mid-2015, He played many concerts in cities like Berlin, Frankfurt Oder, Cologne, Dresden and Rathenow. He also co-founded two bands in Berlin. The first is named Matar, which means "rain" in Arabic, and is made up of Syrian newcomers working to combine Oriental and Classical music. The second band is named SINGA, which means "connect" in Lingala, and is made up of Syrian and German musicians playing Jazz music by adding an Oriental soul and playing Oriental music by adding a Jazz soul. As well as, He is playing now with Babylon orchestra and Aananda electronic band. He also composes his own music which is played by both bands, Matar and Singa.

Helen Meerkhan is a Syrian oud player from Damascus. She studied 8 years in Solhi Alwadi Music Institute; after her graduation she started to teach the instrument in the same institute. She played with several Syrian bands and performed many concerts in Damascus Opera house, Alhamra theater and in the National Library. After that she was awarded a scholarship to complete her higher education in Geology in Portugal where she also gave several concerts. Now Nabil and Helen are living and performing music together in Berlin.

SINGA Both Nabil and Helen are ambassadors of the SINGA community. SINGA Deutschland is a social enterprise that connects newcomers, often unexpectedly coming to Germany as refugees, and locals by creating opportunities for them to participate in and co-create projects and activities together. By building on the interests and skills of the community, all members are able to contribute to the creation of a truly inclusive society through a variety of innovative programs, enabling the social and professional exchange of information, ideas and networks.

Michaela Wünsch has taught Media Studies at Universität Wien, Freie Universität and Humboldt Universität in Berlin, Universität Potsdam, and University of California Riverside. From 2012-2015 she conducted a research project on repetition in psychoanalysis and television as Marie-Curie-Fellow at UC Riverside, UCLA and Universität Potsdam. She is a founding member of the publishing collective b\_books and serves as the president of the Psychoanalytic Library Berlin, a space for psychoanalytic research and practice.

Publications include *Im inneren Außen. Der Serienkiller als Medium des Unbewussten* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2010), the edited volumes *Angst. Lektüren zu Jacques Lacans Seminar X* (Wien: Turia+Kant, 2012) and *Techniken der Übereinkunft. Zur Medialität des Politischen* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2009, with H. Blumentrath, K. Rothe, S. Werkmeister, and B. Wurm); *FeMale HipHop. Realness, Roots und Rap Models* (Mainz: Ventil 2007, with Anjela Schischmanjan), and *Outside. Ein Reader zur Politik queerer Räume* (Berlin: b\_books 2005, with Matthias Haase and Marc Siegel).

Nina Prader is a text and image artist. Her sea port is docked in Vienna, close to the international airport. Born in Washington D.C., she studied at the Museum School of Fine Arts in Boston in affiliation with Tufts University and at the Slade in London in affiliation with UCL. She received her MA in Critical Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Austria. She has exhibited and written internationally in Boston, Vienna, Berlin, and London.

She was Co-teacher to Nicholas Wild and Sarnath Banerjee at the International Summer Academy in Salzburg and has worked for Knygu Salis (Land of Books and artist Book Studio) in Vilnius, Lithuania and Avital Geva's Greenhouse: Arts and Ecological Center.

Vanessa Gravenor (1992, Canada) is an artist and critic living in Berlin. She is a DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst) scholar from October 2015 to December 2016. She is candidate for a Diplom in the class of Hito Steyerl at Universität der Künste, Berlin and holds a Bachelors in Arts from Washington University in St. Louis. She has published works in N.Paradoxa, ArtSlant, Chicago EXPO, and Bad at Sports. She has also lived in Chicago, IL where she worked with Gallery 400 and Three Walls non-profit. Her research interests include trauma studies, feminism, and biopolitics.

Zofia Nierodzinska is a feminist artist, theoretician and social activist. Her research interests embrace such fields as: Feminist New Materialism, Post-anthropocentrism, Work and Labour Theories, Gender and Representation, as well as Assemblage Theories. Media of her artistic research are: Analog and digital film, animation, painting, drawing, performance and text. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Arts in Poznan, Poland. In 2016 she graduated from the Universität der Künste, Institute for Art in Context with the work: Materialität der Arbeit. Eine Assemblage. Ein Ziegel (ein Stück Kuchen). She published fragments of her PhD research and the translation of the MA thesis in *Czas Kultury*. Her artistic and theoretical works were presented at the exhibitions and festivals in Berlin, Tel Aviv, Warsaw, Poznan, Bialystok and Wroclaw, as well as at conferences in Wisconsin (40 Feminist SF Conference), Poznan (Paradox, University of Arts) and at the Kunsthochschule in Kassel. She has been based in Berlin since 2011.

#### Reproductions:

1. Vanessa Gravenor, *Girl in a Web/ Girl with her finger caught*, oiled paper, found image, 2012, s. 1

2. Zofia nierodzinska, *Seminar*, watercolor and pencil on paper, 10/15 cm, 2016, s. 5

3. Zofia nierodzinska, *Africa*, digital collage, 10/17 cm, 2013, s.6

Zofia nierodzinska, ?

Vanessa Gravenor, *Father Issues: Getting Born*, 2012, s.9

4. Olga Lewicka, from the *Cloudility* Series, c-print, collage on paper, din A4, 2016, s.10

Zofia

Vanessa Gravenor, *Mother*, oiled paper, collage, found image, 2012

Mathilde ter Heijne, *Face to the Dawn of Liberty*, s. 15

Olga Lewicka, from the *Cloudility* Series, 2016, c-print, collage on paper, din A4, 2016, s. 16

SINGA, Nabil Arbaiin, s.22

Zofia nierodzinska, 'a', collage on papier, 5/8 cm, 2012, s.17

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So you say woman does not exist?