

Carla Lonzi writes: "Feminism is the discovery and implementation of the birth of the individual components of a species subjugated by the myth of self-realization through sexual union with the species in power."¹

There are spirits among us, a long line, reaching back through time as far as we can see. Cristine de Pizan, Moderata Fonte, Lucrezia Marinelli, Artemisia Gentileschi, Arcangela Tarabotti, Olympe de Gouges and all the others. A river running through history and culture, a choir of voices, a tradition, a relay. A struggle, a burden, a community, a hope, a rope. A stone in the shoe, a pain in the ass, a coven. Bitches, bitches, bitches. A city of ladies.²

It is with great joy that skēnē welcomes you to *Negative Space*, an exhibition by **Marianne Heier**. Expanding from Heier's multi-year research project *La Passione*, the exhibition centers the visual, political, and bodily legacies of Italian radical feminism, thus bridging these archives and interventions within a Nordic context. Against a backdrop of resurging fascisms, *Negative Space* becomes a site for collective counter-narratives and urgent structural resistance. Here, further voices are drawn into the space, encompassing works by **Bingöl Elmas** and **Stephanie Ursler**, alongside a dedicated tribute to **Gina Pane**.

Joining them as a tactile counterpart is *Aristotle's Masterpiece* – a centuries-old, subversive book using a patriarch's name as a camouflage to preserve the autonomous bodily knowledge of midwives and healers. *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, also known as *The Works of Aristotle, the Famous Philosopher*, is a sex manual and a midwifery book that was popular in England from the early modern period through to the nineteenth century. It was first published in 1684 and written by an unknown author who falsely claimed to be Aristotle. As a consequence the author is now described as a Pseudo-Aristotle, the collective name for unidentified authors who masqueraded as Aristotle.

Also shown in the exhibition is a series of photographs, *Body* and *Spine*, taken by Marianne Heier in Paros, Greece, where marble has been quarried for millennia. The material has served as the basis for some of art history's most significant sculptures, many of which erase the female subjects they depict, rendering them nameless and often headless objects. This quarry can also be likened to Plato's cave, canonically denominated as the birthplace of Philosophy (think Gustave Courbet's *L'Origine du monde*). As follows, the photographic series manifests Heier's consistent (scathing) critique of Western patriarchal and capitalist epistemology and the worlds that this History has spawned and upheld.

Marianne Heier (b. 1969) is a visual artist based in Oslo, Norway, educated at the Fine Art Academies in Milan and Oslo. Utilizing methodologies borrowed from activism, theater, and anthropology, Heier explores the distribution of resources, power dynamics, and the political potential of generosity and exchange. Her work is manifested through performance, text, installation, objects, photography, video, and architectural interventions.

Marianne Heier has exhibited extensively at institutions including the National Museum (Oslo), Munch Museum, Kunstnerens Hus, Henie Onstad Art Center, Malmö Konstmuseum, and CAPC Bordeaux. She has also produced prominent public art commissions for KORO and the Norwegian Scenic Routes. In 2012, she was the featured artist for the Bergen International Festival Exhibition, and in 2013, she was awarded the Lorck Schive Art Prize.

Bingöl Elmas (b. 1976 in Erzurum, Turkey) is a director and writer, known for *Komsu Komsu! Huu!* (2015), *My Letter to Pippa* (2010) and *Playing House Evcilik* (2012). For *My Letter to Pippa*, Elmas dons a black wedding dress and takes up the journey where Pippa Bacca's journey ended (see above), following her planned route through Turkey until the Syrian border, hitchhiking alone in the same way Bacca had planned to do. Documenting her journey and the various meetings and situations along the way, her film is both a homage to Pippa Bacca and a study of the conditions imposed upon female bodies under patriarchal regimes. Equal parts sorrow and fury, the resulting film is both a meditation on courage, trust and solidarity and important political statement on the violent consequences of toxic masculinity. As Elmas states: "[...] states of masculinity are discussed as well as the reality of being a woman in Turkey [...]. This is a movie about existing as a woman in a truck or on a highway without being harassed or raped."

On view in the exhibition:
My Letter to Pippa (2010)
Film, 60 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

A pioneer of the American feminist movement and a Black Panther activist in 1966-67, American artist **Stephanie Oursler** (b.1938—d.2018) emigrated from New York to Rome in the early 1970s. She joined the Collettivo di Rivolta Femminile with Accardi, Lonzi and Banotti, and contributed to the foundation of the Cooperativa Beato Angelico, the first self-managed space for women artists in Rome. Reflected in her work are both ideas that were circulating in the late 1960s in New York, and influences of the feminism from the early 1970s in Rome. Typical for these contexts, the introspection of the female subject in patriarchal society is for Oursler the foundation of both her political work and her artistic practice. A recurring topic in her work is patriarchal violence, and included in the exhibition is a copy of her publication *Un'album di violenza* (An Album of Violence), published by Edizione delle donne in 1975. The book collects hundreds of clippings from the Rome newspaper *Paese Sera* describing violence, often deadly, against women in that same year. Oursler writes as an introduction to this overwhelming collection of squalor, fear and despair: "At night history is not progressive. Men are momentary accidental noisy squatters in the universe. Women are, at least, quietly invisible... In clear mornings of habitual sanity, one reads the newspaper and reason eclipses the moon. There are women worthy of attention, eloquent in their man-given power to die."

On view in the exhibition:
Un'album di violenza (1975)
Photobook. Publisher: Edizioni delle donne. Dimensions: 33 x 23,5 cm.
Private collection

Gina Pane (b.1939—d.1990) is mostly known for her "azioni" (actions) pieces, in which she would perform a strategic set of actions upon herself, oftentimes requiring high levels of physical endurance and tolerance for pain. The visual language of the ritual was very important to Pane, and she executed her highly symbolic and meticulously staged performances with an extreme attention to detail, effectively inviting the audience to resonate with the feelings she was going through, igniting empathy and relative emotionality. Her own body was the canvas on which she expressed communal concerns surrounding sexuality, spirituality, gender, politics, feminism, the environment, and suffering. The framed document in *Negative Space* does not qualify as a work by Pane but is included in the exhibition as a kind of relic, echoing Gina Pane's interest for the religious, the spiritual and the ritual, and acknowledging her importance within the context of Italian feminist art.

It is a small black and white silver test print, bought on e-bay and probably originating from Pane's studio as a photographic copy sent for instructing the mounting of an exhibition. On the front of the picture are three documentation photos of her seminal performance *Je* from 1972, on the back of the picture is a detailed, handwritten description of the work. In *Je* Pane positioned herself on the window-ledge of a second-floor apartment situated above a café overlooking a square in Bruges. She turned her back towards the square and the audience, looking instead through the glass to the apartment within, where a family of four went about their usual, private, domestic activities: eating dinner, talking, playing a game, and generally ignoring the face at the window. Precariously and dangerously positioned on the windowsill, Pane took polaroid pictures of the family inside the apartment and let the pictures fall down to the audience underneath her, while sometimes pausing to read short texts on the relationship between the self and the other, the free and the unfree. As Pane stated herself: "In placing my body on the window's parapet between two zones, one private, one public, I had the power of transposition that shattered the limits of individuality so that 'I' could share with the 'Other'."

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1 Carla Lonzi, *Sputiamo su Hegel. La donna clitoridean e la donna vaginale*, Gammalibri, 1973, p. 122

2 Excerpt from Marianne Heier's performance *La Passione*