



CSWupdate
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showcases the transformation of matter to
challenge viewers to think about
environmental change*

Imagining a Genetic Seed Bank

BY STACIE CASSARINO

“TRANS-TEMPORALITY” AND THE HOLIDAYS

HEADING INTO THE HOLIDAYS means scrambling to dot the I's and cross the T's on our calendar of Winter and Spring quarter events. In my capacity as faculty of English, Gender Studies, and Asian American Studies, it also means squeezing in graduate student prospectus exams that have been put off until these final weeks of the year. With such an exam on the horizon, Gender Studies Ph.D. candidate Jacob Lau, who writes on narratives by transgendered and transsexual subjects, came into the CSW offices recently to discuss his ideas regarding “trans-temporality,” the central idea of his dissertation. According to Lau, the life-course of transsexual subjects is too often divided into before and after the visible (hormonal and surgical) change. As an alternative to that bifurcated and linear notion of time, Lau is proposing a richer more complex interweaving of several

temporalities: “secular historical time”—i.e., the national chronologies that we learn about in high school social studies classes—but also time conceived in religious, liturgical, and seasonal cycles as well as the daily round of events that French theorist Helene Cixous suggestively called “women’s time.” Aware that our own Chancellor Bloch is a chronobiologist,¹ Lau may also consider the periodicity of wake-sleep cycles as they affect hormonal regulation in a “trans-gendering” context.

The timing of our conversation, of course, could not have been more situationally ironic with respect to the ticking minutes of our respective deadlines (cue sound effect of alarm-bells-ringing): for Lau, his exam date that coming Thursday, and for me, the closing of the CSW offices for the winter break and the time squeeze

represented by the upcoming holidays. For working mothers like myself, elementary school closures—such as the recent five-day closure of all LAUSD schools that occurred Thanksgiving week (due to budget cuts and forced teacher furlough days)—means having to juggle childcare even as the teaching, research, and administrative clock at the university marches indifferently forward. As Lau might put it, I had experienced holiday time as a rupture of two chronologies that were “immiscible” (non-mixing, as in the example of oil and water). Spending time with my three daughters is not about the efficient use of the eight working hours before me (at which I’ve become adept over my tenure as Associate and now Interim Director), but using up the time in pleasurable but focused tasks so that no one kills each other by 2 pm.

1. <http://chancellor.ucla.edu/biography/academic-interests>



From left to right, Workers at Foxconn (*The Guardian*); Nail salon (Center for American Progress); Texas Street, Buson, Korea (<http://yellowbelliedmustardfrog.wordpress.com/>)



Speaking about furloughs as forced experiences of temporal disjunction (between UCLA time and home time), I thanked Lau for his insight into how trans-temporality applied to my present circumstances. Though intending to narrowly focus this directory's commentary on the productivity of thinking Lau's trans-temporality and HolidayTime together, an email alerting me to a forum on the current "campus climate," sponsored by the Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition, intervened (and lengthened the writing time) by bringing local, national, and transnational histories to the forefront.



By "campus climate," I refer to that cyclic return—coincident with the advent of exam season—of anti-Asian verbal sentiment lying dormant for who knows how long in UCLA's basement (bathrooms), bubbling up into public spaces such as Bruin Walk and the internet two years running (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/14/alexandra-wallace-racist-video_n_835505.html and <http://www.dailybruin.com/article/2012/11/ucpd-investigate-racial-sexist-slurs-found-on-bathroom-stall-door>).

The university has called this lashing out at Japa-

nese-speaking and Vietnamese female students “isolated” acts, and we could imaginatively fill in the details of that speculated narrative: these acts of poor judgment were likely committed by stressed out individuals (of who knows what race, sexual orientation, or gender) who blame Asians for their perceived and real worries over not doing well in the short term—those upcoming essays and exams—and the long term—their post-degree futures.

Shrinking opportunities for U.S. college graduates are certainly real: “From 2007 to 2011, the wages of young college graduates, adjusted for inflation, declined 4.6 percent,” according to the *New York Times*,² and a recent article in *The Atlantic* reported that “53% of recent college grads are jobless or underemployed.”³ We might connect that shrinkage not to loss of jobs due to foreign workers but to the waning social compact between college students (so-called skilled workers of the professional managerial class) and the faceless corporations and “asset management firms” who

2. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/05/opinion/the-class-of-2012.html?_r=0
3. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/04/53-of-recent-college-grads-are-jobless-or-underemployed-how/256237/>

form their potential employers. These firms no longer feel bad, if they ever did, about pink-slipping and downsizing the debits—not people—that they “hold.” But, of course, it is hard to lash out against an abstraction—AKA the fictive “person” of the corporation—and much easier to return to old habits—habits that both demonize Asians as foreign threats and desire and disavow them as docile, servile laborers necessary to propping up the U.S. empire—doing intimate labor such as sex work servicing of U.S. military bases and electronic assembly work that powers our info technology (iPads, computers).⁴

Holiday, we must remember, refers as well to times of off-duty “rest and relaxation” that were the flipside of the on-duty deployments of U.S. troops to Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos during the so-called Cold War period. The slur calling Vietnamese female students “white-boy worshipping wh***s” reminds us of the U.S. military occupations of Asia (Okinawa and the Philip-

4. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/26/business/ieconomy-apples-ipad-and-the-human-costs-for-workers-in-china.html?pagewanted=all>

pinas, for example), the infrastructural support of U.S. troops by “ghost” bar workers, and the white supremacy that remains partially congruent with the militarized spread of U.S. capital into those same former “theaters of war” qua Asian consumer markets. The surplus of time to indulge in off-duty, non-working pleasures—that which I’m associating with “holiday time”—has never quite felt like a holiday for others working in nail salons, electronics factories, sex work, childcare, eldercare, and other occupations requiring intimate labors on the part of women of color. As we become more service-oriented in our economy, what may be resented—and voiced as a slur against Asian American women—is the feminized situation of having to give our intimate labors—our good feelings and non-progressive, non-upward bound time—to serve someone else’s holiday. ‘Tis the season of thinking such temporal convergences for women, men, and transitioning women and men of all races.

—Rachel Lee

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CSWupdate



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Imagining a Genetic Seed Bank

Susan Anker's exhibition at the Art | Sci Gallery showcases the transformation of matter to challenge viewers to think about environmental change.

BY STACIE CASSARINO

IF “MAGICAL THINKING,” to use her words, is essential to Suzanne Anker’s practice of integrating science and visual art, it is also indispensable to the viewer entering her recent exhibition, Genetic Seed Bank, at the Art | Sci Gallery in the California Nanosystems Institute at UCLA.

Anker’s “silent animation” in large-scale digital photographs of marine life creates the

impression of being undersea, eye-level with aquatic nature as it coexists with industrial matter—vibrantly colorful bits of coral grow on concrete discs placed on a lattice of PVC, a plumbing plastic. One thinks of pictures of marine organisms regenerating in the ruins of shipwrecks, only this is a controlled environment, composed by an artist. How can this multihued spectacle of animate forms persevere from such

inorganic material? And yet the scenes do not deceive—the coral is flourishing. Anker’s exhibit is a testimony to the power of nature to triumph. But more than that, it demands to know: What is the place of human beings in regard to other living beings and the environment? What are the new ethics and epistemologies surrounding issues of artistically conceived partial life, particularly in this genetic age? What are the

By engaging activities that have been traditionally associated with an essentialized theory of femininity in the lab, a historically male domain—the reproduction and nurturing of new life forms, the modeling of new communication, the cultivation of symbiotic relationships, the valuing of affect—Anker disrupts reductive notions of gender, procreation, conception, and art.

***Astroculture (Shelf Life)* by Suzanne Anker.
(Detail) 2010, inkjet print, 24x36 in**

values embedded in works of art? How does art preserve life?

Part bio lab, part art exhibit, “Genetic Seed Bank” showcases the transformation of matter to get us to reflect upon the structural and environmental changes occurring all around us, revealing the ways and means that life is being altered in the twenty-first century. One might situate Anker’s work in the realm of Bioart, a relatively new genre that sprang up in response to the emergent field of genetics, which entered into popular culture in the late 1980s. Bioart refers to the overlapping domains of the biological sciences and plastic arts, much like Transgenic Art, which involves the use of genetic engineering to invent new life. Bioartists work with live matter, often experiment with biotechnology, and produce artworks in laboratories, studios, and galleries, with the aim of querying the social, ethical, and aesthetic values rooted in art. Anker, a visual artist and theorist working with traditional and experimental media at the intersection of art and the biological sciences, founded the first bio lab in a fine arts department, the Nature and Technology BioArt Lab at the School of Visual Arts in NYC, where she creates ecosystems in terrariums composed of living and industrial materials.

The intentionally dimly lit gallery containing Anker’s work simulates the laboratory experi-

ence, producing a disorienting encounter with art-as-specimen. By repurposing signs from the natural world into the aesthetic realm, literally moving images from the lab to the gallery, Anker creates a new social field of images to interrogate questions of human agency, stewardship, knowledge, and ethics. With the goal of integrating visual thinking into the living, she underscores the artist’s as well as the viewer’s personal responsibility for all aspects of the living world.

Anker’s installation includes a series of five pictures, inkjet prints on watercolor paper, most at 24 x 36 in, the largest of these projected onto the wall with a slight impression of movement replicating an oceanic current. The images portray MOTE Laboratory, a coral research and recovery program in the Florida Keys where scientists are developing methods to reduce the increasing destruction of coral reefs, which house the matrices of entire ecological systems from corals and plants to fish and birds. The concept for Anker’s coral seed bank derives from the work of these scientists, whose system of classification for corals is based on genetic sequencing. She uses art as an interventionist yet analogous means with which to envisage the genetic seed bank as a form of “repair” and “reformation.” Her genetic sequences of coral reefs are a recovery attempt

that brings to the forefront the artistic, social, and scientific implications of using bio/med technologies for artistic purposes.

Most importantly, Anker’s speculative and practice-based research is approached with Oron Catts’s concept of an “aesthetics of care.” Her work asks, What is the responsibility of the artist in the preservation of living forms, and how does such care, implemented in the practice of art, contribute to a broader, global initiative to revitalize and diversify the planet? In this particular manifestation, coral adapts to and ultimately thrives within the foreign environment in which it is aesthetically circumscribed, and in this way its restoration is achieved. However, Anker also uses art to see and show the ways in which nature rebels. She highlights the variety and complexity of coral: not just a plant, it is a “collective aggregate of individual animals operating as a community,” with symbiotic and parasitic relationships. Her dioramas enfold nature and culture (technology), considering their interdependencies and rendering an evocative “ambiguity of conjunctions.” It is within these points of contact—between coral/PVC, nature/human, artist/spectator—that transformation is possible.

As part of this exhibition, Anker lays out an interactive mini-lab of petri dishes filled with fragments of things from the sea, such as coral,



urchin, algae, and crab shell. The parts, though displaced from their natural habitats and formations, are reenvisioned together as a whole ecosystem. One is reminded of the Renaissance-era encyclopedic collections of objects known as “cabinets of curiosities,” which depicted theatrical microcosms of the natural world. But in Anker’s project, life forms are transformed into art forms, which then materialize into new life forms, emphasizing not only the necessity for reparation but also the vitality of art itself to sustain human life, to influence the life-cycle. Anker shows us that life begets art begets life. Perhaps this is where her sense of the “magical” is required. Visitors are encouraged to move beyond the visual, to touch the specimens, to examine their multi-angular textural elements, an interaction

effectively resulting in a new and perhaps more impacting form of communication between humans and art objects or, more precisely, between humans and other living beings. While art is typically kept at a distance from the observer, at Anker’s opening visitors were on their knees in the dark, huddled around the sampling of nature’s wonders.

By decontextualizing familiar objects in new ecological networks within the art space, Anker radically finds a way to evoke the mysterious as well as the pleasurable at the junction of science and art. Her specimens are alluring curiosities. Her images are pretty, mesmerizing, a salve. Yet they embody and incite action. She proposed in her lecture that we consider the digital image as a circumnavigatory “sign in action.” Indeed, her work asks us to think through the

“compelling narratives embedded in pictorial icons” that constitute our own mutating cultural imaginary, itself a database. The semiotic function of aesthetic images is a central tension in her work. By generating new life, art yields new information. Art, Anker reminds us, is a vital form of knowledge production. Noting the resemblance of coral forms to the human brain, Anker metaphorically reflects upon their convolutions. But beyond this, art as we experience it in this exhibit is also a real means of visual pleasure, and, in the case of the specimens, tangible delight: a potential restoration to the human spirit during disquieting times of white noise. The gallery invites a certain presence from us, temporary submersion in an optimistic narrative in which we may become agents of change to counteract our increasingly



polarized cultural moment. At a time when the realms of nature and technology are only growing further apart, Anker's art exposes their symbiotic relationship. Nature and technology may be unlikely allies, but the scene in which they cohabitate is one of equilibrium, albeit magical. And we have a role in their proliferation.

When we address the task of art to mediate the differences between nature and technology, we are eventually led to wonder how we might understand the aesthetic act of repair and restoration as gendered. While Anker's project does not overtly confront gender, it is possible to consider the ramifications of such an aesthetic endeavor as it adheres to and defies conventional ideas of gendered identity. One could even argue that Anker's work is feminist in approach—she uses the laboratory-gallery as a twenty-first-century space for reproduction, a space in which she invests in the emotional labor of cultivating new life. By engaging activities that have been traditionally associated with an essentialized theory of femininity in the lab, a historically male domain—the reproduction and nurturing of new life forms, the modeling of new communication, the cultivation of symbiotic relationships, the valuing of affect—Anker disrupts reductive notions of gender, procreation, conception, and art. The “aesthet-

ics of care” which she advocates is thus applicable to an expanding idea of what it means to be a citizen of the world. Her art enacts a mode of resistance by intervening in discourses concerning the ecology of seeds, bringing awareness to the ways in which the sciences inevitably alter socio-cultural values in society, while also revealing how the arts, conversely, shape the bioethical imagination.

“Genetic Seed Bank” anticipates a symposium, “The Politics of Seeds,” organized by the Center for the Study of Women, which will take place May 16 and 17, 2013. The symposium is part of “Life Un(Ltd),” a multiyear research project initiated by CSW Interim Director Rachel Lee that addresses the question of what impact recent developments in the biosciences and biotechnology have had on feminist studies, particularly regarding the rich connections between food, ecology, propagation, and metabolism.

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Author's note: Citations are from Suzanne Anker's lecture on November 13, 2013, at the Broad Art Center and are excerpted from her “installation notes” and website (<http://www.suzanneanker.com/>). Images are courtesy of the artist.

THE POLITICS OF SEEDS

A symposium, May 16 to 17

How have gender, ethnicity, and race shaped contemporary cultural and political movements related to seeds? How has global climate in relation to economic and cultural crises affected food systems and place-based heirloom seeds? What sociological, ethnographic, and humanistic methodological tools have we integrated into the study of food culture and food politics and to what ends? To what extent has research by corporations and engineers redefined the ecology of seeds and how have political and artistic forms of resistance intervened?

Join us as we explore some of these questions in “The Politics of Seeds,” a symposium on May 16 to 17, 2013, co-organized by Allison Carruth, a professor in the Department of English at UCLA and CSW Interim Director Rachel Lee.

Aparna Kumar is a doctoral student in the Department of Art History at UCLA. She is studying Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art and received her M.A. earlier this year for her project titled "Lines of Inquiry: Partition, Historiography and the Art of Zarina Hashmi."



Displacement, Dislocation, and Dispossession

A retrospective, "Zarina: Paper Like Skin," and a symposium, "Strangers in a Strange Land: Art, Aesthetics, and Displacement," at the UCLA Hammer Museum celebrate Zarina's artistry and consider themes that she has addressed during her long career.

BY APARNA KUMAR

CURATED BY ALLEGRA PESENTI OF THE Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts at the Hammer Museum, "Zarina: Paper Like Skin" is the first retrospective of the Indian-born American artist Zarina Hashmi, or Zarina, as she is known professionally. Showcasing approximately 60 of her works, most of which were made on or with her preferred medium of paper, the exhibition beautifully chronicles over 50 years

of her expansive international career. Held in conjunction with "Strangers in a Strange Land: Art, Aesthetics, and Displacement," a symposium organized by Saloni Mathur, Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at UCLA, and Aamir Mufti, Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA, in celebration of the themes and questions that Zarina's work raises for scholars of all

disciplines, the exhibition brings critical attention to an artist and practice often overlooked.

The exhibition begins chronologically with the 1960s, tracing Zarina's keen interest in both the art of printmaking and woodcuts, forms of expression and craftsmanship she encountered during her time spent in Europe and Asia, only to end with some of her more iconic projects from the 1990s into the present. This includes



Where Zarina may have once identified strictly and comfortably as an “Indian” artist, such a designation became somehow insufficient in the wake of her family’s displacement. Indeed, their decision to move to Pakistan instilled in Zarina a profound sense of loss, giving way in her practice to the exilic sensibility, quiet but nonetheless commanding, that comes to fruition in works like *Homes I Have Made/A Life in Nine Lines...*

Zarina. *Dividing Line*, 2001. Woodcut printed in black on handmade Nepalese paper. Collection UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum. Purchased with funds from the Friends of the Graphic Arts.

Home is a Foreign Place (1999), one of four of Zarina's larger works displayed at the exhibition's core. The piece is a masterful series of 36 woodcuts printed on handmade Indian paper that artfully and intimately meditates on the meaning of "home" in a time when histories of displacement, dispossession, and social fracture call into question the concept's very foundations of stability and safety.

As its title affirms, however, the exhibition also stands as a forceful inquiry into the materiality of Zarina's artistic practice, and considers seriously, perhaps for the first time, Zarina's sustained and critical affinity for paper. Paper, as Pesenti contends in the exhibition's thorough catalogue, is more than just a medium of choice central to Zarina's process and production. A portable and pliable surface with varying properties and histories often reflective of its region or culture of origin, paper has become a lifeline, a constant, in Zarina's practice. Its use is indicative not only of Zarina's meticulous technique and the genealogy of her training both as a printmaker in Paris and a student of woodcuts in Japan, but perhaps more critically of her own story as well.

As seen in works like *Fence* (1976), an embossed print perforated at its edges by a rim of sharp indentations, paper is, in a way, unmasked in Zarina's practice as both a material

and a discursive field, at once a point of entry into a larger thematic and the very point itself. *Fence* remains notable not only for its significant ties to both Minimalism and Conceptual Art but also for the violent process of incision and perforation it keeps hidden within its finished form. It is a violence not unlike that embodied by Zarina's later woodcut print *Dividing Line* (2001), an abstracted meditation on the Indo-Pakistani border that is also emblematic of Zarina's cartographic turn in the twenty-first century. Paper quite remarkably bears the marks of Zarina's own biography, resonating in particular with her experiences of displacement and dislocation, homelessness and exile.

Born in 1937, Zarina came of age at a precarious time in Indian history, essentially on the precipice of partition. Though her parents, both Muslims, would initially elect to stay in India following the tumult of 1947, her family was forced to shift across the border in the 1960s and forsook their ancestral home at Aligarh and with it Zarina's firm identification with the subcontinent. Where Zarina may have once identified strictly and comfortably as an "Indian" artist, such a designation became somehow insufficient in the wake of her family's displacement. Indeed, their decision to move to Pakistan instilled in

Zarina a profound sense of loss, giving way in her practice to the exilic sensibility, quiet but nonetheless commanding, that comes to fruition in works like *Homes I Have Made/A Life in Nine Lines* (1997), a collection of nine etchings of varying floor plans, each paying homage to a place Zarina has called home, both in India and abroad. As the exhibition also underscores, this sense of loss was in many ways complicated further by the increasing amount of time she spent traveling between Europe, Asia, and North America. Having left India herself in the 1950s prior to her family's own departure for Pakistan, Zarina embraced a more nomadic existence following her marriage to a diplomat.

This profound struggle of self and subjectivity is one of the more critical threads made visible through Zarina's use of paper by the exhibition's juxtapositions and intersections. It unfolds, moreover, as a set of tensions and elisions in her practice, harnessed vigorously by Pesenti's otherwise simple exhibition design. Where, for example, the first two galleries affirm Zarina's relationship to the Western modernist canon—emphasizing works like *Kiss* (1968), a relief print from collaged wood with unmistakable ties in its composition to Constantin Brancusi's sculpture of the same name, and *Untitled I* (1973), a silkscreen printed in white on silver board that attests to

“Zarina: Paper Like Skin” is on view at the UCLA Hammer Museum through December 30, then it will travel to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City and the Art Institute of Chicago. The exhibition catalogue features essays by Allegra Pesenti and Aamir Mufti, an interview with the artist by Sandhini Poddar, a curator at the Guggenheim, and images of Zarina’s pieces that are not in the exhibition.

the profound impact encounters with Kazimir Malevich’s work have had on her foray into abstraction—the latter galleries bring into view Zarina’s poignant and elusive use of the Urdu script, a language at the heart of a literary and visual tradition unique to South Asia, one Zarina, through her practice, repeatedly claims as her own, as her “mother tongue.”

Urdu, however, is not merely a counter in her practice to the Western influences that have so clearly come to shape her visual language, nor does it operate necessarily as a sweeping gesture back into her cultural heritage. As the exhibition emphasizes with works like *Letters from Home* (2004), a portfolio of eight woodcuts and metalcuts printed on handmade kozo paper that superimposes a series of letters, which Zarina’s sister had written to her about their parents’ passing, onto a set of abstract visual forms, Zarina’s use of Urdu and text more

broadly are an avenue into the personal, a powerful trigger for memory for Zarina predicated on a familiar dialectic, and even on its own form of displacement. While a viewer familiar with the script finds entry through Zarina's practice into another realm entirely—to the culture, the memories, the historical complexities the language inherently evokes—a viewer unfamiliar with it stands obstructed before Zarina's works, encouraged instead to engage with the script as part and parcel of the paper it inscribes, as a material of Zarina's practice in and of itself.

The retrospective ultimately raises more questions around the artist's practice than it attempts to resolve, and opens important avenues into Zarina's work for scholars of modern and contemporary art. One of these questions, brought to the fore by a selection of her more recent works, including *Blinding Light* (2010), okawara paper gilded with 22-carat gold leaf, and *Dark Night of the Soul* (2011), laminated BFK white paper dyed with sumi ink and covered with black obsidian, is Zarina's relationship to religion. While it would be a detriment to the scope of her practice to attach her oeuvre to any one religious tradition, regardless of her own cultural and religious background, the exhibition makes clear that interpreting her work as strictly secular in nature may be equally

damaging. Zarina has said herself that her recent works dealing with darkness and light can be seen partly as a manifestation of her interest in the spiritual, an attempt on her part perhaps to "tie her beginnings to her ends" as she comes face to face with her mortality and embraces anew her Muslim heritage.¹ "Zarina: Paper Like Skin" thus seems more like a debut than a retrospective, in a way marking a new beginning in an already impressive artistic career.

"Zarina: Paper Like Skin" was an effective starting point for the participants of "Strangers in a Strange Land: Art, Aesthetics, and Displacement," a symposium held at the Hammer Museum in conjunction with Pesenti's exhibition on November 8th and 9th. The symposium was sponsored by the UCLA Department of Comparative Literature; the UCLA Center for the Study of Women; David Schaberg, Dean of Humanities; Christopher Waterman, Dean of Arts and Architecture; and Professor Dan Neuman of the UCLA Ethnomusicology Department. It brought together an array of scholars— theorists, art historians, architectural historians, poets, artists and curators—in an effort to foster a comparative and cross-disciplinary conversation around the questions and themes prevalent in Zarina's work: displacement, dislocation, uprooting and dispossession, all conditions and experiences that have

increasingly come to shape the cultural and political dynamics of the present.

The opening address given by Homi Bhabha, author of *The Location of Culture*, among other important works and essays, set the tone for the two-day symposium. Bhabha, the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language as well as the Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University, inaugurated the event with his own reading of Zarina's works, narrowing in on the paradox of Zarina's minimalist vocabulary—that is, the affect of her forms, the overriding sense of anxiety and unease at the center of her practice. In bringing a psychoanalytic frame to his analysis of Zarina's works, Bhabha built on Pesenti's inquiry into the materiality of Zarina's practice in theoretically significant ways, interrogating Zarina's affinity for the small. Bhabha looked to the scale of Zarina's oeuvre, to the miniature as a critical point of access into notions of anxiety and trauma, where he was able to see Zarina's practice not simply as the "replication of trauma and memory" but more persuasively as the "mise-en-scene of traumatic dispossession."

Note

1. This quote is paraphrased from a talk given by Zarina in conversation with Allegra Pesenti at the UCLA Hammer Museum on September 31, 2012, an event held in conjunction with her retrospective, "Zarina: Paper Like Skin."



THREE TIMES A WOMAN

A Gendered Economy of Stem Cell Innovation

In a talk in the Life (Un)Ltd series on October 24th, Charis Thompson tells the curious story of Proposition 71 and its disproportionate reliance on women.

IN 2004, Californians passed Proposition 71, a statute establishing stem cell research as a constitutional right. Prop 71 authorized bond sales to fund stem cell research in California, and created the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) to award grants and regulate the research. The state's General Fund provided initial startup funding, to be repaid later with proceeds from bond sales. In her recent Life (Un)Ltd talk, Charis

Thompson told the curious story of Prop 71, and how women came to be disproportionately enrolled in its passage and the “bio-curial” economy that resulted from it.

Prop 71 represents a state-based (rather than federally based) science economy. Given the ethically problematic nature of stem cell research, and the shortfall of federal funding for it, three elements were crucial to its passage and subsequent acceptance. First, a

pro-cures rhetoric defined the passage of Prop 71 as a moral imperative, an idea that no one could possibly oppose. Second, framing procurement of stem cells for research as “acceptable derivation”—happening under the right conditions, coming from the right place—put the ethical focus on *how* cells are obtained, rather than on the acceptability of using embryonic cells in the first place. Finally, the passage of Prop 71 gave rise to

Prop 71, then, resulted in a unique social contract between science and the state. In what ways were women enrolled in it? What roles did they play during and after its passage and what consequences did their involvement have? Women were involved in three ways, which no one had predicted or deemed necessary for the success of the proposition.

a system of bio-curation—an incredible set of additional bureaucracies surrounding bioinformatics, data curation, banking, chains of custody, bookkeeping, compliance, and ethical protocols—without which the research could not proceed.

Americans live in an innovation economy, where we have an idea of science as an engine of economic growth. We assume that science will produce jobs, increase quality of life, produce interesting results and gains in global capital, and move human history forward. We see it as a trickle-down economy, growing both innovation and the tax base. These ideas lie

behind our contract with science at the federal level. Assuming the same ideas behind Prop 71—a social contract between science and the state, rather than the nation—it should be noted that several aspects made Prop 71 extraordinary in comparison. For one, it was a product of direct democracy—citizens voted to fund this specific type of research. Also, it used funds usually reserved for “bricks and mortar” projects like roads or buildings—things typically equally accessible to all residents of the state. Additionally, Prop 71 actually amended the California constitution to make stem cell research a constitutional right—a very strange thing, given the controversial nature of the research.

Prop 71, then, resulted in a unique social contract between science and the state. In what ways were women enrolled in it? What roles did they play during and after its passage and what consequences did their involvement have? Women were involved in three ways, which no one had predicted or deemed necessary for the success of the proposition.

VOTES

It's probably true that Prop 71 passed due to disproportionate voting by women. And women had multiple reasons to vote pro-cures. Noted gender differences exist in disability

type, chronic disease incidence and severity, and resource allocation. Also, care work has gender dimensions, and many conditions requiring care stood to gain from Prop 71. Not surprisingly, then, women who felt strongly in favor of Prop 71 had a high level of enthusiasm for research that might lead to cures. However, when pressed further, they expressed uncertainty about how or if the passage of Prop 71 would affect their care burdens. Also, despite belief that women stood to gain from research afforded by Prop 71, the possibility existed that they would be left out of the benefits of the research. Known correlations exist between SES and likelihood of benefit (mediated through insurance access), and certain women are more likely to be low income—therefore access to benefits would be restricted along gendered race/class lines.

PROCUREMENT

Women's eggs are one of the raw materials needed for stem cell research. Pluripotent cells, which can develop into any cell type, are taken from embryos shortly after conception. In the language of the proposition, pluripotent cells were mentioned as “surplus products of IVF,” but words like “egg,” “embryo,” “woman,” or “couple” never appear, despite the fact that they are all relevant.

After Prop 71 passed, egg donor protection emerged as *the* women's issue. Debates flared around whether to pay women for this work of donating material. Most women's activist groups opposed compensation because it felt too close to paying for babies, and would affect who would donate (those who would be most likely to discount risks involved—in other words, those who needed the money). Protection of egg donors came to be mocked for being overly paternalistic. The sentiment against compensating donation for stem cell research contrasts notably with attitudes toward compensating donation for assisted reproductive technology, which are generally positive.

COSMETICS

When people vote for measures like Prop 71, they vote for the entire trajectory of the research process—bench to bedside. So it becomes important to see tangible results quickly. One result of this is the emergence of “regenerative” skin products marketed by companies engaged in stem cell research. In one example, a small startup company with ties to CIRM produces skin products derived from stem cells to generate revenue in the absence of substantial research grants. The combination of the belief in the regenerative potential of stem cells plus a gendered aesthetic toward youth

Charis Thompson's talk is available for viewing on CSW's playlist on the UCLA YouTube channel.

results in a heavily gendered consumption of these products by women. In this way, women provide a steady stream of income to keep the essential functions of the company going while the basic research moves along.

In sum, women end up enrolled in and paying for this biocuration complex three times. So what, if anything, should be done about it? As Thompson suggests, we could ensure that women, who are less likely to benefit from the research, are not disproportionately sampled for it. We could also encourage rhetorical changes. Authors of future propositions could seek out and list possible disproportionate demands and benefits, clearly name the major actors in the research—women, embryos,

couples—and spell out possible uncertainties or unintended consequences.

The story of Prop 71 and its disproportionate reliance on women raises many questions. If a new proposition were written that incorporated the changes suggested here, would the public actually vote for it? And if not, does that mean that Prop 71 itself should not have passed? Are there alternatives to direct funding at the state level, such as firewalls to evaluate and distribute funding? Or should the federal government remain the primary funder of stem cell research? And, finally, what does a changing social contract with science mean for everyday people living in an innovation economy, and how might we intervene?

—Lisa Kietzer



Lisa Kietzer is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at UCLA. Her dissertation examines doctor-patient interaction and decision-making in fertility consultations.

PROCESSING OF AUDIO-VISUAL COLLECTIONS

AS OF JUNE, 15 of the audio and video collections in the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives have been digitized and processed. Most of the collections hold between 15 and 40 audiocassette tapes or VHS tapes. The content of the material includes recordings of conferences, workshops, meetings, performances, radio and news broadcasts, interviews, and oral histories concerning topics such as homosexuality, lesbian issues, feminism, racism, discriminations, literature, music, history, and so on.

Of particular note is the June L. Mazer and Bunny MacCulloch Interviews Etc collection, which includes interviews with Mazer and MacCulloch concerning the Southern California Women for Understanding (SCWU), the archive, Mazer's death, and lesbian culture in the

San Francisco Bay Area. The audio recordings provide great insight into the life and work of both Mazer and MacCulloch, who were prominent figures in the lesbian community of the West Coast. The women conducted interviews with scholars and other experts on lesbian culture and history and were also the subjects of interviews. The collection includes a recording of the Jewish memorial service that honored the life and work of Mazer after her death in 1987.

The rest of the (mostly audio) audio-visual collections that have been digitized so far has included many well-known people and significant events. Lesbian-feminist activist Diane Germain's video collection includes interviews with Southern California lesbians and recordings of Germain's various appearances on news

broadcasts and talk shows. The Reading Performances 1980–1983 collections features reading performances by a variety of lesbian and feminist writers, including Judy Grahn, Peg Cruikshank, Judy Freespirit, Kent Hyde, Terri de la Pena and others in lesbian bars, bookstores, events, and on KPFA radio. There are a number of recordings from radio shows, including a KPFA presentation about the Stonewall Riots and the KPFA show, *Women's Magazine*, which featured Del Martin discussing domestic violence within heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

The digitized collections present a range of topics with a variety of hosts and speakers. From music recordings to scholarly talks to small group medical information sessions, the Mazer audio-visual collections capture the culture, diversity, politics, scholarship, and activism



Suzanne Lacy, “Three Weeks in May, 1977.”

that feminist and lesbian communities have produced throughout the last 50 years.

The tapes also describe a great deal of activism that women were involved with in Los Angeles throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. One recording, titled “Rape City Mall,” includes materials from a project that took place over three weeks to raise awareness among Los Angeles inhabitants of the frequency of assaults against women across Los Angeles. The event included speeches, interviews, self-defense demonstrations, and an art piece

by Suzanne Lacy. The recording includes Lacy explaining her intentions in producing the piece and interviews with the public as they passed by, reacted to, and watched her as she indicated the number of reported rapes that had occurred in three weeks that May.

A number of recordings were taken at the Women’s Building, which was a nonprofit arts and education center founded in 1973 by Judy Chicago, Sheila Levrant de Brettville, and Arlene Raven and was originally located in MacArthur Park. The Women’s Building closed its doors in

1991, but it was a vital base for the feminist movement in Los Angeles. It also was a safe space for women to create art, write, collaborate, meet, and develop their sense of identity and community.

Another set of recordings documents the Women Writers Series that were held at the Women’s Building. These events were mostly organized by the Los Angeles–based author Eloise Klein Healy. She is an American poet who has published five books of poetry, founded Arktoi Books, and taught at the Women’s Building and served on its

MAKING INVISIBLE HISTORIES VISIBLE

collection notes from the NEH/Mazer project



Above left, “Eloise Klein Healy, Poet” (photo by Nancy Rosenblum); above right, “Sisterhood Book Store”; right, a flyer with a map showing the new location of the Women’s Building (Women’s Building Slide Archive at Otis College of Art and Design Library).



Board of Directors. She was recently named Poet Laureate of Los Angeles. The recordings include Healy reading her work but also her interviewing other writers on her radio show, *Women’s Words*, on KPFK 90.7. Other recordings feature Healy and other writers reading their work at the Sisterhood Bookstore, a unique establishment on Westwood Blvd. that specialized in feminist and non-sexist literature and music for more than 20 years.

Before doing this processing, I was not well-versed in lesbian and feminist history, but I have gained so much from listening to these voices. I not only have learned about the development of lesbian-feminist activism but I have also been given a chance to help make available an integral piece of the story of Los Angeles and of California.

— Angel Diaz

Angel Diaz is a graduate student in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA.



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