

miChelle Vara

## 'embrē ō/



Sculpture No. 253

rudimentary stage that shows Potential for Development.  
unborn or unhatched in the process of development, Offspring during a period- Form.  
fertilization.

### Examination –

Landscape: Space - Time

Figure: Relationship – Physicality - Reflection

Force – Submission

Reaction: Movement

Sex – Slang

Ethics - Truth

Emotion: Primal - Fear – Hate

Silence

Sublime

Sculpture no. 253 'embrē ō/ is a response to a photographic image that was burned onto my retina as if I had watched a house, with children inside screaming, burn to the ground. The photograph followed me in my thoughts, a haunting agitation packing a punch to the stomach as if in mid-sentence leaving me gasping for air with internal questions.

*Why?*

The photograph by Joel Peter Witkin was found posted on George Angelovski's blog (1) and resounded with me for its sense of amazing exploration. George is in critical review group "C" consisting of four other artists, myself included, and it was his presentation week. The process of our group is the presenting artist can post anything for the remaining members of the group -reviewers- to critique. Outside of the group George and I have a personal friendship that is very deep and stimulating, prodding places within ourselves through honest, raw communication, and with this photograph, he sent me once again to such a place of questioning.

*Questioning deep interiors of being.*

*Reflection.*

*TENsions- surFace -ten Shhhhhh ion.*

*reActions- conVULsive -REactions.*

By nature, I don't go too dark in thoughts, ideas, movies, imagery, conversations; yet there was something in this photograph seeming to emerge from the four corners of dark like a prostitute waiting under a street light that I couldn't let go of. The image haunted my thoughts: the man's blurred face and head as he connected through fist fucking to another man. (2) The overall shape of the two men creating a single form. If you turn the photograph on its side it reminds me of an embryo. (3) This image became my embryo of development in the exploration of self through deep thinking, contemplation. I felt as if the arm reaching up inside the subject was grabbing personal ideas and thoughts from deep in the interior. Connecting the lines of spine and arm to form a continuum, this photo of a violent, physical act seemed to cross-connect with something so intimate, private and dismissive; yet its rawness is relevant to how we as a society treat each other. All empathy is lost. Striking!

*Tension: Embryo birthed is painful yet emotionally exciting - Process  
Photographed, watched, exposed?*

Joel Peter Witkin is known for his photographs of 'outsider' subjects and depiction of people who have historically lived on the margins of society. Witkin's imagery often centers on death and features dismembered corpses, which Witkin claims was inspired by a gruesome car accident he witnessed as a child. (4) Witkin's method of working harkens back to academically trained Renaissance painters. He carefully plans his tableaux, sketching their designs and arranging every detail before beginning work in the studio. These images must often be re-staged; and it is difficult to find models. Once in the studio, it can take up to two weeks to finish one photograph. He then reinvents it in his darkroom, where he makes the photograph into something virtually hand-made by scratching and even puncturing the negative. Printing is the final step in making the taboo and the grotesque seem sexually desirable and beautiful in Witkin's world. (5)

I have always found the margins of society, the taboo, comfortable having lived within the circus environment which exposes one to dismemberment of all forms, of structure and idealism. The circus is where the comfort of home is found in the discomfort of many. I wondered if this photograph was a subconscious recalling? Freud noted that recalling a repressed trauma could help release emotional tension, a process called "abreaction." Abreaction is the release of effect occurred by bringing "a particular moment or problem into focus"... and as such formed the cornerstone of Freud's early cathartic method of treating hysterical conversion symptoms. (6) At this point wondering if the picture touched on something buried in my subconscious mind I decided to meditated for extended period. I focused meditation on the picture, on the idea, the act, on darkness. Nothing showed itself to me but the self's interior of being, transmuting through the image. Seeing that I didn't have a major epiphany, I thought it could be fun to explore this in a new light, one which I have never explored before. So, I made an appointment with a hypnotherapist only to experience a great disappointment -again, nothing, not a nugget, not a crumb. Funny, all it did is leave me exhausted and bland as a gray, cold, blustery day.

I collected metal parts for the conversations I was having relevant to Witkin's photograph and my reactions, as if it were a performance or action.

The performance artist Hermann Nitsch thought of his *Actions* [Ger. *Aktionen*] as an *Abreaktionsspiel* (abreaction-play), hoping his corporeal gesture would offer a cathartic release of those instincts for himself and his viewers. (7) This was the process I was experiencing as I churned, gathered, reviewed, cleaned and readied the reclaimed pieces for the sculpture now called No. 253 *'embrē õ'*.

While looking for the right hook to incorporate into the sculpture I remembered reading something that I had to search for again: Carl Jung (8) expressed interest in abreaction, or what he referred to as *trauma theory*, but later decided it had limitations in the treatment of neurosis. (9) Jung said:

*Though traumata of clearly aetiological significance were occasionally present, the majority of them appeared very improbable. Many traumata were so unimportant, even so normal, that they could be regarded at most as a pretext for the neurosis. But what especially aroused my criticism was the fact that not a few traumata were simply inventions of fantasy and had never happened at all.* (10)

With that thought I released my research for trauma and decided my response was more in the vein of Rauschenberg's work viewed through the lens "relational aesthetics". (11)

I realized Witkin's photo created within me an interference of mundane thought and reflection caused by social circumstance. In my mind sparked thoughts about Tino Sehgal performances and my project *Dialogue* presentation that will be conducted at Ufer Studios in Berlin, Germany this coming summer. This serves to show how many things I'm working on at the same time and not as a change in focus but in relation to each other. I am creating in a matrix of the *Everything is connected to everything else in the Universe* as expressed by Abraham-Hicks. (12)

I started to explore thoughts about the human body as this has come up over the last six months numerous times and being I'm in the trolls of reading Yves Klein that seemed a natural place to start. Klein took the nude female off the wall and created a central role for the human body in action art.

*"The blue gesture released by Yves Klein runs back through forty thousand years of modern art to link up with the anonymous markings, the both sufficient and necessary markings in that dawn of our world, which at Lascaux and Altamira signified man's awakening to self-consciousness and the world."* (13)

The Museum of Modern Art exhibit of Klein's work included live, naked people and directly addressed the taboo of nakedness in a public space. One part of the exhibit had two naked people standing in a doorway so that the museum visitor had to brush past them in order to get through the door, confronting their own feeling of discomfort being so close to a naked stranger. (14) I have a lot of experience with nakedness having run a topless bar but followed through with new ideas of nakedness which I expressed drawing and photography, verbal communication dance and space to once again decide this wasn't the path to revealing the truth of my response to the photograph as it is expressed in the sculpture.

To me the main focus of Klein's art was not about confronting our feelings about sex as Witkin's piece does. Witkin's draws focus to center in composition of which I highlighted in the '*embrē,ō*' sculpture. Then I went on to visit gender perception and sex.

As I said before the sculpture '*embrē,ō*' incorporates a hook. The hook has a bulbous end and two holes on a flat, semi-shiny surface; all obvious dialogs through form with self- sub- un- conscious, sex, gender, discomfort, function, exposure to a sociality of taught beliefs and how these become fleshed out as a burning agitation, started by one visual interaction with a Witkin photograph. The hook to the work is the sexuality, shocking raw, pain and pleasure from its coma of distain. In a conversation, the picture was explained to me as "Fuck me like you hate me" is a way of feeling emotion once again – the hook with holes.

In the sculpture '*embrē,ō*' the small, moon shaped metal piece with rusty blobs purposefully left on the edges speaks to the extent consciousness plays if the mind travels to the moon and back. I made the moon piece three times in order to gain the correct physicality of size that would represent and encompass the mind, body, spirit belief- all parts in conversation with self -in the final piece. Circling around the self, through other explained with so many metaphors. Delicate lines stand on feet to the sculptures round base, circumferencing the subjects arm leading reference to, form, figure, relation.

I furthered the sculpture '*embrē,ō*'s dialog in an extensive set of photographs. '*embrē,ō*'s photographs expose the sculpture as a representation or mutation of impressions birthed from a cavity of questioning- seeking perceptions- dark and mysterious.

*The intersection of sculpture, drawing and photography is where I find my truth.*

This voyage of questioning was stimulated by George's introducing me to Witkin's art and is now documented in sculpture No. 253 '*embrē,ō*', drawings and photographs. The process shed additional light on my Joy, as I continue in the process of communicating ideas; a Prism of Aesthetic.

The process of review that I have outlined here, is the true definition of what art is and does. The Witkin photo has indeed done its job. stimulating a line of self-explorations, critical thought and the propelling one to making more art.

I process the Anthropometry (15) & human experience through objects in metaphors that encompass wide dimensions of possibilities as awakenings.

There is a photo book to accompany this outline.

1. <https://www.blogger.com/profile/04932368062919579125>
2. <http://www.artintrans.com/?zx=df9d4ffcc11703bb> **Please note this is Adult content and nudity is raw.** Scroll down to third picture for photograph referenced in this text.
3. em·bry·o- '*embrē,ō*' a. *an unborn or unhatched offspring in the process of development, in particular a human offspring during the period from approximately the second to the eighth week after fertilization (after which it is usually termed a fetus).* b. *a thing at a rudimentary stage that shows potential for development. "a simple commodity economy is merely the embryo of a capitalist economy".*  
[https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=embryo+definition&\\*&dobs=embryo](https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=embryo+definition&*&dobs=embryo)
4. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/joel-peter-witkin/biography>
5. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/joel-peter-witkin/>
6. <https://freudscases.wikispaces.com/Abreaction>
7. [http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art\\_101/body-of-art/body-of-art-transgressive-performance-53294](http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/body-of-art/body-of-art-transgressive-performance-53294)

8. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Jung](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung)
9. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neurosis>
10. Collected Works of C.G. Jung, book volume 4, Freud and Psychoanalysis: Some Crucial Points in Psychoanalysis, Jung-Loy Correspondence (1914).
11. Nicolas Bourriaud coined the term "relational aesthetics" in his 1998 book of the same name. In the book, he defines the term as: *A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.* (pg. 113) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relational\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relational_art)
12. Law of Attraction by Abraham-Hicks <http://www.abraham-hicks.com>
  13. <http://thestorybehindthefaces.com/category/bodypaintings/page/9/>
  14. Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present March 14–May 31, 2010  
<http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/965>
  15. **Anthropometry** (from [Greek](#) ἄνθρωπος *anthropos*, "human", and μέτρον *metron*, "measure") refers to the measurement of the human individual. An early tool of [physical anthropology](#), it has been used for identification, for the purposes of understanding human physical variation, in [paleoanthropology](#) and in various attempts to correlate physical with racial and psychological traits. Anthropometry involves the systematic measurement of the physical properties of the human body, primarily dimensional descriptors of body size and shape.