

# FINAL REPORT

Vienna

June 2009

## **CORPOrealities**

### **Die Herstellung von *Empathografien* an der Grenze von zeitgenössischer Kunst und Medizin**

In den *CORPOrealities* (2004-2009) verwenden die Künstlerinnen Barbara Graf und Catherine Rollier, die Kuratorinnen und Wissenschaftlerinnen Cathrin Pichler (bildende Kunst) und Christa Spatt (Tanz) sowie die Soziologin und Kulturwissenschaftlerin Christina Lammer künstlerische Sensibilitäten, um die Körperwahrnehmung in der Klinik zu erforschen. Über einen Zeitraum von fünf Jahren begleiten die Forscherinnen die Entwicklung der PatientInnendatenbank *Unified Patient (UP)*, um zu verstehen, was eine Krankengeschichte im klinischen Sinne beinhaltet und wie sie sich von den persönlichen Erzählungen von Kranken unterscheidet.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Gegenüberstellung münden in die Herstellung von *EMPATHOGRAMMEN*. Drei wesentliche inhaltliche Aspekte sind in dieser Wortschöpfung enthalten: Identität oder Alterität, Gefühl oder Pathos und die Aufzeichnung oder Darstellung. Mit diesen Kategorien arbeiten wir, um die vielfältigen Körperlichkeiten in den medizinischen Kulturen eines Universitätskrankenhauses darzustellen. Ethnografie kommt diesbezüglich als Instrument der Vermittlung zwischen zeitgenössischer Kunst und Medizin zum Einsatz. Christina Lammer führt Feldstudien im Spital durch und untersucht die Praxis der Herstellung von diagnostischen Bildern des Körperinneren. Sie befragt Brustkrebspatientinnen und ihre ÄrztInnen und erzeugt Versuchsanordnungen, die jenen der Aktionsforschung ähneln. Ihre ständigen BegleiterInnen sind eine Videokamera, ein Tonaufnahmegerät und ein digitaler Fotoapparat. Zudem stellen ihr die InformantInnen, Kranke und Klinikpersonal gleichermaßen, Materialien zur Verfügung, welche in ihre akribische Entwicklung von audiovisuellen Forschungsdaten kontinuier-

lich einfließen. Der menschliche Körper der Ethnografin fungiert als Medium des Ausdrucks. Kameras und Tonrekorder erweitern seine Funktionen. Auf die Art geschaffene Dokumente – Videos, Fotos, Interviews, Texte – werden mit dem künstlerischen Schaffen von Barbara Graf und Catherine Rollier verbunden. Die Künstlerinnen beschäftigen sich mit den *KONTUREN* (B. Graf: 2004-2009) körperlicher Integrität, mit Verletzlichkeiten und mit *ARTEFAKTEN DES INNEREN* (C. Rollier: 2004-2009). Daraus resultieren künstlerische Arbeiten, die unmittelbar Gefühle ansprechen und Empfindungen wecken. Aktionismus wird zudem im Buch *KLEINE NARBENLEHRE* (C. Lammer: 2007) thematisiert, das Christina Lammer mit dem Künstler Günter Brus gemacht hat. Er dokumentierte seine Krankenhausaufenthalte anlässlich einer Krebserkrankung und einer Narbenbruchoperation in der Form von zwei Bilddichtungen. Der Künstler denkt selbstironisch über seine Position als Patient nach. In einer weiteren Fallstudie an der *Klinikabteilung für Plastische und Rekonstruktive Chirurgie der Medizinischen Universität Wien (MUW)*, setzen zwölf Brustkrebspatientinnen sich selbst ins Bild. Sie haben sich für einen chirurgischen Wiederaufbau ihrer Brust entschieden. Christa Spatt kreiert einen performativen Ansatz mit ihrem Teilprojekt, für welches sie junge Choreografinnen über die Bedeutung von Einfühlung im Tanz befragt. Das Performative spielt zudem eine zentrale Rolle für die Videoinstallation *EMPATHOGRAPHIES / EMPATHOGRAFIEN* (C. Lammer: 2004-2009), für die 40 MedizinerInnen im Fernsehstudio der *MUW* vor laufender Videokamera die Frage beantworteten, was für sie und in ihrem klinischen Praxisfeld ein Patient oder eine Patientin *ist*.

Detaillierte Informationen: <http://www.corporealities.org>

## **CORPOrealities**

### **The Creation of *Empathographies* on the Boundary of Contemporary Art and Medicine**

In the CORPOrealities-project, the artists Barbara Graf and Catherine Rollier, the curators and scientists Cathrin Pichler (fine arts) and Christa Spatt (dance), and the sociologist and ethnographer Christina Lammer apply artistic sensibilities to investigate the modes of perception of the human body at the clinic. In a time span of five years, the researchers accompanied the development of the patient databank *Unified Patient (UP)* to achieve a better understanding of the differences between clinical cases and personal stories of the sick.

The results of this confrontation flow into the creation of *EMPATHOGRAPHIES*. Three main aspects of content are included in this word creation: identification (understanding), pathos (feeling), and the narrative or pictorial (writing or portraying). These categories are equally important for the approach, which we use to represent the manifold corporeal realities in the medical cultures of a teaching hospital. Ethnography is introduced as a tool of mediation between contemporary art and medicine. Christina Lammer conducts field studies at the clinic. She examines the practices of diagnostic image making of the inner body. Furthermore she works with breast cancer patients and their doctors. For her highly experimental ethnographic endeavors, she creates settings similar to those in action research. Her steady companions are a video camcorder, a digital photo camera and audio recording devices. Additionally her informants provide materials, which continually slip in her development of audiovisual research data. The human body of the ethnographer is a medium of expression. Cameras and audio-recorders extend its functions. In this way produced documents – videos, photographs, interviews, texts –

are woven into the works of art of Barbara Graf and Catherine Rollier. The artists create *CONTOURS* (B. Graf: 2004-2009) of the body's integrity. They fiddle with vulnerabilities and *ARTEFACTS OF THE INTERIOR* (C. Rollier: 2004-2009). The results of their explorations are art pieces, which touch the senses and arouse feelings. *Actionism* is an important issue of the book *KLEINE NARBENLEHRE* (C. Lammer: 2007). For this Christina Lammer intensively collaborated with the Austrian artist Günter Brus. He documented two of his hospital stays in the form of *Bilddichtungen*. With much self-irony the artist reflects on his position as patient. In a further case study at the *Unit of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Medical University Vienna (MUV)*, twelve breast cancer patients put themselves in the picture. They decided to get their breasts surgically reconstructed. Christa Spatt develops in her part of the project a performative approach. She interviewed young choreographers about the meaning of empathy in dance performance. Performativity even is a central element in the video-installation *EMPATHOGRAPHIES / EMPATHOGRAFIEN* (C. Lammer: 2004-2009). 40 physicians were invited to the TV-studio at the *MUV*. They performed and presented themselves in front of a video camera, describing the relationships to their patients.

*Detailed information:* <http://www.corporealities.org>

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## **CORPOrealities Revisited**

<http://www.corporealities.org>

In the CORPOrealities-project we introduce video as an ethnographic method of translating human experiences of illness and suffering into an aesthetic language. Interviewing physicians and patients in different clinical fields with the help of a video camera is embedded in a broader research approach. A team of visual artists, curators, historians and caregivers at *Medical University Vienna (MUV)* has developed this path. The official end of the study (June 2009) marks a passage to the follow up research endeavor *SURGICAL WRAPPINGS*, which has been awarded with an *Art(s) & Sciences-Price 2009*. We use video as a tool of self-reflection. Our visual and sensory ethnographic interventions illuminate apparently opposed perceptible and expressible realities in the physician-patient relationship. With the application of body art related methods we aim to enhance complex processes of translation and mediation and strengthen the empathy, sensitivity and emotional competence in health care work and beyond.

2.1)

The investigation includes case studies in reconstructive and plastic surgery, working with cancer patients, collaborating with interdisciplinary clinic teams and elaborating expressive modes and experimental tools together with the artists, Barbara Graf and Catherine Rollier, and with the curators Cathrin Pichler (fine arts) and Christa Spatt (dance). Cathrin Pichler is not only experienced in the conceptualization of exhibitions and fine art events but has additionally been trained as a medical doctor, psychologist and sociologist. Another section of the CORPOrealities-project involves the use of digital media in a patient record system, *Unified Patient (UP)*, which is being developed at

the department auf *Medical Media Services (MMS)* at the university hospital and includes research on how this tool is used by clinicians and medical students. The methodological framework goes hand in hand with a problem-oriented approach. Research questions are posed within the different biomedical fields at the hospital. For instance, for the head of the plastic surgery department, Manfred Frey, the socio-cultural background of women who will get reconstructive operations on their breasts is an important issue for planning surgeries. He wants to get a better understanding of the 'meaning of the breast' for women, and the individual expectations of his patients. Aesthetic problems and suffering are inseparable in reconstructive surgery. Thus the general aim of the project was and still is the development of communication tools and multimedia applications, which provide mediation between subjective experiences of bodily processes and objective forms of knowledge of the human organism and its inner structures. Notions like empathy and embodiment are investigated to bring apparently unapproachable emotional worlds, which are vividly active at the hospital, to a treatable and manageable surface. For most of the clinicians the development of qualitative standards in their work with patients is at the foreground of their interest in the research. Patients and clinical staff live with artificially, technically and socioculturally produced artefacts. They embody them in manifold ways. In biomedical practice and beyond the *Unified Patient* becomes part of one's identity. Bodily aspects and tactile qualities are central observational patterns. Within these ethnographic activities art meets biomedicine through the performance of fieldwork. The results will advance sensitivity to the emotional and imaginary modes of treatment and diagnosis involved in biomedical fields of practice.

## 2.2)

A summary of research includes a variety of work packages, case studies or *Empathographies*: a) *Unified Patient (UP)*, b) *Artifacts of the Interior*, c) *Empathy on Stage*, d) *Scalpel Painting – Günter Brus' Theory of Scars*, e) *Contours*, f) *Sociology of Breast Tissue*.

### a) ***Unified Patient (UP)***

In the meantime, the *Unified Patient* leads an 'independent existence'. In the course of a new implementation of the patient record system, a concept for the realization of case discussions for the medical curriculum has been developed. The function "case-discussion" (Falldiskussion) is used as a didactic tool at the *MUW* since the winter term 2006. Its name is "web-ambulance" (Web-Ambulanz) and has become a well-known category for medical students and their teachers. Furthermore the *Offline-Functionality* (Offline-Funktionalität) of the *UP*, which provides an offline-use of data as "clone of oneself" (J. Brandstätter), is available since October 2007 (see proposal). In the *CORPOrealities*, the *UP* opens sites of ethnographic research. Christina Lammer participated at the regularly held interdisciplinary clinic rounds as a silent observer. The ethnographer analyzed how the *UP* is applied among clinicians. She particularly concentrated on aspects of communication. How do physicians of different clinical fields talk and think about their patients? How does a sick person become a 'patient' in the discursive environment of a university hospital? Issues of the relatedness between doctors, patients and medical media inspired Christina Lammer to conceptualize a case study with 40 caregivers who were staged and video interviewed at the clinic's TV-studio. She was particularly interested in the performances of her interview partners, assembling touching scenes, putting them together into movie collages. The technical eye of the camera

is used to capture the body language and emotions of people. The created video materials were presented to the colleagues at the hospital in (three) workshops. These screenings took place in the room where physicians usually discuss cases and work with the *UP* (or without). Nine of the interviews were put together to a video installation, which is exhibited at the *Tiroler Kunstpavillon* in Innsbruck between July and September 2009. Tamar Tembeck, curator and art historian, invited Christina Lammer to contribute to the group exhibition *Auto/Pathographies* with her work *EMPATHOGRAPHIES / EMPATHOGRAFIEN* (2009).

#### **b) *Artifacts of the Interior***

This section of the project includes a master thesis executed by the historian Katrin Pilz on the institutionalization of radiological diagnostics in Vienna (2007-2009) as well as the preparation of a work of art by Catherine Rollier with the title *ARTIFACTS OF THE INTERIOR* (2004-2009). Katrin Pilz realized her diploma at the *Collections of Medical University Vienna – Josephinum*. Her advisor is the medical doctor and historian Sonia Horn, director of the *Josephinum*. Catherine Rollier was already involved in the *CORPOrealities*-research group during the time of conceptualization. Diagnostic devices illuminate the body's interior. The artist investigated inner flows and created artificial illusions. She experimented with drawing, photography and video – “with contrasts, structures, deformations, shadows, holes and buckles.” With the intention to arouse “associations with the interior of human existence.” Different levels of reality are made perceivable. The artist performed herself ethnographic fieldwork. She consciously transcended the boundaries between art and anthropology. Her observations of diagnostic procedures and the artifacts she produced point to issues of how our inner liveliness becomes technically reproducible through medical media. She watches “the flow of your

lived experiences,” as the sociologist Alfred Schütz has written in his study *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932). Catherine Rollier confronts usual perceptions and bodily sensations with an objectified diagnosable body proper.

### c) Empathy on Stage

The artistic director of the [8:TENSION] *Young Choreographers' Series* at the *imPulsanz Vienna International Dance Festival* Christa Spatt interviewed young choreographers and questioned them about the meaning of empathy in contemporary dance. In summer 2005 she conducted an interview with the Spanish choreographer Paz Rojo. An intensive exchange developed. In their further cooperation they conceptualized a performance lecture with the title *Manual for a Promising Machine*. The performance was presented at the international conference *The Anatomical Theatre Revisited* at the *Department of Performance and Theatre Studies at University of Amsterdam* (NL) in April 2006. Paz Rojo and Christa Spatt met in various situations as artists and curator. They were hostess and guest to each other, sharing proximity in the theater and sharing ideas about theater in talks. In *Manual for a promising Machine* they met again and spoke with each other and to a third one about what the sharing of time and space in theater could imply. Christa Spatt investigated the relatedness between performer and viewer. She connected her findings with Christina Lammer's ethnographic studies at the hospital. In an interview with the sociologist she put into question what role choreography does play at the clinic. Indeed, there are manifold modes of utterance and expressiveness active in the relationships between medical personnel and patients. The sick are “staged” in different clinical areas and through diagnostic machineries. And the doing of visual and sensory ethnography in these institutional settings forms an additional performative body of work – including shifting audiences.

d) **Scalpel Painting – Günter Brus' Theory of Scars**

In an exemplarily study with the internationally renowned Austrian artist Günter Brus I (Christina Lammer) examined the relationship between *body* and *self* and how it is mediated. *Günter Brus. Kleine Narbenlehre* shows the artist as patient in the environment of a hospital. He had cancer and parts of his stomach had been surgically removed. Günter Brus documented his impressions at the clinic in Graz in the form of two *Bild-dichtungen*, putting together snapshots, showing himself in the *operating theatre* and beyond, combining photographs with short poems about his experiences. In the book *Kleine Narbenlehre* Günter Brus' artistic self-injuring performances in the 1960s and 70s are compared with surgical operations he needed in the late 1990s. The artist's body is displayed in its *liminality* – in constant flux and transition. He is wounded and his boundaries are broken.

e) **Contours**

In Barbara Graf's drawings *CONTOURS* (2004-2009), the artist experimented with the silhouette of the human body. Central categories in her art-based series of investigation are "boundaries, layers, displacements, dispersals and contiguities." The contour of the self is under constant transformation. Art meets medicine in these examinations on the vulnerable envelopes of human existence. Barbara Graf created being as a fine thread, weaving together conditions of birth and death, of suffering and pleasure, of identifiable and complete alienated structures, pointing to the limits of imagination. Both artists, Catherine Rollier and Barbara Graf, continually discussed the development of their labor with Cathrin Pichler. She knotted the strings of content together. This project part is interconnected with a historical research of images, paintings and illustrations in surgery,

performed by Birgit Nemec at the *Collections of MUV*, and with Christina Lammer's ethnographic activities at the *University Clinic of Surgery*. Moreover the professional photographer Katharina Hoflehner who documents surgical interventions at the *MUV* contributed to the *CORPOrealities*-study with a photo work in plastic surgery. She has been trained in photography as well as in anthropology. In a further case study, Barbara Graf created textile *BREAST LAYERS* (2007). The artist's production of these particular 'anatomical garments' is influenced by Christina Lammer's collaborative ethnography with breast cancer patients and plastic surgeons, commissioned by Manfred Frey, head of the reconstructive surgery unit at the university clinic.

#### f) ***Sociology of Breast Tissue***

Breast cancer, mastectomy and treatment in oncology injure body and self. In this field study we investigate concerns, needs, anxieties and decision-making processes of patients after they are diagnosed with breast cancer. We are particularly interested in how women in such life threatening and vulnerable situations rebuild their body-selves and their female contours with the help of plastic and reconstructive surgery. Six patients, who underwent immediate breast reconstruction and six with secondary plastic surgeries after mastectomy,<sup>\*\*</sup> tell their stories. They share their experiences and histories with me (Christina Lammer).<sup>\*\*\*</sup> I accompanied them during surgical treatment and beyond. The individual body of each of these women writes different stories. Each singular story is written from different bodies. With the documentation of subjective breast reconstructive

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Eleven women have been interviewed. One patient had both breasts operated. Thus she is counted twice, for immediate as well as for secondary breast reconstruction. There has also a control group of six patients been interviewed, who did not develop breast cancer but had other surgical interventions at the plastic surgery division.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Manfred Frey and myself developed the research design for this study. Combining approaches of very different scientific cultures – reconstructive surgery and sociology – is challenging for the both of us. Since we are aware that our backgrounds and thus our arguments are to some extent contradictory, though respecting the position of the other, we consciously reflect on our dialogue in this contribution. Our continual negotiations unfold a productive cross-disciplinary controversy in progress, which is in a way mirrored in the relationships between (male) surgeons and (female) patients.

tion narratives we aim at deepening an understanding of socio-cultural, political and symbolic meanings of female body tissue. We argue that psycho-societal issues are deeply connected with our physical wellbeing. The patients' decisions for particular surgical methods often are influenced by the information they get from their surgeons. Through negotiations with their physicians, women learn to see themselves in new ways. The choice of immediate or secondary breast reconstruction is informed by the mediation of knowledge in different clinical disciplines and cultures. In the narratives of these women the scientific conceptions of their physicians are mirrored. During the period of treatment breast reconstruction patients learn to examine themselves with the eyes of their (plastic) surgeons. They perceive their breast tissue as mouldable object. Hence, surgical reshaping of the body's integrity requires the inclusion of psychosocial and cultural factors, which are defined by each single individual woman herself. The (multimedia) documentation of subjective definitions, decision making processes, experiences, perceptions and needs of breast reconstruction patients unfolds a deeper understanding of the requirements of women, who are in this particular life situation. Plastic and reconstructive surgeons learn more about the subjective expectations of their patients. With the help of this research data indications and therapeutic conceptions can be individually improved. A mutual translation and mediation process is inspired. Surgeons strengthen their understanding of the patients' voices and languages. Treated women plunge into the imaginary worlds of their plastic and reconstructive surgeons.

### 2.3)

Within the *CORPOrealities* a dialogue between the contemporary arts/ethnography and medicine took shape. Christina Lammer is experienced in developing and realizing multi-disciplinary research projects on the boundary of art and biomedicine. Until now

she is performing ethnographic fieldwork in different areas at the *MUV* for almost ten years. She did ethnography in radiology, surgery and plastic and reconstructive surgery. 2007 she finished two major case studies: *Günter Brus' Kleine Narbenlehre* (Vienna: Löcker 2007) and *Embodiment / Verkörperungen* (Vienna: Löcker, 2007). For *Kleine Narbenlehre* she collaborated with one of the most important figures of *Vienna Actionism* Günter Brus. The publication includes interview materials with the artist and his surgeons, a photo documentation of his cancer operation and actual pictures of his scars. Self-referential issues – the tension between self-destructive happenings Günter Brus performed in the late sixties and early seventies, and medical operations he had to undergo – are addressed. The *Embodiment*-book, edited by Christina Lammer, Kim Sawchuk and Cathrin Pichler, includes essays of internationally renowned authors who study the human body from different disciplinary perspectives. The volume offers a broad overview about the field of body studies. Christina Lammer cooperates with the head of the *Clinic Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, MUV*, Manfred Frey, for almost five years. They realized a field study with twelve breast cancer patients who decided to get breast reconstruction. Preliminary results of this project were published in the journal *European Surgery* (Vienna: Springer, 2007). The final report will appear in the form of a book: *Empathografie* (Vienna: Löcker, 2009). This is Christina Lammer's habilitation project. Unorthodox collaborations, building networks of people with a variety of art based, scientific and biomedical backgrounds, are typical for the sociologist's professional expertise. Her applied ethnographic approaches are deeply problem-orientated, organized around particular socio-cultural as well as power-political questions of life and existence. These issues build the core of the follow up-investigation *SURGICAL WRAPPINGS* (2009-2013). Manfred Frey, Barbara Graf, Sonia Horn, Christina Lammer, Birgit Nemec and Katrin Pilz will examine draperies and material compo-

nents in the *operating theater* of plastic and reconstructive surgery. The aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of how human being is displayed and perceived in medicine and beyond. The investigation has been awarded with an *Art(s) & Sciences*-price 2009. In cooperation with the *University for Applied Arts Vienna* and Manfred Frey, Sonia Horn, Birgit Nemec and Katrin Pilz, Christina Lammer furthermore applied for funding of an art scientific investigation on facial *FEATURES* at the *Austrian Science Foundation*. At the time of report this proposal is still being reviewed.

*I like to thank my cooperation partners and coworkers for their contributions and the WWTF for the convenient work together!*

*Christina Lammer*