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The article captures the autobiographical work of Maria Lassnig – her self-portraits, diaries, poems – in the context of trends present in Austrian art in the years 1950–1980. The artist's self-analysis reveals through a variety of forms such diverse inspirations as Vienna Actionism, avant-garde and experimental literature of Vienna – Mayröcker, Wiener – to the philosophy of Leiblichkeit by Hermann Schmitz. A characteristic feature of Lassnig's self-analysis is not only transmediality and related aspects of the translatability of an individual body language into figurative and abstract forms, colours and words, but also a clear distance from the approach to corporality in terms of gender.??

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Maria Lassnig's "Kopfheiten." Self-Analysis in Words and Images

In 1991, Maria Lassnig, 72 years old at the time, pencils a sketch she will come to call *Ich zeichne also denke ich* [*I Draw, Therefore I Think*]. The small piece stands as the distilled essence of Lassnig's artistic vision. Confined within is her pressing need for (self-)analysis, the process of which the artist has been elucidating upon canvas and paper since her primary-school days, continuing the effort throughout her Viennese (first and second), Parisian, and New York City periods, using oil and gouache paintings, pencil sketches, and animated films. Lassnig's early artistic efforts included portraits of girlfriends from school and self-portraits – even decades later, in the 1980s, the artist still argued to students taking her painting and animation masterclass at the Hochschule für angewandte Kunst [College of Applied Arts] in Vienna that mastering the ability to paint a portrait was the first step toward artistic independence.[1]

What did Lassnig seek to analyze? Curators, art historians, and art theorists all seem to agree: "Uncompromising self-analysis was a central theme in Lassnig's work [...]. She looks through her own flesh."[2] "To Maria Lassnig, transcendence began in the body."[3] "The visualization of physical emotion and the tracking of physical sensation sit at the heart of her 'body awareness paintings'."[4] Her particular interest in the body and ways of expressing it in art made Lassnig a pioneer among her fellow twentieth-century artists. As stressed by Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Josef Helfenstein, she "placed the body in the very center of her art long before bodily awareness was taken up as a subject by the international avant-garde."[5]

Between the literary avant-garde and Viennese Actionism

Her bodily focus at once brought her closer to Viennese Actionism and separated her from the movement, which she was mostly associated with on account of her contact with artists Otto Muehl and Günter Brus. She was an old friend of Muehl's – Lassnig used to visit him at the Friedrichshof commune[6]; she also appeared in *Back to Fucking Cambridge* (dir. Otto Muehl and Terese Panoutsopolous, 1987), Muehl's film about *fin de siècle* Vienna, shot from his script and in his commune. The film also starred Muehl himself, Nam June Paik, Christian Ludwig Attersee, and Dieter Roth. In his manifestos, Muehl, a proponent of *direkte Kunst* [direct art], called for radical acts of violence,[7] supposedly to facilitate the implementation of the postulates of the early avant-garde (futurism and surrealism). Lassnig's involvement with Actionism, however, should be considered at best a marginal episode in her work, if only because she spent most of the 1958–1968 period, when the group was active, in Paris, eventually moving on to New York City in 1968.
Before leaving for Paris, the artist kept in touch with the Viennese avant-garde group Hundsgruppe, founded in the early 1950s, whose roster included artists such as Arnulf Rainer and Ernst Fuchs. In the late 1950s, she exhibited her works at the Nächst St. Stephan gallery, notorious for its progressive slant, where Josef Mikel and Markus Prachensky (later the mentor of Actionist artist Brus) also held shows; the gallery served as a springboard for many Actionists. Alongside VALIE EXPORT, one of the most important artists to ever take up the subject of female physicality in art (primarily in film), Maria Lassnig represented Austria at the 1980 Venice Biennale.[8]

Lassnig was also associated with the Viennese literary avant-garde coalesced around the so-called Vienna Group[9]; traces of

this affiliation can be found in Lassnig's journals as well as her other artistic efforts. She illustrated *Rosengarten*, Friedrike Mayröcker's 1984 volume of poetry. Mayröcker, meanwhile, dedicated a number of her own works to Lassnig, including *Frühstück im Ohr von Maria Lassnig* (2005).[10] The Austrian artist was also very close to Oswald Wiener, a writer and theorist affiliated with the Vienna Group, with whom she created the catalog for her 1992 exhibition at Galerie Ulysses in Vienna. Lassnig's analytical approach to painting and its specific expression of physicality complemented Wiener's interest in human perception and the possibility of transposing perceptual processes underpinning it into verbal or, more generally, artistic communication.[11] Her collaboration with Mayröcker and Wiener is testament to her interest in language and its expressive capabilities, as well as, first and foremost, the line between word and picture.

Therefore self-analysis, so crucial to Maria Lassnig's work, cannot be limited to representation through a particular arrangement of colors, lines, and textures, as it incessantly strives to transcend them, to portray using words while clashing against them. "There simply aren't enough words, that's why I draw,"[12] said Lassnig, known for her repeated expressions of admiration for artists working with the written word.
This confrontation with the written word also reveals interesting commonalities, as well as differences, with Actionism, which demonstrated deep-seated disapproval, even hostility, toward language, seeing it as a profoundly limited medium (due to its epistemic characteristics, which disengaged it from direct sensation and experience), subject to manipulation by existing power structures. Lassnig, on the other hand, contrasts her own curiosity about language with the Actionists' assault against it and their attempts to expose its limits in their manifestos; by design, the actions of artists affiliated with the movement were

to be stripped of explicitly verbal content.

The work of Maria Lassnig and the efforts of the Viennese Actionists indisputably share many similarities – including the abovementioned focus on physicality. The Actionists saw this as a challenge to the artistic process, stemming from the transposition of the space of the image onto the bodies of the models (mostly female, however). In this instance, the proximity of Günter Brus's and Lassnig's notions is particularly interesting. Brus experimented with the material character of the painterly process, with the intention of liberating art from the rigid frame of the painting, which he saw as not merely an aesthetic constraint, but a concrete, physical one as well. He analyzed his own body, which he covered in paint, pierced, and wounded; in other words, he treated it as a canvas, pushing that which so interested Lassnig – the study of sensation – to the extreme.

Maria Lassnig also took up the subject of liberating oneself from the frame of the painting (*Innerhalb und ausserhalb der Leinwand V* [*Inside and Outside the Canvas V*], 1985), but without leaving the painting itself – thus crafting something of a metaimage. Such an approach isn't exactly rare in contemporary art – the plane of the canvas is "breached" and transcended in Kurt Schwitters's assemblages and Lucio Fontana's slashed canvases. Transcending the frame of the image and the canvas was a crucial aspect for Brus, as it implied transcending the socio-cultural injunctions he felt constrained by as an avant-garde artist working in 1960s Austria. Thus his embrace of sharp objects, piercing his skin, and self-mutilation (in *Selbstverstümmelung* [*Self-Mutilation*]) – all the way up to probing the very limits of his body (in his 1970 action *Zerreißprobe* [*Breaking Test*]). In *Körperanalyse* [*Body Analysis*, 1970], Brus's last action, the artist pushed his self-analysis to the brink of self-destruction. Here, the difference between Brus and Lassnig becomes apparent – rather than probe the limits of physicality, Lassnig instead interrogated the limits of the body's

own expressibility within the image (and, to a lesser extent, within language).

Hence, a closer examination of Maria Lassnig's approach to the issue of the body in art would paint her as veering closer to the work of artists such as Francis Bacon rather than the performance art and Actionism of the 1960s and 70s. The figures in Bacon's paintings were closed in triptychs and frames. Calling painting "the brutality of facts," Bacon argued that said brutality must be interrogated using artistic means, rather than left behind, which is what Actionism called for. Bacon wanted to merge figurative painting and the sensibility of the nervous system, to depict disquiet by way of a particular arrangement of form and color, but one that would remain abstract and figurative. Lassnig was familiar with his work – they were of the same generation – but dismissed drawing any inspiration from it.[13]

Their portraits share a certain anatomicity, as well as an attempt to examine sensory perception through painterly means, expressed within the paintings in the form of an incessant teetering on the verge of abstraction and mimesis.[14]

"Not merely female"

The quest for a means of expression appropriate for the body and the feelings that manifest through the somatic self conjures up associations with "female" art or, more broadly, a "female" perception of reality. If we were to examine the contemporary autobiographical tendencies of female book and comic-book authors, we would be hard-pressed to dismiss the significance of the issues interrogated by Lassnig – the body of literature available on the subject reveals a consensus that in the center of female self-analysis, practiced through either word or image (in comic books and graphic novels), sit both perception and the definition of the "self" mediated through physicality.[15]
This foregrounding of emotionality impacts the specific style of female autobiographism – the fragmentary, inconsistent, and

polyphonic nature of the "self" is considered a distinctive feature of these authors' self-representation. Lassnig's self-analyses indeed include the hallmark traits of the characteristic "female" tone, but the artist herself pointed out a distinct difference: "People used to think [...] that emotions are the domain of the female. Only now do they realize that it is about sensation, and sensation is not exclusively female. Grand emotions aren't everything, there are also many little emotions, and that's what I'm interested in..."[16]

Rather than pertain to the issue of expressing one's "self" in opposition to the male "self,"[17] what Lassnig points out clearly focuses on subjective self-perception while avoiding the dichotomy of gender – thus her emphasis on "small emotions." And it is these "small emotions" that make up the "bodily sensation" [*Körpergefühl*] that the artist considered critically important and that the German philosopher Hermann Schmitz described as the "somatic disposition" [*leibliche Disposition*].[18] Schmitz's philosophy of the body ought to be brought up, if only because he was developing his premises around the time that Lassnig was working on her concept of *Körpergefühl*; some of the notions used by the artist seem to indicate that she was familiar with Schmitz's writings.[19] In this context, we should also mention another significant concept – that of the *Körperschema* [body schema], which phenomenologists used to describe to spatial conceptions of individual physicality, semantically comparable with Lassnig's *Körpergefühl*.

Word / flesh / self-portrait

In 1955, Lassnig wrote about abandoning the figurative representation of parts of the face in favor of expressing them through three-dimensional forms (cylinders).[20] The portraits so devised – of herself and her loved ones – she came to call *Kopfheiten*, a merger of *Kopf*, German for "head," and *-heit*,

which more or less corresponds with the "-ness" suffix, the meaning of which unequivocally implies a rational approach to portraiture. *Kopfheiten* suggests a reference to the head as part of the body, while the *-heit* suffix expresses an abstract interpretation thereof within the image. Thus *Kopfheiten* could be juxtaposed with *verkopft*, a German term for someone overly preoccupied with rational analyses. A journal entry from January 1946 reveals Lassnig's program and her ultimate objective: "To make the incomprehensible comprehensible, no deluge of will!"[21] The neologism coined by the artist betrays her inclination toward analysis, of both image and the written word, a proclivity apparent, among other places, in the poem *Selbstporträt in Worten I* [*Self-Portrait in Words I*], which we will come back to in a moment. In a transcript of one of her lectures to students, we can find the highlighted sentence: "Our eyes ought to think."[22] Self-analysis accompanies the act of creation and complements it; Lassnig constantly tries to express it in words, which itself seems paradoxical insofar as – in order to do just that – she would need to come up with descriptions for the processes taking place in her body, observable by her in her own individual way:

> As my spirit/reason awakened when I was around 20 years old, I soon realized the extent to which the flesh hampered it and threw it off balance – I grew up in a reality dictated by the dualism of body and spirit, and it was not a purely Renaissance-like love of my own body that led me to use it as a means of representation – quite the contrary. Additionally, I saw the unusual sensitivity of my sensory organs, like my ears, for example, as an obstacle, and later represented it (*Frühes Selbstportrait als Ohr* [*Early Self-Portrait as Ear*], 1949). […] Thus my proclivity for the impossible, for transcending the possible, the real, for journeying toward new, undefined lands. It is rather difficult to portray physical sensation through visual means: where it begins,

> where it ends, what shape it is, whether it's pointed, smooth, or zigzag-like – probing it resembles trying to fence in a cloud or a nebula, it is mysticism of the physical.[23]

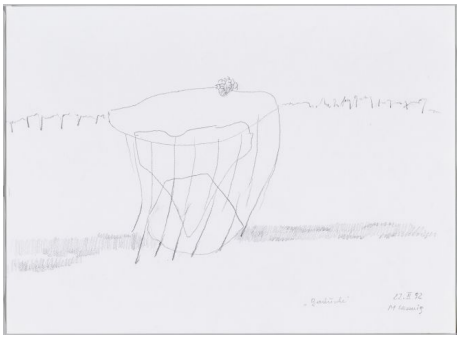

Fig. 1. *Geräusche* (*Noises*), 1992 © Maria Lassnig Foundation / Bildrecht, Vienna 2019, Photo: Roland Krauss

Color usage played a very important role in the creation of *Kopfheiten*. In her text on the fine arts academy in the late 1940s, Lassnig wrote about color, identifying what she called *Senkrechtes Farbsehen* [Vertical Color Vision] and *Absolutes Farbsehen* [Absolute Color Vision] – the artist argued that if you looked at a color long enough, the "local color" would melt away, revealing the relativity of color and leaving only the field of sublimation.[24] Interested more in "probing the essence" of color rather than being "intoxicated" by it, Lassnig also wrote about trying to halt the passion felt toward it. Color allowed her to express aspects of physicality in an abstract way: it reduced the figurativeness inherent in nudity. The most important thing was to sink and drill into a single patch of color ["*Versenken und Bohren um einen einzigen ersten Fleck Farbe*"].[25]

Colors and their individualization are significant in this particular instance as they allow us to isolate in the abstract *Kopfheiten* the intensity of sensory experience that the artist so frequently mentions. This does not mean, however, that they are the only available means of expression – in *Starkes Vogelgezwitscher* [*Harsh Birdsong*, 1991] and *Geräusche* [*Sounds*, 1992] the intensity of aural sensation is expressed through small jagged lines, resembling the zigzagging trace of an electrocardiogram (Figs. 1 and 2).



Fig. 2. *Juni, starkes Vogelgezwitscher* (*June 1, Loud Birdsong*), 1991. © Maria Lassnig Foundation / Bildrecht, Vienna 2019, Photo: Roland Krauss

The forms visible in the center of the illustrations, depicting the object of the sensations suggested in their titles, offer an abstract portrayal of the "body schema," the most individual perception of one's own body. Here, we witness the resurfacing of the inherent clash between subjective experiences and the means of their expression, both verbal and purely visual. The tendency to visualize the "body schema" was described by Oswald Wiener as "an unsolved problem," given contemporaneous knowledge of neurology and brain functioning:

> One of the many unsolved problems the field still contends with is finding an explanation of how we "visualize" our own body schema – that is how we transpose our tactile, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic sensations, our sense of pain or temperature, etc. onto our visual representations of our bodies.[26]

To Wiener's question of whether Lassnig's bodily sensations [*Körpergefühl*] are accompanied by their "image" in her consciousness, the artist replies: "There is an image, an amorphous one, but an image nonetheless; additionally, the image emerges as a result of the ensuing process of representation that directly follows the physical sensation."[27]

Lassnig also attempts to paint this "amorphous image" with words, the quest for which she describes as follows: "The consistent intent to write, to record that which appears in moments of mental clarity. Because there is always something there, but never words, these have to be found."[28] Characteristically, however, she avoided the first-person form in her writing, as using "I" seemed "unpleasant" to her.[29]

Her *Selbstporträt in Worten I*, recorded in her journal in 1958 (exact date unknown),[30] likewise avoids any references to the first person:

> *Self-Portrait in Words I*
>
> Near the edge where the flesh grew in
> there is a sensation that feels like burning
> by the mound and around the curves
> everything is red
> while the very center is bluish red
> The nostrils flaring in the fire
> sucking the air in through a high opening
> protrusions right and left
> spread outwards and droop.
> There, the light filters in and begins to flicker,
> round, sometimes oval
> and reaches all the way up to the top edge.
> When tired, it forms barely an aperture,
> lined with shade,
> and from there onto the burning spots
> a soothing coolness, like a gentle band-aid
> reaching all the way up to the notch.[31]

The text speaks of the flesh and bodily sensations, expressed primarily through color, spatial forms, and individual metaphors hailing from the painterly arts. Elements of the descriptions, such as the shaded lines, the crevice, or the shadows, bring up associations with *ekphrases*, which, however, remain abstract. These associations allow us to create a specific vision of the image, but a vague one, its lack of clarity rooted in the fact that forms and colors are referenced in the text in descriptions of bodily sensations located in the body as a whole, without mentioning specific parts – only the nostrils are named. This, in turn, creates the impression that the verse is at once an attempt to describe how difficult it is to communicate physicality verbally and visually, and an answer to said difficulty,

a transposition of sensation – of warmth and cold – onto visual forms. The attempt to translate what Oswald Wiener called the "visual representation" of bodily sensation resembles the practices that existed within the repertoire of the Austrian experimental literature of Lassnig's day. Examples include Wiener's experimental novel *die verbesserung von mitteleuropa* (1969), in which the author attempted to verbalize sensory perception without falling back onto symbolic or metaphorical references.[32] Reinhard Priessnitz argued that such verbalization of subjective experienced "underpinned all description [...]: the more precise and complex a portrayal, the less it is able to visualize."[33] Similar efforts made up a strain of experimental literature whose biggest achievement, according to Priessnitz, was that it managed to point out that "language stands between consciousness and reality."[34]

Unlike the authors associated with Austrian experimental literature, Maria Lassnig did not embrace the assumptions that Priessnitz wrote of – her written works reject hostility toward language and its norms, because "sensations are determined by the grammar that defines them."[35] The artist approaches language from another angle – operating mostly with images, the attitude she adopts toward language could best be described as "naive," in the complimentary sense of the word. Rather than transcending the schema of language, she is interested in identifying words describing the processes that she saw as important to her painterly efforts. It was this aspect that pushed her closer to Wiener, interested as he was in contemplating language as it pertained to the structures of consciousness and their expressibility. To the experimental poets and artists that made up the Austrian milieu, which, to some extent, shaped Lassnig's work, passing "beyond the possible, beyond the real" was part and parcel of the creative process, the quest for new forms of expression and perception.

In what we could call her mission statement, "to make the

incomprehensible comprehensible," we can hear echoes of the many philosophical and historical discussions that unfolded across the body of literature on portraits and their evolution within cultural history. Following the argument presented by most art historians, from Jacob Burckhardt to Gottfried Boehm – which claims that the beginnings of portraiture are inherently bound up with Renaissance humanism, while the development of the field reflected the shifting definition of the subject[36] – we would naturally arrive at the conclusion that (self-)portraits bearing little resemblance to their subject and abstract (self-)portraits[37] are answers to the recurring question about the true nature of human individuality. Because of the crisis of representation, mimesis was no longer considered the preferred method of representing human beings, and its gradual abandonment became emblematic of 20th-century art and its reflection on the fictional nature of the (self-)portrait as well as the mystery of the "self."[38] Lassnig embraced that reflection by painting herself, starting from the "bodily sensations" described above. Her repeated attempts to portray her somatic experiences using both written and visual language stand as a record of the tension that is typical of contemporary autobiographical work, at the heart of which lies the dissonance between the sensed "self" and the expressed "self."

Maria Lassnig associates this tension with the need for self-limitation: "What makes the artist is the humble satisfaction with little."[39] That contentment with little – the culling of forms and means – may be seen as manifesting itself in the strict monothematic nature of her work, especially the self-portrait studies that have been a constant presence in her artistic efforts. Another hallmark of Lassnig's work is her reluctance to add unnecessary mystification to creative work, a disposition that kept resurfacing in her many writings and texts. The probing of the individual "self," whether using the canvas or the written word, is inherently accompanied by (self-)analysis: "Rather

than mystify a particular medium of art, as often happens with painting and drawing, Lassnig instead turned toward the mystery of our relationship with ourselves and with the world."[40]

1 Cf. Antonia Hoerschelmann, "Ja ja aber sowieso nein. Zu den Zeichnungen und Aquarellen von Maria Lassnig," in: *Maria Lassnig. Zwiegespräche*, eds. Hoerschelmann and Anita Haldemann (Vienna–Basel: Hirmer Verlag, 2017), 18.

2 "*Das zentrale Thema Lassnigs war eine schonungslose Selbstbefragung* [...]. *Sie sieht durch ihren Körper*." (Translator's note: unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from German sources have been translated by the essay's author.) Laurence Rassel, "Einleitung," in: *Maria Lassnig. Werke, Tagebücher & Schriften*, ed. Hans Werner Poschauko (London: Koenig, 2015), 10 and onwards.

3 "*Für Maria Lassnig beginnt die Transzendenz beim Körper*." Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Die Gegenwart bewegt sich langsam," in: Maria Lassnig, *Die Feder ist die Schwester des Pinsels. Tagebücher 1943–1977*, ed. Hans Ulrich Obrist (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 11.

4 *"Das Sichtbarmachen von körperlichen Emotionen und das Nachspüren der Körperwahrnehmung bilden den Mittelpunkt ihrer Body-Awareness-Paintings*." Josef Helfenstein and Klaus Albrecht Schröder, "Vorwort," in: *Maria Lassnig. Zwiegespräche*, 6.

5 *"Bereits früh machte sie ihren eigenen Körper zum Mittelpunkt ihrer Kunst, lange bevor Körperbewusstsein* [...] *zentrale Themen der internationalen Avantgarde wurden*." Ibid., 6.

6 Friedrichshof is a settlement in Burgenland, some 60 kilometers south of Vienna. In 1972, Actionist Otto Muehl (1925–2013) moved there to establish the Aktionsanalytische-Kommune [Actionist-Analyst Commune], based on economic self-sufficiency, ecology, and liberation from the small-family model, with its specific views on morality and sexuality. In the commune, Actionism, the form of expression practiced by Muehl, became a means of therapy, supposed to facilitate self-analysis free from the restrictions of bourgeois society. The commune survived until the early 1990s. In 1988, a handful of former denizens sued Muehl, accusing him of sexually molesting minors and giving them drugs. Muehl dismissed most of the charges, but spent seven years in prison; after serving his sentence, he left for Portugal, where he lived and worked in a small community of artists and friends. On the 85th anniversary of his birthday, the Leopold Museum in Vienna held an exhibition of his later works; at the press conference, Muehl officially apologized to those who fell victim to his

authoritarian tendencies while at Friedrichshof. An interesting analysis of Muehl's efforts in the context of Austrian social policy of the 1970s and 80s can be found in Ferdinand Schmatz, "Sinn und Sinne: Marquis de Sade – Otto Mühl," in: *Sinn & Sinne. Wiener Gruppe, Wiener Aktionismus und andere Wegbereiter* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1992), 168–181.

7 Cf. Kalina Kupczynska, *"Vergeblicher Versuch, das fliegen zu erlernen": Manifeste des Wiener Aktionismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 81–140.

8 A brief overview of Austrian art focused on the body can be found in the work of Reinhard Priessnitz, a friend of most of the artists associated with that particular strain. See: Reinhard Priessnitz, "Selbstbefragung II. arnulf rainer und die körperkunst," in: Priessnitz, *Werkausgabe* 3/1, ed. Ferdinand Schmatz (Linz–Vienna: edition neue texte, 1988), 74–80.

9 See: Kalina Kupczyńska, "Grupa Wiedeńska," in: *Słownik współczesnej kultury krajów niemieckojęzycznych*, eds. Krzysztof Ruchniewicz and Marek Zybura (Poznań: Nauka i Innowacje, 2019), 1:130–131.

10 See: *Maria Lassnig. Werke, Tagebücher & Schriften*.

11 Antonia Hoerschelmann emphasized that during Lassnig's one-year residency in Berlin, a period marked by intense discussions with Wiener, the artist created a series of pictures inspired by theories of perception, such as *4 Aufgestützte Körpergefühlsabdrücke* (1978) and *6 Gesichtsgefühlsabdrücke* (1979).

12 *"Es gibt zu wenig Wörter, deshalb zeichne ich ja." Katalog zur Ausstellung: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 20er Haus, 26.03–06.06.1999; Musée des Beaux Arts de Nantes, 6.7–27.09.1999*, ed. Wolfgang Drechsler, exh. cat. (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, 1999), 65.

13 Maria Lassnig (1986), quoted in: Christa Murken, *Maria Lassnig. Ihr Leben und ihr malerisches Werk. Ihre kunstgeschichtliche Stellung in der Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Herzogenrath: Murken-Altrogge, 1990), 415.

14 In her doctoral dissertation on Maria Lassnig, Silke Andrea Schuemmer also noted that both Lassnig and Bacon focused on "the sensed body" [*der empfundene Körper*] rather than the body as seen from outside; the only difference was that Lassnig focused on her own "sensed body," while Bacon painted others. Cf. Schuemmer, *Das bewohnte Körpergehäuse. Die introspektive Methode der Maria Lassnig* (Hamburg: Disserta Verlag, 2014), 94–97.

15 In the introduction to her book *Shifting Subjects*, Natalie Edwards mentions that while writing about physicality is an important ideological starting point for framing women as the subject of autobiographical narratives, it also implies the definition of the female "self" as "non-unitary, fragmented and mutable as opposed to coherent, static and unitary." Natalie Edwards, "Introduction: Writing the Self; From the Individual 'I' to the Non-Unitary Self," in: *Shifting Subjects: Plural Subjectivity in Contemporary Francophone Women's Autobiography* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 3. Cf. also Sidonie Smith, *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Hillary Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

16 Maria Lassnig (1995): "*Gefühl, haben die Leute gedacht* [...], *das ist etwas Weibliches. Erst jetzt kommen sie drauf, daß das eine Empfindung ist, und eine Empfindung ist ja nicht nur weiblich allein. Es gibt nicht nur die großen Gefühle, sondern auch die kleinen, und um die geht es bei mir...*" As quoted in: Hanne Weskott, "Zeichnung und Aquarell im Werk von Maria Lassnig," in: *Maria Lassnig. Zeichnungen und Aquarelle 1946–1995*, ed. Weskott (Munich: Prestel, 1995), 37.

17 Christa Murken held a different position – in her view, Lassnig's self-portraits express a feminist protest against the expectations imposed upon representations of women in painting. Murken believes that the lack of male figures in Lassnig's pictures expressly confirms her theory. Cf. Murken, *Maria Lassnig. Ihr Leben und ihr malerisches Werk*, 379, 381.

18 Hermann Schmitz, *Der Leib. System der Philosophie* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1965), 2:6.

19 Cf. Schuemmer, *Das bewohnte Körpergehäuse*, 195 and onwards. Schuemmer also noted the terminological differences between the German words *Körper* and *Leib*, both of which mean "body." Schmitz used the term *Leib* to mean "*beseelter Körper*" [the soulful body]. Schuemmer explained that anthropologists and phenomenologists use the word *Leib* to describe the subjective, internal perception of physicality: "*der Leib, den man nicht nur sehen und betasten, sondern auch spüren kann*" [the body that you can not only see and touch, but also feel]. Lassnig's usage of *Leibinsel* [lit. the bodily island] drew on Schmitz's phenomenological interpretation.

20 "*Als meine 'informelle' Zeit in Gefahr war, in sterile Abstraktionen auszuarten, hatte ich ein großes Verlangen, saftige Realitäten zu malen. Doch bald wurden die saftigen Fleischtöne wieder zu 'absoluten Graus' sublimiert, die Körper in Farbflächen gebaut, und die Portraits von Freunden, Eltern und mir wurden zu Kopfheiten:*

Unter Verzicht auf die physiognomischen Wichtigkeiten der Augen, Nase, Mund, wurde der Kopf in Raumteile zerlegt, die Farbflächen der 'absoluten Graus' wurden zu Wangenschildern, zu Stirnschildern, Halszylindern ausgebreitet und dem Hintergrund vorgesetzt." Lassnig, *Die Feder ist die Schwester des Pinsels*, 25.

21 "*Das Unbegreifliche begreiflich machen, keine Sintflut des Wollens!*" Ibid., 22.

22 "*Unsere Augen sollen denken*" (1980). "Maria Lassnig zu den Schülern," in: ibid.,74.

23 "*Über das Malen von Körpergefühlen*," ibid., 80–81.

24 "*Ich habe mir mein Farbsehen selbst erarbeiten müssen: Durch Kontemplation den ersten Farbfleck zu entschlüsseln, mit diesem Schlüssel alle Nebenfarben durch kalt-warm Gegensätze zu bestimmen. Ich habe das 'Senkrechtes Farbsehen' oder 'Absolutes Farbsehen' genannt: Indem ich so lange auf einen Farbfleck starrte, bis die 'Lokalfarbe' verschwand und die ganze erschreckende Relativität der Farbe einen Weg zur Auswahl freigab. Natürlich ist die Auswahl nicht frei, sondern hängt von dem Grad der Sublimierung ab, zu dem man sich im Augenblick hinaufsteigen kann.*" "Über Akademie und Nachkriegszeit (1945–1950)," in: Lassnig, *Die Feder ist die Schwester des Pinsels*, 23–24.

25 Journal entry from January 18, 1946. Ibid., 22.

26 "*Eine der vielen in diesem Bereich ungelösten Aufgaben ist die Erklärung der Tatsache, daß wir unser Körperschema 'visualisieren', nämlich daß wir Tastempfindungen, propriozeptive und kinästhetische, Wärme und Schmerzempfindungen etc. in ein als visuell empfundenes Bild eintragen, wenn wir über diese Empfindungen nachdenken.*" Oswald Wiener (1989), in: *Maria Lassnig. Zeichnungen und Aquarelle. Texte von Maria Lassnig und Oswald Wiener* (Vienna: Galerie Ulysses, 1992), n.p.

27 "*Wenn auch noch so amorph, es ist ein Bild, besser, es bildet sich ein Bild, es ist aber eine Nacharbeit der Vorstellung, die nach dem Sinneseindruck folgt.*" Ibid., n.p.

28 "*Immer wieder die Absicht zu schreiben, aufzuschreiben, was in den Momenten der Besinnung in dem Sinn ist. Denn es ist ja immer etwas da, etwas, nur keine Worte, die müssen gefunden werden.*" Journal entry from August 3, 1991. Lassnig, *Die Feder ist die Schwester des Pinsels*, 115.

29 "*Das Ich beim Schreiben zu verwenden ist schon etwas Unsympathisches, kein Wunder, daß die Schriftsteller die dritte Person verwenden oder keine Person.*" Journal entry from August 20, 1981. Ibid., 79.

30 Ibid., 26–27. The August 20, 1958 entry contains the follow-up poem, *Selbstporträt in Worten II* [*Self-Portrait in Words II*], another attempt by the artist to verbalize her "bodily sensation."

31 *Selbstporträt in Worten I*.

> Wo das Fleisch an der unteren / Kante angewachsen ist / fühlt es sich brennend an / an der Erhöhung und rings um den Zirkular / dies alles ist rot / die stärksten Stellen bläulich rot / Die Nasenflügel ringeln sich im Brande / und durch die hohe Öffnung saugt sich der Luftstrom / rechts und links sind dominierende Stellen / die nach außen verlaufen, über ihnen hört es auf. / Dort beginnt der Lichteinfall und das Geflimmer, / dies ist ziemlich rund, manchmal oval / und reicht bis zum oberen Rande. / Bei Müdigkeit bildet es nur eine lichte / mit Schattenschraffuren versehene Spalte, / oberhalb der Brandstellen geht aber von dort, / wie ein lindes Pflaster / kühl bis an die Einkerbung heran.

32 Similar attempts were undertaken by poets from the Vienna Group, as well as Peter Handke, in his debut novel *Die Hornissen* [*The Hornets*, 1996], for example.

33 "*Das grunddilemma allen beschreibens* [...]: *in dem masse, in dem es an präzision und komplexität zunimmt, verliert es an anschaulichkeit*." Reinhard Priessnitz, *Werkausgabe* 3/2, ed. Ferdinand Schmatz (Linz–Vienna: edition neue texte, 1990), 188.

34 "*Die experimentelle literatur hat* [...] *darauf hingewiesen, dass zwischen dem bewusstsein und der realität die sprache steht*." Ibid., 177.

35 "*Empfindungen seien durch die sie festlegende grammatik bestimmt*." Ibid., 193. Using the form "*sei*" (Konjunktiv I), expressing doubt, Priessnitz signals his own dissociation from the notion.

36 Cf. Andreas Köstler, "Das Porträt: Individuum und Image," in: *Bildnis und Image: Das Porträt zwischen Intention und Rezeption*, ed. Ernst Seidl (Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), 8–14.

37 Cf. Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture (Essays in Art and Culture)* (Cambridge: Reaktion Books, 1991); Max Imdahl, "Relationen zwischen Porträt und Individuum," in: *Individualität*, ed. Manfred Frank (Munich: Fink, 1988), 587–598.

38 Cf. Petra Gördüren, *Das Porträt nach dem Porträt. Positionen der Bildniskunst im späten XX Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Mann, 2013), 291: "The inconceivable in the human being stands as the anthropological and aesthetic core from which arises the variety of

representations and artistic concepts: all of which are attempts at approaching and probing the invariably 'deepest and most impenetrable mystery of the world'."

39 "*Das, was den Künstler ausmacht, ist das Bescheiden im Wenigen*." Journal entry from January 18, 1946. Lassnig, *Die Feder ist die Schwester des Pinsels*, 22.

40 "*Anstatt ein bestimmtes Medium der Kunst zu mystifizieren, wie dies oft mit Malerei und Zeichnung geschieht, wandte sie sich dem Geheimnis zu, das in unserem Verhältnis zu uns und zu unserer Welt liegt*." Ralph Ubl, "'Wenn man so malt, macht man keine Projekte.' Miriam Cahn im Gespräch mit Ralph Ubl über Maria Lassnig," in: *Maria Lassnig. Zwiegespräche*, 50.

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