

Auto/Pathographies

Tamar Tembeck

in residency
 from October 23 to November 21, 2008

Curator's Lecture

Thursday, November 27, 2008, at 5:30pm



Jo Spence/Terry Dennett, *Decaying Face, The Final Project* series
 © Jo Spence Memorial Archive, 1991-1992

Tamar Tembeck is doing a curatorial residency at OBORO in order to develop a research and exhibition project around autopathography in media arts.

With the growing visibility of cancer and AIDS in the last quarter of a century, a number of artists have begun to document their experiences of sickness, and to construct a new idiom for the representation of illness in art: autopathography. Faced with the predominance of negative myths and value judgments towards the characters of diseased subjects in Art History, many of these artists have chosen to critically respond to the traditional stigma with which diseased bodies are typically depicted and received.

From initial experiments carried out by artists working with autopathography, it becomes clear that artworks can reinforce the negative stigma that is attached to visibly ill persons, but also potentially resist stigmatic attributions to sick beings by

re-writing the terms of their representations. Very often, they in fact do both at once. The key feature of autopathographic works produced by professional artists since the 1980s is that they do not strictly amount to a form of personal expressive arts therapy; they are also usually characterized by militancy, aesthetic innovation, and a desire for interpersonal outreach. All of these elements contribute to making autopathography a significant new genre of representation, one which merits increased study.

Auto/pathographies is the first project of its kind to specifically examine the functions of firsthand representations of physical illness in a variety of disciplines, including the performing arts. The project will lead to a group exhibition and lecture series on the subject of illness and (self-)representation, which will be shown at the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, the Kunstpavillon and the Stadtturm-gallerie (Innsbruck, Austria) in the summer of 2009.

A performing artist primarily engaged in physical theatre, **Tamar Tembeck** has been working in Montreal hospitals with Dr Clown for the past five years. She is currently completing her PhD in Art History at McGill University. Her thesis, *Performative Autopathographies: Self-Representations of*

Physical Illness in Contemporary Art, examines the aesthetic and militant strategies put forward by certain professional artists in representing their experiences of illness. Tamar Tembeck will be in residency at Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen from February to July, 2009. < <http://tembeck.org> >