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Archiving and annotating. BRACHA's notebooks at CRRI

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Studied by twentieth-century philosophy and psychoanalysis as the space-time of negotiation and discourse¹, archives are delicate tools for the social affirmation of power (and therefore also for exclusion from it, when stories and their authors are excluded from the archive), as well as for the individual process of configuration, selection, or removal of memory. When deprived of the objectivity and stability that is usually attributed to them, archives are living political bodies, acts of both collective and subjective storytelling in constant transformation.

The body of notebooks written, drawn and jotted down over the years by Bracha L. Ettinger—an artist, psychoanalyst, and feminist author, self-renamed as BRACHA—carry out her discourse by tracing on paper the movements of her hands and the folds of her thoughts and feelings. This everyday activity defines each of her notebooks as a portable archive, which carries out in real time an analysis of the rules and statutes of the archive itself².

Archived, digitized, translated, studied, exhibited, published, and shared at Castello di Rivoli Research Center (CRRI), BRACHA's notebooks constitute the new critical and sensitive foundations of the very activity of this research center, whose *raison d'être* is the analysis of the archival matters (understood both as a collection of specific artifacts and as an overall discipline). Through the study of BRACHA's practice of "noting," the processes of archiving and annotating are revealed as very similar actions.

If the archive (whose name derives from the Greek word ἀρχεῖον, the house of the magistrates of the polis) is a depository subject that rules and issues statutes, it is also a place and moment of origin (ἀρχή), and thus the activator of a possible revolution and re-appropriation of predetermined rules and statutes. BRACHA's notebooks express an alternative and subversive agency that frees the practice of archiving from its established and imposed vocabulary, and its (mostly male) voice, re-empowering it with the transitory and malleable flux of another discourse, and over-writing a different story: the artist's own story told in the first person. Day after day, archiving and annotating the forgotten, obliterated, silenced, traumatized, and missing voices in the discourse within the archive, the artist not only tells her own story, but suggests to us, as readers, how to start doing the same, in a process moving from trauma to care and healing, from helplessness to embodiment and empowerment.

That's how the CRRI too could become, from now on and in the coming years, a written, drawn and jotted down archive, an enquiring and eager, a subjective, a *matrixial* and not gender-stereotyped, a multi-species and vibrant archive dedicated to the historical and psychic potentialities of the archival discourse, and to the en- tangled multiplicity of its singular versions, rather than to the supposed,

misleading and historically patriarchal authority of the Archive.

¹ For the philosopher Michel Foucault, the archive is a system of enunciability and discursivity, which establishes the possibility of what can be said and thus archived (M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). After taking part in a conference held on June 5, 1994 at the Freud Museum in London, another philosopher, Jacques Derrida, observed that “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization [we could add “care” and “healing,” in the case of the practice of the notebook by BRACHA] can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation” (J. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. E. Prenowitz, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 4, note 1). For an introduction to the feminist re-reading of theories on the archive, see Griselda Pollock, “Trouble in the Archives,” *Women’s Art Magazine*, Women Artists Slide Library, London, no. 54, Sept.-Oct. 1993.

² “All the notebooks are artbooks. Categories will cross over in any case. I do notebooks in all periods, and under different and strange circumstances. There are different systems according to which we can regroup notebooks, different concepts, different categories; and these categories traverse time and places. We can choose those made mainly in Paris, those made mainly in Tel Aviv, those made mainly during travels, those made mainly in the studio, those made mainly when I am alone, those made mainly when I am in lectures, those mainly done during moments of crisis, those mainly done during periods of peace, those full of life experience and those full of conceptual thinking, those made with strangers, those made during painting... Mostly each notebook is done in few of these conditions, and include different aspects, and done under different circumstances, some are of one month and some done in few years. They are all artworks. As an archive, this is very encyclopedic, and I do not want to separate it to categories, as it embraces different categories. This must remain fluid and flexible, to invite future research” (BRACHA’s email to the author and Anna Musini dated October 19, 2021, which provides the first indications of the archival research method that the CRRRI will have to experiment and adopt to properly archive these notebooks).