DE PROFUNDIS

A CARTOGRAPHY OF THE FACE IN THE WORK OF PAULA REGO

By Márcia Oliveira

Born in 1935 in a country ruled by a fascist government that was not only a dictatorship, but also deeply patriarchal, Paula Rego left Portugal at a very young age because, as her father said at the time, "this is not a place for women, this country. You go away." Fortunate in having been born into a rich, bourgeois family, with a rather progressive father (an electronic engineer) and in the fashionable resort town of Estoril, near Lisbon, she moved to England when she was only 16 years old. There she studied painting at the Slade School of Art between 1952 and 1956. Even though Rego remembers it as a place of artistic freedom, John McEwen, in his biography of the artist, notes the similarities between the institution and the gendered State Regime: "The Slade might have been the smartest of art schools but in its male domination ... it could echo Portugal. Paula particularly disapproved of the way women were not treated as equals, and the fact that the rich girls were admitted at the expense of poor ones in the hope that they would support struggling young male artists by marrying them."

Living and working in London until today, the artist has achieved great recognition—one of the landmarks of her career being her appointment as the first Associate Artist at the National Gallery in London, in 1990—working on the threshold between a Portuguese identity, a strong political basis, and a unique pictorial style. Her work evolved from the deeply disconcerting and political 1960s and 1970s collages to later compositions made with acrylic, frequently in series, like the early 1980s Red Monkey series, based on a toy theatre story featuring a monkey, a bear, and a one-eared dog told to her by her husband, the painter Victor Willing. Rego told a story of humiliation and dominance between man and woman with these pictures, with really self-explanatory titles such as Red Monkey Beats his Wife and Wife Cuts off Red Monkey’s Tail. Stories, in fact, are one of Rego’s favorite things—throughout the years, she has produced series of works and large canvases departing from literary works such as Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea and J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan, among many others, since her enthusiasm for mise-en-sciences, story-telling, and tales is one of her most distinctive (and emphasized) characteristics.

But in 1994, Paula Rego made a radical change in her artistic practice when she started using pastel instead of acrylic in her canvases. It seems that she put aside painting and its principal precepts to let drawing lead the way towards defining her unique style. Knowing that Rego particularly dislikes painting nature and landscape, we can truly grasp the reach of theatricality in her compositions, which are conceived and enacted inside her London studio. This exponentially increases a sense of infinitude both of the senses and of the pictures’ meanings, a kind of mise-en-abîme that, being unable to extend beyond the limits of the painting overflows inward, thus overloading each line, each pigment, each image, and, ultimately, each pictorial composition. Vic Willing identified in her images "several levels of content on different levels of consciousness: the story, or ostensible subject; secondary content of a personal nature; painting about painting; painting about the artist painting this picture; the pre-conscious theme which is gradually revealed and unconscious personal content." To these we might add another level of content: an overcharge that will emerge in the paintings through the only possible way out: the subject’s face.

To try and understand this virtual level of her painting, I will trace a cartography of the face in the painter’s work—for the face is where all the affective, imaginative, and creative movements entailed converge. The point of departure is a simple observation: when looking at her overall work, all the women’s bodies that Rego has been painting since the 1980s are predominantly covered, even over-dressed. Female nudity hardly exists in these paintings. This is an interesting contrast to, for example, Jean Dubuffet, an early influence for Rego. As Andrea Nicole Maier states, Dubuffet in his Corps des Dames series (1950) painted nudes and not women, getting closer than ever to a European art historical tradition— notwithstanding his distaste of anything traditional— including traditional conceptions of beauty. On the contrary, Rego, who covers women with layers and layers of fabric, paints women, and the way she does it is probably one of the reasons why she is so distant from art history’s traditional precepts despite being close to its themes. This is certainly one of the many ways through which Rego assumes a clear position against the history of art and its inherent male authority, one of her many achievements, as Germaine Greer has emphasized. The artist herself reveals this very singular interest in painting clothing and fabrics, in what may be seen as an analog to the accumulation of layers of paint in her
painting-drawings or the accumulation of different materials in her 1960s and 1970s collages. As the artist and historian Luísa Capucho Arruda recently pointed out, Rego’s work is essentially drawing and not so much painting, going beyond the traditional limitations of drawing as a sketch or study that assumes a secondary position with regard to painting.¹¹

There is, however, a profound dialogue between the painted surface and the depth of drawing, and in Rego’s work there is an evolution from surface to depth which is substantiated by a re-emergence to the surface. One does not exist without the other; neither does one overturn the other. This continuous movement between surface and depth is quite noticeable, especially when we take a closer look at the faces of her figures/characters, given that the face is the central aspect of their physiognomy. The face is the way out, the map of emotions, saturated with all the signs, marks, and impressions that transform them into rough, textured, and therefore deep layers. To think about the face in this context is not so much to think about the body as fragment,¹² but rather to think about that signifying process that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as visagéité, or faciality.¹³ Deleuze and Guattari do not refer to any piece, any partial object; nor do they refer to anything isolated from a system of corporeality. The face, as an element that is visually represented and materially constructed, is first and foremost presented as an element of signification. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “it is not the individuality of the face that counts but the efficacy of the ciphering it makes possible, and in what cases it makes it possible. This is an affair not of ideology but of economy and the organization of power (pouvoir).”¹⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari, faces do not define individuality, they emit redundancy: “They are engendered by an abstract machine of faciality (visagéité), which produces them at the same time as it gives the signifier its white wall and subjectivity its black hole.”¹⁵ Faces are also not to be mistaken for heads, since “the head is included in the body, but the face is not.”¹⁶

Michel Prieur, on the other hand, directly relates the face with individual identity, saying that in the relationship between face and persona a process of representation occurs.¹⁷ Unlike the mask, which implies an obstruction of identity, the face represents the essence of the person and, as a consequence, its reconnaissance. And even if humanity is not seen as a whole but as an I (a you, a she, a he...), the fact is that recognition of the face is a primary and distinctive trait of humans; this differs from animals, of which we recognize the head but not particularly a face. To Prieur, the face is a matter of representation, of identifying the person (persona), of a uniqueness of character.¹⁸ It is, therefore, a matter of traces, that is lines and marks that, in the face, form the traits of a certain personality; traces and lines also constitute the essence of drawing, and of much of Rego’s painting, as I suggest. It is interesting to note that persona in Latin means mask, a theater character, a term that was “introduced with this connotation in philosophical language by popular Stoicism to designate the roles represented by an individual throughout life”¹⁹ and only later started to designate the substance of an individual in relationship with the world or with oneself.²⁰

A detail of Centaur (1964; Pl. 11 and Fig. 1), a large format collage and oil on canvas in a Pop Art lineage in which the Greek mythological figure represented is a woman, already indicates the basis of the trajectory of the face in Rego’s work, occupying that indiscernible territory of her figures, always in limbo, between person and mask, reality and fantasy. This piece portrays a particular understanding of this monstrous, savage, and bestial creature of Greek mythology, whose “head, arms and torso belong to a man while the rest of the body and legs are horse-like.”²¹ As described by the painter herself: “That’s just the warrior standing on top of the centaur, who happens to be a woman. So he’s riding a woman, going into a fight.”²² What is truly disconcerting here is the inability to distinguish between mythological figure and knight as conveyed by that small detail that resembles both a face and a mask, neither masculine nor feminine, not clearly human or animal. The representational device that should be the most linear and particular—the face—ends up introducing more confusion and misperception amidst the chaos of the surrounding guerrilla warfare. According to Prieur, “it seems necessary to choose between the face and animality. The recognition and indiscernibility: the sacred exceeds the terms of the alternative and the notion of divine might as well be the result of the teratological union between the face that provides a meaning and the ‘beast,’ that neither includes nor expresses.”²³ The philosopher José Gil also corroborates the status of the face as signification in his Metamorphoses of the Body, where he says that the face supports the relation between signifier and signification, for “there is no relation of meaning that doesn’t redirect, from near or far, to a face.”²⁴ Given this assumption, what happens in such a type of pictorial
representation marked by becoming an animal and by a corporeality elsewhere described as extreme? I would start by saying that the face is the element that binds together all the threads of what Victor Willing calls Rego’s imagiconography, having evolved from a mask-state to a map-state; from face-as-surface to face-as-depth. The face is the one element that expresses something, and what it expresses is, first and foremost, the vivid imagination of the painter made of the entwined threads of her own affective, visual, and haptic memory.

What, then, does the concept of surface bring to this discussion? Giuliana Bruno proposes a reading of the surface as a place of materialization that marks a turning point in the contemporary readings of art from optical to haptic, since the surface (canvas, screen, etc.) works as a mnemonic element, an “historically dense” space, an “archive.” The image is here seen as ‘thing,’ and the image’s own materiality “manifests itself in the surface” (Bruno refers to Lucretius’s De Rerum Natura, that serves as a starting point for her argument), or the surface as a dynamic space of permutation between subject and object. Bruno also emphasizes the etymological connection between surface and face. For the sake of my own argument, it is important to clarify that I do not consider the face as a portrait, as for Rego the face is not a prerogative to identify or represent any fixed identity or character—rather, it serves as a relational space where desire and creativity meet. This is significant when we consider the way through which the most intimate and hidden secrets of women emerge in her work—secrets related to women’s bodies, abortion, resentment, the negation of masculine supremacy, etc.—which is through the materiality of drawing. In fact, the stories that Rego paints often depart from literary and mythological sources, although they always convey an idiosyncratic vision of the particular story, transformed into a visual narrative contaminated by the mundane, by actual and real experiences. As the painter herself says, “my favorite themes are power, dominance and hierarchy games. They always make me turn everything upside down, to dislocate the established order.” As an example, one can look at the scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary that were commissioned for the chapel at Palácio de Belém (the Palace of the President of the Portuguese Republic), a series of small paintings, from the Annunciation to the Assumption, including one depicting a pregnant Virgin Mary, dressed in her traditional blue robe but in the throes of giving birth (2002; Fig. 2). (The examples are too many to list here, especially considering her graphic work.)

Here it is useful to look more closely at Wendy’s Song (1992; Pl. 12 and Fig. 3), from the series based on...
J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Paula Rego described the connection of this work with pregnancy and abortion in a letter to art historian T.G. Rosenthal, who wrote: “As the artist has pointed out, Wendy, here younger than her usual, stronger, more bossy self shows the rounded profile of pregnancy. The pot she stirs is filled with and blood and foetuses, and blood streaks the etching. More foetuses look on.... Rego also indicated that this etching is in several ways the progenitor of her abortion series.”\(^{33}\) A pregnant Wendy’s face is disconcertingly unformed, perhaps even slightly resembling that of a fetus, which relates to other elements of the composition that include four fetus-like babies exposed at the windows of the house standing behind the central character. As they look on, Wendy stirs a bucket of blood. The bloody tone is given by the bright red color, which accentuates the superposition of black lines that characterize engravings and brings her still forming face, with a disproportionate forehead, small nose, and flat face, features emphasized by her profile view, closer to the suggested idea of germination. Life and death, beginning and end, are thus deeply inscribed, or marked, and not superficially stained. This can be said to be the essence both of engraving and of drawing. And both the fissure of engraving and the marked line of drawing are synthesized in the technique Rego started using in the mid-1990s, of pastel on paper. All of these material processes enable the formation of ambiguous faces, on a threshold between human, monster, and animal. Philip Rawson defines drawing as the most spiritual of all the visual art forms because it adds something to our sight that not even Nature can provide.\(^{34}\) Drawing also relates to sight in a very different way from painting. The marks of drawing deepen the look; a line sends us in the direction of another line. Like in a map, it is impossible to go through all the paths of a drawing without paying close attention to the visual and physical connections it entails. This is a process contrary to painting that converges in a diffuse action—the mark tends to be dispersed throughout the surface.\(^{35}\) Therefore, one can deduce that drawing has a more immediate and, in a certain way, visceral nature. As Ignacio de Beryes says when thinking about Goya’s drawings and etchings, drawing is a faster and more direct channel to convey thoughts and emotions,\(^{36}\) and it was this exact feature that brought Rego closer to drawing after being trained as a painter at the Slade School of Art.

Influenced by Jean Dubuffet—“then I discovered Dubuffet. And it released me,” she said—\(^{37}\) and by an increasing contact with Art Brut, Rego started exploring the further potentialities of drawing at the end of the 1950s. By then, according to John McEwen, “she drew and drew, and eventually the pictures came again, raw in both color and mood, as if she was literally ‘drawing her guts out.’”\(^{38}\) This rawness is present in the all of
the work Rego produced in these years. In collages like *The Eating* (1959) or *Popular Proverb* (1961)—which we could easily call “primitive,” meaning fundamental and visceral—we can see the exact same sense of freedom and possibility. Amongst the chaos of these compositions, masks emerge, small heads with only minor elements that suggest the idea of a mask: in *The Eating*, for instance, there is a tiny mouth inside the line that resembles a head, marks that look like rosy cheeks, and some discrete details suggesting an idea of sacredness (the letters JES CRIS, for example, on a piece of newspaper glued onto the canvas, make us think about Jesus Christ). In this regard, the commentary by Ana Gabriela Macedo, who refers to a “permanent dialogue between sacred and profane,” is especially poignant.39

But modern painting, as Deleuze said, is an “atheist game.”40 Thus, instead of bringing us towards an individual identification or to a metonymical exercise—taking the face for the whole of humanity—these masks, and their primitive substrate, tell us something about animalism and about pre-consciousness, something that is confirmed in later acrylic paintings such as *Vivian Girls* (1984) or in pastel works on paper such as *War* (2003)41 and *The Pillowman* (2004), a tryptic based on the homonymous play by Irish writer Martin McDonough that not only tells the story but is also reminiscent of the artist’s father and other of her memories in Portugal. *Portrait of a Lady* (1959; Pl. 13), a highly sexualized and autobiographical mixed media work that was made in Portugal after the Slade period with newspaper clippings and other materials,42 confirms this early and fundamental profusion of masks and the sentiment they encompass, based on a way of doing (collage) that has close similarities to drawing. (“It was all haptic, it all came out of what I was doing. This was to do with the hand and the gut: how you feel and some sort of sexuality.”43) Indeed, like drawing, the construction process of these masks implies a base, a background onto which layers of material are superimposed. This process can be seen as creating solid foundations for something that is being built but also as a process of concealment. It looks like these masks conceal what is there to be shown or seen; i.e., to deny representing a face, an identity comes with a paradoxical emergence of something real, something material and not symbolic or ethereal, in contrast to canonical forms of representation and particularly of feminine representation. The allusion to primitive elements, archeological excavation, and a dive into the unconscious also is something close to drawing as a process—a relationship that is fundamental to Rego’s work since the beginning of her career. The mask was, then, inevitably to be transformed into face-depth.

The fragmentation of collage was replaced in the early 1980s with a return to painting with the Red Monkey series. *Red Monkey Drawing* (1981; Fig. 4) portrays a monkey drawing a figure onto a vertical canvas and clearly shows the rediscovery of the feeling of drawing after encountering Dubuffet. As McEwen says, the painter rediscovered the emotion inherent to a more direct kind of work: “she found she drew with a zest and truth to her own experience that she had not felt since her post-Dubuffet outburst twenty years before.”44 This was the moment when the mask entered a whole new level besides the one envisioned in the collages. Even though the primitive feel of the works was maintained (for example in the acrylic works *Little Girls Showing Off, Rabbit and Weeping Cabbage, or The Chicken Persuading the Woman*, all 1982), bodies of men and women emerge with vegetable or animal heads (e.g., cabbages, potatoes, horses, monkeys, rabbits, chickens, birds). Several anthropomorphisms dominate each piece, and their size keeps growing so that they are able to accommodate the staggering succession of events, stories, or “incidents”45 until we reach the famous Operas, the epitome of this more direct and explicit form of drawing. Here is “the instinctive kind of drawing to which Paula resorts when she feels herself to be drifting away from the truth,” writes McEwen.46 Rego calls these works “ink drawings.”47 This series of large format paintings is akin to her graphic work in that the use of color is kept to a minimum, for example, besides black and white, there are different tones of red and amber, with the exception only of *La Bohème*. In *Aida, The Girl of the Golden West, Rigoletto* (Pl. 14) and *Faust* (all 1983) the preponderance of the line and two-dimensional figures comes as a heritage of that Art Brut influence, which will reach a peak with her Vivian Girls series, a re-reading of the North
American outsider artist Henry Darger’s famous work.  

Darger’s The Story of the Vivian Girls in what is known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, caused by the Child Slave Rebellion, a visual and literary masterpiece, is the story of the epic combat between the small Vivian Girls and the Glandelinians, evil grown-ups whose goal was to mistreat and enslave children. Rego described her impression when facing Darger’s drawings, emphasizing the feeling of looking at the small figures with penises and the fact that they wore pretty clothes. Yet, this was only a trigger for her own Vivian Girls, which focus instead on the troublesome relationship between women of different generations. Vivian Girls In Tunisia (1984; Pl. 15 and Fig. 5) “is about mothers eating their daughters,” a theme that is present all over her work, as is the kissing between mothers, daughters, and grandmothers; as in Grandmother (2001; Fig. 6) and Misericord (2001) (a dialogue with Goya’s Saturn [c. 1821–23] is almost inevitable here). In Vivian Girls in Tunisia, the mask-faces (the etymology of persona described earlier is relevant here), or the surface-faces, remain as central elements in these paintings, as is the anthropomorphism of the figures that is achieved via a process of rapprochement with the face: a palm tree with eyes, nose, and mouth is beheaded, the heads having clear and flattened shapes. But it is always the line that remains, even though the entire pictorial surface is filled with bright colors. The mask, a symbol of concealment and theatricality, apparently deludes the persona while at the same implying the existence of the corporeal element on top of which it sits. The animals and their faceless heads need no masks but are transformed into masks.

In Rego’s work all those borders are diffuse and blurred, the emotions shackled under an array of clothes and bursting through the only way out they can find: the face. This is the depth that will progressively emerge from the faces, rebutting the separation between surface and depth. The optical space is widened via that haptic quality of drawing, emanating from the gesture of the painter. In a way, and unlike Francis Bacon (for example, the triptych August, 1972 or the portrait Seated Figure, 1961) whose objective is, quoting Deleuze, “to dissolve the face, to uncover or to make the head emerge from beneath the face,” Rego superimposes the face on the head after anthropomorphizing it, after ‘masquerading it.’ This process comes to fruition via the lines of her drawing that allow all the traces of a sensorial and figurative memory to stay afloat. While in Bacon the face loses its shape, in Rego it becomes modular; it is redefined with each and every look, allowing for multiple shapes and different memories to co-exist. But the question is not so much whether such a redefinition is achieved by the act of looking or by the painter’s hand, especially if we consider the fact that there is always a certain amount of figurative information that already exists prior to the act of painting, as Deleuze made clear. What happens in Rego’s painting, which never ceases to be drawing, is that the line loses its exclusive function of delineating, demarcating,
outlining. Not actually being an outline, the line is intertwined with color, with the pigment, without being completely lost. The face, therefore, is no longer the limit of the figure because the figure does not exist as a persona or as an inner landscape (interior, affective, psychic, etc.).

The face is a map because in it are inscribed all the paths of Rego and her work. This process became clearer when, in 1994, Rego started using pastel with her (in)famous Dog Women to paint Lila Nunes crouching and snarling (Pl. 16 and Fig. 7). In these works the composition was reduced to one or two figures, always women, not acting like dogs but actually being dogs, engendered dogs. In them, the use of pastel, said Rego, introduced her painting and her figures to a whole new set of possibilities: “I found that if I used these sticks of pigment, I could get the volume of the body. It’s terribly difficult to do unclothed bits of the body in paint; it is for me. And I found it a lot easier doing it in pastel, building it up in layers.” Such layering—the constructing of images by superimposing lines engraved on the pictorial surface with the pastel stick that are later harmonized with conté crayons—is what transforms these faces into complex surfaces, full of volume and depth (this process, and its material implications, contrasts strongly with the use of brushes in oil painting, for example. Rego’s true drawing in the guise of painting, using pastel, deeply transformed the type of figuration she produced. “It gave me a different kind of look,” she says. The series Dancing Ostriches from Disney’s Fantasia (1995), based on the 1940 Walt Disney film, made for the “Spellbound” exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London, synthesizes this process in a representative way, portraying dancers that were all but the epitome of a ballet dancer, with their rude, large and clumsy bodies and their brute faces and expressions. The same can be said of the Dog Women and the Abortion series (1998; Fig. 8) or the polyptych Possession (2004), a set of seven large panels inspired by the hysteria studies and photographs made by the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière Hospital, in which a woman is portrayed on a bed in seven different positions, or seven different stages of her possession by ‘evil forces’ or simply by desire. The face is where exception occurs, a place where all the senses and feelings meet. It is the main characteristic of Deleuze’s “affection-image”; the face allows for the affective image to stand out, not just in each composition individually but also in each series of paintings and, ultimately, in the artist’s overall work. As Deleuze says:

In painting, the techniques of the portrait have accustomed us to these two poles of the face. Sometimes painting grasps the face as an outline, by an encircling line which traces the nose, the mouth, the edge of the eyelids, and even the beard and the cap: it’s a surface of visageification [facetification]. Sometimes, however, it works through dispersed features taken globally; fragmentary and broken lines which indicate here the quivering lips, the brilliance of a look, and which involve a content which to a greater or lesser extent rebels against the outline.}

The face is the organism in which this process of affection, or showing affect, actually exists—it is not merely reproduced. As was said earlier, Paula Rego does not make portraits; she also goes beyond faciality, expanding affect toward the interior, toward inside the face itself. And the face is the only way out.

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Notes

1. The fascist regime, that came to be known as the New State, ruled Portugal between 1933 and 1974, the year of the coup d’état that overthrew the republicans. Known as the Carnation Revolution, it was led by a group of military that brought democracy back to the country. This was the longest dictatorship in Europe and had distinctive features, such as a deep-seated patriarchy, censorship and political persecution as well as a strong Catholic matrix. António de Oliveira Salazar, the head and face of the regime until his death in 1968, stated that the country was “proudly alone,” with its back turned against Europe and focusing its economic and political relationships with the African countries that then, and until the Revolution, were colonized by Portugal (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and Sào Tomé e Príncipe). An independence war was fought in these countries between 1961 and 1974. Overwhelming poverty, and cultural, social, and economic backwardness were some of the most visible results of these decades of repression and isolation.

3. A place where the European aristocrats, intellectuals and political exiles found asylum during WWII. This occurred because Portugal was officially a neutral country during the conflict.

4. McEwen, Paula Rego, 46. In a recent documentary directed by Rego’s son, Nick Willing, she made startling revelations regarding the relationship between men and women in those days, including hers with her husband, painter Vic Willing, whom she met at the Slade School (Vic was married by then and Paula got pregnant at a very young age; they had their first child in 1956). Nick Willing, Paula Rego, Histórias & Segredos, DVD (Lisbon: Midas Films, 2017).

5. She lived in Portugal for a brief period with her husband and three children (1957–63) and between London and Portugal during 1963–75. They settled permanently in London in 1976.

6. In 1966 she presented her work in Portugal, at the National Society of Fine Arts, in what was her first solo show in the country. The works shown caused a turmoil in Portugal’s conservative capital, and she was even accused by a visitor of being ‘a slut.’ She responded promptly and fearlessly: ‘No, sluts paint churches,’ McEwen, Paula Rego, 76.


8. One exception is Girl with Chickens (1997, pastel on paper mounted on aluminum), which portrays a woman lying on a bed wearing only underpants. It is more frequent that male figures appear naked, as in the Kafkaesque cockroach man of the Metamorphosis after Kafka (2002, pastel on paper mounted on aluminum) and several other examples of her graphic work.


10. In an article published in The Guardian, Greer says that “her work is not about the development of herself or her position within the Western tradition; she couldn’t care less about all of that. Indeed, she refuses to list herself among the ‘great painters’, and continues to call what she does “drawing”, as she did when she drew on the floor as a child. Her stories are moments that have no narrative sequence; they defy and undo history, explanation and theory.” In Germaine Greer, “Untamed by Age.” The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2004/nov/20/art (accessed Jan. 3, 2017). Greer, a feminist and an admirer of Paula Rego, has written extensively about the painter’s work. Rego produced an iconic portrait of the writer in 1995, a commission for the National Portrait Gallery, in London.


12. For more on the body as fragment, see Linda Nohlin, The Body in Pieces. The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994).


14. Ibid., 175.

15. Ibid., 168.

16. Ibid., 170.


18. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


24. In this book the Portuguese philosopher focused on the body, the body’s different spatial dimensions, and more specifically the dichotomy between inside and outside (what he calls the threshold space, the space of the body and the body’s internal space). In this more recent edition of the work, he publishes a new chapter entirely devoted to the question “What is a face for?” Here, he reflects on the importance of the face to the understanding of this problematic. José Gil, Metamorfoses do Corpo (Lisbon: Relógio d’Água Editores, 1997).


28. See Maria Manuel Lisboa, Paula Rego’s Map of Memory. National and Sexual Politics (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2003). 4. Lisboa traced an all-encompassing map of personal and political relationships in the work of Paula Rego: “the political is translated back into the immediately accessible vocabulary of the personal: history is paraphrased in images drawn from domestic life, and national politics finds expression through the familiar lexicon of interpersonal relations.”


30. Ibid., 3.


33. Ibid., 82.


37. McEwen, Paula Rego, 56.

38. Ibid., 57.
41. This pastel on paper on aluminum painting (63” x 47 1/4”) about the suffering during war times is based on a picture by a little girl in panic that was published in the British newspaper The Guardian during the Iraq war. As Rego says, “I thought I would do a picture about these children getting hurt, but I turned them into rabbits heads, like masks. It’s very difficult to do it with humans, it doesn’t get the same kind of feel at all. It seemed more real to transform them into creatures.” Rego, Paula Rego, 268.
42. This work marks Rego’s early encounter with the work of Dubuffet and the moment when she cut loose with the academic education she encountered at Slade.
43. Rego, Paula Rego, 248.
44. McEwen, Paula Rego, 104.
45. Ibid., 117.
46. Ibid.
47. Rego, Paula Rego, 203.
48. Paula Rego saw the exhibition “Outsiders,” including these works by Henry Darger (1892–1973) at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 1979. This show is now considered to be a landmark of the British art scene and was curated by Victor Musgrave and Monica Kinley.
49. Rego, Paula Rego.
50. Ibid., 353.
52. Ibid., 83, “La peinture avant de peindre.”
53. Lila Nunes travelled from Portugal to England to look after Vic Willing when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. With Dog Women, she and Rego started a life-long collaboration and friendship as she became the main model for the artist’s pictures. As Rego says, “Somehow it’s her, I can’t imagine that it could be anybody else. She’s terribly good at finding poses. She herself can help a great deal, by getting the right stance, exactly right. I say, ‘Give it a twist’. And she does. She gets it. Extraordinary.” Rego, Paula Rego, 258.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. This exhibition was dedicated to the relationship between the visual arts and cinema.
57. In 1998, the Portuguese government organized a referendum to ask the population if they should legalize abortion. The referendum failed to pass and illegal abortion continued to be a major problem for women in Portugal, many of whom died as a result of such practice. This shocked Paula Rego, who decided to produce one of her most deliberately political series of paintings, depicting several women in the context of having illegal abortions. As she says, “all I can do is paint; it is the only power I have.” In Márcia Oliveira, Paula Rego em Serralves: trabalhos recentes. DVD (Porto: RTP 2, 2005).
60. Paul Klee wrote that “art ne reproduit pas le visible; il rend visible” (“art does not reproduce the visible; it makes visible”). Klee, Théorie de l’art moderne (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1964), 34.