

Letters of Katharina, 2009

Each thing moves about the world in its own whirlwind...

Katharina was born around 1910 in a privileged milieu of the Viennese society. Later in her life she succumbed to a terrible psychological crisis, accused her husband of adultery and was subsequently internated by him in an asylum for the rest of her life. From there she wrote him countless letters of love and despair. In addition she created two large drawings. These strange depictions of the male and the female body, of the kind found in early anatomy atlases, thoroughly disregard conventional anatomical knowledge. She inscribed these creations with notions pertaining to the different organs of the body, willfully ascribing them functions to suit her personal concepts. Thus she produced highly individual topographies of the human body, which impressed me to the point of becoming the ignition spark for the Letters of Katharina. I imagined Katharina's peculiar creations, stowed away in cardboard boxes, lacking chronological order, but still striving to make sense of the world and of her own intensely felt sensations.

I have always been fascinated by topographical plans, old registers, navigation or celestial maps; all these means designed to help us master the surrounding chaos, which of course, keeps coming back. Could such devices possibly ensure the safekeeping of fleeting enchantments, of passing enthusiasms or persisting despair? Doubtful, but temporally emboldened, I assembled in two linen-bound cases cyanotype photographs and toner transfer drawings of different sizes.

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