

**"BellyTalk" (1996), Yong Soon Min**

Luis Camnitzer

To study one's own navel or the activity of lint gathering, these were always metaphors and euphemisms for the waste of time, for self indulgence and for narcissism. Even the mystical interpretations of tunneling into the deeper self to get in touch with the essence of the universe, share some of these traits of self-centeredness and indulgence. Yong Soon's use of bellies and navels in "BellyTalk" reverses these assumptions. The navel becomes, after self-understanding, an organ of outward expression, of communication with the others. The belly becomes a landscape--the landscape--possibly the only territorial property for which one can claim an ownership unencumbered by artificiality. Here, body and landscape become an individualized unity. It reflects the owner by establishing a relationship with the property of that landscape, as much as the face by individualizing the landscape. However, a face is loaded with psychological projections and interpretations while the belly is barren and nevertheless particular. It is the perfect valley to have resonate with precision the echoes of that equally particular statement emitted (or birthed) from the elements that shape that landscape.

Yong Soon's act of landscaping is even more pointed for those of us who lost our traditional terrains, who, because of uprooting, end up associating any perception of a landscape with foreignness. The original landscape is located in memory and incompletely accessible. The "real" or "anal" landscape from where we came continued to evolve on its own, unaided by our witnessing. The new landscape that now envelops us remains forever a borrowed one. The murmur of the trees, the color of the air, the smell of the rain, are gone and usurped by strange noises, shades and odors difficult to order.

In her earlier "Defining Moments" series (1992), Yong Soon used her face and body to register the traumas that disrupted and reshaped her original landscape and which displaced the old myths. She then recorded and mixed the disorders provided by the new landscape. In her biography continuity and sanity are provided by her face and body. The events, external, puncture her image, unable to destroy it. They are "defining moments" because they reaffirm the survival and integrity of her image. In "BellyTalk," four years later, those moments became orderly, not only through a compression into a spiral of text, but through the veil and administration provided by memory. They become Nazca drawings where the message, unable to blind, is blended with the awareness of a detached perspective. They grew from what started as a scream to a methodology to be shared, teaching mature survival.

Yong - let me know if you like it  
and if length is OK -  
Regards -