

Gender? () Female () Male (X) Other

Embodiment, Theatrical Space, and Gender

in the Works of Teresa Hernández and Sylvia Bofill

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OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate that audiovisual materials are a viable resource for theater and performance research
- Analyze discourse in gender in both artists' works

INTRODUCTION

This project focuses on the works preserved in audiovisual materials of two contemporary Puerto Rican women theater artists. The analytical categories are: embodiment, theatrical space, and gender.

ANALYSIS

Both, Teresa Hernández and Sylvia Bofill, construct characters that look like traditional women. The artists carefully selected clothing, accessories, and hairstyle that are usually associated with femininity in the western world. Nevertheless, the characters' feminine behavior is non-stereotypical. Both question the gender dichotomy as masculine/feminine.

Hernández' characters discuss the challenges of an experimental artist in Puerto Rico, a country where experimental art is not highly valued. ¹

Bofill's characters discuss issues of globalized beauty in a world immersed in media that privilege certain characteristics as "beautiful." ²

Teresa Hernández
Nada que ver (composiciones escénicas sobre el yo)
December 6, 2006
Teatro Yerbabruja, Río Piedras, PR

Sylvia Bofill
¡Oh! Natura
April 4, 2013
Teatro Victoria Espinosa, Santurce, PR

CHARACTERS

Rubí Encantada
embodies structure.
She is physically paralyzed.



The Woman
embodies breaking structure.
Her mobility is physical.



Lola Santillá
embodies the traditional (western) concept of beauty.
She is psychologically paralyzed.



Betunia Santillá
embodies naturalness and spontaneity. Her mobility lies in her attitude.

CONCLUSION

This analysis assumes the audience's point of view. Although audiovisual materials can never preserve the exact live experience, these materials render the object of study once the performance or theatrical experience is over (Taylor, "Acts of Transfer" 20). In other words, the audiovisual materials reduce the live experience to images. Images, however, can be studied systematically. Moreover, video records all the performance and theatrical experience details inside the theatrical frame, which are the significant theatrical elements used by the artist to communicate discourses.

Teresa Hernández' performance and Sylvia Bofill's play when analyzed as images, more specifically, theatrical images, provide a platform to present, confront, and discuss different notions of femininity. Both artists demonstrate that (feminine) gender is as complex as the behaviors used to express it (Butler; NYU LGBTQ). The binary construction of female/feminine and male/masculine do not respond to their complexity. Femininity is diverse and complex.

¹ Images are from the Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library. ² Images were taken by Migdalia Luz Barenz-Vera and published on Facebook.