

2005, featured frontal full-body self-portraits, one showing the artist half naked, as if subjected to a strip search. The drawings addressed the increased surveillance of brown bodies in a Western world that perceives people with brown skin as potential terrorists. One of the two drawings in the nearby diptych *Landing*, 2010, showed two seminude male bodies dangling upside down from ropes bound around their ankles, surrounded by tiny jet fighters and helicopters. Executed on an enlarged digital facsimile of actual stamped paperwork belonging to the artist's ancestors and bearing multiple national seals, the work symbolizes the precarious sense of belonging produced by the subcontinent's shifting national borders. The artist's body also serves as a vehicle for performances presented through documentation and artifacts. *Feature 2*, 2013, clearly indebted to Lipi, is a spherical helmet made of surgical scissors, their pointed ends projecting menacingly outward. Rahman dons a shamanistic bull's costume, woven out of rope and straw and topped with a pair of curved horns, for *Transformation*, an ongoing performance begun in 2004. The piece was inspired by an episode from the 1982 play *Nurulddin Sara Jibon* (The Entire Life of Nurul Din), by Syed Shamsul Haq, which concerns the predicament of a destitute indigo farmer who, collapsing under the strain of pulling his own plow, is transformed into a bull in the eyes of his young son. Photographs (dated 2004 and 2010) document a performance by Rahman, in a field and on a beach, reenacting this profound metamorphosis in which oppression and injustice reduce man to the condition of a beast struggling to survive. Nearby, a powerful stainless-steel sculpture, *Transformation*, 2015, more Minotaur than meek animal, achieved a partial resurrection.

A final gallery highlighted the couple's work focusing on the status and treatment of Bangladesh's trans female citizens, known as *hijras*. While Lipi's two-channel video *Home*, 2014, presented a forceful and passionate individual testimony on behalf of these legally recognized but often ostracized Bangladeshis, Rahman's single-channel *Time in a Limbo*, 2014–15, adopted a less didactic, more fly-on-the-wall approach, intimately documenting communal spaces, tracing diverse narratives, and capturing the warmth, camaraderie, and mutual support that sustain *hijra* communities. Similarly, this exhibition's greatest strength was the insight it provided into the many subtle ways in which a longstanding personal and professional partnership can enrich, rather than deplete, both partners.

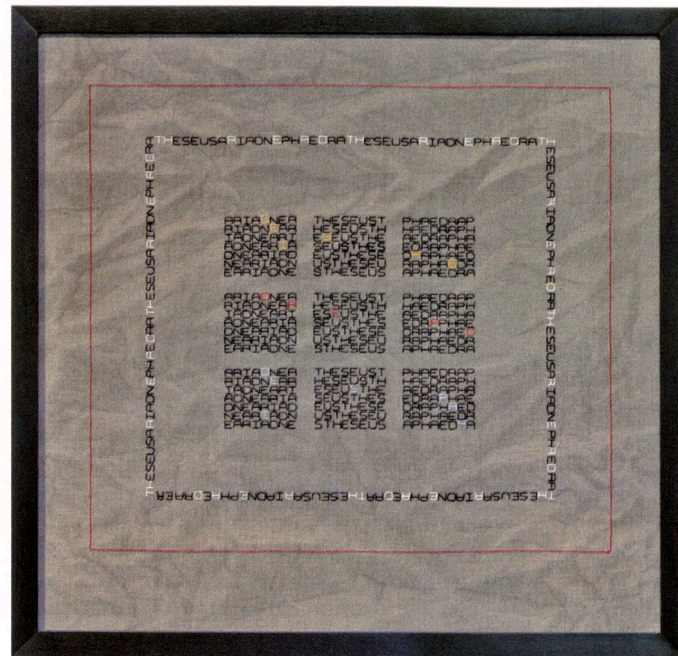
—Murtaza Vali

## LOS ANGELES

### Elaine Reichek

SHOSHANA WAYNE GALLERY

Over the past forty years, Elaine Reichek has employed handworked and digitally stitched embroidery alongside photographic and printmaking techniques to comment upon the endless process of interpretation and the ways in which myths (both ancient and contemporary) shift, overlap, and intersect. Titled “Minoan Girls,” her recent exhibition was a complex pastiche of literary and art-historical citations. Reichek ruminated on the dark fates of the two daughters of Minos, King of Crete, splicing classical Greek myths and pairing the sisters with symbolic iconography. She deployed the motif of the maze for Ariadne, the guardian of Crete's labyrinth, and a bull for Phaedra, wife of the Athenian warrior Theseus. In Euripides's tragedy, Phaedra hangs herself in despair after Aphrodite causes her to become infatuated with Hippolytus, Theseus's son, who is subsequently banished and finally trampled by a monstrous bull. Ariadne is also involved with both Theseus and a bull: In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she assists the former in slaying the half-man, half-bull Minotaur, to whom Minos had decreed



Elaine Reichek, *Desire/Dread/Despair*, 2012, embroidery on linen, 26 1/4 x 26 3/4 x 1 1/4".

Athenian youths be periodically sacrificed. As the story goes, Ariadne offers Theseus a thread that leads him out of the monster's lair, only to be abandoned by him once he emerges from the maze.

Through the intersection of appropriated image and text from various mythological and modern sources (as well as embroidered copies of classical renderings of Greek myths), the work on view intervened in these interpretations by suffusing them with alternate readings by a wide range of twentieth-century cultural producers from across Western Europe: stage and silent-film actress Sarah Bernhardt, modernist painters Giorgio de Chirico and André Masson, poet Stevie Smith, and novelist Marguerite Yourcenar. The show was characterized by the artist's deft appropriations—a line here, an image there—from the vast repertoire of modernist art, literature, and theater.

In *All Things*, 2013, Reichek hand-embroiders a copy of the maze-like silk screen *Red Meander*, 1954, by the influential Bauhaus designer Anni Albers. Here, it is wrought in fine needlework in shades of pink, red, and magenta. Borrowing from the conventions of domestic needlepoint craft, the artist overlays the pattern with a statement, also stitched. But in lieu of a cloying cliché or Christian homily, Reichek emblazons her sampler with the poetics of Bataille: “All things would be visibly connected if one could discover at a single glance and in its totality the tracings of an Ariadne's thread leading thought into its own labyrinth.” Embroidery samplers have historically been used to instruct, and Reichek's does so by rerouting the received understanding of the myth itself. Another embroidered work, *Desire/Dread/Despair*, 2012, takes the form of a concrete poem. Using only the three names Ariadne, Theseus, and Phaedra, each repeated to form a square block of text, the artist creates a nine-square grid in which certain letters are embroidered with colored thread, causing the words in the work's title to pop out from the black embroidered litanies.

Through its interrogations of visual language, Reichek's work strongly resonates with the found-image pairings of her Pictures generation peers, yet it was always too sensually materialist to be lumped with that group. Reichek can instead be considered an influence on younger artists such as Goshka Macuga, who uses the labor-intensive, tradition-steeped medium of textiles as a platform to reimagine sites of activism and cultural engagement. The works that were on view in “Minoan Girls” are theoretically sophisticated, fostering contrarian

interpretations that linger simultaneously in the mind and eye. Reichek's densely textured, difficult embroidery reminds us that myths inevitably take shape at the whim of their interpreters.

—Jenni Sorkin