

Nina Papaconstantinou's work is governed by the same strict precision and sacredness that can be found in a medieval manuscript illuminators' work. In these it is difficult to isolate the artistic palimpsest of drawing traces, or supplementary painting elements from the main text. Similarly, Papaconstantinou's work is intentionally situated between narration and non-narration, *text* and *texture*. Texts that are transformed into images through precise, laborious, time-consuming, and meticulous procedures of copying are the basis of the artist's work. The central point of reference is the *trace* of writing, which is in fact presented in the form of an enlarged text that had been used as the original source of the image. Wider or narrower spaces between print-types in the text are revealed through this process, delineating a hidden image. In the words of the artist, "an image of emptiness". Some drawings-texts copy whole books, while the layers of text accumulated on the same surface of paper, create an illegible kind of writing. Textual gestures and tracings annihilate text themselves and their meaning while drawing attention to the trace and texture of the imprint as the image. In "Between the Lines" (2003) textual gestures produce a series of distinctive *landscapes* as Papaconstantinou's work attempts to approach "the depth of things behind words." But who is the viewer-reader-receiver of that reversed 'pleasure of the text'?³⁷ Stéphane Mallarmé's poetics and dictum "that the world was made in order to result in a beautiful book",³⁸ describe the specific artistic intention. Such text-images function somehow like a personal diary. One of Papaconstantinou's typical works is "Sylvia Plath. The Missing Journals" (2008) where pages with faded or erased traces of writing are stapled together

and mounted on a wall. It is an explicit allusion to the missing pages of the acclaimed 20th century writer's diary that were removed by her husband after Plath's suicide in her kitchen's oven. Perhaps, this image is the hidden picture revealed by the artist's work. Whether there is some assumption on gender in Papaconstantinou's work or not, this lies not only in the detailed, laborious processing of material—as is the case with some artists, like Agnes Martin, who traditionally deal with a female version of gestural painting—but also in the mere fact that the *patriarchal language* is changed into an image. In recent drawings, such as "Hunting Scene" (2007), which is derived from patterns designed for tapestry or cushions—mostly a *woman's* occupation—and where the texture is created with both colored pencils and holes on paper (a direct allusions to embroidery), it is interesting to see that this procedure of deconstructing solid representation—and the narrative it stands for—is an abstract image. Reversely, the decorative quality of the original tapestry image—an artistically lower form of art—becomes abstract, self-referential, and therefore higher art.